practical health-care alternatives for farm workers, in response to "an agricultural and economic system which values profits and productivity more than people, combined with a health-care system which creates barriers to accessibility and acceptability of health services." All research will be made available to the farm workers and their appropriate community organizations. Moreover, a number of students plan to join a larger group from Stanford which will work with the United Farm Workers this summer in their battle against the Teamster-grower alliance.

Senior Elaine Wong, who started some of the first women's study groups at Stanford, estimates that up to 200 women are actively involved in SWOPSI and other student-initiated courses focusing on women's liberation. Women's caucuses are active in the Law and Medical Schools as well as in some undergraduate departments. For most of the women organizers with whom I spoke, liberation goes beyond careerism to the redefinition of alienating occupations and institutions. A group of white women joined their Chicana sisters in picketing a department store which was selling Farah slacks.

Approximately fifty law students are active in prison, civil liberties and rights, or legal aid work. Fifteen undergraduates are getting a first-hand look at prison through a SWOPSI project, teaching black and Chicano studies and general education to inmates at Soledad.

One of the most important indications of deepening commitment has been the profusion of student-conceived courses on alternative vocations. Through policy research and direct practice, many students are learning about such structural experiments as free clinics and migrant labor health centers, free schools, law communes and the alternative media. Synergy Center, devoted to the integration of new, socially meaningful vocations and life styles, is training twenty-five counselors through a SWOPSI course. In the academic sphere, future professors of leftist bent have formed study groups in at least the following departments: History, Political Science and Economics.

Most of this activity is publicized in the *Daily* and has some influence on general student consciousness. For instance, a small demonstration against fraternity sexism is said to have dominated dinner conversations in some dorms for weeks.

Black students have always been chary of joining the white movement at Stanford. At the moment, according to black student union president Charles Ogletree, "The emphasis is on acquiring the best resources available to achieve educational success." Former black student leader Mike Dawson, who graduated last year and now works for Stanford Linear Accelerator, confirms that "As of a year ago, one trend was to more interest in the classical professions and a decrease in community involvement. Earlier there was more talk of the university as a laboratory to practice skills in the community. Recently there has been less interest in political and more in cultural issues." Although there are exceptions, this seems to portray the general drift. Perhaps it is an inevitable characteristic of first-generation-in-college, upwardly mobile ethnics, but some think that rising admissions requirements for blacks and the withdrawal of the Panthers from the campuses have also played a role. The less firmly established Chicanos, who can look to the example of Cesar Chavez, have been somewhat more active.

With the end of the shattering mass mobilizations of the late 1960s, conservative groupings have picked up a bit. There has been an increase in the number of students choosing to live in fraternities, but nothing very spectacular. The principal manifestation of conservative political thought is the Radical Libertarian organization which has about sixty members. But its program, a hybrid of Milton Friedman economic liberalism and New Left anti-militarism, would give cold comfort to Richard Nixon or David Packard.

Perhaps the largest and most rapidly growing group on campus is the amorphous "Jesus movement." It is sponsored by evangelical Protestant organizations and appears to have a few hundred followers. Previously based mainly in Western high schools, it ran a highly successful canvassing operation in the freshman dorms this year. The movement offers peace and joy through a personal relationship with Jesus, who is considered to be an active force shaping people's lives. It stands for many of the old tenets of fundamentalist morality but has imparted a new flexibility toward youthful indiscretions, clothing styles and even women's lib. Its characteristic activities are Bible study sessions, which have incorporated some aspects of encounter groups; joint prayer, and summer retreats. For the fairly conservative young people who embrace it (a good many are athletes), it seems to provide an antidote to competitive personal relations, self-doubt, indecision and institutional impersonality that they do not find in "good works" Christianity. Freshman Carol Sawyer expressed some themes which recurred in my conversations with Jesus people:

> I was hung up on decisions, relations with people, how I was going to change things—I haven't such control. Now that I have Christ, He guides me in my decision. No matter which way I go I don't get hung up on it. No matter where I go I have a peace about my decision. I'm less self-centered—He's helped me. I can get along better with some, have understanding and love for them, through my relation with Christ. When I came to Stanford I knew some Christians. I noticed they were like little lights—so happy, joyful, had a peace, weren't upset. I found out some even prayed for me when I blew an exam or my mom was mad at me. They related to me on a very personal, interested basis. The Lord has special timing for me. They had something. I wanted their peace and joy.

However inwardly turning and apolitical, the Jesus movement is no return to the values of the 1950s. It seems more connected to the social strains that gave rise to the counter-culture of the 1960s. Its followers are critical of the competitive insecurity and empty materialism of American life, and disillusioned by the failure of national power, science and sometimes the student movement to solve these problems. Many have come to the Jesus movement after experiences with drugs or Eastern religions.

Needless to say, college students of the industrialized Western nations can never by themselves be a decisive revolutionary force. But, as events in France and the

United States have shown, they can be the cutting edge of a troubled society. If their movements are marked by the impermanence of their educational experience, it is also true that the young, by their self-definitions, have shaped "political generations." (Nearly all the Stanford student leaders of the 1960s are now in "alternative vocations" which permit them to continue their work for political change.) Kenneth Keniston and others have shown that the contradictions of our society have produced large numbers of "committed" or "alienated" young people who come together in many of our best universities. As a result of the 1960s, these universities are even more open to political thought and practice than they were in the 1950s. While the forms of involvement have responded to changing external conditions, the critical thrust seems firmly established. □

AFTER BUFFALO CREEK

BUREAUCRACY OF DISASTERS

TOM NUGENT

Perched high on the western flank of the Appalachian Mountains, Buffalo Creek Hollow, W. Va., is a narrow, 17-mile-long valley where 5,000 people once lived in a string of sixteen coal-mining settlements. At one minute past eight on the morning of February 26, 1972, a massive, coal-waste dam, operated by a New York conglomerate's coal-mining subsidiary and located at the very top of the hollow suddenly collapsed. Within three hours, the worst flood in West Virginia history killed 125 people, destroyed almost 1,000 homes, and caused at least $50 million in property damage.

Today, more than fifteen months after the break in the dam, the larger dimensions of the Buffalo Creek tragedy are becoming apparent. The disaster no longer produces nationwide headlines, since its most visible effects—the dramatic deaths and the catastrophic property losses—were long ago reported. Gradually, however, many of the flood victims have begun to realize that the worst part of the disaster actually came in the weeks and months which followed the dam's collapse.

Most of the flood victims were uprooted from the land on which they had lived for generations, and resettled among strangers, in rows of identical, government trailers. Many of them began to develop psychological problems, irrational phobias and guilts which psychologists say are directly traceable to the killer flood. Some of the survivors say they have been forced to haggle, endlessly and infuriatingly, with tight-fisted coal company adjusters who refuse to make fair payment for property losses.

Worst of all, perhaps, the vast majority of Buffalo Creek's former inhabitants have been required to sit in their temporary trailers, helplessly idle, while a whole portfolio of ambitious, elegantly drawn government plans to rebuild their valley first faltered, then stalled, then virtually died in a snarl of red tape. After more than a year of optimistic press releases, citizens' meetings and government pledges to "Turn Buffalo Creek into a model community" had produced nothing concrete, U.S. Sen. Jennings Randolph declared on April 10 that "Assistance and aid from the federal government . . . have, in my judgment, deteriorated to the extent that the lack of progress in the rebuilding effort is a disaster itself." Equally critical, area Rep. Ken Hechler has persuaded the Government Accounting Office to investigate the mess.

What happens to a place like Buffalo Creek after the dead have been buried, the wreckage has been carted away and the newsmen have moved on to the next story? Many of the problems which developed after the West Virginia flood were inevitable; they could be expected in the wake of any large-scale disaster. Others were directly related to the politics of the Nixon Administration, with its insistence on tight, centralized control of government functions and its emphasis on vote-getting public relations rather than performance. Finally, a large share of the difficulties has arisen because many federal assistance programs, while reasonably effective in a short-term, emergency situation, are inadequate when it comes to rebuilding a disaster area.

"Those people on Buffalo Creek have been getting screwed all their lives," says a top official at the West Virginia Statehouse, "and they're still getting screwed today. We're trying to change that—but it isn't as easy as it looks." Whatever the causes, it seems clear that the Buffalo Creek disaster has not yet ended, and that it's not likely to end in the near future.

Three different government agencies investigated the disaster. They laid the responsibility for the flood squarely on the shoulders of Buffalo Mining, and on its corporate parent, Pittston. They concluded that the defective dam had been built in violation of several laws, that its construction had been absurdly unscientific, and that the coal companies had shown "flagrant disregard for the safety of residents of Buffalo Creek."

And that, basically, was where the matter ended. Buffalo Mining drew a $25 fine for breaking a U.S. Bureau of Mines regulation, and a mild scolding from the U.S. Department of the Interior. (Thruston Morton, who sits on the Pittston board of directors, is the brother of Rogers C. B. Morton, Secretary of the Interior.) Several Buffalo Mining officials were required to answer questions before a Logan County grand jury, but emerged

Tom Nugent worked on the Detroit Free Press *and the Charlotte* Observer. *His* Death at Buffalo Creek *will be published by W. W. Norton on July 16.*