

been thrown in the water. I wish  
A call to Metropolitan Sewers and people would care more."

*Mc-Washington Press*

# State investigators clear Straight of abuse charges

The Ohio Bureau of Drug Abuse last week cleared Straight Incorporated, the drug rehabilitation program operating near Millford, of charges of abuse of authority and abuse of teenage clients.

The report is the result of an investigation conducted in May at the request of the American Civil Liberties Union chapter in Cincinnati. ~~Following the release of the report last week, ACLU was reported as saying that the Straight program may turn out to be a model for other drug-related programs in the future.~~

Straight originated in Florida and has operated in Clermont County since the first of this year. It is a rigidly

structured program for young people, designed to change a life style which leans on drug dependence. Clients are in residence during the course of the program, living in a strictly guarded style, with intense counseling and peer pressures.

There has appeared to be little middle ground in judgment of the program. People, including clients, are either all for the operation or all against it.

Stewart Bell, director of the Ohio Bureau of Drug Abuse, said that he and two other investigators interviewed seven staff members, six clients, and 14 parents. They also studied

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13 client files, chosen at random from Straight records. They studied the written rules and signed consent of clients and parents contained in the files, histories of drug use, personal and medical backgrounds, reports of physical examinations, and notes about the progress of the clients. All of these records, Bell reported, are kept in client files.

He and his fellow investigators found fault only with the lack of a written grievance procedure.

In his conclusion, Bell said, "In my opinion, the program is a functional, legitimate program." He said, "Admittedly, the style of the operation of this program is quite demanding and therefore bound to cause controversy to those used to more conventional treatment modalities. However, ~~the~~ ~~investigation~~ ~~team~~ ~~could~~ ~~find~~ ~~only~~ ~~evidence~~ ~~of~~ ~~total~~ ~~professionalism~~ ~~and~~ ~~concern~~ ~~for~~ ~~the~~ ~~clients~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~staff~~." He also said that the complaints on which ACLU had based its request for an investigation provided only circumstantial hearsay evidence.

Bell also said that the final report was in direct variance with what he

had anticipated filing when he entered the case.

"I am very much basically against that type of program on a personal level, so I was looking for a bone to pick," Bell said. He said, however, that the team found no abuse of clients and no inconsistencies of policies. He said of the highly structured program, "I don't say it's right or wrong. I'm merely saying it's effective for the people that's there."

ACLU had received complaints prior to asking for the investigation, and Margie Robertson of ACLU said that additional complaints have been received since. The complaints, she said, accuse Straight of verbal abuse and other tactics designed to destroy the young person's self esteem and allege that clients are not permitted to leave the center when they wish.

Ruth Ann Newton, director of Straight in Milford, said, "I hope this puts some of the complaints to rest."

St. Petersburg, Florida, is the home base of Straight Incorporated. The branch at Mt. Repose, east of Milford, is the first to be established under Straight operation. When it was opened, 55 young people from the Cincinnati area were transferred from Florida.