Boycott, continued

National Protests Against SmithKline

Phenothiazines are used on institutionalized people--mental "patients," prisoners, nursing homes and reform school inmates, etc.--for purposes of restraint and ward management; in general, in both voluntary and coercive settings the primary function of the drug is to deaden the central nervous system and control troublesome and/or unconventional behavior. SmithKline produced and marketed Thorazine, the first phenothiazine, in the mid-1950's. Since then millions of people have been administered Thorazine and the other phenothiazines--Stelazine, Prolixin, Haldol, Mellaril, Trilafon, and Navane (among others). All phenothiazines are known to cause dozens of dangerous, unpleasant, and frightening effects. These include blurred vision, slurred speech, lethargy, confusion, severe neuromuscular reactions ("pseudo-parkinsonism"), and a form of permanent brain damage known as tardive dyskinesia, which studies indicate may occur in up to 50% of those who take phenothiazines over a period of months or years. (Many "patients" are told that they will "need" to take phenothiazines for the rest of their lives.) Phenothiazines can also cause (permanent) death. (See the article on Haverford State Hospital for details on one such death.)

Despite the well known dangers of these drugs, they are pushed and forced upon institutionalized people en masse, and are also heavily prescribed in community "mental health" centers. The profits reaped by drug companies are enormous; in 1977, SmithKline's three phenothiazine products--Thorazine, Stelazine, and Compazine--accounted for $80 million worth of sales. As phenothiazine administration amounts to chemical warfare (its main function is to subdue people), we consider SmithKline's profiteering on these drugs to be as obscene as Dow Chemical's production of napalm during the U.S. invasion of Vietnam. We urge you to support the boycott by spreading the word, writing letters, coming to demonstrations, getting your organization to endorse the boycott, and, of course, sending donations to help publish literature, etc.

"Dee Day'

Dee (who made $380,000 in 1977) was scheduled to receive a "Doctor of Humane Letters" degree from MCP. (Apparently SK and MCP have worked closely together over the years.) As Dee stepped forward for his award at the end of the ceremony, 8 Alliance members in the audience put their battle plan into action. It was Lenny's move first: he stormed the stage, objecting to Dee being honored as a "humanitarian" and asking for equal time on the microphone. In the absence of a response, he seized the mike and began to read a statement denouncing SmithKline's role in the oppression of mental patients and other institutionalized people.

At this point the power was cut, temporarily silencing Lenny. However, by this time Lynne and Diane were on the stage holding a large red, white, and black banner proclaiming "THORAZINE KILLS!." Before being led offstage by three men, one identifying himself as a Philadelphia detective, the ALMP assault team onstage led a final chant of "Thorazine Kills!," which was picked up by Alliance members still in the audience. After the entire ceremony was over, remaining members distributed leaflets explaining the action. Police were called but no arrests were made, probably because the newly-installed president of MCP did not want to make his first official act the prosecution of mental patients making a political statement.

SmithKline has still not responded to our repeated requests for a public debate on the issues at hand, other than saying that it "would serve no useful purpose." They apparently believe that by ignoring us, we'll go away. Wait and see, SK!

The following organizations have endorsed the boycott:

Alt. Therapy Ctr./Atlanta
Advocates for Freedom in Mental Health/Kansas
Christian Assn./U. of Pa.
Coalition Against Forced Treatment/San Francisco
Coalition Against Racism & Sexism/San Francisco
Coalition of Grassroots Women/New York
Coalition of Welfare Recipients/Los Angeles
Don't Mourn, Organize/N.Y.
Emergency Civil Liberties Committee/Phila.
Gay Activists Alliance/New York
Mental Patients Association/Vancouver
Mental Patients' Liberation Front/Boston
Mental Patients' Rights Association/Florida
Nat. All. Against Racist & Political Repression
Nat. Comm. to Support the Marion Bros./St. Louis
National Lawyers Guild/San Francisco/Phila.
Network Against Psychiatric Assault/S.F./L.A.
New York Inst. for Social Therapy & Research
People's Fund/Phila.
People's Law School/S.F.
Prisoners Rights Council/Phila.
Prisoners Union/S.F.
Project Release/New York
Psychiatric Inmates' Rights Collective/Santa Cruz
Wages for Housework/Wages Due Lesbians/Phila.
Women Against Graphic Rape/Phila.
Women Against Rape/Santa Cruz
Women Free Women In Prison/New York
Women's Health Collective/Santa Cruz
Women's Information Service/Media, Pa.
Wonderful Older Women/Phila.
Working Group on Battered Women/Phila.
Socialist Workers Party/Phila.
Young Socialist Alliance/Phila.