

# TRANSFORMATION



vol.1 no.1 January - February 1971

50 cents

STOP BOYCOTT SOUTH AFRICAN  
GOODS, AFRICAN

stop the war in Vietnam

OFF THE PIG! FREE

PROTEST TYRANNY  
IN GREECE!

~~buy~~  
~~chamorro~~  
lettuce  
grapes

liberation  
FRONT

PS. WHAT  
ABOUT  
CANADA?

# TOWARD AN AUTHENTIC CANADIAN LEFT

One does not have to be supremely astute and observant to realize that Canada today is in the throes of major economic and political crisis. Even without the recent events in Quebec—the outlawing of the FLQ and the utilization of the War Measures Act to suppress other independence movements and progressive organizations in the province—there were plenty of other serious problems.

The downward business cycle (the inability to get rid of goods and to expand), euphemistically called “inflation”, has thrown a substantial percentage—close to 10%—of the working population out of work. The heightening contradictions between the imperialist centre, the United States, and Canada, the colony, are creating a new class of underemployed and unemployed people, the intellectuals and professionals. These are people who are being educated at great cost for jobs that do not exist. They are pouring out of graduate schools, universities, and community colleges; and are discovering to their dismay, that they, too, are surplus labour. The job market in a foreign dominated economy simply does not expand to suit the needs of the nationals in this country, who at every level of education are being systematically reduced to “drawers of wood and hewers of water” for the U.S.\*

When unemployment grows, so grow the welfare rolls, and the consequent cutbacks in ordinary benefits, pushing the recipients, old and new, into further misery. Those who manage to hold onto their jobs are submitted to more and more restrictive legislation, including compulsory arbitration, which is looming on the horizon for all provinces and is already in existence in many.

The farmers are fighting a survival battle against the encroaching agrobusiness—the industrialization of farming—and are losing. They are also fighting a losing battle against the anarchy of capitalist production: their produce, from grain to dairy products is rotting in storage while people all over Canada are seriously undernourished and actually starving. The fishermen, on the other hand, are struggling against the stranglehold of the fishing industry, which has kept them in virtual serfdom up to now. At the same time they are losing their livelihood altogether due to the oilspills and various other forms of industrial water pollution.

There is the planned, forced assimilation of the Native Peoples, as well as their casual extermination by the lack of medical care and adequate nutrition, and by the destruction of their livelihood through, for instance, the flooding of their lands. Indian and Metis people are being driven into the cities,

where they cannot function. The Eskimos of the North are under attack, too, by the Canadian state representing the U.S. oil interests. Oiltankers circle the arctic, and pipelines threaten the natural equilibrium.

There is another highly significant development in today's Canada: the weakening of the Federal state and the consequent balkanization of the country into semi-sovereign provinces with the powers to sell out Canadian resources directly without any bureaucratic delay from Ottawa. It is a division of labour with design: it prevents any collective effort on the part of the inhabitants of the different provinces to resist the depletion of our natural resources, and makes it well nigh impossible to fight effectively against growing ecological problems. It allows the representatives of the Federal state to sympathize profusely with various complaints and then shrug their shoulders: “It's really up to the provinces, you know. We couldn't possibly interfere with their powers.” This non-interference applies to all other provinces except Quebec, where the Federal state acts “tough” when the political situation in its opinion so requires.

These are just some of the more dramatic contradictions in the Canadian society. The everyday features of capitalist class society should be familiar to every thinking person:

Human resources are grossly wasted in a process by which only a miniscule part of the population is allowed to develop their talents and full creative potential. Human life is daily abused in grinding, monotonous and often socially useless labour. The profit system necessitates the subjection of the working population into a condition where the so-called “free society” is but an elaborate prison where one part of the population (the propertied class, as well as a large part of the middle class) functions as jailkeepers for the rest. (The prison has its therapists and social workers as well, but the real power is in the hands of those who keep the keys and carry the guns.)

Childhood and youth in such a society are but a brief prelude to a long life as a prisoner. The educational institutions, from kindergartens to universities, without fail train and condition the young to be perfect inmates or prison guards, obedient and fear-ridden. The “normal” family becomes another training ground as well as the breeding ground of mass pathology in human relations and sexuality, a miniature hell for the masses of people. Mental hospitals and prisons are built and filled to capacity to “deal” with this feature of capitalist society.

Physical health, likewise, is structurally connected to the life negation of the present system. “Occupational diseases” notwithstanding, the immense stresses and strains created by the system cause a multitude of epidemic-like health problems: cancer, ulcer, heart disease, asthma, rheumatism, allergies et al., are all largely psychosomatic in origin, although

\* See my study, *Who needs the PhD? A study of 190 PhD level jobseekers at the University of Toronto*, October 1970. Available from the Graduate Students' Union, University of Toronto, 16 Bancroft Ave., Toronto 5, 50 cents.

not so treated by the medical businessmen, disguising themselves as doctors. These problems are compounded by "nutrition" that is food in name alone: synthetic guck drained of all the health producing and maintaining elements, merely to make increased profits possible for the few.

Wherever one looks in Canada, there are serious problems affecting the vast majority of Canadians. The state has traditionally two strategies for dealing with these problems. One can be seen in the latest proposed tax reforms and the recent White Paper on social welfare, according to which the middle income groups are taxed heavily to provide for those worse off (in welfare, family allowance and Canada Assistance Plan benefits), in addition to already paying for all the other problems created by the capitalist system: mental hospitals, prisons, courts, hospitals, social agencies, drug clinics, etc. (These are then called "social services"). The redistribution of taxes in this manner never fails to create a pronounced conflict between the middle and low income groups, manifesting itself in a political reaction and a swing to the right by the middle class.

In actual fact it is the small wage earners who pay for everything: they are first taxed by the owners of industry and business, then by the state, and finally they end up paying further taxes to buy back the things they themselves have produced! However, it goes without saying that while the "solid middle class" will be harping at the "bums" and "welfare drones" and "agitators", the *real* welfare recipients and parasites—and the cause of all the agitation—those under-taxed, coddled and protected owners and managers of Canadian industry will continue their leisurely existence.

The other tactic used to deal with the growing discontent is the dropping of the velvet glove without any notice, revealing the iron fist that has been there all along. The only difference is that increasing numbers of people are personally going to experience the touch of iron. In Quebec it is *anybody* who challenges the status quo from an independentist and/or socialist position, ranging from the working class oriented left to the social democrats in the Parti Quebecois.

In English Canada it is the workers who are going to be the worst affected, by repressive legislation and wage freezes, although the most *visible and dramatic* repressive acts will be directed against the Canadian left, no matter how alienated and ineffective it is. The summary arrests of the Maoists and the Canadian Weathermen imitators, their jailings, the confiscation of their newspapers, the busting up of their bookstores, their psychiatric examinations, etc., are just a taste of things to come for the rest of the left, no matter how quiet and subdued it is now. It is a kind of "conditioning" of the public to the fact that these arrests are normal every day occurrences—but directed only against the "freaks" and "terrorists" on the left. Why else would the state concentrate on attacking elements on the left that are totally out-of-touch with the Canadian working class, that cannot make headway anywhere, that cannot sell their literature or even give it away? Why else would they be frequently arrested for "creating a disturbance" in the connection of selling these newspapers? This left is in fact performing a *positive* function for the state, by turning the Canadian people off the left, away from reading the very things these groups advocate: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao etc., and away from responding favourably to revolutionary struggles elsewhere. The arrests of the Maoists and the other ultra-left tendencies are clearly a training ground for the Canadian police and a deliberate desensitizing of the general population.

## The left is alienated

Under these circumstances, under the twin developments of growing crisis and repression, what is the Canadian left doing? Is it moving on, educating the masses of people, organizing them, informing them about things to come; in a word, is it building a strong popular movement to assert the will of the majority?

The answer is, unequivocally, NO. The recent developments, including the response to the invoking of the War Measures Act, have only further revealed what has been evident for a long time, namely, the impotence and irrelevance of the Canadian left; the fact that it is minute, factionalized and unable to mobilize the people around critical issues, or day-to-day problems. This is true about the old and new left, the left social democrats and the ultra-leftists alike. The Canadian left, for all practical purposes, at the very moment when it is most needed, does not exist.

The irrelevance of the left has manifested itself in various ways. During the last ten years, while the struggle against the colonial rule has intensified in Quebec, the Canadian left has either ignored the question of Quebec or has opposed its quest for selfdetermination. All the left groups have and continue to have their *own* organizations on Quebec soil. Instead of joining the Quebecois in *their* organizations, the Communist Party of Canada, the Trotskyists, the Maoists (both the "Internationalists", now the Communist Party of Canada, Marxist-Leninist, and the Canadian Party of Labour), and of course, the New Democratic Party, have all attempted to recruit Quebecois to their movements, which are often vocally opposed to the independence of Quebec. The very fact that they exist as separate organizations—even if lately some are reluctantly sympathetic to the overall aspirations of the Quebecois—is sufficient evidence of Anglo-Canadian chauvinism on the left: the natives cannot be trusted to build effective revolutionary organizations.

The colonization of Canada by the U.S. is a similar blind spot in the eye of the Canadian left. According to their practice one is allowed to be concerned about every other liberation struggle in the world, except one's own. The Vietnamese, the Algerians, the Cubans, the Palestinians, the Bolivians and so on, are supported in their efforts to rid themselves of foreign oppression, but if the same demand is being raised in English Canada, the position is attacked by the left as "petty bourgeois" and "national chauvinist". One brand of Maoists (the Canadian Party of Labour) directs its most virulent attacks against the Canadian nationalists. The Trotskyists try to get rid of the problem of Canada's colonization by calling Canada "a junior partner of U.S. imperialism", and by making a mountain out of the molehill of Canadian capital in operation in West Indies and Latin America. They ignore, boldly, the fact that Canadian capital, wherever it exists is either an extension of U.S. capital, or does not exercise any significant control over any other country's economy.

When it comes to the U.S. (state department) domination of Canadian unions, *all* left groups from the Maoists to the NDP oppose the demand for Canadian unions as "splitting the working class". The fact that the NDP Waffle is still "undecided" about it—although their logic should have led them to definite conclusions by now—reveals the basic contradiction in their position. Once the Waffle decides to be consistent with its overall independentist position, their refuge within the NDP will be over. (They will also lose their Trotskyist support, which might not be such a bad thing.)

Other Canadian issues are equally neglected. When does the left support the Native Peoples in their struggle for self-determination, or the fishermen on the East Coast, or the exploited farm labour (often Indian and Metis) in the West, or the tobacco workers in Ontario? And removed from the labour front, where is the left doing mass organizing around housing, urban renewal, day care centres, problems of the aged and youth? You'll be looking in vain in these areas, since the Canadian left will be found doing the following:

\* protesting against the war in Vietnam (organizing moratoriums, collecting signatures to be sent to Nixon, demonstrating in front of U.S. embassies, carrying the flag of the National Liberation Front of Vietnam).

\* protesting against repression in Greece, South Africa, Spain, Portugal, etc. In this international scheme of things there is no place for Canadian issues.

\* boycotting American grapes and lettuce, and South African goods—organizing meetings and demonstrations for the U.S. Farmworkers' Union. Canadian farm produce is eaten without the slightest thought given to the wages and working conditions of *our* farm workers, which are in no way different from the conditions in the U.S.A.

\* basking in the glory of the victories of revolutionary movements elsewhere, in an attempt to share vicariously their reputation without going through any of the processes that these movements have gone through, i.e. long term organizing amongst the population. Witness the army surplus outfits for men and women, the Che buttons, Panther slogans; the naming of groups after revolutionaries elsewhere. (A Women's Liberation group in Toronto, singularly short of any organizing with the working class and contemptuous of such efforts as "reformist", now calls itself the Leila Khalad collective, and sells publications with Khalad and her rifle on the cover! How's that for instant revolution!)

\* attempting to create the nth People's Park in Canada after the Berkeley model few years back. Not only are they trying to reproduce the action, but they can't even think of an original name.

### Sectarianism and colonial mentality take their toll

The reasons for the alienation of the Canadian left have to do with rampant sectarianism and an all pervasive colonial mentality. Both are historical phenomena that have to be examined in depth in order that they can be overcome. Briefly, sectarianism and dogmatism have to do with the replacing of creative, scientific Marxism with various systematized *ideologies* (of Khrushchevism, Stalinism, Maoism, Trotskyism, Marxism-Leninism—and perhaps with others to come.) These are transplanted *as such*, as tightly packaged goods—"correct lines"—into the Canadian context. They remain "goods" and do not grow roots on the Canadian soil. This then gives the liberal critics and opponents of Marx and Engels a seeming justification to say: "Marx and Engels are outdated and irrelevant. They belong to the 19th century."

That there is a fundamental difference between Marxism as a *science*, a methodology, and Marxism reduced to an ideology, to *faith* and *religion* (e.g., Mao's little Red Book as the Catechism), has escaped both our so-called Marxists as

well as the liberal critics. It is forgotten, conveniently, that Marx and Engels fought a life long battle against *ideologies*, that is, the falsification of reality, the projection of one's wishes and dreams into one's perception of reality. They were critics of utopian socialists, *as well as* of so-called Marxists who were continually reducing Marx' and Engels' thoroughly open-ended and dynamic theories of historical materialism and dialectical materialism, into the *closed systems* of fixed ideologies, economic determinism and arid academism, all so prevalent in the left circles in today's Canada.

Creative practitioners of the Marxian methodology, like Lenin and Mao, have become elevated into Popes, and other, lesser revolutionary theoreticians (like Trotsky) and Communist Party functionaries (like Brezhnev), into Bishops. Every little sect performs their rituals around this personnel, by quoting their texts page and paragraph, blessing the believers and ex-communicating the heretics. And they all have their Meccas, be it Kremlin or Peking or Albania (the Canadian Party of Labour is upholding the mantle of Enver Hoxha—ever heard of him?—as the one Stalinist statesman remaining within the Soviet enclave!), or Trotsky's grave. Towards these they bow and scrape, like any other religious sect in the world.

No wonder their day-to-day practice is absurd and unrelated to Canadian realities! No wonder that a great number of people who are critical of the present society shy away from these movements *and* are turned off Marx and Engels and Lenin and Mao, the very people a serious person, oriented towards fundamental social changes needs to study and learn from.

The colonial mentality of the Canadian left is part of the overall alienation and feeling of inferiority to be found amongst *all* Canadians. You can hear Canadians wail: "We have no culture, no history; we are a worthless people." The fact of the matter is that Canadians do not *know* themselves as people and are not aware of their history. Nowhere are they taught fundamental facts about the Canadian experience; about the Indian civilization prior to the arrival of European savages; about the extermination—almost successful—of the Indians, and the theft of their lands; about the history of the Canadian propertied class, i.e. at whose expense did they make their wealth; about the ideology of immigration in this country (it was the "foreigners", the Chinese, the Ukrainians, the Italians, the Japanese etc., who broke their backs in building this country, although you won't see their names mentioned in the history books!).

Canadian students are not learning the truth about that conquered nation, Quebec, simmering in resentment, which is now, hundreds of years after, breaking into resistance and rebellion. And they are not learning in their history and geography books about how their land and natural resources are being sold from under their feet. Canadian history, the *real* history of the people, is as alive and well as any other history in the world, but Canadians are removed from it.

Lately, this alienation has become accelerated by the fact that our universities, where teachers and textbook writers are being trained, are dominated by American professors and U.S. trained Canadians, ignorant of the Canadian fact and disinterested in investigating it. Across the country, Canadian literature, history, sociology, political science and economics, get the classic step daughter treatment: they are simply ignored.\* Canadian academics are forced into the impossible position of teaching courses in these fields, that only further alienate the Canadian student from his country.

\* See bottom footnote, column 1, page 8

A recent document, a letter of resignation by a Canadian academic from her post as a lecturer in English at York University, Toronto, published in this issue, testifies to these difficulties in a most graphic way. (See Gwen Matheson's "I refuse to brainwash Canadian students...")

### Looking south for solutions

The colonial mentality makes the Canadian left automatically look for solutions from elsewhere instead of creating their own. The new left of the mid-sixties is a most familiar example of this colonial dependency and imitation.\* From the mother-country left, various concepts were adopted and put into practice on the Canadian scene, with disastrous consequences, since they had not originated from the Canadian reality. Community organizing, participatory democracy, organizing the "poor", and lately, community control, find their way unexamined, untested, from New York and Chicago to Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Halifax. The Women's Liberation Movement, part of the "new left", has from the moment of its birth in Canada, ca. 1967, leaned heavily on the imagery and rhetoric of the movement in the U.S. Its leadership has consisted significantly of American women in Canada, either as students or as wives and girlfriends of draft dodgers. But even without the physical presence of Americans, the Canadian left has been and continues being Americanized. Thus in the final analysis, the impact of Americans in Canada is not an American problem, but a problem that belongs straight into the laps of the colonial minded and easily intimidated Canadians.

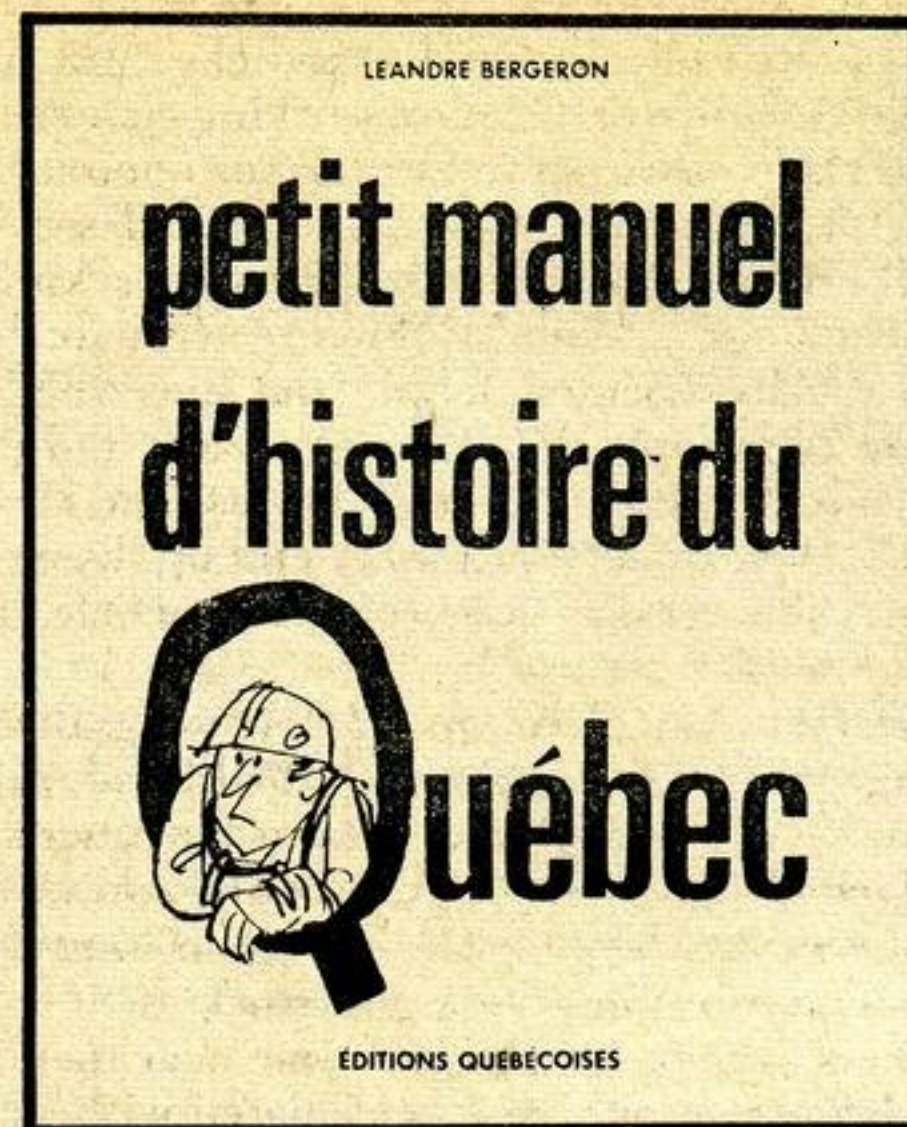
The latest manifestations of dependency on the mother-country left has consisted of Black Panther worshipping and emulating. Certain elements amongst the new left have been the worst offenders, through the use of Panther jargon ("Off the pig", painted in big red letters on walls and fences in Toronto), by their guntoting and by their sentimental imitation of the Panthers' "Feed the People" program. The reality, of course, clashes with the rhetoric since while the Panthers have a broad constituency amongst the Black People, the Canadian imitators have nobody to feed except what they call the "street people", i.e. essentially middle class youth and their own friends in the radical community. Their attempt to feed the welfare recipients and the unemployed will only put them into the same service category as the Salvation Army—the only difference being in style.

The point here is, that although one can be inspired by movements and projects from elsewhere, they can not be

\* James Laxer has written the best analysis of the phenomenon, "The Student Movement and Canadian Independence", *Canadian Dimension*, vol. 6, no. 3-4, Aug-Sept, 1969. Primary reading for Canadians. Reprints available from *Dimension*.

\*\* Footnote from page 7, column 2.

There are documents after documents after documents, proving conclusively that the making of the colonial minded Canadian is an *active* process, perpetuated by design. They also declare that this process can be *stopped*. See Robin Mathews and James Steele, *The Struggle for Canadian Universities*, New Press, 1969; Cyril Byrne, Ken MacKinnon and Robin Mathews, *The Waterloo Report: A Special Study of University of Waterloo*, 1969; William House, Robert McCrae and Robert Reynolds, *The University of Windsor: a Special Study*, 1969; and Robin Mathews, *The Graduate Department of English, University of Toronto: a Study of Cringing Colonialism*. There are more studies to come.



transplanted as such and expected to bloom here. It should, for instance, be possible for the Canadian student left to be able to learn from the Black Panthers, without having to pretend that they *are* the Panthers.

### Playing the Red Guards

Colonial mentality operates vis a vis other nations than the U.S. Thus the Canadian Maoists are a sorry sight on the Canadian city scene, since they behave as if they were the Red Guard amongst the post-revolutionary Chinese population. While they are advocating Mao Tse Tung Thought-Propaganda-Teams to be sent to Canadian "towns and villages", the Canadian people refuse to live up to their roles as "the heroic people welcoming the revolutionary cadre in their midst." More often than not you will find "the Canadian people" watching passively, while the "youthful cadre struggles with the fascist police" and is invariably packed into police cruisers, without a hand being raised in their defence. It is an ironic fact of history that Mao, the most practical of revolutionaries and a man who was extremely critical of colonial mentality amongst the Chinese revolutionaries whenever it was in evidence, has to lend his good name to the worst case of colonial minded imitators and impractical idealists on the Canadian left.

The alienation of the left, the latching onto a variety of rhetoric originating from different social circumstances, has effectively removed it from the scene of social change. Some of the more "revolutionary" groups announce proudly their rejection of practical work: "Objective conditions will force women to demand unions, daycare, equal pay, the right to control their own bodies, etc. We should not therefore see our task as initiating and directing these struggles." (Peggy Morton, "They are burning effigies; why effigies." Morton is a founding member of the Canadian Women's Liberation Movement and is presently a member of the Leila Khalad collective.) This reflects accurately the position of most of the left. Everybody is too busy "making revolution", so there is no time to work with the people!

### Enter the middle class liberals

Since the left does not provide leadership (and in its

present condition it would be thoroughly incapable of doing so), the stage of social change is left to the liberal radicals, i.e. people who are radical vis a vis *their* class, the middle class, but who do *not* work from a working class perspective. They are the ones involved in various community organizing efforts (after the new left radicals deserted them in the face of evident failure), as well as what is known as "organizing the poor". Many of them are very likely sincere, humanistically oriented people, but since they know nothing about the people they are organizing, and they don't know where to take the working class and the so-called "poor", their efforts invariably end up disorganizing and weakening the working class. (See our article, "The fallacy of community control.")

The New Democratic Party and its left wing, the Waffle, are but an *organized* manifestation of the liberal middle class elements, which includes the labour bureaucracy. The main party is removed from the grass roots, and will not even feel the necessity to go back to them as long as the party gets its major revenues from the pockets of the rank-and-file workers, without having to come near them! Presently every labour union that has affiliated with the NDP, pays automatically 5 cents a head a month toward the party coffers. This affiliation can easily be maneuvered by the union leadership, and the workers then have only a *negative* choice: they can make a point of opting out; but for the amount of money involved and for the trouble it takes, it is not worth the effort. Two things are achieved through this maneuver by the NDP leadership and the labour bureaucracy: rank and file members are separated from their so-called political party, and a false impression is given about the strength of the NDP.

The Waffle, on the other hand, in its attempt to re-orient the NDP towards genuinely Canadian issues and connecting with the grass roots, is caught in an impossible contradiction, which has paralyzed it from the beginning. The name, "Waffle" is not just an in-joke, it is indicative of the overall impotence of the Waffle as an organized tendency. The movement is allowed to present certain radical rhetoric and is allowed token leadership positions, but *only if and as long as* it does not act effectively in organizing amongst the people. Let me illustrate the contradiction in action: In the fall of 1969 the Waffle organized a teach-in on Canadian issues at the University of Toronto. The teach-in was singularly poorly organized, lacking in dynamic format, in challenging and interesting materials and presentations; it was, in a word, horribly boring. As a result the first night's crowds diminished by the following afternoon, until only the familiar faces of usual NDP and left gatherings were there. When I approached one of the organizers, who is one of the leading members of the Waffle, and criticized the miserable organizing, his explanation was: "We were very worried about the Party's reaction, in case we were too successful." This "worry" leads to a self-censorship that is evident in all Waffle efforts. Their organizing attempts could, in fact, be described as "organizing for failure".

At the same time many good and capable activists in the Waffle movement are going to be drawn into an endless game of attempting to influence the Party machinery or to take it over. They are going to be spending more and more time in back room maneuvers and plots, and will become even more removed from the working class, in whose interest judging from their rhetoric, they are supposedly acting.

### Impactical and uncritical

There are two striking similarities between the miniscule and alienated left and the liberal middle class elements: both are *singularly impactical*, i.e. unable to mobilize the

only people who could affect any fundamental social changes, that is the wage-earners, the Canadian working class. Secondly, both elements are loath to critically examine their political practice. Instead, they are involved in active myth-making about their achievements, the one using its own left publications, the other utilizing the mass media for its glorification. To read an account of community organizing efforts in Canada (Toronto daily papers regularly pump these feeble attempts up to resemble mass efforts) or attempts at organizing "the poor" (an article in *Canadian Dimension*, vol. 7, nos 1&2, by George Ford and Steven Langdon, on the Just Society Movement, is pure fiction), or accounts in various left publications about presumed "victories", makes anyone familiar with the actual realities of these efforts, rub one's eyes in disbelief.

We are going to be doing a lot of rubbing of our eyes on the pages of TRANSFORMATION, starting with this issue. The critiques are not undertaken for the rather limited satisfaction of putting various groups down, but for the simple reason that without knowing the truth about reality—including the practice of social change—we will never successfully affect social changes. We will examine the various efforts critically, but always with a purpose in mind of suggesting positive courses.

In this issue we have an article on the fallacy of community control, and in the second issue there will be an analysis of the various efforts to "organize the poor". In later issues we will discuss the shortcomings in different single issue organizing efforts, tenant organizing, the fight against expressways, and the anti-pollution groups. We will also discuss the practices of the so-called left, old and new, and will try to present a historical perspective on their present day failures.

As for the overall impracticality of the activists, one could safely say that neither the left nor the middle class liberals have touched even the surface of the masses of people, and neither has offered any way out of the mass fate of restricted, impoverished and looted existence. One seriously doubts whether there is amongst these people anything amounting to to an accurate perception of the kinds of lives most people in this society lead. There is rhetoric, all right, but no accurate sociology, history, literature, neither of the working class nor for it. Thus the working class is not known to the educated middle class from which many activists come, and which is far more serious—the working class does not know itself.

In the next few issues of TRANSFORMATION this lack of material will be documented in three articles, "Literature and the working class", "Sociology misconstrues the working class", and "How to teach the *real* history of Canada Canada". Taken a step beyond, we will also examine what literature is available to the ordinary Canadian member of the working class (blue, white or grey collar). A fast survey will indicate that there is no popular literature about working class life and history, that there are no popular books on the economics of capitalism and imperialism as they affect the lives of Canadians, no readable versions on the politics of the ruling elements.\* There are no books and there are no magazines, which are not going to the already "well-informed". While the new Canadian publishers (House of Anansi, New Press, Hurtig, James, Lewis & Samuel) are putting out often valuable books, these are written for and circulate exclusively amongst the same edu-

\* Such literature can be found plentiful in Quebec. A leading bestseller in Quebec is presently a little history book, *Petit manuel d'histoire du Quebec*, by Leandre Bergeron, which presents the history of Quebec from the point of view of the oppressed majority there. It sells for one dollar.

cated elements. When "underground" newspapers and magazines start, they go to the very same element. In Toronto alone, during the last few years *three* underground papers have started, all catering to the same hip, youthful middle class audience. Meanwhile the working class reads establishment propaganda in the daily papers and in the weekly tabloids.

Art and music and theatre are equally distant from the people who need them most. Art hides in galleries, museums and private homes, or is prostituted in the advertising media. While artists are madly pursuing their individual careers, selling out to the latest commercial fads, the working class buys "handpainted" landscapes and other brutally dishonest "works of art" from the dime stores. Their longing for beauty produces no response from the artists whose eyes are turned onward and upward towards the wealthy sponsors, succesful dealers and influential critics.

Music has turned into an opiate, a mass tranquillizer, and musicians, conservative and of the long hair variety, feed into the process of mass pacification without the slightest challenge to it, that one is aware of. Theatre, as an article in this issue, "The alienation of radical theatre", points out, is

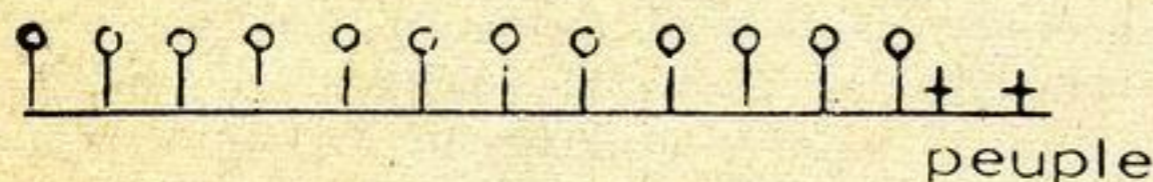
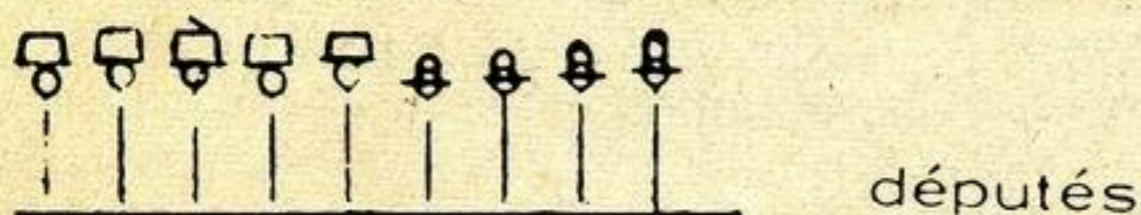
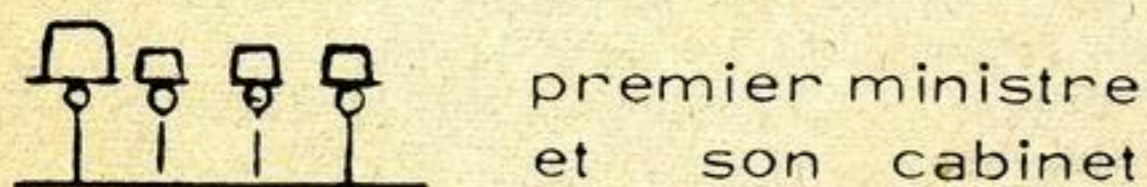
just as out of touch with the needs and aspirations, often inarticulated, of the ordinary people.

The self-centeredness of the middle class elements (professional, academic, artistic etc.) is, one has to conclude, *colossal*. They simply do not understand their class position in this society, and appear to enjoy it thoroughly. It has not registered to the middle class (including its radical fringe), that every thing they have in this society: relative affluence, space, time, good food, latest fashions, latest books, magazines and records, vacations etc., comes to them as a direct result of their role as the controllers or caretakers of the population, and as the ideologues (i.e. the defenders and justifiers) of the system. They are *paid* to brainwash, confuse, subdue and alienate.

We will deal with the role of the middle class in this society, through articles that accurately describe what the members of this class have to do in order to obtain their privileges. We will have articles by social workers, lawyers, journalists, teachers, health professionals, university professors, artists, filmmakers, librarians, psychologists, scientists et al., with the sole purposes of de-mystifying their roles in the present society and in order to develop a perspective

*continued on page 35*

## The apparent political structure :

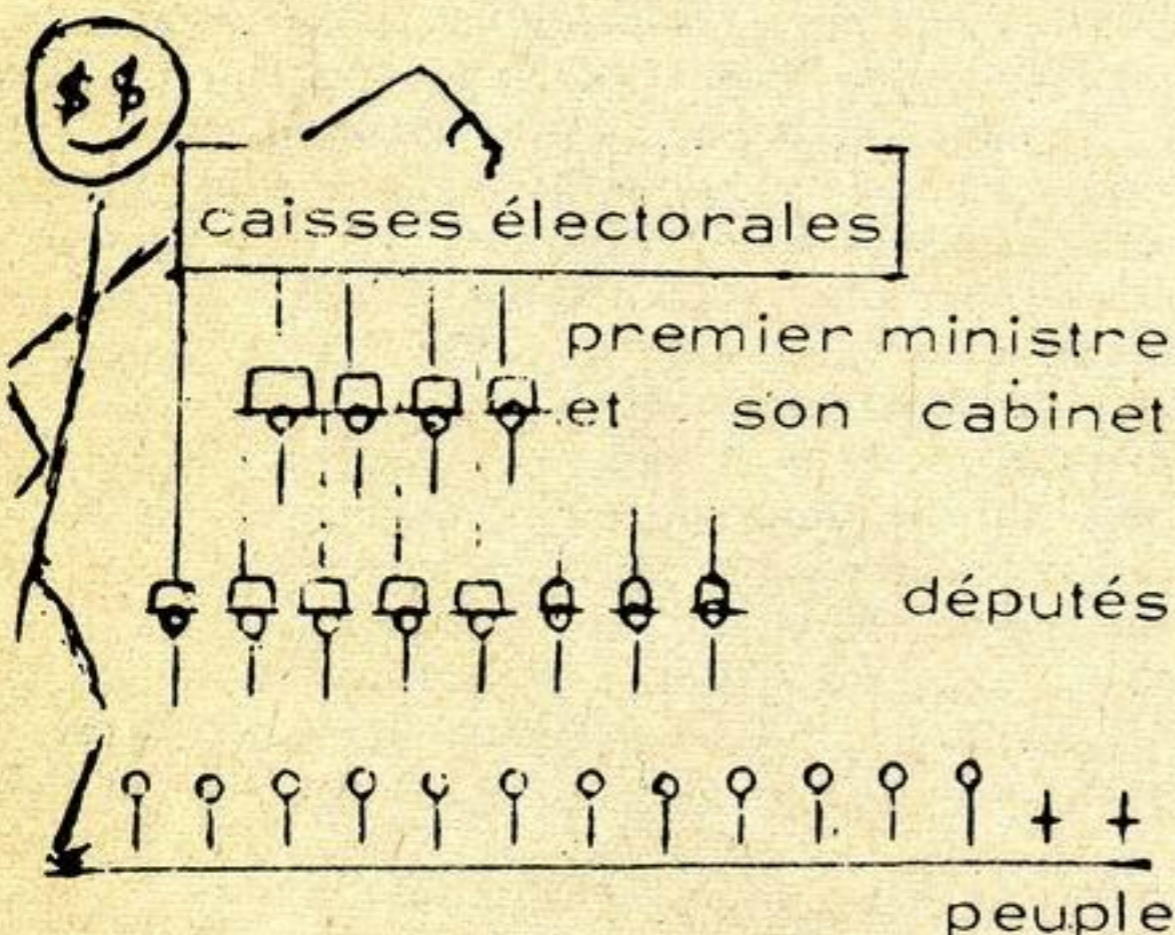


The people elect representatives.

The representatives belonging to the majority party (square hats) form the government. That is, the leader of the party becomes prime minister and chooses the various ministers he needs to govern the country from among his colleagues.

The representatives of the minority party (round hats) from the opposition. Their work is to criticise the government so that it will pass good laws for the people.

## The real political structure:



The people elect representatives who belong to parties. The parties "win" the elections through electoral campaigns paid for by companies.

The party in power first passes laws that favour the companies, and later other laws in order to appease the people (family allowances, employment laws, social security, etc.)

The government is at the service of the companies. It is a puppet government.

This kind of democracy is called bourgeois democracy.

Bourgeois democracy is in fact the dictatorship of the propertied class.

Direct political instruction is available to the working class in Quebec. Exerpt from Bergeron's Petit manuel d'histoire du Quebec.



# THE FALLACY OF "COMMUNITY CONTROL"

by Marjaleena Repo

*Author's note:* This article has been written from the perspective of a participant. I worked full-time in the Trefann Court urban renewal area, from summer 1966 to Christmas 1968, after which time I have kept in touch with the developments there. I was initially hired by the City of Toronto to work as a "community worker", and resigned six months later when I realized fully what effects the scheme had on the working class population in the area. I continued with a grant from the Company of Young Canadians.

This article will deal with the demand for community control presently being raised in English Canada, and particularly with the experiences in the largest metropolitan centre outside Quebec, Toronto. There is little doubt, however, that these comments are equally applicable to other Canadian cities since similar (class) dynamics are in operation elsewhere. It will not deal with the demand for community control by the Quebecois and by the Native Peoples, Indians and Eskimos, for these are nations, and their demand for community control equals progressively the demand for the right of nations to self determination. (A later article in TRANSFORMATION will deal with the issue of self determination in depth.)

In the U.S., where the concept of community control originates, there are similar diverse elements: there are oppressed *nations* (American Indians, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans), who are making territorial demands, and there are oppressed *ethnic (racial) minorities*. Amongst the latter there are the Blacks and the Puerto Ricans (the Puerto Ricans, once in Harlem, cease to be a nation and become an ethnic group amongst many), as there were the Italians and Jews prior to them, and within these ethnic minorities the problems of determining who and what the "community" is, have been identical with the difficulties experienced in English Canada.

Indeed, the problem with the concept of community control is, that it is a thoroughly amorphous concept, unclear and vague, ill-defined and wobbly like a huge marshmallow. It means different things to different people, yet it has become an unquestioned given, seldom if ever critically examined by those advocating it. Significantly, there is very little literature on the theory of community control in English Canada, which reveals the thoroughly anti-theoretical, narrowly pragmatic nature of the community control advocacy.

The demand for community control has been raised in connection with schools, social agencies and welfare councils, and regarding social and physical planning in urban neighbourhoods. (Lately there has also been discussion of "community radio", in connection with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, but more of this instance of balkanization in later issues.) We are told by many of the advocates, that organizing for community control is *the com-*

ing thing, an almost exclusive strategy for social change. Jane Jacobs, the author of some excellent books on city life and a long-time participant in community organizing efforts in New York and Toronto, puts the position this way:

"The governments of large, modern cities are not only incomprehensibly complex today, but also their direct effects on citizen's lives are now so ubiquitous that they cannot help but fail when their functions are centrally organized. *Many functions must be decentralized and brought under direct, continuing control of local communities.*" Emphasis supplied). (Foreword to James Lorimer, *The Real World of City Politics*, Toronto, James, Lewis and Samuel, 1970)

And George Martell, editor of *This Magazine is About Schools*, and a strong advocate of community control, makes the case for it in the following way:

"Indeed, in English Canada it seems to me, neighbourhood organizing is the *only* path by which we can seriously begin to struggle against the corporations." (*This Magazine*, Summer 1970.) p. 7-53

## Neighbourhood and clienthood

The two major usages of the community control concept refer to either geographic boundaries (thus a neighbourhood is a community) or to a clienthood vis a vis an agency or an institution (welfare recipients, public housing tenants, parents of school children et al., thus constitute "communities" of users.)

The "neighbourhood as a community" concept assumes a classless society at the local level, in which a mysterious "people of all classes" work towards a common goal. The Riverdale Community Organization in a working class district in Toronto puts this position forth succinctly:

"We aim to build a broad based community organization in which every interest in the community is represented (church, business, industry, agencies, schools, fraternal groups and neighbourhood groups)."

It is significant that their list does not include *labour*, although the area is almost exclusively a working class neighbourhood. On the other hand, "church, business, industry, agencies and schools" can hardly be considered as separate interests, since together they constitute the entrenched establishment, highly organized and highly conscious at every level.

The assumption here is that everybody is equal, that all work together for a common good, that no class conflicts exist or that they can be abolished through co-operative efforts at the neighbourhood level. This is contrary to the existing reality.

The client definition of community, on the other hand has its own problems, which also result from a lack of

class analysis. It assumes an exclusive common interest on the part of the clients; separates them from their class context—which invariably is the working class—thus creating political abstractions out of real people. For instance, one element of the working class becomes “the poor” (presumably a “nicer” term than the scientifically correct *working class*). They are then organized as a group and end up making broad and often preposterous demands on behalf of themselves, as a segment of the class. They do not raise demands which would advance the cause of the working class in its totality, particularly of the most down-trodden and oppressed members of that class, whether they be working for low wages, unemployed or on assistance.

This article will be dealing only with the neighbourhood definition of community. The client concept will be examined in depth in an article in our next issue, “Organizing ‘the poor’—against the working class”.

As already suggested, the geographic definition contains the serious fallacy of assuming that any neighbourhood is or can become a community (of equals). This fallacy leads to the consequent, easily documented failure to achieve any fundamental—or even minor, for that matter—social changes. The community control advocates themselves recognize the failures, but they do not understand the cause: *the lack of class analysis upon which an adequate theory can be built to guide one’s practice*. James Lorimer’s\* analysis (or the lack of it) is typical. I quote from his book, *The Real World of City Politics* (op.cit.):

“There is one more common element in the experiences of the citizens of Toronto—which is depressing. It is, that, inspite of all their efforts, inspite of their success at making their issue a public matter, they got nowhere. Cornwall—Oak demolition went ahead. Tenants were offered no compensation. Opportunity classes [for slow learners] in downtown schools went on as usual. Planning for Trefann Court [urban renewal area] got underway on the city’s terms. O[n]tario [H]ousing [C]orporation’s admissions system was unchanged, and applicants were subsequently not allowed to negotiate with the OHC as groups. The University of Toronto continues buying and demolishing houses.” (p. 155)

And he concludes:

“People are getting nowhere. What look like small but real successes turn out to be the prelude to complete failure. People find themselves back where they started from, and often worse off than they are. All their letters, protests, petitions, briefs, delegations, representations, meetings, demonstrations, and pickets produce nothing.” (p.157-158)

This is where the book ends, whereas it should have started from here, and gone on to provide a class analysis of the areas involved and of the issues the residents were confronting. Then it should have gone on to analyze the theoretical and practical inadequacies of the leadership in all these efforts (and a multitude of others) that ended so disastrously. These inadequacies, to say the least, are considerable.

It might be useful to begin the analysis of the community control concept by examining three different types of communities in which the demand has been raised. These types are not at all mutually exclusive, but by dealing

\*James Lorimer, a university lecturer and a journalist, has himself been an active participant in the “community organizing” efforts in Toronto, as one of the leaders in an inner city residents’ association.

with them separately, one will, hopefully, be able to examine some of the major theoretical/practical problems within the community control advocacy.

First, there are neighbourhoods consisting of middle class and working class people—in Toronto this would be the case with the inner city districts in particular. The middle class element in question is of the liberal radical variety (professors, architects, planners, artists, journalists, university students, et al.)

Secondly, there are neighbourhoods with substantial immigrant populations, such as the Kensington area in Toronto, where approx. 70% of the residents are from Portugal.

Thirdly, there are neighbourhoods consisting largely of working class people, such as the east end in Toronto.

### Mixed class neighbourhoods

In the first instance, where a middle class element has moved into a working class district, there has been an attempt by that element to create an illusion of a classless society. The vocabulary itself—“community”, “the people”, “the residents”, “the public” and “the taxpayers”—attempts to blur the fact, obvious to anyone with eyes and ears, that there are different social classes in the area, with different, often opposing class interests and conflicting life styles. A stroke of a pen or a game of semantics, however, will not abolish the existing social reality: we live in a class society with major class contradictions everywhere. The class differentials and conflicts can be *ignored*; but they will not vanish. Let us, then deal briefly with the manifestations of class conflict in these types of neighbourhoods. (It is almost embarrassing to go over such elementary lessons in sociology, but the current practice of the radical middle class elements—which include many sociologists—makes such an examination absolutely necessary, and not only once, but over and over and over again.)

The first conflict occurs when a middle class professional moves into a predominantly working class neighbourhood. By doing so he is depriving a working class family of relatively cheap housing, since the situation is not reciprocal: working class people cannot afford to buy in predominantly middle class areas. Secondly, by renovating and rebuilding his house, he introduces a further contradiction: the assessment value of the neighbouring, non-renovated houses increases. Thus through tax increases, the cost of housing and living rises in the area. Now other “smart” middle class people will be attracted to the area, and will compete successfully with working class buyers, as they are capable of paying higher prices and larger down payments.

Generally speaking, one could say, that middle class people in these neighbourhoods are concerned with the aesthetics of their environment, while the working class element will by necessity be more concerned with mere survival and with keeping the cost of living down.

When it comes to the attitude towards schools, this same middle class element is critical of the educational system, largely because it is regimented, authoritarian and thwarting of all creativity. They make demands for child centered education, where children will have a lot of freedom to choose, and where they can take their own time learning specific skills. These parents are not and do not have to be particularly concerned about basic skills, because their children have often picked them up in their own homes, through actual instruction by the parents (usually the well-educated, home staying mother), through interesting books, educational toys, numerous games, puzzles, travel etc. In addition these families lead relative-

ly orderly lives—they usually have fewer children and always more space than the working class; they have job security that does not exist in the working class. Thus they can tolerate large doses of creative anarchy in schools.

The situation of the working class is the very opposite. You will find that typical working class parents are most concerned about the basic skills, “the three R’s”, as well as with “good behaviour”. They will, on their own, press for more effective teaching methods; but will not criticize the learning climate and the discipline in the schools, unless the latter is extraordinarily punitive. The working class reality makes these demands perfectly understandable. Without these fundamental skills their children cannot advance in society, i.e. move away from the monotonous, life-consuming and more often than not poorly paying jobs. Working class parents are not in the position to teach these skills at home. Furthermore, the chaos, the lack of space and the general insecurity, worry and anxiety in the lives of the majority of working class people, makes the working class parent appreciate certain order during school hours, in a way that most liberal minded middle class people do not quite understand.

Take these conflicting life experiences and put the two classes together to demand “community control”, and soon you will have the middle class elements attacking the workers as “reactionary”, and the working class people viewing the middle class demands as frivolous and dangerous.

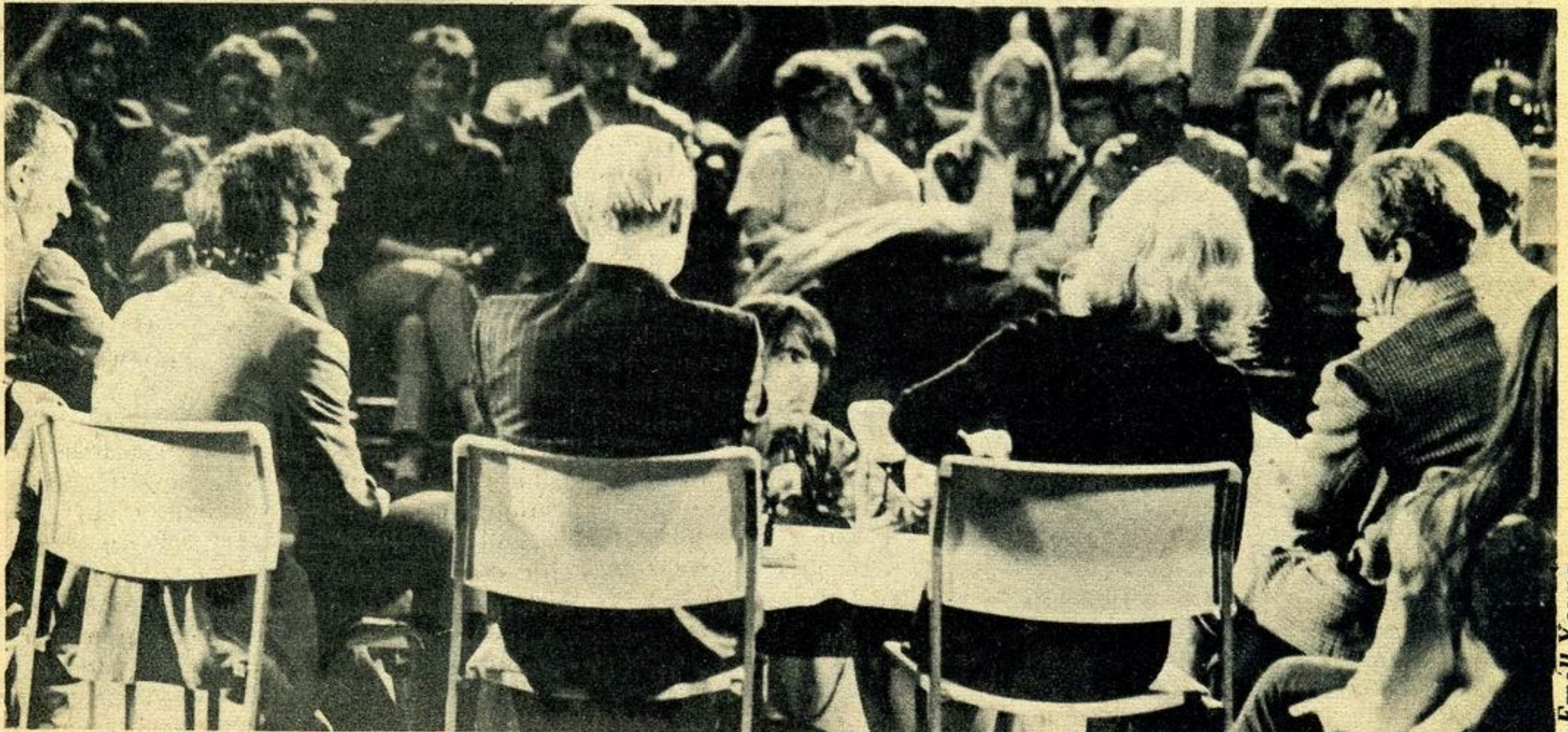
These are just a few examples of the class differentials within the same neighbourhood. One could go on and on, but what is more interesting from the point of view of this discussion, are the effects this class conflict has on the politics of community organizing.

Generally speaking the middle class element involved in community groups in the inner city, the liberal or radical fringe of the middle class, loves to talk and to attend meetings. They are capable of handling these meetings, able to challenge the authorities, the civil servants and politicians (the conservative element of the middle class). They are verbally highly skilled and due to their class and sex (male),

often have a life-long leadership training. Community action in the form of frequent meetings and public confrontations gives them great ego rewards and invariably advances their careers, whether they be university professors, planners, journalists, lawyers or aspiring politicians. (To be more specific: two active participants in “community organizing” in Toronto, Karl Jaffary and John Sewell, went into civic politics; and Jim Lorimer, another activist, became a regular columnist for a conservative newspaper in Toronto. While the working class was invariably defeated, the middle class leaders benefited personally.) Furthermore, the social life of the middle class element is often integrally part of their political involvement in the neighbourhoods, and this makes their involvement even more satisfying. Consequently, they prefer this type of functioning, meeting after meeting, a lot of publicity, public confrontations, etc., *all of which are the polar opposites of quiet, long-term grass roots organizing, and mutually exclusive to it.*

Confrontations and catering to the media consume time and rapidly elevate certain persons into leadership and spokesmen positions, from which they find it difficult to remove themselves in order to get back to the rank and file membership. One ends up spending a lot of time with various media representatives, trying both to explain to them what is happening in the area, and then correcting the mistakes and actual falsehoods, that make their way into the print. Meeting after meeting is spent in discussing how to “deal with the media”, while the immediate tasks of talking and listening to the grass roots becomes secondary. The continuous attention from the media thus successfully drives a wedge between the leadership and the rank and file. Again, even the mildest dose of class analysis would prevent this. One has to see the media for what it is: the mouthpiece for the ruling elements. Under these circumstances to speculate whether an individual reporter is trustworthy or not, is a total waste of time. When it comes to a crunch—and it always does—individual reporters are thoroughly powerless to determine how much of the stories or broadcasts sees daylight.

The working class, on the other hand, as any other col-



Erroll Young

... the middle class loves to attend endless meetings ...

onized people (like the Blacks, Indians and women) have no training in leadership and verbal skills, are socially insecure and feel inferior when having to deal with or work with highly literate and extremely verbal middle class elements. As a rule they are not able to challenge verbally authorities—or any middle class people, for that matter—in big or small meetings; are not able to handle “big words”; and feel—quite correctly—that circles are being talked around their heads by conservative and radical middle class elements alike. One can observe in public meetings, time after time, that when an occasional working class person musters courage to get up and say something, it is usually a big emotional outburst, which is either totally ignored or paternalistically received by the middle class elements present. It is obvious that an immigrant worker is in an even worse position, since his language problems reduce him to total passivity at such meetings. Another significant class differential is that the workers invariably have to get to work early in the morning, whereas the middle class professionals can determine their own hours.

Consequently, the meetings that middle class elements thrive in, create boredom, anger and anxiety on the part

of the working class participants: there is no ego satisfaction involved for them, and certainly no career advancement to be hoped for. Frequent neighbourhood meetings to “talk things over”, have only negative meaning for the ordinary working class person, and are generally considered to be a total waste of time, since they produce no concrete results. After a while they stop attending altogether, and the organization is now fully in the hands of the middle class elements, in whose interest it has been run all along.

This dropping out of the working class element is, I contend, what has happened in all the neighbourhoods where middle class liberal radical elements have been organizationally involved. Under these circumstances it is not very difficult for conservative and reactionary politicians at City Hall and elsewhere, to point out—which they have repeatedly done in Toronto—that the middle class oriented and controlled residents’ associations and community organizations do not have the numbers and do not represent the interests of the average working class person in the respective areas. Now, the reactionaries make a mistake when they think that, because the working class resi-



Pamela Harris-McLeod

*... endless meetings frustrate and bore the working class ...*

dents do not join these organizations, they are satisfied with what is. The correct conclusion is that no matter how dissatisfied the working class is, it will *not* join or actively participate in organizations that represent the ideology of a different class. That goes for the organizations ranging from the Conservative, Liberal and New Democratic Parties, as well as residents' associations, community organizations and a wide range of other organizations, including labour organizations. (Voting is a slightly different matter: as long as there is no clear alternative for the working class in the form of a movement or a party that is totally committed to that class, they vote on the basis of personalities, although the wide-spread non-voting pattern in the general population declares clearly: a plague on ALL your houses.)

In the particular confrontation of classes that takes place in the neighbourhood organizations, the working class has been and continues to be systematically defeated. It is being misled and defeated by an ideologically committed middle class element that operates in its own interests; and it is being misled and defeated by an element of that same class that, although "well meaning", lacks an understanding of social classes in operation and does not act from a working class perspective. The resulting middle class ideology has determined the nature of the organizations in the neighbourhoods, and has through them succeeded in controlling the working class.

A further example might clarify this: in the inner city neighborhoods and in working class areas where middle class organizers assumed leadership, a major contradiction developed around the urban renewal issue. The working class elements, when they were allowed adequate expression, *invariably rejected urban renewal in any form*, since it has never ceased to be a threat to their existence. Thus in Trefann Court, an absolute majority of working class home-owners (who are the ones who are directly under the gun), announced in March 1968 that they wanted no part of the existing urban renewal schemes, that they wanted to be left alone. They asked for enforcement of housing standards and a general normalization of their area. Similar requests were made, and similar sentiments were expressed by the working class elements in Don Vale and Kensington, two other urban renewal areas in Toronto.

The middle class elements, on the other hand, were *intrigued* by the urban renewal game and willing to play it for ever and ever. (They can always pick up and move back into their own areas). Instead of demanding to be left alone, they insisted on *more* participation, and presented hopelessly utopian schemes (in the sense that they did not have the forces to back up those schemes and to turn the demands into serious political demands), to be discussed in endless meetings. They considered the working class position of outright rejection as "negative", and spent much time and effort in trying to involve the residents in "positive" planning. The Trefann Court Residents' Association, for instance, was manipulated back into a planning process which now allows them, four years after the introduction of the urban renewal scheme, to participate in their own slow destruction. Needless to say, by returning to the negotiation table, the association lost its credibility among the working class home owners in the area, who had previously so strongly rejected the scheme. (Unlike in labour negotiations, where at least workers are making demands about wages, benefits and working conditions, there is nothing to "negotiate" in urban renewal areas, because the working class has not asked for urban renewal in the first place. Participation in that context is like being allowed to choose the colour and texture of the rope that one is to be hanged by.)

## Participatory democracy — a middle class concept

"Participatory democracy" has been a very effective method by which the middle class elements have succeeded in walking all over the working class. In the mid-sixties the concept was imported from the U.S., and dumped into community organizing projects in Canada by the Canadian appendix of the American student left, Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA). In half-a-dozen years it has travelled from being considered a "radical" concept to becoming part of the establishment's everyday rhetoric. As it is a most inappropriate method for the working class, its effect is always the same: to disorganize the workers in whatever they were doing, and make them dependent on middle class (mis)leadership.

In its "radical" phase it would work something like this:

*Item 1.* In Trefann Court, a tiny, five block urban renewal area in Toronto, where *objectively* there was a need for a *strong overall organization* (since the ruling class elements are thoroughly organized), the liberal middle class community organizers systematically proceeded to organize the area into block organizations. Their assumption that "people on each street should get together to solve their problems" replaced any serious analysis of what strategy and tactics were needed to fight an extremely vicious urban renewal program, that proposed to bulldoze working class homes, in order to build public housing in an area already bursting with it. Instead of communications and actions in the area flowing through the overall area organization, the Trefann Court Residents' Association (up to this date the only organization, although poorly functioning, that reflects the interests of the working class residents), letters and petitions were distributed by the organizers and sent to the City Hall with a variety of different signatures: "Angry Mothers from Wascana", "Mothers from Sackville Street", "Sumach Street Residents", etc. A total confusion resulted in the minds of the residents as well as in the minds of city politicians, seriously undermining the work of the Trefann Court Residents' Association. A most significant result of this "organizing" was that in their fragmentation—which was brought about *knowingly* by the middle class element since they invariably defended their actions—the residents were increasingly forced to depend on the organizers for information and initiative. In this way the latter effectively wrested the power from what was supposed to be a union of the working class elements in the neighbourhood. Under these circumstances local leaderships could not develop. Generally speaking, block organizing is tantamount to organizing workers at a plant *by the floor*, rather than as members of the same unit: the factory.

*Item 2.* The same organizers would collect competing and opposing petitions from different streets and forward them to the City Hall, with the obvious results that City Hall disregarded all petitions and was fully satisfied that the residents were thoroughly disorganized. When confronted with their actions, the organizers—one of whom went ahead to become a city alderman, and continues to advocate "participatory democracy" and "community control" wherever he goes—would shrug their shoulders and say: "but the people wanted it!" They had gone around to ask people on different streets what they wanted

je participe  
 tu participes  
 il participe  
 nous participons  
 vous participerez  
 ils profitent



No. 34

● I PARTICIPATE	○ YO PARTICIPO
YOU PARTICIPATE....	TU PARTICIPAS
THEY PROFIT	ELLOS GANAN
□ IO PARTECIPÓ	■ ICH HABE EINEN ANTEIL
TU PARTECIPÓ.....	DU HAST EINEN ANTEIL
ESSI APPROFITANO	SIE HABEN DEN PROFIT

to do about particular problems; and had picked up on certain initial responses without informing the residents of what *else* was happening and what possible consequences (obviously!) competing and opposing petitions would have on their situation. (One set of petitions from two neighbouring streets asked for lights on *their* particular corner—consequently neither got it. I am fully convinced that if the residents, in this instance and others like it, would have known that the organizers were going around with the same or totally opposing petition for another street, they would not have signed it. But they weren't informed. Only the organizers knew what was happening, but they were pretending that they were doing what the people wanted!

*Item 3.* A strategy meeting was held to discuss plans for a demonstration at City Hall. Plain-clothes men and press people wanted to attend the meeting and were automatically going to be turned away by working class members at the door. At this point, the organizers interfered and insisted that the item be “discussed by everybody”

at the meeting. They introduced it in such a vague manner that people present—the most vocal of whom were the least class conscious, lumpenized (chronic welfare) element, who had grown fond of publicity of *any* kind—voted to let the press in. (This ideological unity, a real love affair, between the middle class and the lumpenized element, “the poor”, is a very visible element on the scene of social change in Canada. It will be thoroughly examined in our pages.)

Not unexpectedly on the next day the press blasted the plans which were made for weeks later. The potential impact of these plans was thus destroyed and distorted. To allow the press into that particular meeting was tantamount to having a union organizing meeting openly attended by management representatives.

*Item 4.* At the same meeting, a week-long picketline was discussed. A worker suggested that a committee be set up to co-ordinate the picket line, to line people up on picket duty, to make sure that always there would be ample presence of people. He was supported by other workers. But the suggestion was shot down by the organizers (three of them—with myself strongly dissenting), who kept saying, over and over again, that no organization was needed; that people should not be told when to go; that they would do so spontaneously; that a committee would be restrictive and too structured, etc. All in the great middle class tradition of everybody “doing their thing”! No committee was set up and the picket line was a resounding disaster, containing the organizers, their friends and relatives, and few grumbling workers (those that had suggested the committee). The lumpenized element, so vocal in the meeting, was conspicuous in its absence.

There were similar items by the dozen, small items, large items, all indicative of middle class ideology in operation. (An overall critique of the Trefann Court organizing effort, the role of the City Hall, the social agencies and the middle class radicals in the area, is in preparation, for the specific purpose of counteracting the widespread mythmaking in Canada about how “successful” the organizing has been. The publication will be advertised in the coming issues of TRANSFORMATION.)

### Immigrant neighbourhoods

The second type of community is the one that is largely immigrant. In these communities the community control advocacy (initiated by the same middle class liberal element), has resulted in the demand for “community schools”, where the language and culture of the ethnic minorities would be cultivated.

Now the first and foremost fallacy here is that ethnicity has been elevated into nationhood: the ethnic group in question is offered some sort of self determination, a right to maintain its language and culture. I would like to state it in the strongest possible terms, that *an ethnic group is not a nation*, and should not be treated as such. There is a fundamental difference between the Italians, Portuguese, Ukrainians, Finns and Chinese in Canada, and the Quebecois and the Native Peoples. There is a difference between immigrants who have come voluntarily to Canada (even if they be refugees) and oppressed nations that have been conquered. The nations in Canada have

a basic right to their language and culture, as well as a right to govern themselves (the fact that this right is not being granted by the Canadian state, is another matter); whereas the immigrants have left these rights behind, in their countries of origin, and ought to assimilate rapidly with the new society. Ethnic groups, particularly in the beginning of their assimilation should, of course, have access to information and social services in their own language. Also, nothing prevents them from supporting their own private schools and institutions, if they so wish, but at their own cost.

The second crucial error is the whole concept of immigrant "culture". A proposed community school in the Kensington area in Toronto will attempt to emphasize in its programmes the culture of the Portuguese, Chinese and Black populations of the area. The question one has to ask in this context is: what is the culture of immigrant labour? And the answer is: the culture of immigrant labour consists of hard work, long hours, poor pay, a lot of children, a lot of illness, and premature old age, *all of which constitute a typical working class fate.* The language of that experience is incidental. *This* culture is indeed the one to be taught in schools and everywhere else, but not a second should be wasted on transmitting some superficial features from the past society of the immigrant into his present existence. The immigrant worker should integrate with his new society, learn its language and history, learn about the ideology of immigration (i.e. why he was brought here), and learn about the history and conditions of his own class in Canada. It goes without saying that he should participate in the overall struggles of his class in this country.

Any demand for ethnic schools and programmes will only lead into a hopeless ghetto mentality on the part of the immigrant, and into a permanent isolation and alienation from the Canadian context. It would make it totally impossible for the working class to communicate with each other on the work-place and in the neighbourhoods. This is ideal from the establishment's perspective, because the more divided and fragmented the working class is, the stronger the present power structure becomes.

### Working class neighbourhoods

Let us then examine the third situation, in which the neighbourhood in question is essentially working class: that is, homogenous from the class point of view. The question we have to ask here is the following:

"Do people who are sociologically working class, that is, from the point of view of the work they do and the lives they lead, constitute a class, ready and able to make demands in the *genuine interest of the class?*"

The answer to that is presently NO. Let us assume that the Canadian and American working class has not been politically educated for the last 30 years or so, that they are in fact, the forgotten people. And let us assume that consequently they are ignorant about their class potential and themselves as a class; that they are prejudiced against and alienated from other members of the class, whether they be different races, immigrants, women or welfare recipients: and that they are sexually miserable and oblivious of the needs of youth and children. Should one under these circumstances advocate that this politically immature working class or any part of it, should demand community control over schools, for instance, purely on the vague populist notion that they are

"the people"? Should they at this point of their political development be drawn into hiring and firing principals, and into determining the course content in schools and whether there should be sex education in schools or not? Should they be able to determine whether there should be a birth control clinic in the neighborhood, etc.?

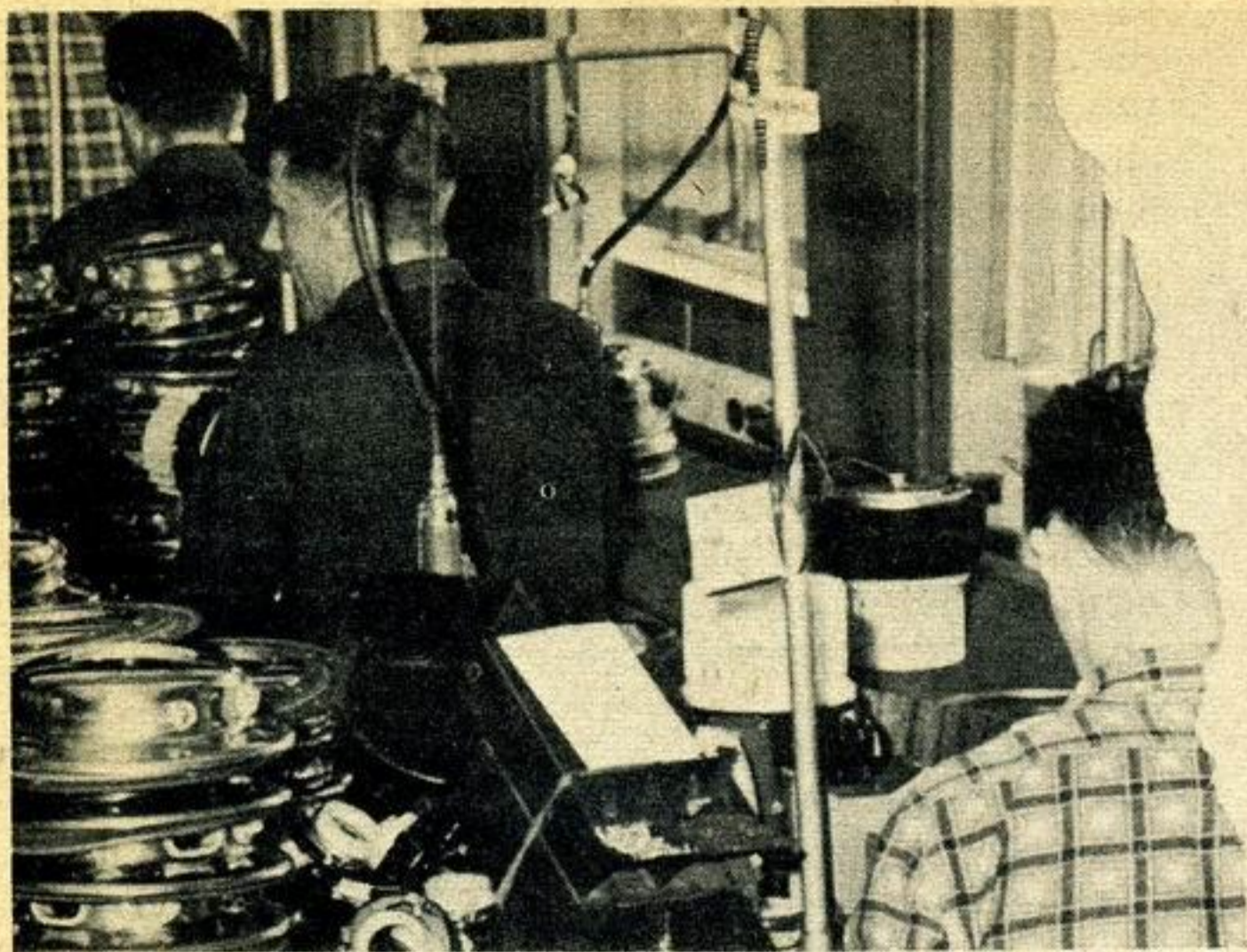
One has to oppose such a demand on the basis that it is premature, since the working class is in fact politically uneducated. *First* there has to be prolonged political education about the history, sociology and politics of the working class, combined with practical activity around relevant issues. Only *then* should the demand for community control or working class power be raised. Presently, in a community control issue, the working class lacking such education, would rapidly divide into various different factions, ranging from progressive to reactionary, depending on the issue, and could not get anywhere. To drag the working class ill-prepared and divided into a premature power struggle with the establishment, and its various agencies and institutions, will result in yet another defeat for that class, something it does not need. People should be organized for strength and victory, and not for certain failure, as is the case in premature contest. For that end they would have to be politically educated.

Political education of the working class is today totally missing, and nothing that could be accurately described as such has been offered by the middle class elements busily organizing in the urban neighbourhoods. The literature one finds in connection with these efforts is at the lowest level, consisting of attacks on City Hall politicians and bureaucrats, civil servants here and there, and with the occasional swings at "bad" developers and "mean" landlords. The solutions advocated are merely exhortations about "people taking power in their own communities", people "participating in decisions affecting their lives", etc., without the slightest analysis being provided as to what it takes for people to assume control over their own lives. No class analysis is provided, either of problems or their solutions.

Some of our community control advocates realize that the working class is not politically ready to raise the demand for political power ("community control"), but their "solution" is equally absurd. They will start "from where the people are at", which in terms of their political consciousness is nowhere, and by taking them through small steps involving extremely low-level organizing around trivial issues, they suggest the working class will grow in political stature and gain knowledge about "how the system works" and be then capable of larger achievements. (Of course, the working class people involved are never notified about this "educational process" set up for their presumed benefit!) This is the way it's supposed to be, but that's not the way it works.

Organizers, who start at a very low level, at the level of neighbourhood management, have invariably been forced to keep themselves extremely busy at this level. They therefore have no time for political education, even if they had the desire. The busywork makes analysis impossible, and orients the people away from both. Since busywork does not effect real changes in the lives of working class people, their participation will gradually fall off. When that happens, the middle class elements involved will raise the cry for more organizers. They see the solution to what they perceive as "apathy", in more

*continued on page 33*



# The alienation of radical theatre

by Rose-Marie Larsson

The main task for all political radical groups in society today lies in the building of a strong popular socialist movement. This has to be done by supplying the working class with the already existing analysis of how a capitalist system works and by linking the analysis up with the daily personal experience of exploitation, increasing alienation and manipulation of basic human values. In short, an acute political consciousness needs to be created or, to put it more aptly, re-created. To attain this level of awareness would seem to require a massive and sustained effort via *all* media—publishing, TV and radio, community organizing, the arts. It is my opinion that the theatre which calls itself “radical” or “revolutionary”—with a few outstanding examples—is not contributing to that awareness.

Not that people involved in theatre do not feel the need for a society based on co-operation, total integration and love. The problem is that most people in theatre are as much victims and agents of current capitalist-individualist mythmaking as the technocrats in our institutions, in spite of, or rather because of their flagrant attacks on Western industrialist society. The fact is that all theatre today, including radical theatre, is alienated from the working class (just like the rest of the arts); and as long as it remains so, people attempting to revitalize drama as a fundamental, social necessity are going to be sidetracked by endless and wearisome endeavours to shake some life into the upper and middle class strata—the very citizens who, all their hypocritical assertions notwithstanding, are interested not in any serious social change, but, on the contrary, in maintaining the status quo. I will explain in detail.

The catch phrase for radical theatre in the sixties was “audience participation.” Faced with the more and more obvious situation that theatre as a medium was totally alienated from actual political and sociological reality, one began to experiment with new forms of theatre, in order to have it re-established as an active social force. Inspired by Artaud’s writings of “The Theatre of Cruelty” and the

happenings of Dada and post-Dada, underground theatre groups were formed in all the big cities and at university campuses. Most of the plays, or “theatrical pieces,” were somehow or other related to the theory that modern technological society threatened to make human beings into machines and that it was therefore necessary for the theatre to become a place where man’s human qualities could be experienced and dealt with in ways that would redefine his role in the world. It became important to prove that theatre really could work as that kind of catalyst. So what everyone strived for was involvement, any kind of emotional involvement. These were the years of assaulting the audience—to provoke anger. These were the years of paint and sex orgies on every other stage. Film and slide projections, electronic music, multi-channeled tapes, unbearable sound and light effects, stroboscopes, plastic environments—all became commonplace ingredients in underground theatre, as did the challenging of every social taboo and the general obsession with what was considered extreme behaviour. *The Living Theatre* toured Europe and the States with plays that either delved into institutionalized violence (*The Brig*) or sado-masochistic sexual behaviour (Genet’s *The Maids*) as well as a constantly expanding set of improvisations on human behaviour called *Miracles*. The Polish director Jerzy Grotowski with his theatre of superhuman efforts became to radical theatre what Tennessee Williams was to Broadway and Hollywood. And all through the sixties there was continuous experimentation with technology as a means to revolutionize the theatre, culminating in the spectacular *Nine Days in New York* in 1967, which was a festival of dance and theatrical events worked out in co-operation by artists as well as engineers from the Bell Telephone Company, and using a fantastic—for lack of a better word—variety of modern technological equipment as a means of theatrical expression. None of the experimental theatres attracted audiences outside of the intellectual elite; there never was a mass audience. The movement to revolutionize the theatre was a movement strictly within



theatre as a medium. There was no socialist analysis involved, and thus there was a reluctance to see people other than mere individuals who just happened to belong to the same species.

Some of that changed when the Vietnam war became a focal point of political discussions in the U.S. as well as in Canada. As the horrors of being part of an imperialist capitalist society were once and for all brought out front and contrasted with the socialist struggles of people in Asia, Africa and Latin America, it immediately began to influence the climate of the arts. Along with the drug culture's alternative of Eastern mysticism and aestheticism as a solution to social problems, a revolutionary jargon—derived from Marx, Lenin, Mao, Che, etc.—was adopted. Out of the student revolts and the underground dropout culture came "political theatre", aimed at activating people into political ventures to overthrow the system.

There was only one problem: the vast majority of the people, i.e. the working class, did not respond very favourably to the longhaired revolutionaries' agitation. In fact, they were opposed to just about everything that could have made "political theatre" meaningful: the withdrawal from Vietnam; they were opposed to drugs, opposed to free sex, and most of all opposed to communism, or at least to what they believe communism stands for. And that's where we are today. The radical theatre is as alienated from the working class as is the traditional establishment theatre.

And it's so simple. The reason working class people don't go to the theatre to see Ibsen's *Ghosts* or *A Festival of Underground Theatre* is that they don't identify with that kind of theatre. The reason they don't identify with that kind of theatre is that it is not created with them in mind. Both types of theatre presuppose familiarity with world history, economy, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, or any other aspect of ruling class privilege education. Which makes the oh, so noble! outcry of professional culture makers about how to get the people out to the art galleries, the theatres, the concert halls—under the pretext that anybody can understand good art—nothing less than a downright sham. The same goes for the currently fashionable and contemptuous opinion that no revolution is ever going to come out of the working class—"they've sold out!"

As usual, what is needed is wits and guts. The wits to analyze, the guts to articulate. What radical theatre has to tackle is basically the same question confronting all groups that seek to construct a new society, namely, the question of why the working class will not respond to what is essentially in its own interest. This question not only can, but must be answered.

There is a well-documented history of how the socialist parties in North America—both in Canada and in the U.S.—have failed in accomplishing anything but the final tying of the worker to the mine or the factory for life, while smart-ass union leaders spend years bargaining about a few extra dollars or a couple of more days vacation. (Not that these reforms are entirely useless. But they are certainly no solution to the overall problem.) The historical understanding of how working people, as a class, have been exploited by one power group after another, linked with a solid understanding of what daily life for the working class is all about, would be the basis for a new kind of genuinely revolutionary theatre aimed at a mass audience. Anybody who has any knowledge of just how hard a man has to work in order to keep a reasonable standard of living will not be surprised at the reluctance of workers to take any advice from people like

student radicals, or hippies, or whatever one should call the advocates of "Revolution Now!" For many workers this sort of talk has a hollow ring: it's far too middle class. It sounds like people who don't have to earn a living "with the sweat of their brow," since they are eligible for, say, student loans, or Canada Council grants—which come out of the workingman's taxes; like people whose vocabulary and frames of references are derived from a kind of education the worker does not have; who know nothing about what working class life is all about; and who, to top it all, show a profound contempt for hard work and discipline more often than not. (This, of course, applies in reverse: the workingman knows little about middle class radicals—only what the mass media want him to know.) If this is not done—if exploitation and colonization processes are not acknowledged in their daily manifestations: at the work place, in school, at home, or wherever (one doesn't have to look very far), and put into a perspective of marxist analysis and in a theatrical form—then radical theatre will end up as nothing else than boulevard theatre for a group of alienated, pseudo-revolutionary opportunists: a strip-tease for the most daring of daring bourgeois decadents who are cleverly disguised as Bolivian guerillas with posters of Che next to John Lennon's "Peace is Here" on their communal living-room walls, who are comfortably contained in the belief that they are right and everybody else is in delusions.

The fact that theatre can work as an activating and necessary social force in a working class context has been beautifully illustrated in California by the Campesina Players, who worked with the Mexican grape pickers, and by a group of young actors from the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, Sweden, who toured the northern part of Sweden with a play about working conditions in a steel mill. Since I am most familiar with the last mentioned group, I will choose them as an example.

Last year they wrote and staged a play with the help of one of Sweden's best as well as funniest socialist writers, about working conditions in the mines and steel works up in the north of Sweden which, incidentally, as a geographical and sociological area has very much in common with Northern Ontario. The play was based largely on documentary material collected from the workers in the various places. There were songs and a live band whose members had written the music and played it during performances. The characters of the play were workers, bosses, office employees and wives. When the miners in one of the biggest mining districts walked out on strike last winter, the actors changed their touring schedule and went to do their play for the striking workers. As a result they were fired (later rehired) from the Royal Dramatic Theatre and got a debate started about workers' control, which is still carried on in the Swedish news media. The strike was as viciously opposed by management—which happened to include the Swedish Social Democratic government since mines are 50 per cent state owned!—as it was by the National organization of Unions.

The fact is that this production had the workers, whose experience of live theatre up to then had been limited to occasional second-rate road productions of Broadway musicals or traditional Ibsen—Strindberg renditions, virtually rolling in the aisles with laughter as one after the other of the all-too-familiar absurd situations were presented. The response to the less funny aspects was just as solid. And all this in packed, standing-room-only houses! When I visited Sweden again last summer I was told by one of the actors

*continued on page 35*



Illustration: Raymond Beel

# The House of Horrors t

# A look at early childhood literature

*"The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living."*

(The old man)

You can wander endlessly through libraries, bookstores, department stores, supermarkets and neighbourhood variety stores, and everywhere you are confronted with the ugly reality of children's books. The undeniable fact is that there are scarcely any that one can with a good conscience read or give to children; and those few that exist are prohibitive in cost. Generally speaking, it does not matter whether you find these books lavishly illustrated and expensive, or printed on cheap paper with mediocre drawings and selling for less than 50 cents; the content of the fare is identical. Children, from an early age, from the time they are able to hold a book in their hands, are inundated with reading materials, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, animal stories, et al., containing values, attitudes, instructions and exhortations, in sum total, a morality which any critically thinking adult, be he/she a parent, an educator or a librarian, would have to abhor.

Without exception one will find the worst features of past societies as well as of the present society heaped upon the minds of children. The feudal societies of the past live uninterrupted in the fairy tales and nursery rhymes. The kings, queens, princes and princesses continue their parasitic existence, their contempt for the common people, although in reality the latter have made an end to the existence of the former. The best the common people ever do in these stories is to marry the king's daughter or son and thus join the parasitic class.

The male-female relationship has in the same literature been fixated in the nineteenth century and prior to that. Not even ripples of the suffragist and global women's liberation struggles are in evidence. Women are sweet and passive as ever, trained for subservience and/or parasitic existence. Thus fathers, progressive and otherwise, are still reading to their daughters in the 1970 editions of Mother Goose:

*Curly locks, curly locks,  
Wilt thou be mine?  
Thou shalt not wash dishes  
Nor yet feed the swine,  
But sit on a cushion  
And sew a fine seam,  
And feed upon strawberries,  
Sugar and cream.*

Here, as in numerous other rhymes and tales, the daughters of the twentieth century are taught to be the ladies of leisure of past, defunct eras.

The traditional nursery rhymes, found in every home in this country, in every school and library and which are re-

produced, re-edited and re-illustrated, year after year, decade after decade are in reality a veritable house of horrors. The most prevalent feature in them is brutality, a wanton violence directed against fellow human beings—particularly those defined as "different"—as well as towards other living creatures. Nursery rhymes, one would have to say, make the My Lai massacres of this world perfectly understandable:

*There was a little man, and he had a little gun,  
And his bullets were made of lead, lead, lead;  
He went to the brook, and shot a little duck,  
Right through the middle of the head, head, head.*

And:

*There was an old woman, her name it was Peg;  
Her head was of wood, and she wore a cork leg.  
The neighbours all pitched her into the water;  
Her leg was drowned first, and her head followed  
after.*

Then there is Solomon Grundy, who lives and dies within a few abrupt lines. There is little Cock Sparrow as well as Cock Robin, who are killed in a most graphic manner, no details spared. There are the two cats of Kilkenny, who "fought until there weren't any" (excepting their nails and tips of their tails). There is Pussy in the well, thrown there by a "naughty little boy", for no apparent reason. There is Humpty Dumpty, a pleasant little fellow who cracks up altogether, with the content of his head pouring all over the ground. There is the baby in the cradle, who comes crashing down from a tree with obvious consequences (and think of all the parents who are still singing this song, tenderly, to their children!). There are the three blind mice whose tails are cut off by the knife of the farmer's wife. And there is the old woman in the shoe, who starves her numerous children and whips them before they go to bed. Blood is literally dripping from the pages of the most popular children's books, while the blatant, mindless cruelties are perpetuated by the nicest looking men, women and children, dressed in quaint old-fashioned clothes.

With violence, absurdity, a totally mystifying nonsense is elevated to a life principle in the rhymes. Jack and Jill can't even fetch a pail of water without falling down and breaking their crowns, without any explanation being offered for their failure. Our children learn to accept these absurdities as part of life: nothing makes sense, anything can happen, it won't be any use to ask why, since one absurdity follows another without interruption, without anyone stopping and saying: "Let's examine that." In some rhymes this morality is explicit:

## What Jack Built

*For every evil under the sun,  
There is a remedy, or there is none.  
If there be one, try and find it;  
If there be none, never mind it.*

Competitive individualism is another element systematically fostered. Animals, people and other creatures seldom if ever co-operate in the stories; they are usually pitted against each other and the story ends with victory for one individual (good, clever) and defeat for another (bad, stupid). The three little piggies build three different houses for each one of them, instead of working on one solid one from the beginning; the little red hen cannot get any help from the other animals despite her ardent pleadings; the three billy goats gruff are willing to sacrifice each other to the monster, instead of fighting together against it. And so it continues; each man for himself, everybody "doing his thing."

Work and working people are treated with thorough contempt in the class society of the nursery rhymes and fairy tales. Like Curlylocks, one should aspire not to work at all (but somebody else does all the work, of course). The butchers, the bakers and the candlestick makers are "knaves all three" (but why, is not explained), and in pictures and in stories common people look grotesque and behave ludicrously. Their exploitation is taken for granted:

*See-saw, Margery Daw,  
Jacky shall have a new master;  
Jacky shall have but a penny a day,  
Because he can't work any faster.*

A perfect song for the children and grandchildren of the E.P. Taylors, Rockefellers and the other masters, but hardly for the offspring of the exploited and oppressed Jacks! (The Canadian Manufacturers' Association might consider it for their theme song.)

One recent book, on the 1970 Christmas list, combines the put-down of the working class with the put-down on women in a magnificent way. In Evaline Ness' *The Girl and the Goatherd*, the girl is so ugly that *only the goatherd* would marry her. (Translated into modern times: she was so ugly that only the truckdriver, garbage collector, janitor or mailman would marry her.) A book with a message like that, no matter how "imaginatively" it is packaged, should head straight for the garbage can.

Contemporary fairy tales and animal stories, although most of them have left the feudal class society behind (the very popular *Babar, the Elephant* series, however, has its kings and queens and royal palaces), and avoid open bloodshed, are also seriously defective in terms of social values. A brief examination of some of the most popular (to adults?) children's books, will make this clear.

Harry, the happy little dog, that appears in numerous books by Gene Zion and Margaret Bloy Graham, teaches children one negative lesson after another. In one of the books, *Harry, the Dirty Dog*, Harry won't take a bath and instead spends his day getting marvellously dirty in number of different ways; consequently his family cannot recognize him and will not let him into the house. Somehow he manages to sneak home, rushes into the bath tub, and, clean once again, is loved and cuddled by his family. Lesson: cleanliness is next to godliness. Nobody loves dirty dogs or people. Your fun is irrelevant, if it makes a mess.

In another book, *Harry and the Lady Next Door*, Harry goes through extraordinary efforts to change the voice of a woman who sings very unpleasantly. Harry is single-minded and the lady is one dimensional: her only quality

is that she cannot sing; therefore she has to either change her voice or be gotten rid of. After repeated and unsuccessful efforts to affect changes in the woman's voice, Harry succeeds in the end, through some manoeuvres, to get the woman to win a singing contest, which she wins by default (he unwittingly scares everybody else off). The first prize is a scholarship for singing lessons in Europe, and on the last pages an ecstatic Harry is seen howling goodbye to the woman. Moral: get rid of people who are disagreeable. Persons who are failures in one thing must be failures in everything.

Curiosity, i.e. creativity and imagination, is a cardinal sin in children's books, and is used interchangeably with "naughty". *Curious George* by H.A. Rey, another much used series, has as its hero a little monkey who is just too curious for his own good, he encounters endless troubles and is usually in the end rescued, subdued and defeated by an adult-human. He learns *his* lesson, but the adults won't learn anything from him, e.g., how *they* could explore their world with equal intensity and joy, and experience wonderful adventures.

Libraries and bookstores abound with similar books, where the only identification a child can have with the story is a negative one: little dogs, monkeys and children get taken, repressed and punished. Children appear to respond to these books in their identification with spirited young beings wandering through a maze of systematic put-downs. In a real sense these books reflect the actual experiences of all children in our society, but they repeat over and over again *what is* without moving an inch towards the direction of *what can be*. This is, of course, their most serious failure.

Some widely distributed children's books manage to combine a variety of offensive, reactionary characteristics, as well as a very explicit political message. A case in point is a book entitled *Miss Suzy*, by Miriam Young (Parents' Magazine Press, U.S.A.). The plot is simple. It is a story about a little grey squirrel, who has a house in a tree where she lives contentedly. "She liked to cook, she liked to clean, and she liked to sing while she worked." The whole purpose of her existence is to be a housewife (although there is no family involved!). One day six RED squirrels come along. They are thugs and quarrelsome fellows, loving to fight to such an extent that they even fight amongst themselves. They chase Miss Suzy out and break her little broom, throw out the acorn cups and generally destroy her little house. In the meantime, Miss Suzy finds a large doll house (after undergoing Herculean hardships) which she cleans and washes and makes into her new home. One day she finds a box of soldiers whom she takes into her doll house. She feeds them and tucks them into bed at night and tells them stories, and eventually reveals to them how she lost her home. The soldiers, determined to help her because she has been so kind to them, march on the red squirrels and chase them away. Miss Suzy returns to her house, where she lives happily ever after, cleaning, sweeping, dusting. The illustrations depict the red squirrels as frowning, evil little creatures, while the soldiers are smiling, benignly haloed with all-American goodness.

Whether it be classical or contemporary, early childhood literature is a crucial link in developing the bourgeois individualist-suited for living in a capitalist society. No matter what our own values and political orientation are, our children are nevertheless fed on the main ingredients of a bourgeois society: rampant individualism coupled with blind conformity; thwarting of creativity and imagination; systematic mystification of reality; alienation from one's

fellow human beings and from nature; and contempt for work and working people. This is why we have to take hold of that very literature and transform it to suit our purposes, to help to create the new man capable of living in a communal society.

A key question in the overall discussion of children's literature—a question that we can only touch upon here—is the very role and nature of fantasy in children's literature; the early turning away from reality in its various magnificent and troublesome manifestations. Is fantasy really necessary at all? Are fairy tales needed? Are they "natural" in a healthy society we want to create? Anyone who has closely observed pre-schoolers knows that theirs is a very creative, sensuous age in which the child is engrossed by reality, whether it be a stone pebble found on the sidewalk, a crack in the wall, a tiny insect or a drop of water. She is interested in all phenomena, responds to everything with an eager "What's that?" and "What is happening?" A handful of dirt is to her more meaningful than the most elaborate toy.

The fantasy element is systematically introduced from the outside by adults; witness how we tell our children of Santa Claus and Easter Bunny, and how few adults talk realistically about how babies are made. Witness how we introduce prefabricated toys into the children's lives and remove interesting materials (empty cigarette packs, pieces of material with different textures, paper boxes, pieces of wood, etc.) that children invariably prefer. The toys on the market are truly "fantastic," grotesque and one dimensional; they are "complete" without the child (little telephones with eyes, mouths and wheels!; large rubber spoons with eyes and mouths; intricately detailed trucks with drivers in them; trains with faces, etc.)

This fantasizing about reality rather than its thorough, open-minded exploration creates major contradictions in children's lives. Take for instance the treatment of nature, particularly animals, that starts early in children's picture books. Animals are given complete human characteristics, including human speech and clothing; they are introduced as friends and love-objects, as something to identify with. In our everyday life, however, we do something altogether different: Little Piggy Wiggy, Bunny Rabbit, Little Red Hen and Donald Duck—all end up on the dinner table, in a manner sufficiently horrible to turn sensitive children into vegetarians or at least to give them indigestion. How are these contradictions usually handled by adults? Not at all; they are simply ignored—as if it were the most natural thing in the world to eat one's friends. There is really no reason why animals could not be described accurately and scientifically in their actual habitat, in their place in the ecological chain, thus ridding us forever of the present sentimentality cum brutality towards animals. (If we want to keep eating them, that function should be explained very early.)

One would have to ask whether the deliberate pushing of fantasy is not one of the major factors producing adults of all levels of education, in all classes, reactionary and progressive, who fantasize about the world around them: who are satisfied with half truths and myths, with a sharp division of Good and Evil, between superior groups and inferior groups; who search for a simplistic solution to, or a superhero for, complex problems; and who see things in an either-or way, without being able to understand the complexities, the actual dynamics of the situation.

Fantasy, it seems, lays the basis for formalistic, fruitless, ritualistic, in one word, *unscientific* thinking, so prevalent in our society (including the left). Young children can describe very accurately the world around them, and

their reasoning as to why things happen is often quite imaginative (not fantastic). But children a little older already start to resemble adults in their obsession with being correct with little or no investigation. Small children are always exploring and investigating; and are critical of yesterday's truths, until they are taught *not* to do so.

Another indication of the harmful effect of prepackaged fantasy (fairy tales, toys, etc.) can be seen in children's art. Before the inherited fantasies take over, the child (even in mildly favourable circumstances) draws with bold colours, fills the sheet of paper with creatures and events that are part of his reality, no matter how "fantastic" they might appear. Few years later, you can find the same child drawing princesses with eyelashes and crowns, ladies in wedding gowns, or stereotyped monsters and spaceships and dragons that have no originality about them whatsoever. Sterile, mechanistic fantasies have replaced a rich and meaningful reality.

### What do we propose?: Communal values and a realistic, scientific world view.

There are many things we can undertake right now regarding early childhood literature. We can make sure that children's books reflect the values that are needed to create a communal society, and that they introduce a realistic picture of the world around us, both social and natural. Why not have books that project a society where people are helpful towards each other, where work is performed together, where joys and sorrows are shared? Why not have books about the creative powers of man within such a society? About the uniqueness of every individual in a communal society? These are things we know about through experiments that have taken place in the past and present, but the knowledge of mankind's struggle towards a communal society is buried under the garbage heap that now passes as history and literature. We simply have to make that knowledge alive and available.

Side by side with cultivating communal, humane values, we have to deal with the brutality, oppression, violence, misery, poverty and grief that presently exist in the world, and which hammers at our senses night and day. These phenomena, however, unlike the violence and brutality of the nursery rhymes and fairy tales, are not absurd and unexplainable. They are the very *real* consequences of underlying economic, social and political structures, all of which can be understood when approached with a scientific mind. The cultivation of this scientific (open-minded, critical) attitude towards all kinds of phenomena, natural and social, should be the primary task of all education, starting with infants and pre-schoolers.

### Four Tasks:

1) The first task of progressive parents, educators, librarians and other interested people is to examine what they have on their shelves and what exists in the stores, and to discard and condemn all that is exclusively negativistic, anti-female, anti-working class, anti-communal, anti-nature; all that is filled with meaningless violence and all that is mystifying. (The useless books, no matter how handsome and expensive, should not be sent to "the less fortunate"—to Africa, Northern Canada or to the inner cities—since if they are poison to the critically thinking person, they are poison also to those who have not had the opportunity to critically examine them. If they are no good, cut them up for other purposes or burn them.)

2) The next task is to seek out the few existing healthy

*continued on page 36*

## IN THE MORNING

I don't like to get up in the mornings and my mother always calls "Emma, Emma, get up and feed the babies." And then I say "Emm emm" and then I go "emm emm" like that. I'm really tired and then I get up and feed the babies. I get some milk and I put some hot water in it. Then I put it on the stove and I boil it. Ricky can eat by himself and so can Ricardo. Only Ricky knows how to hold on to the bottle.

I say "here Ricky, hold onto the bottle."

Then I change Ricardo.

Then we have to take them outside. My mother kept saying:

"Is Ricky awake?"

"Is Ricky awake? Is Ricky awake to take him outside?"

I say "No."

I trick my mother sometimes when I don't want to do it.

Emma Berry, age 7, Toronto

# Children's World

is Real

## MY MOTHER'S BREAST

I love to take a bath with Mommy.  
I hold her breast in my mouth for fun.  
It's very soft.  
Soft as a rubber mattress?  
Soft as a rubber ball.  
When I put my cheek against it  
I remember when I was a baby.  
Mommy is smiling.  
I feel shy and let go of her breast.  
Her breast is such a good thing.

Okito Junko, age 7, Japan

## WE GOT USED TO . . .

. . . We got used to standing in line at 7 o'clock in the morning, at 12 noon and again at seven o'clock in the evening. We stood in a long queue with a plate in our hand, into which they ladled a little warmed-up water with a salty or a coffee flavour. Or else they gave us a few potatoes. We got used to sleeping without a bed, saluting every uniform, not to walk on the sidewalks and then again to walk on the sidewalks. We got used to undeserved slaps, blows and executions. We got accustomed to seeing people die in their own excrement, to seeing piled-up coffins full of corpses, to seeing the sick amidst dirt and filth and to seeing the helpless doctors. We got used to it that from time to time, one thousand unhappy souls would come here and that, from time to time, another thousand unhappy souls would go away . . .

Excerpt from the prose of 15-year old Petr Fischl, born in Prague on September 9, 1929, and deported to Terezin Concentration Camp, Czechoslovakia, on December 8, 1943. He died at Oswiecim on October 8, 1944.

## MY GRANDMOTHER'S WRINKLES

There are many wrinkles  
in my grandmother's face.  
When she laughs hundreds of wrinkles come.  
Even the wrinkles seem to be laughing.  
I will have wrinkles  
when I get old.  
I hate them.  
Why do we have wrinkles?  
Probably because our teeth become loose.  
On my grandmother's forehead  
sits a thick, long wrinkle  
as if it thought it was funny.

Nishitani Harue, age 9, Japan

AM I STUPID?

When I do something at home  
my parents say,  
"You're stupid."  
Am I stupid?  
Didn't my father and my mother grow up  
being told by our grandfather and grandmother,  
"You're stupid"??  
Somehow I feel very sad.

Ooguro Hiroko, age 8, Japan

FATHER

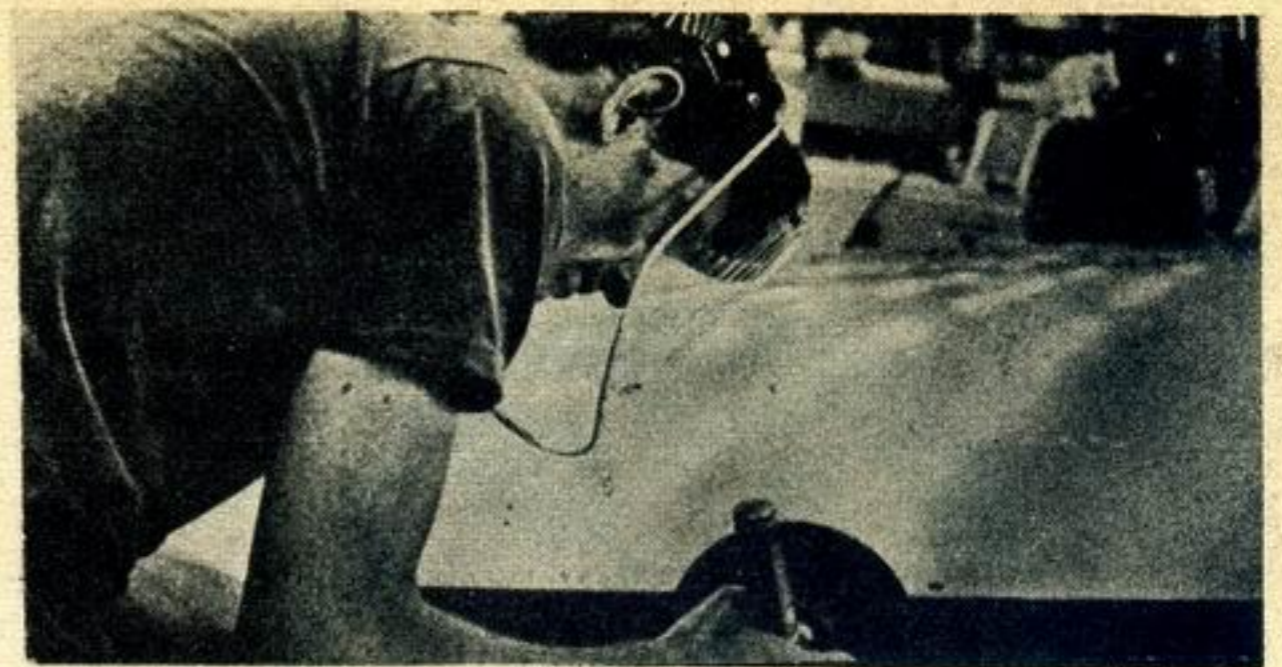
When my father wants to read the paper  
he says,  
"Paper, walk to me."  
When he wants to smoke  
he says,  
"Cigarettes, walk to me."  
Then  
my mother stands up to bring them to him.

Urakawa Yuriko, age 6, Japan



Stephanie

Children's poems are from:  
Richard Lewis (ed.), *There Are  
Two Lives: Poems of Children  
of Japan*. Simon and Schuster,  
New York, 1970; *This  
Magazine is About Schools*, and  
*I Never Saw Another Butterfly:  
Children's Drawings and Poems  
from Terezin Concentration  
Camp, 1942-44*. McGraw-Hill.



# LIFE ON THE LINE

by Roger Rapoport

*Editor's note:* Nothing is as thoroughly mystified in a capitalist society as is work. Production of goods and services is removed from our midst and is as a rule hidden behind the well guarded doors and fences of factories and other work places. Ready made products then appear as if untouched by human hands, and are exchanged for that supreme mystifier: money. Meanwhile, every object, every service hides within it a whole world of oppressive human relationships between the owners and managers of capital and the producers, as well as monotonous, dehumanizing drudgery, to which there is no end in the life of the producer. In a series of articles dealing with the real nature of work, to be published regularly in TRANSFORMATION, our first piece is written not by a worker but by a journalist, who for six days experienced what workers endure a lifetime. Nevertheless it is a sensitive and rare piece, which is even more remarkable since it was first published in the *Wall Street Journal* (July 24, 1967).

The Ford Motor Co. auto assembly line here is an impressive sight. Bare frames are put on a slowly moving conveyor. Wheels, engines, seats, body sections and hundreds of other components are added along the way. At the end of the quarter-mile, 90-minute trip, finished cars are driven off to be inspected and shipped to dealers.

It takes some 275 workers to put the cars together on the Wixom line. To hear a guide at Ford's big River Rouge plant, a popular tourist stop in nearby Dearborn, tell it, life on the line is a snap. "Each worker on an assembly line has one little job to do," he says. "It's simple. Anyone could learn it in two minutes." That's bunk.

Working on the line is gruelling and frustrating, and while it may be repetitive, it's not simple. I learned how tough it can be by working for six days at Ford's Wixom plant, which assembles Thunderbirds and Lincoln Continentals.

I learned first-hand why 250,000 auto workers are unhappy about working conditions. Ford calls Wixom the "most progressive automobile assembly plant on the North American continent." Facilities at the 10 year old plant here are indeed better than those at many of the 46 other auto assembly plants scattered around the country. Wixom is clean and well-lighted by auto industry standards. It boasts adequate rest rooms, plenty of drinking fountains and an all air-conditioned cafeteria. Even so, working conditions are less than ideal.

## Problems of quality

I also learned why quality control is a major problem for the industry and why so many Americans complain about poor workmanship in the cars they buy. I saw one blue fender installed on a white car and saw the steering col-

umn fall off another newly built car. Wixom's repair area, nearly the size of a football field, usually had a line-up of 500 cars waiting to have steering adjusted, scratches painted, brakes repaired and other faults fixed—but not all defects are caught before cars leave the plant. The four auto companies have recalled from customers more than a million 1967 model cars since last September because of suspected manufacturing defects.

Ford didn't know I was a reporter. Along with a handful of other young men, I was hired as a summer replacement, and to the personnel department I was simply, Social Security number 362-44-9616. The foreman on the line knew me as "9616" for short.

Names aren't necessary on the line. The conveyor moves at 1/6 of a mile an hour, and while that may not sound terribly fast, it doesn't leave much time for conversation. Also, the cacophony of bells, whistles, buzzers, hammers, whining pneumatic wrenches and clanking, rumbling machinery drowns out voices, so most communicating is done by arm waving and hand gestures.

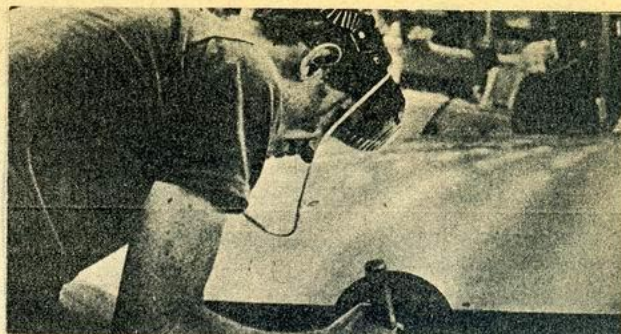
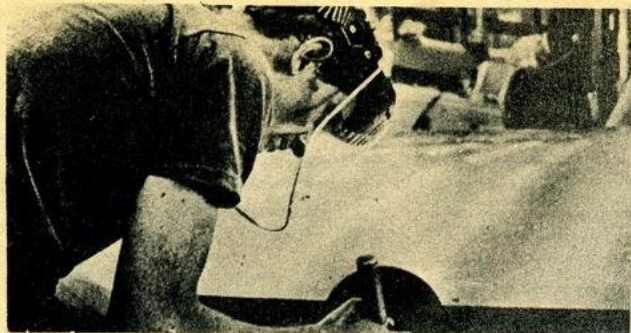
Only two of the dozens of men I worked beside at various points on the line ever learned my name, and I knew only the first names of two workmen. One was Clyde, a husky Negro who had been an assembler for about a year. My first day on the job, a foreman assigned Clyde to teach me the ropes at one work station.

## Lessons from Clyde

Clyde, a 200-pound six-footer, showed me how to bolt the car body to the chassis in three places. It was fairly easy for me, a 160-pound six-footer. He showed me how to lean into the trunk, tighten two bolts and make an electrical connection. I managed that task, too. He showed me how to maneuver a big V-8 engine dangling overhead down into a car's engine compartment. By this time, I considered myself fairly versatile.

Then Clyde showed me how to scramble from one car to the next, putting chassis and trunk bolts in the first two cars and helping with the engine in the third—all in less than five minutes. When I tried it, I got stuck in the trunk of one car, missed the chassis bolts on the next and was too late to help install the engine on the third car. Gradually, I became more proficient. But I didn't last long at any job. As a temporary worker, I was assigned to fill in for absent workmen at five different work stations at various times during my six days on the line. Except for Clyde, the men who showed me the jobs weren't very good teachers. One workman demonstrated the way to attach clamps to heater hoses, but he didn't mention that the clamps have





UAW Solidarity

tops and bottoms. A foreman caught my error after I had installed a dozen clamps upside down.

### Learning from experience

Nobody told me to put on steering wheels that match the colour of the dashboard—I figured that out myself. But I made some mistakes because nobody warned me that tinted glass makes it difficult to distinguish the colour of the dash by looking through the windshield. I installed some blue steering wheels on cars with aqua dashboards and mismatched a black wheel with a grey dashboard.

An experienced worker told me that a color-blind assembler recently installed the wrong colour vent plates under the windshield wipers on cars for two hours before a foreman spotted the error and assigned the man to another job.

I wasn't checked for colour blindness when I was hired. Rapid turnover and a major expansion at Wixom made getting a job easy even though the plant was heading for a temporary shutdown to make the annual model change-over. I passed a three-hour physical exam and an 11-minute written test. (Sample questions: "Which of the following doesn't belong? spade, queen, king, ace; maple, leaf, elm"). There was no interview. I was issued a free pair of safety glasses, given a five-minute lecture on safety and plant safety rules, and told to report to work.

Along with some 2,700 other employees on the third work turn, I arrived at the sprawling suburban Detroit plant shortly after 3 p.m. and punched the time clock. Most of the men on the line were between 20 and 35 years old. Most wore sport shirts and slacks or green overalls. About a third were Negroes.

The windowless assembly line area inside the two-storey plant reminded me of a tunnel. Down the middle ran the assembly line. Overhead were fluorescent lights and conveyors carrying engines, fenders and other components. Tall racks and bins full of auto parts lined the sides. A narrow slit for the underbody installations stretched the length of the line.

At 3:30 p.m., the conveyor began moving, and work started on the assembly line. For the next three hours—until a relief man shouted at me to take a 20-minute break while he replaced me—I rarely spoke or was spoken to.

For a while, I concentrated hard to get each job done within the 90 seconds the moving car was in front of my work station without dropping the five-pound pneumatic wrench on my foot. Every third car on the line was a Continental, and required a slight variation from Thunderbird installation procedures.

Nevertheless, each task soon became a mind-deadening routine, and my thoughts turned to everything but cars. ("You just leave your brains at home and work out of habit", one experienced worker later advised me.) Sometimes, after many minutes of bending over and zeroing in on a moving target, I would step back and the line would appear to be stationary, while everything else seemed to be moving.

### Crouch, stretch, ache

I'm in fairly good physical shape, but I ached all over after each day's work on the line. At one station, I had to bend down into the engine compartment to bolt on the steering column. To install carpeting, I sat on the door frame with one foot dragging and drilled holes, then stretched out on my side under the instrument panel to fasten the carpet to the floor. Attaching steering wheels meant stretching through the open car window to stick the wheel on the column and bolt it down.

Nobody seemed to take any particular pride in his work. Some workers considered some of the parts shoddy. The kick-pads that I installed under instrument panels, for example, were made of relatively brittle plastic and sometimes broke off during installation. One workman told me that "over 400 of them broke off one month last winter".

One day when I was helping two men bolt steering columns in place, the columns on a dozen cars were mounted improperly by someone up the line, so we couldn't bolt them down and men further down the line couldn't attach the steering wheels. Such chainreactions often result from a slip-up, and regularly snarl the precision of the computer-controlled assembly line.

It was Clyde who first told me what to do if I made or discovered a mistake. "Get the next car and don't worry," he said. "They'll catch that one further down the line." When I spotted the white Thunderbird wearing a blue fender, another worker explained: "They'll paint it over in the repair shop. It's easier to catch it there than it is on the line."

### Catching defects

About 10 repairmen stationed at various points along the way catch and fix some minor defects right on the assembly line. But it's up to the 15 or 20 inspectors along the line to check each car thoroughly and route those with improperly installed parts into the plant's 100-man repair shop. One inspector was an inexperienced college student.

*continued on page 35*

# THE NORTH'S IN REVOLT!



by Milton Acorn

American Manager fellow came popeyed and leaky-mouthed into the office of the Cabinet Minister. "They've shut down my pulpwood plant!" he howled.

"Be specific," said the Cabinet Minister, "who did?" During the Manager's tormented pause, he shrugged. "Oh I know . . . the people did. How'd they do it?"

"They sent me insulting letters," said the American Manager. "Then they all came one day. They blocked up my outlet into the river . . . all that excess gunk just backed into the plant. They capped my chimney . . . soon everything was just flooded . . . with waste and choking with fumes. We had to stop."

"And the workers?" asked the Cabinet Minister.

"Didn't do a thing . . . laughed at it all . . . in fact, they helped!"

"And Manpower?"

"Say, how did you know? Manpower wasn't interested in my problem. Now all those fellows are just loafing around, collecting benefits . . . when they're unemployed because of their own sabotage."

"You told me," said the Cabinet Minister, "you said the people did it. That includes your workers. That includes the staff at Manpower. The pattern is familiar."

"The North is in revolt!" cried the Manager. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Shhhhhhhhh," said the Cabinet Minister, "my secretary might hear you . . . not that the papers will print it, or anyone will broadcast it . . . but we have to be careful. Just on principle."

"You mean you're just going to ignore it?" asked the Manager.

"Sure," said the Cabinet Minister (he had come well up in life and still had a plebeian manner of speech). "The North's in revolt . . . true. But the North's a big place . . . a few small communities scattered over millions of square miles. There's not much communication between different places. You get what I mean? As long as the North doesn't know it's in revolt. As long as each community thinks it's a local thing . . . you dig?"

The American Manager sat down. It sounded interesting. "Do you think it'll work?" (He too had come well up in life; had reverted to the plebeian language himself.) Then he looked urgent again. "What about my factory? What about my losses?"

Milton Acorn's latest collection of poetry, *I've Tasted My Blood*, came out in 1969 (Ryerson Press). He has a new collection, *Hundred Proof Earth*, to come.

"Oh, I'm sure there's a contingency fund for that," said the Cabinet Minister, "unless you can just write it off as a tax deduction. Maybe you can do both. Maybe you'll end up with a profit. As for your first question, it's worked with places a lot smaller than the North. . . Prince Edward Island, for instance."

The American Manager looked bewildered.

"A small province", explained the Cabinet Minister, larger than Rhode Island. About comparable to New Jersey or Delaware. It's actually an island, though in the Gulf . . . oh never mind," the Cabinet Minister concluded, seeing that the American Manager was not interested in Canadian geography. "In the 1850's Prince Edward Island was in revolt. It was a colony then. Wouldn't it have looked ridiculous—the whole British Empire fighting Prince Edward Island?"

"You mean they didn't move the troops in?" said the Manager.

"They had troops in," said the Cabinet Minister. "They moved them out."

"What did this watchamacallit Island do then?"

"What could they do? Proclaim independence? It was too small. Join the United States?"

The American Manager didn't say it but looked like he was about to ask, "why not"?

"Canada is made up entirely of various people who don't want to join the United States. That's about the only thing we have in common . . . even the reasons differ, when there's any reason."

The American Manager then started to argue. The Cabinet Minister just sat there and nodded, distantly listening, listening just to the tones of the words, however. He thought of writing a poem about the distant barking of alligators. Did alligators bark? Then the American Manager paused and looked expectant. The Cabinet Minister realized that the man had asked a question.

"What's that? Oh never mind . . . look, I've got to check the time. Don't happen to have my watch on? Look my friend. Don't worry . . . *c'est la vie* . . . that's French for 'that's life' . . . everything will come out right in the end. You'll be chopping down those trees, polluting that river, stinking up that air again twice as good. You'll go on making money, never stop making money, make more money—as long as nobody makes a fuss."

## A letter of resignation

# "I refuse to brainwash Canadian students"

by Gwen Matheson

This is my resignation from the American Studies course (Humanities 173) at Atkinson College in which I was to have been a tutorial leader under an American director during the coming term.

Up until the completion last spring of a three year period during which I was a part-time lecturer in the York English department and a part-time instructor in both the York Humanities department and Atkinson College, I have never complained about the courses to which I was assigned, including those in American Studies and those which included American material. And I have tried to fulfil my duties as a teacher in these courses, as I believe all of my directors will testify. (Previous to this I lectured at two Canadian universities and received letters of reference from the heads of their English departments.)

But I have finally reached a point where I am very disturbed about certain aspects of the York Humanities programme as well as all other programmes in both York and other Canadian universities. And therefore my resignation from Humanities 173 at Atkinson College is a protest. It is a protest for the following reasons:

1) I wish to protest against the over-emphasis on American Studies of all kinds as well as American attitudes and methods at York University and throughout Canada, while Canadian Studies and interests are still relatively speaking in a state of gross neglect. Therefore, I do not want to take any further part in what I regard as a kind of brainwashing, the effects of which I have had the misfortune to observe in my students during three years in the York Humanities and English departments. It is this disproportion constituting a form of cultural imperialism that I object to and not American Studies *per se*. American literature, in fact, has for some time been a secondary interest of mine next to my chosen specialty which is Canadian literature. (I have also taught in a variety of other courses and my third thesis is on Aldous Huxley, the British writer.) Although the American course in which I was to have taught this year is designed largely as a radical critique of the American scene and includes some of the best American forms of protest, I still do not want to take part in it. I believe it is more important for Canadian students to learn about ideas and writings of those who are making history and producing both literary and critical works in our own country than to concentrate the greater part of their attention on the intellectual climate and problems of the U.S.A. By this I am not implying that a knowledge of the latter is not also necessary and full of vital interest. It is simply a matter of priorities. Canadian students should also be more knowledgeable about the problems of Quebec and of the Canadian Indians than about Viet Nam and U.S.

*Editor's note:* We are publishing Gwen Matheson's letter of resignation from her position as a lecturer in English at York University, Toronto, because it is a significant document about the actual working conditions in our Americanized universities. Those Canadians who are serious about relating to their own country, have up to now had two choices: to succumb to the departmental directives and to knowingly mis-educate Canadian students, or to resign and lose their livelihoods. There is a third way, too: for the students to take up the battle and *insist* that they be taught relevant matters, and that they not be brainwashed into thinking that they are American citizens.

racial strife. And perhaps it is sometimes even more valuable for Canadians to view American problems from a Canadian point of reference rather than strictly according to American interpretations. (Ultimately a truly international world perspective must supercede all national ones. But the immediate concern of Canada is its survival as a separate entity from the U.S.A.)

2) Furthermore, I wish to protest against the fact that an excessive number of American and other non-Canadian academics are in positive positions of authority, such as those of course director, department head, and administrator when there is an increasing number of Canadians of equal qualifications (and often better qualifications with regard to their knowledge of the Canadian environment) who are at present either in part-time or junior positions if they are lucky or unable to find work at all if they are not. Some of these Americans and non-Canadians are no doubt both gifted and agreeable, some have been hired before the present crisis reached its height, and some others have made the decision to become Canadian citizens. But none of this alters the basic injustice or undesirability of the situation.

At the same time I am not suggesting an attack on those Americans, British citizens, and others who have already established themselves in our system and who are sincerely concerned about Canada. Let them stay and join us in citizenship and in our struggles for independence. I am only pointing out the grim fact that the proliferation of American courses at the expense of Canadian courses, coupled with American authority in our academic life could lead to a further influx from the U.S. to the neglect of Canadian training and talents. This has, in fact, already happened. In addition, I see no reason why those who have for idealistic or other reasons decided to leave or to renounce their country should have an easier time with regard to the academic market than qualified Canadians or Canadians who are perhaps having difficulties because of their political or other views within their own country.

. . . I wish to protest against the over-emphasis on American Studies of all kinds as well as American attitudes and methods at York University and throughout Canada, while Canadian Studies and interests are still relatively speaking in a state of gross neglect. Therefore, I do not want to take any further part in what I regard as a kind of brainwashing. . .

3) I wish to protest against the fact that I was put into a position where I was being forced into teaching an American course if I wanted to teach at York University at all (and not by the American director but by my own countrymen) even though I had more than once stated my strong interest in Canadian literature and Studies, my experience in this field, and my willingness either to conduct or to assist in a course of this nature. Last year I even submitted an outline of a course in Canadian Studies that I would like to teach, including names of other York teachers who had offered their assistance in this project.

When I finally reached the point [recently] where I felt I could not stomach another year of collaborating in the Americanization of York students (even for the much needed salary), I thought I saw a way out being presented when a tutor in the single Canadian Studies course being offered in the General Education programme at Atkinson volunteered to trade places with me in the American course. Consequently, since she was teaching two classes in the Canadian course I could have taught these two classes rather than my assigned two in the American one. Further, since another tutor had switched from the Canadian to the American one it looked as if there could be no objection to my making a change also. I even assisted at the first meeting of the Canadian course in the event that a switch could be arranged and also because the Canadian director of the Canadian course was delayed in returning to Atkinson. But when I sent a written request for the change to the director of Humanities at Atkinson his answer was in the negative. Subsequent talks with both him and the Canadian course director revealed to me no valid reason for this refusal.

It is true that my observance of the Canadian course director's general approach and reading list made me realize that I would disagree with him on some very basic issues, although at the same time I had also hoped to learn something from him. But given the present situation in Canadian universities, I believe it is better in some cases to work with Canadians or Canadian material we might sometimes disagree with than with Americans or even some American material that we might happen to find more congenial. In this connection I would suggest the possible curtailment of the powers given to course directors to choose their tutors in an arbitrary manner that could be determined by factors other than the more relevant ones. But this, I realize, is controversial. The main point is that there should be room enough in any humanities programme for more than one course and consequently more than one main approach to Canadian Studies.

4) In addition, I protest against what seems to me the cynical assumption that I would teach in the American course just because I am in financial need, even though

for the reasons already indicated it is against my principles and not presently part of my main intellectual interest. In doing such a thing I would not only have been unfair to myself but also to the students in the course as well as to the course director. I do not believe that anyone should teach just for money, although unfortunately the present exploitative nature of the university system often forces people, particularly women and those in junior positions (often synonymous), into this form of intellectual prostitution.

5) And more generally, I protest against the fact that during my three years of working part-time in both English and Humanities at York University I have been unable to obtain a full-time position although I have frequently made it known that I was available to teach in either or both of these fields at both York day school and Atkinson College, as well as at Glendon College. (I have, in fact, been applying to York University for the last five or six years.) The reasons given for these rejections have been, in my opinion, not satisfactory. Furthermore, I received no offer of a renewal of my contract as a part-time lecturer in the York English department (chiefly in Canadian literature), and my request to continue as a part-time instructor in the York day school Humanities course in Canadian Culture and Society was ignored by the course director with no reason given at all.

I feel that my Curriculum Vitae (indicating degrees, experience and publications) should give me at least an equal chance with some others in the competition for positions. And I have received constant assurances that there are no complaints about my over-all performance as a teacher, as well as some more positive comments.

I am not making any claims to being either a model of perfection as a university teacher or an "expert" as yet in my chosen field of Canadian literature (although I have taken a number of courses in the latter and taught it for three years). Like many Canadians, including academics interested in Canadian Studies, I have been affected to some extent by the deprivation resulting from the indifference or contempt that a colonised country tends to have towards its own heritage. (See the 1968 OISE report, *What Culture? What Heritage?*) All I wanted to do at York University was to make a more effective contribution with what training and knowledge I do have, and by so doing enlarge both. And this was another reason for my desire to teach at least in the Canadian Studies course at Atkinson since no other opportunity had been offered. Canadian students and teachers will have to learn together. At present I am working towards my fourth degree in English Literature at the University of Toronto—the "union card" Ph.d. degree. (That this degree together with the "publish or perish" policy have been turned into the *sine qua non* for acceptance and

. . . I wish to protest against what I regard as a central power structure at York University; based on American domination, the remnants of British Imperialism, and the Canadian Colonial mentality; dominated by male chauvinism; allied with Big Business and Continentalist aims; presenting an impenetrable barrier to those with differing points of view. . .

advancement in our universities I attribute in large part to the Americanization process.) I certainly do not regard the mere acquisition of degrees as necessarily any sign of merit. (It can sometimes be the mark of an idiot.) But I do want to point out that I have devoted a large chunk of my life to obtaining my present three degrees (now held for over three years) under the apparently illusory notion that the years of study and research they represent might be considered as qualifications for my career of university teaching. The fact that these degrees were all obtained from Canadian universities (Toronto and McGill) could, I am afraid, put me at a disadvantage in the eyes of some non-Canadian or Canadian department heads and administrators who might have the mentality of the coloniser or of the colonial respectively.

In addition to applying for a full-time position at York last year I also applied to about twenty-eight other universities in North America, naming my chief interest as Canadian literature, although I also mentioned experience in other fields, such as American, Contemporary and Modern British, African and Commonwealth, General Survey courses, Humanities, etc. Although I would have preferred the position of assistant professor I was willing to settle for the junior position of lecturer. However, I received no offers from any of the universities applied to.

For those who might think that my experience in this regard was unique I would like to point out that it is happening all across Canada, as will be increasingly revealed when more investigation is done into the problem. A Canadian woman of my acquaintance with a Ph.d., teaching experience, and publications, told me recently that she applied last year to sixty universities in both Canada and the U.S.A. with no success. A friend of hers, a Canadian woman working towards her Ph.d. degree, couldn't get a job in Canada two years ago with the result that she took one that was offered at a well-known American university. But although she is well liked there she expects to have to leave at the end of this year because of the two-year visa time limit. (Restrictions like this plus the fact that the American population is 200 million as compared to our 20 million serve to point up the incredible injustice of the whole situation.) The president of the Women's Canadian Historical Society (from who I rent my flat) told me last month about the case of a Canadian Ph.d. in Anthropology who is now working in a shoe store. And at a party last year I met a Canadian professor who had a friend with a Ph.d. in physics and chemistry and a high academic record who could not find a teaching position anywhere in Canada. These are only a few of the many cases that will come to light eventually.\*

\* Editor's note: See my study, *Who Needs the Ph D.?* Op. cit.

6) At this point I would like to put forward certain facts from which anyone may deduce what he or she pleases. The decline in my status at York and the various rejections mentioned in this letter have been more or less parallel with my increasing concern over the de-Canadianization of our universities, specifically as a member of the Montreal Committee which investigated this issue and which first met on May 17 of 1969. Since then I have made known my opposition to Americanization in conversations with colleagues, at department and other meetings, and in the Correspondence columns of Toronto newspapers. In addition, over the last year or so my support of the Women's Liberation Movement has become stronger.

I am not saying that there is any connection between these facts. I honestly do not know whether there is or not, or if there is, to what extent. And I will admit that when I was refused a full-time position in 1969, after being practically assured of one when I joined the English department in 1968, the intellectual convictions that I already held on Canadian independence and Women's Liberation were given an additional emotional impetus. The whole process could be seen as complex and circular, but not for all that, unworthy of notice. If it is all a coincidence, it is an interesting one.

7) Also at this point I do not think it irrelevant to protest against the complete male domination that exists both at York and all other universities, in forms that are both incredibly gross and extremely subtle and complex. This has been proved factually and statistically by Dr. Pauline Jewett and three other academic women in their 1969 Brief, which, incidentally, was not accepted by C.A.U.T. [Canadian Association of University Teachers]. And it has been proved to me in my daily experience and observations. The number of women in senior or authoritative positions at York is minimal compared with the number of men in these positions. And those who gleefully point to the occasional woman who has "made it" only further illustrate the situation. I feel that discrimination is particularly directed towards women who commit the intolerable sin of having strong opinions and expressing them, of having the unorthodox desire to be treated as people first and as females second, and of daring to stand up for their rights when they are being trampled on.

Personally, I would prefer to have a full-time position or to have an equal chance at promotion with a male colleague than to have that same male colleague rush "chivalrously" to open a door for me. I can open doors and light cigarettes for myself, but unfortunately I cannot eat without earning the money to buy food.

8) Finally, I wish to protest against what I regard as a

Being a great university, the University of Toronto Graduate Department of English has a great list of courses which it offers graduate students. Graduate students may choose in 1970-71 from 106 courses. Of the 106 courses *only one* is in Canadian literature. Areas of concentration for the Department are the Renaissance and Nineteenth Century British. But a student may take about nine courses in the British Eighteenth Century. A student may take nine courses specifically concerned with U.S. literature and about six or seven more in which U.S. literature would be present significantly. A Canadian student wishing to study his own literature in the largest department in Canada is literally prevented from doing so. Faculty members will leap to their feet, saying *nothing* prevents Canadians from studying Canadian literature if they want to do it somehow. Nothing does prevent a student, of course, except a Department which offers only one course out of 106, and which clearly considers Canadian literature unnecessary and which treats it, in the course structure, as almost non-existent. The Graduate Department of English at the University of Toronto, and its Chairman, Millar MacLure, do not consider Canadian literature is in anyway ill-served, because they are cringing colonialists who believe Canadian literature parochial and unimportant. The truth is that most of them know nothing about Canadian literature. Their ignorance, however, is a function of their contempt for Canada, Canadians, and Canadian culture. From: Robin Mathews, *The Graduate Department of English, University of Toronto: A Study of Cringing Colonialism.*

central power structure at York University: based on American domination, the remnants of British Imperialism, and the Canadian Colonial Mentality; dominated by male chauvinism; allied with Big Business and Continentalist aims; presenting an impenetrable barrier to those with differing points of view; and exerting a subtle and sometimes not so subtle influence on students, faculty, course content, administration, and every aspect of university life.

It was then against all of the above-mentioned factors that I was protesting when I dialled Atkinson College the other day and informed my American course director's secretary that I would not be in that evening or any other evening to teach the Humanities course in American Studies. This action was the final result of experiences that have been accumulating over the last few years. (I freely admit that the action was of course irregular and not strictly according to the "rules".)

At this point in the Canadian university situation and in the Canadian situation generally I saw no alternative to my decision. The straight facts are that I am not being allowed to teach in a regular Canadian course at York University (with the exception of my small Elective classes), even though I have expressed the strong desire to do so, in the English department, in the York day school Humanities programme, and at Atkinson College. Instead, the only course in which I am allowed to teach is one in American Studies.

Consequently, as a member of two colonized groups, Canadians and women, I believe that the time for "niceness" and "moderation" and adherence to technicalities is past if we want to achieve our liberation. And all types of liberation reinforce one another.

When I called up my American course director's secretary I also said good-bye to \$1,850.00, the sum I would have been paid for teaching in the course. Since I have decided to spend most of my time this year completing my fourth degree at University of Toronto graduate school and since I am already in debt, my financial situation is not going to be without difficulties. Although I am happy about teaching my two College Elective courses at York because under that system is there real freedom for both student and discussion leader, yet the stipend is minimal. I will probably have to try and obtain a position doing supply teaching in the Toronto high schools, something I also had to do a year ago when my attempts to obtain a full-time position at York University were, as usual, unsuccessful.

But I would prefer not to teach at all or to return to the part-time waitress position of my undergraduate days than to work under conditions where I suspect that I am being penalized for my opinions, where I share in the discrimination suffered by my sex, and where as a colonized Canadian I am being compelled into the systematic Americanization of the students who are my colonised country-

men and my doubly colonised countrywomen. Perhaps some day if a truly adequate Canadian Studies Programme with room for a variety of approaches is developed at York and elsewhere there will be a place for the many Canadian academics who share my situation. Meanwhile, plans for more Canadian course content and a search for the best Canadian talent (both native and naturalised) should be priorities. (And non-Canadians are invited to assist.)

Over the past year I have often considered making a public protest about my own particular case. But I was not yet completely sure of my justification in doing so, and besides I thought I would prefer just to concentrate quietly on completing my third thesis rather than become too involved in controversial issues. And this is what I would have done if I had been allowed to teach in the Canadian Studies course at Atkinson rather than being forced into an American one. My experiences at Atkinson, however, were the last straw. All I know is that I can't take any more. I am fed up to the teeth!

Now that I am sticking my neck out, I know that I can expect the various axes to begin to fall. It is part of the technique of the colonisers and of their collaborators, the colonial elite, to make the colonised feel inadequate and dependent. Then when individual members of the oppressed group rebel against this, they are accused of seemingly self-assertion and "bad form" at the least and of many other things at the worst: they are "rebellious" (youth), "uppity" (negroes), "unfeminine" (women), "chauvinistic" (Canadians). But I refuse to be intimidated by this tactic. I do not accept the power structure's evaluation of myself, of other unemployed Canadian academics, or of the Canadian students who are apparently supposed to regard their Americanization as a form of enlightenment.

On the other hand, perhaps those of us who are protesting can expect the continued Olympian indifference of an Establishment that prefers drifting with the *status quo* to facing facts. My experiences with students over the last few years, however, make me feel that there is still much hope for York University. This is the main factor that has kept me from despair. Remedies must be sought by them as well as by all concerned Canadians, and those of any nationality who support Canada's struggle for independence.

What I have said in this letter has a much wider application than to my particular case. I am protesting not only for all Canadian academics and graduate students who have been unjustly discriminated against or overlooked in the job market, but also for all Canadians who desire the survival of their country, for all women all the time and everywhere, and for all people in the world who resist oppression and imperialism in every one of their many pernicious forms—cultural, political, economic, sexual, personal—and who merely want the right to fulfil their potential and to run their own lives in their own place.

**The fallacy of community control** *cont'd from page 17*  
of the same (i.e. *more* busywork) rather than in something qualitatively different. (A handful of working class people will continue participating and will be proudly exhibited by the middle class elements. They are, of course, merely token representatives of the class, and become, through their participation in middle class oriented organizations, removed from their own class. This same phenomenon takes place in the labour unions, where capable rank and filers are "promoted" into leadership positions. Through association with middle class oriented bureaucrats they cease to relate to their own class.)

These types of organizations become substitutes for aldermen, as is proven, for instance, by the record of the Riverdale Community Organization in Toronto, a much-lauded "militant" organization, consisting of about fifteen tiny block or area organizations, half-a-dozen churches, various social agencies, political riding organizations and service clubs. They list eighty achievements during a period of a year, all of them without exception at the neighbourhood management level:

"Post office department installed a mailbox in Blake Street development."

"Additional street lighting on busy street [provided] by Department of Public Works."

"Metro Police agreed to and conducted speed checks in Eastern-Logan area."

"Parks and Recreation Department installs fences on the North side of Allen-Boulton parkette."

"City Property Department cleared weeds at north end of Ashdale."

And on and on it goes with 75 additional items. One could forgive this collection of trivia, if the 81st item would have been: "provided and popularized a class analysis of the operation of the power structure in Toronto", or "started educating the community about the role of the working class in Canadian history". Not only is the Riverdale organization *not* educating, but it announces proudly that the organization is not political—as if such a non-political animal existed anywhere. What they actually mean is that they will do their utmost to keep the *working class*—the actual political majority—apolitical, while the middle class and the ruling class, which constitute a tiny minority in the country, definitely act politically, i.e. they advance their own interests aggressively. (For a detailed class analysis of Canada, see "Minority rule: a study of the Canadian ruling class", in a later issue of TRANSFORMATION). Through organizations such as the Riverdale organization, the working class is going to be led into insidious "participatory democracy" games, while the powers-that-be continue their total control over all aspects of the lives of the working class.

The notion that the working class is a babe in arms that has to be taught—carefully, slowly—to walk, by holding the hand of the liberal middle class/adult, only reveals the colossal ignorance and arrogance of the middle class elements in action. What they are in fact dealing with is a sleeping giant, who has to be woken up from its slumber. When awake, it walks and talks without instruction and guidance and when erect, it stands so

tall that the "helping hand" of the well-meaning, incompetent middle class elements won't be able to reach to the knees of the giant, let alone its hand. Waking up the giant is what political education is all about.

It cannot be emphasized enough how different the two approaches are: the babe-in-arms approach patronizes, talks down to, leads the working class into little parlor games and dances—and to defeat; whereas the second approach is direct, is conscious of the tremendous potentials in the working class to affect fundamental changes, and is equally aware of limitations in both the present consciousness of the working class and in its current ability to act collectively and effectively in its own interest.

Organizationally the differences are equally significant. A neighbourhood organization that would operate in the interest of the working class, would behave something like this: it would make sure that leadership at an executive level would largely consist of men and women with working class background; it would introduce leadership training at every level of operation, thus preventing a dependency on often unreliable middle class elements; it would introduce political education around specific issues, i.e. the class nature of issues would be spelled out clearly, and the connection between various issues would be established—thus moving the residents beyond neighbourhood issues, enabling them to connect with working class elements elsewhere; direct feedback as well as grassroots control would be built into the organization, thus preventing, from the beginning, the possibility of the leadership becoming distant from the grassroots; regular meetings would be held to establish this connection, to get new ideas about everyday practice, and to involve the membership in various tasks; these meetings would be well organized, neither bureaucratically run or chaotic, thus enabling the membership to articulate its will without hindrance. In such organizations there would be no defeats, only temporary setbacks, from which one would learn important lessons in strategy and tactics. (One lesson, that the working class knows already, but which middle class elements are unable to learn, is that you have to organize for numbers, i.e. to create a mass base. It is not enough to have a dynamic organization in one neighbourhood; it has to spread all over the city and operate from a unified working class perspective.)

In overview, the concept of community control, as advocated by middle class elements is for all practical purposes a useless one in English Canada. It is not applicable to neighbourhoods with a mixture of social classes, since no community is possible between different social classes, until the middle class elements acquire a working class perspective (politically, not sociologically). Such community control is not applicable to immigrant communities since these are not nations, nor to the working class in Canada, since it is presently not sufficiently politically educated to have a united perspective.

**The working class concept of community control, on the other hand, of majority rule, of working class power, is the one that has to be advocated and towards which people have to be organized, in the neighbourhoods and in the working places. It has to be advanced to oppose the present "community control" of a minority class ruling over the vast majority of people.**

### Why community control?

Why then has the demand for community control been raised, when the case for it is so hopeless? The answer to

that is that the community control advocates have been predominantly liberal radicals, who are ignorant of and/or deny a class analysis. They are so thoroughgoing in their ignorance/denial that they fit perfectly Henri Lefebvre's description of the middle class "as the class that denies the existence of classes" (*The Sociology of Marx*, New York, Vintage, p.92). Consequently they have no adequate overall theory and end up creating instant "theories" in the course of their activities, theories that are doomed from the beginning.

Much of the prevalent community control rhetoric is, in addition, actually borrowed from Black and Puerto Rican communities in the U.S. (typical of the prevailing colonial mentality!), without a thorough examination of how circumstances, say, amongst the Black community in Harlem are *different* from a working class neighbourhood in English Canada. Both are oppressed and exploited, it goes without saying, but political education and consciousness raising has taken place for the last half-a-dozen years amongst the Blacks, whereas it has not even started amongst the working class in English Canada. Removed from its organic context, in this case Harlem, the concept becomes meaningless on Canadian soil.

How is it then that the liberal radical element has taken the leadership in the neighbourhood organizations, although it is singularly unqualified to do so? The answer to that is simple: the left in English Canada has been so thoroughly alienated from the people, that they have not for decades dealt with the day-to-day issues affecting the working class. While the left has been busy waving flags (the Vietnamese, the Cuban, the Chinese) and pushing meaningless slogans, demonstrating in front of empty buildings or attempting for ever to take over the NDP, a leadership vacuum has been created at the neighbourhood level, as well as all the other levels. This is the vacuum that the liberal radicals have filled and will keep filling until there is a healthy, non-sectarian, non-colonial minded, non-bureaucratized and theoretically capable working class movement in this country.

### The organizers have to get educated

What then is the strategy for social change at the neighbourhood level, at the present time? I have to disappoint a number of people who are probably waiting to hear an easy answer, in the form of a detailed practical program (and the "correct line"), that they can undertake immediately. Frankly, I would rather see the middle class people, anxious to organize the working class, take up stamp collecting or knitting, than go into neighbourhoods with nothing but good intentions and fantasies. I would like to see a definite moratorium on the systematic disorganization of the working class, by people who have not even got a rudimentary knowledge of the history and sociology of the working class, and its political theory.

The primary task for people who are eager to organize the working class into one thing or another is, therefore, to get educated themselves on the level of working class political theory. There is a tendency amongst activists who have lived this long without theory and who have acted more or less spontaneously on various issues, to abhor theory as "academic" and a "waste of time". I contend, however, that theory is most practical since it makes it possible for one to understand complex phenomena and act effectively towards them. To have a theory is to have a workable methodology, and this is what both the liberal radicals and the alienated left (old and new) are sorely missing.

Only a non-thinking person will conclude that what is advocated here is for people to withdraw from social and

political interaction, lock themselves up with a dozen or so choice books, and eventually emerge like a butterfly from a cocoon, as theoretically capable leaders. Nothing is further from the truth. The theory has to be combined with one's present practice, *whatever and wherever one is at*. If one is an educator or interested in fundamental changes in the educational system, one should be able to work with other interested people to produce a thoroughgoing critique of the schools from a working class perspective (*not* from the perspective of the liberal middle class or the so-called "poor"); and this critique should be made available to the working class (and *not* circulated exclusively amongst fellow middle class radicals and the so-called left, as it presently is the case). If one is involved in the housing question—as an architect, economist, planner or what have you—these people should be able to provide an equally thorough going class analysis of housing and urban living problems: both the reasons for the housing shortage and an explanation to its miserable quality.

Similarly there should be a class analysis of health facilities and the medical profession and other related issues, e.g. nutrition and the food industry. At every level of competence, professional training and interest, the tasks are at this point quite simple: *educate the working class to deal with its situation in its totality; provide a scientific analysis (class analysis) that makes meaningful short-term action and long term total transformation possible*. These are serious, demanding, long term undertakings, which lack glamour and which won't create headlines and instant controversies. But these are the very tasks that have to be done if the working class is to be organized in its own interest.

### Where to start

The education of the middle class intellectuals and professionals can start right now. The following works are extremely helpful to those middle class elements (including middle class oriented workers) who want to take a critical look at themselves and who understand the necessity of getting oriented towards the majority, the working class:

Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Fritz Pappenheim, *The alienation of Modern Man*, Modern Reader Paperbacks, 1959.

Cristopher Caudwell, "Pacifism and violence: a study in bourgeois ethics," from his *Studies in a Dying Culture*, 1938. Available as a reprint from TRANSFORMATION, 50 cents, free to subscribers on request.

These books describe eloquently the nature of middle class ideology and present an accurate portrait of the liberal middle class elements in search for "solutions" to major contradictions in the present day capitalist society. They provide a real opportunity for self criticism on the part of sincere elements of that class, and a possibility to rid themselves of an inaccurate and dysfunctional world view.

Two other extremely readable books, will serve as introductions to the history and politics of the working class:

Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Panther Books. \$1.25.

Jurgen Kuczynski, *The Rise of the Working Class*, World University Library, McGraw-Hill, 1967.



**The alienation of radical theatre** *Cont'd from page 19*  
of the group that it had been the greatest experience of his life. The audience didn't stir during the entire performance; not a giggle to a joke; not even the usual rhythmic swaying, in time with the music—until the play ended. And then there would be standing ovations that never seemed to stop; the people flooded the stage, wanting to shake hands and express how right it had all been; everybody overjoyed and beaming—much to the relief of some of the actors who had gotten worried during the performance. Talk about audience participation!

As I am writing this, workers are on strike in different places in Canada, and we don't have a play to bring—much less a theatre group or a playwright even contemplating such a work.

So what it boils down to is this: Artists working in radical theatre will have to reconsider whether they want to be part of a movement aimed at the socialist transformation of the entire society or whether they are merely enamoured with their own personal liberation from oppression. If they choose the first, a whole new creative world will open up: the audience is there; the material for billions of plays (up and down the power spiral) is there—all the experiences of working class life, the farce and the tragedy of it all. And the scope for action after the play not even entered into yet!

*Rose-Marie Larsson has been involved with theatre in her native Sweden, in Germany and now in Canada.*

#### **Editorial** *cont'd from page 10*

whereby the conscious elements in the middle class can start working towards a programme of total liberation of the working class, since only through the liberation of the oppressed majority will the middle class itself be free of its impossible role.

At the same time we will focus on the nature of work, as it is presently experienced by most people. The very texture of that life-destroying experience needs to be described over and over again, to counteract the prevalent mystification of work. Labour, performed under the very noses of the middle class, remains totally abstract to them, and the experiences of the workers themselves are not validated by any existing media. Truck drivers, elevator operators, cleaning women, hospital aids, postal workers, skilled and unskilled workers, workers in offices and factories, who are reduced to mere objects and beasts of burden in the present system, will have their testimonies printed in these pages.

TRANSFORMATION, very briefly, has come into being to challenge the present activists on the scene of social change, to critically examine their overall orientation and everyday practice. This criticism, however, has to be based on a class analysis of the capitalist society in its multitude of manifestations (economics, politics, art, literature, music, family life, education, media, etc.), since only a class analysis can be the basis for an adequate theory of social change.

It should be clear from the above, that TRANSFORMATION is not just another academic left wing publication, produced to swell the heads of those who already know too much but cannot act. Neither is ours a forum for "all different opinions on the left", since such a mish-mash would only further contribute towards the present insufferable chaos and confusion in the left and activist circles. We hope to be something altogether different: a positive and practical alternative to various failing practices, and a direction towards the building of an authentic Canadian left, which would deal with the Canadian realities and have a base in the working class.

The building of such a movement is the primary task for those presently involved in social change. It is a five—ten year program, that we have to undertake right now.

#### **Life on the line** *cont'd from page 27*

I saw one standing with his eyes closed. When a workman pointed out a faulty engine, the inspector tagged the defect, then closed his eyes again. Once I spotted a loose steering wheel and told an inspector. He said he had just checked that wheel and "found it tight." But he double-checked and admitted, "You were right—it was loose."

I saw a loose steering column fall off a Thunderbird when an inspector checked it. Later he told me that before lunch he had "only missed marking up three loose steering columns which is pretty good since 80% of them were going through loose yesterday." Another inspector farther down the line spotted the three loose columns.

An inspector who had five things to check on each car told me: "There isn't nearly enough time to do all the inspections. I'm supposed to check shock absorbers, but I haven't had a chance to look at one in a month." Another inspector jokingly said he inspects a car trunk just closely enough "to make sure there's no dead foreman in there."

#### **A "slow" pace**

Because Wixom builds luxury cars priced to sell from \$4,000 to over \$7,300, the assembly line moves at what, for the auto industry, is considered a slow production pace of about 40 cars an hour. Some other luxury cars are built at a faster rate. General Motors Corp.'s Cadillac assembly line rolls out 50 cars an hour, and Chrysler Corp. builds about 55 Chryslers and Imperials an hour. Lower priced cars such as Fords, Chevrolets and Plymouths usually come off the line at a rate of up to 65 cars an hour.

That can seem like breakneck speed to a weary worker on the assembly line. The speed of the line, in fact, has been a major cause of half a dozen local strikes by United Auto Workers Union members at other auto assembly plants in the past few years.

Even Wixom's pace seemed fast to me. When my 20-minute break started at 6:30 each night, I staggered to the pop machine to buy a cold drink. Then I looked for someplace to sit and rest. There aren't many places to sit in the plant. My favourite spot was atop a cart loaded with big white laundry sacks full of dirty coveralls, a place where I could stretch out.

Sometimes a few workers would talk and joke during their breaks. Foremen and other supervisors were the butt of many jokes—particularly one balding supervisor who was referred to as "Khrushchev." But the assemblers actually got along well with the foremen, who worked hard themselves and generally were patient and polite when correcting workmen's mistakes. Supervisors insisted on informality. When I called one "sir" he quickly told me: "That isn't necessary around here."

#### **Scramble for lunch**

After my relief period, I spent another hour and 10 minutes on the line. Then at 7:30 p.m. the conveyors stopped, and the scramble for lunch started. There wasn't time to wash the grease off my hands or pull the slivers of glass fibre insulation out of my arms before eating.

Usually lunch periods were staggered, but sometimes the day's production schedule was arranged so that all



who have become desensitized to the real messages of these books.

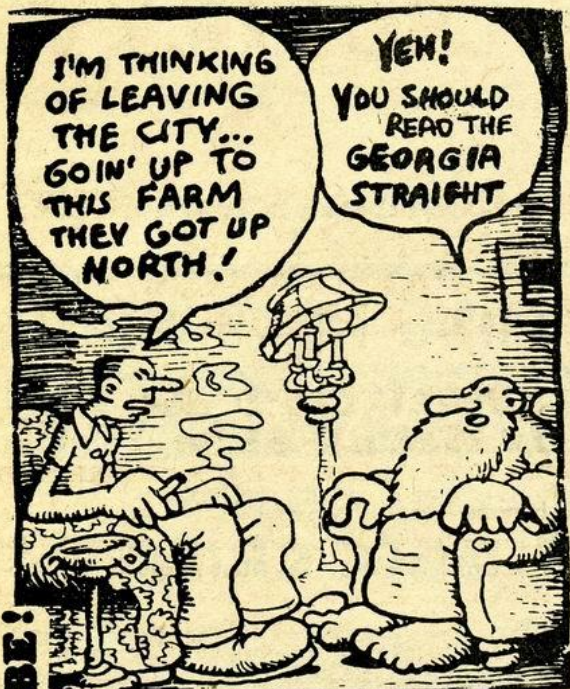
Take, for instance, the old woman Peg, who was so casually thrown into the water by her neighbours and drowned. Why not have it this way (if you have to have it)?:

*"There was an old woman, her name it was Peg.  
She'd hurt her poor head and she wore a cork leg.  
Her neighbours all helped her when she fetched water;  
And took her to see her little granddaughter."*

and:

*Little Miss Muffet  
Sat on a tuffet  
Eating her curds and whey  
Along came a spider  
And sat down beside her  
And frightened Miss Muffet away—  
amused our all day.*

Through the same rewriting principle, kings and queens become ordinary men and women; maids, so omnipresent



**FULL YEAR \$9.00**  
**HALF YEAR \$5.00**

OR BY CARRIER!  
PHONE 688-3686 FOR  
MORE INFORMATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

YEAR

1/2 YEAR

SUBSCRIPTION

RENEWAL

**GEORGIA STRAIGHT**  
**56A POWELL ST**  
**VANCOUVER 4 B.C.**

**SUBSCRIBE!**

**CANADA**

in the rhymes, become friends and equals, sudden deaths and wanton violence vanish, to be replaced with affection and communal caring. Defeats can easily be turned into victories, negatives into positives.

The rest of the fairy tales and popular children's books require similar transformation, if they are to be salvaged at all. Popular revolutions can easily take place by the "simple peasants" and "swineherds" disposing of their fat and self-satisfied rulers, and creating a different order altogether; the princesses can at last get up and speak their minds about the immense boredom and futility of their lives, and leave their palaces and princes for a richer, more interesting and more challenging existence.

The darling Little Red Hen, who from generation to generation has planted the grain of wheat all by herself, in utter solitude—after vainly seeking co-operation from other animals—is going to find an altogether different response. *Everybody* is going to want to help at every stage of the effort, until finally the bread is baked and a magnificent communal feast is created around it.

Little Choo-Choo Train, who goes on an adventure despite warnings from older and wiser trains, and is consequently (of course!) humiliated, will also have a different experience. *Everybody* is going to wish him good luck; he will go through pleasant and unpleasant experiences, and when he returns he has a lot to tell everybody. Trains and other creatures from far and wide will come and hear his story. When he finishes his tale, another little train can be seen to take off into the horizon.

The popular tales can easily be rewritten, with humour and affection, and they should be put out in *cheap* popular editions to reach the vast majority of children and parents in this country. We invite our readers to rewrite the mythology we have become so sentimentally attached to (Goldilocks, Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White, etc.) and which therefore cannot totally be discarded. But if we cannot get rid of them, we can at least transform them. A collection of these re-told tales will be published by TRANSFORMATION. This is definitely an interim solution, it should be remembered, leading up to the most important task: that of writing completely new and different literature.

4) New books have to be written immediately, to counteract the moralizing pulp that is presently disguised as children's literature. We need books on the experience of children from working class families, depicting the everyday drama and struggle in the lives of ordinary people. Stories of menacing landlords and picket lines of striking workers, both truthfully told and without an ounce of exaggeration, are more wonderful than the most elaborate fantasies of witches and dragon-slayers—and both phenomena are totally excluded from books written for children. Those few books that attempt to deal with work, are riddled with fantasy and idealism and refuse to deal truthfully with the present class society.

We need books about little boys and girls where the core issues of male and female liberation, of developing into pro-life, self-regulating, communal people, are presented in an honest and attractive way, and that also deal with the problems we will have in achieving our goals.

We need books on the rich experience of children in a communal setting (including the heroic struggle against city bylaws threatening communal living in the cities!). We need books where nature is loved for its own sake and not for being *human* underneath it all, and where the issue of pollution, for instance, is simultaneously discussed in a realistic, non-anxiety creating fashion (a class analysis of the reasons for pollution rather than the usual doomsday at-

mosphere of the ecological catastrophe advocates). We need books that deal honestly with the complexities of family life in our present society, with the fact that some people separate, that some people have children without getting married, that often both parents work, that people fight and argue with each other under pressures, and what the reasons for these pressures are, and so on. These books we intend to publish.

It should be made equally clear that what we *don't* need is propaganda, in this case *left* propaganda for children. The truth itself is effective, it does not have to be abstracted, reduced, exaggerated or simplified, to the extent that it would then create the same impact of simplification and mystification as the prevailing children's literature does.

One illustration might make this point clear. In the latest issue of *This Magazine is About Schools* (Fall 1970), a radical magazine on education, a booklet, written by "an American radical mother for her six year old daughter" is reprinted. Titled, *What will you be when you grow up?* it is a genuine attempt to explain the struggle against oppression in all parts of the world. But it fails miserably, since it reduces a most concrete and at the same time complex phenomenon of capitalism and imperialism, into simple minded sloganeering about "fighting imperialism and American bosses", without any effort to explain to the child what imperialism or the bosses are, and how they affect the lives of ordinary people. Text and photographs relate almost exclusively to the military aspect of the struggle; there are guns and raised fists on every page, there are references to "oppressed people", "revolution" and to "victory", without any concrete meaning given to any of these. On the final page there is the ultimate message: a little child (Algerian) dressed in a military outfit and carrying a rifle. The text above it says: "And we must all learn to fight".

The story is in no way different from the fantasy ridden fairy tales that we have criticized. It has replaced the familiar figures with new ones: imperialism and bosses (bad) are locked in combat with the Vietnamese, the Brown People, etc. (good). How is a child to perceive imperialism in this presentation except as something "evil" that he, personally, has to fight with guns. Is it symbolic, is it real? Is he supposed to get up and find a gun and go and kill a "boss" (or "off a pig"), who perhaps runs the corner store? Will children with their guns overcome "imperialism and bosses"? How? How? (Mother, what is imperialism? You are too young to understand it, honey, but it's bad and you have to fight it.)

Propaganda, *right and left*, is the very opposite of truth, and an anathema to a scientific understanding of the world. We have to get rid of it everywhere, including in children's books, and not re-introduce it with new excuses. The nature of capitalism and imperialism, as well as the ongoing wars, *can and ought* to be explained to children, but in ways that will equip them to deal with it conceptually and in practice.

In conclusion, the reconstruction of a new society and a new man will have to take place everywhere, in every aspect of our existence. Children's books, with their all-pervasive influence are just one step in the total battle against the falsehoods and lies around us.

Send ideas, suggestions, new stories, old stories rewritten as well as general comments, to TRANSFORMATION, Children's Literature Project.



LITERATURE! LITERATURE! LITERATURE!

Cristopher Caudwell's *Pacifism and violence: a study of bourgeois ethics*, is available from TRANSFORMATION. Free to subscribers on request, 50 cents to non-subscribers.

Other literature mentioned in the articles is available from the SCM Bookroom, 339 Bloor Street W., Toronto 5, Ontario. Add 15 cents per book for mailing.



COMING NEXT MONTH

NEW CANADA

Special on the  
QUEBEC CRISIS

For the first time--the real story  
of what happened

*New Canada* is the anti-imperialist monthly newspaper that reports on the struggle for independence and socialism—in the trade union movement, in school and universities and communities across the land.

Also in the February issue

- *The plight of prairie farmers* by John Warnock
- *A new stage in the Canadian liberation struggle* by Gary Perly
- *An analysis of the auto pact*
- *Articles on the labour front across the country.*

Subscription is just \$2 a year (12 issues) payable to:

NC PRESS,  
Box 6106, Station A,  
Toronto, Ontario.

# TRANSFORMATION

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SOCIAL CHANGE  
P.O. Box 6179, Terminal A, Toronto 1, Ontario

Subscription rates include occasional reprints and pamphlets.

Individuals:  
..... 1 year for \$5.00  
..... 2 years for \$9.00  
Institutions:  
..... 1 year for \$10.00

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

**SUBSCRIBE NOW!**

*Thanks to our advance subscribers for making this  
issue possible*

What's happening

in midtown Toronto?

**toronto  
citizen**

The alternate voice for news, politics, entertainment  
and the arts.

I would like to subscribe to the TORONTO CITIZEN  
for 12 issues at \$1.80 for 26 issues at \$2.90

Name.....

Address.....

TORONTO CITIZEN, 56 Esplanade St. East,  
Toronto 1, Ontario 863-0030

Are All Americans in Canada  
Agents of U. S. Imperialism?

**NOT IF THEY READ  
THE AMERICAN  
EXPATRIATE  
IN CANADA**

- news of the world resistance movement
- views of "new Canadians" about the north country "fair"
- best letters section in Canada



Ask for it at your bookstore,  
or SUBSCRIBE!  
\$3 for 9 issues, \$5 for 16 issues

P. O. Box 187 Station D  
Toronto 165, Ontario

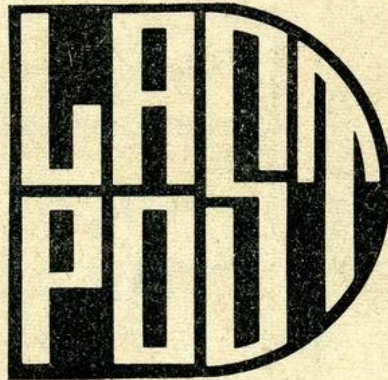
**THIS MAGAZINE is about**  
**SCHOOLS**  
\$3.50 yr (4 issues), 56 Esplanade St. East, Suite 401, Toronto 2E5, Ontario

**Read  
the Canadian  
opposition  
press**

**NEW CANADA**  
\$2 yr (monthly) Canadian Liberation Movement  
Box 41, Station E, Toronto 4, Ontario

**Guerrilla**  
\$6 yr (every 2 weeks)  
17 St. Joseph Street  
Toronto, Ontario

**The Prairie Fire**  
\$8 yr (weekly) Suite 210, Northern Crowne Building  
1821 Scarth Street, Regina Saskatchewan



**NEW LEAF**  
\$2.00 (12 issues) 421 E. 48, Vancouver 15, B.C.

**Our Generation**  
\$5 yr (4 issues)  
3934 Rue St. Urbain  
Montreal 131, Quebec

\$4 yr (8 issues)  
P.O. Box 98  
Station G  
Montreal 130, Quebec

**QUEBEC — PRESSE**  
\$12 yr (weekly) 9670, rue Pélouquin, Montreal 358, P.Q.

**the mysterious  
east**  
\$5.50 yr Box 1172, Fredericton, N.B.

**OCTOPUS**  
\$2.50 (13 issues) P.O. Box 1259  
Station B, Ottawa, Ontario

**THE FOURTH ESTATE**  
\$4.75 2-yrs (biweekly) 1823 Hollis Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia