

Yvonne Craig

## Potential for the People

"I had a dream. . . .", the famous phrase of Martin Luther King, prefaced a piece I did recently for *Self and Society* describing our increasing need for sanctuaries which would help us find harmony, health and hope within the constraints of our local environment, whose facilities would be available to the poor or most deprived. Amidst the interest that it raised were two complementary contributions of great value. The first referred to a pioneering further education venture serving a multiracial area where a primary objective of its college course in hairdressing and beauty culture, etc. is to attract and train students to go out and work in their locally socially depressed ghettos and raise the consciousness of homebound or hard-labouring women (especially) so that they can enjoy similiar encouragement to that of the bourgeois or privileged few. It is not that just "black is beautiful" but that we *all* can become beautiful.

The second parallel pioneering enterprise in helping the people, rather than the elite, to develop their potential, is centred upon health especially, and, like many new ventures, was born of the dream of a person, herself a pioneer. Bee Klug is remarkable, yet archetypal. She went out to work at 14 when her father suffered during the years of unemployment, particularly grieving that his own passion for people's education, and that of his daughters had been frustrated by lack of resources. After a life of continuous hard work, during which she also raised four children, she was operated on for a hiatus hernia, with a subsequent pyloroplasty, having undergone ten operations in all. She weakened, her doctors could give no further help, and, in her words, "there was no alternative but to seek alternatives". These came from the natural therapies, and gradually, she grew not only stronger, but found that her long-impaired potential had become developed and ready for release. Wise enough not to seek an ego-trip extravaganza in the enticing company of food freaks or fringe fanciers, she committed herself, out of gratitude for her own restoration and regeneration, to make similar opportunities as widely available as possible to all who sought them.

She has endeavoured to begin the building of a model community enterprise where, through the partnership of volunteers and professional workers, the natural therapies can be considered, discussed and tried, as near as possible to the economic basis of a national health service. The underlying philosophy of her Healthy Living Foundation (a charity) is that of prevention, and she has chosen to open the first centre in the poor part of town, where members run every kind of group from cookery and meditation to health education and treatment. This is provided by professional workers, homeopathic doctors, one Dr. M. Harling, a co-founder with Bee Klug, physiotherapists, an osteopath, naturopath, aromatherapist, dietician, chiroprapist, acupuncturist, etc., with the hope that an allopathic doctor may sometime join them: Bee Klug is always

concerned to heal the breach between orthodox and alternative approaches to health, even to the extent of insisting that the Centre's workers should themselves not only reflect "capability and compatability" but mirror the harmony and balance which healthy minds and bodies need. Therefore she works consistently and sensitively to attract professional workers who have multidisciplinary spirit, and who forebear to impose their own particular preferences on the people. In a sense, it is as if she is trying to offer the public an open marketplace where they can use self-determination in finding out what is best for them.

She has persuaded her professional staff to give their part-time services to the Centre voluntarily, so that the nominal sum members pay for treatment (a fraction of commercial prices) feeds back into financing the Centre. In return, the professionals' work is publicized and their private work increases. In our present state of neo-capitalist society, and in the advancing era of automation when opportunities for widely diversified voluntary enterprises will increase substantially, may not this type of model be the most viable in trying to spread "the sanctuary" idea non-commercially (see my above-mentioned article on *A Sanctuary, Vol VII No. 1 Self and Society*), and indeed, any kind of Health Centre or Therapeutic Centre which each local community may need?

As I made plain in that article, I do not feel it to be ethically right for me either to advertise or advocate specific approaches or treatments, but merely to communicate the fact that they exist, and to discuss their significance for the movement for human potential: readers can seek out details themselves from the address given below. However, I did feel that it was appropriate to sample personally one of the services they offer in order that I could offer a more informed opinion on its *quality*. So I accepted an invitation to go to a community education evening, held in a local Quaker Hall, where a panel of therapists answered a continuous stream of questions, none of which, I was interested to note, came from faddists, but from a very ordinary mixed crowd of young and old and middling people, who filled the place. They later happily socialized amongst bookstalls and wholefood refreshments, tasting samples of health cookery, trying cruelty-free cosmetics, rather like being at an Ideal Health Exhibition. The next day I was invited to the Centre itself, an intimate friendly building, with friezes of flowers painted round its big windows, white-coated clinicians mingling with members coming in and out, and with plants and flowers everywhere.

As I adore massage, I immediately opted for some aromatherapy, especially as I wished to compare it with that which I had previously received on a wickedly expensive commercial basis. It was superb - for mind as well as body! For all the extensive knowledge and experience of the aromatherapist Jean Norton, was most generously and openly *shared* with me. Unlike the commercial situation, she had all her many varied bottles of herbal oils on display, together with a chart of the body, and a chart about the oils of herbs and their use (books about which are also available in the Centre's library). She also mixes oils herself for the *individual needs* of members, who can buy them for their

own use at less than £1 per bottle - about a tenth of the price shops ask. She did what I would call a preliminary diagnostic massage survey of my body, noting a bone displacement and another body weakness, for which she then selected appropriate oils: for she does not just smear one oil over the whole body, but uses several selectively for different areas, according to need. It made me realize the distance between the professional and amateur approach and the difference between the dedicated *vocational* service and that of mere commercialism. She gave me fascinating details about the properties of the oils, and commonsense help with using them myself, pointing out the dangers and limitations of self-help which is not based on the patient acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills. Naturally, because of my own counselling interests, I asked Jean how far this intimate bodywork provided an atmosphere in which people discussed intimate emotional problems with her. She said that this was very often the case, and that she would always refer people to the Marriage Guidance Council or any other acceptable agency. She, like the other professional workers at the discussion evening, stressed that health came from the integration of body, mind and spirit, and that each person had to be helped to find their own unique way towards this. So the principle of *referral* to any agency which might be thought best able to help inquirers was one of the prime consideration.

My main constructive criticism centres from the way in which a question about depression was answered. Whilst, quite rightly, all the health therapists maintained that by seeking to establish good patterns of nutrition, sleep, and bodily function, depression could be minimized, I felt there was insufficient recognition given to the fact that major causes of depression like bereavement, marital problems, job redundancy, etc. may have to be dealt with also by *counselling*, and that thus the widest range of options in the therapeutic approach should also include referrals for this, possibly to local Counselling Centres which are being started by C.A.Bs and Councils of Social Service with support by Local Authorities. Such a liaison between such complementary concerns might be difficult, but it would be in the interests of general physical and emotional goodhealth.

Lastly, I liked the realistic way in which the Centre avoids "cure-all" messianism: it is firmly focussed on enabling people to maximize their natural potential "to change what can be changed," to accept that which cannot be changed" and to live life fully, as Bee Klug herself is now doing. The Centre is managed by a knowledgeable enthusiastic supporter of the Foundation and its aims, Ernest Winterbottom.

*Further details can be obtained from Wessex Healthy Living Foundation, 72 Belle Vue Road, Southbourne, Bournemouth BH6 3DX (0202-422087) if a stamped and addressed envelope is sent.*

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