

IN A NUTSHELL

3191 W. 10th
Ph: 738-5177
738-1422

MPA NEWSLETTER # II

Feb. 7, 1972

EDITORIAL: MPA IS NOT FOR EVERYBODY

At a recent Central Committee Meeting, a motion was made that unless an excuse be given Central committee Meetings be compulsory for people living at the Centre. The motion was met with a flood of opposition. Most of the people at the meeting (and by the way, only 2 of the 12 residents were present) felt that the motion was rigid and reactionary, and patterned after the authoritarian structure of hospitals. It was felt that attendance and participation at MPA functionsought to be voluntary.

The reactions to the motion reflect quite accurately the operating principles of MPA during our first year. The general policy has been to keep bureaucracy, rules and structure to a minimum, and to maximize individual freedom. Many people are fed-up with the constraints on personal liberty one finds in almost all institutions and particularly in mental hospitals. In the attempt to avoid becoming just another hospital, MPA has made a place where people can do pretty much as they like, without some authority figure restricting every action because it violates one of a million rules.

I think it is fair to say that MPA has been following a policy of anarchism. I also think it is fair to say that our experience over the past few months has shown that this policy does not work. Things were good for the first 6 or 8 months, but eventually the loose and open structure attracted people who abused the freedom. I should say that I favored an anarchistic policy during the early stages, but I have changed my mind as a result of our experiences during the past months. Our reputation as an absolutely unauthoritarian organization has attracted a small number of aggressive, anti-social people. Because of the open nature of MPA, these people have had a free hand to dominate and intimidate the group. MPA has become a breeding ground for "Strong" people to impose their will on the "weak". This is so not only because of the anarchistic structure of MPA, but also because many "weak" confused, upset & frightened people use our facilities. It's an ideal setting for power-trippers to "do their thing". The individual comes first, the group second, no matter how damaging the individual may be to the group. Because our centre is small, one or two people can create a disruptive atmosphere throughout the entire house by "Doing their own thing".

However, I think we are finally beginning to wake-up and to see that hippie anarchism is not a reasonable way to run an organization. What then is the alternative? Partly, we must begin to see that the group is as important as the individual, we must stop being afraid of terms like "responsibility to the community," like "obligation," "duty" etc. We see these terms as negative, because in our experience they have always been shove down our throats by authority figures who have not consulted the community, have not consulted us. This sort of tyrannical power-structure is one alternative to anarchism, and that I think is what people in MPA are afraid of. We do not want a small group of authority figures saying "You can't stay here you must do this, you can't do that." In this situation the individual feels helpless. How can she or he challenge the official? What recourse is there to get rules or officials changed? So, owing to our fear of power-structures in which we have no say, we stick to anarchism and let the mess continue.

There is however another alternative, and that is a genuinely democratic process of making and enforcing rules which serve the good of the community. However, we have had so little experience with the practice of democracy and have grown so cynical about any kind of power, that we are distrustful of all structures involving "rules and regulations". The very phrase makes me queasy.

I think MPA is one of the very few organizations in which participatory democracy can be put into practice. This means seeing very clearly that democratically made and enforced rules are not the same as rules made and enforced from above. It also means seeing that "responsibility, obligation and duty to the community" are not dirty words but are essential concepts in the daily practice of a democratic group. "Power" is another term that needs to be salvaged from the dictionary of smut. So is "property". Shared power and publicly controlled property are indispensable aspects of participatory democracy.

HOUSING REPORT

Stop staring at those drab green walls!
Forget those bickering neighbours next door!
Kick your landlady down the stairs and come talk to me about co-op housing.
We have gotten some off the ground recently - four people near 21st and Main,
four more near 35th and Fraser and five people (MPA and non MPA) in Kits.
(that one was Patty's work). I've stopped looking for houses, as we've run
low on co-op people now.

Then I've been looking for single rooms and cheap suites, interceding with land-
lords on tenants' behalf (got a problem?), driving, phoning, moving furniture
and drinking coffee at the El Matador.

Recently we've come into a lot of furniture from various donations. The largest
was from the City - furniture, sheets and appliances from the Angelus Hotel.
A new firm of rugged individualists - The Unmoved Movers - worked for two days
with a truck and driver donated by McIntosh Moving (tell your rich friends
to give them their business) lugging and storing furnishings. The East End
Centre has priority on these items, followed by co-ops (return to paragraph
one).

Keep me posted.

Avi Dolgin

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

This evening I positively attended a meeting at the request of Barb to project
some assistance to MPA with what I had. I was totally and completely given
non-respect, and insulted. I feel that there is a tremendous, and to me
that means "extremely" large amount of "unfairness" in the jurisdictional lea-
dership of the Mental Patients Association.

It would seem that there is a definite possibility that the above mentioned
association has no care or welfare or compassion or interest in Mental
Patients whatsoever.

Sincerely,
Tom G. Pollok

ON DECEIT

If we are to be really truthful in what we say we may find ourselves observing a
new day.

When all that we perceive to be exacting perfection is actually procrastination
That's in dire need of correction.

So beware the use of slander, and keep your tongue in line. Truth is a virtue
so you say -- well now I have said mine.

Darryl Rempel

PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT

Jon York has been elected to the position of Public Relations and Liason Officer.
His initial baptism to the post was a lecture and information talk on Mental Health
and the MPA at the Ladies Haddasah Bazaar, which was enthusiastically received.

He visited U.B.C. Health Sciences Hospital and played guitar and sang -- then Phil
Prefontaine read his self-composed poetry.

Jon is presently working on a dossier to present to Riverview, U.B.C., General Hos-
pital and Lionsgate outlining the expansion and new facilities of the MPA, hopefully
enabling him to work directly with new releases between MPA and the hospitals.

HOW SO CONCAVE:

If you were to look at it really closely, you would probably strain your eyes. Therefore the point remains different from just about, but not quite similar to the opposite. Now the perplexing thing about a relatively immaterial, though seemingly trivial approach to declining from a positively infinite conglomeration of impractical, not to leave their present irreversible improvisations from the proportionate involvement.

DARRYLL REMPEL

KNOTS TO YOU:

R.D. Laing is a British psychiatrist who has written a number of books about madness. Perhaps his main contribution to our understanding of insanity is the idea that going crazy can be a perfectly reasonable way to react to an unreasonable world.

In his latest book, KNOTS, Laing describes some twisted or knotted interpersonal relationships that produce emotional turmoil in one or both parties. He unravels the tangled sequence of thoughts that the people involved experience only as confusion.

Here is one of Laing's knots:

Jill: You think I am stupid
Jack: I don't think you're stupid
Jill: I must be stupid to think you think I'm stupid if you don't-- or you must be lying.
I am stupid in every way: To think I'm stupid if I am stupid to think I'm stupid, if I'm not stupid to think you think I'm stupid, if you don't.

And another one:

Jill: I'm ridiculous
Jack: No you are not.
Jill: I'm ridiculous to feel ridiculous when I'm not
You must be laughing at me for feeling you are laughing at me if you are not laughing at me.

I have found it useful and fun to write out my own knots. If you have any luck with yours, submit it to the newsletter. Here is one of mine:
Jack tells Jill she is better than he is. Jill believes him and tells him she is better than he is. Jack resents her for believing him and tells her she is worse than he is for believing she is better than he is, Jill feels guilty for hurting Jack and tells him she is worse than he is for believing she is better than he is. Jack feels guilty for telling her she is worse than he is for believing she is better than he is and tells her he is worse than she is for telling her. Jill feels guilty for having made him feel worse than she is by believing she is worse than he is for believing she is better than he is. Jill feels he is better than she is. Jack feels she is better than he is.

Lanny Beckman

EAST END MPA REPORT

The East end Co-ordinators have been working on getting our applications for a City and Provincial permit to operate an East End MPA at 303 E. 46th. We have also contacted & are proceeding with an application for the CM & HC mortgage for this property. In the meantime, we have rented a house at 2673 E. 28th and are setting up a temporary East end MPA with space for eight people. We were helped by many of the members in this project. The people now living there are involved in setting up their living situation. People are welcome to visit but there will be no crisis set-up as in the West End MPA. We have also been involved in setting up the first East End Co-op at 569 E. 21st.

Most of us are working individually with members and with the co-ordinators of the various programs with the idea of keeping the Eastenders talking to the Westenders.

Fran Phillips

EMPLOYMENT REPORT:

The most successful event during the month of January was the formation of the Janitorial Service. An unsuccessful grant application to the Salvation Army was referred to Smithrite Disposal Ltd., and has resulted in a donation of most (or all) of the required equipment. So, the obtaining of contracts is the next step. Please help if you know any contacts. More people are needed to work in the Janitorial Service--- janitors experienced and inexperienced

Still on the fire is the Restaurant scheme -- ideas welcome! Michiko San has proposed a Japanese low-priced restaurant.

Anyone wanting employment or training, or needs help with welfare, please see me. Many people have contributed by keeping me informed on new jobs & openings. Thank you

Barb Fussigal

THEATRE WORKSHOP:

On January 14th, John Gray who teaches theatre at City College and is part of an actors' workshop in Vancouver, gave an evening of theatre games for MPA people at St. Mark's Church. John opened the evening with a few yoga exercises, followed by a "trust" exercise in which we divided into couples, and one partner in each couple shut his eyes and let himself be led around the room by the other, being led by the contact of finger-tips only. It was surprising to find how easy it was to be controlled by the finger-tip pressure, and how aware of other physical sensations we became when for a few minutes we could not see.

Later in the evening John showed us how to form ourselves, in groups, into giant insects or machines which made appropriate noises. And finally, we experimented with being an orchestra, minus instruments, providing all the noises and movements ourselves.

At the close of the evening, John explained that the exercises we had been doing were used by his own actors' workshop as a means of learning to trust each other and to work as a team.

Everyone who was present greatly enjoyed the evening, and we all hope John will be able to give us another evening soon.

Terry Haughian

PEOPLE IN HOSPITAL:

Fred Fisher is in Vancouver General, Heather Pavilion, Ward D-8. The following people are in Crease: Gerry Graham--West 2; Frank Ereland -- East 4; Michael Dempsey -- Intensive care; Michael is not allowed visitors now but would like to have them when they are allowed, so keep checking. Jean Tkachuk is in East Lawn.

THE SUM:

A great many people make a mess of their lives by spending a lot of time thinking about how they made a mess of their lives.

I call it The Broken Record because it goes on and on and you don't get bored. You can go down all sorts of satisfying alleys on the subject. If your mother had done so and so or if you had taken that job or that mate or that bus and so on.

Sometimes the record becomes so much a part of you that you think of very little else. Perhaps a friend will say "Take a trip to Hawaii and that will make you feel better." But will it? There you are, on a lovely romantic Hawaiian evening, sitting at a luau and what are you thinking? Look at the mess I made of my life. Or if you don't take it with you, you can be sure it is sitting at home waiting for you. After Hawaii, then what? Slit your throat? No dear, you would make a mess of that too.

Most people play the broken record at one time or another during their lives because we all make mistakes. Enduring the results of our errors is the price we pay for having the privilege of being able to make our own decisions--the privilege of choice.

Few of us reach our full potential. Perhaps in 2500 A.D. scientists will have the perfect state where people will be evaluated almost as soon as they are born or even before they are born. They will be evaluated, tagged and channelled to reach their full potential. Mates will be chosen for them to produce whatever is needed on the market at the time.

Perhaps then everyone in the world -- if there is any individual thinking left -- will hang their heads and say "look at the mess we made of our lives."

Molly DEXall

BRAIN STORM--- L
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CH FIZZZ GRR
KEL CRINKLE GRASH!!!!
N
I
PEOPLE

we need you; maybe you need us. We've been thinking of starting another - but better than the other -- crisis training program. The last one was fun, as well as being a learning experience for everyone who took part, including those who conducted the training sessions. However, it was obvious that those who came to learn had a lot to teach. Everyone has had crisis experience, has skills and techniques they employ in relating to others. If we get together to discuss what we want from a program, what each one of us has to offer, we'll get to know each other and produce a course that everyone wants. If you're interested, call Terry or Barry at 738-5177. We'll arrange a meeting to discuss what type of course we want and need. REJUVENATE - PARTICIPATE

Barry Coull

ACTIVITIES

Every week:

Sunday Nights - 7:30 Women's rap group
check at MPA for location

Tuesday Nights - Growth Group 8:00 MPA
with Tom Sandborn and
Ruth Hess

Wednesday Afternoon - Bowling 3:00
meet at MPA at 2:45

Thursday Nights - Sensitivity Group 8:00 MPA
with Shari and Laurin

Saturdays - trips to the farm 10:30 am
- please check at MPA and leave your
home ahead of time and phone number
if you want to go so I can make sure there
are enough rides. People will be asked to
contribute 50¢ for food if they have a meal
at the farm.

***** IMPORTANT LAST-MINUTE FLASH *****

TUESDAY NIGHT GROUP

For the next two months our group will
not be taking on any new members. Also - time change
to 7:30 p.m.

Ruth and Tom

P.S. We are asking for a commitment form members to
come every Tuesday.

(9)
ACTIVITIES (Cont.)

Other things:

- Sun Jan. 13th - First Aid Discussion 2:00 MPA
- with MPA's own nurse in residence
Fran Phillips
- this is the second in a series.
Tentatively, it will concentrate on what to do in the case of an OD and how to check for vital signs, but the agenda is flexible - come and bring any questions you have about giving first aid.
- Women's Rap Group 7:30 MPA
- this is the first meeting. We can decide if we want a closed women's group, where we want to meet, and what kinds of things we might want to talk about and read. How uncomfortable is it to be a woman around MPA and what kinds of problems do we have with the men in the house? Let's get together and talk about it.

Monday Feb 14th - Valentines' Day Coffee Party
East End MPA 8:00
come and see the new East End house, listen to some music, and have coffee and cake. The van will leave MPA at 7:30

Tuesday Feb 15th - Paid People's Business Meeting
12:00 noon - different location each week
- this week at Avi's : 2080 Alma
- anyone is welcome to attend this meeting but it will be strictly a business meeting

Wednesday Feb 16th - Central Committee Meeting 8:00 MPA
- people's agenda will be posted in advance for anyone to add what they would like to bring up.

Friday Feb 18th - General Meeting 8:00 MPA
- people's agenda posted for this meeting, too

Friday Feb 25th - Theatre Workshop 8:00
with John Gray
Location to be announced

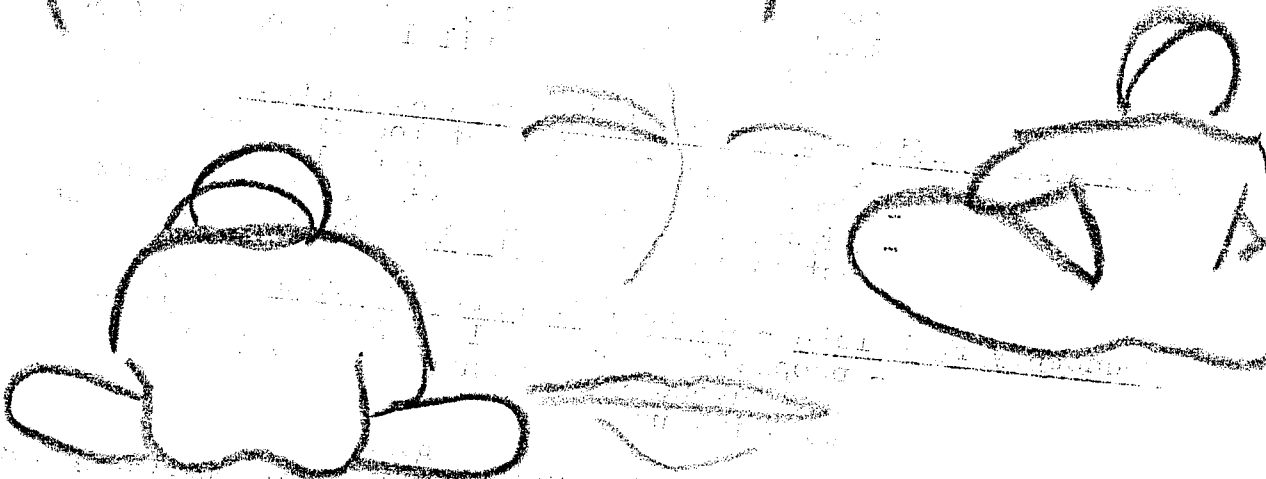
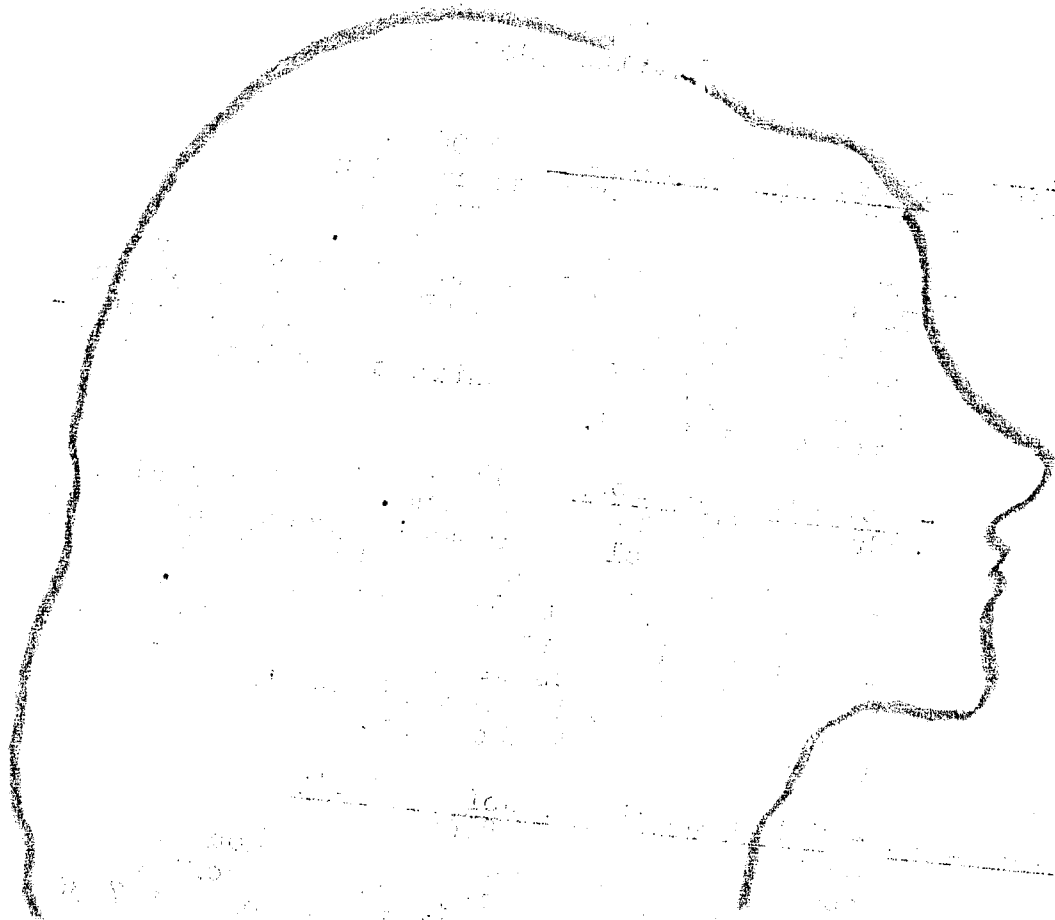
Saturday March 18th - Kosmic League
- pre-season softball opened at Connaught Park (Crickettchatter Park)
- MPA needs a softball team
- leave your name and phone number at MPA if you would like to play

CHEAP FOOD

Another idea bubbling around is a joint food-buying venture or food co-op for MPA and its members. For instance - one day a week the van and all interested persons can go around doing bulk food purchases at the inexpensive places in town (Famous Foods, the docks, Richmond). Another scheme is MPA joining the NDP food co-op (see "The Grape" Feb 2nd) Either way. You'll get a hell of a lot more for your money. SO-o-o-:
Tell Avi

- (1) what things you consume a lot of, that you need to get cheaper
- (2) cheap outlets you know of

FLASH Patty's Party Friday Feb. 11th 7:30
Bring own refreshments. Everyone welcome.



W. JOHN...
1988