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MPA NEWSLETTER # II

Feb. 7, 1972

EDITORIAL: MPA IS NOT FOR EVERYBODY

At a recent Central Committee Meeting, a motion was made that unless an excuse be given Central committee Meetings be compulsory for people living at the Centre. The motion was met with a flood of opposition. Most of the people at the meeting (and by the way, only 2 of the 12 residents were present) felt that the motion was rigid and reactionary, and patterned after the authoritarian structure of hospitals. It was felt that attendance and participation at MPA functions ought to be voluntary.

The reactions to the motion reflect quite accurately the operating principles of MPA during our first year. The general policy has been to keep bureaucracy, rules and structure to a minimum, and to maximize individual freedom. Many people are fed-up with the constraints on personal liberty one finds in almost all institutions and particularly in mental hospitals. In the attempt to avoid becoming just another hospital, MPA has made a place where people can do pretty much as they like, without some authority figure restricting every action because it violates one of a million rules.

I think it is fair to say that MPA has been following a policy of anarchism. I also think it is fair to say that our experience over the past few months has shown that this policy does not work. Things were good for the first 6 or 8 months, but eventually the loose and open structure attracted people who abused the freedom. I should say that I favored an anarchistic policy during the early stages, but I have changed my mind as a result of our experiences during the past months. Our reputation as an absolutely unauthoritarian organization has attracted a small number of aggressive, anti-social people. Because of the open nature of MPA, these people have had a free hand to dominate and intimidate the group. MPA has become a breeding ground for "Strong" people to impose their will on the "weak". This is so not only because of the anarchistic structure of MPA, but also because many "weak" confused, upset & frightened people use our facilities. It's an ideal setting for power-trippers to "do their thing". The individual comes first, the group second, no matter how damaging the individual may be to the group. Because our centre is small, one or two people can create a disruptive atmosphere throughout the entire house by "Doing their own thing".

However, I think we are finally beginning to wake-up and to see that hippie anarchism is not a reasonable way to run an organization. What then is the alternative? Partly, we must begin to see that the group is as important as the individual, we must stop being afraid of terms like "responsibility to the community," like "obligation," "duty" etc. We see these terms as negative, because in our experience they have always been shoved down our throats by authority figures who have not consulted the community, have not consulted us. This sort of tyrannical power-structure is one alternative to anarchism, and that I think is what people in MPA are afraid of. We do not want a small group of authority figures saying "You can't stay here, you must do this, you can't do that." In this situation the individual feels helpless. How can she or he challenge the official? What recourse is there to get rules or officials changed? So, owing to our fear of power-structures in which we have no say, we stick to anarchism and let the mess continue.

There is however another alternative, and that is a genuinely democratic process of making and enforcing rules which serve the good of the community. However, we have had so little experience with the practice of democracy and have grown so cynical about any kind of power, that we are distrustful of all structures involving "rules and regulations". The very phrase makes me queasy.

I think MPA is one of the very few organizations in which participatory democracy can be put into practice. This means seeing very clearly that democratically made and enforced rules are not the same as rules made and enforced from above. It also means seeing that "responsibility, obligation and duty to the community" are not dirty words but are essential concepts in the daily practice of a democratic group. "Power" is another term that needs to be salvaged from the dictionary of smut. So is "property". Shared power and publicly controlled property are indispensable aspects of participatory democracy.

While MPA is partly an experiment it's also rooted in the very real lives of people who have very real goals which need to be met. We must serve the needs of "weak" lonely and unhappy people, but this will be done only when the "weak" get together and exercise their collective power. To a large extent we have not enforced rules because the many weak and peaceful people have been afraid to challenge the tiny number of strong and aggressive people.

Our experience has shown that the stereotype about the group or "mob" being aggressive and irrational is false. At MPA, the group has always been reasonable, lenient and forgiving. In my view, we have done this to too great a degree. It is time for the community (that's us) to assert ourselves against those who want to destroy the community.

At the last general meeting, we voted to expel immediately a person who has been continually violent at the Center. We had spent hours in meetings, and individually, talking with him, almost begging him to conform to the rule prohibiting violence. He met our pleas with indifference and cynicism. The decision to throw him out was a monumental one. I believe it was the right decision and that we should realize that. Saying that he was "mentally ill" and couldn't control his violence is a cop-out, which he in fact acknowledged. He claimed to take responsibility for his violence and said he would do it again in the same situation. At the general meeting the group said, "Then we do not want you here." The insight I gained at that meeting was that MPA is not for everybody. As Mike said, "The door swings both ways." (This, by the way is how MPA differs from hospitals and other non-democratic institutions. You can't just walk out of a hospital, jail or school.) We have the right to say, "If you don't want to conform to the few, basic democratic rules, then you shouldn't be here." I believe it is the right of any democratic community to make that decision.

If the few people who refuse to conform were expelled, many more people would re-join the group. One woman said that, while she used to bring her teenage daughters to the center, she wouldn't dare do it now because of the violence. We must re-make our community so that all peaceful people feel at home here.

To go back to the beginning, the compulsory-attendance motion which I made and subsequently withdrew, was (perhaps) too harsh. Out of frustration, I made it not so that the residents would be present to be disciplined, but so that they would be present to make their voices heard on decisions that affect their lives. The general point, which I was awkwardly trying to raise in the motion, is that the group has the right, indeed the obligation, to decide upon and to control what goes on the MPA Centers.

There are important decisions to be made. They can be made either by a few people, by no one, or by everyone. Without question, the last choice is by far the best.

BY LANNY BECKMAN

THREE MORE SALARIED JOBS TO BE FILLED.ELECTION AT THE GENERAL MEETING, FRIDAY FEBRUARY 18th, 8 P.M.

At the general meeting of January 28th, the following three people were elected to salaried positions:

Avi Dolgin---- Housing Co-ordinator
 Neil Friedenbergl ---- Night Crisis Worker
 Jon Ycrk ---- Public Relations

No one was elected to the Arts and Crafts position as the two applicants Withdrew.

It was announced at the meeting that Pat Bryce was resigning as secretary (for the utterly incomprehensible reason that she is going to Cypress to get Married) and Stan Mailey resigned from the position of East End Co-ordinator.

There are, therefore, three additional salaried jobs to be filled. It was passed at the meeting that the positions be temporarily elected at the Central Committee Meeting on February 2nd, and that they be advertised in the newsletter and elections must be submitted to the MPA office by noon of February 18th.

In summary, the following three positions are to be elected:

- (1) Secretary
- (2) Co-ordinator for East End Centre
- (3) Arts and Crafts Person

All three are interesting jobs. If you want to work for MPA, submit your application by noon of February 18th. Further information can be obtained from the office or by calling 738-5177.

ATTEND THE ELECTIONS - FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18th, 8 P.M.

TIME OF TIME OF LIFE

In my twisted mangled mind.
 I often wonder, what has
 happened to time.
 My thoughts often wander
 to points beyond, and some-
 times I wonder to whom they
 belong.
 I do not fear death when
 I am depressed, but what is
 depression, and what does it
 have to do with death.
 When time is fine and warm
 with love my mind is clear
 and I have no fear.
 This world of ours is deep
 in thoughts of eternity and
 time.
 If our souls rest on the
 caverns of our mind, if
 everyone would take just
 a moment of time to help
 other people to sort out
 their minds.
 This place would be a
 place of heaven divine.

By...Marg Keene

NAME IN THE NEWS:

A number of people who drop into MPA from time to time have been complaining they NEVER know what's going on, or what other members are doing. I think it's a justi-

fied complaint. We all like gossip, right? And the more scandalous, the better. This column is meant to fill our members' long-felt need for information about other peoples' business.

You have all heard, I suppose, about Molly Dexall's new job. What you probably don't know is that she is really an undercover agent for the Weatherman, smuggling talcum powder, pabulum and other hallucinogens into boarding homes to subvert the minds of the boarders and make them more receptive to radical doctrines. Molly was especially chosen for this job because her appearance and (at times) manner suggest respectability.

Len Loriner's painting on the Crisis Room wall has been much admired. His next major work will be more sensational; it represents gerbils courting -- and rumour has it that the gerbils are shown in the nude. I don't think it will make the Playboy centre fold, though. Pity.

Gail Berg spent Christmas, as usual, in Las Vegas. Over the years, she has spent her spare time perfecting a poker system which is almost infallible. Now she takes parties of the idle rich and about-to-be-rich to the casinos, where they are the terror of all other players. Her next project will be to devise a means of winning at the slot machines.

Liza Kallstrom's favourite Christmas present was a pet chimpanzee. Dressed as a butler, the chimp firmly escorts to the door unwanted visitors, especially those yobs from MPA. But Liza had better be careful; the wily animal is collecting evidence to blackmail her.

While wandering along Fourth Avenue one night, I heard chanting and drumbeats coming from an apparently empty storefront. I went in, and found a group of worshippers prostrating themselves before a 6-foot-long carrot which was laid on an altar. The priest, who was wearing a mask, approached me and began to sprinkle me with pepper from a censer. I seized him and tore his mask off. What was my surprise to see the mild features of John Drake. John told me he had been dedicated to the service of the Giant Carrot for over a year. "It beats office work for excitement," he said. "And I get a rakeoff on the offerings."

For the last month, elderly women in different parts of Vancouver have been receiving 2 a.m. visits from Darryl Rempel. Dressed as a policeman and supplied with a forged warrant, Darryl unravels their knitting on the pretence of looking for dope, digs up their African violets, and spits in their window-boxes. Then he leaves, casting dark hints that they are about to be arrested for conspiring with the Mafia. The real fuzz are looking for Darryl, on a charge of impersonating a police officer. But that's nothing to what his victims will do to him when they catch him. You can't beat an old lady with a well-sharpened knitting needle.

Adrianne Whiffenpoof

GREETINGS PEOPLE ---- FROM THE FARM

The city's coming to the farm. The farm past role has been for people to come out for a month and get into a communal situation. Well so far it has not worked out that well because not much interest has been shown to do this and thus the farm has not been running up to expectations.

So we are changing roles for a while and opening it up more for people to come on day trips, or two or three days or up to a month; for people to come in groups or alone. If you are interested contact Terry at the West End House. The first group of people planning to come out is this Saturday.

So if you feel like getting away let us know. Hope to see you for good feelings

Peace-----By Lloyd

FROM OUR GRAFFITI BOARD

Paranoia is a state of heightened sensitivity. Most of us are persecuted beyond our wildest delusions.

HOUSING REPORT

Stop staring at those drab green walls!
Forget those bickering neighbours next door!
Kick your landlady down the stairs and come talk to me about co-op housing.
We have gotten some off the ground recently - four people near 21st and Main,
four more near 35th and Fraser and five people (MPA and non MPA) in Kits.
(that one was Patty's work). I've stopped looking for houses, as we've run
low on co-op people now.

Then I've been looking for single rooms and cheap suites, interceding with land-
lords on tenants' behalf (got a problem?), driving, phoning, moving furniture
and drinking coffee at the El Matador.

Recently we've come into a lot of furniture from various donations. The largest
was from the City - furniture, sheets and appliances from the Angelus Hotel.
A new firm of rugged individualists - The Unmoved Movers - worked for two days
with a truck and driver donated by McIntosh Moving (tell your rich friends
to give them their business) lugging and storing furnishings. The East End
Centre has priority on these items, followed by co-ops (return to paragraph
one).

Keep me posted.

Avi Dolgin

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

This evening I positively attended a meeting at the request of Barb to project
some assistance to MPA with what I had. I was totally and completely given
non-respect, and insulted. I feel that there is a tremendous, and to me
that means "extremely" large amount of "unfairness" in the jurisdictional lead-
ership of the Mental Patients Association.

It would seem that there is a definite possibility that the above mentioned
association has no care or welfare or compassion or interest in Mental
Patients whatsoever.

Sincerely,
Tom G. Pollok

ON DECEIT

If we are to be really truthful in what we say we may find ourselves observing a
new day.

When all that we perceive to be exacting perfection is actually procrastination
That's in dire need of correction.

So beware the use of slander, and keep your tongue in line. Truth is a virtue
so you say -- well now I have said mine.

Darryl Rempel

PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT

Jon York has been elected to the position of Public Relations and Liason Officer.
His initial baptism to the post was a lecture and information talk on Mental Health
and the MPA at the Ladies Haddasah Bazaar, which was enthusiastically received.

He visited U.B.C. Health Sciences Hospital and played guitar and sang -- then Phil
Prefontaine read his self-composed poetry.

Jon is presently working on a dossier to present to Riverview, U.B.C., General Hos-
pital and Lionsgate outlining the expansion and new facilities of the MPA, hopefully
enabling him to work directly with new releases between MPA and the hospitals.

HOW SO CONCAVE:

If you were to look at it really closely, you would probably strain your eyes. Therefore the point remains different from just about, but not quite similar to the opposite. Now the perplexing thing about a relatively immaterial, though seemingly trivial approach to declining from a positively infinite conglomeration of impractical, not to leave their present irreversible improvisations from the proportionate involvement.

DARRYLL REMPEL

KNOTS TO YOU:

R.D. Laing is a British psychiatrist who has written a number of books about madness. Perhaps his main contribution to our understanding of insanity is the idea that going crazy can be a perfectly reasonable way to react to an unreasonable world.

In his latest book, KNOTS, Laing describes some twisted or knotted interpersonal relationships that produce emotional turmoil in one or both parties. He unravels the tangled sequence of thoughts that the people involved experience only as confusion.

Here is one of Laing's knots:

Jill: You think I am stupid

Jack: I don't think you're stupid

Jill: I must be stupid to think you think I'm stupid if you don't-- or you must be lying.
I am stupid in every way: To think I'm stupid if I am stupid to think I'm stupid, if I'm not stupid to think you think I'm stupid, if you don't.

And another one:

Jill: I'm ridiculous

Jack: No you are not

Jill: I'm ridiculous to feel ridiculous when I'm not
You must be laughing at me for feeling you are laughing at me if you are not laughing at me.

I have found it useful and fun to write out my own knots. If you have any luck with yours, submit it to the newsletter. Here is one of mine:

Jack tells Jill she is better than he is. Jill believes him and tells him she is better than he is. Jack resents her for believing him and tells her she is worse than he is for believing she is better than he is. Jill feels guilty for hurting Jack and tells him she is worse than he is for believing she is better than he is. Jack feels guilty for telling her she is worse than he is for believing she is better than he is and tells her he is worse than she is for telling her. Jill feels guilty for having made him feel worse than she is by believing she is worse than he is for believing she is better than he is. Jill feels he is better than she is. Jack feels she is better than he is.

Lanny Beckman

EAST END MPA REPORT

The East end Co-ordinators have been working on getting our applications for a City and Provincial permit to operate an East End MPA at 303 E. 46th. We have also contacted & are proceeding with an application for the CM & HC mortgage for this property. In the meantime, we have rented a house at 2673 E. 28th and are setting up a temporary East end MPA with space for eight people. We were helped by many of the members in this project. The people now living there are involved in setting up their living situation. People are welcome to visit but there will be no crisis set-up as in the West End MPA. We have also been involved in setting up the first East End Co-op at 569 E. 21st.

Most of us are working individually with members and with the co-ordinators of the various programs with the idea of keeping the Eastenders talking to the Westenders.

Fran Phillips

EMPLOYMENT REPORT:

The most successful event during the month of January was the formation of the Janitorial Service. An unsuccessful grant application to the Salvation Army was referred to Smithrite Disposal Ltd., and has resulted in a donation of most (or all) of the required equipment. So, the obtaining of contracts is the next step. Please help if you know any contacts. More people are needed to work in the Janitorial Service--- janitors experienced and inexperienced

still on the fire is the Restaurant scheme -- ideas welcome! Michiko San has proposed a Japanese low-priced restaurant.

Anyone wanting employment or training, or needs help with welfare, please see me. Many people have contributed by keeping me informed on new jobs & openings. Thank you

Barb Russigel

THEATRE WORKSHOP:

On January 14th, John Gray who teaches theatre at City College and is part of an actors' workshop in Vancouver, gave an evening of theatre games for MPA people at St. Mark's Church. John opened the evening with a few yoga exercises, followed by a "trust" exercise in which we divided into couples, and one partner in each couple shut his eyes and let himself be led around the room by the other, being led by the contact of finger-tips only. It was surprising to find how easy it was to be controlled by the finger-tip pressure, and how aware of other physical sensations we became when for a few minutes we could not see.

Later in the evening John showed us how to form ourselves, in groups, into giant insects or machines which made appropriate noises. And finally, we experimented with being an orchestra, minus instruments, providing all the noises and movements ourselves.

At the close of the evening, John explained that the exercises we had been doing were used by his own actors' workshop as a means of learning to trust each other and to work as a team.

Everyone who was present greatly enjoyed the evening, and we all hope John will be able to give us another evening soon.

Terry Haughian

PEOPLE IN HOSPITAL:

Fred Fisher is in Vancouver General, Heather Pavilion, Ward D-8. The following people are in Crease: Gerry Graham--West 2; Frank Ereland -- East 4; Michael Dempsey -- Intensive care; Michael is not allowed visitors now but would like to have them when they are allowed, so keep checking. Jean Tkachuk is in East Lawn.

THE SUM:

A great many people make a mess of their lives by spending a lot of time thinking about how they made a mess of their lives.

I call it The Broken Record because it goes on and on and you don't get bored. You can go down all sorts of satisfying alleys on the subject. If your mother had done so and so or if you had taken that job or that mate or that bus and so on.

Sometimes the record becomes so much a part of you that you think of very little else. Perhaps a friend will say "Take a trip to Hawaii and that will make you feel better." But will it? There you are, on a lovely romantic Hawaiian evening, sitting at a luau and what are you thinking? Look at the mess I made of my life. Or if you don't take it with you, you can be sure it is sitting at home waiting for you. After Hawaii, then what? Slit your throat? No dear, you would make a mess of that too.

Most people play the broken record at one time or another during their lives because we all make mistakes. Enduring the results of our errors is the price we pay for having the privilege of being able to make our own decisions--the privilege of choice.

Few of us reach our full potential. Perhaps in 2500 A.D. scientists will have the perfect state where people will be evaluated almost as soon as they are born or even before they are born. They will be evaluated, tagged and channelled to reach their full potential. Mates will be chosen for them to produce whatever is needed on the market at the time.

Perhaps then everyone in the world -- if there is any individual thinking left -- will hang their heads and say "look at the mess we made of our lives."

Molly DEXall

BRAIN STORM--- L

KEL CRINKLE GRASH!!!!

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CH FIZZZ GRR

PEOPLE

we need you; maybe
you need us. We've been thinking of starting another - but better than the other -- crisis training program. The last one was fun, as well as being a learning experience for everyone who took part, including those who conducted the training sessions. However, it was obvious that those who came to learn had a lot to teach. Everyone has had crisis experience, has skills and techniques they employ in relating to others. If we get together to discuss what we want from a program, what each one of us has to offer, we'll get to know each other and produce a course that everyone wants. If you're interested, call Terry or Barry at 738-5177. We'll arrange a meeting to discuss what type of course we want and need. REJUVENATE - PARTICIPATE

Barry Coull

ACTIVITIES

Every week:

Sunday Nights - 7:30 Women's rap group
check at MPA for location

Tuesday Nights - Growth Group 8:00 MPA
with Tom Sandborn and
Ruth Hess

Wednesday Afternoon - Bowling 3:00

meet at MPA at 2:45
Thursday Nights - Sensitivity Group 8:00 MPA
with Shari and Laurin

Saturdays - trips to the farm 10:30 am
- please check at MPA and leave your
home ahead of time and phone number
if you want to go so I can make sure there
are enough rides. People will be asked to
contribute 50¢ for food if they have a meal
at the farm.

***** IMPORTANT LAST-MINUTE FLASH *****

TUESDAY NIGHT GROUP

For the next two months our group will
not be taking on any new members. Also - time change
to 7:30 p.m.

Ruth and Tom

P.S. We are asking for a commitment form members to
come every Tuesday.

(9)
ACTIVITIES (Cont.)

Other things:
Sun Jan. 13th

- First Aid Discussion 2:00 MPA
- with MPA's own nurse in residence
Fran Phillips
- this is the second in a series.
Tentatively, it will concentrate on what to do in the case of an OD and how to check for vital signs, but the agenda is flexible - come and bring any questions you have about giving first aid.
- Women's Rap Group 7:30 MPA
- this is the first meeting. We can decide if we want a closed women's group, where we want to meet, and what kinds of things we might want to talk about and read. How uncomfortable is it to be a woman around MPA and what kinds of problems do we have with the men in the house? Let's get together and talk about it.

Monday Feb 14th - Valentines' Day Coffee Party
East End MPA 8:00
come and see the new East End house,
listen to some music, and have coffee
and cake. The van will leave MPA at 7:30

Tuesday Feb 15th - Paid People's Business Meeting
12:00 noon - different location each week

- this week at Avi's : 2080 Alma
- anyone is welcome to attend this meeting
but it will be strictly a business meeting

Wednesday Feb 16th - Central Committee Meeting 8:00 MPA

- people's agenda will be posted in advance
for anyone to add what they would like
to bring up.

Friday Feb 18th - General Meeting 8:00 MPA

- people's agenda posted for this meeting, too

Friday Feb 25th - Theatre Workshop 8:00
with John Gray
Location to be announced

Saturday March 18th - Kosmic League

- pre-season softball opened at
Connaught Park (Cricketchatter Park)
- MPA needs a softball team
- leave your name and phone number at
MPA if you would like to play

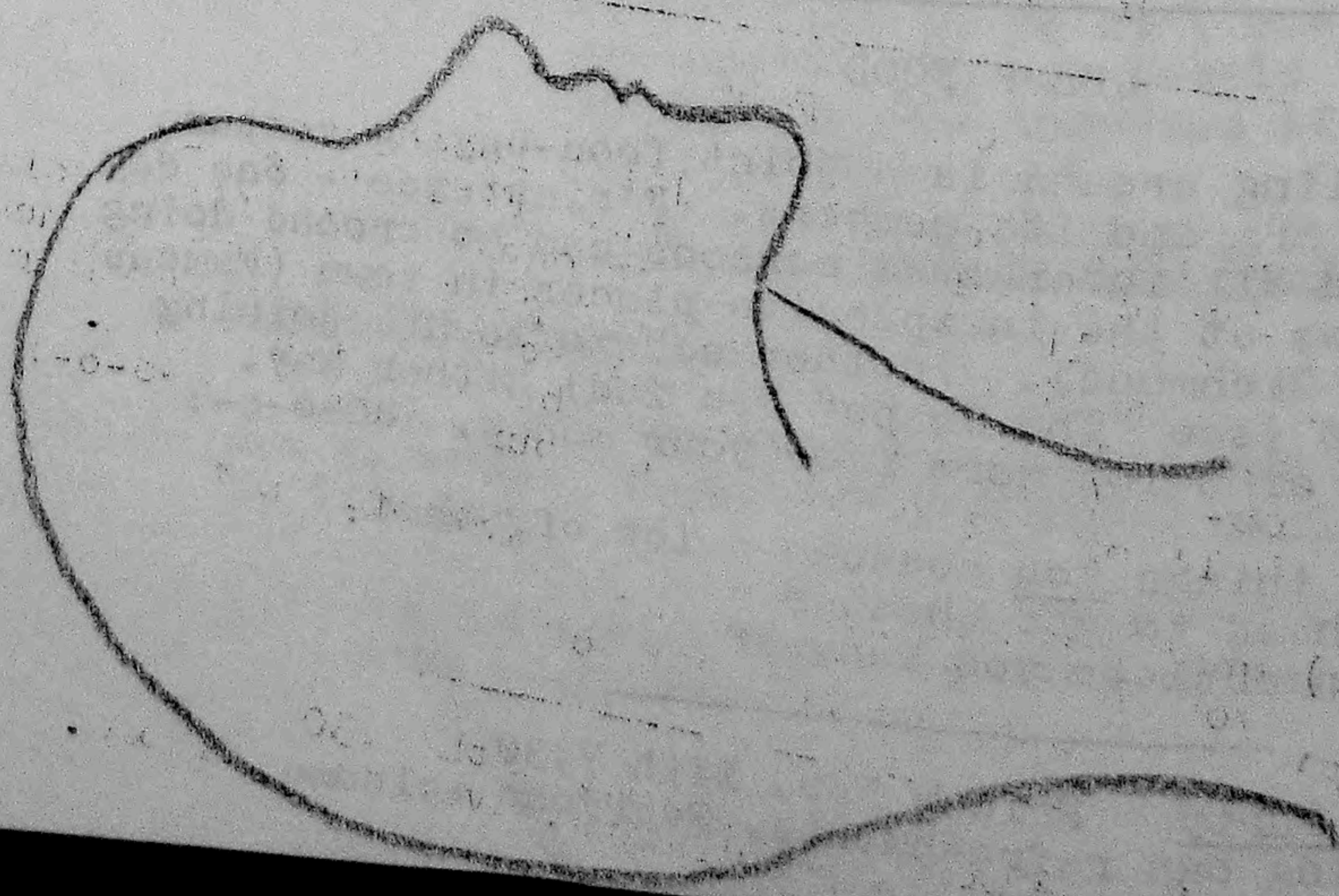
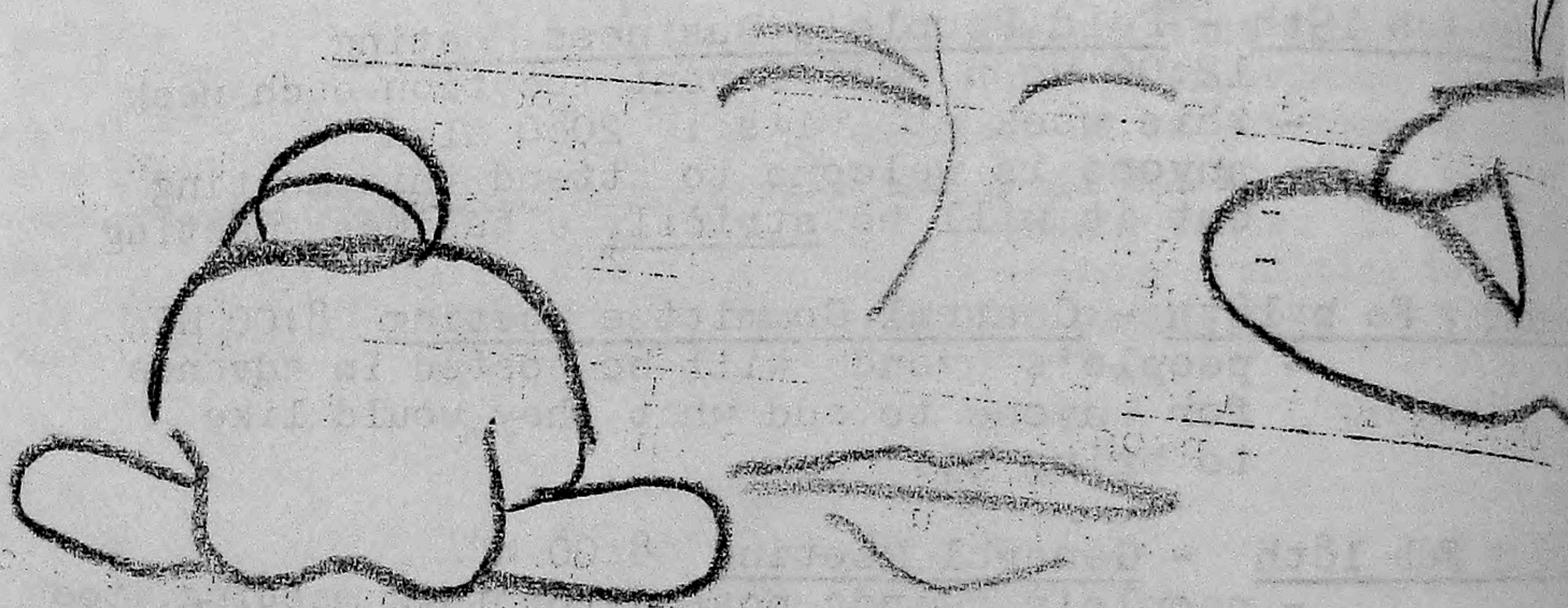
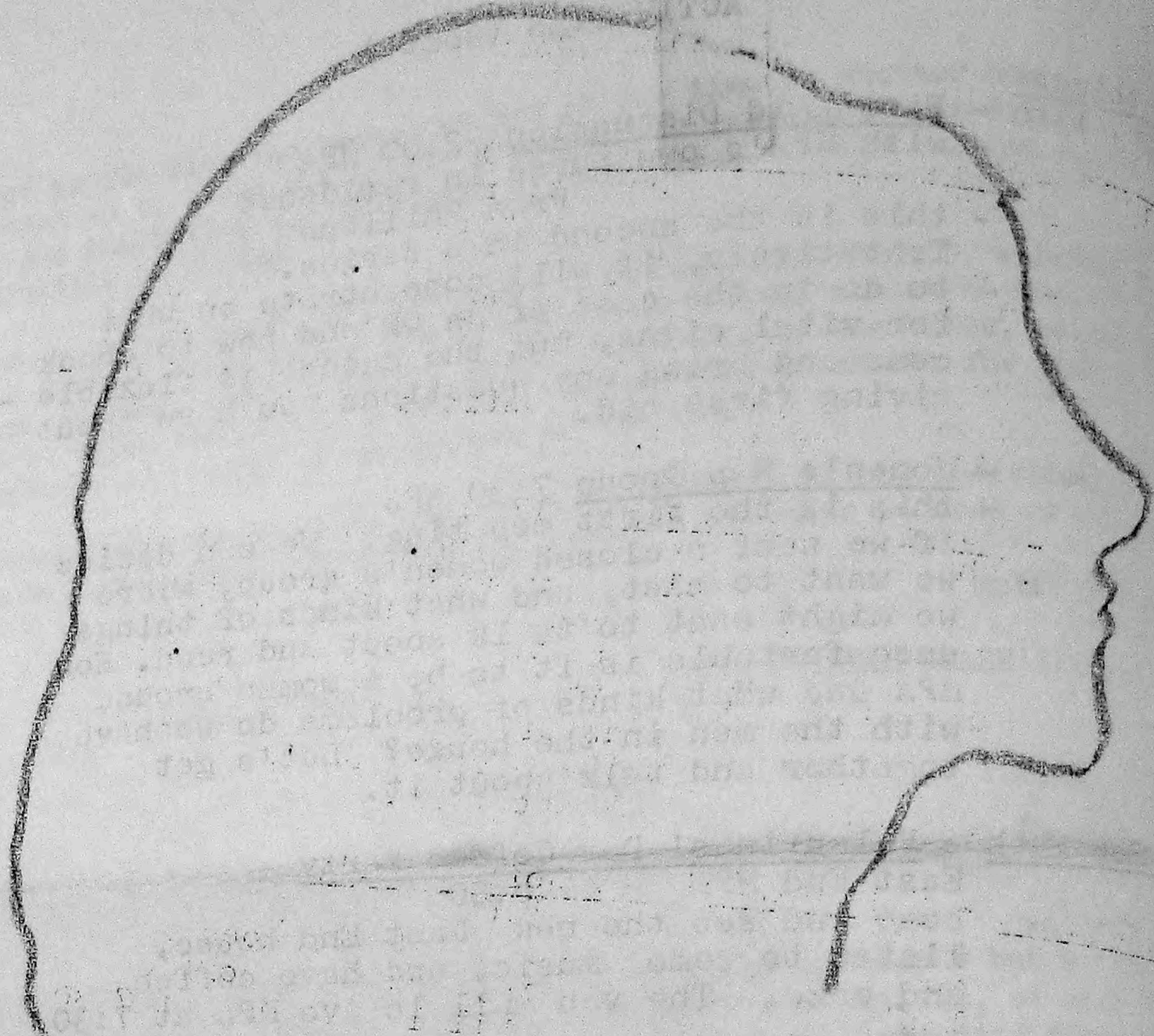
CHEAP FOOD

Another idea bubbling around is a joint food-buying venture or food co-op for MPA and its members. For instance - one day a week the van and all interested persons can go around doing bulk food purchases at the inexpensive places in town (Famous Foods, the docks, Richmond). Another scheme is MPA joining the NDP food co-op (see "The Grape" Feb 2nd) Either way. You'll get a hell of a lot more for your money. SO-o-o-: Tell Avi

- (1) what things you consume a lot of, that you need to get cheaper
- (2) cheap outlets you know of

FLASH

Patty's Party Friday Feb. 11th 7:30
Bring own refreshments. Everyone welcome.



18-1422
Vander 8, B.C.