

Money and power-tripping

by Billy Russo

I first became acquainted with the group process in August, 1972. I was awaiting trial on a trumped up assault charge in Belton County, Texas. I was there because I had inadvertently spoiled an ambush that U.S. authorities had arranged for a Maoist group operating near Fort Hood. To make a long story short, when the Maoists found out how my bumbling had saved them from a major defeat — 34 of them were arrested with me that hot summer day, but it could have been a lot worse for them — they felt sorry for me and bailed me out of jail. And since I was destitute, they took me into their collective in



The Roseburg Report

the town of Killeen.

In 1968, during the height of racial unrest, Congress took riot control away from the National Guard and gave it to the Regular Army. It was a time when our involvement in Viet Nam was still considered appropriate.

Quietly, the military set up this special riot control training center at isolated Fort Hood where combat hardened military police were being trained to set a national example the next time the people of Harlem or Watts rebelled against racism. The purpose of the collective was to draw attention to the training.

The focus of the collective was a small coffeehouse that they operated just outside the West gate of Fort Hood called the Oleo Strut (named after a helicopter component). They leafleted areas of the town GI's were known to frequent, attempting to convince the men who were involved in the special riot control training to lay down their guns. Needless to say, the Maoists were not real popular among the citizenry, who were for the most part retired military.

By 1972 the tide was changing. More and more people were opposing the war in Viet Nam and a few Congresspersons were beginning to understand the danger of putting riot control (which includes enforcement of martial law) in the hands of the Regular Army. Unlike Guardspersons who would be law enforcers in their own communities, the elite group of M.P.'s which would swoop down on a troubled area, an area in which they had no personal investment, and establish law and order. Many believed that the toll on human life and property would be very high.

There was no leader, as such, in the collective. All decisions were made at weekly meetings that often went on into the wee hours of the night. And the decisions that were reached at those meetings represented the consensus of the group. To me, a casual observer, it seemed like an enormous waste of time. It seemed that the decisions reached were not important enough to warrant the time and energy that went into them.

The members of the collective, like members of the homophile community, came from all walks of life. The common element that kept them focused was their strong com-

mitment to peace and freedom. They stuck it out and after almost four years of struggle, the 1968 decision was reversed and riot control was, once again, in the hands of the National Guard.

According to Harry Hay, founder of the homophile movement in America, the Mattachine Society was governed by the group process from 1950 until 1953. At that time a power struggle ensued where a handful of straight identified white men pulled a coup that resulted in the group process being replaced by a variation of Robert's Rules. This action, admittedly, streamlined the decision making process; however, it also imposed certain restrictions on the potential growth of the organization: it grew faster but within narrower parameters. Instead of meeting the needs of the diversified homophile community, Mattachine focused on the needs of its leaders, straight-identified white men.

Twenty years later, the late David Goodstein, past publisher of the *Advocate*, summed up this mentality in his editorials. According to him, the only people qualified to make the decisions are the ones with the money. The homophile movement should stand behind the people (straight-identified white men) with the power to make change.

And with the formation of groups like GRNL and NGTF, that's exactly what we've been doing. Through brilliant leaders, like Virginia Apuzzo, power backed groups can make great strides towards ending oppression, but all too often great leaders won't make the concessions necessary to get the powerful backing.

So, here we are, half way through the fourth decade of gay activism. And where are we? What have we accomplished? It's true that during the past 15 years the entire nation has evolved to the level California was at during the early Fifties. But California has shown little progress during that same period.

Since the onset of AIDS our development as a community has come to a halt. Like the immune system of the AIDS victim, our community's development backslides and deteriorates for a while, then it reaches a plateau and stagnates. And like AIDS researchers, little groups band together to compete with each other for the money and the power, playing one against the other.

In Memoriam

Gregory
Oliver
Bibby

1955-1985

CASUAL • INTIMATE • RELAXING


JONAH'S
THE Place for Seafood
and Steaks

Original owners since 1977

LUNCH • DINNER • SUNDAY BRUNCH
LOUNGE

7425 SW BARBUR BLVD
(at Terwilliger) **245-2188**

Family

Divorce
Custody
Support
Modification
Visitations
Gay Couple
Agreements &
Breakups

Business

Contracts
Licensing
Admin. Hearings
Partnerships
Corporations
Small Businesses

Traffic

Tickets
Suspensions
Accidents
Drunk Driving

Workers Comp.

Hearings
Appeals
Preparation

Other

Wills
Bankruptcy
Property
Medical
Consents

Ben Merrill
295-2456

408 SW Second, Suite 519
Downtown Portland 97204

BOOKS RECORDS CASSETTES

MUSIC FOR THE NEW AGE...

... At Artichoke Music. Come sample our wordly selection of records and tapes. All Windham Hill titles — still only \$8.00.

ARTICHOKE MUSIC
722 N.W. 21st Ave. • Portland, OR. 97209 • 248-0356
Open: 10:30 - 6:00 Mon. - Sat.

UNUSUAL FOLK INSTRUMENTS BOUGHT & SOLD

DULCIMERS • FLUTES • GUITARS • RECORDERS

Broadway
CAB
PROMPT
COURTEOUS
SAFE

227-1234

THE NUMBER YOU CAN'T FORGET

- Parcel Pick-up & Delivery
- Jumper Cable Service
- Wheelchair/Handicapped Transportation
- Station Wagons - Vans Available
- Sightseeing Tours by Taxi or 15-Person Luxury Van

50 YEARS METROPOLITAN PORTLAND'S OLDEST & LARGEST

MRCSS

Mens Resource Center Counseling Service

GAY THERAPISTS

- Professional Counseling
- Low Fees — Sliding Scale
- Individuals, Couples, Groups
- Hypnotherapy
- Evening & Weekend

235-3433

Problems. . . . We Can Work It Out!