

Brian Morris Bowdler

Somewhere a New Community Idea

This particular somewhere is Colne, Lancashire, not a town of any great outstanding merit or beauty, but the 'base' for a recently developed organization known as the 'Somewhere Community Project'.

'Somewhere' was founded in mid-1973 by the Chair Men of 'People Not Psychiatry' and the 'Homeless Young Persons' Organization' and has very diverse aims. The general philosophy is based on the premise that society, as we know it, is the cause of many problems for it's members - lack of identity, lack of purpose, etcetera, not to mention 'nervous' troubles and deep destructive behaviour. The aim of 'Somewhere' is to provide an alternative type of community to that already in existence - ultimately a completely self-sufficient community - within which people would lead the type of existence they desire, be in complete harmony with their fellows, cater for all their own needs, and generally lead an enlightened, loving, care-free life where peace, love, co-operation and understanding reign supreme. In effect the Utopia that so many throughout the ages have dreamt of, but which, unfortunately, has proved difficult to attain. It may well be impossible to achieve such a society, but, that is not to deny that it is worth striving for.

Regrettably, although their ideals and aims are commendable, a cynical person might look askance at the diversity of their aims which are so wide-ranging and require tremendous manpower and resources-financial and otherwise.

Apart from the ultimate 'alternative' society they are aiming for, they have plans to engage in extensive community, welfare and environmental projects. Two important aims of the group are to provide housing assistance for the needy within the Colne area, and a hostel for the homeless young - and facilities for Colne children to be able to visit London.

Apparently Colne, a former 'cotton' town with a population at one time of about 40,000, has declined along with the cotton industry. The population is now around the 18,000 mark. Many homes are now derelict and neglected, with the likelihood of demolition if neglect continues. (It is claimed that sheep from the Pennines actually wander around these derelict areas, virtually in the heart of the town!) 'Somewhere' with the (hoped for) approval of Pendle District Council, wish to purchase a fair number of these buildings and restore them to habitable conditions; these will then provide homes for those in need and also for 'staff' drafted into the area.

It is also intended to provide an arts and handicraft centre in Colne, possibly in a derelict mill, in which 'Somewhere People' and interested locals could produce goods both for self-consumption and sale. It is hoped to attract retired craftsmen, to assist and supervise these tasks, possibly to re-institute local crafts such as making traditional Lancashire clogs. A farm is also planned for the future use of the community. Plans are also in hand to engage in work over the whole district clearing derelict sites, planting

flowers, removing 'eyesores', and generally improving the environment so that the town is in harmony with the natural beauty of the Pennines. Other envisaged tasks include adventure playgrounds, day nurseries and play schools for the benefit of local children (and parents!). Helping the elderly/infirm/housebound to fulfil the chores they cannot manage unaided. An Arts Group for all interested people, with educational aims, presumably to counteract 'philistine' tendencies existing amongst the working class! An advice centre, open to all (I wonder how C.A.B. would feel?). It is planned to have a 24 hour office service to handle all these operations.

Those, briefly and basically are the paths that 'Somewhere' plan to follow. Providing services for the whole community in as many diverse fields as the Governmental Agencies. I cannot but wonder whether, as the Government does, they, too, will require a large 'army' of administrators and officials.

Memberships of 'Somewhere' will be available to all interested parties. The running and organization will be overseen by an elected Management Committee. Each 'unit' of the group will be run by people qualified and/or experienced in the appropriate specialization. Full co-operation will be maintained with all existing organizations and charities, especially those concerned with education, therapeutic support and welfare. Dialogue is also maintained with local residents' associations.

Apart from all that, one person concerned still hopes to have time to run an Encounter Group! Phew! I wish them well. I really do. And if anyone is interested you can reach them at 14 Patten Street, Colne, Lancashire.