

# WHO'S INSANE?



The way society is dealing with mental health is a farce. Institutions are too full and treatment is hampered by staff. Perhaps the hardest thing to understand is the term insanity. Everybody has their own pet neurosis and everybody is insane - which makes everybody sane. The people who are locked up may be as sane as the majority of people on the street but their behaviour doesn't fit into any neatly defined category so they are abnormal, therefore they are sick. Perhaps these people are right and society's sick.

Sam has been a patient in a mental hospital for seven years. He has a brilliant mind and knows more about relating to people and predicting their reactions than most of the staff. He organized a Patients Council to give inmates a say in the way the institution is run and has

managed to change quite a few regulations governing the freedom allowed inmates. What is a man like this doing in a mental hospital?

Stanley is a perfect example of someone who doesn't fit into normal circles. Because he is a homosexual and rebelled against the alienating and inhumane treatment imposed on him by society, society feels it must hide him away where he can't embarrass anybody. He is lonely and unaccepted. He has been constantly rebuffed, harassed and ridiculed but he still cares deeply about people. He is extremely sensitive and emotional but he is not mad. The motives for institutionalizing people like Stanley should be closely examined.

Janice is another example of a sane mental patient. She was hospitalized for two years because her parents didn't have the time to try and understand her views so they told her doctor she was unmanageable and unable to adjust to society but perhaps society is unable to adjust to her, or any person whose views do not agree with Mr. Average. Janice was thirteen when committed. Is that democracy?

There are many other cases that could be quoted to point out the injustice of our mental health laws. There are old people who have no place to go so rather than take the time to establish them in a community we lock them up. People who are depressed are hospitalized but I know of no other place - except maybe a prison - as depressing as a mental hospital. Your rights and freedoms are taken away and you receive the same treatment as a not-too-bright three-year old. Is this supposed to make you feel better?

If society keeps locking up people who are different, where are our future leaders, artists, poets, geniuses going to come from? They are different, you know. If the present trend keeps up it will be easier to release the "insane" and hospitalize the so-called normal people. At least it would solve the problem of crowded institutions. Beware what you say - you could be committed next.

- Patty Servant