NIMH FUNDS CUT

western union **Telegram**

SUBJECT: TERMINATION OF CONTRACT NO. 278-79-0056(MH)

ALMP IS HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT CONTRACT NO. 278-79-0056(MH) WILL BE TERMINATED IN ITS ENTIRETY FOR THE CONVENIENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVE MIDNIGHT OF APRIL 30 1980

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On April 29, the day we arrived in California for the annual conference, we received word from Philadelphia that the National Institute for "Mental Health" (NIMH) had revoked the remainder of the funds promised us for purposes of setting up an ex-inmate-controlled drop-in center and a free legal assistance project. This action on the part of NIMH demonstrates several facts and reinforces a number of long-standing suspicions regarding the nature and function of the alleged "support" professed for our movement's goals by liberals in the "mental health" system. Following is a short analysis of the circumstances leading up to the cutting of those funds.

We had originally agreed to set up a user-controlled drop-in center for ex-inmates with about $6,000 of the $11,000 promised to ALMP directly. Another $40,000 was promised for the salaries and expenses of our two expert attorneys, Penny Boyd and David Ferleger. In our proposal to NIMH we described ourselves in conjunction with David and Penny as a "lawyer-assisted self-help advocacy program." The project was to be compared with other sorts of experimental "advocacy" projects at the end of one year to see which model was more successful. (What constituted a "successful" project, of course, would be judged by NIMH standards; since we don't care what the fuck NIMH thinks about what we do, this was not a primary concern of ours.)

When we began to seek out properties to rent for the drop-in center, we quickly found ourselves in a catch-22 situation: NIMH would not hand over any money for the center until we had a lease in our hands. And the only way we could ever get a lease in our hands, given the general V.I.P. status accorded to ex-inmate groups, would be to have cash to hand over up front. We spent a good deal of the winter and spring attempting to negotiate around this absurdity with NIMH bureaucrats, but to no avail; eventually we decided that it wasn't worth our energy to play games with the government in the face of more immediate and urgent tasks. Predictably, the main reason given later by NIMH for cutting off our funding was that we hadn't produced a drop-in center.

Why was such a situation allowed to develop? Although no individual bureaucrat would assume responsibility for this mess or admit to calculated sabotage, it can't be ignored that the psychiatric profession clearly has a vested interest in promoting the image of "mental patients" as being incompetent and undependable. If the intent if including the Alliance in this "experimental advocacy program" was indeed to frame an image at the end of ex-inmate-controlled advocacy being ineffective, the bureaucratic structure into which it was demanded we fit was certainly tailor-made to allow for such a conclusion. It would have been a full-time job simply to do the mountains of bullshit paperwork required in order to be reimbursed for our expenses.

Another possibility to be considered is that the function of our federal funding could easily have been to lead us down the road to bankruptcy. Since ALMP had very little money in its general account, we could not have secured a lease in any other way than to have NIMH provide us with enough money in advance to pay for a security deposit and first months rent on the drop-in center. They refused to do this and instead suggested that ALMP take out a private loan to fund the center until they decided to reimburse us. We dismissed this idea immediately, being all too aware of the 1976 experience of the Network Against Psychiatric Assault with the state of California. In that instance N.A.P.A. had been promised government funds with which to start a legal

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