

The writers of this are very concerned with what they perceive as a sinister fuzzy-mindedness on the part of whole factions of the staff as to what our role in this society and the south has got to be. We think that the only useful and creative function that we can have is to mobilize and educate people so that they can use their organized power to change the basic ills in the society. Our orientation must always be towards eliminating causes rather than trying to make their effects more bearable for a few. This is what makes us different from a goddamn social welfare agency or the Salvation Army.

Let us be more specific: We exist as a group because this society functions in such a way as to cripple, maim, oppress and dehumanize huge blocks of human beings, especially negroes. These deprived and stifled and hopeless people exist in such numbers that we cannot hope to cradle each one in our healing arms and personally wipe away the tears, soothe the troubled heart, and heal the wounds inflicted by generations of oppression and privation. All we can hope to do is to change the structures, institutions, and social dynamics of the total political body that the society itself heals these wounds and stops inflicting more. This means radical political and economic change.

Apparently some of the good sisters and brothers are of a different persuasion. They think that our business is the spreading of "the redemptive warmth of personal confrontation," "emotional enrichment" "compassionate and sympathetic personal relationship" and other varieties of mouth to mouth resesitation derived from the vocabulary of group therapy and progressive liberal witch doctors. But we aint got enough redemptive compassion and cultural enrichment to go round. And as moving and personally rewarding as it may be, lavishing all of this well-meaning good-will on two or three kids for four or six weeks, is not any more socially honest than when one white philanthropist selects one Negro kid to educate. Or for that matter, when the Salvation Army has a free Christman dinner for 100 needy families. What about the other 10,000 families and the 364 other days in the year?

Allright -- let us love everybody -- but does it have to be so much of a spectacle? When the bleeding hearts and acute social consciences of the staff of one, very important coordinating office runs so deep that the staff cannot bear to hurt the delicate sensitivities of a group of local youths who are disrupting the functioning of that office because "the youths are victims of society with legitimate hostility" then thats a crock of crap.

This kind of misplaced "sensitivity" and middleclass paternalism is not only dangerous, placing as it does the impulse of Staff towards social reclamation above the safety of the rest of the staff and the very important job (which has nothing to do with rehabilitation) that that office has to do, but is implicitly insulting. It suggests that we have been 'prived so long that we are not capable of observing simple, necessary rules of discipline and must be excused for anything we do.

Respect, confidence and affection are qualities that develop normally between people working together and reacting to each other as human beings. Nothing so unusual about this as every normal person knows. Why the ---- they should be elevated to the level of the miraculous, into the rare and ~~and~~ totally overwhelming sacred cows as though SNCC suddenly discovered them and holds the monopoly on the franchise bewilders and sickens us?

If you been poor you know damned well there aint no nobility in that condition and very little beauty in oppression. So let us stop romanticizing them and get to the real work once again. Because, we can all go back north and find more than enough hurting children and stifled people to cradle to our messianic and redemptive bosoms if thats the way we "make contact" and get our kicks. But thats like putting band-aids on a leaking roof when the whole wretched house needs to be torn down and rebuilt.

So can we arrive at consensus? Are we running around dispensing our own brand of sweetness, light and compassion as our main function, or are we doing something a wee bit different?

"Even the hatred of squalor  
Makes the brow grow stern  
Even the anger against injustice  
Makes the voice grow harsh  
And we who sought to lay the foundations of  
Human kindness  
Could not ourselves be kind.