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The Alternative Society

New Institutions Serve Th

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Alternative Society's institutions—the free clinics, free universities, free stores—are still young and wobbly and very dependent on straight society. But they exist, and they serve a large number of disaffected young Americans, as this dispatch, one of a series from the AP Special Assignment Teams, discloses.

By KEN HARTNETT

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SEATTLE, Wash. (AP) —

The house is warm and airy with high ceilings and spacious rooms and a handsomely carved mantelpiece. It was built in another day, perhaps for another kind of doctor, but it is perfect for Allen.

He plans to turn the old house into a commune—a commune for doctors.

"People are recognizing more and more that to have a new society, you have got to

happening in medicine. "Before this year, there wasn't a single medical collective in this area. Now you have at least three."

The Seattle Clinic, like virtually all the institutions of the Alternative Society, is directly dependent on the larger society.

Allen, for example, was trained at the University of California. The Country Doctor will operate out of an abandoned city-owned firehouse. Contributions will be tax deductible because the clinic will have tax-exempt status as a non-profit institution.

Milwaukee's Free Clinic operates in the basement of a Roman Catholic hospital on the East side, close by that city's hip enclave.

One of the six volunteer doctors, a middle-aged gynecologist with a regular practice, puts in six hours a week at the clinic ("It helps keep me young"). He has no illusions about the im-

said Tom Faulkner of the Sanctuary in Cambridge, which deals with the problems of homeless, jobless street people. "We exist because of the system. All our dollars come from the system. We can't possibly support ourselves. We have 15 fulltime people."

"Somehow a myth has developed that it's easy to develop an alternative culture. I think these of us who have tried have found out it's not easy, it's not easy at all."

Part of the basement of a commune in Albuquerque is set aside as a small workshop for the eventual production of stained glass—an operation the communards hope will someday make them self-supporting.

Their optimism is based in part on the fact that they can sell their product to the straight society below what it would cost to produce in a union shop.

Isn't that hurting union work-



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He plans to turn the old house into a commune—a commune for doctors.

"People are recognizing more and more that to have a new society, you have got to build it," he said, leaning his six-foot, heavily shouldered frame against the mantel.

As he spoke, his hands toyed idly with a half-braided leather belt that dangled from his shoulders at the edge of his flowing black hair.

Allen is hip and 30, an M.D. specializing in internal medicine.

He and two fellow physicians are helping organize Seattle's Country Doctor—a free medical clinic, one of several springing up to join free universities, free stores and other infant institutions of the Alternative society—that still wobbling attempt by disaffected young Americans to develop ways to live apart from straight society.

Allen has no interest in money—only in making enough to survive. His main interest is the clinic and leading a professional life not as "an economic machine" but as a human being with "medical knowledge to share."

"The way the arrangement is now doctors are so incredibly overpaid I could work one day a week as a straight doctor and make around \$12,000 to \$14,000 a year easily. That's how screwed up things are," he said.

"Clinics are a long way from the answer, he said, "but I do see them as building blocks for a new medical system with free laboratories and free X-ray technicians and free radiologists and free hospitals and free people."

He laughed, a laugh recognizing that the reality of his vision was a long way off.

Doctors like Allen remain rare. Allen said, as far as he knows, he is the only one of 72 doctors in his graduating class planning to devote his career to free medicine.

The important thing, he said, is the number of like-minded doctors who are coming out of medical schools after him.

Dr. Julius R. Krevans, dean of the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco, said it is too early to tell just how significant that number will be.

But, he said, there is no question that social awareness is quickening among other students and faculty members in the nation's medical schools.

"You won't be able to judge how much is discussion and how much is performance until one sees where these people go when they become physicians."

"These alternatives will snowball," predicted Jerry Billow, a member of a legal collective in Cambridge, Mass. Already, he said, there are at least 15 similar groups of young activist lawyers scattered throughout the nation's cities.

The same thing, he said, is

...the eventual production of stained glass—an operation the communards hope will someday make them self-supporting.

One of the six volunteer doctors, a middle-aged gynecologist with a regular practice, puts in six hours a week at the clinic ("It helps keep me young"). He has no illusions about the impact of such operations on the nation's medical system.

"I certainly do not see any change in the physician or the medical practices," the doctor said.

"A guy isn't going to break his back working days and nights to go through medical school and when he gets out give himself nothing. He feels he's earned remuneration. At least that's my opinion and I don't think it's changing, except for a few nuts like myself."

The scarcity of doctors to man the free clinics makes continuity in treatment difficult. A young woman, well along in pregnancy, works in a Cambridge movement book store. She praises that city's medical clinic but says her baby will not be delivered by a movement doctor. "I want to be at a hospital where I would have the same doctor for delivery I had all along," she said.

Technical competence—not only in medicine but in auto mechanics—is a thinly spread resource in the Alternative Society. Poets abound. Plumbers are scarce.

The People's Free Wheel, a no-charge bus line in Cambridge, Mass., has a discomfiting habit of breaking down as it plies back and forth along Massachusetts Avenue.

A mechanic in a garishly psychedelic movement garage in New Mexico knows an awful lot about political science (he has a master's degree) but berates himself for knowing too little about diagnosing that strange skip in a customer's engine.

There are other problems, too.

At Albuquerque's movement garage, where gasoline is sold at cost, a chronic problem is the "ripoff"—the thefts. In one two-month period, \$350 in sales was unaccounted for.

"I think we need our own police force—I really do," said a young woman at the Albuquerque Free Store. "People who rip off people's institutions should really be dealt with strongly."

The bad check situation got so bad at the Miffling Street Co-op, a pioneering store in Madison, Wis., that offers "food for the revolution," that the store's collective leadership decided to post the returned checks behind the counter.

The politically minded organizers of the free institutions blame the failures on what they see as the corrupting influence of the larger society—influences that the free institutions are designed to minimize.

But the insulation is far from perfect. The Straight society is very much a part of the Alternative Society. It supports it.

"Take a program like this,"

...the eventual production of stained glass—an operation the communards hope will someday make them self-supporting.

Isn't that hurting union workers? a 20-year-old member of the commune was asked.

"To hell with the union," he replied.

Alternative Society professionals—doctors like Allen, lawyers who staff the legal collective in Cambridge, teachers at the free schools—all got their training from the straight society and depend on it for continuing education in their field.

Rock concerts and people's donations provide some cash and give a sense of community participation. But the hard cash doesn't come from the hip community. It comes from straight people, one way or another.

From the manual "F— the System: How to Live Free in Albuquerque," is an example of how to "rip off":

"One of the best places to eat is your local supermarket. Get a cart and start pushing it around. Throw a few things in occasionally for effect. Meanwhile, you can make sandwiches, eat fruit and cookies, and open a tin or two of smoked oysters. When you're full, leave your cart and split."

Naivete plagues some of the Alternative Society's institutions.

Albuquerque hips opened a free store and stocked it with donated clothing, food and household goods. All were welcome to come and take what they needed in exchange for what they could give.

"We had no restrictions on what people could take so they took everything," said a young woman at the store, which is now not so much a store as a store front movement meeting place with bare shelves and a handful of underground newspapers.

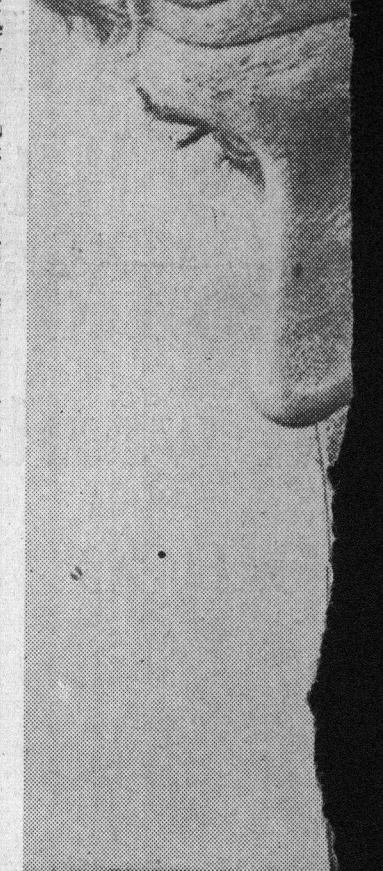
Linking the various experiments together within each community and within the nation is an elaborate communications network.

Most major cities and university towns have alternative newspapers, such as the Chicago Seed, the Milwaukee Kaleidoscope, the Great Speckled Bird in Atlanta or Berkeley's Tribe and Barb.

Many operate as collectives. Tasks rotate. Today's editor-in-chief will be next week's paste-up man. Salaries are paid according to need and the availability of funds. The process is often more important than the product, which leans toward unevenness.

Stories of national interest are circulated through one of several "wire services" with the highly ideological Liberation News Service (LNS) of New York the oldest and largest.

Growing in significance are the alternative radio stations—some listener-supported, including New York City's WBAI-FM;



Tim Jolley, a senior medical student at the University of Washington, is one of the orig-

some commercially supported such as KTAO in Los Gatos, Calif.

The refusal to operate on a profit motive yields a certain independence but also guarantees a shoestring operation.

"We don't pay well and we don't pay with absolute certainty," said WBAI station manager, Ed Goodman.

KTAO, which scored a coup with station breaks featuring Angela Davis and Jean Paul Sartre, pays some of its staffers not in cash but in free housing.

KTAO's manager, Lorenzo Milam, says he is not motivated by revolutionary impulses. "Basically, I hate all this bull with the system. I'm a radio man, not a revolutionary. I'm into it because it makes good radio. I like to see people jumping, especially commercial radio station owners who are using up a natural resource like the cars and the freeways."

A peculiar kind of staff problem besets some of the stations. Staffers won't strike over money. But they will—and do—walk out in disputes over program content and over decision-making machinery.

The problems in the Alternative Society are endless, but the institutions are new. Few scholars would pin their reputations on predicting their ultimate fate or impact.

Historian Harvey Goldberg of the University of Wisconsin maintains that the counter culture and its institutions must be viewed as part of an epochal change sweeping American society.

Truths about the society that long have been kept beneath the rug, he said, are now visible. After a decade of protest and organization a new generation is rising deeply aware of the plight of blacks, Chicanos, Indians, women, the poor.

Its members, Goldberg says, start out with a perspective those who came before had to acquire. Consciousness gets raised another notch. The attack on the old institutions escalates. The counter culture grows as the old shared beliefs lose adherents.

"What holds a society together is a certain cement of loyalty," he said, "and I think that's eroded."

Next: Life In A Commune

