

Hotline Center has survived the turmoil

The Hotline Center began six years ago as a nightly phone crisis line to provide help to persons in times of need. The Hotline sought to fill a void for young people in the area who had no where to turn for friendly, confidential assistance.

As the initial months went on, it became apparent to us that many of the problems people encountered had their roots in a society that was destructive and dehumanizing. We found institutions pounding in a message to people's heads that said "you are worthless, expendable, and unimportant." We saw the school and the workplace for most people as being a very uncreative, unstimulating way of spending most of one's day. The watchword was "don't think for yourself, don't question authority, don't make any waves, just do as you're told and you'll get along just fine."

We realized that we would be answering phones until doomsday if we didn't get out and attack the cause and not the symptoms of people's problems. Talking to somebody about their excessive drinking problem did no good when that person had to get up the next morning and face the same depressing environment in the shop or at school.

We also realized that the regular social service agencies were being funded by those same institutions—General Motors, Flint School District, the State of Michigan, etc.—who had a vested interest in keeping the workers and students depressed, apathetic and listless so the boat wouldn't be rocked.



"We only believe what we read."

It's hard to confront administrators, create change, check into the real issues of human life when you're all doped up. And don't think for a moment your friendly, neighborhood foreman and principal don't know that.

Finally, we came to the conclusion that there was no drug problem in the schools,—the drug problem *is* the schools. That there was no drug problem in the shops,—the drug problem *is* the shop.

Therefore, we began to move away from our passive role as simply phone counselors to an activist role of creating humanistic changes and confronting those people and institutions we saw as destructive to people.

This attitude prompted the state and county drug abuse agencies to immediately withdraw their funding from us and the Davison School Board to take away our building. (How dare

we say the school is at fault when we all know it's the kid who is the trouble-maker!)

So, with no money and no building, we started working on ideas and programs to accomplish our goals. We were fought every inch along the way by the Burton City Council, the Burton Zoning Board, the Genesee County Board of Commissioners, Right to Life, and other groups seeking to suppress freedom of thought. We were banned from speaking to classes in eleven area high schools. A number of conservative Catholic and fundamentalist churches sought to have us closed up. The city of Burton even enacted a special ruling requiring us to build a five foot high cement wall around our house.

All of these efforts failed. Our list of supporters grew to over two thousand people. Donations to the Hotline tripled from what we were receiving

before. The Burton City Councilmen were thrown out of office. Three thousand people came out to our 5th birthday party in William Park.

And Harry Chapin said "I'd like to give you a hand."

Today we like to feel that the Hotline Center is a living example that people—especially young people—can accomplish whatever they want to do with their lives in spite of the fact that they have no degrees, no political connections, no support from the "establishment" and little money.

We have, at the Hotline Center, many programs that provide an alternative to the type of system that creates so many of the problems people encounter. In addition to operating the original crisis line, we offer the following services and programs:

- The Flint VOICE
- Huron Alliance, an anti-nuclear environmental coalition
- Student rights office
- East Village Cinema, an alternative film theatre
- Strawberry Fields Food Co-op
- Radio Free Flint, aired three times a week on WTAC
- American Civil Liberties Union - Flint branch
- National Organization for Women - Flint branch

The Hotline is open afternoons and evenings. We are located on the corner of Lapeer and Genesee Rd. in Burton. Our phone number is 742-1230.

Give us a call or stop by if you think it's time to make some changes.

Harry Chapin—a unique individual

By JOHN WALTER
Washington Star

WASHINGTON — In a brick-fronted, three-story town house on Seventh Street SE, among the scuffed leaves of summer, singer Harry Chapin has opened his Capitol Hill office.

Most entertainers, of course, don't have a Washington office — and to be literal about it, this town house goes by the name of the Food Policy Center. But just inside the door, which carries no identification except for a penciled sign which orders a knock, Harry Chapin's picture is on the freshly painted wall, and his presence is felt everywhere inside the brightly colored rooms, and the four persons who work here full time have handy copies of his latest album.

And if all goes well, you will find Harry Chapin here, too, or somewhere at work in the city or on the Hill, now and in his words, "next week, next month,

next year," because "if you're serious about something, you're there."

Harry Chapin is serious. What he is serious about — and this idea is going to take some getting used to over the next year, because we are not accustomed to finding our entertainers knee-deep in such complex issues — is World Hunger.

You are going to be reading about him, and that subject, because Harry Chapin, the singer, tramped through the halls of Congress and the White House last winter and, just about singlehandedly, drummed up a presidential commission on the subject.

He is, says Rep. Richard Nolan, D-Minn., "a one-man army."

"I would," said Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., "do anything for him."

The thing everyone who watches him wants to know, says Marty Rogol, a former Ralph Nader aide who is now director of the little staff on Seventh Street, is:

"Why is this man so obsessed?"

In brief, this man is obsessed because five years ago he started asking questions about why millions starve to death in this world, and discovered not many people have clear-cut answers.

"There is," he says now, "no cohesive food policy in America." The problem of hunger, he charges, is not particularly visible, because its victims — often the "very young and the very old" — "are not going to come storming over the gates."

But the programs of the 1960s Great Society did not abolish hunger.

"If you are lucky enough to grow old in America," says Chapin, "there is a very good chance that you will become hungry." And: "Ten percent of America is going to bed malnourished." And: No, the problem of world hunger is not going away.

Chapin, 36 is known to a generation of young Americans as the writer-singer of bittersweet, ironic short-stories-in-song like "Taxi," in which an old friend turns up as a tired taxi driver's fare, and "Cat's in the Cradle," in which a father discovers he just missed seeing his son grow up.

Although critics are generally savage, calling the stuff cloying, Chapin has a near-fanatical record and concert following.

The title cut on one album, "Dance Band on the Titanic," expressed his fear that we are all busy "creating diversions in the ballroom so nobody notices the icebergs outside," he says.

Still, if that sounds awfully pessimistic, then there is hope in a new song he is now writing, called "Goodbye to the '70s" — about "the end of this 'me' decade, and thank goodness for that; goodbye to the idea that God forbid that we should ever address causes."

Chapin has always, through his performing career, devoted time and energy to benefits; last year, he gave something like \$700,000 of his profits to various causes. In 1975, as he learned more about hunger, he started channeling his energies into a New York-based nonprofit educational group called World Hunger Year; and then his wife, Sandy, said: How about a presidential commission?

Last winter, he personally lobbied for it, in long weeks of arduous legwork on the Hill. The new presidential Commission on Domestic and International Hunger and Malnutrition will start work next month; veteran ambassador Sol M. Linowitz will serve as chairman; Chapin will be one of 15 members.

For one year, with a budget of \$1.3 million, they will study food programs, and make recommendations. In a second year, they will try to get those ideas into law.

The Food Policy Center on Seventh Street, financed by money raised in a Harry Chapin Detroit concert, has been set up as a lobbying arm for the cause.

Can 15 men sitting on a presidential commission possibly do anything to help on the subject of hunger?

Chapin thinks so, because they will cut across bureaucratic borders that divide up much of America's food policy, domestic and foreign.

He hopes to convince committee members to discard labels such as "liberal" and "conservative" in their studies, and substitute "watchwords" — for examining "the morality of a program . . . the truth about how it operates . . . and the effectiveness of it."

"I'm terribly excited about it," Chapin said. Progress, if it comes, will "mean a whole lot more to me than this gold record sitting over my head." Watch this space; he means to make it come.