

# Editorial

When Nick Owen in his article in the last issue (Personal Change through Encounter) wrote 'This type of research has scope for much learning and growth for all who take part, with no specific end or cut off point' he didn't reckon on a nameless sub-editor who put his/her scissors through his text at that point and really cut him off. What he wanted to go on to say (and due to an equally nameless sub-editor or gremlin had already said in the March issue as a surprising coda to Peter Well's article on Some Notes on Encounter and Social Change) was that he hoped his article would stimulate people to look at the IPM (Interpersonal Perception Method), his research having been an application of this. His results in fact shewed that considerable changes had occurred in relationships during the period due to one or more of the partners having taken part in an Encounter Group. If enough people would research their own experiences during Encounter Groups this could add to a valuable general statement about Encounter Groups, or a least about individual experiences and developments. Nick Owen went on to say:

'I would be glad to respond to any questions, queries or suggestion from people reading SELF AND SOCIETY. This statement has had to be very concise. I hope here are not too many gaps in the sense, that need to be filled out.'

Well the main gap wasn't his fault. We are very sorry.

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John Heron

## An open letter to Harvey Jackins

*John Heron was for over two years a principal figure in introducing re-evaluation counselling into the UK and Europe both as teacher of the method and reference person for the communities here. In February this year he resigned from the roles of teacher and reference person within the international re-evaluation counselling communities because of major disagreements with Harvey Jackins, the originator of re-evaluation counselling and the active leader of the international communities who monitors theory and policy and authorises teachers and other appointments. The following open letter sets out some of the primary issues involved in these disagreements.*

Dear Harvey

Re-evaluation counselling with its communities is in many ways a very beautiful construct in human affairs but it suffers from two quite fundamental internal contradictions. And it has always been my concern about these contradictions that has led to the profound rift between us.

They can be caricatured by two rather impolite catch-phrases (1) the client is in charge but Harvey is in charge of all the clients and (2) the client is liberating his occluded intelligence but on all basic matters of theory and policy it is Harvey's intelligence that counts.

Let me deal with the second of these first. Your article in the recent (January 1974) issue of *Present Time* entitled 'Combating Distortions of Theory and Policy' argues that any significant modification of RC theory at the present time is unnecessary and will simply consist of patterned revisionism, the rationalisation of unresolved distress. I think this is a terrible mistake and is imposing on your communities a vicious self-fulfilling circle.

The circle works in at least three ways. Firstly, by creating a very strong climate in your communities which clearly separates personal growth on the one hand from fundamental conceptual research and open enquiry about basics on the other, you create a movement where people are conditioned to experience their own growth in total dissociation from their personal theoretical development. Once people are set on this path, they have an increasing vested interest in confirming its validity in order to wall off the discomfort of the disaffected and dissociated growing point of the spirit. So they confirm that more growth in terms of existing theory is what is necessary, not revision of theory, and castigate any revision as simply avoiding application of existing theory. But this dynamic has also a proselytising momentum, for the more people who can lovingly support each other's growth in terms of theoretical closure the greater the tide of fellow feeling that can stave off the hidden discomfort. Theoretical closure and proselytisation have always gone hand in hand.

Secondly, you are imposing a subtle but significant invalidation upon your members by telling them that they are not yet intelligent enough to modify or revise your theory. This invalidation puts a stranglehold of stress on theoretical development within the RC communities. If RC people collude with this invalidation they won't for the time being notice the stress it causes in them. But if they do try to think radically about RC theory and try to express their thought within the RC communities, then the stress of this stranglehold may show in what they say. If so, then they are condemned as being in the grip of distress patterns, their thinking is therefore declared invalid, the legitimacy of the stranglehold is apparently confirmed and so the vicious circle rolls on.

Thirdly, you have to insist - as you have done all along - on the submission to you of all articles on RC prior to publication so that you can review and 'correct' them. Inevitably you simply cannot cope with the mass of

material that comes your way for comment and so you are driven for purely practical reasons to declare a moratorium on articles on RC theory (which is precisely what you ask for in your article in the recent *Present Time*). The sheer impracticality of one-man theoretical censorship leads to your attempted suppression or discouragement of written theoretical output within the communities.

This total impasse and extreme closure about theory which the RC communities have now reached is precisely the time at which the human spirit will press out in other more healthily independent directions. Hence we may now expect to see a variety of autonomous peer counselling associations.

Human beings, I believe, have a profound and valid need to symbolise their experience in all kinds of ways including theoretical constructs. In a movement that has a one-point programme of liberating the occluded intelligence of the human being, one sign of the maturity of the emergent intelligence will be a systematic review of the theoretical principles in terms of which it has been liberated. This process should be encouraged, not discouraged.

The other contradiction - 'The client is in charge but Harvey is in charge of all the clients' - is of course closely interrelated with the one I have just written about. There is a fundamental contradiction and disparity between the peer principle as embodied in the co-counselling relationship and the organisational policies you practice. Your policy is basically one of firm central control to uphold policies which you judge to be important. You practice consultation in part, but it becomes insufficient, inappropriate or totally nonexistent when it seems to you that your policies are being threatened. Hence there is a good deal of ostensibly or apparent autonomy in the various localities and areas of the RC communities, but that it is apparent rather than real becomes evident when things no longer seem to be going in ways that you favour.

'The client' you write 'is in charge of the process of counselling . . . The counsellor is in a helping position, not in an authoritative position' (point 14 in 'The Distinctive Characteristics of Re-evaluation Counseling'). Precisely. This is a very fine model of the co-counselling relationship: the client is self-directing and the counsellor has influence but not power. If clients can be self-directing in the counselling process, then communities of clients can be self-directing in their organisational procedures. I think you make a fundamental mistake in directly exercising power over your communities. The rich, warm, open and benevolent caring in the communities has the effect of obscuring the realities of the power

structure, just as it has the effect of walling off the discomforts of theoretical closure.

The policy I would recommend for someone initiating a peer movement is that he exerts influence but exercises zero power; that he is, so to speak, an organisational counsellor to the communities of clients and that the communities of clients are self-directing in determining their organisational procedures, accreditation of teachers, appointments, publicity and publication and in the responsible development of autonomous theoretical perspectives.

Meanwhile in default of such developments within the re-evaluation counselling communities, many of us will be seeing to their realisation elsewhere. Hopefully, we can all link up forces at a future date when there is a successful resolution of these fundamental differences of principle.

Yours sincerely

John Heron

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**Vivian Milroy**

**Interview with**

**Nadine Scott**

This is my work, this is the very essence of my work - to enable people to allow themselves to self-regulate and that may possibly mean to the external world inconsideration, because I am not conscious of time. I'll run late in my session; you can be working with someone for 50 minutes and in the last 5 minutes a thousand years of feeling come through. You lose sense of time at that point. The inevitability is that