A N EVENING AT THE WHITE HOUSE IS NOT AN UNUSUAL EVENT for Enid McGillfert. As the wife of Assistant Secretary of Defense David McGillfert, she has been there many times. But one particular evening, May 1, 1978, stands out in her mind. Mrs. McGillfert had gone to the majestic building on Pennsylvania Avenue to attend a performance of a play presented by her daughter's elementary school, whose students included Amy Carter. Before the performance, President and Mrs. Carter greeted children and parents on an informal reception line. It was then that Mrs. McGillfert drew open the curtain on her own personal drama. She stopped, said hello, and then she simply could not refrain. She had to convince Jimmy Carter of the significance of a new "experience" in her life—the Hunger Project, the latest venture of Werner Erhard's est. For est, or Erhard Seminars Training, which began as one of the evangelistic human potential movements of the '70s, had recently expanded its horizons from the self to the world. Werner Erhard had inaugurated a campaign that, he promises, will end hunger on the planet within the next two decades.

As Jimmy shook Enid McGillfert's hand, she smiled and began her tale, "I just want you to know," she told him, "about the Hunger Project. There are 100,000 people out there who really just want to totally serve you and do anything you want them to do to end hunger and starvation on the planet in the next 20 years." The people standing behind her pressed her on. She could not decipher Carter's reaction.

All through the play, anxiety ate at her. Had she done the right thing? Poor man, she thought, he can't even stand on a reception line without someone pestering him. After the play, as the parents gathered in the White House dining room for refreshments, the President walked up to her. "Now, where were we?" he asked, flashing his famous smile. Enid McGillfert was startled. "I want you to know," Carter went on, "that I know about your group and will call upon you when we have our plans ready."

Mrs. McGillfert, an est graduate and enrollee in the Hunger Project, was not the only one pleased with Carter's response. Upon hearing of the incident, est Public Relations Manager Brian Van der Hoed beamed. It was nothing short of a miracle, a miracle that would delight Werner Erhard. For if one man will spark America's movement to end hunger, many loyal est supporters believe, it is Werner Erhard, founder of est—a man who has transformed thousands of Americans' experience of themselves, has "made it work," and who has not only now gone on to forge a campaign to end hunger on the planet but also, in the process, will show us how to "complete" our lives and make the world our "context rather than our condition."

Until 1977, Erhard's activity was based on a training system whose some 250 people sit in a hotel ballroom for two weekends to hear Erhard or one of his trainers combine techniques as varied as Eastern mysticism, Dale Carnegie and behavior modification so that they can heal their souls. The going price for this is $300. The training takes place in a distinctive upbeatest esoteric language whose euphoriuspeak the statements of both Erhard and his disciples (see box, p. 44). Erad's expansion into the field of hunger is significant not only because Erhard has initiated it, but also because it is one of the first attempts so far by one of the "self-oriented" movements of the '70s to address social or political issues.
To assure the eradication of hunger and starvation within the next two decades, our fathers created the Hunger Project as an independent, nonprofit organization and gave it a $400,000 interest-free loan. Est's tax-deductible arm, the Ent Founda-
cion, bestowed on the Project a $100,000 grant. This money financed a series of 12 "prestinations" in urban centers across the nation, where Erhard "presented" the idea of ending hunger to 40,000 Americans. In a slide show and lec-
ture, he and his resident hunger expert, Roy Prosterman, tried to "get at" the first principles of hunger and starvation. He then gave the Project to those Americans who, after paying $6 to attend the show, demonstrated that they wanted to take "personal responsibility" for being the source of the Project and ending hunger and starvation on the planet in the next two decades.

[Who Gets the Money?]

W hat, precisely, does the Hunger Project plan to do to end famine and starvation? The Hunger Project does not, you see, do anything about ending hunger. That's why, Erhard tells anyone who asks, is a difficult idea to grasp. The Hun-
ger Project does not advocate any particular solution to hunger—like land reform, food self-sufficiency or the wrest-
ing of power from landowners by peasants. Nor does it ask its enrollees to make "dehumanizing gestures"—like sending money to anti-hunger organizations. Above all, the Project does not want its members to feel guilty about the deplorable situation that causes, each year, the death of some 15 million people all over the world. Rather, it asks them to view hun-
ger and starvation as a "wonderful opportunity," an oppor-
tunity to "make a difference in the world.

To create such optimism, Erhard counsels us to examine our "positions" about hunger and starvation. This is the first step in "getting" the Project. Once we examine our attitudes, we will discover that two prevail: one, we think hunger and starvation are inevitable; two, we think that to end it, we have to "do" something, support a particular "position." But these things, Erhard assures us, are not the case. Hunger and starvation are not inevitable. We have the technology to eradicate them. And positions merely make matters worse—by engendering opposing positions.

What the Hunger Project literature—a slick collection of Werner Erhard's sayings, photographs and aphorisms gleaned from hunger experts and their writings—counsels is a process of de-education. For anyone confused by the complex issues of the day, this has enormous appeal. "Ra-
ther than knowing more and more as you go along," Erhard counsels, "you will need, instead, to be willing to know less and then less—that is to say, to become somewhat confused as you go along. Finally, you will have struggled enough to be clear that you don't know. In the state of know-
ing that you don't know, you get, as a flash of insight, the principle out of which the answer comes."

What forces caused hunger in the first place? Erhard is vague about this. "Call them political forces, if you like," he advises generously. "Study the political forces and you will see that hunger and starvation on the planet are the inevitable result of those forces... If you don't like the politics, do it with economic forces. If you don't like the economics, do it with sociological forces. Psychological forces. Philosophical forces. Or if you prefer, a combination of them."

So far, 180,000 people have enrolled in this project to make the world "work"; they have made more than 30,000 tax-
deductible contributions, which have totaled $885,800. Al-
much none of this money goes into the mouths of hungry people, for that would, remember, contribute to the "de-
humanization" of the world's hungry. This money goes, in-
stead, toward the continued communication of the Hunger Project to an ever-expanding sector of the American public: it produces the Hunger Project quarterly newspaper, A Shift in the Wind; it helps pay for office space and slide shows and films. Less than one percent of the Project's money, $2,500, went to a well-known British hunger organization called Oxfam. But the essence of the Hunger Project is workability, alignment, communication and more communication.

And here he is now, Werner Erhard, founder of the Hun-
ger Project. Here he is on the stage of the San Francisco Cow Palace, or that of the Fifth Forum in New York, communici-
cating the Hunger Project to thousands of Americans. The auditors are enormous, so we have two Werners before us—our man on stage, and above him, bigger than life, a videotaped image on a huge screen. Or here he is in Washington, gathering hunger experts together to convince them that ending hunger is an idea whose time has come. Or there he is in India, talking with Prime Minister Morarji Desai, and then quick, we have to catch up with him as he jets to the Franklin House, his Victorian mini-mansion on Franklin Street in San Francisco. Wherever he is these days, the Hunger Project is on his lips, for it's a project that comes from his very intimate experience of the souls of the thou-
sands and thousands of Americans with whom he has had, he says, a very meaningful personal relationship.

The est staff, the Hunger Project staff, the Hunger Project Council, the est Advisory Board, the Hunger Project Ad-
visory Board, est assistants and volunteers all echo Werner's language when "communicating" the Project. And they all claim that, except for the seed money, the Project has noth-
ing organizationally to do with est and that Werner Erhard has unmanufacturedly taken months off his busy schedule to help Americans end world hunger.

A six-month investigation by Mother Jones and the Center for Investigative Reporting of Oakland, California, however, has revealed a far different set of goals for the Hunger Project: Werner Erhard is using the Hunger Project not only for self-aggrandizement but for promoting the for-profit corpo-
ration he founded, as well. The Hunger Project is a thirty-
veiled recruitment arm for est. Hunger Project volunteers have said that est-trained Hunger Project staffers have pressured them until they agreed to do the $300-a-shot est training. Others told of being asked to lend their cars or provide other services to est.

The Hunger Project has nonprofit status—which gives it the ability to receive tax-deductible contributions. But this use of a nonprofit organization to recruit customers for a for-profit one is in violation of the law, if not the letter, of Internal Revenue Service laws.

In various cities across the country, Erhard's disciples have organized a "Hunger Project Seminar Series" at $30 per enrollment. Yet the proceeds go, not to the Hunger Project, but directly to est.

The official claim that est and the

MOTHER JONES

DECEMBER 1978 43
organically appear is a fabrication. Careful examination reveals that the personnel pass through a revolving door from est to the Hunger Project. In many cities, the Hunger Project is housed in est offices. Est graduate bulletins advertise the Hunger Project events. The three initial directors of the Hunger Project, Michael Chazinsky, Robert Dunnett and Mark Schaevenius, all work out of the low fees of est lawyer and offshore tax haven expert, Harry Margolis. (See box, p. 32.) In addition, Dunnett was vice president of Erhard Seminars Training, Inc., when that was est's corporate name, and Chazinsky was one of the directors of California Aesthetics, which was once the sole shareholder in est. The Hunger Project's current vice president, John Emery, and the secretary-treasurer, Helen Nakan, are both on the est Advisory Board. The Project's resident hunger expert, Roy Priester, the man who does the traveling hunger road show with Erhard, receives a grant from an est foundation, which helps support his own hunger consulting work.

As we shall see, Erhard will deny some of these charges in his uniquely estian way in an interview.

[No More Struggle]

Exhausted, of course, the Hunger Project is not a new departure for Erhard, but merely an application of the familiar est approach. Consciousness is everything: distribution of wealth and power, nothing. The Hunger Project takes one of the most potent political issues of the day and totally depoliticizes it. The persistence of hunger, Erhard says, is not primarily due to an economic system in which rich get richer and poor get poorer (of which Erhard is a part), but to the way Est monies finds its way to offshore tax havens. Rather, it is due to the lack of will, to attitudes, to bad intentions.

The emphasis is on the positive. Don't think about the depressing facts of hunger or the causes of starvation, think of the hunger issue as the chance of a lifetime—a way to have an impact on the world. All this talk of impact neatly brackets the starving and the dying. They appear in beautiful color pictures in Hunger Project brochures—but the needs of middle-class Americans eclipse their reality. The people who flock to est, the Hunger Project and the other consciousness movements have just joined a decade of disillusionment where political action promised social transformation. The promise was not fulfilled. Similarly, the '60s and early '70s were an era of journalistic exposés that revealed widespread corruption: Watergate, the CIA, FBI provocateurs. The list is endless. But again, information has not led to transformation. The more people learn about how bad things are, the more powerless they feel. Erhard realizes that his fans want to feel both powerful and needed. "The idea of the Hunger Project germinated itself from my experience of people with whom I was interacting, primarily people who had been through the training," he explains. So Erhard craves a way for them to feel like they're having the impact they know they've lost.

Hunger is one of the sexier issues in Washington, D.C., this year. No one is for it, and everyone is against it. Hunger is consequently a perfect issue around which a President with legging popularity can mobilize public support. Recently, Carter appointed a Presidential commission on the subject. Like all Presidential commissions, it includes a "non-partisan" assortment of college presidents (Steve Muller of Johns Hopkins), millionaires (Sol Linowitz), scientists (Jean Mayer), Republican and Democratic senators and representatives, and, among others, entertainer Harry Chapin and singer John Denver—the latter, an enthusiastic backer of est.

Denver is unfailingly helpful. His greatest contribution, aside from his earning role in the Presidential Hunger Commission, was a film he financed and narrated called I Want to Live. He sang the theme song, which centered around the lines: "I want to share/ I want to give/ I want to live." The film also included the opinions of such luminaries as Hubert Humphrey, U.N. Representative Andrew Young and various hunger experts, who spoke about the possible solutions to the hunger problem. Earning on a rather vulgar note of self-celebration, Vice President Walter Mondale congratulated Denver on his great personal commitment. This film is
a staple of Hunger Project promotion.

Werner Erhard has promptly gone to work trying to propogate his ideas to the Presidential Convention's members and others in the White House. Carter's son Chip, for example, met with Werner while at the convention. However, Erhard's pitch has not been well received. "If my father can go from being almost unknown to being President in four years," he was quoted as saying by "The Washington Post," "we can certainly end hunger in 30 years."

Harry Chapin and est regulars John Denver and Valerie Harper (TV's Rhoda) were also among the 100 guests at the Tarrytown dinner. Harper has also been active in the Hunger Project. She has served on the est Advisory Board and is a member of the Hunger Project Council. Her public appearances at the est have been immeasurable. On national television and in magazine articles, she has thanked Werner for transforming her life. Now, she expresses concern about the Hunger Project. (See below.) She participates in events to promote the Project—a soccer game here, a speech there, a gathering at her house—or to help Werner meet the important people.

Because of hunger's non-partisan appeal and President Carter's interest, a campaign to end hunger is a natural way in which Erhard can appear to be "doing good" while cultuiving powerful connections. A number of key people have

"Brenda, Brenda, I Just Got Manifested!"

What attracts a talented, busy and libberiated woman to an organization and now I'm a member of this group called the Hunger Project. In our world you have to say, "What is the organization?" And of course there is an organization, but the actual work of the Hunger Project is individual responsibility. It does manifest and it isn't a solid thing; it's not an object, as humans beings are. People are. So the Hunger Project lives in each person who chooses to have it be there. And so, since I've been participating in the Hunger Project, a lot of things in my life have altered and my personal power has expanded.

"What the Hunger Project is, is an alignment of individuals, each doing their particular, individual thing. Now Wilbur and Orville Wright created the airplane. Now, what it looks to us—and now we'll talk physics for a minute—it looks to us like Wilbur and Orville built a plane and then flew it. Now that's the Hunger Project. The way an idea's time comes is individuals create it. Individuals create—again physics—a critical mass of agreement about an idea, and then out of that, things manifest. You got that? You don't have to believe it or understand it, but just kind of get the sense of what I'm saying.

"Werner Erhard has formulated the Project. He has...I'll tell you what he has done. He has built a very powerful—what I believe, literally, he personally took responsibility for ending world hunger. He said to the Advisory Board, and I was at the meeting: "That's what I want to do." And there was tremendous state, and we all said, "Now we're going to have a minute, Werner, what are you doing? What are you talking about? He said: This is an est organization, our organization will continue, will find troupings, will help giving people a chance to nurture, expand their lives, etc. If the training something they want to do, fine, if not, they don't, and we'll keep providing it. That's our work as an est Advisory Board. I'm just telling you that I am personally taking responsibility for ending the starvation on this planet by 1989. And I remember standing up and saying, "But Werner, listen, I was taught as a child, and I believe, that it will always be us. There will always be the starving things because it's built into the world's agenda. Aida in the Middle Ages, all that much further back than the Middle Ages people have starved."

And he said: "I supposed you, Valerie, that you holding that is contributing to hunger. Your responsibility is not if you aita pizza this afternoon. And I got it so clearly, and I began to see.

"The clearer I get about starvation, the more I can take responsibility for it. No, in one sentence, the Hunger Project is a project of communication and enrollment, and by excellence that does mean that you pay a fee and you're in and you have a card. It means that you enroll and then you enroll to enroll. You enroll people yourself. I'm sure you'll seek to other people about this. I'll send you material and I think you'll like it. I have exactly the person for you to call to get some materials. Brian Van Der Horst is the public information of the Office of public information for the Hunger Project. Well, now wait a second, I'm giving you the wrong thing, honey, hold it, he's with us, that's not right..."

DECEMBER 1976
44
MOTHER JONES
supplier. His wife, Vicki Sant, is Regional Director of the Hunger Project in Washington. The Sants introduced Erhard to former Carter administration drug and food policy adviser Dr. Peter Bourne, before Bourne’s sudden fall from public view.

As we talk in Sant’s Arlington, Virginia, office on the top floor of a building that overlooks the Potomac and Washington beyond, Sant radiates enthusiasm about Erhard and his latest undertaking. Currently a director of the Energy Productivity Center of the Carnegie-Mellon Institute of Research, an organization funded by, among others, Gulf Oil and the Ford Foundation, Sant is a member of the Hunger Project Council and speaks officially for the Project. He admits that he has not “read enough to be even informed about the problem.” But since Werner says that to know less is to know more, this doesn’t matter. “In effect,” he says of the Hunger Project, “bouncing with enthusiasm, “it’s the world working. That’s the exciting part of that . . . So if you can handle hunger, you sort of get to go on to everything else. If you can get rid of hunger, my gosh,” he trills, “we might even be able to get rid of mental illness.”

Besides Sant, Erhard has on his team another well-connected Washington executive—Greg Votaw, the former director of World Bank programs in East Asia and the Pacific. Votaw provided introductions for Erhard’s trip to India and has introduced him to various hunger experts in Washington. And, finally, there is Roy Prosterman, a truly non-partisan hunger expert who has worked as a consultant in land development for such diverse nations as Brazil, the Socialist regime in Portugal, and South Vietnam (in 1967). Roy Prosterman attended some of the first meetings between Erhard and former Presidential adviser Bourne. Prosterman and Erhard were able, Prosterman says, “to communicate a real sense of what the Hunger Project is about and the kind of support that might mean is waiting in the wings for the President. I’m persuaded that this is a thing that could greatly add to Carter’s political capital to do lots of other things for foreign aid programs.”

Prosterman also notes that if Carter showed himself to be someone with the vision and leadership and the sense of the future that would allow him to make a commitment to join with others on the planet to end hunger by the year 2000, I think he would be seen as a person of greater stature than he is now seen as being.”

The Hunger Project is not every politician’s dream: a huge block of voters have no one to advocate and who will contribute their time and, although no one explicitly mentions it, their votes to the President and his programs. Erhard knows this, and the Hunger Project staffers are quite open about their plans to go straight to the top. No matter who replaces Bourne on hunger issues, says Ellis Deuil, president of the Hunger Project, “we’ll be talking to him.”

The Washington connection shows another side of Erhard’s ingenuity in entering the Hunger Project. The Project manages to give Erhard a legitimate issue through which he can reach people in government (he could never, for example, have gotten Carter to provide direct governmental support to east), while providing his followers with a program that will both occupy their time and assure their continued allegiance. This latter result is no mean thing. Although Erhard has put more than 150,000 people through his training and retained the loyalty of many est graduates, there is always the risk that without ongoing programs, they will

move on to another of the many new consciousness gurus who have come after him. The Hunger Project minimizes this risk. Est graduates can become obsessed with hunger. And, when Erhard goes to Washington, est graduates all over the country can feel that they, too, have Jimmy Carter’s ear.

[“Werner Says . . .”]

A new volunteer to the Hunger Project coming to est headquarters in San Francisco is ushered into a huge, thickly carpeted room with large potted plants strategically placed next to partitions and walls. Overhead pipes and vents, painted various tones of orange and rust, cris-cross the high ceiling. Partitioned sections of offices, without, however, actually dividing the area into private, soundproof rooms. Walking through the large, fragmented room, one has the uncanny feeling of people being together, occupying the same space, but never connecting. By the same feeling one has at an est training session. There were 250 people in the same room, but they do not reef. In proximity one practices not intimacy, but the ability to maintain a discreet distance.

Proximity within distance, distance at the heart of intimacy, the same play operates in the Hunger Project’s relationship to east. The volunteer has been told, upon calling the Hunger Project, that east and the Project are totally different organizations. Never mind that the Hunger Project caller’s inquiry is answered with the familiar exclaim “Hello, this is Gruss, how may I assist you?” It’s not east. Never mind the fact that its offices are at est Central, that it uses est’s phones, that est started it, that Werner Erhard is its chief spokesperson and that his picture and aphorisms adorn the
walls. Remember, it's not easy.

Despite denials of any relationship, however, the two organizations are virtually one. Recently, for example, the Hunger Project purchased $1,200 worth of tickets for a San Francisco World Affairs Council luncheon at which India's Prime Minister Desai was to speak. When the Indian consulate was distressed that the word "hunger" would appear on tables and programs, the Project conveniently switched identities. After purchasing the tickets with Hunger Project funds, they used Desai's name on its place cards at the tables (laden with cephas Argenteuil, grilled mango and apple tart).

The Hunger Project is technically a separate legal entity — but in fact it functions as a recruitment arm for the Project. The experience of Hunger Project volunteers confirms this. From the moment she first went to the Project's offices in San Francisco as a volunteer, reported Lori Lieberman of the Center for Investigative Reporting, members of the Project staff concentrated on recruiting her to est. "I was greeted by Tracy Apple [a local Hunger Project staffer and est graduate]," she recounts, "who immediately asked me whether or not I had undergone the est training. When I said I had not, she reassured me that that was okay, but that it would be easier for you to work around the office if you do take the training because we use a different language and different ways of communicating around esties." Pressure to take the est training continued throughout my five-hour stay. I discovered only one other person among the 20 or 30 people I encountered to be a non-est graduate. She was an office worker. And as I was sitting in the bathroom, I heard two other women office workers haranguing her because she had worked at the Hunger Project for a month and still refused to take the training. They said she was "uncooperative, closed-minded and had a narrow perspective." I was later asked to provide my car to chauffeur some out-of-town est officials around the city several days later.

"I was also struck," Lieberman adds, "by the emphasis on Werner Erhard. Everything was "Werner says." When I expressed confusion to someone about the term "the Xerox machine," she explained that I "really ought to study this machine because Werner says we all ought to get clear about how machinery works so that it doesn't control us." Another Center for Investigative Reporting staffer volunteering at the Hunger Project described a similar experience. The effort to pressure him into taking the est training, says Dan Noyes, was as important as Hunger Project business: "When I asked Tracy Apple if est was important, she said 'I personally recommend it, but it's not essential. It will help you understand the Hunger Project and the man who created it. It's the greatest thing that ever happened to me.' Although she was careful to say that est was not essential to the Hunger Project, she then proceeded to pressure me to sign up for the two-weekend seminar, saying it cost $300. I asked her when I had a free weekend and sat down to call and find out what the dates of the next Bay Area sessions were, I said I would think about it.

The next time I came in, I saw Tracy Apple. After saying hello, the first thing she asked was 'Have you decided about your training yet?' She told me that I had to have the $300 enrollment fee by the next day. She called to arrange for me to go on and enroll. When I went to a special est guest weekend the next week, I was surprised to see that it began jointly with a Hunger Project seminar, which then split up

into an est seminar and a Hunger Project seminar. My general impression was that there was no difference between the two. Hunger Project officials seemed to do much energy trying to get Noyes to join est that they neglected to collect his Hunger Project enrollment card or to convince him to contribute his money to the Project.

Much pressure in recruiting new est numbers comes as no surprise to anyone familiar with the organization. Est has high enrollment quotas and staffers are put under enormous pressure to fill them. "Werner once put out a list of ways to recruit people to est," explains one disillusioned former staffer. "You would not believe the lengths staffers were asked to go to get people in the training. If someone called est by mistake, you know, a wrong number, you were supposed to not hang up but try to recruit him. You were supposed to recruit your lover, your mate, your friends, your family, the milkman or paper boy. It was incredible." According to another former staffer, Werner explained the purpose of the Hunger Project as that of increasing enrollments in the est training.

One has only to do some minor arithmetic to determine how potentially lucrative a recruitment arm the Hunger Project is. There are, so far, about 190,000 enrollees in the Project. About two-thirds of them have not done est yet. This means est has more than 100,000 potential students in close reach. If only half of these people take est, that is $15 million which Erhard can funnel into his offshore tax shelters.

Even when Erhard can't manage to recruit Hunger Project enrollees into est, est still has managed to get their ear and sometimes their money. Credibly benefiting from the whole confusion between est and the Hunger Project, officials recently mounted a countrywide series of seminars on hunger, whose proceeds went directly to est. It worked this way: in a number of cases, the est organization would send a seminar titled "Hunger Project Seminars Series." Both est graduates and non-graduates were eligible to come. The purpose of the seminars, in typically estian language, was advertised as being to "support you in realizing your intention in making a difference in the world, in making the world a place that nurtures and enlightens human beings." The advertisement adds, "To register, call the est Center in the city where you want to take the series." Forty-two hundred people enrolled as $30 apiece. The money, both Brian Van der Horst and Ellis Deall of the Hunger Project admit, went directly to est.

[Like a Temperance Union?]

ERHAND CLAIMS THAT THE HUNGER PROJECT HAS THE support of other organizations that have been working for years to eradicate hunger. In February of 1978, he met in Washington, D.C., with representatives of those organizations to explain the Project to them. Erhard, Prosternon, Van der Horst—all insist the meeting was a fantastic success. Ellis Deall, the New York attorney, who is president of the Hunger Project, optimistically explains that people from hunger organizations are thrilled about the Project. "They're delighted to have us aboard," he enthused.

This positive reaction is contradicted by the San Francisco Chronicle reported a skeptical-to-hostile reception of Erhard at that February meeting. Many of the most
Where Erhard Launder The Money

BY VICKI SANT

MOTHER JONES

influential people in anti-hunger organizations are quite critical of the Hunger Project.

Lester Brown, for example, thinks Vicki Sant was evasive when asked why Brown, who heads the Worldwatch Institute and is a widely respected expert in the field of world food problems, failed to appear at the Washington meeting. Mrs. Sant explained that he was absent from the dinner because he was "out of town." Yet internal Hunger Project memoirs state very clearly that Brown did not attend because he was, in principle, against the Project. When pressed again about Brown's lack of involvement, Mrs. Sant replied that Brown was not involved because he just isn't "Brown," however, he has repeatedly explained to Vicki Sant his objections to the Hunger Project, and that he is quite outspoken about why he just can't involved. "You have to do more than just collect pledge cards to end hunger. They [the Hunger Project] remind me of when I was a boy, and they used to pass out cards for the Women's Christian Temperance Union in church," Brown elaborates. "I can't speak for the others who signed up, but they didn't work at all that well for me."

I have serious doubts about the social value of the Hunger Project," Brown continues, "about its real contribution to the alleviation of hunger. It's probably collected more money in the name of hunger and done the least about hunger than any group I can think of. Anyone who has a real concern

about hunger has to have some understanding and concern for social justice in developing countries, about existing immobile structures, about rapid population growth. I can't see the Hunger Project doing anything about that."

[THE MAN IN THE MOBILE CHAIR]

THE HUNGER PROJECT STAFFERS, WHO HURDLY recruit Project volunteers into est, insist that to understand the Hunger Project, you must understand Werner, take the training. That is Werner. They are right; the Hunger Project is Werner's. Whatever it is that Werner does, it is done through the thickly decorated rooms and the extraordinarily

invasive comfort of his Franklin Street Victorian in San Francisco.

Any experience of Werner Erhard is orchestrated in ad

vance. The environment in which he lives is as much a part of an interview with him as the words he pours out—thousands of them, wandering their way past logical intervention—

or the warm handshake of greeting, or the obligatory parting hug. The interior of the Franklin House is overwhelming, opulent, dripping good taste and prosperity. Plants—perfectly watered and tended so that not the slightest brown curls

Did that $1 million really come some

where, or did Margolis construct emptily

prefabricated tax shelter for a million dollars Erhard hoped to collect in future

years from people who took his training?

That is one question the IRS tried to

answer when the government, in 1975, in
dicted Margolis on 23 counts of tax fraud

and one count of conspiracy. Mentioned

in connection with the indictment were

Erhard, two million-dollar deals, which,

the government charged, had never

really taken place.

Federal lawyers argued that all the pa

perwork had been drawn up and shuffled

by Margolis employees. But in 1977, a jury

acquitted Kim. Court observers say that

too many companies had been behind their

status as foreign corporations, and omi

bigativies in tax law confused the jury.

Meanwhile, back to Erhard and the mil

lion dollars that may or may not have ex

isted. Prior to the Margolis indictment, the

IRS had disallowed Erhard's claim that the

sale of his knowledge brought him capital

gain. Furthermore, PMSA's word that it

would pay up voluntarily during the next

ten years wasn't good enough in the gov

ernment's view, to qualify for location on

the installment plan.

So the feds shipped Erhard with an in

come-tax bill on the million dollars,

amounting to nearly half that amount.

Currently, six tax cases against him

December 1979
the end of leafy foliage from enormous wicker baskets. In the midst of this modern decor is a collection of African and Oriental gods and goddesses, among them an ancient Buddha. Puzzled, or in impassible resignation, he reaches to his inner life while above him, from the midst of a cluster of ferns, a single, helmet-shaped sculpture juts out from the wall. The tip is whirled at a sharp point. Lethal, phallic, primitive, it seems a reminder that no matter how carefully assembled is this collection of dormant divinity, the primary theme is power—hard, driving, alive, spike-like, nailed through the trappings of aesthetics.

I am told, as I walk in, where the interview will take place. "Here is your chair," a young man points to a thick, over-stuffed armchair. "Put your tape recorder here," he points to a table, "and here is where Werner will sit." Erhardt's chair, unlike any other in the room, is a comfortable office chair on castors, apparently out of place in this well-decorated living room/library.

After a half-hour delay, Erhardt finally appears. He is better-looking than his stage or screen image. He is filled with charm. From his perfectly cut and trimmed hair perfectly short shoe, the effect is deliberate and immaculate. Clean-shaven, white-shirted—several buttons, but not too many, open from the collar—he is a blend of breeds that match the biggest and browns of the room in which we sit.

Erhardt, dealing with different aspects of their income, are lined up in U.S. Tax Court while Margulis and the IRS counsel conduct pre-trial negotiations.

NOW, OUR INFERNO GOLF BALL Sudden news comes off in a different direction. Powerful Margulis, Ltd. shifty about his prospects of winning a case involving a body of knowledge no one could see, touch, possess or copyright. Or, perhaps, EST income he had just given away, the million-dollar stake. Whatever the reason, Margulis has created a brand-new set of corpora-

tions to house Erhardt's empire. Four months after the IRS began asking for back taxes, public documents recorded the creation of "EST, an Educational Corporation"—a for-profit California business, owned by the Werner Erhardt Charitable Settlement—a tax-exempt trust on the Isle of Jersey. All est profits flow to Jersey, after the government diverts 30 percent to the U.S. treasury.

But, perhaps a big dip, six at the second, like EST the first, shows a paltry profit today, when it shows one at all. How can one be solid showing a profit when we know 161,395 people have taken Werner Erhardt's training, now selling at $300 a shot? A good question. The answer is that before reporting any income, est pays for the use of Erhardt's "knowledge." That knowlege has now found its way from Panama to its current owner, Welhagen, R.V., a Dutch corporation. Est pays royalties to Welhagen for using the body of knowledge.

He smiles, shakes my hand, tells me how much he appreciates all the work I've put into this article. A rare thing, he compliments, to do so much work. Then, after the preliminary, he begins to tell me the Erhardt Project line. Word for word he goes on and on. When he is not intent on repetition, as he is, suddenly, the role of the chairs becomes clear. He is stationary, sitting back from him some six or eight feet. But he moves. He rolls in and back, intense and then relaxed, close and far. In control, while he immobile.

The Erhardt Project, he says, is about one thing and one thing only. "The larger issue represents a significant opportunity for us to learn what the principles of things working are." If we can discover the principles by which you end hunger and starvation," he explains, his eyes monitoring my every gesture, "we can discover the principles by which you handle ... prejudice, by which you handle ... violence. The sounds around the words are deliberate.

Because of its political and social value, the Hunger Project, Erhardt concludes as if addressing 10,000 people at the Coliseum, is immune in the bad publicity est has received.

"I don't think that est's relationship to the Hunger Project is really very much of a detriment. I think you can make a case for its being a detriment, but I don't think that is," Erhardt continues. "In fact, it's proven that it's not. The en-

February of 1976 would almost $6 million. Nearly one-fourth was reported to be having paid out in "interest" and "amortization."
rolments in the Hunger Project are an absolute statement that it is not a problem for people. That doesn't mean that it's not a problem for some people.

The main person for whom it is not a problem is, of course, Erhard himself. Despite the fact that the law makes distinctions between for-profits and nonprofit corporations, Erhard himself does not occupy himself with such petitions. "For me," he explains, "the whole issue of what's est and what isn't est bad disappeared. I know it isn't exactly most of the rest of the world, but for me, the boundaries have kind of washed away. I'm fairly clear that what's happening in est is really happening in the world, so how can you call it est? It's what's happening, and I'm very clear that it's what's happened. I used to be clear about that when nobody was clear about it. And therefore I didn't see much use in saying it very often, although I did from time to time. But now I don't think it's my clarity any more. I think that people are pretty clear it's what's happening."

Struggling to find a way out of this extraordinary, overwhelming maze of language, I ask Erhard about his connection with the counterfactual tax attorney Harvey Margolis, one of the IRS's prime targets in its attempt to close offshore tax loopholes. Erhard's continuing relationship to Margolis—whom he says he would never abandon because it's simply not his policy to "sacrifice" people, even if they were indicted for tax fraud (of which, he indicates, Margolis has been acquitted)—seems particularly ironic. For here is a Project that Jimmy Carter feels he will be able to support, but that is rooted in est, an organization heavily tied into the offshore tax haven Carter constantly rails against. But Erhard has never been troubled with irony, either on the score of Margolis or his involvement in paying us little tax—"unpossible." It's incumbent on a person to be responsible within the system by which they function to function in a way that's most workable. For instance, in my personal tax returns, I pay the maximum amount of taxes that I can pay," Erhard outlines his generosity. "I just take a standard deduction, whatever it is. It doesn't even bother me. And therefore, I think what I'm saying, totally, says the man who is responsible for everybody in the world, trying to wiggle out of responsibility for this particular issue, "because I don't know all the words to use. But I don't make up deductions for my tax return. (But for est) you maximize your assets in an organization by paying the least amount of taxes."

If Erhard did take the standard deduction on this year's tax form, it was a radical departure from his past practices; the IRS is now questioning a series of Margolis-engineered deductions that Erhard made in the early '70s on interest payments to paper corporations overseas, as well as Erhard's personal expense deductions that the IRS claims are invalid. Ironically, if the IRS has its way on one of the cases and disallows his deductions, they will grant him just that the standard deduction.

Erhard does not like my line of questioning. He acknowledges that it is my job, my responsibility, but it was not what he had in mind. Nor is my response to him, it seems, a part of his symphony. At our initial greeting, he was thrilled by my efforts. Now, as we part, he dismisses me. "See, I don't really give a damn what you write because that's none of my business. That's your job, and not my job. And I don't want you telling me how to do my job, so I'm not going to presume to tell you how to do your job. You might even be a jerk and write something stupid, which would really be all right with me," he says, giving my permission to be an idiot, encompassing my potential stupidity in his world, "because God must have loved us jerks, he put a lot of us around. . . . I don't think this story is going to make any difference one way or the other. I have very little concern about one day's output. But, it's kind of a shame that you had to put so much time in for one output. But that's the way business is."

True, Erhard says, he appreciates me—his experience of my experience of the Hunger Project. As for my story, well, it's a pity so much effort for nothing. Or, as he tells someone several days later when speaking of our meeting, "You know what happens to magazine articles, they're used to wrap fish in the next day."

Susan Greene is the author of Lonely in America and many articles for Mother Jones and other magazines. This article was completed with the aid of a grant from the Food for Investigative Journalism.

If You Really Want to End Hunger...

The Hunger Project, as the story on these pages shows, has other goals more important than the elimination of a world hunger. But if you really want to do something about famine and malnutrition, here are some groups to get you started with.

The Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (415 Riverside Drive, Room 256, New York, New York 10027, (212) 870-2299) has helped organize a boycott against purchased indexes that provide a framework for the Third World, the cause of "balance-of-trade syndrome" efforts (see Mother Jones, Dec. '73). With affiliates all over the country, ICCR can use volunteers.

The Institute for Food and Development Policy (2588 Mission St., San Francisco, California 94110, (415) 668-6000) is a research and education center reporting on government food policy and agricultural research. It maintains a resource library and distributes many articles and pamphlets.

World Hunger Year (P.O. Box 7175, Garden City, New York 11530, (212) 352-7000) provides resource materials for classroom and community groups. Its bi-monthly newsletter, Food Monitor: The North American Congress on Latin America (P.O. Box 57, Roman Catholic) New York, New York 10021, (212) 740-6511; or P.O. Box 229, Berkeley, California 94703, (415) 835-0077) researches the political economy of the Americas, with a monthly report on the Americas in its bi-monthly publication.


-Ruth Heinrich
Backstage

WERNER: YOU ARE WHAT YOU EST

After an ex-vestider, Pinto takes personal responsibility for ending the hunger.

Photograph by Leslie Redhead

All over the country and summarized in ABC's Good Morning America, The Hunger Project has announced a press conference to announce the饿的 people's own initiative to end hunger.

A few days later, on October 31, we were particularly hoping the Hunger Project would burn up and see. On that day, its emissaries would have found the entire MJ staff dressed as Total Woman, Guisane von Aschenbroich, a Victorian-era soldier or various other things—in preparation for our Halloween party.

An ex-MJ Project messenger did arrive the next day, but not with a letter. Instead, it was another press release, again saying the group was using Mauer Jones to help media that reported our story. We're sorry, we meant to let newsrooms all over the country know that Mauer Jones and all media that reported our story. We're sorry, we meant to update the newspapers all over the country.

Our anniversary spirits have been dampened by the death of a friend, New Times magazine. Its investigative stories, which have made us and others readable, have made it (perhaps the magazine in the country that most resembles Mauer Jones. New Times published a lot of work, which we believe we would have been proud to have been included in, including one MJ début, on its staff.)

We take this death very seriously, and we're searching for alternatives to commercial America. We take this news to the effect that the country's wounded heart to the Right is a good deal more complicated than we thought. More than 200,000 people are willing to subscribe to a magazine like Mauer Jones, there is another trend going on simultaneously—and that publishers and purveyors are not so aware of. And in these 200,000 subscribing to Prespectives 1993 and Werner Erhard, that constitutes some modest cause for hope.

—Adam Hochschild
MOTHER JONES

Letters

STRICTLY FROM HUNGER

Dear Mother:
I just sent the Hunger Project the following message:

"After reading Suzanne Gordon's article in MOTHER JONES, I have decided to promote the Project in a contest to further the Project and the gain power for us in the world of hunger."

"I have spent the past year teaching my own friends about the Hunger Project. I want you to understand that the Project is a call to arms, and that we have to act now."

"The Project is organized by the California Hunger Project, and it is a call to arms for us, and for the world."

"This is an urgent message for all of us, and it is a call to arms for us."

"I hope you will understand that the Project is a call to arms, and that we must act now."

"Thank you for your support and understanding."

Diane Keeler
Santa Clara, California

Dear Mother:
I thought the idea of promoting the Hunger Project was wonderful.

James M. Fallow, Chief
The White House

Dear Mother:
I don't think the idea of promoting the Project is a call to arms, but it is a call to arms for us, and for the world."

"This is an urgent message for all of us, and it is a call to arms for us."

"I hope you will understand that the Project is a call to arms, and that we must act now."

"Thank you for your support and understanding."

Greg Skipper, M.D.
San Diego, California

Dear Mother:
I have never before gotten so much of an idea about hunger."

"I want to understand that the Project is a call to arms, and that we must act now."

"Thank you for your support and understanding."

Larry Lyons
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Mother:
I am writing to express my support for the Hunger Project."

"I have read the article in MOTHER JONES, and I want to understand that the Project is a call to arms, and that we must act now."

"Thank you for your support and understanding."

Fred Wickham
San Francisco, California

Dear Mother:
I speak as a baby SOB who enrolled in the Hunger Project and has gone on to do nothing about hunger."

"I can see that the world hunger has been added to what I think about, what I care about. A world full of people who care about hunger is a major victory for finding solutions to a world that hasn't thought about hunger since fourth-grade CARE boxes."

"I am happy to be complacent about hunger, but I am not happy with the way SOB enrolled in the Hunger Project."

"Thank you for your support and understanding."

Helene Kane
San Jose, California

Dear Mother:
I am writing to express my support for the Hunger Project."

"I have read the article in MOTHER JONES, and I want to understand that the Project is a call to arms, and that we must act now."

"Thank you for your support and understanding."

Fred Wickham
San Francisco, California

Page 6
LETTERS — Continued from page 4

like to tell you what we really is. Essenti-
ally, it is a scheme by which Erhard has
gotten tens of thousands of people pack-
ing meaning in life to pay $300 each for
a hodgepodge religion of Freud, yoga, 
as, primal therapy and the like. Mind 
you, the $300 is not all profit for Er-
hard. His luckies must spend part of it 
on renting a hall and buying a straw-
berry for each trinege to toast and imagine being inside.

How does this work? Two hundred 
fifty people are put in a room and told 
that after two weekend they will “get it.” Curiosity is peaked as to the mys-
terious “it,” and fear that one will not “get it” sets in. No one wants to feel like 
an idiot and blow $300 besides. Thus, 
est has everyone scrupulous secrecy as to what his or her ability to “get it” rather 
than objectively weighing what is presented. This resembles military basic 
training, where sergeants glare at trainees and call them “ashoks” and “cants.” The 
idea is to break down one’s ego and then 
rebuild it on institutional terms. Fi-
nally, everyone does “get it” and feels 
sucessful and superior to those who 
have not been initiated.

Henry Cohen 
Sister Spring, Maryland

Dear Mother:

We are writing to congratulate you 
on your December issue and to thank you for the opportunity you provided for the 
Institute of mime to counterattack to the New Line of restaurants.

We value your strong feeling of soli-
darity with you.

Fruen Louis 
Institute for Food and 
Development Policy 
San Francisco, California

Dear Mother:

We are glad to trade a valuable con-
tribution with your est article.

Since we have done a lot of research 
into high-protein edible algae as a means of feeding the hungry, we felt that the 
obvious people to contact about this 
possible solution to the problem would 
be Warren Erhard and the Hunger Proj-


day, April 23, 1979