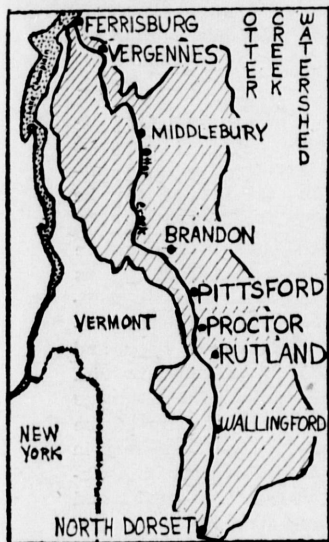


Otter Creek Pollution: Raising The Blinds

By MAUREEN CROWLEY
News Editor

"... The water pollution picture is so vast, and its implications extend to so many aspects of the Nation's life, that each of us tends to see clearly only that portion which is visible through his own particular window," remarked Dr. LeRoy E. Burney, then Surgeon General, Public Health Service, in



addressing the National Conference on Water Pollution in Washington, D. C. in 1960.

Here the window fronts on Otter Creek, the longest river in Vermont, which originates in the Dorset area and flows north 75 miles into Lake Champlain at Ferrisburg. In past years, Middlebury, along with Rutland, Proctor, Pittsford, Brandon, Vergennes and smaller riparian communities simply pulled the shades on a situation which they had helped to create.

More recently public disgust, private initiative, and federal and state legislative promptings have served in forcing these communities to face the polluted landscape. Each has taken positive, if inadequate, steps toward coping with the problem.

Paying the Debt

For decades the same towns which owed their origin and subsequent industrial growth largely to this New England stream acknowledged the debt by pouring raw sewage into Otter Creek. With contributions picked up from Rutland (Pop. 20,000) to Proctor (2000) to Pittsford (2200) to Brandon (3400) to Middlebury (5400) to Vergennes (2000) the stream was unable to recuperate through so-called "self-purification."

Five years ago, when the towns were ordered to come up to newly adopted standards of quality for intrastate waters, several had already begun sewage treatment plants, although none were completed.

Since that time all the major polluters of the stream have in effect completed treatment facilities, the latest to comply being Middlebury's Water Pollution Control Center.

Yet the "tell-tale yellow" of a once-sparkling New England stream belies the visions of improvement, and in the words of Gordon St. Peter, operator



Otter Creek shoreline. Pollution has made the Creek more a peril from disease than drowning.

of the Rutland sewage treatment plant, "It will be a long time before people have the courage to fish there again."

Middlebury's treatment plant reflects one of the reasons for this all-too-apparent lack of improvement. The plant provides for primary treatment only of raw sewage, as do most of the plants along the stream.

'Accordings' Not In Accord

According to Town Manager R. W. Emerick, the plant removes 90 to 95 percent of solids, which are then decomposed through a process of bacteriological digestion, and the remaining water is chlorinated before it enters the creek. According to Middlebury plant operator Lucius Shaw, chlorination of the water has been stopped because it was not "thought necessary." According to the January, 1967, edition of *Scientist and Citizen*, primary sewage treatment "is strictly physical treatment for the removal of suspended solids . . . primary treatment removes 35 percent of solid fecal material from raw sewage."

Falling Short

Not a little discrepancy is apparent in these three statements. Whatever the statistics

may show to be the worth of this primary treatment, a visit to the Middlebury plant and 20-20 vision are all that is necessary to realize that large volumes of crap are still being pumped into the creek.

Multiplied by the number of towns with primary treatment plants, those smaller communities with no treatment plants, an incalculable number of single-user sewer lines emptying in-

to the creek, side-effects from river-bank garbage dumps and incidental beer-can tossers and the like, the Middlebury situation indicates that the danger to one falling in the creek is greater from disease than from drowning.

Steps Forward

These conditions do not mean that this area is especially short-sighted. The New England River Basins Commission was the first to be formed under the 1965 Water Resources Planning Act. Senator Aiken was one of the prime movers for the 1954 Small Watersheds Act. The New York-Vermont Interstate Commission on the Lake Champlain Basin (INCOCHAMP) has concerned itself with pollution problems for over 17 years. The Vermont State Water Resources Board has been given the power of eminent domain. Technological problems encountered by sewage plant supervisors and operators will be the concern of a newly formed Green Mountain Water Pollution Control Association.

There is a forward-
(Continued on Page 7)



Entrance to pipe returning "purified" water to the Creek. White specks are detergent and scum.

ive Thirties: It With You'

never as bitter as Odets, never as poetic as Maxwell Anderson or O'Neill.

Carried to a logical conclusion, however, this contrast becomes hopelessly misleading, because this would be to judge Kaufman on the wrong terms. His milieu was comedy and laughter. Kaufman hated the silence and pauses in straight drama; he even disliked the music in musical comedies. Irving Berlin remembered the most horrifying experience was to have Kaufman walk out of the theatre when the music started in a musical, only to return once the dialogue began (of course, Kaufman remembered in horror Berlin's walking out when the dialogue started). Kaufman loved laughter and he loved to hear people laugh.

What is surprising is that this burst of comedy should have come in the midst of the Depression. It has not always been the case that in times of "lean days and hungry nights" there is opportunity for laughter. Kaufman could provide that opportunity and so could Aristophanes in a play such as "The Birds" (to be presented May 13 and 14 by the Middlebury College Players) which was performed during the days when Athens was fighting for its survival; but those two names just about exhaust the list. Each created a place in the national consciousness of his time for laughter, despite an environment that seemed too disheartening for humor.

In the sixties we have seen social objections raised in protest works such as "Viet Rock" or in the violent actions of "angry young men." In the thirties it was Odets and the Group Theatre. In Athens it was Euripides. By comparison a playwright such as Kaufman may appear trite, perhaps even flippancy. Well, Kaufman never pretended to be an "intellectual."

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All The News You Can Manage

"The making of the illusions which flood our experience has become the business of America, some of its most honest, most necessary, and respectable business. Multiplication of forms and improvements of technology inevitably make all experience a commodity. The story of the making of our illusions — the news behind the news — has become the most appealing news of the day. We need not be theologians to see that we have shifted the responsibility for making the world interesting from God to the newspaperman." —Daniel Boorstein, historian, from *The Image*, 1961.

The term "illusion" in reference to what we normally call "facts," or "events," or "news" is confusing. But the fascination of "news management" to public, press, and government is one indication of the growing impact and pervasiveness of mass-produced mass experience. If we are inevitably entering the "Age of McLuhan," then the integrity of our media should rightly be an abiding public concern.

Even the issue of "news man-

agement" is but a part of the question. As Joseph Kraft, the columnist, asserted in Harper's, the conflict over "management" takes fuel from "the popular myth, held by both press and government, that news is something that really exists," something both tangible and passive, merely fit to print, "instead of being shaped and put out for 'the eye of the beholder.'" Furthermore, the government and press have developed an "affinity of structure" and interest, as both government and reporting functions have become increasingly professionalized.

Yet, if the media and government find themselves to be cozier than ever structurally, the Middlebury Conference revealed that they both cherish a public image of mutual independence. The Conference raised complex problems: Government manipulation of the sources and conduits of public information, and the implications of this for a free press in a free society; the effect of mass media news on public understanding; whether the government can "stage" a news event as it sees fit by the selective release of information; whether the denial of access to certain information is deliberate

"news management," bureaucratic arrogance, or "in the interests of national security."

Unfortunately, the Conference often seemed torn between a narrow discussion of news management as related to Vietnam and a view of news production as an institutional feature of modern America. This led to debate over the almost interchangeable details of particular "credibility gaps" with too little speculation on whether these incidents indicate a pattern of government behavior.

The focus of interest seemed to be in the division of labor between the press and the government as they both work to inform the people.

Information IS Power

Arthur W. Sylvester, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, 1961-1967, propounded the notion that "information is power." Information makes news, in its immediacy. And "The man with the most facts and understanding of the interrelation of facts has power." Because the Government is "your government, an instrument of the people," Mr. Sylvester implied that its "power" was always employed in the public interest.

There is much ambiguity here. We could read Mr. Sylvester's thesis as an assertion that the power to rule this country is, or has been, conferred as an inherent right to those holding the most information, the experts. Or he could be making the self-evident statement that those institutions having access to and control of facts are the most powerful. Notably, he seems to have a strong technological attitude about information and its uses.

The Right To Lie

Mr. Sylvester went on to explain his controversial "right to lie" statement, made about the Cuban Missile Crisis. Because the use of the power of news "holds off" the violent uses of power, there are times when the government has "the duty and right to mislead and lie to deceive an enemy." Mr. Sylvester admitted that he preferred the "right to hedge" as a more accurate and less shocking definition of this right. But, as a consequence of the decision making process, "you can't operate in a goldfish bowl."

The Loyal Opposition

According to Mr. Sylvester, a newsman since 1924, there is a
(Continued on Page 8)

Conf: The Right To Lie

(Cont. from Editorial Section)
"built-in and correct conflict" between newsmen and the government. Newsmen can't expect the government to acknowledge all actions taken in the "national self-interest," because it is their job to search out certain facts on their own. Since the government basically emits "truthful information," the news media are the predominant and "inherent" news managers.

Mr. Sylvester contends that the management potential of the media has grown as advertising has taken precedence over news space. The first function of a paper is to make money, not to be a guarantor of the "public's right to know." Furthermore, with complex demands on our time, the percentage of time spent informing ourselves is declining. Another trend, according to Mr. Sylvester, is that the media are relying more on the government to do their job.

The Informed Public

James Reston of the *New York Times* has said of the ironies of the mass media: "Never have reporters and commentators reached so many people in America with their news and views as they do now, or had so little power to influence the direction of the nation's foreign policy." Mr. Sylvester, however, seems to take a contrary view of the informed public. Although it is hard to tell the temper of the country from Washington, he said, he tried to search it out, for he has "never been cynical about the American people."

Mr. Sylvester allowed that some of the audience questions at Middlebury had indicated "assumptions without facts." Concerning the civilian casualty controversy in North Vietnam, Mr. Sylvester pointed out that "air-power enthusiasts" had "brainwashed" us into believing that there is pinpoint bombing. Yet, "without question civilian areas have been hit." Although the technicalities of bombing could have been more emphasized by the Department of Defense, Mr. Sylvester feels that this "should have been self-evident."

Unfortunately, Mr. Sylvester's

technique of dealing with each alleged case of news manipulation as mere confusion of facts among the informed public begged the question of how government purveyance of information shapes and directs public understanding. During the Bay of Pigs Invasion of Cuba the Administration quietly requested *The New York Times* to defer a certain story of the invasion. President Kennedy later admitted to the editor of the *Times*, that, had they printed the story at their own discretion, he would have probably called-off the entire disastrous invasion. How many other "Bay of Pigs" situations have there been, when our government lacked the courage or grace to confess the fallibility of its informed action?

It seems possible, then, to imagine a government "commitment" as sovereign in itself even though ill-conceived, because it has not been required to face a full public examination. If we follow Mr. Sylvester's "information is power" rhetoric too far, we may discover the bleak conclusion that the government always makes the best decisions, because by definition, it knows best.

Otter Creek

(Continued from Page 5)
looking regional planning program in Addison County, and the Otter Creek Watershed Association has spurred public interest in the clearing-up of pollution with their projection of a Canoe Trail along the Creek, an idea since taken up by the Otter Creek Soil and Water Conservation District. The League of Women Voters has long been active in promoting the correct use of water resources in this area. The Middlebury Chamber of Commerce, the Vermont Campers Association, area Boy Scouts, and county extension services make up other interest groups.

Confusion

The proliferation of groups concerned with water resources, especially those with govern-

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To The Editor...

(Cont. from Editorial Section)

To the editor:

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the editors and staff of *THE BLUE BABOON* for their latest and most successful edition, "A Recommendation and Report to the President of Middlebury College by the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Life." Rarely has a student humor magazine been able to achieve a satiric work of such sustained excellence. The findings and recommendations of the committee kept us in stitches throughout.

The aura of reality surrounding the work almost convinces the most sophisticated of readers that there actually does exist such a committee at Middlebury.

It is indeed encouraging to find in the Middlebury educational environment such a strongly individual and ingenious outburst against the mindless tendency in our increasingly bureaucratic society to seek "The committee solution."

The pamphlet, which opens with a bang with recommendations of the committee continues to build inexorably towards its climax in the brilliant description of the satellite social dining plan, a minor tour de force reminiscent of Swift's "A Modest Proposal."

We can only admire the author's restraint in dealing with satellite concept which would seem to lend itself to endless exploitation.

It is only after several readings that the laughter dies away and the perceptive reader is able to discern beneath the author's satiric stance his moral kinship with Dostoyevsky and Ionesco who saw so deeply into the predicament of the individual and his struggle against the dehumanizing tyranny of our modern bourgeois planners.

Joseph P. McLaughlin
Class of 1965, Independent
Paul A. Wittman
Class of 1965, Delta Upsilon

Armstrong Announces Faculty

Promotions For Thirteen Here

Promotion of 13 members of the Middlebury College faculty, including five to full professor, was announced today by Dr. James I. Armstrong, Middlebury president.

Raised to professor were Dr. Albert H. Ewell, Jr., chairman of the Psychology Department, Dr. Walter A. Moyer, Jr., Chemistry; Dr. E. Kirk Roberts, Chemistry; Dr. Harris E. Thurber, chairman of the Political Science Department, and Chaplain Charles P. Scott, chairman of the Religion Department.

Dr. Ewell is a graduate of Haverford.

He became an asst. prof. at Middlebury in 1955, was named chairman of the department the following year, and was advanced to associate professor in 1961.

A graduate of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science in 1943, Dr. Moyer received his master's degree in

Chemistry from Middlebury and his Ph. D. at the University of Delaware.

Dr. Roberts is a 1941 graduate of Earlham College. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University where he served as a teaching fellow before coming to Middlebury in 1952 as an instructor. He was named assistant professor in 1955 and raised to associate in 1961.

Chaplain Scott is a 1943 graduate of Ohio State University. He was asst. minister of the Washington Park Presbyterian Church in Milwaukee, Wisc., 2 years before coming to Middlebury in 1951 as Chaplain and Instructor in Religion.

Dr. Thurber is a 1943 graduate of the University of Vermont.

He first joined the Middlebury faculty as Instructor of Political Science in 1947, left to obtain his doctorate, and returned in 1951.

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Creek, "Tell-Tale Yellow" . . .

(Continued From Page 7)
mental jurisdiction, itself poses a problem, however.

In an address to a 1966 session of INCOCHAMP, Justin Brande, Cornwall farmer who was a past activist in the Otter Creek Watershed Association and is now head of the Vermont Natural Resources Council, noted that "planning coordination" often sounds like a babel of confusion made up of suffocating voices with paper-rustling . . . in natural resource planning, in our watershed we have two levels of forestry officials, plus fish and game people, soil conservation experts as well as the Army Corps of Engineers, all with some jurisdiction but without any apparent coordination of programs."

Arbitrary Divisions

In an interview with the Campus, Brande cited the artificial barriers to solving natural resources problems. Pollution problems in the Lake Champlain Basin, for example, concern not only the communities around its banks, but those along pollution-contributing rivers and streams, the states of Vermont and New York, the federal government and Canada. "Political divisions are anathema to nature," Brande points out.

He recommends dealing with watershed management on the local level through a study of recreation, water supply and waste disposal at the town and village level in relation to the bigger regional concepts. A prerequisite to this localization of authority, he emphasizes, would be the awakening of local citizens to the need for protection of their water supplies "for current consumption as well as for future generations."

No Such Thing

A crying need for public re-education, points out Brande, is manifested in the very idea of waste disposal.

"Waste is a figment of man's imagination," he says. Man seriously disturbs natural cyclical processes which left alone would normally admit of no "waste."

Athelstan Spilhaus, professor of geophysics at the University of Minnesota and chairman of the Committee on Pollution of the National Academy of Science-National Research Council, puts it another way. There is a pressing need to "reconsider our economy, which is based on

the fallacious idea that there is such a thing as a consumer. I believe that we can have a viable economy under private enterprise which regards what we presently call a consumer a user, and that after use, materials left over are collected, disassembled, and put back in the cycle of manufacture to re-use. Some economists see no need for this because they argue from the resource availability standpoint that if we run out of one material, we can always invent a substitute. This is beside the point. We can invent plastic substitutes for metals and such-like, but we cannot re-invent the natural diversity that is the beauty of an unspoiled environment."

A Delicate Balance

This delicate cyclical balance of unspoiled environments has been seriously tampered with by man. Some results are all too familiar.

In Long Island, housing development dwellers have drawn glasses of tap water with foaming detergent heads. Lake Michigan abounds with closed-down beaches. Lake Texoma has suffered from saltwater seepage from oil wells. Lake Tahoe, long known for its crystal clear water, has witnessed the insidious invasion of algae, a sure sign of pollution. The Mississippi has been described as the central sewer pipe of a nation. And on and on . . .

Potential Wastelands

If some effects of pollution are readily apparent to the naked eye, however, more subtle effects defy estimation. "Re-

storing the Quality of Our Environment," a 1965 report by the Environmental Pollution Panel of the President's Science Advisory Committee, emphasizes in simple language the interdependence of living organisms in its plea for a saner policy of utilizing natural resources:

"Obviously man cannot live alone in a biological desert . . . man must reckon with the fact that, just as he depends on an assortment of renewable resources which are directly useful to him, so also do all other species depend on their own assortments . . . the species of plants and animals which man depends upon indirectly are very many times more numerous than those which he uses directly. Altogether they constitute man's environment. No one is independent of this, not only if he lives on a farm in the country, but even if he spends his entire life in a city of concrete and glass and buys all his food at the corner supermarket. Any one of us is likely to be more or less affected when pollution defiles a habitat, even one we have never seen."

Possibilities

In some areas pollution has been so effective a defiler that experts have termed the ruin of an ecological environment irreversible.

Such is not the case in the Otter Creek watershed area. The kinds of water pollution contributors hardest to control (oil slicks, radioactive and other chemical and industrial wastes) are not factors.

Rather the problem seems to depend for solution on advanced methods of sewage treatment. Eventually municipalities will be expected to upgrade present primary treatment plants to secondary (including biological treatment) and tertiary (required for making polluted water potable) stages by increasingly stringent state and federal regulations.

Legislative actions on pollution, however, are notably corrective in nature rather than preventative. Important baby steps have already been taken here to correct an alarming situation. What might be hoped for is a locally-initiated giant step.

Tryouts for Aristophanes' comedy *The Birds* will be held tomorrow and Monday, from 3:30 to 6 p.m. in the lounge of Wright Memorial Theater.

Call-backs and further tryouts will take place Tuesday, March 21, from 1 to 3:30 p.m. in the Theater auditorium.

Scripts are now available at the Theater box office.

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