

Σ KANAALON

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Reconciliation and Reality by Kathy Glass

Ross Dunn has told readers of the State College News about the "culture shock" participants in the Experiment in International Living experienced as they travelled to foreign countries. I was struck (and that's a carefully-chosen word) by the same phenomenon last summer, but I didn't have to travel nearly as far; I only went to Buffalo, New York, to be one of a group of ten college students living in the "inner-city" (a term applied to the large, low-income neighborhoods of major cities).

Although we were hesitant to admit it at first, we all experienced culture shock to some degree, and I'll admit mine readily now. I was scared to death of the large numbers of men who spent their days and nights lounging in front of stores and bars. I shared in the fears of the home ec major among us who warned us to keep our hands clean because the children we played with were dirty. I was completely stunned during my first church service as I watched a number of worshippers being calmed or carried out after becoming "possessed". I was almost ready to pack and leave after reading a copy of the newspaper published by the Black Muslims. I was certainly unprepared for some of the dancing I was exposed to; the first time I was in a large group of teenagers one boy came up behind me and said "You don't want to watch that, Miss."

All of which leads to a very reasonable question, "What were we doing there in the first place?" That question stumped us at first. We knew what we weren't doing. We weren't amateur social workers studying somebody else's way of life, or hoping to evangelize and/or raise somebody's standards of living. All we know at first was that we had all been pretty well insulated against knowing people who were "different", who were of another race or economic or

educational background. Something told us that basically people weren't so "different"--that they only erect artificial barriers around themselves. We all had theorized about this. Now we wanted to know if it was true, and what would happen if we tried to live without some of those barriers. Our initial emphasis was thus on communication--trying to establish some kind of meaningful communication across traditional barriers. We wanted to be pretty independent about this, because we didn't want to be hindered by stereotypes of church-workers or social workers.

Although our planned activities included Bible-study three times a week, we found ourselves forming a "theology on the streets". Terms we've heard all our lives began to take on new meaning as we applied them to things we saw happening around us. We came to see the Bible as a record of man's alienation from God and from man, and the life and death of Jesus Christ as the revelation that reconciliation has been achieved and that men are called to express that reconciliation in their dealings with other men. This made possible a kind of acceptance which had never been possible before and freed us tremendously from some of our

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***** Calendar of Events

Wed., Nov. 7, 12 noon: Chapel Service--the Lutheran Service of Matins; Mr. Carl Johnson preaching; at the Unitarian Church.

Sun., Nov. 11, 7:30 p.m.: The Rev. Helmut Cramm of Brown University speaks on "Dietrick Bonhoeffer: Prophet and Martyr"; Brubacher, PDR.

Wed., Nov. 14, 12 noon: Chapel Service; The Rev. Earl Lowell of the New York Student Christian Movement will speak.

earlier notions as to how a Christian should live. We began to develop what we called a "theology of presence"--we felt that by our very being in the situation we were expressing reconciliation, without, however, being forced to talk to people about it all the time.

What were the results? The change in the people in the group became more apparent to each of us as time passed. We were excited by the experiences as they happened. We continue to be excited as we realize that we exist with a new kind of freedom. We have no way of knowing about our effect on the inner-city of Buffalo. Certainly, lasting friendships have been formed (especially among those students in the Buffalo area).

We didn't reform many people. "Our bunch" (of teenagers) can still be whipped up into a fighting gang ("The Big G- Gaylords") by one of their leaders. Antagonistic little Vivian is still punching her friends after a whole summer of our showing her affection and demonstrating that it isn't necessary to exhibit affection that violently. We realize that we have been only one of many factors affecting the lives of those with whom we came in contact.

Perhaps some of them won't be quite as willing in the future to believe that a white face in their neighborhood must be equated with exploitation of some form. Perhaps they will remember that it is possible to spend time in the same room with members of rival neighborhoods and communicate with people who have an education or who like non-rock and roll music. The alienation which exists is readily apparent. Perhaps we have been able to begin to show that reconciliation is possible.

(To be continued in the next issue.)

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The Student Center at 166 Central Avenue is open from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. for individual study or group meetings. To schedule a meeting, contact William Rushby, Resident Director.

John H. Fenton reports in the October 25 issue of the New York Times that an organization with headquarters in Miami, Florida has launched a nationwide campaign to rid American stores of Communist manufactured goods (as if any store selling Commie products were truly American). The campaign consists of slipping small cards into packages containing the offensive material. The cards are imprinted with pithy messages to remind the purchaser of his offense in the cataclystic struggle for justice, freedom, and democracy in America. For example, Polish hams are labeled, perhaps by their American counterparts, "Inspected for your table by Communists". As a bulletin of the Miami group says, ". . . for those conservatives who really want action, this is like the answer to a prayer; it is effective and it is fun!"

Contributed by an aroused, alert American

"motive", the magazine of the Methodist Student Movement, is available at reduced rates through the Campus Minister's office--\$1 for eight monthly issues. It is a provocative and handsome journal (rather the "New Yorker" of its class but without the advertising) worthy of serious attention. The October issue carried articles on "Odetta and the Gospel" and "The Cult of Rebellion" in addition to a photographic essay, poems, and a new cartoon series by Jim Crane.

Faculty are allowed to subscribe to "motive", of course, but there's a publication for them alone, a quarterly called "The Christian Scholar". It, too, is available through the Campus Minister's office at \$3 a year. Published by and for "working scholars", the fall issue has an article on "The Wittgenstein Game", "Evil and Absurdity" and "Albert Schweitzer's understanding of Jesus as the Christ".