

PRAIRIE FIRE

Newsletter of the Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society

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February 19, 1978

Editor, Carolyn Briggs, 233-4374
Mailing, Preston Miracle, 231-1649

Feb 25th

Saturday Playreading will be at the Birong's (599 Glen Drive), on
8:00 pm Saturday the 25th of February at 8pm. Call Ms. Mona
Birong at 233-5995 for more information.

Feb 26th

Sunday Prairie Dances - From Bouree to the Boston Bump, a FAMILY
10:00 am SERVICE, all are welcomed!

Feb 26th

Sunday You are invited to come, bring your friends, and join
1:00 pm Boyce Totz in celebration of a cottage studio, a
winter lake and a showing of recent gouache and water-
color paintings - just a stones throw from the Yahara
River, at 1435 Morrison Street, Madison. The showing
is from 1-5 pm. Please give Boyce a call at 255-8647
for further information.

Mar 5th

Sunday "My Turned On Teacher", George Cramer, teacher and artist,
10:00 am front and center and all around the room. This will
be the opening Sunday of Theron Caldwell's lay-minis-
try, a morning dedicated to the proposition that if
learning leaves you cold now days there's something
terribly wrong between sender and receiver.

Mar 6th

Monday There will be a Board meeting on March 6th, at 7:30 pm, at
7:30 pm Diane Miracle's (3980 Plymouth Circle). All are wel-
come to come to the meeting. See you there!

Mar 12th

Sunday "The Way We Are, Now That We Mention It", A direct look at
10:00 am what is Unitarian Universalism and how we react to that
at Prairie. Leaders, Arnie Clay and Theron Caldwell.

Mar 17th

Friday First Unitarian Society would like to announce (drum roll
9:00 pm please): the Saint Pat's Follies, with The Original
Hyperion Oriental Fox Trot Orchestra! Presented at
First Society on Friday, March 17th, Between 9 and 12
pm. A maximum of 200 tickets (\$3.75 each) are avail-
able at the Adult Programs Table (following Sunday
service) and from the church office at 900 University
Bay Drive, 233-9774.

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Jack and Mona Birong are proud grandparents. Lindy and Husband Bill Hinrichs have a daughter Michel(1)E, born on Saturday, February 11th. All are faring well.
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The Larger Prairie circle of those who are no longer in Madison need to hear that Roland Parrish, one of the founding members of Prairie, died of cancer in late January. He was seriously sick for only the last 10 days, having surmounted the disease for 16 years. We are very grateful to Avis for coming, as always, to the Sunday meetings. As we struggle to fill the gap in Prairie, discovering repeatedly how many behind-the-scenes responsibilities he carried out, we remember Roland - direct, open, self-effacing and joyful - and we are proud to have been included in his circle. -A friend.
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PRAIRIE CELEBRATES ITS 10TH BIRTHDAY!

PRAIRIE will celebrate it's 10th anniversary this April 30th at our regular Sunday morning service. We want it to be a memorable celebration. Please share with us (Program Committee) your special reminiscences of our past and memorabilia (snapshots, slides, newspaper articles, early issues of Prairie Fire) that might help us recall the past ten years of Prairie. This is your birthday party. What kind of cake would you like?

-Barbara Carson, Chair
Program Committee
221-1244

I believe we live in a nonperfect universe under an egalitarian nonperfect god (with a small "g") or conscience (with a small "c").

I believe we are all mad all the time - both insane and angry.

I believe we are all nice all the time - both concerned about and pleasant with each other.

Our problem as humans is to balance our madness and niceness.

One of god's problems is not to make it too hard for us to reach this balance and maybe even to help us reach it sometimes.

We cannot escape our history, our personal pasts, our habits, or our traditions but we needn't wallow in them or be a slave to them if we want to live well in the present and work well for a worthwhile vision of the future.

John Ohliger
February 1978

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A correction! The "poem" above is missing it's title! It should read as follows:

I BELIEVE (A TENTATIVE HYPOTHESIS)

Sorry folks!
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THE CHURCH AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY
An Address by David Lisman

Some here have contended we should seldom or never take any form of social action? Why? I believe there are several reasons.

In the first place debating social policy and becoming involved in social action may conflict with your basic purpose for coming to Prairie. Many of us come for fellowship or personal growth. It is a pleasant interlude in the rat-con't on the next page---

race, a moment when we can enjoy each other's company and ponder the meaning of life. Social action, we may feel, only brings more aggravation. We come here to get away from that, not invite more of it.

We must admit that while for some social action can have a genuine therapeutic effect and actually deepen personal relations. For others it may have an alienating effect. Moreover there is the danger of the social activist using group action to escape from dealing with his or her inner concerns, and in so doing treating others as objects rather than persons. As the Commission V says, in social action groups there is often a tension between obtaining an objective and respecting the feelings and the ideas of the people involved. Any error would best be on the side of over-stressing concern for the feelings of the persons involved to the exclusion of effective action, rather than the contrary. I believe we performed admirably in this respect during the recent issue. In any case, social policy procedures should take into account the very personal side of our fellowship.

In the second place, you may believe that the church should not engage in social action because despite our historical precedent, this is simply not the function of a church. The church should be a place for fellowship and personal growth alone.

It's interesting to note that in the Protestant movement at large there has been a split between those who believe the function of the church is to minister to one's soul and those who believe it should be to change the world. This conflict was most bitter during the period of history called the Social Gospel led by Walter Rauschenbush, a Baptist, and more recently during the civil rights movement and the Vietnam war. It is an issue that is far from settled in the traditional Protestant denominations, although at present it appears that for many of the denominations, including ours, concern for social justice has been replaced by preoccupation with the human potential movement stressing interiority over social action. It has been a time of retrenchment.

I can understand theologically why a Christian may wish to give priority to his soul over the concerns of the world. After all, he has an otherworldly philosophy. But few Unitarians have such justifications. We have in the last century primarily been Humanists. With the death of God and the disappearance of the three-storied universe we are left with this world on our hands and left with the realization that if we don't do anything about our world who will?

Whether we are humanists, naturalists, or deists or subscribe to some form of Transcendence, I believe we would all agree we are beings in the world who are influenced by the physical and social conditions of our existence. As even Sartre, the most radical defender of existential freedom, has said, it makes a difference whether we're born Chinese or French or American.

This, as you may recall, is where I have criticized the self-help movement. Concealed in the human potential movement at large is a secular pietism, namely, the assumption that if we become our true selves, society will be transformed as if by magic. This ignores the very real social obstacles to even becoming our "true selves", if there is such a thing. It may not even be possible to become such a self in a corporate capitalist society. So if anything has to be changed, it is the system as much as the self. Nurturing our inwardness privately or as a church, while important for inner strength, in itself will not solve those problems which are the source of much of our personal frustration. In the words of Commission V, "What shall it avail a church to strengthen itself internally, yet remain irrelevant to the irrereligious structure of the society in which it is based?" (111)

Actually, rather than threatening interiority, group social action may be the best means of connecting our inner and external concerns. In the wake of the events of the late sixties and early seventies, many of us feel rather powerless as individuals in a society of confusing and complex institutions. In our highly organized and impersonal society, group action may prove to be one of the essential ways, not only to survive as individuals, but to relieve individual suffering and to increase opportunities for individual growth and fulfillment.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR*Letters* LETTERS TO THE EDITOR*Letters*LETTERS TO THE ED.*

Jallings objects to HR6869

The ACLU predicts that enactment of this bill into law would triple the prison population, by shifting emphasis from rehabilitation and parole of prisoners to longer sentencing and by jailing citizens for labor union activity and political demonstrations.

It is not true, as advertised, that the new bill is cleansed of clauses violating civil liberties: A few blatant ones have been amended out, but hundreds remain.

"placing a person in fear of economic loss" would invite felony charges against striking members of the unions at Madison Newspapers Inc.

Actionless crimes could be used

to destroy legitimate labor organizations. Even individuals who have committed no act, not even walked a picket line, only attended a planning meeting or discussion of goals and methods, would be liable under these provisions.

For details on S1437/HR6869 and the more reasonable alternative HR2311 contact the Madison Coalition to Stop S1, P.O. Box 1027, Madison 53701 (phones 255-8171/257-0912/256-7438), or go to its meeting any Thursday in the Memorial Union at 7:30 pm.

Other organizations opposing the bill are as follows: the ACLU, the U-U Service Comm., the National Moratorium on Prison Comm., and the Womens International League for Peace & Freedom. (RESPONSES WELCOME-ED.)

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