Vanguard Editorial

UNITY

The Los Angeles Vanguard is a weekly newspaper which informs and communicates with people who seek control of their lives through alternative means of political, economic, social and personal survival.

We recognize that this community is greatly fragmented today. We hope to provide a channel for unification through a dialogue bringing us in closer touch with one another. Vanguard readers will have new information enabling them to make intelligent decisions for their own actions and commitments.

The Vanguard will expose the propaganda that the government of power uses to trample on the rights of people. We will probe consumer ripoffs, environmental degradations, unfair labor practices, and attempts to limit personal and social freedoms, mass media and cultural brainwashing, and offer solutions.

We will provide extensive coverage of people's activities in a four-page pullout resources section. This calendar will be a compilation of places to go, things to do, and information on social services, crises centers, free clinics, food pantries, childcare cooperatives, theater productions, multi-media performances, classes, seminars, meetings.

The Vanguard entertainment pages will be filled with reviews of both large and small productions. Our reviewers will be analytical not presumptuous. Quality features will be an integral part of the newspaper.

We will hold politicians and bureaucrats accountable for their conduct, reminding them that they are public servants. We will closely watch the actions of large corporations, utility companies, transportation and communication lines, the Los Angeles moguls and others in positions of economic power. To this end, we will engage in advocacy journalism and some good old-fashioned muckraking, launching our own investigative reports and carefully following up our readers' complaints. We will examine all forms of repression, from the blatant to the subtle. We won't be afraid to take stands when necessary.

The Vanguard is more than a newspaper. It is an organizing tool for community groups and individuals to fight back through citizen action. FIGHT BACK will be a regular feature of such efforts.

We also encourage communication from our readers. We will print responses and select readers' opinions for our editorial pages.

Recognizing that this is a cooperative effort, we will strive for the maximum degree of self-organization and control by the people whose energies it takes to make it happen. Finally, we hope to return a measure of our success to the community by sponsoring cultural and community projects.

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Don't Watch What We Say

City Councilman Marvin Braude gave a splendidly illusory "Don't watch what we say, watch what we do." After inviting himself to a meeting of the Pacific Palisades Community Council to speak about what he was doing to solve the area's traffic problems, he gave a detailed list of little actions. Traffic and Off-Street Parking Commission had approved things like the installation of a parking sign or a walk light but he failed to mention that for little residents would have to consider counterfeiting a major change in the parking ordinance. Under present rules, the city of Los Angeles is divided into parking districts. Funds collected from meters and less in a parking district may only be used for parking construction within that district. Braude's committee voted to reduce that number to 12 larger districts, concentrating one councilman district.

Thinking they could use the revenue to create more needed parking space, the Pacific Palisades recently got Braude's committee to approve parking meter rate hike. Unknown to himself, the district charge remained the same while the committee simultaneously increased by $0.15 the increased revenue to be used in another part of town.

Not surprisingly, Braude made no mention of the very real decision by his committee at the next community council meeting. We're watching.

Campaign 76;

Will Ted Kennedy Take The Plunge?
People and Power in Los Angeles
Whose Utility Bill Did You Pay This Month

The Herrera family lives in a trailer in the Hawthorne Garden center and winter they hit on particularly hard times. They only had one job to pay their Department of Water & Power bill so their service at cut off. They immediately called the neighbor's trash to get help. The service was delivered. The evening before they were due to leave, the water shut off for a few minutes due to a leak. They managed to put the two children to sleep. Since he had to go to work for a few minutes he left the candle burning in order not to wake the children if they woke up. He was gone when he turned 20 minutes later the house as on fire. The two children died.

Valerie Manuel Herrera is being indicted with the charge of incendiarism in the death of her child. The family’s home is being searched.

Utilities are a necessity for urban life. Who can get by without them? You can’t, they are essential to any human activity. Electric bill is a significant portion of household expenses. Every family has to pay it. In Los Angeles, the average electric bill is around $120 per month, which is a significant portion of the household income. The bill is paid on time by most families, but there are some who struggle to pay it. The Department of Water & Power is often criticized for its high rates and frequent outages. The bill is a major source of stress for many families.

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By Tim Brick

should be guaranteed to everyone at affordable prices. Above the Lifeline, prices would increase to meet the legitimate revenue requirements of the utility. The Lifeline rate would immediately alleviate the effect of spiraling increases on those least able to bear them or to cut back, but it would also write conservation into the rates by making the major users pay a fair share and giving them a clear signal to cut back. Lifeline rates would help anyone who uses small amounts of utility service. Those who use more than the Lifeline amount would still benefit from the more progressive structure by which it would diminish the need to expand expensive generation facilities and to acquire expensive resources. Everyone would pay the low

from the direct control of the City Council in order to eliminate the influence of recent politicians. Decades of decreasing prices, however, shielded their operations from the public view and allowed the empire-builders, who have always played such an important role in the development of our city, to establish firm control of the city’s energy policy.

In recent years environmental concerns and the impact of rate hikes have finally lifted the veil on the DWP’s activities. The Department has emerged as a key social and political force in the city with a billion dollar budget larger than the rest of the city departments combined. The commission now considers itself not as a regulatory agency but as the Board of directors of the utility. Deprived of the staff necessary to independently analyze DWP programs, it serves as a rubber stamp for the DWP management. The DWP officers in turn are the highest paid city officials with 10 executives making more than the governor of this state. The City Council, which passes on only rate increases and appointments lacks a basic understanding of its operations and implications. The DWP’s pattern of bureaucratic ineptitude and pro-big business (or at least pro-downtown) mechanisms are finally being uncovered.

Prompt of protest has prompted these revelations. That movement first emerged as a public force in December of 1974 when an unusual accord of senior citizens and consumer groups came before the City Council to denounce a DWP water rate hike. The Council at that time turned back the DWP 10% increase and instead instructed a subcommittee to study a Lifeline plan to reform the rate structure.

Lifeline, Yes or No

The Lifeline is a proposal developed by consumer groups all over the country. It is based on the belief that an urban society, basic utility service is a right that

Lifeline price for the basic amounts should somewhat higher rates for extra use. Most people’s bills would go down. Utilities have traditionally used what they call the declining block schedule for pricing. This system charges the most for the smallest blocks of basic consumption and least per unit for the larger blocks of use. Areas with large fixed charges are in short supply and short supply drives prices up. The Lifeline plan is based on the belief that an urban society, basic utility service is a right that

lead, to make the DWP recognize its social responsibility and to implement the proposals that passed with such show. The Department’s presentations raised the ire of the City of North Hollywood, and if it didn’t obtain the revenues necessary to begin the required investments. After two recent setbacks the commissioners abandoned the attempt to pass the rate reform.

Mayor Bradley bought the DWP in silence to try to allay criticism. Yes it was the rate reform which had already been the subject of extensive study and Council resolutions. CAUCE activists tagged it with the “Red Tape Compton.” We were particularly upset by two recent appointments made by Bradley with no public input. One of the new Commissioners was the leader of the Lori Formosa Industry Association. It was for denouncing the rate increase. The other was a zealous policeman dragged me from the Council Chambers before TV cameras on the-to-be-public rate increases passed.

Most Councilperson criticized the rate structure and lamented the burden of inflation, but few spoke out against the increase that time. David Cunningham insisted on a Lifeline for poor people deeply and charged the Council with failing to implement its own decisions and exercise its responsibility to the DWP for the benefit of all Los Angeles residents. Cunningham raised substantial and unanswered objections to the DWP’s electric rate increases. He pressed for a more reasonable rate increase of 12%.

DWP Buys Votes

The DWP’s budget obviously gives them enormous ability to influence Councilpersons, but few expected the crimp of the political. Peggy Stevenson made that day on the Council. The utility had framed the first Lifeline resolution before he died and had been known as one of the staunchest critics of the DWP. Now Councilperson Stevenson asked elected officials to go on the record against the rate increase at the DWP’s public meeting. Stevenson, apparently inaccurate, to some extent at the DWP meeting, and asked for the record to be made public. Stevenson, appeared to be showing the majority of the Council, whom she engineered the compromise that led to the passage of the DWP’s rate increase, the dishes has spoken for years of the need for some kind of turn back the DWP.

It was Joel Wachs, the new head of the Public Utilities Commission of the City, who engineered the compromise that led to the passage of the DWP’s rate increase, the dishes has spoken for years of the need for some kind of turn back the DWP. Two months previously he had publicly called for a moratorium on the rate increase until the rate structure was reversed. It was Joel Wachs who claimed the need for a “Fight Back” campaign in this space each week.
Government spying on Americans has not ended despite Watergate exposures and official promises, in fact, it may have just begun on all Los Angeles kindergarten kids.

The first batch of medical and psychological dossiers on the pre-school children in Los Angeles is on file in Sacramento, and plenty more are on the way. By next September, the state will have potentially damaging files on every child entering first grade, not only in Los Angeles but throughout the state.

The program under which these files are being compiled is innocently called the Child Health and Disabilities Prevention Act — California’s version of a Department of Health, Education, and Welfare mandated program called Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT).

This program, both nationally and statewide, is to develop medical and psychological profiles on every child, ostensibly to help identify those with physical and emotional problems detected early and treated.

Perhaps the best indication of the motives of the program, which despite its name makes no provision for treatment of detected problems, is that it is one of the few “Great Society” programs to survive the Nixon administration. The Nixon crew, of course, while not known for its desire to help the poor, did have a fondness for collecting intelligence files on as many people as possible. Not surprisingly, EPSDT grew in scope under Nixon.

The target population of EPSDT and its California version, CHDP, is the poor, and it is estimated that there are now three million children in pre-school from 700,000 families in the Los Angeles area. The American Civil Liberties Union is investigating the program for possible violation of the rights of privacy based on information provided by the Los Angeles Vanguard.

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Just as the FBI uses local police departments for much of its intelligence work, HEW is running the EPSDT program mainly through state agencies. Each state has been required to set up its own program for implementing EPSDT, but the basic pattern has been the same everywhere. Children from Medicaid families — or in states like California, from families with incomes of less than 150 percent of the poverty income level — are lured into the program by the offer of “free medical screening programs.” They are not informed about the intelligence and psychological screening portions of the program. Frequently, as in California, they are told incorrectly that the screening is mandatory, and are not advised that in most cases treatment will be on a voluntary basis.

There are two ways the screening and data collection are conducted, and each makes no provision for treatment of detected problems. In one way, a child, obtained through tests, a physical and interviews with parents or guardians, is placed on file with the local health department unit, the state health department, and on a national file. In the other, HEW itself. In some states, the information is also filed with state departments of education and welfare. As one member of the CHDP program in California said, “Once you have data in a computer, you can wind up anywhere.”

CHDP is administered by the State Department of Health in the Los Angeles area. The program has been picking up speed steadily since then, and the figure is now in the hundreds of thousands.

There are several ways the screening can result in potentially damaging information on children getting into the public domain.

Most serious of these is the “devotional” test. California opted to use the Denver Developmental Screening Test. Here is what Michael Bostone, a test evaluator at UCLA’s Center for the Study of Evaluation said: “The Denver test is intended for children between the ages of two and six. It has four sections: two are for coordination, one for intelligence, and one for behavior and emotional test. Basically, the younger a child is, the less accurate the test, since children are susceptible to changing their behavior.”

“It is an individually administered test. That is, one person, says the doctor, administers it to one child at a time. There are many kinds of personality tests, and they all have the same problem. They can all be criticized for lack of reliability and general validity.”

“That is, the same child might test differently on two different days, and in two different cultural backgrounds might test differently for different reasons.”

Besides, there is the ethical question of whether it is even right to label a person.

“Finally, I always understood this kind of testing was supposed to be done on an anonymous basis. I don’t think anything but gross statistics on groups should be required by any agency. The government should not have such information on individuals. It is a definite civil liberties privacy question.”

The state and HEW don’t see it that way. Apparently California children are relatively lucky.”

The Michigan Free Press in Ann Arbor reports that files in that state on day-care children are sent directly to HEW in Washington, D.C. At least in California, the health department purports to be oblivious to its right to exclusive use of control over such personal data — they won’t even let the state department of education see the reports, despite considerable pressure. They rightly fear that the files would be used to “track” students into certain programs based upon their supposed “intelligence.”

Nursing the CHPD office givetable data to HEW at this point. HEW only lists general statistics, according to Ralph Taylor, HEW’s local administrator of the L.A. County CHDP office.

But the current protection of records is only so long as because of the views of individuals in power. A future Reagan might have different ideas about privacy.

Even now, Taylor expressed some concern about the health department’s files. He said that already some idea data on Medi-Cal children gets in the hands of welfare officials “so Medi-Cal officials will know how much to reimburse private physicians for.” That already makes the files worth their weight in gold.

Taylor said, “Some time you’ve got large amounts of data in libraries. You have to worry about what will happen to it. Right now, the data supposedly cannot be released from the health department unless parental consent, and there are other state laws on confidentiality that isn’t even in any one you have someone identified like this, information used to his detriment. I readily think identifying information shouldn’t be included, but there HEW doesn’t want my advice.”

Taylor said that protests against the Denver Test by the Network Against Psychiatric Assault (NAPA), a San Francisco organization, and some other groups “will probably bring a halt soon to use of the Denver Test itself. But the added, “I’ve heard that the developmental testing was controversial but is in a less formal fashion. It could just as well be included by the examining physician in the history and physical portion of the test.”

This could be worse, since each physician regardless of qualifications would be under his own criteria to judge a patient’s state of “development.” There would be no standard at all.

Sheila Cadman, CHDP administrator for the Los Angeles region, confirmed this. “We are in the process of changing the developmental test from the program this year,” she said, “so we can study it. In the meantime, the examiners are being told to look for evidence of emotional damage.”

Taylor said the developmental test itself was not the only damaging psychological information becomes part of a child’s permanent record.”
Is Big Brother Becoming Big Daddy?

NEW TARGET — The latest target of information gathering by government is pre-school children. Dossiers on thousands of Los Angeles five year olds are now in state Health and Welfare Department file drawers in Sacramento.

The federal EPSDT guidelines say to screen for emotional and physical status," he said, "and these come up in the history part of the screening process too.

"For instance, say a child was overly aggressive or something and his parents had him treated by a psychiatrist at age four. Then, when he is screened at age five, the doctor or nurse might ask about that, and include it in the child's medical history." It may also be predisposed to look for signs of the alleged disorder in the child, even if they're not raised as psychologists.

As of now, because of lack of funds, trained staff, and private physicians asking to be certified to participate in the state-funded programs, the screening process in California is primarily done at the first grade entry level.

The state has ruled that all children must be screened and in a "Certification for School Entry," or present a signed waiver from parent or guardian before they may enter first grade after July 1 of this year.

Parents of middle class children, who probably have had their children checked up regularly (minus the developmental testing) might well be the waiver wave time, but poorer families are likely to "take advantage of the program, too."

In many cases, it is the first physical children have had, according to state statistics.

After all, the idea of free screening isn't bad in itself. It includes a dental exam, eye and ear tests, blood tests including syphilis, T.B., anemia and lead poisoning where called for, inoculations, etc. What parent would turn that down? And on top of every page the parent sees the words: "CONFIDENTIALITY GUARANTEED.

Reassuring, but how many parents look down to the little space that says "behavior, emotional status" on the "Confidential Screening/Billing Report" that goes to medical files? And how many read the fine print at the bottom of the carbon copies. These read, "Community CHDP Program...." and "Send completed form to State Department of Health."

If that medical history were "confidential," why would it need such identifying information as name, Medi-Cal ID number, CHDP I.D. number (I), sex, patient's address, atttorney's social security number, ethnic origin, name of parent or guardian, address of parent or guardian, and wage earner's social security number?

If the Los Angeles CHDP program is any example, parents are being encouraged to have their children screened and yet are not being told about the fate of the forms and the "existence of the developmental test.

A letter sent to all parents of kindergarten children in the city says, "Dear Parents, a new California law requires that all children prior to entry into first grade must have had a health screening within the past year. The check-up consists of a health history, physical examination, including vision and hearing screening, necessary immunizations, a test for uterine, a urine test and tuberculous skin test."

If the developmental test results and the history are not bad enough, CHDP has decided it needs specific information about problems which show up in screening. These issues are provided for describing "Still Problems." Enough to write a load of damaging information.

The stated reason for this is that the state and county CHDP offices want to make sure the parents take the child to the referral for further diagnosis and treatment if necessary. Why the information has to go automatically to the referral level is not explained. Even if this were just to provide continuity in case a family moves, why couldn't the local CHDP office just forward those specific files to the family's new school district?

Some local officials in childhood education express concern about the state's actions. Douglas Monroe, in charge of the L.A. Unified School District's pre-kindergarten program, said, "I am concerned about files being kept at the state level. In my position, I wouldn't know why they need them at the state level, but I don't like it."

She said that her program also tests children's developmental status, using a different test, called the Betty Calo well Test. "But that stays with us. It is not sent to the state except in the form of unidentifiable group statistics," she said.

"If the state came to me and asked for the individual test, I'd complain about it and would not let them have them."

Additional forms are provided for the doctor(s) a child is referred to. The referral doctors or 'shrink' also get them to describe the diagnosis, and an additional space to check whether the "effect of the diagnosed condition" is considered to be "minimal, mild, moderate, moderately severe, or severe."

Considerable space is also provided for the new examiner to describe "any conditions revealed in your examination not suspected as a result of screening." All this is added to state files.

Since state funds are lacking, and poor people have to wait so long to get service in county medical facilities, it can be assumed and the state assumes this by its very arguments for keeping the files: that many poor parents only learn about their children's alleged "problems," but do not get treatment. Treatment is not provided by EPSDT, even though that is what the initial tests stand for. So in many cases the record stands blotted in the state computer banks.

And there is no provision to erase the file, even if treatment is provided and the problem solved.

Caroline Emanuel is in charge of the CHDP files at the state health department in Sacramento. She is the department's claims analyst.

Emanuel said the health department gets all copies of the screening forms and keeps several in different files. "We haven't computerized them yet," she said, "but we will eventually.

She said the files were needed both as a check on bills submitted by private physicians and "to make sure parents are taking their children to referrals."

She had no explanation of why names and complete reports had to be submitted just for billing verification. Most significantly, she said she had no knowledge of any guidelines for destroying the files after a specified length of time. "I do know we'd have to keep them for a number of years," she said. She said the lack of such guidelines was "because we've only been in operation for a little while."

Emanuel did insist that HEW "cannot get any of our files."

"No other department or agency gets any copies of the screening results," she asserted.

When more funds are forthcoming, the first priority is to provide much-needed free treatment. Rather, it is to expand the screening process to cover children in poverty families "from birth to age five." And after that, it is to provide free screening to all children, rich and poor, from birth to 21.

The intelligence addicts' credo is "If there is information available, put it in dossiers."

The workers in the CHDP and the parent EPSDT programs that many children in America's forty-million poverty families are being helped by these programs. - - -

In California alone, 70 percent of children screened from poverty families had one referral. Thirty percent had two or more. Of course, only a fraction of these received treatment, but for them it was a blessing. Instead of winding up in "special education classes," many just got their glasses, or had their ears cleaned, and were able to do fine in school. But the sacrifice of the confidentiality of medical records for this small gain is not worth it. The potential damage is too great.