NIMH FUNDS CUT (continued from page 5)

aid project. They took out a loan based on the assurances of California officials that money was on the way and began running the project; then they were informed that the money promised would not be forthcoming after all. They were stuck with having to repay the money they had spent out of the loan out of their own pockets, a catastrophe which crippled their budget for several years and threatened to force the organization to fold. There was no way ALMP would have chosen to risk repeating such a bitter experience, which we made very clear.

It appears that our candor regarding our decision to take federal funding was yet one more factor in the NIMH decision to abort the agreement. In our last newsletter, an article drafted by myself entitled "The Politics of Government Grants" discussed some of the Alliances reasoning in accepting funds from such a disreputable source as NIMH. The article explained in part some of our suspicions that the ulterior motivation of NIMH could be to lure us into bankruptcy or collaboration by encouraging us to become dependent on government funding. The article also made clear that we had accepted the funding only after it had become certain that we would be financially secure through 1980 whether or not NIMH attempted to pull the rug out from under us. And it reaffirmed our basic lack of trust in the motives of NIMH liberals. We later learned that biggies at NIMH were outraged over the article's lack of deference and ALMP's lack of gratitude for the crumbs they had chosen to toss our way. (It should be noted that as of this point, six months into the one year funding period, ALMP had received a grand total of $600 in reimbursements from NIMH.) Bluntness and honesty on our part were not at all appreciated by these bureaucrats who apparently believed that they were entitled to our trust on the basis of their financial "assistance."

Although the drop-in center project had to be scuttled due to NIMH's intransigent tight-assedness, our legal project, meanwhile, was going well. The project's direction and the cases and lawsuits which were handled were decided entirely by the Alliance during regular meetings with our attorneys. We kept the focus of the project on fighting forced treatment, and successfully defended a number of people at commitment hearings (including some that most lawyers would not represent "in their own best interest.") We also funded a lawsuit in behalf of an ex-inmate of Haverford and Norristown State hospitals who was beaten and restrained for days on end (the suit charges). In addition, NIMH funds financed our successful defense of the "Haverford 4" case and much of our access lawsuit against Haverford State Hospital.

The question crosses our mind--was the legal project perhaps <u>too</u> successful for NIMH? Although it was understood from the start that legal funds were to be used in the way they were, perhaps the prospect of the anti-psychiatry movement having free access to institutions and (gasp!) CHRONIC "patients" being released from the grip of psychiatry was too much for them to handle. Psychiatry certainly needs "patients" more than we need psychiatry! Similarly, the recently burgeoning "advocacy" industry, which promulgates the absurdity that "mental health" employees can be effective advocates for "their" clients, might be severely threatened were it to be proven that we are fully capable of exercising our own advocacy.

Many of the full, sordid details of this latest attempted manipulation by NIMH will probably never be known; the most official explanation of why our funding was cut is that it was done "for the convenience of the government." Without a doubt, there are many lessons to be learned from ALMP's brief initial flirtation with government funding. It must be understood by all movement groups that accepting any financial assistance from liberal segments of the government or psychiatric industry is certainly playing with fire and potentially inviting disaster. Such offers <u>must</u> be looked upon with the greatest suspicion, and should <u>never</u> be accepted unless the agreement is on your terms and unless you are prepared to survive and carry on when your principles and unwillingness to tow the enemy's line lead to your sudden loss of funding by the system. The obvious must be remembered--that the "mental health" system is not going to support any endeavor which it perceives as being a real threat to the continued power of psychiatry. The more progress you make toward achieving truly revolutionary changes, the more the system will try to sabotage your efforts. And though we do not wish to tell others what to do in their own sets of circumstances, it should be pointed out that had we not had a fairly accurate analysis of the forces at work before accepting our NIMH funds, we could have easily been led into ideological and financial collapse. We hope that those in similar future circumstances will take our experience as a clear warning not to allow themselves to become entrapped by the lure of so-called "government support."

It is plain that true alternatives to psychiatry will need massive funding in order to be successfully developed in a large-scale way. We must develop the public influence and political power necessary to secure such funding, whether it comes from the government, foundations, or private contributions. We are making some significant steps towards that goal. But we must remain ever vigilant and should continue to hold the maximum possible skepticism towards all proposed system "support," no matter how benevolent it may at first seem.

--Bob Harris