

NEWS LETTER



APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

LETTER

Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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For "Unadoptables"

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has come in for a lot of criticism in its 12 years or so of life. Foes on the left attack it because, they say, it supports rather than opposes the traditional powers that be (being made up of governors and Federal appointees, it would be unlikely to do otherwise, one would think). Humanist critics assail it for its devotion to highways and other material concerns instead of people. And so on. And many citizens, understandably, just wonder what it does with all those tax dollars.

It is not our purpose here to settle all these matters in three paragraphs. We merely wish to register our surprise (pleased, we think) on learning of something called Project Adopt, which was dreamed up by the staff of the South Carolina Department of Social Services in Greenville and is being launched with the aid of \$74,241 from ARC. What the program will do is simply to help handicapped children -- the ones who used to be regarded as "unadoptable" -- into foster homes through the training of staff and volunteers to work with them. Nothing radical, nothing very dramatic. But, fortunately, every deed does not have to be heroic or promise great changes 25 years away or be embodied in stone and metal.

Unfortunately, however, we're still in the age of the demonstration project. The program is tiny, a bare beginning. It will matter greatly to the 25 kids who are directly affected by it, of course -- and maybe news of it will get around. We hope so.

The Magazine Whirl

New Poetry Quarterly

George Ellison, who runs a rare-book shop in Bryson City, N.C., and is working on a biography of Horace Kephart, has begun publishing a quarterly, *Unaka Range* (named for mountains in western North Carolina). He includes poems from the region, reviews and some pithy comments. It is free -- "my gift," as George puts it. The address is *Unaka Range*, Route 1 -- Box 58A, Bryson City, N.C. 28713.

Appalachian Journal

The recently distributed Spring-Summer issue of the *Appalachian Journal* (Vol. 4, Numbers 3, 4) contains

Uncle Dick Is Back



Richard Chase is back from California and available for school programs. Chase is the collector of *The Jack Tales*, *Grandfather Tales*, *American Folk Tales and Songs* and other works. He is a master tale-teller, folklorist, leader of singing games and perpetrator of other foolishness. He can be reached at Route 4, Box 308-A, Hendersonville, N.C. 28739.

an announcement that should interest students of Appalachia in general and, certainly, of Cratis Williams in particular. In place of the regular Summer issue, the *Journal* is publishing a special volume called *An Appalachian Symposium: Essays Written in Honor of Cratis D. Williams*. The collection includes 19 essays that were presented in 1976 at the Appalachian State University symposium honoring the distinguished Appalachian scholar. If you were a subscriber to the *Journal* as of March 1, 1977, you will receive a paperback copy without lifting a finger. If you're not so fortunate, however, you can order the book (\$6 paper; \$10 cloth) from the *Journal* at Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C.

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P. F. Ayer – After Ten Years

Just 10 years ago (December 23, 1967), an unforgettable person died at his home in Berea, P. F. Ayer -- Perley, as he was always called -- was a self-made sociologist, a pioneer and inspirer of regional Appalachian action, a holder of many honors. He was executive director of the Council of the Southern Mountains and professor of sociology at Berea College. Many of you -- perhaps most of you -- will remember him well. And what you will remember best is a presence and a voice: Perley was the most memorable of speakers. Following are some selections from talks he made before various groups, many of them made up of teachers -- Perley's particular specialty and target. Although cold type can barely suggest the quality of living speech, these excerpts are offered as a reminder of what we used to hear in a uniquely vivid voice.

Every time some new acquaintance discovers that I am a Professor at Berea College they ask, "What do you teach?" My reply is, "I don't know. I only know what I intend to teach, but much of what I find in my students' notebooks bears no relationship to what I thought I was communicating."

One point I endeavor to teach is that we should wake up every day of our lives seriously asking ourselves, "Is what I was convinced was the truth yesterday really so today?" In the Appalachian South, where I have lived for thirty years, as well as in New England, where I was born and grew up, it is considered a sacrilege to question what the home, the church, the school, and society has always and ever more considered the truth. But I feel a questioning attitude is essential when I remember that much of what I learned as an undergraduate and graduate particularly in the physical sciences, but in the social cliches as well, has since been proved totally wrong.

There are no unreasonable people. There are only those whose reasons I do not understand or whose reasons do not relate positively to mine. What any person does at any moment is, for him, the only thing he can do as a result of his experience, his immediate and long-term purposes, and even his digestion and body chemistry at that moment. To say a man is unreasonable is to say that I think that if I were in his shoes I wouldn't have behaved as he did. Each of us is reasonable within his own lights.

We must remember that God didn't just put us in the world to get a diploma so we can get a job, or so that we can do something that doesn't need to be done any more anyway.

What is man going to do for jobs after machines have taken over? Then the motivation we have assumed and talked about will no longer be sufficient. This talk about the need for education for future employment doesn't

fool kids now. The traditional jobs have little to do with the fulfillment of mankind. And the only reason we can point to good jobs for graduates is because so many of the kids don't listen and then take themselves out of the race by not graduating.

But people may be dropouts at any age. Man is constrained to be and to do. He wonders if Adam was created lying down or standing up. Man has the propensity for action and kids in school do likewise. To stop further aspiration is dishonorable at any age or at any point. We should ask ourselves when we dropped out.

We must re-examine our techniques and our motivations in education. We adults are using goals that we figure would have appealed to us in our youth but they don't fit today's kids' minds. We must bring the reason for being in school close to the average school day. The reason to the boy or girl must be deeply personal and moving. The kids who don't stay in school go elsewhere to look for this personal, meaningful thing.

AYER'S LAWS

No. 1 *"Mankind does not progress and develop at the rate -- or to the extent -- possible, or at the rate and to the extent that its best educated and competent leadership could lead, or believes it is leading. In the last analysis, mankind's development is controlled by the rate at which the great mass -- even the least able one -- can and does follow."*

No. 2 *"If something needs to be done, and if, in the end, it is not done, then you and I are among those who did not do it."*

No. 3 (still tentative) *"If anything -- an act, an achievement, a situation -- contributes to the good of all, it is right -- that is, progressing in the right direction. If it is detrimental to any -- even to one person -- it is less than perfect, and to that extent therefore wrong."*

An Essential of a Good Teacher:

An approach to life which I can best describe as a genuine and overtly expressed joy in being alive. As I see educators -- individually and en masse -- I am unable to understand how they manage to teach, lead, and inspire with such a typical outer facade of apathy, disappointment, defeat, pessimism, and unhappiness. I once heard a group of teachers express surprise that not any of the young people in their school system wished to be school teachers when they grew up. It occurred to me as I looked at this group that it was *not* surprising that students did not wish to be school teachers when they grew up, but it *was* surprising that they wished to grow up at all with this sort of example as an inducement.

Competition -- a win or lose contest -- dominates the home, the school, the economy, the local community and society in general so thoroughly that everyone lives in a win or lose situation. Under these circumstances, a

major portion of our people will grow into adulthood as habitual losers. I have spoken earlier of the absolute necessity of basic reorientation of our values and commitments. In support of this statement I submit that it is no accident that as we seek to eliminate poverty, we are at the same time involved in strikes demanding still more money for those segments of the population which already have more, compared to those who don't have enough. The practical, All-American value of the competitive instinct has been overrated while its inescapable, negative contribution has been misunderstood or overlooked entirely. In our "get as much as I can for myself system" half the participants must lose if half are to win.

Look at it this way: with production and power and control in our technological world concentrated in the hands of fewer individuals the number of great winners automatically becomes fewer and the number of great losers, in terms of significant partnership in the whole enterprise, can increase astronomically. The only sound, long-term solution, therefore, is an intellectual and spiritual repudiation of our primitive dog-eat-dog philosophy by which half the dogs must be eaten. This should be coupled with a new commitment to the development of the intellectual, social and spiritual potential of each person to the end that life has meaning beyond mere physical existence for all people.

All selections from *Seeking a People Partnership*, © 1969 The Council of the Southern Mountains, Inc.



Traditional, Traditional



Once again (October 27-30) the Berea College Appalachian Center has presented its annual Celebration of Traditional Music, featuring the "strictly old-time" article. Shown on this page are a few of those who came to make music in what, we may say in all modesty, has become recognized as a major Appalachian musical event. Clockwise from above are Cas Wallin, Sheila Rice, Doc Hopkins and Jean Ritchie.



28608. You probably ought to move pretty fast: only 500 copies are being offered, and sales may be brisk.

Appalachian Heritage

While on the subject of special issues and such, we want to point out the Summer 1977 number of *Appalachian Heritage*, the quarterly published at Alice Lloyd College, Pippa Passes, Ky. This special issue is dedicated to Emily Ann Smith, who taught English at Berea College from 1930 to 1972, and is entirely written by former students of hers. Among the features is a symposium called "Staying and Leaving," in which Betty Payne James, Charles Counts, Jim Miller and Loyal Jones talk about home, staying there and whether you can come home again when you leave.

One-Man Show

We can't leave the realm of magazines without taking notice of an unusual quarterly of writing (this somehow seems a more accurate description than "literary quarterly," perhaps because the issues we read were absolutely crammed with poems, with nary a critical essay) called *Wind*. As nearly as we can see, it is editorially a one-man show, the one man being Quentin R. Howard, about whom we can tell you nothing further except that his address is RFD Route 1, Box 810, Pikeville, Ky., 41501. *Wind* welcomes short essays, book reviews and one-act plays as well as poetry, and it certainly seems to be free of parochialism; the voices come in all accents and tones.

EYE on Publications

Act of Vengeance, by Trevor Armbrister (Saturday Review Press-Dutton). An account of the famous Yablonski murders of December 31, 1969, written by a veteran journalist. The book was published in 1975; as for the "mastermind" of the crime, former UMW President Tony Boyle, he and his lawyers are still in the news in 1977. It was Boyle who said after the crime, "Why should anyone want to kill Yablonski, his wife and daughter?" A pithier, remarkably understated quote comes from another member of the conspiracy, Paul Gilly: "After it was over, I knew it was the worst mistake I'd ever made in my life."

The Molly Maguires and the Detectives, by Allan Pinkerton (Dover). A 1973 republication of what Philadelphia lawyer John M. Elliott calls in the introduction "a seminal historical document of vast importance" -- the account (1877) by the head of the Pinkerton detective

agency of the crushing of "labor's first efforts to organize America's largest mass industry -- coal." Elliott also describes the book as "a sales piece for Pinkerton's strikebreaking talents." Whatever one may think of Allan Pinkerton or the Molly Maguires, the book is a graphic account of the undercover work of one James McParlan, a Pinkerton agent who penetrated the highly secret Molly organization. Sherlock Holmes buffs may appreciate being reminded that this whole adventure served as the basis for the novel *The Valley of Fear*.

The Federal Government in Appalachia, by James Branscome (Field Foundation). TVA, the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Office of Economic Opportunity are among the agencies discussed in this give-away booklet written by an Appalachian native who spent two years as an Appalachian Commission staff member. He is not enamored of any of these governmental interventions.

The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture, by Wendell Berry (Sierra Club Books). The publishers enthusiastically describe Berry as "our contemporary Isaiah," and they may have a point. In this new book the Kentucky writer-ecofarmer carefully examines the harm that the mechanization of farming is doing to American life, but there's more to it than this description might suggest. The book really is about culture as well as (and in relation to) agriculture. A sample: "The basic cause of the energy crisis is not scarcity: it is moral ignorance and weakness of character. We don't know *how* to use energy, or what to use it *for*." Another: "Out of [our] contempt for work arose the idea of a nigger: at first some person, and later some thing, to be used to relieve us of the burden of work. If we began by making niggers of people, we have ended by making a nigger of the world." In case you have for some reason become complacent about technology, energy and related matters, this Isaian message will bring you back to the earth Berry worries about.

Dialect Clash in America: Issues and Answers, by Paul D. Brandes and Jeutonne Brewer (Scarecrow Press). The authors, who teach at the University of North Carolina, are concerned with the relationship of dialects and standard English in teaching, Appalachian being one of the dialects. Six dialects are taken up.

Wry Wine, by John Foster West (John F. Blair, Publisher). A book of poems by the author of the novels *Time Was* and *Appalachian Dawn*. A native of Appalachian North Carolina, West also supplied the prose-poem text that accompanies Bruce Roberts's photographs in *This Proud Land*. Speaking of *Wry Wine*, critic Guy Owen says that "it is refreshing to read poems that are accessible and deeply felt, and not willed into being or written as an academic exercise." Now that's a carrot that ought to entice any poetry lover.

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