

NAPNOC

notes

Issue number 15

P.O.Box 11440, Baltimore, MD 21239

September 1981

VITAL SIGNS: THE GATHERING & ALTERNATE ROOTS

We spent a lot of this summer on the road. From August 9th through the 16th we attended The Gathering, a theater festival and meeting in St. Peter, MN; from August 19th through the 23rd, we were at the Annual Meeting of Alternate ROOTS (Regional Organization of Theatres - South) at Ozone, TN.

When we arrived at Camp Ozone to attend the ROOTS meeting, we were fresh from The Gathering. Midway into our non-stop babbling about our experiences in Minnesota, we were interrupted by a dismayed-looking Ruby Lerner, ROOTS' Executive Director: "Oh no," Ruby complained, "I was afraid that The Gathering would turn out to be the Woodstock of the '80s and just like Woodstock, I missed it!"

Well, The Gathering wasn't much like Woodstock in all of the obvious ways: most of us aren't that young anymore, no matter how you look at it. But there is some sense in which the comparison is apt. The special events of this season -- The Gathering and ROOTS, the People's Theater Festival and TENAZ Festival this month in San Francisco-- seem to signal a change in consciousness; as the statements of Cherry Creek (the group that planned and hosted The Gathering) put it, "a lifting sign of cultural democracy."

Putting Money In Its Place

It's been years since we've heard so much discussion about social issues and the artist's responsibility -- and not just fair-weather politics either. Finances are more of a problem for most than they've been in a decade. Government funding is drying up and private money seems to be following suit.

But people aren't lying down and dying. Instead they are turning their attention to the real problems that will be solved if our movement is to flourish: how neighborhood arts groups can be of service to their communities and in turn be supported by them; how neighborhood arts work can speak to the real concerns of our society; and how arts workers can integrate their concerns with craft, with political and social consciousness, with a decent life and livelihood.

Neither The Gathering nor the ROOTS meeting made much of the grants-getting-inten-easy-lessons kind of workshop that's been an inevitable feature of arts meetings. Instead, people seemed most interested in talking about ideas -- about the meaning of their work and its relation to other people--

(continued on page two)

COMMUNITY RADIO: MAKING WAVES

Most radio in the United States is one long commercial: programming is "formatted" for a particular "market," so that the air-time between commercial advertisements exists only to attract consumers of the desired age and income-levels. Standardization is the key -- radio stations across the country can purchase the same 24-hour programming package, complete with advertising slots, and just plug themselves in, eliminating overhead and most station personnel.

This spring the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that "market forces" alone should be permitted to determine the kind of music and talk that commercial radio stations air. The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) current rush to deregulate is helping this market monopoly along. Some predict dire consequences: if stations are sold to the highest bidder without consideration for community diversity, people across the country could find themselves with only one or two Top-40 and country-western prerecorded formats on their radio dials.

But there are alternative futures.

In dozens of communities around the country, people have organized to reclaim a place on the air through community radio stations. There are over 50 such stations (continued on page nine)

INSIDE:

A new NEA Chairman?
and much, much more

NAPNOC notes is published by the Neighborhood Arts Program National Organizing Committee (NAPNOC). Copyrighted articles may not be reprinted without permission of the authors; other material may be reprinted as long as proper credit is given to the authors and notes. Signed articles represent the views of their authors and not necessarily those of NAPNOC.

NAPNOC welcomes comments, letters and suggestions for articles. Please put NAPNOC on your organization's mailing list. Please address all correspondence to NAPNOC, P.O. Box 11440, Baltimore, MD 21239, or telephone 301/727-6776. NAPNOC notes is co-edited by Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard.

VITAL SIGNS (cont'd from page one)

and about craft, techniques and methods that would be useful to them. This too we took as a hopeful sign. Apparently most people have been sufficiently exposed to the "technical assistance" boom and its products to take the whole business with a large grain of salt.

The groups and individuals that attended these meetings were incredibly diverse on every possible basis -- size, aesthetics, politics, structure. It's obvious that there's no set of helpful hints or technical ideas that is applicable to all, and no set of magic words that would make each project irresistible to funders. Recent and rapid changes in funding, while discouraging in the short run, seem to have had a paradoxically positive impact: apparently, people are remembering that money is a tool and not an end in itself. After too many years in which money led as often as followed, people are refocusing on the meat of their work. And that's why we see these gatherings as vital signs.

THE GATHERING

The Gathering took several years of planning and detail work -- and it showed. Scheduling, accommodations, food -- everything was in place before we arrived and worked smoothly throughout. The people at Cherry Creek clearly decided that doing it right would mean single-minded dedication, and that's what they gave it.

Some 500 people participated. Most were members of performing groups. Others were writers or organizers, like ourselves. Many were professors, especially in the social sciences, invited to offer an anthropologist's or sociologist's view. Because the meeting was so large, and because so many events took place simultaneously, few could say they'd met most of their fellow participants.

"Working Collectives"

Like most people at The Gathering, we became friendliest with the other members of our "working collective." These were groups organized around themes like "The Living Story" and "The Performed Self." They functioned pretty much like "home rooms," meeting almost every morning during the week-long Gathering, giving participants a chance to carry on some continuing conversations and adding stability to the fast, crowded schedule of performances and special events.

We were in the "Transformation and Communitas" group, along with about 30 others. For the first three days of The Gathering our group began each morning's session with a presentation: on Monday, Harry Boyte of Minneapolis' Citizen Heritage Center started with a talk on the theme of the "commonwealth." He traced the roots of this idea in American history, and called on radicals in this country to draw inspiration and sustenance from them. (For a bit more about Boyte's work, see "Freedom and Diversity" in NAPNOC notes #12.) Then Arlene gave a talk debunking "the arts orthodoxy," and calling on neighborhood arts people

to think freely and speak out, to be "heretics." (For remarks on the same theme see coverage of NAPNOC's Annual Meeting in notes #13.)

On Tuesday, George Lakey of the Movement for a New Society in Philadelphia offered "Six Ways Theatre Can Make a Difference in People's Struggles for Change." In shorthand, they are Alliances, Analysis, Catharsis, Vision, Struggle and Improvisation (in the sense that theater can help people improvise their new roles as society is changed).

On Wednesday, Max Kaplan, a writer on leisure and aging (himself a retired professor of Leisure Studies), offered an anecdotal and much-condensed version of his own career and the lessons he has learned thus far. Max said that power you make is worth more than power you buy -- and added that in that respect, Reagan may be doing us a favor by forcing us to rely more on what we can make ourselves. He saw hope for the future in our group's focus on "Communitas": from Kaplan's perspective, the evolution of societies is a continuum which progresses from a "primitive" and integrated order to one increasingly more industrialized and marked by divisions of power, labor and responsibility, and ultimately toward a rediscovery of community and re-integration.

The "Spirituals" and The "Politicos"

These "working collective" sessions provided continuity and gave us a chance to make the acquaintance of our group members. The balance of each day's schedule was filled with meetings, workshops and performances.

Most workshops focused on ideas and techniques for creating performance work, and each afternoon as many as a dozen workshops ran concurrently, making it difficult to choose.

To overstate slightly, the thrust of most workshops fell under either of two imaginary headings -- the "Spirituals" and the "Politicos." There was "The Collective Actor" on one hand and "Metamythic Theatre" on the other; "Junkie Workshop" on the one hand and "The Healing Power of Sound" on the other. These rubrics also characterize the two camps into which participants fell -- or to be more precise, the two poles of the spectrum along which they might be placed.

The dimensions of that spectrum were an interesting and important theme throughout. With just a few exceptions, the Politicos acknowledged the importance of an awareness and integration of spiritual values in their work; there was very little of the black-and-white, spell-it-out school of political theater, which holds that the truth is *cast in concrete*. And with just a few exceptions, the Spirituals held no truck with the idea that their work should eschew the political world, but also recognized the imperative of integration.

This was striking. It brought to mind gatherings of ten years ago, pitched battles between these factions -- and their

unsatisfactory resolutions, which tended to give the work of both sides an unfortunate stridency. Though there was some name-calling and hostility between camps, something is beginning to change here.

We spent a lot of our time at The Gathering with a faction of the Politicos, drafting a statement and organizing meetings aimed at developing a petition that could serve as a call to unity. There were half a dozen restaurants around St. Peter that provided meals for Gathering participants in exchange for purchased meal tickets, so we gathered at Pizza Villa or the Cat's Away Cafe to talk over ideas, language and strategy. We were conscious of the need to speak to larger political and social concerns -- against militarism and repression -- but also of the need to address the particular concerns of cultural workers. (The petition appears on page 13 of this newsletter.)

Art Thou Political?

This dual responsibility was brought home by an incident during The Gathering. A group from Minneapolis, The Performers Ensemble, presented a work-in-progress called "The Boat People," about Vietnamese and Laotian refugees. The piece was the most poorly-received (most of the audience left before the end) and most controversial of the more than two dozen offerings that week. It featured a large cast, masked, and a heavy, dirge-like pace. Episodes of the play were punctuated by interludes of music by Hmong and Vietnamese musicians. One song was translated in the program; it took a hard-line pro-USA position on the war, one that would be difficult for people active in the antiwar movement of the '60s and '70s to buy. That was the political thrust of the piece too.

The next day an impromptu meeting was called to discuss "The Boat People." A few Performers Ensemble members were there, but most (including the director) were in Minneapolis, which complicated the meeting. People were emphatic about not wanting to "trash" the Performers Ensemble members (there were many speakers against shaming), and instead wanting to offer criticism in a constructive spirit; they wished all the Ensemble members were there. After a long discussion about whether to proceed or not, the large group (nearly a hundred participants by our count) went forward in an understanding and empathic manner.

The crux of the matter was an old but still compelling issue: Is all art political? The Performers Ensemble members at the meeting, and the Ensemble's director Susan Galbraith in an open letter the next day, would say no: "...we were not trying to make a political statement about the recent history of Vietnam and Laos." For the Performers Ensemble, the suffering of those portrayed in "The Boat People" transcended politics: "We are attempting to tell a story of a people who surrendered their fates to the ocean, people who were starving, drowning, DYING. At that point, politics do not matter."

Those who criticized "The Boat People"

for its portrayal of the American armed forces as Vietnam's savior and the North Vietnamese as the people's enemy would say yes. Here are some of their remarks: "The play represents the North Vietnamese as the enemy, not unlike Ronald Reagan's recent remark that Vietnam was a 'just war'.... Political theater makers are obliged for the whole ball of wax; they must take responsibility for their work.... I stayed for most of the play but it was hard; I was repulsed. The play failed because it was presented as history, and as history it was false.... Which story do you tell?"

This theme -- that all art is political, whether it reinforces the status quo, makes a criticism, or posits alternatives -- was discussed throughout The Gathering. In our "working collective" we saw an interesting exchange between Barry Opper, who's worked many years with the Los Angeles-based Provisional Theatre, and Bill Wirtz, a young man who works with Living Stage in Washington, DC. Opper talked about the development of Provisional's work, and the group members' consciousness of its inescapably political nature, and Wirtz experienced a moment of insight and recognition at this new formulation, saying "That's important. All art is political. That's important." all the while energetically making notes.

One thing The Gathering made especially clear is our poor performance as record-keepers and teachers. We saw that even the most fundamental ideas and principles must be discussed and passed on if they are to have life outside a few people's heads.

The Proof of The Pudding

Most of the performances presented at The Gathering would take the "all art is political" side of this argument. And it was the performance work that in the end made The Gathering such an encouraging experience. It was encouraging because so many groups were concerned about making theater out of themes that matter to ordinary people.

We saw work that retold forgotten or buried aspects of people's history and heritage -- the Los Angeles-based Traveling Jewish Theatre's "The Last Yiddish Poet," and "If I Live To See Next Fall" by the Knoxville-based Play Group.

Other pieces used theater to address particular social problems: "Junkie" from At The Foot of The Mountain from Minneapolis and the Illusion Theatre of the same city who presented a condensed version of their piece "Touch," about children and sexual abuse.

Word of Mouth Productions from Jamaica Plain, MA, presented a play with music about four waitresses and the facts of their work-life called "Why Don't You Find a Rich Guy and Marry Him?" and El Teatro de la Esperanza in Santa Barbara, CA, presented "El Pulpo" ("The Octopus"), an updated commedia-style play which presents an allegory of political control and repression.

The United Mime Workers from Champaign-Urbana, IL and Otrabanda from New York presented the most formally innovative work we saw. UMW's "Mime Is No Object," a tightly-

choreographed and funny silent mime piece about work and the circulation of goods and money. Otrabanda presented "Salt Speaks," in which a husband, a wife and a sentient salt shaker investigate the meaning of life and scientific knowledge.

The Provisional Theatre's "Inching Through The Everglades," The Talking Band's (NYC) "Worksong," and the Dakota Theatre Caravan's "Welcome Home" were complex tap-estries concerned with the lives of working people. The Talking Bank interwove oral histories with vignettes on the lives of J.D. Rockefeller and his family and Frederick Winslow Taylor, the inventor of "scientific management," all in the episodic and musical form of a "performance cantata." Provisional's play juxtaposed two characters -- a restless Vietnam vet and construction worker named Willie Ray and a funny and outspoken supermarket checker named Irene -- and their thoughts and feelings about their own lives and other people's, their dreams and other people's. The Theatre Caravan's play was based on the life of a small South Dakota town on the occasion of its centennial; the four performers played dozens of characters to give the audience a feeling for the complexity of this small town's life.

In short, most of the performances presented at The Gathering spoke to social and political questions -- but in no single voice or mode. The festival was remarkable for its diversity and vitality. Just as the participants might be placed at all points along the spectrum described by its poles, the "Spirituals" and the "Politicos," the theater work presented might be placed at many points along the spectrum defined by theater that seeks to inform, to address the audience through thought and through formal innovation that upsets automatic ways of thinking -- and at the other pole, theater which uses traditional form and emotional appeals to carry a critical and unconventional message.

People were trying many different approaches -- really as many approaches as there were pieces of work -- and in each case their attempts were marked by real commitments to craft, to content, to form -- to find an authentic voice and also a voice that might be heard.

The Need for Criticism

What people missed at The Gathering-- at least the most common complaint we heard -- was a chance for criticism, for considering what we had seen and heard. The largest crowds were assembled at performances (most "working collectives" and workshops contained 30-50 people) but people only got a chance to talk about these common experiences in small groups, over a meal or during a break.

The "Boat People" discussion was very important for many participants, because it gave them a chance to raise fundamental questions that weren't being addressed otherwise -- but also because it gave them a chance to talk about a piece of work, a common frame of reference in a large meeting full of relative strangers.

Everyone at the "Boat People" meeting endorsed the idea that criticism should be an ongoing part of future events like The Gathering. We took a lesson from the people from El Teatro de la Esperanza, who explained that each play presented at Chicano-Latino festivals is discussed shortly afterward by the audience and also by members of the performing group in question -- that this gives meaning to the festival and offers the participants the help they need to improve their work.

Everyone participated in The Gathering with an eye to the future. Some of this was expressed in statements like the petition that appears on page 13, a statement drafted by the same group condemning U.S. involvement in El Salvador and Guatemala, and the final reports of the various "working collectives." "The Performed Self" issued a two-page statement listing half a dozen ways in which its members feel artists have special qualities and a special mission, three times as many "obstacles confronting artists in society," and a number of imperatives for artists based on "the conviction that all people are artists waiting to be realized."

The collective on "Emerging Values/Cultural Revitalization" formed a subgroup on disarmament which issues a "call for coordinated nationwide support by theaters and cultural workers for disarmament rituals to take place at the UN Special Session on Disarmament, May 1982, and rituals coinciding with this event in other areas of the country and the world."

Future Meetings

There was much talk about the next "Gathering," and some tentative conversation about setting a date in 1983. Because NAPNOC is a multidisciplinary organization and not just for theater people, we kept thinking how important it would be to call a meeting of progressive people who work in all kinds of arts forms, styles and contexts. That idea drew a lot of agreement but it also drew moans of agony over the planning and effort it would take to put together a meeting even *bigger* than The Gathering.

In a sense, that kind of multidisciplinary effort is taking place now. From The Gathering we made our way to ROOTS, and right after this issue of notes goes to press we'll be off to The People's Theatre Festival and the TENAZ Festival, in each case carrying the petition our group drafted at The Gathering, getting signatures. The National Murals Network hopes to have a meeting later this year.

Meanwhile, there are two writers' conferences planned for October -- the Mid-Continent Forum for the Future of Literature in Minneapolis on October 3-5; and the American Writers Congress in New York on October 9-12. The Mid-Continent Forum is sponsored by a group of small press distributors, neighborhood arts groups and university programs. You can obtain information by writing to P.O. Box 8918, Minneapolis, MN 55408 or calling Sue Ann Martinson at 612/822-8713.

The Writers Congress is sponsored by The Nation, a progressive weekly magazine.

Befitting its mid-town Manhattan location the Congress promises to be much less neighborhood arts-oriented. An "Inviting Committee" features famous names from Norman Mailer to Marge Piercy and a long list of workshops and panels -- both how-tos and political and social themes -- is promised. Write to GPO Box 1215, New York, NY 10116 for information, or call 212/420-0608.

(If any notes readers are planning to attend either of these meetings, please let us know. We'd like to persuade you to write up your impressions or let us interview you about the meeting(s).)

Scare Tactics in St. Peter

Before we leave The Gathering behind, a few words about money are in order. The meeting was planned carefully and cost-efficiently -- and it still cost a pile. As we go to press, Cherry Creek has some \$30,000 in debts, mostly money owed to people who put their own assets or livelihood on the line so that The Gathering could happen despite the drawn-out and often erratic procedures of potential funders.

Why such a large debt? The answer is one we had all better heed in the coming years. Cherry Creek has a commitment to the town of St. Peter, Minnesota. Perhaps the clearest expression of that commitment might be found in the thousands of dollars in revenues The Gathering brought to local businesses. For some of these, the event made the difference between success and failure by providing capital needed to go on.

But the far Right is not interested in such things: a group called "Women for Responsible Legislation" issued a newsletter denouncing Cherry Creek as "secular humanists" -- against God and family and for unspeakable and un-American perversions. They were able to get a few local business-people to go along; but most important, they were able to smear doubt and confusion across Cherry Creek's reputation, and plant fear in the minds of some towns-people.

Cherry Creek handled the situation well. They called a town meeting, brought the dirty business out into the open, and strengthened their connections with local people who still believe in the Minnesota tradition of free speech and thought.

But the goal of "Women for Responsible Legislation" was to make sure Cherry Creek had a hard time raising money for its work, and on that score they had some success, especially with a number of local funders who had been committed to Gathering support but were frightened by the controversy. When Cherry Creek found itself, just a few months before The Gathering, unexpectedly thousands of dollars behind its fundraising goal, it was time for a decision: Should The Gathering go on as planned? Needless to say, the decision was to go ahead, the money was borrowed, and the rest is history.

You can help Cherry Creek out of its dilemma and get something for yourself in the bargain. Cherry Creek publishes a bi-monthly newspaper, Theaterwork, which features articles about many aspects of theater and related matters -- theory, news, descriptions of performing group's philosophy and practice, new ideas (and even occasional reprints from NAPNOC notes).

Theaterwork is an important publication; no one in this field should be without it. Investing in a subscription will help Cherry Creek to meet its debts and to continue its work into the future.

A one-year subscription is \$5; two years are \$9. Write to Theaterwork, 406 S. Third St., St. Peter, MN 56082 or call 507/931-3810. DO IT TODAY!

ALTERNATE ROOTS

The ROOTS Annual Meeting was quite different from The Gathering both in form and intention. Instead of bringing together potentially sympathetic strangers, ROOTS was a gathering of old friends.

Alternate ROOTS began in 1976 at a "Meeting of Appalachian and Southern Theatres" at the Highlander Center in New Market, TN, the scene of many of the seminal meetings of the Southern civil rights movement. These artists wanted an organization that could help them develop better communications and a cooperative spirit within the region -- and could also advance their work by helping them to get exposure in the South and outside.

ROOTS has sponsored yearly meetings and showcase festivals for its members every other year since 1978 -- the next showcase is coming up in 1982 and may be in Knoxville to coincide with the World's Fair. ROOTS also focuses on "networking," publishing a regular newsletter.

ROOTS has been through quite a few changes recently. As Chairperson Dudley Cocks of Roadside Theatre in Whitesburg, KY (and NAPNOC Board member) put it, ROOTS' ambitious performance festival in St. Petersburg, FL in 1980 "emptied both barrels" in terms of money, and ROOTS was without paid staff for quite a while.

Regionalism's ROOTS

But in December Ruby Lerner was hired to fill the role of Executive Director. Her introductory remarks on the opening night of ROOTS' meeting will also help to introduce her here: Ruby spoke about the "new culture, grounded in place, which is emerging," and she offered several sources of information that she'd found inspirational. She mentioned Donald Davidson's contribution to I'll Take My Stand, a recently-reissued compilation of essays by Southerners who'd been involved in the agrarian movement of the '30s. Davidson says that an artist is also a person, and that the artist and person must enter into a common arena to function as *citizens*.

Like most ROOTS members, Ruby sees the organization's importance largely in terms of its regional identity. In the

July/August ROOTS newsletter she puts it this way: "I'm here because I believe that ROOTS represents a vision of the arts in the South and that our impact extends beyond our immediate terrain. As Nelda Clemmons of The Tampa Times wrote, 'Such a regional theater could be the resuscitator of values when a nation seems to be seeking them desperately.'"

Ruby's opening speech was followed by remarks by several of ROOTS' invited guests. Marc Miller of Southern Exposure (cited in NAPNOC notes #12), spoke of a retreat his organization recently held in an attempt to clarify some big questions that could shed light on its work. In describing the Southern Exposure staff's attempts to be concrete about the environment in which they must function, Marc used a vocabulary that was to be echoed by most other ROOTS speakers.

He said the South is a colony, the least sophisticated, most illiterate and poorest region -- and also the richest in natural resources, with the largest black population, and the strongest regional traditions.

ROOTS members feel they must learn to understand and work with a society they see as full of contradictions which demand resolution -- and in which strong forces would rather exploit these contradictions than resolve them.

Sue Thrasher, who works at the Highlander Center, began by saying that she was also most aware of and concerned with regional questions -- but she was trying hard now not to be a "regional nationalist"

She mentioned the Southern agrarian movement, and recommended a book by Arthur Raper, Sharecroppers All, describing the loss of land and other economic facts that made sharecroppers of most Southerners, in the city and on the land.

Sue said that to survive, we need rootedness in our own culture. An organization's programs may be national, but its concerns must be addressed from a regional and local perspective. As she sees it, that rootedness is a prerequisite for effective organizing.

Sharing, Inspiration and Empowerment

The discussion which followed introduced one of the most important themes at ROOTS: how political should we be? How political are we -- is it really a matter of choice?

One ROOTS member would state the case for an organization mainly concerned with sharing skills and professional comradeship: "The issue gets down to survival. I mean, if things are bad, you can't avoid getting really furious -- you will generate political ideas. But if you can't pay the bills you can't do your art."

Another member would state the opposing case: "There are three key words in this discussion: sharing, inspiration and empowerment -- artistically, socially, politically and economically."

These seem to be the dimensions of the debate within ROOTS over the organization's

purpose and future. As far as we could see, all the members were agreed that a key focus of ROOTS' work should be to help with artistic and technical matters and management skills -- what many people at the meeting called "survival." Beyond that, some saw another role for ROOTS.

In opening remarks for the business meeting later in the week, Dudley Cocke said he would "like to see ROOTS represent a set of principles and present a vision that could nurture our work and give us strength...If we can do that, ROOTS will be as important as the work of its individual members."

"We have one potential power in common: a predisposition to make art out of a particular place and people that can lead to the creation of theater that is very important in people's lives...."

Content and Cultural Democracy

Most of the four-day meeting was devoted to workshops. Along with NAPNOC Board member John O'Neal of the Free Southern Theatre in New Orleans, we participated in a discussion on cultural democracy and its relevance to ROOTS members' work.

John talked about the necessity of having a framework, a theoretical direction to orient cultural work, and he said that the idea of cultural democracy could serve that function.

But he also raised a cautionary point that several NAPNOC members have brought up lately: Cultural democracy can't be a "do your own thing" kind of idea, an idea that says everything is equally valid, that there is no legitimate opposition to oppressive cultural trends. In John's opinion, the kind of framework that cultural workers need is one that facilitates making the distinction between oppressor and oppressed, not one that obscures it. He laid out his sense of the necessary relationship between politics and art: "Content is what makes art important, not form. Form is a tool for the transmission of content."

Finally, he drew participants' attention to the question of audience ("audience is the key -- who you're actually working for and who you think you're working for"), describing the Free Southern Theatre's experience: "FST had 90% subsidy, so its critical audience was funders who could control the theater by cutting off subsidy.... If we went to one audience and they didn't like our work, we could find another audience." He asked participants if they weren't really playing to that small, critical audience that controls their subsidy, and not to the larger audience they profess.

Critical Issues

Steve Kent from the Provisional Theatre in Los Angeles came down to the ROOTS meeting directly from The Gathering and offered a three-afternoon performance workshop. Ellen Rudolph, former director of the Off-Off Broadway Alliance in New York, was a panelist in a discussion of artistic issues, along with Steve Kent, Dudley Cocke, and Mac Pirkle of The Play Group in Knoxville, TN. Mac had attended The Gathering and several

times during the ROOTS meeting carried its message about the need for criticism within the group. "Where," he asked, "is the place to challenge each other?"

From Mac's perspective, the time is ripe for people to ask some hard questions: why did our company start in the first place? "Does anyone here derive over half their income from the gate? Does anyone feel their work now is their best in five years? I feel we've been lazy because the money is still rolling in...."

Steve Kent offered his advice on how to begin making critical assessments of work within ROOTS. He suggested three points to keep in mind:

1) Networks like ROOTS can function as critical frameworks. He offered again the example of TENAZ, which has formalized and institutionalized evaluation. "There is no performance without evaluation. It's sometimes scary and sometimes unpleasant ...but it either jams you into improving or stopping....And because the (TENAZ) festival is annual, groups can get criticism year-to-year, as they attempt to change their work -- there's continuity."

For TENAZ, according to Steve, the first analysis is whether the work is politically correct: "for example, a group might be criticized for blaming social problems on individual weakness."

2) Steve offered a formula for making critical statements that aren't competitive or designed to wound: "When you do _____, I feel _____, and I want you to do _____ because _____."

3) Steve also said that all struggles are power struggles, and that issues concerning power within each group must be dealt with. He recounted Provisional's experience in working with a therapist who forced people to deal with hierarchies. Organized as a collective, Provisional resisted the idea of hierarchy completely, but now has come to believe that a number of hierarchies must be recognized, all based on expertise. That way the group can confidently defer to the judgement of, say, the member most successful at handling promotion, and get on with its other business as well.

Steve suggested several ways in which group members acquire the power to prevail despite resistance: experience, articulateness, charisma, emotionality (as when a group indulges a member because it's "too heavy" to fight it out); mystification; and withholding (as with the person who gets power by withholding comment or approval, by making feelings known without words).

This discussion concluded with participants sharing the basic facts of their group's work and vision -- telling others the meaning and purpose they saw in it.

The Art of Management

Representatives from The Road Company in Johnson City, TN, Roadside, and the Southern Arts Federation (the regional arts agency, headquartered in Atlanta), led a two-afternoon workshop on touring.

And we participated, along with Ellen Rudolph and George Thorn (director of the Graduate Program in Arts Management at Virginia Tech) in a discussion of alternative management styles.

Management is a key concern for ROOTS members. Some are involved in efforts to "professionalize" their management -- direct-mail promotion, season subscriptions, a hierarchical administrative structure and separate administrative and artistic staffs. Others want to maintain nontraditional management styles or administrative structures, but fear these choices will make fundraising harder and harder.

Ellen Rudolph offered some of the various strategies groups are trying to increase their chances of economic survival. One is reducing overhead by maintaining a kind of ad hoc theater -- instead of trying to support a fulltime enterprise, switch to a project-by-project basis. Another is the idea of affiliation with a larger and more financially solid institution -- as the Living Stage in Washington, DC is affiliated with the Arena Theatre, or some theater groups have affiliated with educational institutions which can provide space, back-up, perhaps some funding.

George Thorn laid out his vision of management: "Don't let the tail wag the dog....A clearly agreed, communicated and identified vision is the first step." He suggested that in evaluating their current management structure groups begin by asking "What is it we want to do, are now doing, and can't do now?" In George's view, the role of managers is to support the artists.

Katharine Pearson of The Play Group (and NAPNOC's Board) spoke against the idea that changes in management are necessarily the solution to money problems. Katharine said she could tell "stories of money and access to performing in the schools denied because of the politics of critical theater work." This kicked off a chain of such anecdotes, reminding everyone that survival is more than a question of boards of directors and brochures.

The Politics of Management

We thought this would be a good time to return to the fundamental relationship of art and politics, and suggested that while it's hard to show that increased emphasis on professionalization -- and increased proportionate expenditure on administration -- has meant better work or better community relations, it's fairly obvious that this trend has taken some of the bite out of many erstwhile "alternative" groups.

We suggested that the real point is to diversify -- to help as many different models as possible come into existence and be tested in the difficult present climate -- bearing in mind that for most people in the neighborhood arts movement, the vision is one of survival but also of social change.

We made two suggestions to ROOTS members. First, we asked people to think about the oft-invoked regionalism in terms of

management, not just in terms of the style or content of their work. Are there particularly Southern organizational forms or values that might have relevance to ROOTS member institutions? The co-op tradition comes immediately to mind, and certainly there are others.

Second, we suggested that ROOTS as an organization could advocate for choice and diversity with policy-makers and funders -- just as the major institution alliances lobby for their own interests. For instance, most ROOTS groups are fairly small-budget organizations. Several members complained about a familiar problem: why is it that funders demand "new projects" each year instead of providing support for ongoing activities? For small groups, this distinction is especially inept, since their ongoing programs are likely to be a collection of "projects" anyway. ROOTS could speak strongly (where individual members might fear to jeopardize their funding, or might not carry sufficient clout) on behalf of nontraditional management styles and for the kind of grant support most helpful to ROOTS members.

Some ROOTS members resented our comments, feeling we were condemning companies that had adopted traditional professional management styles and were pleased with the results. This disagreement highlights one of the real obstacles to the kind of diversification we called for -- most of us are stuck with the unfortunate tendency to seek a single, "right" solution, to defend our own choices by attacking others.

From where we sit the enemy is mindless conformity: there is no single right management system or style. To promote diversity -- so long as there are so many prominent voices speaking out on behalf of conventional, hierarchical choices -- we will speak for the alternatives.

ROOTS Routes

ROOTS' business meeting later in the week focused on organization. ROOTS is divided into four regions with a representative from each serving on the Executive Committee, along with the Chairperson, Secretary, Fiscal Officer and Ex-Officio Officer. Between annual meetings the regional representatives organize local meetings to inform themselves and the other groups in their regions, and they attend periodic Executive Committee meetings held in each of the four regions.

Alternate ROOTS membership is open to performing arts groups and individuals in the South -- and funders and arts agencies in the region would be well-advised to receive ROOTS material as well. For more information contact Ruby Lerner at Alternate ROOTS, 1538 Laurel, Knoxville, TN 37916 or telephone 615/546-0290.

Arlene Goldbard
Don Adams

BYE-BYE BIDDLE HELLO...who?

As NAPNOC notes goes to press, there's been no official word. But the Washington Post and New York Times have each leaked it, and when you call the White House they remind you that appointments aren't official 'til they're formally announced. So it appears to be official: President Reagan will name Francis S.M. ("Frank") Hodson, principal policy deputy to White House Chief of Staff James Baker III, to head the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

Hodson, 43, has been making official appearances as White House representative at arts-related meetings. He's made introductory remarks at the Washington meetings of the Presidential Task Force on the Arts & Humanities: "President and Mrs. Reagan... personally care about the arts, perhaps more than any other first family...." And calls to the White House to investigate speculations about the Reagan administration's arts policies and appointments have been referred to Hodson's office. (He's also coordinating the Reagan task force on immigration.)

Hodson, who's from Los Angeles, is a lawyer with degrees from Yale, Cambridge, and Stanford Law School. He entered the foreign service in 1966, after two years with the New York law firm, Sullivan and Cromwell. He acted as assistant program adviser at the Supreme Allied Command in Brussels from 1967-69 and returned to Nixon's State Department as a political affairs officer until 1971. He was assigned as a detailee to the Council on Environmental Quality (1972-73), then served as special assistant to the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. With Ford in the White House, Hodson moved to the Department of Commerce (1974-77), where he served briefly as then-Undersecretary James Baker's executive assistant before becoming Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy and Strategic Resource Policy. He returned to the State Department in 1977, where he directed the office of Law of the Sea negotiations, later becoming Special U.S. Deputy for Nonproliferation. He resigned in August, 1980, to serve the Reagan-Bush campaign as coordinator of preparation for the debates.

The extent of Hodson's arts involvement appears to be some undergraduate activities at Yale (The Post mentioned coordinating some college choral concerts at Carnegie Hall.)-- a fact that is likely to spur some arts world controversy. Hodson is known as a "good manager," but as far as his positions and loyalties on arts world issues go, we can only speculate. Chances are, his inexperience in arts administrations will be forgiven by the arts establishment, which takes hope from Hodson's White House connections. There's little question about his Senate confirmation once nominated.

Hodson can be expected to cleave to the Reagan line and support "our national

treasures" with all the Endowment funds that can be mustered. People who do cultural work in poor communities, rural areas, minority neighborhoods or whose work focuses on radical or controversial themes shouldn't expect much from a Hodsoll Endowment.

Why Reagan would nominate Hodsoll -- who's shown no previous interest in cultural policy -- remains a mystery. Insiders speculate that Hodsoll is being rewarded for faithful campaign service with a "plum" position that doesn't carry much weight in the Reagan administration. The Departments of Energy and Labor have already been handed to a dentist and a building contractor on the same basis.

Don Adams
Arlene Goldbard

MAKING WAVES (cont'd from page one)

on the air now in 28 states, and more in the offing. They are united through a national membership organization called the National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB).

Community Access, Community Control

In many respects, NFCB and its members are radio stations with neighborhood arts consciousness. From NFCB's Statement of Purpose:

"...We believe it is important that the full range of opinion in our communities finds expression through our stations; and that a wide variety of cultural, racial, political and social groups should have use of the broadcast spectrum. We believe that to insure the foregoing, broadcast outlets should be controlled, in substantial part, by representatives of the communities they serve....We have an active commitment to public affairs, exploring a broad range of issues -- local, national and international -- and presenting political and social alternatives for action.... We present diverse cultural, musical, and dramatic offerings, produced locally and drawn from across the country and the world ...We care strongly about the people in our communities and what we broadcast. That is why, at each of our stations and across the country, we work for the growth of vibrant, responsive and human broadcasting."

Community radio stations relate to the neighborhood arts movement in two important ways: They can provide broadcast outlets for the work of community-based cultural groups; and they are important community cultural institutions themselves, offering the airwaves to communities otherwise at the mercy of advertiser-controlled media.

The NFCB Program

As is true for most neighborhood arts groups in the United States, most community radio stations were begun in the ferment of the late '60s, and the idea spread through the '70s as the success of earlier efforts became known.

The NFCB was begun in 1975 as a means of promoting collaboration among community-based radio stations around the country. NFCB has five main purposes:

"1. Foster the development of public policy at the legislative, regulatory and administrative levels to aid the growth of our stations and advance the public interest in mass communications.

"2. Seek an equitable distribution of federal funds appropriated for noncommercial broadcasting and develop support for community oriented broadcasting projects.

"3. Facilitate the exchange of program materials, information and technical expertise among ourselves.

"4. Publicize our activities and represent our interests before such organizations, agencies and groups as may affect our individual and collective welfare.

"5. Assist the organization and expansion of new and innovative broadcast stations throughout the country."

NFCB's 9-member Washington, DC staff carries out a comprehensive service and advocacy program to work toward these goals. Its Program Service is a cooperative national program distribution system. NFCB members receive a monthly listing of programs which they may order at reduced rates. Additionally, NFCB publishes a monthly newsletter containing information, features and technical articles of interest to community stations; an informal quarterly newsletter called fast forward which serves as a discussion forum and idea exchange for program directors at member stations; and occasional Advisory Memos for time-dated regulatory or funding news and job listings.

Special publications include the NFCB Legal Handbook, a guide to FCC regulations affecting community radio; SOURCETAP: A Directory of Program Resources for Radio; and a soon-to-be-published Training Manual to assist stations in training the volunteers who carry out much of the on-air and administrative work of community radio.

Minority Networks

As the community radio field has expanded and diversified, other associations have been formed by NFCB members. Four existing Spanish language stations in California and Washington have formed Western Community Bilingual Radio. Additional bilingual stations are being organized in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.

Similarly, AIRS -- the American Intertribal Radio Society -- brings together Native American Indian stations already operating and being organized in Arizona, California, Minnesota, New Mexico, North and South Dakota, Utah and Wisconsin. Many of these stations do bilingual programming and focus on cultural preservation and development.

NFCB stations that serve mainly black communities keep in touch through an informal network within NFCB.

NFCB also hosts an annual national conference and regional meetings of members and associates (independent producers, non-NFCB stations and others) which permit all the members to meet and work together.

Getting Off the Ground

NFCB also serves as a resource for community people interested in starting a community radio station. NFCB stations usually start out with a handful of concerned people who take on a leadership role and involve others in the formidable task of building a station from the ground up. Neighborhood arts groups can take a lesson from the perseverance and commitment to community organizing involved.

Nan Rubin, NFCB's Director of Station Development, estimates that this process takes an average of 3-4 years; she estimates that there are two dozen new groups now working with NFCB to begin new stations and several nearly ready to go on the air.

The complexity of FCC regulations and the high start-up costs of community radio make the organizational period a difficult and crucial one. NFCB works closely with groups involved in organizing new stations, providing advice, suggesting models for organizing and planning, and making referrals to other stations that have dealt with similar problems.

The station that introduced us to NFCB in the first place, WEFT in Champaign-Urbana, IL (see NAPNOC notes #5 for the story of its founding), missed a beat in the processing of its FCC papers and has therefore been delayed in its clearance for broadcasting. Though not yet on the air, WEFT has begun to reach listeners through the local cable system.

The Problem of Support

Once they are going, support for NFCB member stations comes from a variety of sources. Some receive occasional grants from local foundations. State arts and humanities councils (and to a lesser extent the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities) have given program support for special projects, though most public arts agencies are wary of community media.

A good number of NFCB members stations have found special fundraising activities to generate needed funds. The Cincinnati (OH) station's "Blues Cruise" features local performers in a highly successful riverboat fundraising event that's been a help to Cincinnati's blues "renaissance." KPFA in Berkeley (CA) sponsors a large annual crafts fair that generates revenues for the station. And some stations have succeeded in getting businesses to underwrite productions costs of a particular program or series.

The most important source of community radio support, though, is its listeners. Member dues and contributions make up an average of 30-60% of NFCB members' budgets, Nan Rubin estimates. Most NFCB stations rely on listeners not only for money but for on-air and support personnel too.

Radio Free Georgia's (WRFG in Atlanta) General Manager Chris Carroll expressed a concern felt by many other community radio people these days: "Our biggest challenge is to increase our listener support," she said, after listing previous and current

funding sources that include CETA, VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), state and federal humanities agencies, and city and county arts agencies. Carroll estimates that 25% of her \$100,000 budget comes from listeners and another 25% from fundraising benefits.

While she feels sure that Radio Free Georgia will stay on the air -- in fact, the station's increasing its power to broadcast to a wider area -- she is less certain about how successful they'll be in making a case to new funders since "arts and cultural programs just aren't seen as important" compared to other priorities. As for the prospects of business support, Carroll is skeptical; WRFG has gotten on \$1-3,000 a year from businesses.

Arts on the Air

In discussing the potential for cooperation and collaboration between community radio stations and neighborhood arts groups, Nan Rubin had encouraging words: "Local organizations involved in culture shouldn't feel intimidated by radio. Most stations are eager to collaborate, and it's real cheap....It's a tremendous opportunity to reach people -- possible a very different audience than who they're usually reaching."

Rubin cited a wide array of instances where successful collaborative programs benefitted both the local stations and artists, and pointed out that stations in rural areas and small cities and minority-run stations were especially interested in collaborative work with local groups and relied on the participation of local people in their programming.

These stations' listeners particularly listen to radio for what Rubin called "cultural reinforcement" -- to enjoy music and talk, news and issue discussions that are not carried on commercial radio.

Preparing and producing effective radio is more than turning on a microphone. Artists interested in developing radio programs need to work with station personnel or other experienced producers to adapt material for radio transmission. Some stations and independent producers have special training programs for nonprofit community groups to develop radio production skills. Contacting local community radio stations is a good way to begin to locate such opportunities, and to discuss how to go about exploring radio broadcasting potential for your work.

Most stations are equipped for some kind of remote live broadcasting. Concerts and lectures can be especially well-suited to this simple broadcast treatment. Not all forms of live performance suit themselves to live broadcast, though; taping allows for editing and reworking to suit the radio format. Many dramatic pieces that may seem appropriate for radio treatment can turn out to rely at key points on visuals. It takes a trained ear to judge. These problems of production can be surmounted with the collaboration of sound technicians and a commitment to experiment with new modes of production for the medium.

CULTURED..... PEARLS.....

NAPNOC member Hamish Sandison has suggested a new feature for notes: a column of short items sent in by readers, and chosen to shed some special light (or shadow) on cultural politics in the U.S. We'll offer the first few items, and if readers are interested enough to send others along, we'll make it a regular features. Keep those cards and letters coming to NAPNOC, P.O. Box 11440, Baltimore, MD 21239.

On August 25, the New York board of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) unanimously rejected a proposal by one of its members that Ronald Reagan (former SAG president and honorary member) be disciplined for anti-union conduct in his handling of the air traffic controllers' strike. They did vote to notify the President that SAG supports the strike, but a SAG spokesperson noted that "any member of the Screen Actors Guild, including such a prominent one as the President, is entitled to hold his own opinions."

September 4 was a thousand-dollar day: Health and Human Services Secretary Richard Schweiker announced he would ask states to enforce Congress' new limit on personal property for welfare recipients. Schweiker wants social workers to visit the homes of potential recipients and make sure the value of their worldly goods -- clothing, furniture, utensils and everything else -- doesn't exceed \$1,000.

On the same day, President Reagan took delivery on some new personal property of his own. Tony Lama, Jr. appeared at The White House to present Reagan with four pairs of custom-made cowboy boots, each pair valued at...you guessed it!...\$1,000 -- that is, before the 14-karat gold hand-cut presidential seal was laid into them.

ENTER HISTORY

We met Mark Weinberg at *The Gathering* and were glad for the opportunity to do so. He asked us to run the following announcement. If you can help him out, please do -- and tell him NAPNOC sent you.

"I am seeking information on Alternative/Collective Theatres for research on a dissertation (hopefully book) to be titled 'Performance Generation: The History and Evolution of Collective Theatre in America.' It will include a history of the movement since the late 1950's, detailed chapters on the histories and processes of specific companies, and a directory of working collectives.

"The organization and working methods of collective theatres, as well as the productions, have been on the leading edge of the political and theatrical frontier for years, yet have officially gone unnoticed. 'Theatre in America,' a 1968 report for the National Theatre Conference, claims to be 'inclusive' but does not mention any alternative theatres. The same is true of the pompous study 'Performing Arts and American Society' published 10 years later. It is necessary to document the successes and failures of alternative companies -- to chronicle the legacy and living force of theatre as an art and an instrument for growth and change.

"I need to make contact not only with active theatres all over the country, but also with members of past groups and with people who have left still active companies.

"If you have any information to share, please contact me at:

25 South Hillside Terrace
Madison, WI 53705

(608) 231-1103.

"Thank you."

JOIN NAPNOC and help build CULTURAL DEMOCRACY

NAPNOC has set a target this year; with 600 members and subscribers by the summer 1982 Annual Meeting, our organization will be self-sustaining. The movement for cultural democracy needs NAPNOC's independent, unbought voice -- and if you are concerned about community cultural work, you need it too.

Individual memberships are \$25 a year; each membership includes a free subscription to NAPNOC notes. Libraries, institutions and others who don't want to become members can take out a year's subscription at \$25.

I want to become a member.
Enclosed is my check for \$25.

Sign me up for a year's
subscription (10 issues).
I've enclosed \$25.

I'm an angel. En-
closed is my tax-de-
ductible contribution
of \$_____.

Name

Organization Name (if any)*

Mailing Address

Zip

Contact Phone

Please return to NAPNOC, P.O. Box 11440, Baltimore, MD 21239 or telephone 301/727-6776.

* Please send information about your organization and its program, and be sure to put NAPNOC on your mailing list. Use the other side of this coupon to name others who'd want NAPNOC info.

