

City to Look Into Ph.D. Use at Group-Therapy School

By IVER PETERSON

The city's Department of Consumer Affairs decided yesterday to investigate the Group Relations Ongoing Workshop (GROW) to see if the school's administrators and faculty members are making fraudulent use of Ph.D.'s from unaccredited universities.

The school, at 312 West 82d Street, turns out unlicensed group psychotherapists.

Bruce C. Ratner, a staff lawyer in the department who specializes in deceptive trade practices, said the investigation would be conducted as a result of disclosures by The New York Times about the school.

The Times disclosed that GROW's founder and executive director, H. Edwin Smith, along with several faculty members, are listed in GROW literature as holding Ph.D.'s that have turned out to be from nonaccredited universities.

Mr. Ratner said fraud could exist if the titles and degrees in GROW literature were shown to have been designed to give prospective students a false impression of the school's academic qualifications.

"That would be a classic case of deception," Mr. Ratner said. "To say you have a certain amount of training or a doctorate when you don't is just outright fraud."

The State Attorney General's office confirmed that it too was looking into GROW's activities.

363 in Summer Session

GROW officials said 363 students were attending loosely structured group sessions during the summer session to learn how to conduct their own therapy clinics, classes or workshops.

The students may spend from \$1,800 to \$5,000 in fees for courses leading to "certificates" of competency in five levels of group psychotherapy work. They may require several months to several years to complete their courses.

The certificates are not recognized by any state agency. State laws governing mental hygiene practices have been caught short by the recent sharp rise in interest in group therapy and other innovative methods of treating social and personality problems.

A spokesman for the Attorney General said the investigation of GROW would look for possible "violations of the State Education Law . . . and all related laws," and would be conducted "in the public interest."

As far as could be determined, neither of the investigations is concerned with the GROW training itself, but rather with the school's relations with such out-of-state colleges as Philaetha College in London, Ont., and Indiana Northern University in Gas City, Ind. Both are unaccredited.

Several members of the GROW faculty and administration have Ph.D.'s from Philaetha, whose graduates are also affiliated with a number of psychotherapeutic associations and a therapy clinic enterprise set up by GROW.

Clinic Network Planned

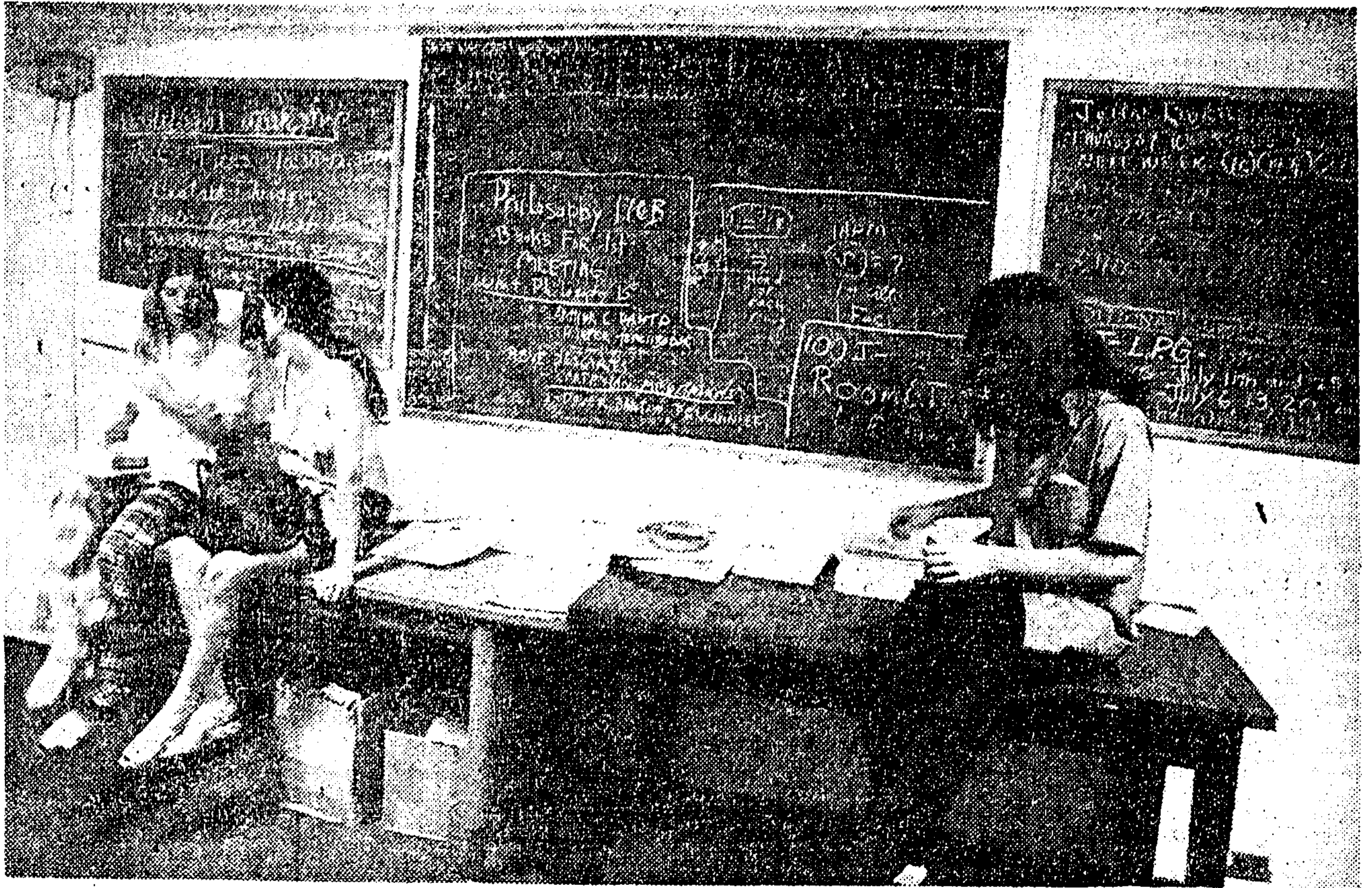
Mr. Smith agreed in an interview on Thursday that his Ph.D.'s from Thomas A. Edison College in Palm Beach, Fla., and the Golden State University in California were from unaccredited institutions. But he said the validity of his degrees had no bearing on the quality of the training GROW offered.

Mr. Smith could not be reached for comment yesterday evening.

GROW is also trying to set up a network of group therapy clinics staffed by GROW graduates. The clinics are called Neighborhood Centers for Human Development, which Mr. Smith said was in the process of being incorporated, although its letterhead reads "C.H.D., Inc."

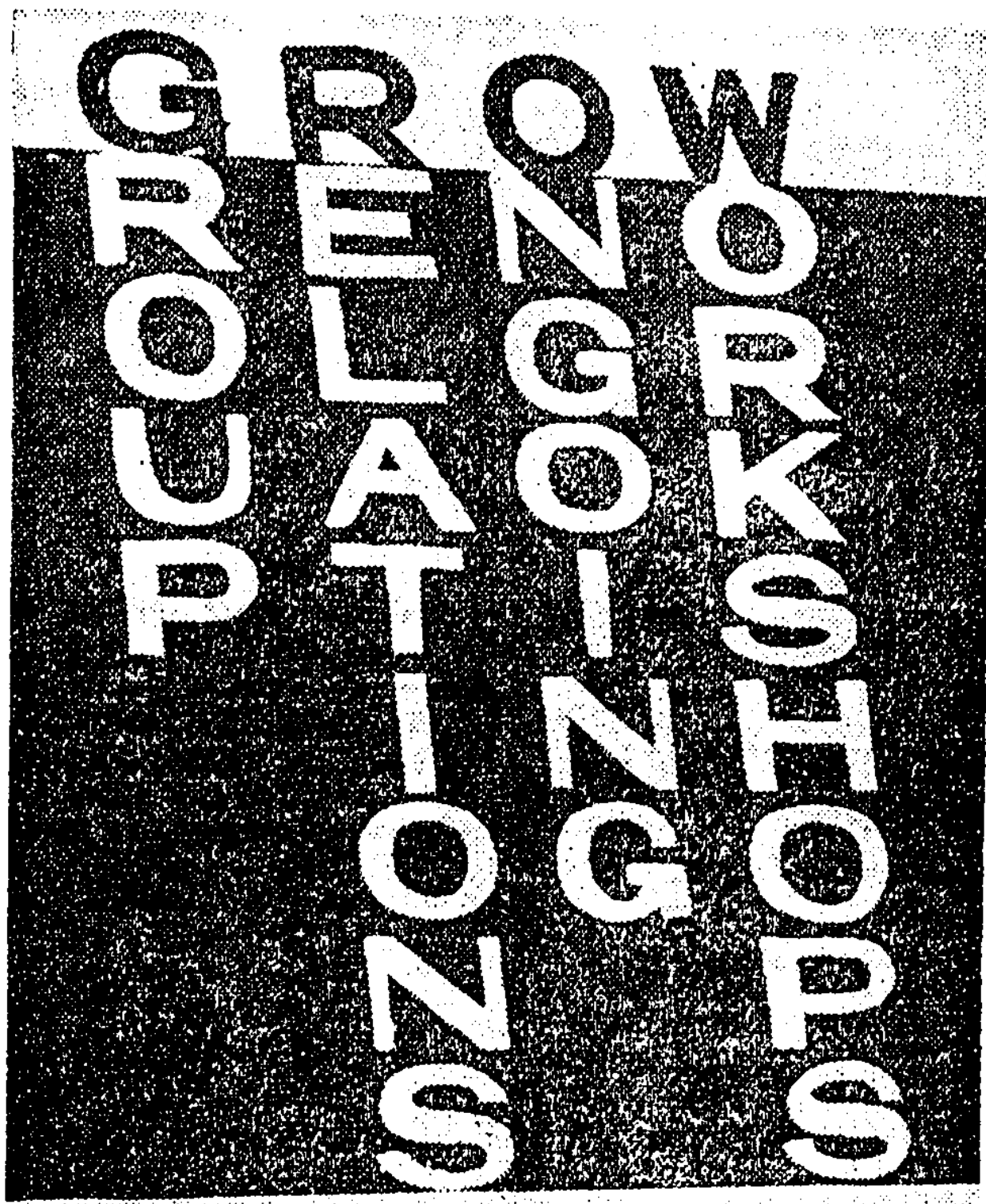
The C.H.D. literature lists State Assemblyman Albert H. Blumenthal, State Senator Manfred Ohrenstein and City Councilman Theodore S. Weiss, all Manhattan Democrats, as members of the C.H.D. "board of advisers."

Mr. Blumenthal said yesterday that he had once been a member of the GROW board of advisers, but had resigned



A schoolday scene in the lobby of the classroom building of the GROW school at 312 West 82d Street

The New York Times/Michael Evans



Sign outside the therapy training school, now under scrutiny by state and city officials for some practices.

in late April when he learned that GROW was a capital-stock corporation. A spokesman for Mr. Blumenthal said the Assemblyman had never been affiliated with C.H.D.

Councilman Weiss was returning from the Democratic Convention in Miami Beach yesterday and could not be reached for comment. But an aide said he thought the Councilman had severed his ties with

GROW and its affiliates.

A spokesman for Senator Ohrenstein said he doubted the Senator was still connected with GROW or with C.H.D.

Mr. Smith and his wife, Mildred, who is also with GROW, said on Thursday that none of GROW'S activities were intended to make profits.

However, members of the regular psychological community, headed by Dr. Morton

Schillinger, incoming executive director of the New York State Psychological Association, strongly dispute this.

The flyer advertising C.H.D. activities this summer offers a "Nite-to-Morn Encounter" in "psychodrama and fantasy" (couples \$25), a two-day "Gestalt Retreat to the Berkshires" (\$125) and a three-day "Encounter by the Sea" on Fire Island (couples \$225).