

THE SIT-IN AT AEL: A FEW DAYS AFTER

BY NANCY HOLLAND

You ask, predictably, my opinion and impression of the sit-in. I have not been very much involved with the April 3 Movement, but just because I am neither very political nor very involved, perhaps I can give you a unique and even (you should pardon the expression) philosophical point of view on the subject.

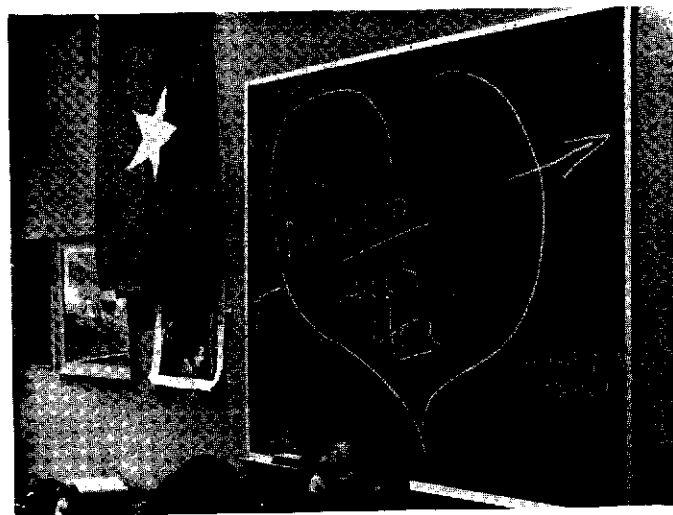
To begin with, we must learn to accept the fact that academic freedom is one of the great liberal myths. Just as the prototypical university in 12th century Paris had a doctrine of academic freedom, but in fact subjected its "researcher" to the limitations of the contemporary theological orthodoxy, so the modern university subjects its academics to the cultural values of the day. Not simply that extralegal research (i.e. on LSD or for the Cuban government) is outlawed, but that funds are almost always supplied by outside foundations or the D.O.D., so that research is in large part de facto limited to that which serves, or might serve, the purposes of its sponsors. The University does not approve a project on its humanitarian merits, or seek out funds for worthy projects, but accepts those projects which are least offensive and will bring in the most money, and so keeps its "free" thinkers well within the confines of contemporary academic orthodoxy. So that by sitting-in we were neither asserting nor denying "academic freedom", but only asking that we be allowed to replace the current standards of what constitutes acceptable research projects with our own.

So we say, "You have no academic freedom to help blow up Vietnamese children." This is the great moral issue. But this is also why I can't get very involved--I am coming to hate liberal rhetoric worse than any other kind of propaganda. So they're doing biological and chemical warfare research at Stanford or at SRI. Of course they are. That's what universities and research centers are for in our society--to train technicians and do whatever basic research the society at large wants done. Big deal! They also train soldiers at Stanford and pay less than minimum wage to the kitchen help and refuse to build adequate housing and keep on building more science labs--they do all sorts of horrible things and we stay here and take it. God only knows why we stay, but we do and we don't have much right to make loud liberal noises at war research while carrying a 2-S, living off our parents, and leading totally non-productive lives. Whatever goes on, we're right up to our chins in it.

So why do I support the Movement? Because you have to believe in a way and my way is education. You educate by how you live, by how you think, by contradicting and exposing the old way for what it is at every opportunity. You educate by showing people their real predicament. So the point, for me at least, is much less to end "immoral" war research and much more to show how little effect our opinions, our morality, and, above all, our numbers have on the decision-making process around here. People must learn to see the arbitrary and illegitimate power the Trustees and their functionaries hold over our lives. It is much more than a few summary suspen-

sions or Joel Smith not letting them hire Vic or Pitzer vetoing the emergency housing plans; it is the whole authoritarian structure and logic of the place. My father (of all people) says Franco's Spain and the modern university are the last remaining vestiges of feudalism. Remember "The Student as Nigger"?

Of course, it goes far beyond the University. But you show people how Hewlett, Ducommun, et al., run the University, and it becomes slowly obvious to even the most adamant liberal that the whole society is being engineered in the same way by these same people and others like them to further their own purposes. They control the educational Establishment, all major industry (and most minor ones), a large part of the government (e.g. Packard), and the majority of men's minds. This is where the going gets tough. You learn that the very fact of your presence in a university, a job, or a political party furthers their purposes--regardless of what you want or intend. This is the great international capitalist conspiracy. No job, no program, no academic field so esoteric, so liberal, so harmless, but what it is at heart counterrevolutionary. Their liberal propaganda is so pervasive, they even believe it themselves. So you say it's inevitable and become apathetic, or you buy off your conscience with liberal rhetoric, or you drop out and make your life a protest--but you can spend a lot of time in jail that way.



That's one reason why the AEL was "de-liberated" (sic) at such a bad time. That's also why the sit-in remained at best a liberal action and not a radical one. As Prof. Rhineland said, "Bourgeois revolutions tend to promote bourgeois values." The main value promoted here was not to get into trouble. Tactically, the withdrawal from the AEL was the second worst thing that we could have done. The worst, of course, would have been to try and take another building with our limited forces. As it was, we were content with what we had and so avoided an unnecessary confrontation. But then discretion went too far and we allowed ourselves to be

(see p.40)

From p.21

little something of my Self to these people I am coming to recognize as my brothers and sisters, the best and bravest people I have ever known--I am Joining...

VIII And I sleep like a rock till daylight breaks across the horizon of my eyelids, and there, staring back at me, is my watch, and it says exactly 8 o'clock, and the very first thing that spins off my mind as it creaks into motion is Right On!--and then I know for sure that something has happened...

* * * * *

Well, enough. Looking back at the private mutterings I've just now rendered up unto posterity, I find that one part of me--perhaps the very part that came alive during the AEL occupation--is more than a little embarrassed both by the self-congratulatory tone and by the essentially sentimental nature of the way I was responding to the situation. I was in fact being mawkish and maudlin, I admit it; and it's also plain to see that my Individualism, that cunning ogre I imagined I'd forever banished from my presence, has had me by the shorthairs all the time. And to make matters even worse, today I happened to run into my young bearded friend Steve, and he was telling me rather glumly about how he'd recently been expounding his own semi-mystical "ravings" (Steve's word, as I recall) to a Red Guard buddy of his, and the Red Guard listened politely for a while and then said, very gently, "Look, Steve, I don't want to bring you down too hard or anything, but you know what you are? You're a metaphysical maniac." Right on, probably. I expect he's got us cold; maybe we're even unwitting counter-revolutionaries, me and Steve. Cosmic crazies, enlightenment freaks, seekers after cosmic fusion with humanity in the fiery forge of politics, selfish romantic greedheads trying to disguise ourselves as selfless saints. Because the Private Life, as Zhivago's young firebrand proclaims, is dead; and those who persist in feeding on its carrion corpse must themselves surely sicken and die too.

Right on. Guilty as charged.

Yet somehow I still can't quite forget that line of Robert Duncan's, the line which says that one definition of responsibility is "the ability to respond." To which I can only add, for whatever it's worth, the observation that those times when the metaphysical madness has been most upon me, those times have been the best times of my life.

From p.28

Ideally, the AEL sit-in should have raised consciousness on two fronts. The Movement should have brought liberals to the left--which it did--and it should have solidified and expanded a radical leadership--which it did also, but with less success. The hesitancy of the radicals to come on too strong at first is understandable. But the radicals' fear of frightening wavering liberals with militant rhetoric caused them to start radical education much too late and in a disorganized fashion.

Radical education is dialectical: activity must alter theory and theory influence activity. One without the other is not enough.

The struggle over SRI may soon be over. The April 3 Movement. Only through leadership, organization, and education can the radicals take the Movement beyond its current left-liberal position and into the revolutionary struggle to destroy capitalism.

From p.15

bluffed out of what we already had for fear of a very necessary confrontation with Pitzer. If we were going to accept promises, we should have left of our own free will Tuesday or Wednesday when they were first offered; if we were going to wait it out, we should have insisted on action before we left, come Hell, high water, or the Santa Clara County Sheriff. The great Liberal Cop-Out at great and liberal Stanford.


It's hard for me to listen to people worry about getting kicked out of school. The Judicial Council derives its (illegitimate) power from the very men we are doing our best to threaten because of their illegitimate use of their power, and judges on the basis of a unilaterally legislated regulation. Remember the good ole' days when students tried students and the Dean couldn't appeal it? Remember the Honor Code? So we get kicked out. Worse yet, so we don't.

So they only try the leaders and ignore thirteen hundred signed confessions. They can't alienate too many parents. That's justice a la Oakland or Chicago and it works. How much solidarity will there be left when it comes time to force them to try us? Don't forget Mommy, the 2-S, and \$25,000 a year. Don't forget the security clearance. To show people where they're at--and they're smack in the middle of the System.

My opinion of the sit-in? It was a good thing. It was non-violent and the most radical idea of all is that non-violence can work. People paid attention. People learned about effective action. A real community seemed to grow up and people learned what that's all about. People grooved on each other, and that's always good. And everyone up on the roof got a marvelous tan. And Pitzer got a chance to be a good guy, or really to be what he is, which is a very shrewd businessman. And it made Stanford look good to everybody, since all concerned kept their cool. People got a little self-righteous, but you can forgive them that. It won't last. It turned the strangest people on to that kind of pseudo-radicalism and showed them where it might be at. And maybe we'll stop war-related research around here. Better yet, maybe one or two people out of that thousand or so will take a deep breath and decide not to become a cog in the Trustee's machine, or in Mr. Nixon's machine, or in the great American meta-machine. And maybe then we can begin to be radical and start thinking about a Revolution.

More Classifieds

LIVING CONDITION -- 4 medical students living in a communal scene in Palo Alto are looking for 1 or 2 persons (female or couple) interested in joining. We have regular encounters, are set up to do pottery, painting and welding and tender the fond hope that we will grow into an extended family and perhaps even a joint practice for movement or Free U types. We hope to find someone who likes us and is ready to stay a while. \$260/month total people. 328-5619.

COUPLE with 1 child need home in relaxed neighborhood or foothills. 2 bedrooms + space -- sharing with other couple & child. A possibility in LARGE old house. Family  Michael -- 326-9990.