NEWSLETTER OF THE PRAIRIE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY

VOLUME 10; NO. 10
1 MAR. 1974

EDITOR: PAT WATKINS
PHONE: 233-5795

******************************************************************

PRAIRIE CALENDAR

SAT 2 MAR. 8 PM Beginning and intermediate folk dancing at First Society. 

SUN 3 MAR. 10 AM BEAUTY AND OBSCENITY: A MULTIMEDIA PRESENTATION. Family service. Orie Loucks will begin his lay-ministry with this program.

MON 4 MAR. 7:30 PM Pat Cautley invites those who are interested in discussing her study of new foster parents to her home. (4805 Regent Street).

SAT 10 MAR. 10 AM ETHICAL ISSUES IN MADISON: a group discussion led by Orie Loucks and Prairie Organic Community Garden Co-op meeting. Immediately after morning service at Portal Foster Center. Bring your lunch. New members are welcome.

SUN 11 MAR. 7:30 PM LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING at the Willards, 2217 West Lawn Ave. Everybody is welcome to join the discussion of the continuing lay-ministry for next year.

SAT 17 MAR. 10 AM BLOODY BUT UNBOWED with John Neese, professor of Zoology and Environmentalist.

SUN 24 MAR. 10 AM THE ETHOLOGICAL-ECOLOGICAL SOCIO-BEHAVIORISTIC INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF MARINE AVIAN POPULATIONS—-OR—CONFUSIONS OF A SEAGULL WATCHER. Dan Willard. Observing animals sometimes reveals truths about oneself: in this case it may not.

FRI 15 MAR. 8 PM THE PLAYREADERS meet at Rosemary Dorney's, 2127 Regent St.

SUN 16 APR. THEATER PARTY AND SAVE THESE FUTURE DATES

SAT 20 APRIL: Dashikey Party with First Society (a U-U Charity)

FRI/SAT, 26-27 APR: Ric Maston

FRI 4 MAY: Social Auction Auction. Begin now to think of your donations.

******************************************************************

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM OUR IN-COMING LAY MINISTER:

Serendipity always seems to prevail to someone's advantage. Happily, a vacancy in the Prairie lay ministry, that I was able to accept, occurs in the spring. Wisconsin is a state for all seasons, but for an ecologist, spring is a little more special, and I am looking forward to having this advantage.

The months of March through May are an ecologist's delight. Earth Week in early April is an occasion to re-examine our relationships to the environment and the life it is beginning to support at that time. All of these things would be interesting enough to look at from new points of view. However, I believe the energy shortage and other developments have moved us toward more understanding and a less abusive relationship to our environment. There is still much to do, as Dr. John Neese will describe on March 17th, but I am more concerned now about the problems of our 'people-environment.' The members of Prairie have thought a lot about community organization as it affects us, but we have done much less in developing the same ideas for school district planning, city organization, or county planning.

Thus... I want to devote four programs over an eight week period to trying to learn more about social organization—from other animals. We all have great admiration for the intelligence of many animals, but when their social organization runs counter to our conventional wisdom, we feel sorry for them. Maybe it is they who should feel sorry for us. In any case, our conventions change with time, and I hope that, with care, we can learn much more from the response of other animals to limitations in resources, social dislocation, and crowding. Dan Willard will tell us about gulls, and I will arrange for reports on primate studies and Calhoun's rats.
At this point, I don’t know what we are going to find, but I think it will be worth doing and I hope that you will all join in.

Orie Loucks

The SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE has joined the national campaign to gather clothes, food, toys, and household items for the more than 3000 Mexican-American men and women who are striking against the illegal labor practices of the Farah Manufacturing Company. Collections and rallies are being coordinated in such a way that shipments will arrive in ElPaso and San Antonio before the Easter season. Most of the work is being done by the National Student Committee to Aid the Farah Strikers and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

This is the first time this year that the Social Action Committee has come to the Prairie members and friends for help. These strikers have been out of work for almost two years. They desperately need food and clothing—and national support for their cause.

On Sunday, March 10, please bring whatever you can. A complete list of needed items will be posted on the bulletin board at the Portal Foster Center by March 3rd. If you would like to make a monetary contribution, make your check payable to Joan Surrer—A.C.N. or Amer.

BRING WHAT YOU CAN....GIVE WHAT YOU CAN....REMEMBER....SUNDAY, MARCH 10TH. You may also drop things off before that date at Nancy McBreath’s, 1915 Keyes Avenue.

CONGRATULATIONS ARE EXTENDED TO:

Pat Werner, who on March 16th, will be joined in holy wedlock to Mariella Fischer-Williams of Marshfield, Wisconsin. To Pat and Mariella, Prairie extends their sincere good wishes for your future happiness.

Pat Watkins, who recently received the $500 Harry Hayden Clark Award for outstanding work and promising scholarship in American literature from the department of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

John and Leslie Miller, who became parents of a 7 lb, 7 oz. baby boy on Thurs. Feb. 21st. In case you’d like to drop a card, the address is: 5501 D East Lake Dr. Lisle, IL 60532.

The following column has been submitted by Dan Willard:BA in Biology—Stamford Univ.; Ph.D in Animal Ecology—Univ. of Calif—Davis.

As a biologist, I would like to differ with one of my colleagues on the matter of biological determinism and its effect on the role of women in society. My points of difference are three in number (always the mystic trinity).
My first point concerns my colleagues' representation of biologists' use of authority. Biologists do not, as he implied, all support his views. In fact, they seldom agree on anything and certainly not on this topic or even whether the topic is strictly biological. This healthy uncertainty generally leads us to avoid dogmatic statements. While I firmly believe that scientists should apply their expertise to the public good, we must take great precautions to separate our data from our opinions. The evidence is almost always ambiguous in and of itself. Its application is even more uncertain. Though we may like to believe either that our special field is central to all knowledge or that we are renaissance people, neither is usually the case, and when we venture from our narrow disciplines, we are as fallible, if not more so, than anyone else.

My second point concerns the arguments about psychosocial trauma. Here I tread on thin ice, in as much as I am not an expert. I can only report the answers I have received from an expert. My biological colleague implied that women who do not have and raise their own children would have more psychological problems than those who do. My expert responded that there is no social work evidence that this is true. In fact, evidence suggests that unmarried childless women are happier than their married be-childered counterparts. My expert further reported that any data concerning the relative mental health of natural children, adopted children, and children who serve time in day care centers showed no significant differences. Which system seems best depends somewhat on one's own belief about what constitutes good social behavior. In short, the great psychological trauma on which my colleague based his argument simply doesn't exist, although other traumas do, I'm afraid.

My third point concerns biological determinism per se. As you recall, the argument went something like this: For some zillions of years, female mammals have had to bear and raise their own young; most mammals still do. This, our strict biological determinist maintains, is natural (therefore, good), and all else is evil. He also contends that the only way to change is through natural selection. The rate of natural selection depends on the generation-time and fecundity of the species. For humans, with their minimum of fifteen year generation-time and one-at-a-time births, this results in a very slow biological change rate. Those of you who are familiar with Limits to Growth know that humans have caused many elements of their environment to change much faster than ever. The doubling times of population growth, resource use, etc., are about the same as the generation-time. In other words, we can only make some infinitesimally small change by natural selection, while the environment changes 100%. If we accept rigorous biological determinism, extinction is clearly imminent.

There is hope. While many animals and plants have been selected for ever-increasing specialization, humans seem to have been particularly selected for adaptability. We are physical generalists who are not fast or strong or anything. We just think and adapt. It is through these behavioral social adaptations that we have survived. Our continued safety depends on continuing use of social and behavioral adaptation. These adaptations are not limited to the slow rate of natural selection. This does not mean they are unnatural, if in fact the ability to change is an inherent quality of the species.

So, we come to now. Any system that will work, be it having our young raised women or men or in groups or by kangaroos, is entirely within our biological framework. We cannot afford to wallow in narrow dogma. We must use our brains, adaptability, and pray for luck. . . It might work.

THE PRAIRIE GARDEN CO-OP has begun to organize for the year. Martha Willard is general coordinator. New members may sign up until planting time, and non-Prairie people are welcome. Each member is expected to let the group know what his commitment will be. There is plenty of space, three acres, at Carson's farm. This year there will be small plots for individuals as well as community crops. If interested, please come to the next meeting (see Calendar).

DEADLINE FOR THE 15 MARCH NEWSLETTER IS . . . WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6th.
From Pat Cautley  

During my first service last December 2 I promised you a list of some actions which have been accomplished because some individuals' (often "ordinary" like us) took initiative. Here is the list. There are two imaginary items in it; the rest I can document. Which do you think are the "real" ones?

1. Five individuals decided in 1953 that a wilderness area (including a climax hemlock forest) within one hour's drive of New York City should be saved and in the years since then have acquired 325 acres (out of a desired 400) of a deep winding ravine on both sides of a rushing river. They achieved a compromise regarding a dam on the lower river so that the area would not be flooded, managed to buy a crucial 60 acres just ahead of a developer, interested over 50 different organizations in the project, and raised the money to acquire the land in 33 separate transactions.

2. A citizens' lobby, now consisting of over 250,000 members, was the brainchild of one man who, after several different attempts to bring about significant social change, became convinced that government reform itself was necessary.

3. A small group of residents of a city, deciding that efficient mass transit was a "must," interested over 20 organized groups in their proposal so that a system of small, frequently running buses was developed and put into action in three years' time.

4. One individual, upon learning that there was a proposal in the Texas legislature to dam every river of any reasonable size in the State, stumped Texas to inform the voters on the issues involved (including the ecological catastrophe which would result). The measure was narrowly defeated.

5. Eight and a half years ago, a prominent heart researcher and an associate refused to answer questions asked by the House UnAmerican Affairs Committee (more recently the House Internal Security Committee) about their political beliefs and associations. After being indicted for criminal contempt, they in turn challenged the constitutionality of the committee's formation and operations and fought an eight year legal battle with funds raised from friends and other individuals. In December 1973 both charges were dropped and the Committee's future is questionable.

6. One woman spent years doing meticulous research regarding the consequences of a faulty technology and wrote a book which reached millions and provided the initial impetus for many in their demand for a more rational approach to environmental problems.

7. An administrator voluntarily gave up a month's salary so that a research project could be continued and other employees paid.

8. One person had the initial inspiration and did all the "footwork" to obtain support for a work project for potential high school drop-outs, in which the boys learn carpentry skills and renovate a house which is then sold. Over 70 boys have been in the project.

9. During 1973 an informally organized group in Madison collected, sorted, and packed 5½ tons of good used clothing to send to two Cooperatives in Mississippi. For the past five years this group has sent an average of 3 tons of clothing a year.

10. The majority of voters in a major city have twice rejected proposals that would (a) bring a temporary business boom to the city, and (b) bring considerable growth.
In his personal account of his own experiences with "wild things" and how he could not live without them, one man expressed a land ethic a quarter of a century ago which has been very widely quoted and is still regarded as one of the most beautiful statements ever written of man's relationship with the land.

One individual, upon hearing that a much-studied forest, prized for the variety of plant environments in it, was likely to be heavily cut, interested friends in preserving it; through them donors were found. It now includes nearly 300 acres and is used almost every day throughout the year by some group involved in study of forests.

One of the large, most beautiful cities in the world, aware that high-rise buildings and expressways were rapidly ruining its beauty, engaged a team of systems experts to study it and recommend changes, prohibitions on building, etc. so that the city would retain its beauty.

Through frequent legal battles and personal appearances at hearings, one man has materially affected the entire industry involved in generating electric power in Wisconsin.

Through the efforts primarily of one member of the Board of Directors, one railroad has modernized its equipment and is providing efficient service to commuters in one large city.

Four people, concerned about the number of runaways coming to Madison and living "on the streets," established a center for runaways through which contact with their families could be made, temporary placement in a volunteer foster home could be made. This center was initially completely staffed by volunteers and through its more than three years of existence has depended mainly upon volunteers for its staffing from 1:00 PM until 1:00 AM.

One of the temporary foster homes described above in #16 was provided by a woman graduate student who provided long-term foster care for several teen-age girls, one of whom is now a student at the University and another is finishing her high school equivalency.

Answers in the next Newsletter!