

The Safeguards Letter

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JANUARY IN SPRINGFIELD AND YELLOW SPRINGS!

OHIO SAFEGUARDS is sponsoring its annual January educational events with John O'Brien, and this year they are taking place in Springfield and Yellow Springs, Ohio--the latter a town where "community" has been an explicit value for a long time! The specific "workshops" to be held are:

*January 28-29 -- Helping People Be **Safe** in Community.* "Safety" seems, these days, to be an increasingly elusive experience for all of us. It is, of course, especially elusive for people who are especially vulnerable--people who have disabilities, people who are sick, people who have lived long lives--people who, in summary, find themselves carrying labels affixed by society's organized helpers, the human service agencies. This two-day event is designed to help participants think together about the question:

What shall/must we DO, in response to the fact that our fellow-citizens are likely to be HURT?

Some of the issues that are likely to be considered, as we think about this large question, are:

- What is the meaning, for us, of the ways we describe what happens to someone (e.g., "exploitation", "abuse", "neglect"?)
- How might vulnerable people and others in a community be bound together in order to achieve greater security for all?
- How might "Professionalism" be a help or a threat to the safety of vulnerable people?
- What can we rely on as useful responses to the vulnerability of some of our fellow-citizens?

The event will include both talks about these and other issues by the "presenters" and ample opportunities for participants to reflect on important questions and discuss those with the presenters and with each other. This event will take place at the Holiday Inn, South, I-70 and State Route 72, Springfield, Ohio. We look forward to a rich two-days!

January 30 - Citizen Advocacy: Stories of Citizen Partnership. Citizen Advocacy is an often misunderstood and neglected way to help people with disabilities and people without disabilities enjoy richer lives together in communities. Citizen Advocacy also offers vulnerable people sources of protection and support that cannot be provided by formal human service agencies. Citizen Advocacy is a way that communities can become more responsive to people in need because it allows those people to reclaim the portion of citizenship that is often forfeited when people receive service from paid experts.

This event, which will take place at the Society of Friends Meeting House in Yellow Springs, Ohio, will introduce the idea of Citizen Advocacy and of the basic principles that seem to make Citizen Advocacy "work" better in communities. This introduction will be presented by **John O'Brien**, of Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. O'Brien is the co-author of "C.A.P.E. (Citizen Advocacy Program Evaluation)" and author of "Learning from Citizen Advocacy Programs"--two

publications that offer the clearest explanation of the idea of Citizen Advocacy. Mr. O'Brien is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Georgia Advocacy Office, a statewide "Protection and Advocacy" agency that relies mainly on Citizen Advocacy as its operating method.

Citizen Advocacy will be further introduced through "Story-telling." People representing several Ohio Citizen Advocacy programs will share with participants stories that illustrate what Citizen Advocacy has meant both to individuals and to communities across Ohio. There will also be plenty of time during the event for questions and for sharing of thoughts about how new Citizen Advocacy programs might be started in new places around the state. Participants in this event will be challenged to develop, for their communities, a vision of the future that includes Citizen Advocacy!

People interested in registering to participate in either or both of these events can do so by contacting OHIO SAFEGUARDS (614/ 773-6191). The fee for the January 28-29 event is \$60.00, and the fee for the January 30 day on Citizen Advocacy is \$5.00. Those interested in coming to all three days can register for a combined price of \$65.00.

SERVICE BROKERAGE SANITY & INSANITY

Wolf Wolfensberger

(Editor's Note: This piece appeared originally in TIPS--Training Institute Publication Series--Vol 10, No. 2, August, 1990. It is here reprinted with the permission of the author.)

While we have instituted a perversion alert mechanism, we have not (as yet) instituted a craze alert, though the idea certainly beckons. One difficulty with such a thing would be that virtually everything being done in human services nowadays is based on crazes, and a good part of TIPS would thus be nothing but one craze alert after another.

The service brokerage concept began to be promoted during the 1980's, first out of British Columbia (Canada). It is a poorly conceived, poorly described, but euphorically promoted scheme that we would put into the category of administrative-fiscal enabling mechanisms, as well as into the craze category.

In essence, it strikes us as yet another desperate scheme to try to squeeze some functionality out of an imperial service system that simply no longer is functional; and like so many of the schemes that are in the coordinative/managerial domain (as is this one), it would add yet another layer of bureaucracy and functionaries (in addition to case manager, advocate, individual program plan-makers* , the service itself, etc.) onto the service system, namely, supposedly independent brokerage service agencies.

Of course, the concept of service brokerage itself is an old one. After all the entire California mental health and mental retardation service system has been based on a form of brokerage concepts since the 1960's. Ideas like these keep appearing in cycles, each cycle taking on a few variations that are purported to overcome previous shortcomings or problems. But what is relatively novel about this scheme is that the service brokerage function would be supposedly independent of the service system in order to be accountable primarily to clients (the promotional literature says "controlled by the consumer") rather than the service system, though it is difficult to see how it can be a great deal so as long as it is publicly funded.

The brokerage would be provided by an agency that employs brokers and economists sophisticated about service costs. The literature promoting service brokerage also assumes that all advocacy is or needs to be unpaid, and that brokers cannot be advocates because they are paid. This is not correct in that there are several major types of paid advocacy, legal aid and

* In the documents explaining brokerage, individual program plans are mysteriously distinguished from "general service plans."

(legislative) ombudsman systems being merely two obvious examples. In fact, many kinds of paid advocacy may have more independence from the service empire than the paid broker would, except for the relatively rare cases where clients have enough independent private money to hire their own brokers themselves.

The broker scheme also stipulates that brokers only pursue what clients want. Little is said about what should happen when clients are not competent to "want." Apparently, the broker would then be responsible to the family--but it is not clear what happens when there is no family, except that "networks" are mentioned as alternates. Nor is it clear what a broker is to do if client, family or "network" want things that are insane, destructive, or evil, or even what to do if the "network" is divided on an issue. Are brokers to be hired guns, so neutralized in their own opinions and moralities as to pursue a person's suicide, or a person's killing, on demand of his/her family or "network"?

Things get even more problematic when one learns that a broker should organize a "network" where there is none, and become a community organizer if need be. If a broker has to organize a network for someone who has no one, how and by whom did the broker become recruited in the first place?

The funds for the services requested via the broker would come (in the form of "credit") from the brokerage agency that, in turn, is supposed to have gotten it from a "funding body." This is really no more than money being allocated to clients rather than to service providers--long a darling concept of conservatives and laissez-faire market ideologues. But even this presupposes that some authority decides who is to be eligible for how much credit, or what limits there are to the purposes to which funds (credit) are allocated.

The brokerage literature says that brokers are to be paid by "an organization directly controlled by the people using the brokerage service." To be an option for more than people who are rich or have a lot of friends with money to donate, brokerage would ultimately have to be paid by public money, which in almost all cases means government--the same people who fund almost all the services being brokered.

Reading the brokerage promotion literature, one finds described a broker paragon of knowledge, skill and wisdom--who will do what s/he is told. Yet in today's service context, one can hardly even find people with the most basic modicum of common sense, and mastery related to service is not only extremely rare, but not even considered a legitimate concept any more. Thus, the more one reflects on the brokerage scheme, the more impractical it can be seen to be--by those who have enough wits to qualify as brokers as described.

Because of its historical baggage, the brokerage promoters do not like the idea of "follow-up" after a service arrangement has been made and they thus use euphemisms such as "remaining generally informed," "maintaining active involvement," and "continuing to liaize." Come on, you can't have it both ways, as CBS-TV commentator Andy Rooney would say.

Brokerage or client-funding schemes are well-known to negate any service system planning, as we have always pointed out. This scheme too would remove its funders from any planning process. True, such planning is largely a joke anyway in the service system today, but there is a difference between delegitimizing planning altogether, versus recognizing the widespread failure to plan the at least theoretically plannable. Thus, the government is expected to pay multi-billion dollars without a say where it goes?

The scheme is unfortunately suffused with language and slogans that obscure rather than clarify how it would function. And as Michael Kendrick has pointed out, much like other brokerage concepts, this one assumes that the needed services of a proper quality are somewhere out there, and can thus be obtained or purchased. But we believe that the best that brokerage functionaries can be expected to accomplish is to negotiate some form of "least worst" arrangements for their clients, and that, as we said, at the cost of another layer of bureaucratism and people to deal with, which means that by contributing to yet further complexity, a brokerage scheme would also, and indirectly, contribute to yet further quality decline.

An inkling that this scheme cannot possibly be a very good idea derives from the fact that the idea has spread like wildfire, among many people, and has already been pushed toward implementation in part of Australia, even before its functionality or limits have been demonstrated--in Canada or elsewhere; and there have been workshops on it in England.

What adds hope but also confusion to the brokerage concept is that in the province of Alberta, a scheme has grown in recent years that calls itself brokerage, but is apparently very different from the one described in the brokerage literature, as sketched above. As it was described to us, anybody in Alberta can set up as a broker, and therefore, brokers are mostly people with human service backgrounds who are free-lancing. Usually in close consultation with, and with the approval of, a mentally handicapped person's parents or guardians, a broker writes a proposal for some kind of service program for that person that will cost money. The proposal is then submitted to the government. If approved, monthly checks are sent to the client (which usually means the client's parents or guardian), and this money is used to purchase the service at issue. The proposal has to be resubmitted, or a new one submitted, every few months, which of course means a great deal of work for the brokers. How are the brokers being paid? They only get paid if their proposal gets funded, and they get a fee that was written into the agreement to begin with. Thus, it is difficult to claim that the broker is truly independent since the broker's livelihood depends on writing successful proposals, whereas a truly independent party might deem that alternatives other than those requested by parents, guardians or the handicapped person are superior, or would be offered. After all, parents and guardians have sometimes wanted their family member institutionalized or made dead, and if such "services" were brokerable, brokers would undoubtedly make money off them. It is almost impossible to get correct descriptions--much less analysis--of issues such as these in the brokerage literature and debate.

The whole problem of course is much more complicated when a mentally handicapped person is involved, because then, the additional layer of another responsible agent on behalf of the person comes into play. This would of course not be the case where a person is handicapped but mentally quite competent.

We are informed that in Alberta, it is theoretically possible for people to by-pass brokerage and submit their proposals to government directly, but apparently too few people are or feel qualified to do so. Perhaps they do not even have an incentive to do so because the brokers do all the work, and insofar as the broker fee is built into the agreement, there is no incentive for them to try to save the government money.

According to Aldred Neufeldt, there were about 170 retarded adults in Calgary, Alberta alone who were "individually funded" as of Spring 1990 by the provincial government, apparently most or all of them via brokerage.

At least the way it works in Alberta, the arrangement does give handicapped people a great many individualizing and more social role-valorizing options, because they can use the money to make their own private arrangements, thereby either bypassing the service system altogether, or retaining enough control over their service so as to command some respect from service providers. For instance, if one needed personal attendant care at home, or let us say a companion to assist with community activities, one could hire suitable people on one's own initiative, whereas under the normal service system arrangement, one would have to go through intermediate agencies such as home health care ones.

For people who can use services which are thusly available (which probably would not always be the case), the additional layer of processes and costs introduced by the brokerage system would be offset--and probably more than offset--by the bypassing of the service agency system and its costliness.

We have several conclusions to offer.

1. Brokerage as practiced in Alberta seems to have much more promise than the way it is proposed in the major brokerage documents. Among the benefits that one could expect especially from an Alberta-type brokerage scheme are the design of more individualizing and

more creative options on behalf of specific persons. After all, there are innumerable misfits between what people need and what agencies offer, and to the degree that a suitable individual arrangement is in fact implementable via money, brokerage may provide a dramatic shortcut and facilitation.

2. Brokerage should never be prematurely trumpeted as a major systemic solution, or be implemented suddenly on a grand scale. Instead, it should be implemented gradually under close scrutiny, with ongoing discussion of its strength and weaknesses. The main brokerage model seems to need even more precautions than the Alberta one.

3. Brokerage models have a much better chance of being adopted (ignoring for a moment whether successfully or not) under governmental systems where there is a great deal of discretion for case-to-case decision-making. In turn, this means that it is more feasible under Canadian and perhaps other governmental forms with relatively powerful and unilateral decision-making capabilities which often work as much against as for people in need of service. The largely rights-based objectifying way in which public processes are structured in the US makes it difficult to envision that the brokerage model could work there.

4. Ultimately, brokerage can only obtain whatever funders (usually government) are willing to fund.

5. People are apt to mistakenly equate clinical problem-solving with service brokerage--that is, some mechanism of making available a service that a person says he or she want, and/or providing a person with the money to purchase the service that he or she needs. Of course, providing a person with needed service may indeed solve his/her problems, but this is not at all the same as examining and analyzing the sources of a person's clinical problems, and trying to identify and devise service measures that might address these.

Strangely enough, there are some handicapped groups opposed to brokerage because they believe that brokerage just might meet the needs of handicapped persons, and "...satisfied individuals...see no reason to develop a powerful collective voice through strong organizations of our own." (VIA, Spring, 1990)

Wolf Wolfensberger

About THE SAFEGUARDS LETTER

The Safeguards Letter is a quarterly (approximately) publication of OHIO SAFEGUARDS. The Letter is intended to be a vehicle to promote affiliation among people who are interested in and thoughtful about those who live outside the sphere of respected community membership--those who are the usual receivers of human services. All material in The Safeguards Letter is under OHIO SAFEGUARDS' copyright (©) unless otherwise attributed. Letters, ideas, and items for publication in the Letter can be sent to: Editor, The Safeguards Letter, P.O. Box 1943, Chillicothe, Ohio 45601. We welcome our readers' ideas and reactions.

SUPPORT FOR THE SAFEGUARDS LETTER

This is our annual appeal for donations of money to pay for *The Safeguards Letter*. Regular readers know that there is no "subscription fee" for the *Letter*. The trustees of OHIO SAFEGUARDS agreed more than three years ago that the *Letter* would not be paid for by "subscriptions" but by the voluntary contributions of interested individuals and organizations. This decision saves OHIO SAFEGUARDS from the task of maintaining subscription lists. More important, though, the decision places the responsibility for the future of the *Letter* where it ought to be--in the hands of its readers. For the past three years the intermittent contributions we've received have made it possible for the *Letter* to reach about 400 readers four times a year. Any readers who want to contribute (it's tax-deductible) may send their contributions to: *The*

Safeguards Letter, P.O. Box 1943, Chillicothe, Ohio 45601. All money received will be used for the printing and mailing costs of the *Letter*. We thank you for your continued loyalty as readers.

Huntsville, July 17, 1990 -- The retrial of Johnny Paul Penry ended today when a jury once again voted his death for the murder of a Livingston, Texas woman eleven years ago. Around 9:30 on the morning of October 25, 1979, Pamela Moseley Carpenter, 22, was raped and fatally stabbed with a scissors in her home. By 6:05 p.m. the police had received a confession from 23-year-old Penry. Since Penry couldn't read or write, the first of two confessions was typed and read to him. He signed it. Five months and six days later, the jury voted the first death penalty.

In 1988, Penry was 13 hours away from execution when the U.S. Supreme Court intervened because he had mental retardation. In 1989, the Supreme Court voted (5 to 4) that a person with retardation can be executed. But it also ruled (5 to 4) that the Texas jury had not been instructed to consider mitigating circumstances. Therefore, the punishment phase of the case had to be retried. Texas responded with a complete trial (including competency, guilt-or-innocence, and punishment phases) as required by its law.

Much needs to be said about the retrial, but only highlights on mitigation are reported here.

The Defense's Evidence of Child Abuse. Written records, two sisters, a brother, three aunts, a next-door neighbor, and a former baby sitter provided the jury with a picture of incredible torture. When Penry was eight months old, his mother returned from a mental hospital and began at least five years of vicious attacks--with fists, fingernails, boards, mop sticks, belt buckles, extension cords, burning cigarettes. A neighbor reported how on summer afternoons she heard Penry at age 2 screaming "terrible, terrible screams," begging his mother to stop. The mother

addressed him as "the little bastard," "the little nut," "Blackie Carbon". (Unlike the rest of the family, Penry's hair is coal black and relatives admitted he had been conceived by a man other than the family father.) When he was four, his mother scalded him in the kitchen sink. He still has the scars. She burned his skin with cigarettes. She kept him locked up in a room--often without food--for long periods. When he couldn't get out to the toilet, he defecated on the floor. His mother sometimes made him eat it. At other times, after he had urinated in the toilet, she dipped some into a cup and made him drink it. Once she tried to drown Penry in the bathtub. Another time she took a butcher knife and threatened to cut his penis off for wetting his bed. The relatives claimed they knew Penry had been singled out as a special target, but they were afraid to do anything because they feared the mother too.

The Defense's Evidence of Mental Retardation and Brain Impairment. Dr. Randall Price, a Dallas clinical psychologist and a neuropsychologist, served as the defense's only expert witness. He spent 11 hours testing Penry. Using nine of ten tests from the Halstead Reitan Battery, he found brain impairment in all except one. Using the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, Penry had a verbal I.Q. of 63, a performance I.Q. of 66 and a full scale I.Q. of 63. He administered tests on faking and found Penry to be working as hard as he could. Price examined a massive pile of medical records (especially from the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, Austin State Hospital, Rusk State Hospital, and Mexia State School), focusing only on evaluations, not treatment records....

The defense presented a large "blowup" photograph of a single page from a reading test administered to Penry when he was 15 and living at Mexia State School. It contained pictures of a dog, door, airplane, hen and hat. Penry had been asked to underline one right word out of five after each picture. He did underline

"dog" and "airplane" correctly. But he underlined "flag" for the hat, "drum" for the hen, and "dress" for the door. The defense used the blowup to dramatize that Penry could not read or write.

Coupled with his brain impairment and mental retardation, Penry was described as a confused, short-attention-spanned man who was prey to mixed-up impulses, a man who couldn't think as well as he talked, one who worked hard to please others.

His physique and distinctive face--not unlike those of movie stars--didn't help. During a break in the trial, one observer said out loud, "He doesn't look retarded to me. He doesn't even drool."

During the trial, Penry sat quietly, often drawing on pieces of paper provided by his attorneys. Even when angry fingers were pointed at him and harsh accusations were made, he didn't seem to respond. At breaks, Penry would stand with his hands clasped and survey the audience, looking into faces. He was quick to smile and nod anytime a rare person nodded to him.

The Prosecution's Attempts to Disconnect Mitigating Circumstances from the Crime. Price's findings of brain impairment were challenged because nothing visible to the eye could be found--no holes, no tumors, no lesions or infarctions. The prosecution presented to the jury their own electroencephalograms and brain scans on Penry, showing no observable physical damage either.

They criticized Price for reading only the records on evaluation and not treatment. Then they kept him on the stand for five hours, going over every record to see what he had read and what he hadn't. Since many of the records were of the old-style medical type that mostly contained problems and critical incident reports (e.g., scuffling, running away, pencil and scissor poking, fire-setting, youthful homosexual interactions) all were thrown into the face of

Price to show the jury that Penry really had an antisocial personality disorder and he was faking mental retardation.

The officers who had read Penry his Miranda Warnings and received the confessions told the jury that they didn't know Penry was retarded. He only seemed to be slow.

Five prison guards told the jury about Penry's infractions in prison--most taking place in the early years of his incarceration--lunging at others with boards having jagged edges, making two "shanks" (toothbrush handles melted around razor blades). They also told the jury they had conversed with Penry and he understood them. Each said he could read and write--even though no sample of his writing was ever presented.

Dr. Fred Fason, a Houston psychiatrist in private practice, focused on the two highest I.Q. scores (Performance I.Q.'s of 74 and 72). He told the jury that these represented Penry's highest potential. "You cannot do better on I.Q. test scores than what you are capable of doing," he said. "It's like an athlete. You cannot run the 100-yard dash faster than what you're capable of. You can run it slower, however." For this reason, Fason felt Penry tended toward the "dull normal" range.

Dr. Walter Quijamo, the former chief psychologist for the Texas prison system, told jurors he didn't feel Penry was truly retarded. He played down the I.Q. measurements and brain impairment tests of Dr. Price. He criticized Price for failing to test for adaptive behavior. (Neither side really tested for adaptive behavior and the American Association on Mental Retardation's diagnostic and classification system--that includes adaptive behavior--was not mentioned once.

He also claimed that Price erred by not administering the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), a test that examined the propensities of

people. Quijamo told the jury that Penry didn't have "academic smarts"; he had "street smarts".

Quijamo went on to claim that Penry was an antisocial personality who possessed every symptom listed in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III* (e.g., grossly selfish, callous, irresponsible, unable to feel remorse and to learn from experience and punishment)--the very same symptoms attributed to highly-intelligent serial killers like Ted Bundy.

When the defense recited a litany of abuse Penry suffered as a child, Quijamo responded that as a child in the Philippine Islands he suffered abuse from an alcoholic father that may have been worse than Penry's. Although he did not elaborate, he said, "The abuse made me very determined not to become like my father."

Dr. Stanton E Samenow, a Falls Church, Virginia psychologist, co-author of the 1500-page, three volume *The Criminal Mind* and author of *Children and Crime* and *Before It's Too Late*, told the jury that people probably don't turn to crime because of something outside themselves. Crime

instead resides within the individual. Therefore, Samenow rejected every defense argument that child abuse could be linked to Penry's criminal conduct. After reading records for 20 hours and making no examination, he told the jury that Penry was a criminal personality "in the extreme sense."

Robert Perske

THANKS VERY MUCH!

During 1990, OHIO SAFEGUARDS has received contributions in support of The Safeguards Letter from the following individuals:

Mary Brandstetter, Fairborn, Ohio
Danette Addison, Dayton, Ohio
Vicki Grosh, Columbus, Ohio
John McKnight, Chicago, Illinois
Robert & Betty Swanseen,
Linwood, New Jersey
Jo Krippenstapel, Cranston, R.I.
Anne James, Ostrander, Ohio

Our thanks to one and all!

JUST QUOTES

I come, in conclusion, to the difference between "projecting" the future and making a promise. The "projecting" of "futuorologists" *uses* the future as the safest possible context for whatever is desired; it binds one only to selfish interest. But making a promise binds one *to someone else's future*. If the promise is serious enough, one is brought to it by love, and in awe and fear. Fear, awe, and love bind us to no selfish aims, but to each other.

Wendell Berry
"Standing by Words"

Often even the most high-minded organizations have little regard for the community around them. I described the situation facetiously at a national meeting of voluntary organizations recently by saying: "A voluntary group may be profoundly and high-mindedly committed to care of the terminally ill and never notice that the community of which it is a part is itself terminally ill."

REMEMBERING ROBERT RODALE

In recent years the word "regeneration" has come to mean a great deal to me. As I understand it, the word stands for the belief that people and communities can improve their circumstances by focusing on the capacities and resources available in a given area. Regeneration implies a certain energy and good spirit, as well as hopeful, creative work by a given group or community.

It was this idea of regeneration that first brought Robert Rodale's life and work squarely to my attention. Although Mr. Rodale had been associated with the Rodale Institute and Press since 1949, my familiarity with his work was casual. I could only remotely relate to the initiatives that represented his work in my mind--the publishing of *Prevention* and *Organic Gardening* magazines. Some time in the mid-eighties, I was introduced to the Rodale Institute's work around this idea of regeneration. I think that the impact of these ideas will continue to influence my life and work as long as I live.

Like many others, I feel a sense of gratitude toward the Rodale Institute and Bob Rodale. I found myself envisioning ways that we might prevail on Mr. Rodale to visit southern Perry County. His ideas seem perfectly matched for the challenge we face here. I didn't think that Mr. Rodale would fix anything; it was more an idea of affirming his ideas in the place I live and work. It was a way of saying, "Yes, Mr. Rodale, we understand that this is a place where there is much opportunity for rediscovering capacities in our people and our place. There is much we can do."

In September, Robert Rodale died in an auto accident in Moscow. Since that time I have read several articles written as tributes to this gentle man and his ideas and dreams. His death, and the response to his death by his family and associates has offered yet another useful piece of learning, for each of these tributes I have read convey a very powerful message of hope.

The leadership of the Rodale Institute will continue through the efforts of Ardath Rodale and John Haberern. The comments that follow were published in the "Partner Report" from Rodale Institute, Fall, 1990:

"We can do nothing less than follow in the footsteps of a man who walked the earth planting hope. If you want to remember Bob, plant a tree nearby, and let us know!" says John Haberern.

"Many of you may never have met Bob personally. Even so, you can know him through his heartbeat--what he believed in--the message to care for all people and nature. I know that there are even greater challenges that will come our way from the seeds that he planted. Our sadness is immeasurable, but his love sustains us to carry on and do the best job that we can do. We all need each other. I reach out to all of you." These are the comments of Ardath Rodale.

The tragedy of Robert Rodale's death seems to have been overpowered by the strength of the love and hope that surrounded the man in his life and his work. Even in death he reminds

me that love and hope do not fail. Mr. Rodale continues to offer a fine example of the regenerative spirit.

Sandra Landis

A VIEW FROM CHILLICOTHE

Why I Show No Orange Ribbons

Unfortunately, by the time you read this, events may make moot the thoughts I'm sharing with you. Nevertheless, I thought I'd record some of the reasons why I've resisted the offers made to me, since August 2, to display orange ribbons at my house, on my car, or on my person.

The ribbons are, of course, intended to show my "support" for United States soldiers in the Middle East. Their display is a symbolic act, and I believe deeply in the effectiveness of symbolic communication. A big question about the use of symbols, however, is whether the user is fully conscious of both the meaning of the symbol itself and of what it is that the symbol means to communicate. In the case of orange ribbons, I'm puzzled about the exact meaning of the object (a ribbon, the color orange). I'm even more unsure, though, about what the display of ribbons is supposed to say.

Is it supposed to say, simply, that I "support" our troops? In one of the most tangible senses of "support," I support them. I pay my full share (I guess) of federal taxes--a big part of which go to the military. So far, I haven't acted to withdraw that "support"--something that would be difficult to do, indeed. Is the ribbon display supposed to indicate that I wish no ill to the individual soldiers who have been sent to the desert? Well, certainly I wish/hope that no harm comes to them--some of them are my fellow citizens of this small town. In fact, I hope that all the rest of them (as of this writing, 97 of them have already died, without shots being fired) come home soon.

My refusal of orange ribbons rests, I think, in my feeling that a display of them is intended, by someone, to indicate my total and unquestioning agreement with (allegiance to?) the policies that have resulted in some Chillicotheans ending up in the Saudi Arabian desert. I don't want to display some sort of symbol that seems to say that I agree that the biggest "enemy" of my country is a ruler of a poor country half a world away (despotic and dangerous though he might be). There are other "enemies" whom our current leaders do not wish to engage so aggressively. Wendell Berry has asked, for example:

Who are the enemies of this country? This is a question dangerous to instituted government when people begin to ask it for themselves. Many who have seen forests clear-cut on steep slopes, who have observed the work of the strip miners, who have watched as corporations advance their claims on private property "in the public interest," are asking that question already. Many more are going to ask. ("Property, Patriotism, and National Defense")

I don't have any orange ribbons because I don't wish to indicate my support for some things that may not be worth supporting or defending, especially at the cost of the life of one of my neighbors. Ivan Illich has characterized life in the United States as "...not viable enough to be shared." Is "defense" of Kuwait really a defense of my home--or is it, instead, just an attempt to extend, for a few more months or years, a style of living in which I and my fellow-citizens have grown lazy, slothful (or "slipshod", as my high school Latin teacher used to describe it)? Is that

enough for others to die for? What right do I have to such a "defense"? How can "patriotism" be defined as the blind acquiescence to such motives? Again, Wendell Berry offers a pertinent thought:

That a nation should purchase at an exorbitant price and then rely upon a form of defense inescapably fatal to itself is, of course, absurd; that good citizenship should be defined as willing acceptance of such a form of defense can only be ruinous of the political health of the nation. ("Property, Patriotism, and National Defense")

Some will say, of course, that a failure to show orange ribbons means that I don't "love my country." But, anyone who knows me knows that's wrong. I love this piece of ground that I've lived and gardened on for twelve years. I love this smelly little town I've lived in since 1976. I love the state where I've been all my life. I learned the lessons of my high school civics class; I even believed (and still believe) them. I don't, however, have confidence in the quarter-truths of the current leaders of my country's government. I refuse the shallow patriotism of unquestioning allegiance; such allegiance is not really an "American" tradition anyway.

I'll say it again. I want the best for my fellow citizens who are in the military. The best would be for them to come home soon and for none of them to die. Maybe, when that happens, I'll cover myself with orange ribbons. But--not until then.

Jack Pealer

Remember:

Helping People Be SAFE in Community,
January 28-29, Springfield, Ohio

&

Citizen Advocacy: Stories of Citizen Partnership,
January 30, Yellow Springs, Ohio