

Transformation
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

**The
impoverishment
of the
Canadian
left**

**Censorship
in the NFB**

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TRANSFORMATION IS....

still the only magazine in Canada that deals with the theory and practice of social change. We are not satisfied with exposing the abuses of capitalism (this is already done by every left magazine on the continent), but will continue to concentrate on the political practice of the liberal radicals and the so-called left, and the theory underlying their practice. Needless to say, we will continue to propose an alternative course to the building of an effective and dynamic Canadian left.

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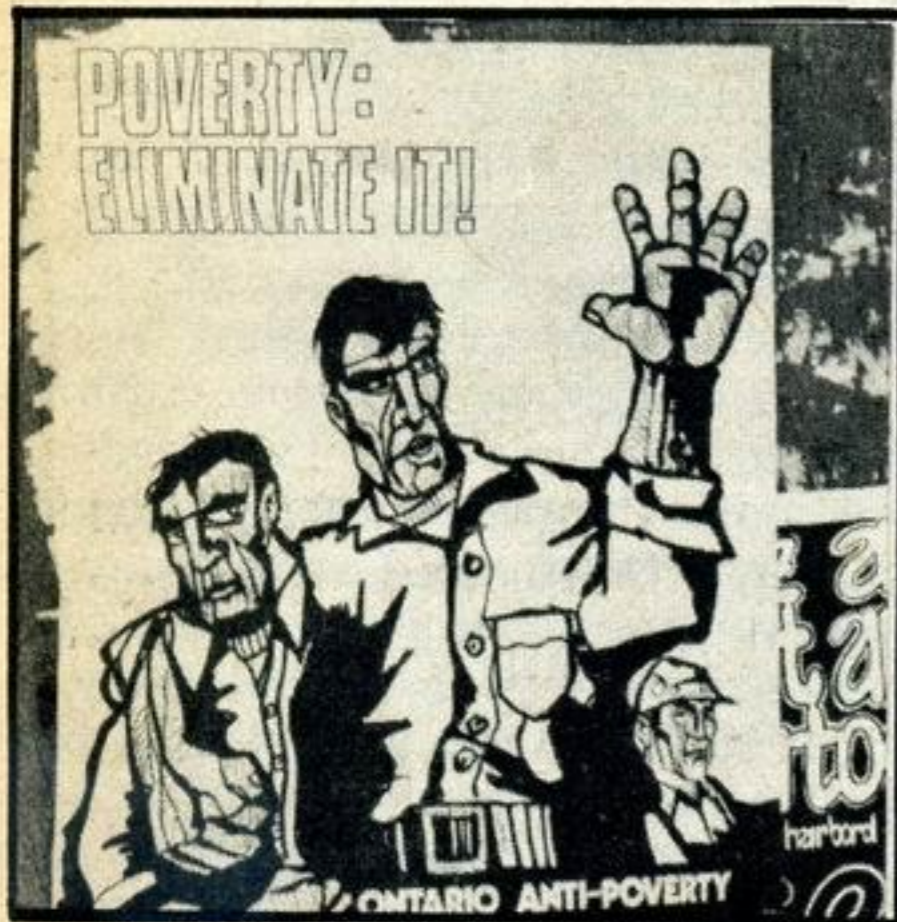
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Transformation

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SOCIAL CHANGE



page 6



page 35



page 44

VOL 1 NO 4

SUMMER 1972

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IN THIS ISSUE

Letters	4
Letter to the readers	5
The impoverishment of the Canadian left by Marjaleena Repo	6
Silencing the workers: censorship in the National Film Board	35
Sociology misconstrues the working class Part II by Gary Teeple	44
An exchange on adventure playgrounds by Gill Hague and Rose-Marie Larsson ...	55
Worth reading	63

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LETTERS

weaknesses pointed out

I have read the first three issues of TRANSFORMATION, which I think have been really excellent. Your magazine is doing an efficient demolition job not just of the normal ideological output of our universities, but also of the much more subtle ideological fog raised, often with the best intentions in the world, by radical professionals and intellectuals who want social change, human liberation and all that, but are absolutely incapable of locating themselves accurately in the society in which they operate - and are therefore incapable of doing much more than sowing confusion by failing to recognize the existence of social classes and the centrality of the labour process.

One weakness I detect in the magazine (and perhaps this is unfair, given your emphasis on the essential task of orienting the activists away from their mindless and dead-end populism), is its failure, so far, to locate and describe the current oppositional forces and tendencies within their historical context. Also, there is the problem you have so far ducked, of intra-class contradictions within the Canadian working class - as well as between the elements of a left-nationalist coalition that you seem to see as the immediate strategic task of the left.

A.W., Peterborough, Ontario

(Editor's reply: I would like to comment briefly on the question of a left-nationalist coalition, that the writer suggests TRANSFORMATION sees "as the immediate strategic task of the left". I have so far only vaguely talked about "an authentic Canadian left", and only in this issue is there further elaboration on the question of "what kind of left" (see, "The impoverishment of the Canadian left"). What I see happening is that although the "national question" (i. e. growing contradictions between Canada and U.S.) creates a fertile ground for political developments, a real "moment" for the left - there is no left to benefit from this situation. There are individuals wandering in and around the movements, which all are inadequate movements. Critically thinking people leave these groups after brief encounters and only the most limited (sectarian-religious) people stay for any length of time. So, in this sense no coalition is possible between any of the left groups, nationalist or internationalist, and I would never advocate that we attempt such a coalition. On the contrary: a left has to be built from scratch, and presently we need people of movement builder calibre, people who are capable of becoming creative Marxists (as elaborated in the lead article). These people have to learn to intervene in an organized fashion in all left and left-liberal activities taking place and they have to advocate the creation of a certain kind of movement. Within the next few years the foundation of a sound left will have to be built.)

reservations about our politics

This is first of all to inform you that I have recently had the opportunity to read the first issues of TRANSFORMATION. I strongly support the idea of a critical Marxist magazine, which would deal at a relatively analytic level with basic issues in Canadian society, with left theory and practice. I basically liked the content of your magazine. I thought most of your criticisms of left groups' practices in Canada were right on. I also thought articles on the liberalism of "community control" were penetrating. However, I must confess that I have some reservations about your politics. I was especially displeased about your inconsistency (given the definition of Marxism you proposed - centered around class politics and analysis), in not criticizing certain types of supposedly radical left nationalism such as the Canadian Liberation Movement. I have developed a rapidly growing personal prejudice against their analysis and politics. I might add that I am anything but a doctrinaire anti-nationalist (of the all-nationalism-is-reactionary variety). I think it is imperative that Canadian activists have some understanding of the concrete situation of their country, its history, socio-economic development, cultural traditions, etc., in order for them to be effective. I also recognize the necessity for anti-imperialist struggle. I am willing to give guarded support to certain of the more socialistic elements (in the Waffle) on this issue. However, the recognition of the nation as the currently operating historical-political-cultural unit, does not go as far as love of patria. I believe that the nation-state has to be smashed or at least eventually allowed to wither away. I consider groups such as the CLM, who at times degenerate to the level of ideas such as "patriotism" and "treason", to be racist, social fascist and utterly incompetent Marxists at their worst. From my point of view I hope that your magazine steers well away from this course and in fact more explicitly repudiates it - otherwise I may have trouble supporting you on political grounds.

H. L., Toronto, Ontario

(Editor's note: See criticism of the Canadian Liberation Movement in the lead article of this issue.)

the left is in a confused state

We think TRANSFORMATION is really good - particularly when the left is in such a confusing state it is good to read some thing which gives a solid working class position on matters affecting Canadians.

J. T., Yukon Territory

continued on page 62

LETTER TO THE READERS

The fourth issue of TRANSFORMATION has been long in coming. There are reasons for that delay and we would like to explain them briefly.

When we first got started, we assumed that there would be a great interest in the kind of clarification and analysis that we proposed to provide, and that we would fill an important gap as far as Canadian left publications go. We were right! The response to TRANSFORMATION has been enthusiastic, to put it mildly. The subscriptions have increased rapidly, despite a lack of any real advertising campaign on our part (we couldn't afford it), and in the right bookstores our sales have been excellent. We have been thoroughly encouraged by the comments from our readers, as exemplified in the letters published in the third and fourth issues.

So, our problem has not been in finding readers. But what came as a (slow) shock to us was that there are very few intellectuals in Canada today, capable of and/or interested in doing critical analyses of social practice, and undertaking thorough, time-consuming investigations of critical issues. Very little is being written in the left publications in Canada that would go beyond standard exposes (usually on economic matters) or the usual griping about capitalism and imperialism. Most of this amounts to nothing but vigorous fistshaking and fingerwaving at the "system", with no attempt to deal with what has to be done.

Theoretical struggle, so essential to social change and movement building, is under these circumstances completely missing, as are analyses of the state apparatus in its various forms (law and the courts, psychiatry, public education, state radio and television, the National Film Board, and different state agencies that intervene in the daily lives of the Canadian people), and of other institutions through which the capitalist class maintains its hegemony (such as the family, the trade-unions, religious organizations, bourgeois arts and sciences, the media and so on). More significantly, nowhere can you find critical examinations of varieties of left practice, past and present. This is the kind of foundation work that remains yet to be done, and without which we cannot develop any effective collective political practice.

The inability/unwillingness of the left intellectuals, whose responsibility it is to provide such analyses, to actually do their work, comes down to the fact that the universities are succeeding in producing not intellectuals, but petty-bourgeois careerists and anti-intellectuals (people still feel proud of dropping out of universities, rather than struggling it out there as well,

and they boast about rejecting all knowledge and all theory in favour of the shallowest kind of "activism"). Canadian intellectuals, of course, would have to become practicing intellectuals, i. e. critics and de-mythifiers of the capitalist order, before they can be one bit helpful to the working class in this country.

Another syndrome of the theoretical/practical backwardness of the Canadian left intellectuals and activists, has been the fact that they have caved in en masse in front of the state's counterinsurgency programmes (Local Initiatives Program, Opportunities for Youth, and others), through which they have been tied up since last summer in useless "research and action projects", detrimental to the working class and devastating to their own political development. The state has in fact succeeded in creating out of these activists a permanent welfare elite, that lives from project to project, grant to grant. It is significant that after a year's experience of state financed "radical" activities, barely one critical self-examination has been published by any of the participants (excluding some whining accounts on how the government has not been "fair" to the grant receivers, and some "clever" advise on how, supposedly, to rip off these grants!) We have, therefore, taken it upon ourselves to provide a thorough analysis of the capitulation of Canadian radicals, in our next issues.

Some self-criticism is in order here, too. If we would have understood a year ago, as we do now, how profoundly pathological the Canadian left is, and how weak and incompetent the radical activists and left intellectuals are, we would not have promised to publish a magazine every two months. We would have stated then, as we must now, that TRANSFORMATION will be an irregular publication until such a time when enough people will emerge to do serious intellectual/self-critical work.

What this means is that we intend to continue to publish, despite the rather considerable difficulties in our way, and in order to go on with our work, we need your continued support, both in terms of money and constructive criticism. We will continue to need subscriptions, as bookstore sales are a give-away from our point of view, with most bookstores taking a 40% cut. We also need bulk orders for study groups, political formations, conferences, university classes, trade union caucuses and so on, since these latter have been the most effective and economical methods of distributing TRANSFORMATION.

We sincerely hope that this issue has been worth waiting for. On our part, we will be waiting for your critical response. ■



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The impoverishment of the Canadian left

By Marjaleena Repo

"Marxism is a theory of liberation or it is nothing", Raya Dunayevskaya, Marxism and freedom.

Perhaps the most visible phenomenon (and the most painful) on the scene of social change in Canada today, is the lack of any real left alternative to either bourgeois or liberal radical politics. The left in its totality consists of small groupings and tiny organizations, all equally alienated from the working class population and unable to effectively challenge the power of the present rule and the systematic disorganization of the working class, undertaken by the liberal radical elements.¹ On the contrary, these left groups that appear to compete with the middle class radicals, do so only in terms of out-doing the latter in liberalism and misleadership. Thus, for instance the Communist Party of Canada, in its desperate attempts to overcome its prolonged alienation from the working class, can be found participating in such anti-working class developments as "poor people's" groups and public housing tenants' groups - which have tended to be more and more the same - not as a critical element, confronting the theoretical-practical shortcomings of these groups, but following instead whatever direction the dominant elements in these groups - the declassed, often lumpenized working class elements are taking.² With its presence, it so happens, the Communist Party helps to legitimize these groups and to perpetuate them, since although incapable of providing theoretical leadership, the party members involved in these organizations make avail-

able their organizational skills from running mimeographing machines to helping with briefs and other materials.³

The Trotskyists, likewise, have made it their long standing practice to support a whole variety of separate interest group activities, and are making, in effect, sure that these fragmented activi-

1) See two articles in previous issues of TRANSFORMATION, both of which deal with the role played by the liberal radicals, "The fallacy of community control" and "Organizing 'the poor' - against the working class", in vol. 1, no. 1 and no. 2.

2) This requires some clarification. The "poor people's" groups we have already dealt with in earlier issues, but the tenant organizing has to be examined and analyzed in a later issue. Suffice it to state that most, if not all of tenant organizing in Canada is directly financed by the state. A detailed and thorough examination of the state financing of "radical" activities in Canada, will appear in our fifth issue.

3) Recently, after the second "Poor People's Conference", held in Toronto, a new group was formed, Ontario Anti-Poverty Association, in which members of the Communist Party play significant roles. It could be said that without the Party involvement, the group would not exist today, and would not be in receipt of close to \$100,000 in state funds.

ties remain fragmented. Thus, despite the fact that they call themselves a movement, with a definite program (which by itself is a reflection of an attempt to deal with the totality of experiences under capitalism), they have, for the last decade at least, been taking over very primitive attempts to deal with a particular group's oppression - and made sure that these attempts remain primitive! The anti-war movement in Canada, the women's movement - all initially narrow concerns, remain narrow through the active interference of the Trotskyists, presently in control of the anti-war and what is left of the women's movement. The anti-war movement which long since should have started talking about the war in Quebec and the stronghold of imperialism over Canada - talks only about Vietnam and the US, with lame references to "Canadian complicity". The women's movement, which began as an expression of increasing numbers of women understanding their overall oppression, talks nothing but abortion today and has been reduced, for all practical purposes, to a lobby for making abortion easier. Similarly, the Trotskyists in the tenants groups, talk housing and only public housing at that - as if that was all there is to working class existence in public housing projects. It is expected that they will soon talk gay - in order to take over the Gay Liberation Movement - although what is sorely needed now is a radical critique of homosexuality and not its wholesale endorsement.

On the West Coast, it appears that a so-called revolutionary movement, the Partisan Party, has taken over the role of liberal radicals. It is they who are advocating "community control" (over the police, for instance) and attempt to organize "the poor" (welfare recipients, the unemployed, and "street people"). And they are advocating these things not by introducing a working class content to the vacuous demands, but by presenting these same "classless" concepts with an abundance of "revolutionary" rhetoric of the Power to the People variety.

The rest of the Canadian left, the Canadian Party of Labour (CPL), an extension of the U.S. Progressive Labour Party and clearly dominated by it, the relatively recent formation, the Canadian Liberation Movement (CLM), the Communist Party of Canada (calling itself, for some unknown reason, "Marxist-Leninist", CPC (M-L), the Canadian Weathermen imitators such as the Red Morning in Toronto and New Morning in Halifax, and a new development, the East Coast Socialist Movement (ECSM), remain both physically and theoretically absent from the issues affecting the Canadian working class, unless these are strictly labour union struggles, such as strikes and the demand for Canadian unions. The so-called "anti-imperialist" struggles, advocated by various groups tend to remain within the confines of the campuses, and have little or no relevance to working people in this country, such as the 85% quota on university teachers, advocated by the CLM, which is in reality nothing more than a demand

for "jobs for educated Canadians" - hardly a radical (going to the roots, that is) demand. The same can be said about the petition campaign ("National Petition for People's Canada"), initiated by CPC (M-L), in which they collect signatures for assorted - and often repetitive - statements, such as "Canada belongs to the people", "The Canadian people have every right to kick the U.S. imperialists out of Canada", and "The Canadian people have the sacred and inviolable right to fulfill their national aspirations of independence and the building of a prosperous Canada". The petition has circulated on the campuses, where students are sufficiently alienated from any reality to perhaps even sign it (about 10,000 people are supposed to have signed it), since it commits them to nothing at all. But try to take the petition to working men and women in this country, and the first person with a head on their shoulders would point out that it is totally absurd to collect signatures for something that cannot be "petitioned", namely independence and socialism. Meanwhile the busy-work of the petitioners continues...

In its present state of alienation from the society around it, the organized left in Canada can not, it goes without saying, be the slightest bit helpful to those activists, students, workers and professionals alike, who are prepared to move beyond liberal radical and narrowly economic demands. Those few activists who might venture near the left organizations, seeking some real direction, invariably become turned off left politics in general and what is offered to them as "Marxism" in particular. Others simply find the left activities from the ultra-Maoists to the Waffle - ritualistic, bizarre and lacking in human content - and therefore do not even go near them. Unfortunately in both cases the activists' political development becomes arrested - a condition prevalent among activists all over Canada and in all walks of life.

It can then be said - and this will be repeated over and over again in this article - that the major obstacle to the development of a dynamic, vital, creative Canadian left, in touch with the needs and aspirations of the oppressed humanity in this country (working class men and women, native peoples, the Quebecois), is not the ruling class, the state and its various sectors but the left itself. Whereas the ruling class obstructs by design and from its class perspective, the left obstructs out of ignorance and sheer incompetence. The former one understands and struggles with, the latter is harder to forgive, since as Henri Lefevbre so aptly puts it: "The worst alienation is the blocking up of development."⁴

4) Henri Lefevbre, Sociology of Marx, Vintage Books, 1969, p. 9.

The undialectical left

What, then makes the left so incompetent?

There is one critical failure that encompasses all of the present left groups from the old Communist party to the newest developments.

This is their inability to perceive reality dialectically and to deal with it (to act) accordingly. This inability - as I will take the opportunity to demonstrate - has led to the gross failure of the left to deal with the quality of life (the experience of living) in a (relatively) highly developed industrial society. All groups and formations, without exception, share a view which can

accurately be called "economist", and which sees man as "homo economicus", a largely and often purely economically motivated animal. The left will talk about "imperialism", "capitalism", "bosses", "exploitation", "profits", and so on - but only in terms of how these phenomena affect one's pocket book. What they will not talk about is the central experience in a capitalist society (and, sorry to say, in many so-called socialist societies as well) which Marx called "alienation of labour", the estrangement of the producing man from his product (be it a thing, a service, an idea or a work of art) and through this from himself and his fellow human beings (see Note on alienation of labour, p. 9). This experience, as we will

Note on alienation of labour

"What constitutes the alienation of labour? First, that the work is external to the worker, that it is not part of his nature; and that, consequently, he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary, but imposed, forced labour. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs. Its alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion, it is avoided like the plague. External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Finally, the external character of work for the worker is shown by the fact that it is not his own work but work for someone else, that in work he does not belong to himself but to another person." (Marx, "Alienated labour", in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts.)

For a beginning discussion of how bourgeois sociologists ignore the phenomenon of "alienation of labour", see the review of James Lorimer's Working people, in TRANSFORMATION, vol. 1, no. 3. For an elaboration on how so-called Marxists also have ignored the concept, one would do well to read Raya Dunayevskaya's much neglected work, Marxism and Freedom (first published in 1958 and recently with a new paperback edition), and Istvan Meszaros Marx's theory of alienation (Merlin Press, 1970, should be out in paperback also), as well as Henri Lefebvre's work, Sociology of Marx, Dialectical Materialism, and his most recent, Everyday life in the modern world. Of these Dunayevskaya's book is by far the most readable, since she has a passion and ability to communicate to the oft forgotten "average reader", whereas Meszaros's

work reads like a PHD thesis and Lefebvre, despite his brilliant insight into the meaning of Marx, and the distance between Marx and the so-called Marxists, has forgotten that there are people outside university circles who want to know. Thus he writes unnecessarily obscurely.

All these authors understand the political significance of the rejection of the concept of "alienation of labour" by the organized left. As Lefebvre puts it:

"For many and obscure reasons institutional Marxism refuses to listen to talk of alienation. It either rejects the concept or accepts it only with reservations and provisos. The dogmatists see it merely as a staging post in Marx's thought, quickly superseded on the one hand by his discovery of dialectical materialism as a philosophy and on the other hand by his formulation of a scientific political economy. (Capital). To them it seems misguided to bring back the concept of alienation, independently of any idealist systematization, so as to make use of it in the critical analysis of 'reality' and incorporate it in the categories of social sciences (especially sociology) or so at least they pretend. Why? Obviously for political reasons which are both short-term and short-sighted. We cannot confine the use of the concept of alienation to the study of bourgeois societies. It may enable us to uncover and criticize numerous forms of alienation (of women, of colonial and ex-colonial countries, of work and the worker, of 'consumer societies', of the bourgeoisie itself in the society it has fashioned in accordance with its own self-interests, etc.), but it also enables us to uncover and criticize ideological and political alienations inside socialism, particularly during the Stalinist period. Institutional Marxists choose to reject the concept so as to avoid such risks and to blunt its cutting edge." (From the foreword to the Fifth Edition, Dialectical materialism, Jonathan Cape, 1968, pp. 16-17.)

find out, is ignored and belittled by the left as something trivial and "private" - in contrast to the "substantial" content of economics. Not surprisingly, since the left in its totality does not understand the actual concerns and life experiences of the people they claim to represent, it remains permanently distant from these very people.

On the reverse side, the working class in its totality is barely aware of the fact that the left exists: it knows the left groupings from infrequent newspaper reports of political demonstrations, from occasional newspapers and leaflets handed out to them (if they happen to be on a strike), and the once-in-a-while political posters which appear so out of place in a working class neighbourhood, calling the inhabitants to protest the war in Vietnam, to join an "anti-imperialist struggle" or an "area revolutionary committee" or just simply to "smash imperialism" or to "smash racist unemployment".

One would think that the left in Canada would be most acutely aware of its alienation, its lack of impact, and that there would be an ongoing, systematic investigation as to the roots of that alienation. Nothing of this nature is taking place, however. No discussion, debate, theoretical struggle, self-criticism, or re-evaluation of positions. On the contrary, all pretend on the one hand that they are making great strides. On the other hand, when cornered, they put blame on the Canadian working class, which according to them hasn't yet reached the level of consciousness required for them to embrace these would-be vanguard groups.⁵ There are references to the corrupting influence of the "affluent society" and optimism about "objective conditions" worsening so as to send the working class running to their patiently waiting saviours. The real possibility that these left groups have nothing to offer to the working class - in the past, in the present or in the future - has not yet entered the collective awareness of the left. If this possibility were to be seriously entertained, it just might be the end of the existing formations - and the beginning of something qualitatively different. The participants of these groups just might discover, that economics - the pocket book - is not where it is at on this continent, or perhaps anywhere in the world.

What the question of "dialectics" and "alienation of labour" then comes down to is that these two terms cover complex realities, and are not just convenient terms that indicate that one has read the "right" books. To be undialectical, refers to a life-long process, to which we, all of us living under capitalism (and under so-called socialism and communism) are subjected to, and through which we are deprived of our critical intellect and creative expression. And not to understand the concept of "alienation of labour" is to fail to understand the totality of our experience in these societies. This totality of experience is, of course, systematically mystified by the ruling elements and not understood by the radical li-

berals who never connect alienation to its structural roots. It is therefore a real crime that the left simply ignores all manifestations of alienation and is hung-up on something it calls "economics."

This article, then, very specifically attempts to describe, ever so briefly, what capitalism does to human beings - including those who call themselves the left - and how the left is unable to challenge the processes by which this system takes hold of our bodies and souls, mutilating and crippling us until the great majority of us are unable to resist or rebel against a most brutal and anti-human social order, and are particularly incapable of transforming it into anything qualitatively different.

The left, in other words, merely reproduces the same processes that bourgeois society creates, although under different labels. Instead of a church there is the political organization that requires total subservience and an uncritical attitude on the part of its members. And, to take another example, instead of advocating qualitatively different male-female relationships, the left offers puritanism (Maoists), promiscuity (the attempts of the elements on the New Left to "smash monogamy"), and homosexuality (Gay Liberation, as supported by various left groups today. eg. the Trotsyists, the Waffle, Women's Liberation), all phenomena which are literally forced on us by the present social order.

(On this question of sexuality, the left has failed to develop a concept of healthy sexuality, for the simple reason that more often than not these groups regard sexuality as a "private matter", and not as a major political issue that it truly is.)

What, then, is dialectics?

The task of making intelligible the alienation and experiential impoverishment of the Canadian left, would have to start with a brief discussion of dialectics. With a dialectical approach, I mean a mode of perceiving reality which takes into account the material forces and concrete conditions behind various phenomena (social, economic, cultural, psychological, physiological, etc.), understands the interconnection between these phenomena, and at the same time views all phenomena as active processes, constantly going through quantitative and qualitative changes, which are the results of internal contradictions inherent in all phenomena. (This means that all matter, all phenomena change from within and are not dependent on "external factors" - in socio-political contexts called "outside agitators".)

It is important to remember that without the inclusion of the active process historical materialism alone becomes rapidly the most mechanistic kind of materialism, a simpleminded deter-

5) If it is not the "apathy" of the working class, it is "labour bosses" or some such thing, holding back the revolutionary impulses of the workers.



Photo: Ross Hazel

The Canadian left has long ago ceased to understand the everyday existence of working class people.

minism that argues - quite seriously - that economic conditions "cause" everything - including revolutions, and forgets that "cause" and "effect" are themselves in a dialectical relationship, i. e. interconnected and affected by each other. It is equally important to keep in mind that an emphasis on "continuous change" without the connecting of various phenomena to their historical and social (i. e. material) roots, is nothing but glorification of change for the sake of change and an excuse for doing nothing. Since everything is always in "flux" there is no point in intervention, an ideology so well represented by Marshall McLuhan, that gift to the advertising industry. The point here is, that one can be un-dialectical and anti-dialectical about dialectics, as well

Although this discussion cannot examine in depth the nature of dialectical thought, some examples are necessary to illustrate what is meant with "dialectical approach". (see "Lenin on dialectics", p.12) For example, in order to deal effectively with a complex social phenomenon such as a political movement (organization) one would have to deal with the material forces - economic, social and political conditions, psycho-

logical needs - which gave rise to the movement in the first place. At the same time one would have to deal with the contradictions within the movement, through which it constantly changes. (Everything changes; if there is no visible growth and development, there is slow stagnation leading to the death of the organization.)

Thus a working class organization develops as a result of economic and social pressures, and because a lack of political representation by the existing political parties. Such a movement can contain within itself different segments of the class, with differential experiences and special interests, resulting in an ongoing "push and pull" between the various elements. The welfare recipients within such an organization would invariably demand more income, while the working people in the same organization would be opposed to any increase in their taxes. If these demands are perceived undialectically as mutually exclusive, the end result will be that this organization cannot continue, but that the two elements will separate and continue to make the above demands in isolation from and opposition to each other. (This is in fact what has happened in Canada where potentially viable commun-

ity organizations in working class districts have split into Residents' Association (i. e. Homeowners) and Tenants and/or "Poor people's" groups. They don't see eye to eye on any issue.)

If these demands are approached dialectically, however, it becomes clear that in this particular case they are not at all mutually exclusive: the demand for more welfare and for lower taxes can both be met by the mutual demand of redistribution of taxes so that corporations would pay a far more substantial share than they presently do.⁶ The contradiction that initially existed, would then have produced qualitative changes in the nature of the organization and allowed unity at a different level. (Other contradictions might continue to exist and new ones appear, necessitating

a similar dialectical treatment. For instance, male/female, parent/non-parent, adult/child, and similar contradictions, if not understood, can become major obstacles in movement building.)

All contradictions are capable of being resolved through the same process of thesis (Workers: "In order to be fully human, we have to be able to control production from beginning to end"), antithesis (Owners: "In order to continue securing our profits and privileges, we have to control production, and that includes you,

6) See, "Taxes and transfers", in Adams, Cameron, Hill and Penz, The real poverty report, M. G. Hurtig Ltd., 1971, for a full discussion of the grossly inequitable tax structure in Canada.

Lenin on dialectics

Lenin, in his Philosophical Notebooks, indicates the complexity and the richness of the dialectical approach as opposed to the present day simpleminded cliché-mongering about "dialectics":

"One of the definitions of dialectics.

- 1) the determination of the concept out of itself (the thing itself must be considered in its relations and in its development);
- 2) the contradictory nature of the thing itself (the other of itself), the contradictory forces and tendencies in each phenomenon;
- 3) the union of analysis, and synthesis. Such, apparently, are the elements of dialectics.

One could perhaps present these elements in greater detail as follows:

- 1) the objectivity of consideration (not examples, not divergences, but the Thing-in-itself).
- 2) the entire totality of the manifold relations of this thing to others.
- 3) the development of this thing (phenomenon, respectively, its own movement, its own life.)
- 4) the internally contradictory tendencies (and sides) in this thing.
- 5) the thing (phenomenon, etc.) as the sum and unity of opposites.
- 6) the struggle, respectively unfolding, of these opposites, contradictory strivings, etc.
- 7) the union of analysis and synthesis - the break-down of the separate parts and the totality, the summation of these parts.
- 8) the relations of each thing (phenomenon, etc.) are not only manifold, but general, universal. Each thing (phenomenon, process etc.) is connected with every other.
- 9) not only the unity of opposites, but the transitions of every determination, quality, feature, side, property into every other

er (into its opposite?).

10) the endless process of the discovery of new sides, relations, etc.

11) the endless process of the deepening of man's knowledge of the thing, of phenomena, processes, etc. from appearance to essence and from less profound to more profound essence.

12) from co-existence to causality and from one form of connection and reciprocal dependence to another, deeper, more general form.

13) the repetition at a higher stage of certain features, properties, etc. of the lower and

14) the apparent return to the old (negation of the negation)

15) the struggle of content with form and conversely. The throwing off of the form, the transformation of the content.

16) the transition of quantity into quality and vice versa (15 and 16 are examples of 9)

In brief, dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites. This embodies the essence of dialectics, but it requires explanations and development." From, Howard Selsam and Harry Martel, Reader in Marxist Philosophy, (International Publishers, 1963, pp. 351-52.)

I fully agree with Martin Glaberman's statement in his useful discussion of dialectics, Mao as a dialectician, (available from the author, 1443 Bewick, Detroit, Michigan, 48214, U.S.A., 50 cents), in which he says, after quoting the above passage:

"I quote this in full not because it succeeds embodying the totality of dialectics, but because it indicates Lenin's awareness of dialectics as a process of constant change, of relationships being constantly transformed, of ever newer and deeper insights and discoveries." (p. 8)

workers'), and going beyond (NOT "synthesis", but transcendence), a new system is created in which profits can no longer be made for the benefit of a few individuals, the position of masters is thus being abolished, as is the subject class of people; individuals from both classes can then (in theory) continue to exist as co-producers. (In practice, however, we know from recent history all over the globe, that the oppressor class is not interested in a democratic majority decision to abolish itself as a class, therefore the implementation of the solution has become a political/military problem.)

The point here is that there is always a solution to a problem (thesis-antithesis locked into their respective positions), since dialectical thought takes one beyond the simple either-or dichotomies, the apparently "insoluble contradictions" presented by formalistic thought, so essential to the maintenance of the status quo. A case in point of the latter was Prime Minister Trudeau's recent response to the Senate Committee on Poverty report's recommendation of a guaranteed annual income, a response which had an appearance of logic and fact: "We cannot afford it." This is where much of the discussion ended in the newspapers and other media, with journalists and commentators protesting these "unfortunate circumstances", but nevertheless "conceding to the demands of reality". And this is where it ends for much to the working population (for instance, those who called in on open-line radio programs), who accept the "conventional wisdom" of the establishment without any visible resistance. In reality, the question opens itself up to a completely different inquiry at another level: How come there isn't enough money? How can we get more? Which then leads again to the question of taxing the profiteers and nationalizing industry. Dialectical thought, of course, is revolutionary by its very nature since it pushes beyond the accepted order of things as these things are reflected in language and formal logic, in the immutable either/ors which can only create despair in those individuals and groups who are struggling to find solutions to whatever problems affect them and society at large.

Take another example of dialectical processes in operation. As is widely recognized (although not truly understood), good, that is, human, affectionate and equal male-female relationships are made practically impossible by the present society. Male and female children are systematically brought up to be each others opposites; both are mutilated to fit outdated, brutal concepts of "maleness" and "femaleness" (boys don't cry, girls aren't supposed to be good at sports). By emphasizing and exaggerating differences between the sexes, differences which by themselves are quite limited, girls and boys, men and women, find themselves permanently estranged from each other.^{6a}

The ideology of romantic love and marriage serve the function to cover up this alienation (people are supposed to, suddenly and magically, to find "love and happiness"), and exploits the profound longings that exist in everyone of us for

sexual fulfillment, love and meaningful human contact. Marriage presently becomes the trap where most of us, at one point, find ourselves, in, when we realize that two people living together cannot, single-handedly and with little knowledge, overcome the serious obstacles that the social order sets for male/female relationships. As it happens, people turn against each other, blaming the other person for the mutual misery that exists. Some manage to escape from the trap - but for each one person that dares to publicly challenge the ideology of love and marriage by separation, divorce or desertion, there must be literally hundreds and thousands, the mass of people, who are afraid to leave the trap. There is the "religious" factor, guilt and shame about one's "failure" and deepseated fear of authority and social disapproval that prevent masses of individuals from breaking away from deteriorated, unhappy relationships. (It still happens that parents disown their divorced children and that friends reject one after a marriage "breakdown", i.e. the fears are based on social realities, and are not imagined.)⁷

Now, what is relevant to this discussion is what happens to the "normal couples", those people who work hard to preserve a front to the world, of everything being O.K. This is the front of "most people are contented with their lot; and people who complain are only a handful of "misfits", a notion prevailing in popular literature, the media and sociological studies, since neither journalists nor social scientists as a rule are capable of going beyond appearances. They are not capable of looking at human beings and human relations dialectically and discovering the interconnection between body and soul, individual and society.

It takes very little to grasp the fact that human experiences have their immediate physiological manifestations. Happiness results in a feeling of well-being, of flow of energy and warmth in the organism; unhappiness in the opposite, a feeling of weakness, tiredness, lack of energy and lack of warmth. Chronic unhappiness - which is the prevalent experience presently - results not surprisingly in chronic tension in the organism, which is then called "illness". Such diverse illnesses as heart diseases, cancer, rheumatism, allergies, asthma, bronchial troubles, ulcers, blood diseases, and a multitude of others, which have all reached epidemic proportions in North America, can be attributed to unhappiness (repressed anger, sexual frustration, anxiety and

6a) Gay Liberation and Radical Lesbianism, the introduction of homosexuality as an "alternative", merely further institutionalize the estrangement between sexes and make a virtue out of this alienation.

7) It is illuminating to listen to or to read testimonies of "normal couples" about the impoverished emotional and sexual content of their marriage relationships. Open-line radio programmes particularly, directed towards working class women, are very important in this respect, since no matter what the topic is, and given half-a-chance, people will talk about their

other deepseated negative emotions and experiences), although organized medicine is doing its damnest not to recognize the connection between human unhappiness and physical illness. On the contrary, although verbal recognition is given to psychosomatic diseases, organized medicine divides the human being into two major parts, mind and body, and have "specialists" treating these two parts, with the "body "specialists literally chopping up the body into tiny fragments, for "treatment" by even more highly specialized "experts".

The dialectical relationship between individual health and the social order, is a relationship that the present society have succeeded in totally obscuring. It has to obscure this relationship, since the widespread popular recognition that capitalist society does not only deprive one of time and money, but even more directly, of health and happiness, is likely to be the most potent revolutionary discovery. The dialectic here, as elsewhere, challenges the established order to the core.⁸

Finally, a third example of the nature of dialectics. A most outrageous example of formalistic medicine can be found in the treatment of eyesight. The orthodox explanation usually presented for poor vision is that there is "something wrong" with the lense of the eye and that this wrong can only be treated by getting artificial lenses and/or by an operation. At best these methods stabilize the defect but never restore the eye to its full or even near health. As a result a huge percentage of the population in North

personal unhappiness. Two recent books on sexuality contain some scarce documentary materials that reveal the extent of sexual unhappiness in our society. William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, Human sexual inadequacy (Little, Brown and Co., 1970), and Larry Solway, The day I invented sex (McClelland and Stewart, 1971), the latter based on a Toronto open-line program, which ran for three days, and dealt extensively with sexuality. It ended up with the program host being fired, for daring to treat human sexuality with great seriousness.

8) The reader is here referred to the uniquely valuable work of Wilhem Reich, a German born medical doctor and psychoanalyst, who always dealt with the dialectical relationship between individual health and social structure. See his, Sexual revolution, The function of the orgasm, Character analysis, Mass psychology of fascism, and The invasion of compulsory sex morality. A recently translated article by Reich, "What is class consciousness?", is an excellent critique of traditional left politics and must reading for every activist. (See page 63 for more information). It is the position of TRANSFORMATION, that familiarity with Reich's work (NOT uncritical worshipping of him), is of central importance to those advocating social change. As with Marx and "Marxists", however, there is no necessary connection between Reich and many "Reichians".

America (where medicine is most "advanced", we are told) wears glasses for a lifetime, the only change occuring being the slow deterioration in the eye.

Dialectical thought, understanding the unity of parts of the body with the rest of the organism, proceeds altogether differently. If there is "something wrong" with the lenses of the eye and if the permanent crutches called eyeglasses do not heal that wrong, then there is something thoroughly inadequate about the theory behind the glasses: it allows no healing process and no therapeutic intervention whatsoever. Organic, dialectical medicine (Reich calls it "functional" as opposed to "mechanistic" medicine), would take a look at the causation and would proceed from there, rather than from the symptoms.

There are causes for bad vision just as there are for any other physical complaint, and these causes cannot - except in the case of externally caused injury - be found in the eye alone. The eye relates and responds to the stresses and strains in the total organism, which as sound clinical experience will indicate, develop as a result of chronic anxiety (i. e. unhappiness). Once causation is understood the treatment follows: the relaxation of chronic strain through dealing with the underlying anxiety, and this combined with



Children's days are spent in utter boredom, unalleviated by moments of joy and ecstasy of discovery



the re-education of one's use of eyes. These methods are today practically unknown to the eye-specialists and optometrists, who treat the eye as an alien object in the body.⁹

Formalistic thought, the opposite of dialectical thought, as I have tried to illustrate, does not understand any of the life processes around us, and is consequently always stuck in the either-ors of good/evil, body/soul, individual/society, male/female, young/old, adult/child, true/false, cause/effect, theory/practice, and a whole lot of other, assorted "mutually exclusive" items. Engels describes so accurately this type of thought, the overwhelmingly dominant mode of thought and perception, then as well as now:

"To the metaphysician (formalistic thinker), things and their reflexes are isolated, are to be considered one after another, are objects of investigation fixed, rigid, given once and for all. He thinks in absolutely irreconcilable antithesis: 'His communication is: yea, yea, nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.' For him a thing either exists or does not exist, a thing cannot at the same time be itself and something else. Positive and negative absolutely exclude one another; cause and effect stand in rigid antithesis one to the other."¹⁰

Training makes us stupid

This is the kind of thought that we are systematically trained in and that makes it so difficult for us to understand the life processes around us and to affect changes. Abstract thought stands in the way of the transformation of social reality, even when this transformation is genuinely desired by individuals and groups. Our whole "educational" system (better called indoctrination system), is geared to enforce the rigid

divisions in our thoughts and perceptions, until the average public and high school student, and particularly university student - who suffers these processes longer - can no longer think organically and critically, that is, dialectically.

The natural dialectical thought and perception that healthy human beings are capable of, is driven out of children, some of whom bitterly resist this indoctrination, this life-long pidgenholing of reality (only to be labelled as "troublemakers" and misfits, and through "advanced" psychiatric labelling as "emotionally disturbed.") That children, all children, are indeed capable of creative thought and expression, has been demonstrated over and over again, despite all the prevailing prejudices against them. It can be demonstrated in early childhood art which often manages to flourish until kindergarten age, by which time children start holding back on their bold expressions of feelings and thoughts. It is by no means a "natural" process: it occurs because of the life-negating, creativity-destroying climate in all "educational" institutions, whose given task is to cultivate obedience to all authorities and respect for the established order of things, and it occurs despite the occasional presence of unusually creative and life-affirming and capable teachers. Children's art, poetry and play, under these conditions dries away, leaving behind those spectacular manifestations that cry about a lost world and a world once more possible.¹¹ Like the following manifestation, described by Marshall McLuhan:

"Robert Oppenheimer has been saying for years that there are small children playing here on this street who could solve some of his top problems in physics because they have modes of perception which an adult has lost a long time ago. This awareness of the perceptual modes that enable people to participate in various types of high level research as much as anything they could learn instructionally, is only beginning to filter through. Edmund Bacon, for example, the head of the Town Planning Commission in Philadelphia, a few years ago became world famous overnight when he enlisted the aid of elementary schools in solving some of his top problems in Town Planning. He got children

9) See Aldous Huxley's The art of seeing, which describes the revolutionary (dialectical) methodology of Dr. W. H. Bates, as it was applied to Huxley's own case of near-blindness. Bates' work, not surprisingly, has been deliberately ignored for the last fifty years! See also an illuminating article by Charles Kelley, "New techniques of vision improvement", in Energy and Character, vol. 2, no 3 & 4. (Available from: David Boadella, Editor, Abbotsbury, Weymouth, Dorset, England, single issue \$2.00).

10) Friedrich Engels, Socialism, utopian and scientific, Karl Marx and F. Engels, Selected works, Foreign Language Publishing House, 1958, p. 130.

11) See footnote on page 16.

in the early grades to study the plans for Philadelphia and to discuss them among themselves and their parents and their neighbours and to study their communities physically and geographically, and they came up with some of the top solutions to the whole problem. It is clear, that we are just beginning to recognize that children and adolescents are a kind of backward country of the mind that's been deliberately suppressed for centuries in our Western

World. (emphasis added) ¹²

Children, before they are put into strait-jackets by their parents, other adults, the schools and the rest of society's institutions, are thoroughly capable. Anyone who has worked with small children/brought up children, and has observed them without the usual prejudices, will concur with John Holt's wonderful description of a baby at work:

"These quiet summer days I spent many hours watching this (seventeen-month old) baby. What comes across most vividly is that she is a kind of scientist. She is always observing and experimenting. She is hardly ever idle. Most of her waking time she is intensely and purposefully active, soaking up experience and trying to make sense out of it, trying to find how things around her behave, and trying to make them behave as she wants them to.

In the face of what looks like unbroken failure, she is so persistent. Most of her experiments, her efforts to predict and control her environment, don't work. But she goes right on, not the least daunted. Perhaps this is because there are no penalties attached to failure, except nature's - usually, if you try to step on a ball, you fall down. A baby does not react to failure as an adult does or even a five-year old because she has not yet been made to feel that failure is shame, disgrace, a crime. Unlike her elders, she is not concerned with protecting herself against everything that is not easy and familiar; she reaches out to experience, she embraces life.

Watching this baby, it is hard to credit the popular notion that without outside rewards and penalties children will not learn. There are some rewards and penalties in her life; the adults approve of some things she does and disapprove of others. But most of the time she lives beyond praise or blame, if only because most of her learning experiments are unobserved. After all, who thinks about the meaning of what baby is doing, so long as she is quiet and contented? But watch a while and

think about it, and you see that she has a strong desire to make sense of the world around her. Her learning gives her great satisfaction, whether anyone else notices it or not."¹³

This intense involvement with one's environment - which in a different kind of society could be a life long one - comes as a rule to an early end and is denied many children altogether. It is denied those working class children whose parents haven't got the space or time to allow a child to roam around freely and to explore the world. A working class family of seven, confined to a small flat with dangerous steps everywhere and with a busy and exhausted mother rushing from one household task to the next, can provide little for the basic needs of the child. This child, the scientist/artist, remains in the crib or playpen, fiddling with the absurd and uninteresting things we call toys, and whining incessantly - as so many children do - out of boredom.

This creative involvement is also denied those children, whose parents although not necessarily lacking in time and space, are afraid of the social consequences of the freedom of even small infants. The young couple in the apartment worried about the child making noises that might disturb the neighbours, will inevitably clamp down on their child. Another family, not necessarily poor either, worries about things that the child might break, ashtrays, vases, assorted knick-knacks, and their solution becomes to keep the child in a playpen(itentiary) in order to protect property. In both cases the child's creativity is constantly thwarted.

Only when there is space and time, as might be the case with relatively well-to-do families, where the woman can hire someone else to do the most tedious and time consuming labour, allowing her to tolerate small children's freedom, and where there are rooms and hallways, that are both clean and safe, can small infants continue to explore the world without constant adult interference (as in the case John Holt described).

And the child is also allowed to develop in those extremely rare families where parents (often educated and in the sense privileged, but not neces-

11) There are many examples of the existence of our tremendous creative powers. The following are but a few useful references for those who are searching for this evidence: Sylvia Ashton-Warner, Teacher, Sybil Marshall, Experiment in education, Elwyn S. Richardson, In the early world, Richard Lewis' collections of children's poetry, Herbert Kohl Thirty-six children, George Dennison, The lives of children. If the reader knows of any others of similar nature, please let us know, and we will pass the information on to others.

12) Marshall McLuhan, "Electronics and the psychic drop-out", This Magazine is About Schools, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1966.

13) John Holt, How children fail, Pitman, 1967, p. 61.

sarily restricted to that element), have an understanding of children's potential and needs, and go about more or less systematically creating an environment and a style of life which allows the children to remain creative and active much longer than the great majority of the children in this society and in the world are allowed to be.

But even for those few children (the children of the propertied few, the children of the more conscious elements of the educated middle and working class) good things come to an early end. Ruling class children have to start undergoing training for their future roles as rulers and exploiters, and this necessitates particularly a desensitizing of their tender feelings towards other human beings, outside the immediate family. (How else can you learn to compete in the business world; how else can you lay off hundreds of workers in order to cut down production costs, and how else can you fire a worker for being "too old", if you haven't been systematically trained to suppress your feelings?)

The progressive middle class element, on the other hand, cannot singlehandedly create alternative institutions and a new society for the benefit of its own children. This is what these people have been busy trying to do for the last decade, by starting free schools and setting up communes. Their children will, however, sooner or later have to return to the "system"; free schools fold and communes disintegrate, sending the erstwhile participants back into a situation in which the middle class children have to face the same kind of institutionalized deprivation of thought and feeling, that working class children have faced from the day they started school, but more often than not from the day they were born.¹⁴

If class society as we know it in advanced industrial societies, conspires against us as infants and small children, by invariably thwarting our creative potential so that this potential in most cases remains completely unknown, the schools institutionalize and systematize this deprivation from the moment a child enters kindergarten. The process by which children (us) are systematically made stupid, has been pointed out by many passionately concerned educators.¹⁵ It always comes down to the straight-jacketing of perceptions through formalistic thought, preventing the dialectical process of going beyond - which is the essence of critical, creative thought - from taking place, and consequently forcing the child to learn to exclude "troublesome" reality and settle for formalistic abstractions that are "safe" (and do not challenge anybody's authority). And it comes down to the separation of thought from action, theory from practice, a state of affairs that makes life appear totally absurd.

How creative thought is obstructed

The classroom instruction and test taking (including the notoriously class discriminatory IQ tests which nevertheless continue being used and which are used against the working class as a

whole, and particularly against oppressed minorities), are the methods through which stupidity is cultivated. At regular intervals children of all ages are subjected to tests which make formalistic thought the norm and which do violence to the flow of life. Any one who has struggled with the absurdities of multiple-choice tests, knows what is meant with "violence".

It is a rare question to which one could not give at least two answers. Banesh Hoffman, a mathematician and a foremost critic of intelligence and other types of so-called "objective" tests (multiple-choice, true-false tests) describes the process by which critical intelligence is stultified and hampered:

"There is [an] aspect of the professional testers' objectivity that needs to be understood, an aspect that the professional tester prefers not to stress. Consider purely for the sake of illustration, this hypothetical true-false question:

If X is like Y and Y is like Z, then X must be like Z.

[] True [] False

The superficial student does not need to think about such a question. For him it is obvious, and he immediately picks true. But a better student will not be so hasty. He may argue, for example, that X might be a green triangle, Y a green beverage, and Z a red beverage. Since a green triangle is not like a red beverage, he will choose false. And we may well be inclined to agree with him. What of a really deep student, though? He may go beyond this stage in the argument, realizing the vagueness and elasticity of the word 'like'. Though a green triangle does not superficially resemble a green beverage, each has something in common with a green beverage and in this sense the two have an element of likeness. The same is true of any X, Y and Z. If X is like Y, and Z is also like Y, then X and Y have in

14) This is literally true. Birth has become the mass traumatic experience for both mothers and children - fathers are simply deprived of any experience which is traumatic in a different way - when it can be one of the most significant and beautiful experiences of our lives. A wonderful, Reich-inspired book by Jean and Paul Ritter, The Free Family, Victor Gollanz, 1959, deals extensively with the experience of birth from the point of view of what exists and what can be. Strongly recommended reading. (We understand that this book is soon to be reprinted in an updated version.)

15) See, Paul Goodman, Compulsory mis-education, Lewis Dexter, The tyranny of schooling, John Holt, How children fail, and The underachieving school.

common, if nothing else, that each is like Y. So the deep student working at this level of sophistication, picks true. It does not matter whether the wanted answer is true or false. In either case, the question will be graded objectively. And in either case the superficial student and the deep student will receive identical scores."¹⁶

And the author concludes:

"All but the most unimaginative have sensed ambiguity in multiple choice tests they have taken. But the average examinee hesitates to believe that his judgement may be better than that of the test-makers, and that the ambiguity he senses really exist. After all, the test he is taking is handsomely printed. It has an air of professionalism. And the organization administering it, presumably has faith in it. How, then, could it contain ambiguities? Surely the test-maker would have eliminated all genuine ambiguities. The seeming ambiguities must arise from the candidate's imperfect understanding of the subject. If he knew more about it, the ambiguities would vanish. But if the candidate thinks in this way, he is mistaken. The ambiguities do exist. And the more one knows about the subject the more glaring they tend to become." (Emphasis added)¹⁶

It becomes clear the the "ambiguities" that are forbidden in the process of "education", are the essence of life, its dialectic. Without being allowed to examine these ambiguities, reality itself escapes everyone subjected to this process. The tests, however, are only a dramatized and condensed form of the daily experience of being forced to severely restrict one's critical faculties, one's thoughts and feelings, and thereby all one's senses as well as one's whole body. As a result a general dulling sets in, and the once active and lively child becomes slowly but surely - STUPID. Hoffman quotes J.W. Getzels, a psychologist writing about this process. The experience described below, one should not forget is a mass experience.:

"Speaking of achievement tests, aptitude tests, school recommendations and high school ranks based on teacher grades, he [Getzels] says that 'these indices favor the student who is retentive and docile - the one who tends to seek the single pre-determined 'correct' answer to an intellectual problem - as against the student who is constructive and creative - the one who tends to seek the multiple, experimental, 'novel' answer to an intellectual problem... Imagine then my surprise to discover that the vast preponderance of problems on current college

selection tests are of the multiple-choice variety prohibiting the possibility of the creative kind of formulation but requiring only that the student be able to match his solution to a pre-determined single correct and sometimes quite pedestrian answer. Under these test conditions, which demand only skill in picking commonly accepted responses to questions-conditions, if one stops to think of it, that in many cases do not demand even recall, to say nothing of intellectual construction or creation, but only recognition - the student... with the preference for the pre-determined solution is clearly at an advantage."¹⁷

That the process of making us stupid takes place quite early and with remarkable success, is testified to by a capable, perceptive educator and observer of children, John Holt, who describes the children in his class room:

"[The children] still cling stubbornly to the idea that the only good answer is a YES answer. This, of course, is the result of their miseducation, in which 'right answers' are the only ones that pay off. They have not learned how to learn from a mistake, or even that learning from mistakes is possible. If they say [in Twenty Questions] 'Is the number between 5,000 and 10,000?' and I say YES, they cheer, if I say NO, they groan, even though they get exactly the same amount of information in either case. The most anxious ones will, over and over again, ask questions that have already been answered, just for the satisfaction of hearing YES. Their more sophisticated teammates point out in vain that it's silly to ask a question when you already know the answer."¹⁸

But, and I would like to emphasize this, it is not just thought that is restricted, since thought does not exist in a vacuum, all by itself. Thought is restricted because the consequence of unrestricted thought is action, movement. If you are allowed to say, as a child, that school is boring and you'd rather not be there, one of two things would have to happen: your criticism would have to be taken seriously and students and teachers would have to start to figure out ways to turn schools into places of exciting learning, or you would be told, sooner or later, to shut up. (Liberalism attempts always a compromise: you can speak up as long as you don't demand action and real changes. In the end, whether it be the students or the Quebecois, "freedom of speech" exists only as long as it does not go "too far", i.e. words turning into deeds. When students would act by leaving the schools and the

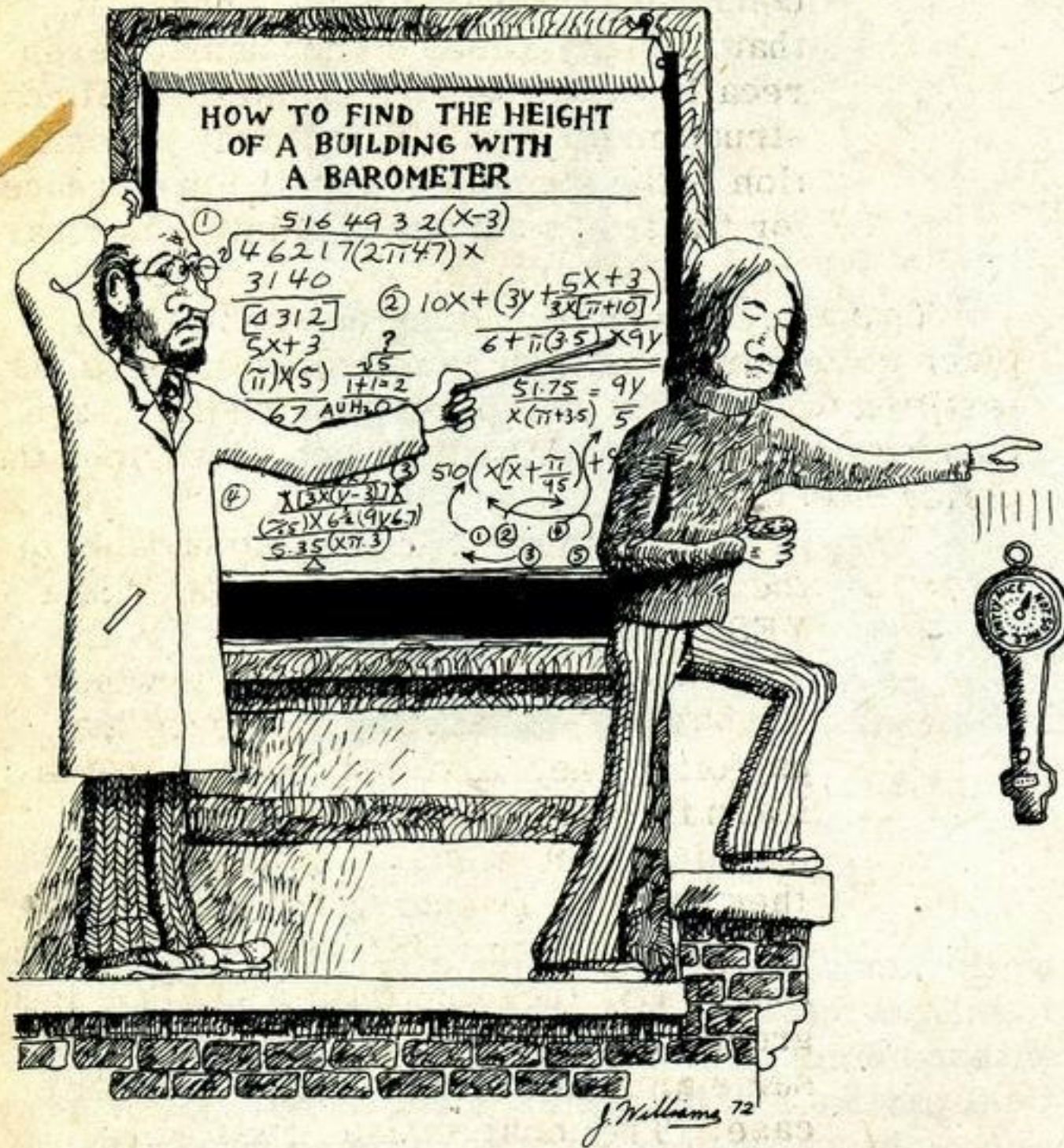
16) Banesh Hoffman, The tyranny of testing, Collier Books, 1964, pp. 65-67.

17) ibid, p. 101.

18) John Holt, How children fail, Pitman, 1967, p.

How to combat boredom and formalistic thought

by James Brimhall



Some time ago, I received a call from a colleague who asked if I would be the referee on the grading of an examination question. He was about to give a student zero for his answer to a physics question, while the student claimed he should receive a perfect score and would do so if the system were not set up against the student. The instructor and the student agreed to submit this to an impartial arbiter, and I was selected.

I went to my colleague's office and read the examination question, which was, "Show how it is possible to determine the height of a tall building with the aid of a barometer."

The student's answer was, "Take the barometer to the top of the building, attach a long rope to it, lower the barometer to the street, and then bring it up, measuring the length of the rope. The length of the rope is the height of the building."

I pointed out that the student really had a strong case for full credit, since he had answered the question completely and correctly. On the other hand, if full credit were given, it could well contribute to a high grade for the student in his physics course. A high grade is supposed to certify competence in physics and the answer did not confirm this. I suggested that the student have another try at answering the question; I was not surprised that my colleague agreed, but I

was surprised that the student did.

I gave the student six minutes to answer the question, with the warning that his answer should show some knowledge of physics. At the end of five minutes, he had not written anything. I asked if he wished to give up, but he said no. He had many answers to this problem; he was just thinking of the best one. I excused myself for interrupting him, and asked him to please go on. In the next minute, he dashed off his answer which was:

"Take the barometer to the top of the building and lean over the edge of the roof. Drop the barometer, timing its fall with a stopwatch. Then, using the formula $S = 1/2 at^2$, calculate the height of the building."

At this point, I asked my colleague if he would give up. He conceded and I gave the student almost full credit.

In leaving my colleague's office, I recalled that the student had said he had other answers to the problem, so I asked him what they were. "Oh, yes", said the student. "There are many ways of getting the height of a tall building with the aid of a barometer. For example, you could take the barometer out on a sunny day and measure the height of the barometer, the length of its shadow, and the length of the shadow of the building, and by the use of simple proportion, determine the height of the building."

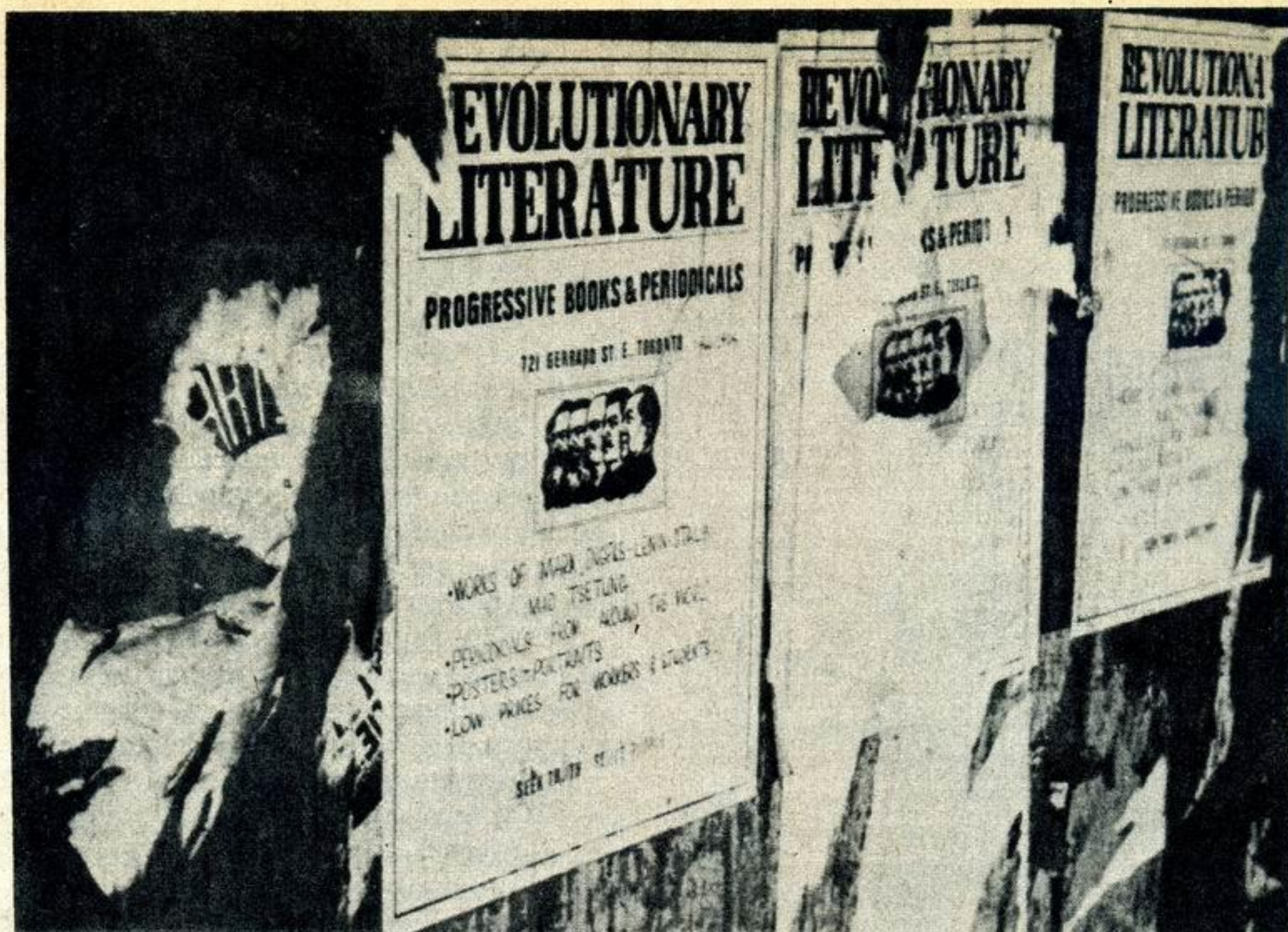
"Fine", I said. "And the others?"

"Yes", said the student. "There is a very basic measurement method that you will like. In this method, you take the barometer and begin to walk up the stairs. As you climb the stairs, you mark off the length of the barometer along the wall. You then count the number of marks, and this will give you the height of the building in barometer units. A very direct method."

"Of course, if you want a more sophisticated method, you can tie the barometer to the end of a string, swing it as a pendulum, and determine the value of 'g' at the street level and at the top of the building. From the difference between the two values of 'g', the height of the building can, in principle, be calculated."

Finally, he concluded, there are many other ways of solving the problem. "Probably the best", he said, "is to take the barometer to the basement and knock on the superintendent's door. When the superintendent answers, you speak to him as follows: 'Mr. Superintendent, here I have a fine barometer. If you will tell me the height of this building, I will give you this barometer.'"

At this point I asked the student if he really didn't know the answer to the problem. He admitted that he did, but that he was so fed up with college instructors trying to teach him how to think and to use "scientific methods" instead of showing him the structure of the subject matter, that he decided to take off on what he regarded mostly as a lark.



Quebecois take their words seriously - "We want to be masters of our own fate!" - the police and the army are called in. Thus the perfect liberal is the perfectly disconnected man: words remain words, removed from any action.)

So when I talk about undialectical, formalistic thought, I talk about the immobilization of human beings at an early age, their subjection to years and years of boredom and anxiety, until a peculiar "tolerance" is created for both. Boredom and anxiety then both become part of the "nature of things".

It goes without saying, that these methods of conditioning people to miserable, unfree lives, create also miserable human relationships. The school is the laboratory where you learn to be the alienated man. You learn to fear (for punishment, disapproval) meaningful human contacts, the expression of genuine feelings, any sign of spontaneity. Already in the early grades one finds extraordinary amounts of brutality, envy, pettiness, competitiveness and overall inhumanity towards fellow human beings - all cultivated in the class room. Super-individualism flourishes next to fear-ridden super-conformity. This is part of the making of the capitalist man, the unmaking of whom is the essential task of socialists.

Formalism on the left

But are the present day socialists up to this task?

It so happens, that the left in Canada, which on a verbal level espouses socialism, is everything but dialectical in its orientation to life and furthermore cultivates through its day-to-day practice the

worst kinds of alienated human relationships. Thus in all respects the left groups, their rhetoric notwithstanding, are but replicas of the bourgeois political parties and bourgeois social relations. This is the phenomenon I intend to examine now in detail.

First, I will attempt to discuss how the formalistic, undialectical thought is manifested on the left. A thorough treatment of the theoretical/practical shortcomings of the Canadian organized left - a long overdue task - is made unnecessarily complicated by the fact that with the exception of the Communist Party of Canada, none publishes a theoretical journal. Neither, CPL, CLM, CPC (M-L), nor the Trotskyists have presented their positions on the key elements of their program in a thorough and intelligent manner. Their respective publications, the Canadian Worker (CPL), New Canada (CLM), Labor Challenge and Young Socialist (League of Socialist Action - Trotskyist) and People Canada, CPC (M-L), are merely agitational propaganda outlets for the movements, but do not carry discussion of theoretical nature of any real substance, and never publish self-critical articles. Both the CPL and the Trotskyists make use of the theoretical journals of their U.S. "fraternal" movements (lacking any autonomy on the part of the Canadian movements, a better term would be "paternal"). In this discussion particularly the CPL's position on the National Question will by necessity have to draw heavily on the U.S. publication of the Progressive Labor Party.

Other Canadian left tendencies are equally short of writings about their own basic assumptions, i.e. the theory behind their practice. The publications of the Partisan Party and the Red Morning-New

Morning groups, have carried some discussion on why they do what they do, but much of it is superficial and sloganeering. The publications of the East Coast Socialist Movement, the East Coast Worker and the NDP left wing group Waffle's publication, Waffle News, have not yet carried any discussion of what kind of movements they are, how they interpret the Canadian reality, what tasks they have set for themselves and with what kind of successes and failures.

All the movements, part of which can be described as the Canadian "old left" and/or calling themselves "Marxist" (with the exception of the Waffle, which thinks of itself as undefined "socialist"), have as the key elements in their programmes items which are treated in a thoroughly undialectical manner, with the result that none can make any headway on the Canadian scene and are doomed to sect-like existence and profound irrelevance at a time when a dynamic left is most needed (or like the Waffle, doomed to forever trying to hide behind the skirts of the mother-party, not daring to move outside of the NDP and to create its own independent politics). These critical items, which we are to examine are as follows:

1) The Canadian Party of Labour position that any kind of nationalism is bad, and their outright dismissal of the National Question in Canada, as inherently and hopelessly petty-bourgeois. Needless to say, they are fiercely opposed to the struggle for independence in Quebec and English Canada.

2) The Canadian Liberation Movement's position that any kind of nationalism is good. They raise demands that emphasize Canadianism as something inherently good and label anyone critical of their position as pro-imperialist and anti-nationalist. Their current demand for a 85% Canadian quota for university teachers and for 100% Canadian unions are based on the argument that any Canadian union or teacher is better than a non-Canadian (and particularly American). Their position that imperialism is the primary contradiction in Canada today, is shared by the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), a Maoist formation.

3) The League of Socialist Action position that socialists should join the New Democratic Party in order to convert it to socialism, is the most important aspect of the League's program, affecting everything else it does. Here they are in full agreement with the Waffle group, who is equally single-minded about supporting the NDP.

4) The Communist Party of Canada position that the Soviet Union is a socialist workers' state and that the defence of the Soviet Union is (forever) the primary task of the Communist Parties of the world.

In addition to the above items, I will also discuss the "economism" of all the left groups from those who regard the workers as change agents, but do not credit them with anything except narrowly material interests, to those who claim that the working class is too materialistic, too reactionary, and that the strategic groups to be organized are the "poor", women, and something called "street youth". This economism, as I have mentioned earlier, is

just a further manifestation of undialectical thought

The national question misunderstood

On the national question, the CPL and CLM, both small, mainly campus based groups, but attempting - unsuccessfully - to penetrate the union movement, can be found at the polar opposites of each other. The CPL simply has no use for nationalism in any shape or form, and it labels all manifestations of national struggle as strictly "petty bourgeois" and "the bosses game". Thus in Canada it has found itself opposed to the independence struggle in Quebec as well to raising the question in English Canada. These struggles to the CPL, are in direct opposition to socialism and internationalism, and therefore will have to be mercilessly combated. Needless to say, with the growing contradictions between Canada and U.S., and the Federal State and Quebec, the members of this movement will find themselves cornered into a purely defensive position and into raising the most general and therefore meaningless slogans such as "smash racist unemployment" and "fight the bosses".

The CLM, on the other hand, sees all manifestations of nationalism as positive and will gladly support the most narrow and selfish demands on the part of any segment of the population, as long as these demands can be construed as "anti-imperialist" (i.e. anti-American).

Both CLM and CPL refer heavily to past and present authorities on the National Question (Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse-Tung) to support their respective positions.¹⁹ The problem, however, is that one can find for each quote from Lenin, for instance, another one by him which seems to contradict the first one. This can, of course, only happen when quotations are removed from their overall contexts, and become absolute statements. In this discussion I will quote any of the above theoreticians only as far as the quotations illuminate a dialectical or non-dialectical approach to reality. A critique of these two groups will stand or fall not on some further quotations from elsewhere, i.e. on outquoting them, but on whether or not it can be demonstrated that these movements are undialectical in their approach to the Canadian reality.

Let us first examine the case made by the CPL. "Revolutionaries must fight nationalism" is the title of an editorial in Progressive Labour, the theoretical organ of the "fraternal" organization, Progressive Labor Party, in the U.S. The article - the fullest statement of their position on the national question so far - is decorated with ample quotes from Stalin and Lenin, one of them stating categorically, that the national struggle is in its essence "always a bourgeois struggle, one that is to the advantage and profit mainly of the bourgeoisie" (Joseph Stalin, Marxism and the national question). The lead article follows this position with single-minded determination, with one absolute following the other

19) This is usually done in debates and occasional writings; neither has yet presented their position in a thorough manner.

and polar opposites piling on top of each other, into one huge insoluble contradiction. This is how the case is presented:

"National struggle instead of class struggle must lead to imperialism. National struggle denies class struggle." (p. 4)

The fundamental error here is that the national struggle is presented as an opposite to class struggle, and as always, under all circumstances, denying class struggle. By definition, it is therefore reactionary, which then makes all further discussion and investigation quite unnecessary (and hopeless, for that matter). Neither the quote from Stalin nor the article itself entertains the possibility that the national struggle contains within itself the same old class struggle which PL (and presumably Stalin also) finds "acceptable". An oppressed nation is not a classless society, although the classes within it could conceivably momentarily unite around a common task as well as opposing each other on the long-term solution to the national question. (Say, for instance, when Canadian entrepreneurs and Canadian workers momentarily unite to keep a company going in the face of takeover threats. That is a question of immediate survival only, since back to "business as usual", there will also be "class struggle as usual".) The article goes on to state, again categorically:

"For many years we in the Progressive Labor Party held to the idea of two types of nationalism, revolutionary and reactionary. But a look at the world reality shows that there is no such thing. Nationalism is either the path to oppression by an outside imperialist or the road back to capitalism. Any form of nationalism is bad." (Emphasis added.)

From a non-dialectical position (either completely revolutionary or completely reactionary) rather than containing both elements, therefore necessitating a struggle between those elements), PL walked into a worse trap, from which there is for them no escape. Again, by definition they have to exclude the possibility that an oppressed nation is struggling neither to oppress in return, nor to be oppressed by another imperialist nation, nor to "return to capitalism from socialism". There is the quite distinct possibility, just waiting to be discovered, that a nation only wants independence not territorial expansion, and that the nation itself, as all nations in the world, consists largely of working class people and peasants, who might or might not rally around a working class programme, depending on the nature of the movement and its leadership.

So the whole question of nationalism becomes far more complex and would have to be dealt with in its totality, not in abstractions and fragments. But the question of the role of the working class in the national struggle - which is the key element to be discussed - is once again by definition left outside intelligent treatment. Stalin is quoted as saying:

"Sometimes the bourgeoisie succeeds in drawing the proletariat into the national

movement and then the national struggle externally assumes a 'nation-wide' character. But this is only externally. In its essence it is always a bourgeois struggle, one that is to the advantage and profit mainly of the bourgeoisie." (Stalin, Marxism and the national question)

The Progressive Labor goes on to restate the same:

"The point is that nationalism is the political rationale presented to workers by one group of capitalists, to fight outside capitalists for profits. And this fight is never in the basic interest of the workers". (p. 11). (Emphasis added)

In both quotations the working class appears as a passive object, easily manipulated by the bourgeoisie for its own ends. This working class does not appear to be capable of raising demands of its own that would oppose the bourgeois demands. This capitulation of the working class is of course possible under certain specific circumstances (like in Germany during the thirties), but even then it came as a result of the weakness of the working class leadership on the left (The German Communist Party - controlled from Kremlin - and the always bankrupt social democrats) and not because some strange inevitability that condemns the working class to forever succumb to bourgeois rule.²⁰

The Progressive Labor (by its own definition) cannot even consider the possibility that the working class, under certain circumstances favorable to its political development, could take the lead in national struggles, and thereby introduce proletarian (revolutionary) nationalism. Or that the ruling class of an oppressed nation might not be able to draw the proletariat into its national movement and not be numerically strong enough to take the lead in the national struggle. This appears to be the case in Canada, where talk about the "national bourgeoisie" is somewhat of a joke since no such animal exists. The national bourgeoisie in Canada has by and large ceased to exist, since as a class it has sold out and continues to sell out whatever little remains. The previous national bourgeoisie has turned into the managers of American capital in Canada.²¹

Not satisfied with declaring nationalism to be by definition reactionary, the article announces:

"There are only two sets of political ideas in the world: Marxist-Leninist ideas and capitalist ideas. Nationalism lies in the second category." (p. 11)

20) This does not mean that I subscribe to the simplistic position that workers are by nature revolutionary only to be blocked by conservative leadership. The detrimental role of reactionary and incorrect working class leadership is that it keeps the working class from becoming revolutionary.

21) Once again we refer here to the ample literature on foreign ownership in Canada. The onus is on those who claim that a national bourgeoisie exists to prove concretely, by naming names, who they are and how they rule.

Undialectical idealists as the (C)PLers are, they live in the world of "pure ideas", forgetting the very real contradictions that exist in reality within all phenomena, nationalism included. A very specific advocacy of an idea, in a very specific time and space, can turn out to be either anti-working class or pro-working class. Thus, the advocacy of community control at the present time in Canada, for instance is totally absurd, since the working class does not yet constitute a community. Conceivably, at a different time period, as a result of definite historical processes, the very same "idea" would be a revolutionary demand. For a dialectical materialist, unlike the idealists hiding behind mechanistic materialism, there are no absolutes that prevail eternally. There is truth at any given moment, but that truth changes with changing circumstances.

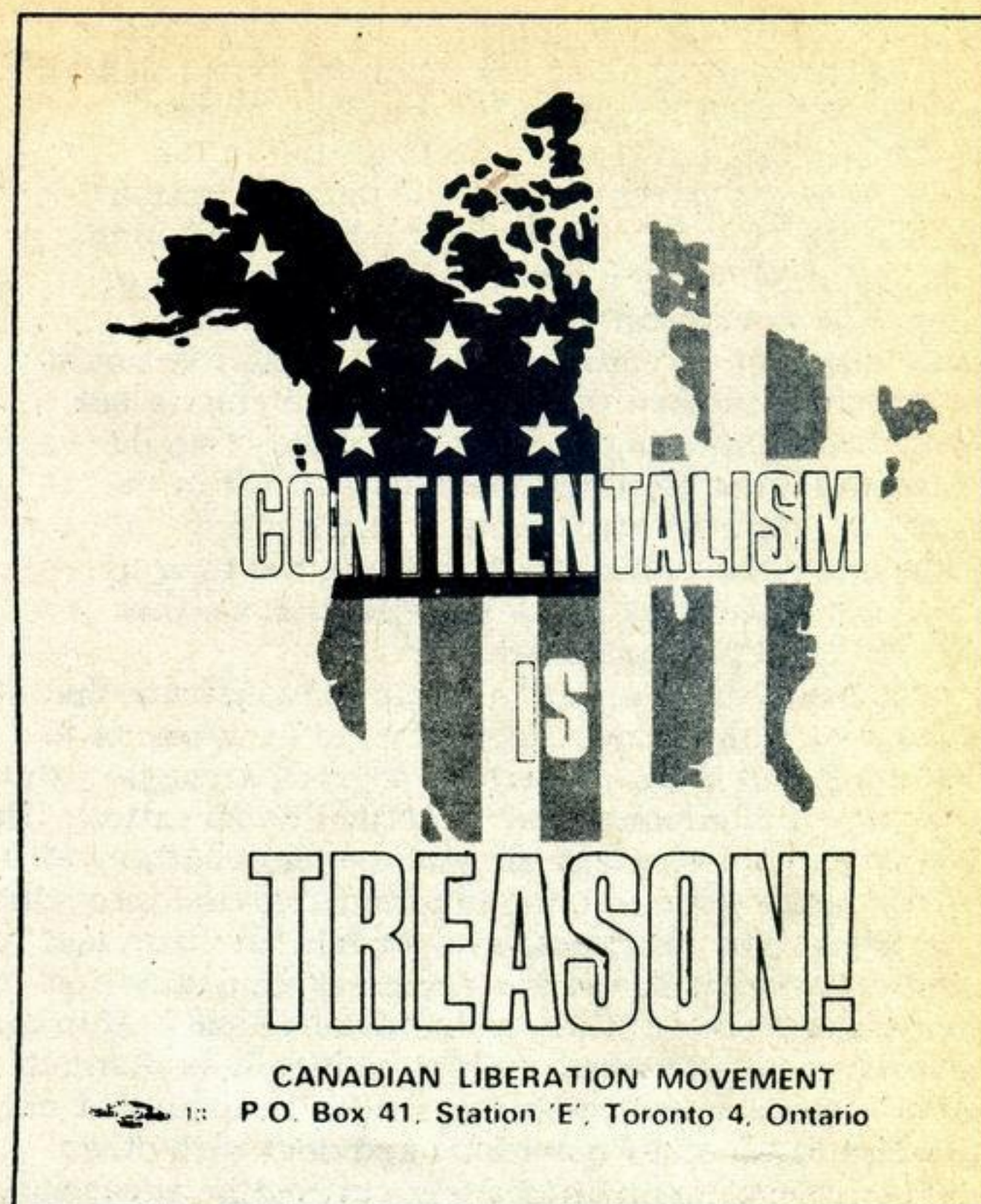
The "primary contradiction" mystique

The Canadian Liberation Movement is equally unaware of the existence of contradictions and arrives at an equally one-dimensional, undialectical position. "Canadianism" and "patriotism" become unquestioned virtues, advocated at the expense of even the most elementary class analysis. Canadian Unions - any kind of Canadian unions - become by definition better than the present U.S. unions, just as any Canadian professor becomes by virtue of his Canadian citizenship superior to anyone who doesn't have such a citizenship. Although the unions and the professors are of strategic importance to the CLM, other aspects of Canadianism are equally elevated. Thus we will, for instance, be hearing more and more about "Canadian culture" as inherently superior to "imperialist culture", i. e. culture originating from the U.S.

The CLM position, which it shares in essential features with the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), appears to be based on the concept of "primary contradiction", introduced by Mao Tse-Tung in his Philosophical Essays. I want to quote Mao at length on how he presents "the principal contradiction and the principal aspect of a contradiction", in order for us to understand the considerable problems with Mao's "dialectics". Writes Mao:

"There are many contradictions in the process of development of a complex thing, and one of them is necessarily the principal contradiction whose existence and development determine or influence the existence and development of the other contradictions."²²

"[But] whatever happens, there is no doubt at all that at every stage in the development of a process, there is only one principal contradiction which plays the leading role. Hence, if in any process there are a number of contradictions, one of them must be the principal contradiction playing the leading and decisive role, while the rest occupy a secondary and subordinate position. Therefore, in studying any complex process in which there



The slogans of the Canadian Liberation Movement have from the beginning lacked any class content.

are two or more contradictions, we must devote every effort to finding its principal contradiction. Once this principal contradiction is grasped, all problems can be readily solved." (p 331) (Emphasis supplied)

An example is given to illuminate the "principal contradiction" in operation:

"When imperialism launches a war of aggression against [a semi colonial] country, all its various classes, except for some traitors, can temporarily unite in a national war against imperialism. At such a time, the contradiction between imperialism and the country concerned becomes the principal contradiction, while all the contradictions among the various classes within the country (including what was the principal contradiction between the feudal and the great masses of the people) are temporarily relegated to a secondary and subordinate position. (p.331) (Emphasis supplied).

So far, so good. There can be a most general agreement that at any given moment, in any given situation, there is such a thing as a "principal (primary) contradiction", i. e., certain aspects of the struggle take precedence over another aspect. Thus, if workers are trying to defeat a strike-

22) Mao Tse-Tung, "On contradiction", Selected Works, vol. I, Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1967, p. 331.

breaking action by the company, it is pointless to concentrate on attacking the union for being U.S. dominated; what it should be attacked for is whether or not the leadership is acting in the interest of the workers, and whether the action against the company is effective or not (in which case the role of the international union might or might not be relevant). Similarly, in a very acute phase of an urban renewal struggle, it would be absurd to involve the residents in trying to set up a health clinic in the district, since it would divert energies from the foremost aspect of the struggle. But the health clinic might, in a different phase, make real sense in the overall strategy of working class mobilization against various forms of oppression.

Example after example would demonstrate that at each given moment decisions have to be made as to what approach has a priority in a given struggle; this is merely a commonsense, practical observation. But to base a whole strategy on it is another matter, since the "primary contradiction" is then elevated into something altogether different, almost into an "iron law" of social development. Is the "primary contradiction" to dominate all other, "lesser" contradictions? If urban renewal, i.e. an assault on a working class district, is the "primary contradiction", does it mean that one does not raise other questions and deal with other contradictions, such as those occurring in education, mental and physical health, sexuality, oppression of women, child rearing, and so on? And if the "primary contradiction" is imperialism (which in the most general sense it is, since this nation is dominated in all its different aspects of existence by an imperialist nation, the U.S.), does it mean that one in a labour struggle only raises the question of U.S. domination of a union, but not whether this domination is or is not detrimental to a democratic, grass-roots controlled union?

There is a clear answer to this in Mao's previous quotation, which leads one to think that the whole concept of "primary contradiction" has obtained metaphysical dimensions: the theory has started to dominate reality, rather than responding to it.

What exactly does it mean to say that "the contradiction between imperialism and the country concerned becomes the principal contradiction, while all the contradictions among the various classes within the country... are temporarily relegated to a secondary and subordinate position."? What superficially appears quite rational and practical, turns out to contain major problems as soon as one raises two questions: 1) what is "temporarily"? and 2) under what kind of leadership is this unity between class enemies to be created? How long would, for instance, the contradiction between the ruling class and the working class be buried? Would the working class have to accept the leadership of the national bourgeoisie, until such a time when the "war of aggression" by the imperialist nation is over? Would that be the case regardless of whether the working class political movement would be a feeble one or whether it would be a strong movement, with support from a large segment of the working class? There is a real difference between an under-

developed working class movement having to recognize the leadership (i.e. the power) of the numerically and materially stronger ruling class and pro-ruling class elements, and a numerically strong working class movement submitting, for some bizarre reason, to the leadership of its class enemy. Or can one conceive of these class enemies sitting down and deciding to have "peace" until the "common enemy" is defeated, and not raising the question of "what happens after?" How can one possibly avoid the question of what kind of society is being fought for?²³

To be sure, in its present phase the Canadian Liberation Movement is not advocating that they join forces, say, with the Committee for Independent Canada - that feeble attempt by some sections of the Canadian bourgeoisie as well as segments of the petty bourgeoisie, to raise the "national question". But with the CLM's lack of class analysis they appear to pave the way for such a future coalition. If, as they say, "imperialism is the primary contradiction", and everything else secondary, including the class struggle, then a miserable practice is to follow.

Bad theory leads to bad practice

This is how this practice has taken shape in the past. In its early phases in 1969-70, the "primary contradiction" mystique led the CLM to ally its forces with the Canadian Construction Workers Union, a break-away from an International Union. The union, led by Bruno Zanini, could accurately be described as a reactionary business union, in which rank-and-file participation consisted of being able to applaud the leader, whose "in" with the workers was the fact that he spoke in their native language, Italian. The best one could say about Zanini is that he is a demagogue who has never shown the slightest inclination towards socialism. Now, in his own particular survival struggle against union leaders in the U.S., he raised the question of "Canadian unions for Canadians" (since he didn't have anything else to raise!), and made this the central aspect of the struggle. CLMers,

23) These very questions have been extremely problematic, to put it mildly, in the history of the Chinese revolution. The Comintern (Third International) China policy of subjecting the Communists to the leadership of the national bourgeoisie in the Kuomintang led the Communist Party of China, time after time, to bitter defeat. The 1949 revolution, led by Mao Tse-Tung, was made against the explicit orders of Stalin and the Komintern, whose position it was to the last, that the Chinese revolution was to be a national bourgeois revolution, led by Chiang Kai-Shek. There is, however, in Mao's writings no treatment of this highly problematic question and no criticism of Stalin. (See, C. Brandt, Stalin's failure in China, Harvard, 1958; C. B. McLane, Soviet policy and the Chinese communists: 1931-1946, Columbia University Press, 1958.)

delighted with such a strong show of "anti-imperialist spirit", became, in effect, public relations workers for the union, putting out leaflets and pamphlets, and distributing a centre fold of the union contract in the first issue of their publication, New Canada.

But while doing all this, nowhere, at any time, did the CLM deal publicly with the reactionary nature of the Zanini leadership and the obvious contradictions between power hungry, self-seeking leaders and the rank-and-file workers. For the time being this fundamental conflict that exists to a larger or lesser degree in all unions, was forgotten for the sake of the "primary contradiction". That a radical group, calling itself Marxist, will work full-time to rally workers to support reactionary leadership, boggles the mind, but what is even more shocking is that CLM never dealt with their failure to introduce socialist analysis into the struggle. After Zanini's leadership quest was defeated, despite all the flag waving (maple leaf) around it, CLM packed up and went on, presumably looking for another "patriotic personality" and a further "anti-imperialist struggle". The immigrant workers were left to the continued exploitation of right-wing union bureaucrats and assorted demagogues. All CLM had been interested in was to replace the U.S. reactionary leadership, with one from Canada, and failing that, they left the scene.

Since that time, every minor power struggle between U.S. and Canadian bureaucrats in the labour unions, acquires a revolutionary significance for the CLM. Its newspaper, New Canada, carries regular reports on labour struggles in most glowing terms, such as the following:

"May 7 saw a smashing victory for Canadian unions in Winnipeg. The 613 workers of the Bristol Aerospace Company have finally won their two-year battle to get out of 'International' Association of Machinists." (Emphasis added).²⁴

Now, when it turns out that the vote was 312 to 250, one could hardly call this a "smashing victory"! Obviously there are serious contradictions in the union around issues that have little to do with "anti-imperialism" (unless one assumes that the 250 workers voting to remain in the international union, are staunch supporters of U.S. imperialism!), and these are the issues that the CLM, blinded by its "primary contradiction", are unable to either perceive or deal with.

It is worthwhile to note that another observer, less ideologically blinded and therefore more objective in his approach, has been able to make sense out of the "smashing victory", reported by the CLM, and to demystify the whole struggle. In an article, aptly titled "Winnipeg's CAIMAW: Business unionism replaces business unionism", Alvin Finkel writes:

"The depth of hostility between CAIMAW (Canadian Association of Industrial, Mechanical and Allied workers) and the internationals however can cloud a rather basic question: what real differences are

there in the philosophy and approach of the two? Interviews with Bristol workers gave me the distinct impression that a change of unions in the plant has meant little more than a change in the faces of the contract negotiators. A new contract was negotiated in April 1971, and most workers contacted were satisfied with it. But, as one worker who voted for CAIMAW and supports it, commented: 'IAM always got good contracts, too... I wouldn't say this contract is any better.' For example, like IAM, the new union was willing to let the company recoup part of its increased wage costs by laying off newer workers. In all 88 workers were released.

Nor has CAIMAW meant increased involvement by Bristol workers in union affairs. True, all union decisions are locally made, but as in IAM, only a handful of workers take part in making these decisions. The union is seen as an intermediary organization between the company and the workers rather than an organization of the workers themselves. In fact, it is this intermediary character of the union that makes it possible for breakaways like CAIMAW to grow. Workers, who believe a new union might give them improved services, adopt an attitude of 'let's give this new group a chance.'

And Finkel concludes:

"A fair analysis of CAIMAW vs. IAM is that CAIMAW is number two and it tries harder. But it has made no changes in the relations between management and workers' prerogatives. The assumptions implicit in the approach of both CAIMAW and IAM are the same: that management's role is to manage; and the union's role is to insure that management 'trickle down' some of the increased earnings of the firm.

The 'Canadian union' issue is relevant but it must be seen in perspective. Bristol Aerospace workers belong to a Canadian union and are employed by a Canadian-owned firm. But they would have no less role in decision-making at Bristol if tomorrow American owners and an American union took over."²⁵

A "smashing victory", indeed!

Failing to understand the alienation of workers from their labour and "their" unions, CLM has reduced the totality of working class experience to one "grievance", that against American domination of their unions and the companies they work for, and has limited the whole working class struggle to a struggle against "international" unions. By the nature of these politics, which do not comprehend working class life, the CLM allies itself

24) New Canada, vol. 1 no. 3.

25) Canadian Dimension, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 46.

with "local" leadership, hoping, perhaps, that once the "first task", the national struggle, has been won, then they can start talking about socialism.²⁶ Socialism, oddly enough, is the second item on the agenda that they themselves have prepared! Meanwhile, the serious task of examining the present day nature of the trade union movement, as to whether it can be a vehicle for fundamental social change, has not even started, and neither has there been an attempt to understand the whole range of working class oppression and alienation.

The CLM acts equally undialectically and incomprehendingly towards the university experience as well. The totality of that oppressive institution, the way universities are controlled by the ruling class, the way knowledge is fragmented in them to create in the students (and professors) an experience of absurdity and boredom, the way theory is separated from practice (in the case of Canada, American theory from Canadian practice), becomes reduced by the CLM to "let's get rid of American professors". This is all the 85% quota campaign is about. It contains a basic democratic demand that the citizens of a nation would have a priority over jobs in that country, but instead of going beyond this narrow demand, as a dialectician would, into dealing with the nature of those jobs, i.e. what is to be taught in the university, who is to control the universities and so on, the CLM has got stuck, like a broken record, on the virtues of the 85% quota as such.

Again, the magical "primary contradiction", prevents them from seeing a fluid reality, in which "American professors" do not figure as a key element, since Canadian professors can also be found to fragment knowledge, be boring, be careerist, perpetuate bourgeois ideology, be indifferent towards the students, and so on. To which CLM can be found to respond: "But first we'll deal with the imperialists, then with the Canadians." And from that perspective they will try to rally reactionary and conservative Canadians to protect their jobs.

Now there is no reason in the world - except deepseated formalism and ideological blindness - why one could not deal with the national question and socialism as being thoroughly interrelated.

Both questions have to be raised at the same time. It does no good to demand, for instance, "Canadian studies" and "Canadian culture", if what passes presently for these is bourgeois Canadian studies and bourgeois Canadian culture, just as removed from the lives of the working class majority in this country as are the U.S. counterparts. It is up to the left groups, such as CLM, to spell out what they mean by "Canadian"; i.e., what it is that they want to substitute for the presently dominant U.S. culture.

If it so happens that they would have to spell out that "Canadian" means socialist and pro-working class, they would have to bid a hasty goodbye to the elements they are presently trying to rally forth; disgruntled, but not even slightly socialist or pro-working class, graduate students, junior academics, artists, writers, film-makers, and

so on. If on the other hand they will not spell out their politics for the fear of losing their present constituency of petty bourgeois elements, the CLM will fully deserve to be called not a socialist movement, but a national chauvinist one. The choice is CLM's and the choice it has to make if it is not to die of "internal contradictions", of being "secretly socialist", but openly narrowly chauvinistic.

For the Trotskyists, it's NDP forever . . .

The Trotskyist movement in this country is equally boggled down in hopelessly formalistic thought. The strategy of the movement for the last decade has been to "bore from within" the New Democratic Party, in the hope of turning it into a socialist movement. (Presently, they are also doing their damnest to keep the Waffle movement in the NDP, and to prevent any serious discussion as to where the Waffle should go)²⁷ The Trotskyists have made up their minds once and for all that there is no place they would rather be than in the NDP. And this despite the fact that their hard work has born very little fruit; if anything, the NDP as a party is moving further to the right and becoming less and less willing to and capable of presenting a fundamental challenge to the ruling class parties in this country.

The Trotskyist argument goes something like this: "The NDP is a workers' party, and has in it the most advanced elements of the class, the trade unionists. These people are not yet ready for socialism, but those not in the NDP are even less ready. We should stay close to this most advanced sector of the working class, and try to raise their consciousness. That is why our primary strategy is to stay in the NDP and to advocate that the more radicalized elements in the society also do so. One day we'll take over the NDP, the way we have taken over other groups and organizations."²⁸

There are many fallacies to this argument, obvious to anyone who seriously investigates social reality. For one thing, the argument ignores the class reality of the NDP, the obvious fact

26) Here the CLM is not alone. The pro-nationalist independent socialists also tie themselves up with the leadership of Canadian unions, and fail to understand and deal with the contradiction between leadership and rank-and-file members. The most they can achieve this way is to become integrated into the union bureaucracy, often as unpaid labour.

27) There is no longer any time for such a discussion. As of late June, the Waffle has been expelled from the NDP. They will now, belatedly, have to deal with questions that they have systematically ignored over the last three years, such as what they can do without the NDP.

28) There is no theoretical struggle visible in the Trotskyist movement around the question of the NDP; thus no thoroughgoing discussion can be found on the pages of their two papers, Labor Challenge and Young Socialist.

"When the revolutionary socialists raise the demand 'Win the NDP to socialism', they do not express the illusion that the NDP can become a revolutionary party. They are expressing their conviction that the struggle for a revolutionary program and leadership will be expressed within the NDP for a whole period to come."

Labor Challenge, May 22, 1972.

... the Trotskyists' have an unshaking faith in the NDP...

that the leadership of the party at any level does not come from the working class, but from what can be called the petty bourgeoisie. It is lawyers, doctors, teachers, social workers, journalists, academics, and labour functionaries, who run the party, and it is the labour union leadership (paid functionaries and bureaucrats) who keep the party going financially through donations that are automatically deducted from the workers' wages, after the local leadership has chosen to affiliate with the NDP. Anyone familiar with union life, knows that the support/non-support of the NDP is not arrived at through a process of mass discussion but can be and most often is achieved in a small meeting, with barely a quorum present. Thus it cannot be construed, except by those thoroughly naive, that affiliation by a union is an expression of the totality of the membership or even a large part of it.

Anyone with eyes can also see that there is very little life in the riding associations, and that this feeble life does not come from the working class. Working class people might and do vote for the NDP as an alternative to something even worse, but they do not join the party anywhere near the numbers they vote for it. And what is most interesting, a large proportion of working class people do not vote for anyone at all.²⁹

The undialectical thought of the Trotskyists makes them interpret this reality of non-participation and non-voting by the working class in a most extraordinary way. They will argue that this indicates political backwardness on the part of the working class population, and that if these people could only become "radicalized" they would join the NDP. The possibility that large sectors of the working class have rejected the NDP, not because they have a "Marxist critique" of social democracy, but because the NDP does not come to grips in any way whatsoever with their life circumstances, has not yet been entertained by the Trotskyists (or the Waffle for that matter). And neither has the possibility penetrated their collective consciousness, that no matter how hard they'll work to polish the

the tarnished image of the NDP as "a worker's party", the party itself (with or without the Trotskyists) has nothing to offer the working class in Canada.

Here we have the incredible situation of so-called revolutionaries doing their utmost to drag working class people into a party that has never represented the interests of the working class, but is a selfconscious expression of the petty bourgeois elements in this country. Of course, the Trotskyists cannot succeed, since hard work and good intentions, without a thorough class analysis and a profound understanding of the actual nature of working class life, amounts to exactly nothing.

If openminded investigation were permitted in the Trotskyist movement, the members would do well to investigate the fact that a great number of working class people, greatly dissatisfied with their lives and the society they live in, will neither join the NDP nor vote for it, since their perceptions of what is wrong and what has to be done, is far more thorough, far more radical in real sense, than that of the NDP. If one dares to talk to ordinary working class men and women at election time, one might hear these fundamental criticism coming from "apathetic" and "politically backward" workers: "The parties are all the same; nothing in them for people like us.", "The NDP - that's just a bunch of lawyers and social workers. What do they know?", "Voting? Why wear out your shoes? What difference does it make for a guy like me?", "Never see them around, except at election times? Do they think we're stupid or something?", "No, what's needed is something altogether different. And they are all the same." And so on and on.

29) Re participation in voting, there is an important thing to remember: you have to manage to get on the voter's list. Here there are unknown numbers of working class people, particularly single roomers of all ages, who don't make it. Their lack of participation is nowhere recorded. Of those on the voter's list, the voting ranges from ca 75% in Fed. and Prov. elections, to a dismal less than 50% in municipal elections.

The problem, however, with the Trotskyist movement is that its class base is also petty bourgeois, largely consisting of middle class university students. No wonder that they feel comfortable in the NDP and no wonder that they too are removed from the working class in this country - otherwise they would have understood that the widespread popular discontent, largely inarticulated as yet, indicates dissatisfaction with the present social system as well as all the political parties, and leaves an opening to the left, which has not been filled yet. And this opening cannot be filled by left movements that do not perceive reality dialectically and who try to fit a flowing, complex and intricate reality to a dead formula. Or by left movements like the Trotskyists, who do not even talk to the workers. (Suggested topic for the Labor Challenge: "What the workers really think of the NDP and what conclusions we might draw from that?" Are there any takers?)

No class analysis of Soviet Union

If the Trotskyists have successfully avoided doing a class analysis of the NDP, the Communist Party of Canada has on the record an even more monumental achievement of never having done a class analysis of the Soviet Union and the post-revolutionary developments there. Where the Trotskyists forever do a public relations job for the NDP, the Communist Party of Canada has turned into a tourist agency for the Soviet Union. The party is carrying - now for decades - the incredible burden of trying to present the Soviet Union to the world as a socialist country, even perhaps a communist one. This, of course, is an untenable position to be put into, no different from the position that some others have taken in defending U.S. as the "heart of the free world". Neither position corresponds to reality - unless words are distorted to such an extent that they become meaningless, which they do when Soviet Union is equated with socialism/communism and U.S. with the free world.

What about the possibility that there has been no socialism at all in the Soviet Union in the last five decades? What about the possibility that the revolution, having been made prematurely with a tiny party heading a numerically small working class, went to defeat not very many years afterwards, even before Lenin died in January, 1924? Only to be replaced by the rule of a different class, the Russian "middle class", consisting of Tsarist officials, managers and owners, bureaucrats, the educated class, the "intelligentsia", most of whom rose to power by joining the Communist Party after the revolution was made.

It is absolutely necessary to do a lot of demystifying about the Russian revolution (as well as the Chinese, for that matter), so that the last fifty years practice in that country cannot be used to invalidate the yet untested ideas of socialism and communism. One could perhaps start with Lenin's own experiences, as a man who saw the

revolution slip through the hands of the working class. As early as 1922 Lenin was alarmed by the fact that the Tsarist functionaries who had first boycotted the new government soon joined forces with it:

"We took over the old state apparatus, and that was our misfortune. The state apparatus very often works against us. It happened that in 1917, after we had seized power, the state apparatus began to sabotage us. We had, at that time, a great fight and asked them: "Please, come back to us." And they all came back and that was our misfortune.

We have now an immense mass of officials, but we have not sufficient trained forces really to manage them. In practice it often happens that here, above, where we hold state power, the apparatus manages to work, but there, below, where they take decisions, they decide in such a way that they very often work against our policies. Above we have, I do not know how many, but I suppose at least some thousands, or at the most some tens of thousands, of our own people. But below are hundreds of thousands of old officials inherited from the Tsar and from the bourgeois society, who work consciously, in part unconsciously, against us."³⁰(emphasis added)

The workers became rapidly an insignificant minority at all levels of party functioning. The very agency, Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (RKI), created by Lenin to supervise the work of government and administrations, succumbed to different class forces. As Moshe Lewin describes it

"Under Stalin's direction - he was Commissar of Inspection from March, 1919 to April 25, 1922 - it [RKI] had become an overgrown, highly bureaucratic body, comprising some twelve thousand civil servants, very few of whom were workers. The chinovniki [Tsarist functionaries] had succeeded in taking over the institutions that had been specially created to combat bureaucracy."³¹

In March of 1921, a party purge, advocated by Lenin for a number of years, had been sanctioned by the 10th Party Congress. The resolution passed indicates strongly the nature of the class conflict within the party:

"Elements which are not sufficiently communist or [are] even directly parasitic are flowing into the party in a broad stream. The Russian Communist Party is in power, and this inevitably attracts to it, together with the better elements, careerist elements as well. A serious purge is

30) E. H. Carr, Socialism in one country, Penguin Books, 1970 edition, vol. 1, p. 132.

31) Moshe Lewin, Lenin's last struggle, Pantheon Books, 1968, p. 95.

indispensable in Soviet and party organizations."³²

The first purge cut the membership down 24 per cent, leaving the party with half-a-million members. As is to be expected, the purge fell more severely on non-worker and non-peasant elements, but did not elevate particularly working class members to leadership and decision-making positions. According to Carr, the proportion of workers and peasants

been a minority in post-revolutionary Russia, (even by the fact that as a class the industrial working class was numerically small), the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921-22, with its definite concessions to well-to-do peasants and capitalists and the simultaneous influx of even more petty bourgeois elements into the Communist party, turned the working class once again into a subject class, inside and out-

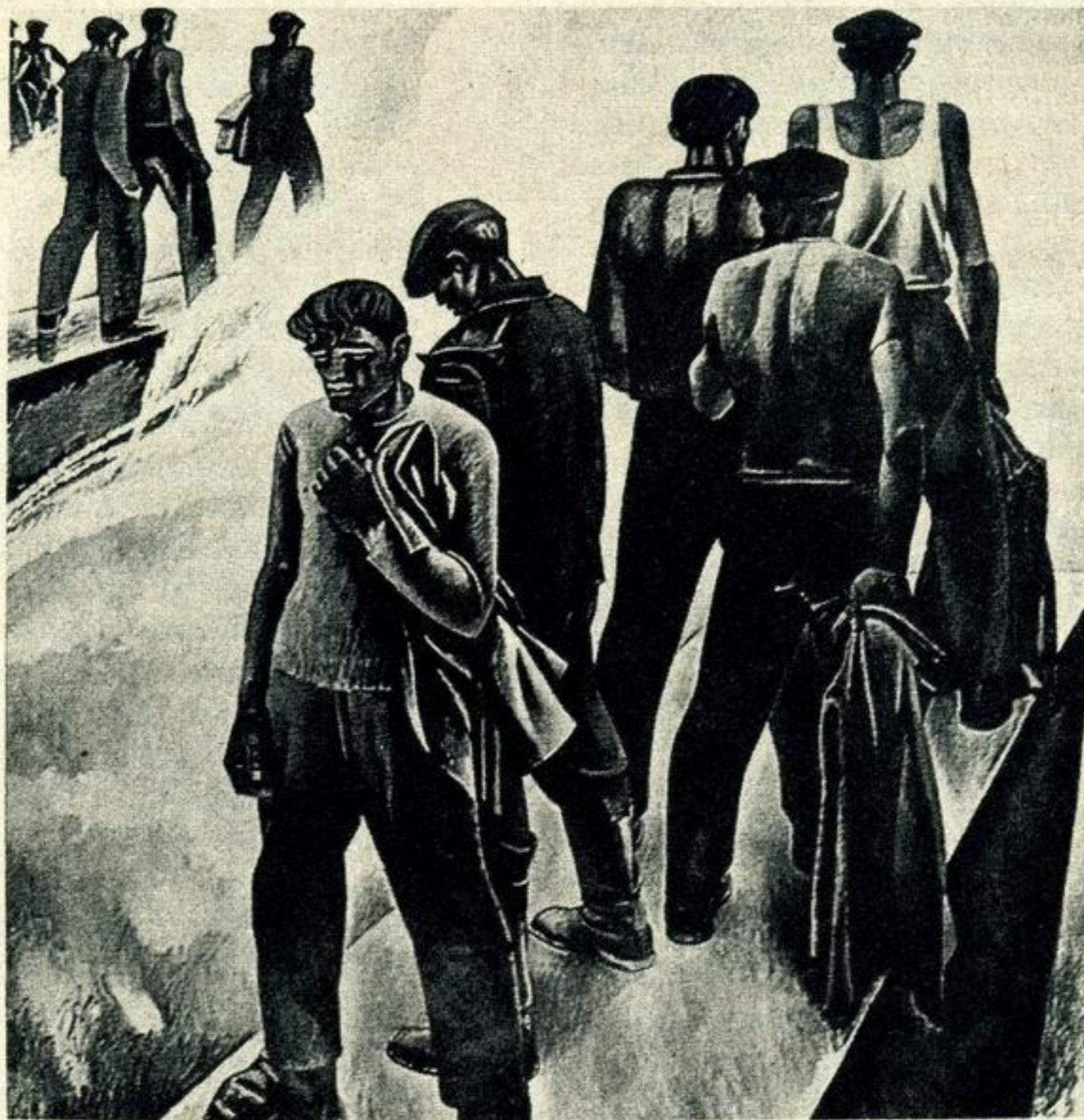


Photo: David Lloyd

Contemporary Soviet art reflects (unwittingly) faithfully the condition of workers in that country: downtrodden, dejected beasts of burden, faceless members of the "labour force". (Tair Salakhov: Workers)

rose in the industrial provinces from 47 to 53 per cent and in agricultural provinces, from 31 to 48 per cent. These statistics show that the workers and peasants, who together constituted a huge majority of the Russian population, constituted barely half of the membership of the party in 1921! But even these statistics present an inflated number of "workers and peasants", since anyone with a working class or peasant background, no matter what their actual occupation was, emerged as a worker or peasant in the statistics. The Party at one point attempted to deal with this problem of paid party functionaries being classified as "workers and peasants", and introduced more specific categories, of "workers from the bench" and "peasants from the plough". On the basis of this more accurate definition of social classes, Molotov reported to the 14th Party Congress in December 1925, that "whereas 58 per cent of party members were returned in the statistics as workers, only 38 per cent were "workers from the bench".³³

If the workers then had from the beginning

side of the party. With the NEP came all the scourges of capitalism: unemployment for the workers, one-man management as opposed to workers' control, oppressive production methods, differential wage rates and purely material incentives. Carr describes the impact of the NEP on the workers:

"It... was also in the spirit of NEP that the rights of employers, public or private, should not be overlooked. The functions of the unions included the encouragement of production: the obligations placed on factory committees included: 'collaboration in the normal process of production in state undertakings, and participation through the

32) Carr, *ibid*, p. 212.

33) Carr, *ibid*, p. 105

34) Carr, *The Bolshevik revolution*, Penguin Books, 1966 edition, vol. 2, p. 329.

intermediary of the appropriate trade unions in the regulation and organization of the national economy.' The failure of the worker to reach the required norm of production might be penalized by deductions from wages which must not, however, fall below two thirds of the standard rate. A long list of grounds on which the worker was liable to dismissal without compensation for failure to fulfill his contract was one point in the code which aroused serious criticism in VTSIK (All Russian All-Union Executive Committee): one speaker described it as 'a trump card in the hands of private employers.'³⁴

At the same time, the Red Industrialists, who gained increased influence in the party and in the society at large, were permitted make their profits again, with a little help from their friends. In 1923, the twelfth Party Congress unanimously approved a report by Trotsky, which among other things contained a remarkable passage, in which it was stated that "the workers must be helped to understand that the director who strives to earn profits is serving the interests of the working class in the same degree as the trade union worker who strives to raise the standard of living of the worker and to protect his health." And furthermore, that "the director who proves himself by the positive results of his work, should be able to count on the unqualified 'protection and support' of party organs."³⁵ (emphasis supplied)

Which makes Carr observe: "In a resolution which paid scant attention to the demands of the workers or of the trade unions, the distribution of emphasis was significant."

It is not surprising that the critics were to call NEP the New Exploitation of the Proletariat, and that this label was an accurate one. During the fall of 1923, the workers reacted with widespread illegal strikes to their accumulated grievances, and the strikes were opposed by the party as well as by the trade union leadership. This official response has a strangely familiar sound:

"Any threat of a worker's strike to enforce attention to their grievances was treated as a breach of trade union discipline and punished by exclusion of those responsible from the trade union, which meant automatic dismissal from the factory and inability to obtain another job. In practice, therefore, the trade union representatives and the factory committees tended to find themselves in league with the managers and with the police to maintain discipline among the workers, to prevent strikes and to suppress disturbances. When stoppages of work occurred, the GPU at once intervened, at the request of the management and with the tacit or explicit assent of the unions, to arrest 'ring leaders' and 'instigators'. Protests and demonstra-

tions by the workers were ruthlessly met with force."³⁶

Not communism, but state capitalism

From there on things only became worse for the workers, since industrialization was to be carried out on their backs, without their consent and without any meaningful participation on their part. Far from communism or socialism, what was being introduced in the Soviet Union, was a form of capitalism, state capitalism, in which the state owned the means of production and acted as a single capitalist, ruthlessly extracting surplus value from the workers. At the same time, within that state decisions were made and power yielded by the old bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie; the functionaries, bureaucrats, managers and intellectuals, with the workers remaining a subject class. (For further elaboration on the notion of state capitalism, see Raya Dunayevskaya's Marxism and freedom, mentioned earlier in this article.)

According to Lenin,³⁷ state capitalism was a step toward socialism, which it in theory could have been, if the controls would have been put firmly into the hands of the workers. But the very opposite happened: it was the workers who were controlled, to the extent that their position was identical - if not worse - with that of the working class in capitalist countries.

Everything under the sun was done to increase production and to tie the workers down to jobs that they detested, all in the name of "labour discipline". There were differential wages and "bonuses", as well as other privileges for "good" workers, (such as holidays, educational privileges, extra rations of food and other goods); there was the famous "socialist competition" (better known as Stakhanovism) in which workers were pitted against each other in an orgy of record breaking (and ratebusting) work performances. When attempts to "motivate" the workers invariably failed, labour discipline entered the picture. Punitive measures were taken to combat high labour turnover - itself a manifestation of the widespread alienation of Soviet labour. Solomon Schwartz describes one of the early instances of tightening work discipline. In the revamping of the labour code in November 1932, the following changes were made:

"Employers were now obliged (not merely entitled as previously) to discharge 'truants' without notice; and one day of unjustified absence sufficed. A discharged truant was to be relieved of the food cards and merchandise coupons (for rationed manufactured goods) issued to the employee in connection with his job, and he was to be evicted from

35) Carr, Interregnum, Penguin Books, 1969 edition, p. 54.

36) ibid, pp. 102-103.

37) Carr, The Bolshevik revolution, vol. 2, pp. 97-98.

any dwellings furnished to him by the plant. 'Instantly' - the People's Commissariat for Labor of the USSR added on November 26, 1932. He was to be evicted with his family, regardless of a lack of other accommodation, 'at any time of the year', and even 'without providing transportation facilities!'"³⁸

It simply boggles the mind to think of what happened to the delinquent workers, who suddenly found themselves without work, without roof over his and his family's head, and with no legal access to the food supplies and other necessary goods. Where was he to go in a country where the state was the main employer? One could only guess that in this manner a whole new category was created of alienated, powerless workers being turned into a criminal element (since no legitimate means were available for their survival), and labeled permanently as "enemies of the state".

To make things worse, in December 1938, after another law revision, workers had to start carrying workbooks, in which their work record, bad or good, was spelled out in detail. The same law now required that workers give one month's notice before they leave their jobs, rather than the seven days previously demanded. Penalties for tardiness and "unjustified" absence from work were greatly stiffened, and vacation laws and social insurance were remodeled into devices to bind the workers more firmly to their jobs. It was now possible that a worker, who left his/her job on his own accord, lost all health and maternity insurance rights and was not entitled to sick benefits again until six months after starting a new job. Schwartz describes some of the effects of the tightening labour discipline?

"Every instance of being late for work 'without valid reason' was now punishable, every case of knocking off early for lunch or at closing time, every kind of 'loafing' on the job, etc. The penalties provided were: warning, reprimand, severe reprimand, severe reprimand coupled with a warning of further steps, especially dismissal; transfer to a lower-paid work for a period up to three months. The imposition of these penalties was not discretionary but mandatory on the plant managers."³⁹

The legislation had a predictable effect:

"The dismissals as such affected only a minority, or course, but a constant fear of dismissal seized the masses of labor as a whole. The fear of being late became a nightmare to workers, many of whom had no watches or clocks, and sent them speeding to work in frantic haste. The same fear made them gulp their lunch as quickly as possible. 'Lunch takes our workers from 15 to 22 minutes', boasted the canteen manager of the Moscow precision tool plant. . . And the assistant manager of the Kharkov Tractor

Works stated that in their hurry to get back to work in time, the men of his plant 'sometimes don't get around to eating their lunch.' "⁴⁰

At the same time when labour discipline tightened (in 1940 it became a criminal offense, with prison sentences from 2-4 months, to quit your job on your own accord), work hours lengthened and working conditions deteriorated - naturally at the expense of the workers' health and happiness. Overtime could be demanded at will by the management and workers found it increasingly impossible to refuse it, for fear of reprisals. All in all, the workers in the Soviet Union were profoundly oppressed.

It has been necessary to dwell on the fate of the Soviet workers at length, to show how undialectical thought first of all forgets about living human beings. "Socialism", to the Communist Party, exists despite the fact that workers are oppressed. And it becomes evident even after a brief investigation that the term "workers' state" has been and continues to be a complete misnomer when applied to the Soviet Union. The post-war "liberalization" of labour laws have made the Soviet workers resemble more and more their counterparts in countries such as Sweden: in both places workers are "taken care of", through social and welfare legislation, but are otherwise not allowed to participate in any significant decisions affecting their lives. In both countries the alienation of the workers is rampant, although not officially recognized in the Soviet Union - bad things there are, of course, "remnants of capitalism".⁴¹ And in both countries fundamental changes are needed to create the condition for the true liberation of the working class.

38) Solomon Schwartz, Labor in the Soviet Union, Praeger, 1951, p. 99.

39) ibid, p. 103.

40) ibid, p. 105.

41) In an article by the Soviet sociologist, N. F. Naumova, in which the attitude of Soviet workers towards their work is compared with that of French workers, the author writes with unbridled enthusiasm: "...the Soviet worker does not consider himself to be simply the object of certain favourable or unfavourable circumstances. He feels himself to be the master of the enterprise, and is anxious to do away with those defects that are a handicap to him personally, and also those that interfere with the smooth operation of the entire enterprise."

(N. F. Naumova, "Social factors in the emotional attitude towards work", in G. V. Osipov, Industry and labour in the USSR, 1966). Isn't this the "happy worker" so familiar from bourgeois sociology everywhere in the world? And isn't this the same worker who is so rarely, if ever, allowed to speak for himself, because the truth about his/her experience might just be too disturbing to the existing order? (See also the article on the National Film Board, "Silencing the workers", in this issue).

The revolution was premature

Somehow, it is quite simple. One only has to realize that even if the revolution was made in Russia, it nevertheless could not be kept going. The revolution, it appears at least from the point of view of the working class, was premature and could not be sustained. Engels, in the Peasant War in Germany, foresaw this development:

"The worst thing that can happen to the leader of an extreme party is a conjunction of circumstances which compels him to take the administration into his own hands in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the rule of the class whose representative he is, or for the measures demanded by the rule of that class. What he can do depends not on his will, but on the level of intensity reached by the clash of interests of different classes, and on the stage of development of the material conditions of existence, of the conditions of production and means of communication which always lie behind the development of class contradictions. What he ought to do, what his own party demands of him, depends not on himself and also not on the stage of development of the class struggle and of the conditions that lie behind it: he is bound by his former teachings and demands, which once again take their rise not out of the existing relation of social classes, and not out of the existing, more or less fortuitous, position of conditions of production and means of communication, but out of his more or less profound understanding of the general consequences of the social and political movement. He is inevitably confronted by an insoluble dilemma: what he can do contradicts his whole former behaviour, his principles and the immediate interests of his party; what he ought to do is impracticable. In a word he is compelled to defend not his own party, not his own class, but that class for whose rule the movement is already ripe at the time in question. He must in the interest of the movement itself defend the interests of an alien class, and put off his own class with phrases and promises, assuring it that the interests of this alien class are identical with its interests. He who has fallen into this false position is lost irretrievably."⁴²

If only this simple message would reach the Communist Party of Canada; one does not have to defend the Soviet Union and argue against all evidence that socialism prevails in the "workers' state". One does not have to defend the Soviet

Union any more than one would have to defend, say, Sweden. Neither, for historical/political reasons, that can be analyzed and comprehended, is anywhere near socialism. By repeating over and over again, as the communists do, that the "Soviet Union is a workers' state", does not make it so. Reality exists independently from our hopes, dreams and wishes.

This denial of reality and the unwillingness to investigate contradictions that might disturb one's religious/ideological feelings (in this case the contradiction that exists between the rulers and the ruled in the Soviet Union), is reflected in all aspects of the Communist Party's practice. That is why much of its practice today is purely ritualistic involvement: demonstrations, petitions (for Angela Davis, for a guaranteed annual income), front groups through which it is hoped that alienation from the Canadian scene can be overcome. But the shortcuts lead only to further alienation, it seems, and if possible, to the further "liberalization" of the practice. As I have pointed out earlier, the Communist Party can be found doing today what the liberal radicals did a year ago: organizing the poor, as well as involving themselves in "community projects" financed by the Federal State. One can expect them to "discover" the issue of "community control", when the concept has become so thoroughly discredited that no one, except the hard core liberals and government technocrats will touch it.

"Economism" all pervasive on the left

If all the organized left groups in Canada have the serious stumbling blocks in their theory and practice that I have attempted to describe above, there is another manifestation of their undialectical approach to life that, to my mind, will keep them permanently alienated from the working class. This is their "economism", the viewing of working men and women as only being interested in economic matters (on the other side of the coin is the attempt to make them into pure idealists, ready to involve themselves in an "anti-imperialist struggle" and "people's war" at will and out of "patriotic feelings", rather than from any response to even so slightly objective conditions). Most of the left groups work hard to appeal to the workers narrowly material (economic) self-interests (this is applicable to the Trotskyists, the Communists, the Canadian Party of Labour, the Canadian Liberation Movement, the Waffle and the Maoists), others (Partisan Party, Red Morning and similar groups) reject the workers for the same reason: they have concluded (from what experience, one does not know), that the workers are hopelessly materialistic and since they are also relatively well off on the North American continent, they are not interested

42) As quoted in E. H. Carr, Socialism in one country, vol. 1, p. 115.

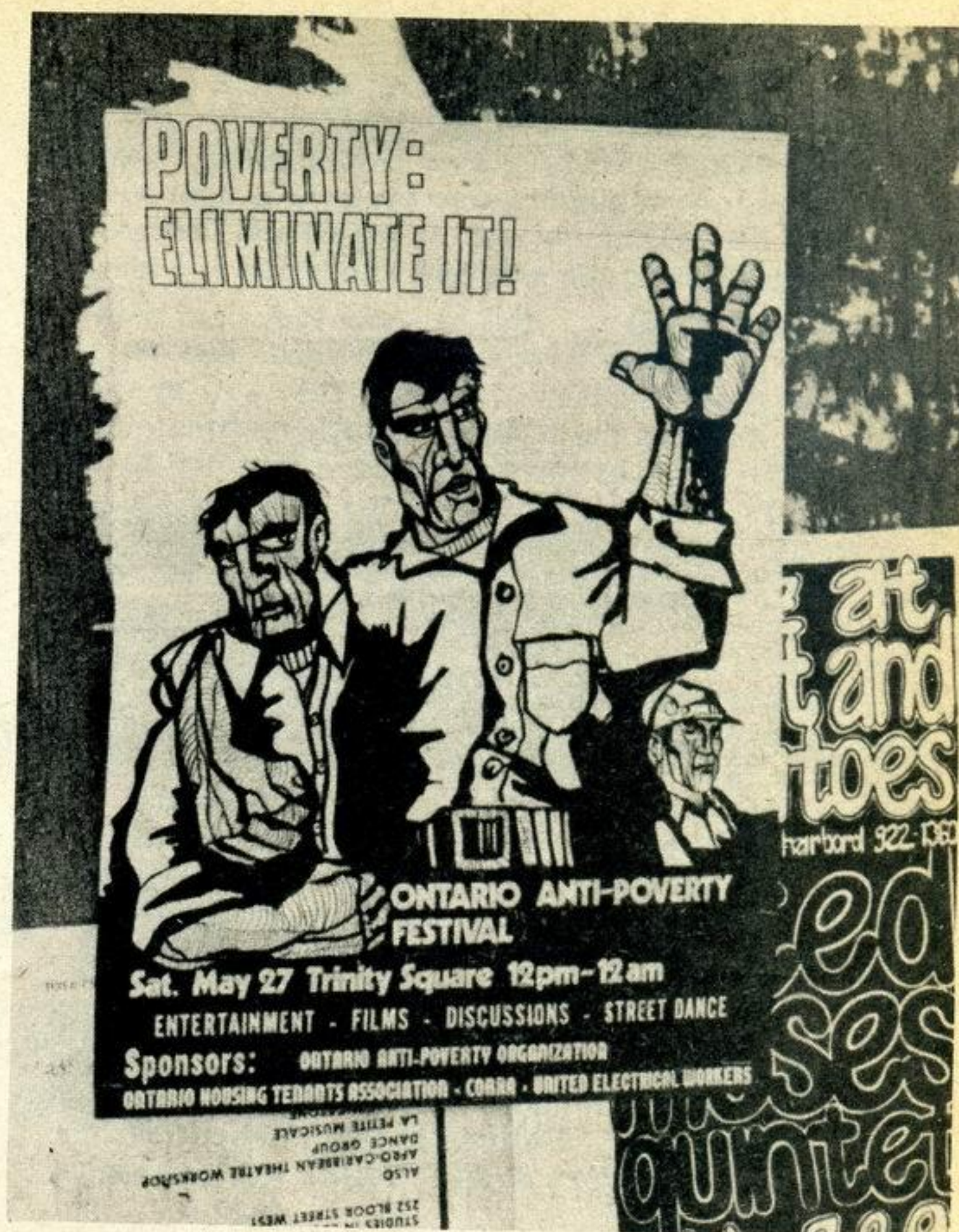
in any deep going changes. These latter groups reject the workers as change agents and regard them as part of the "enemy".

I have never read an article in any of the Canadian left papers, where it is stated that "we think that the workers are such and such, and therefore we advocate such and such strategies and tactics". None of the groups that think "positively" about the workers, state their basic assumptions, their understanding of the psychology and sociology of the working class. Consequently one has to construct their assumptions from what they print. And they print what they think workers are interested in, although, in all cases, the publications reveal more about the ideology and perceptions of the groups than they ever do about the workers.

Let us then examine these publications. A typical issue of the Canadian Worker (CPL) has strictly speaking "labour" news, i.e. strike news, invariably illustrated by photographs of youthful demonstrators carrying the party flag or slogans. Most of the items deal with how to fight the bosses and how to combat nationalism ("May Day Committee Staggers Oshawa Bosses", "United Proletarians Will Crush National Leaders", "Smash Nationalism, Racism, Bureaucrats"), and some deal specifically with high school students organizing activities (again with pictures of party flags). That is all there is in the Canadian Worker: news about militancy at the point of production and in the educational institutions and ideological exhortations ("Smash Racist Unemployment".) In no issues that I have seen, has there ever been articles about problems of every day life: about health, nutrition, childrearing, male/female relationships, sexuality, problems of youth, old age, and women, the meaning of popular culture, or the meaning of life. These, one realizes, are not considered "political" topics, whereas fist-shaking and flag-waving picket line militancy is!

The CLM paper, New Canada, in a typical issue deals a lot with labour news, but only if they are related to Canadian unionism. There are also regular news about the quota campaigns (university professors, culture in general). In addition there are occasional in depth articles on economic imperialism (the auto pact), cultural imperialism (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, in Toronto), and popular culture (a eulogy for Stompin' Tom Connors). There has never yet been an article about the problems of every day life: about health, nutrition, childrearing, male and female relationships, sexuality, problems of youth, old age, and women, critical examination of popular culture, or articles on the meaning of life. These topics, one gathers, are difficult to connect with "anti-imperialist struggle" (that is, with a narrow definition of anti-imperialism), but mainly these aspects of human existence are not regarded as political by CLM either.

Labor Challenge, the Trotskyist newspaper, carries news mainly about its anti-war and pro-abortion campaigns, international news about working class and student militancy elsewhere, and occasional labour news, particularly reports from Quebec. Never, to my memory, have there been articles in



Stereotyped workers stare at you from a typical left poster. Despite the artist's attempt to glorify the workers, they look more like retarded murderers (with blood on their hands, at that!), than any living workers one knows.

that paper dealing with the every day life of the workers: articles about health, childrearing, nutrition, male/female relationships, sexuality, problems of youth, old age and women (unless these latter articles have to do with abortions). And never have they discussed the meaning of life. It is clear, that the Trotskyists, likewise, do not consider every day life political.

Take then a typical issue of the Communist Party publication, Canadian Tribune. There are labour news, mainly about strikes and trade union activities, there are articles about woman workers, but dealing exclusively with "equal pay" aspects, there are reports of peace activities (Peace Congress), and always wonderful news from the Soviet Union. There are no articles about health (unless they deal with the costs of medical care - just another instance of "economism"), childrearing, nutrition, male/female relationships, problems of youth (unless they relate to jobs), problems of old age, the meaning of popular culture, and the meaning of life. The Canadian Tribune, like the others, leaves these "trivial" aspects of social existence for the bourgeois press to deal with.

(And the bourgeois press dwells on these aspects endlessly, but always from a bourgeois perspective. They expose, but do not analyze, and never come up with solutions that would make any difference to the working class. One sector of the bourgeois press, the tabloids, also pretend to deal with every day life, but do so only in gross and bizarre ways, by exploiting the existing alienation and anxiety in their readers. But because they deal with things that are close to some basic needs and experiences of the masses of people, they sell by the millions, whereas the most optimistic estimate of the circulation of the left newspapers directed to the workers, would be no more than 5,000 in Canada. One should draw the necessary conclusions from this: that the left press is no alternative at all to the bourgeois press and no challenge whatsoever to bourgeois hegemony.)

A newcomer among "labour" papers, The East Coast Worker, from Halifax (published by a group called the East Coast Socialist Movement), is a pure case of the "workerite" approach of seeing workers as peculiarly narrow and limited human beings, only interested in hearing about their jobs, strikes, and other economic matters. If the East Coast Worker does not talk about strikes, labour militancy here and there, and the behaviour of bosses, they carry educational columns about the nature of capitalism and socialism, which, too, are purely economic and make their version of socialism appear a total bore. Nothing in that publication touches upon the every day life of the working class, either.

The groups that have rejected the working class as a change agent (such as the Partisan Party), put out papers that appear to deal exclusively with revolutions elsewhere (it's safest that way!). There's a lot of talk about "the people" and "the pigs", but nothing at all about the politics of every day life. The problems of every day life just cannot compare with the glamour of "revolutionary" activities and with guerilla warfare.

Vulgar Marxism and bad sociology

What all these groups and publications have in common is that they have reduced Marxism to a narrow, economic doctrine, and workers to super-human or subhuman creatures (depending on whether you are for or against them), whose lives are spent in the workplace, fighting the bosses or at consuming their affluence. None of these groups have taken seriously Marx's humanism (man is in the centre, not somewhere in the periphery of "economics"), and have ignored his concept of alienation of labour. Most of them, to my knowledge, brush off Marx's early works as "youthful idealism", so the one conceptual tool that might have allowed them to make sense of the contemporary reality in an industrial society, has escaped them completely.

Here, of course, it becomes clear that the left movements have not contributed to any accurate sociology or psychology of the working class (at best they romanticize the workers, and worship instances of past labour militancy). The worker for

these groups is a purely mythological creature, whom one "knows", presumably, by the simple fact that one has read some Marx. The worker is the great immutable, that muscular fellow (always a fellow, never a woman), who stares at you from left wing posters and newspapers, and has his fist raised in that eternal (and tiring) pose. The worker is uncomplicated, brave, militant, ready for action and always held back by "bad leaders".

The worker is never young and scared about his/her future. The worker is never middleaged, arthritic, obese, cancerridden. The worker is never old and defeated by his/her life experiences. The worker is never sexist and oppressive towards women. The worker is never a woman with too many children, and too little time to understand them. The worker never has a joyless sex life. The worker is never ignorant and backward about many things - kept that way by design. The worker is never unaware of the needs of children and never treats them brutally. The worker is never a bundle of unfulfilled hopes and dreams, of hidden talents and buried intellect. The worker is never a human wreck, destroyed by the capitalist order.

But it goes even deeper than that, and is not just a matter of not having understood Marx. To reduce the humanity of working men and women, in a way that all the left groups presently do, is also to reduce one's own humanity. If one does not take seriously the sexual misery of the masses, for instance, one clearly does not treat one's own sexuality with great seriousness. If one does not recognize the profound alienation of the working class from everything in this society, one does not understand one's own overall alienation and particularly one's own alienation from the kind of "political work" available in the left groups. And it works the other way, as well. If one does not take one's own experiences seriously, one is not likely to understand the experiences of others, either.

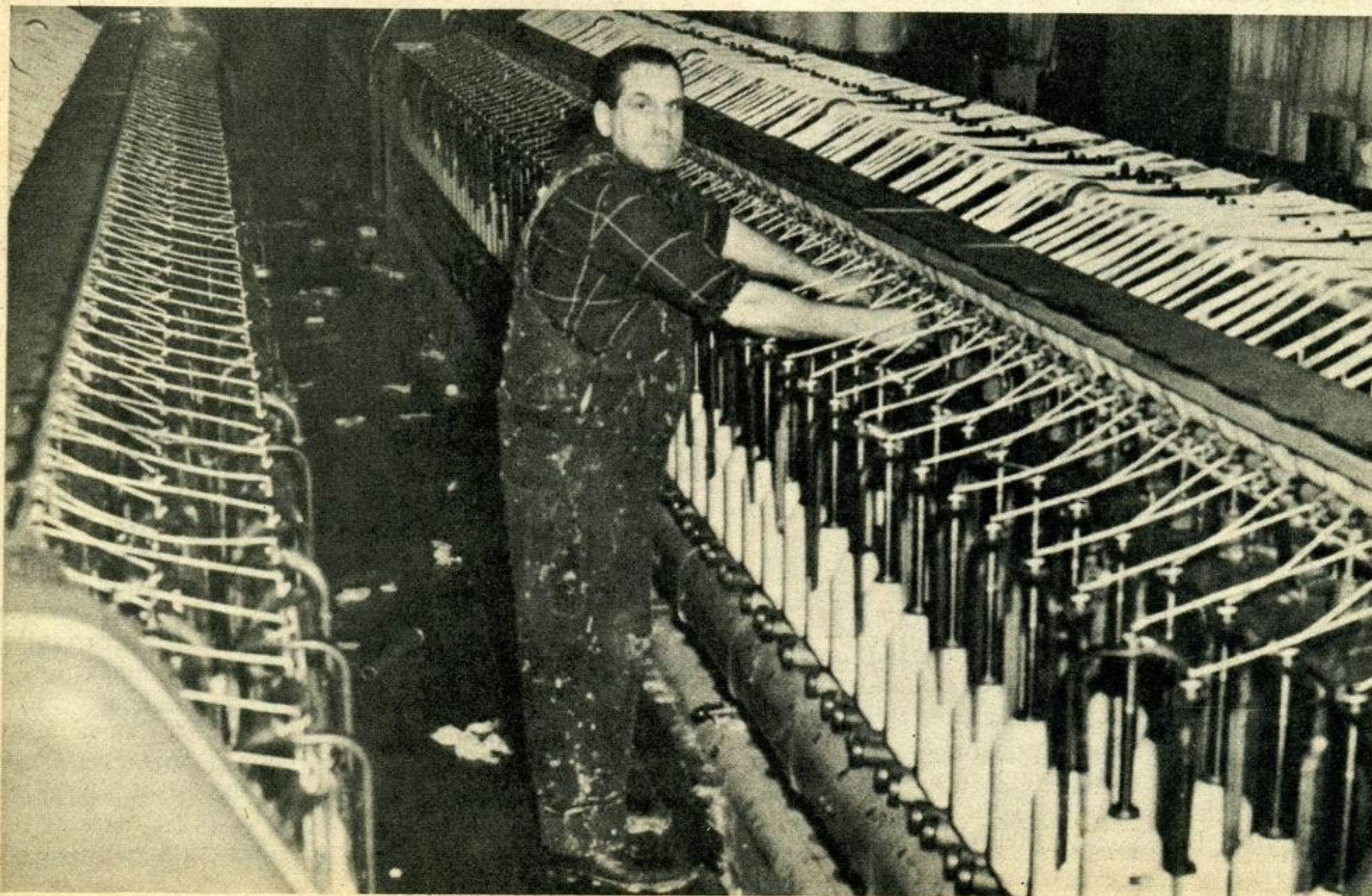
Here we come back to the processes that make the alienated, capitalist man possible. What strikes one about the members of the present left is not just that they are undialectical in thought and action, but that they are distinctly unable to relate with warmth and depth of feeling to either fellow members or non-members. Going to any of the left meetings today (or belonging ever so briefly to these organizations), brings one into a situation in which communication is symbolic and ritualistic, rather than actually meaningful. People who appear physically and psychologically rigid, disconnected and unhappy, present themselves as "leaders" and "spokesmen", and with great confidence speak in total abstractions about life. And the members, trained in obedience and submission for a lifetime, listen quietly and applaud when necessary. Nobody asks any questions on the contrary, anyone who asks a critical question, is likely to be heckled or booed, and ruled "out of order".

There is also a heightened level of boredom in political meetings and conferences, organized by any and all the groups from the Maoists to the Waffle.

continued on page 58

SILENCING THE WORKERS:

CENSORSHIP IN THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD



This film is unfair to the ruling class!

by Rose-Marie Larsson

The original title of this film is On est au coton, which translated into English means some thing like "we're fed up" or "we've had it up to here" (meaning, our necks!). There is no English expression available which would say the same thing and include the pun on "cotton". To be a textile worker who is "au coton", is to be a textile worker who is fed up. This film was censored, was forbidden to the eyes of the people of Canada, because it dared to deal with workers who are fed up.

The following interviews, originally published in Cinema-Quebec, with Denys Arcand, who directed the film, and Gerald Godin, who was part of the original team of "technocrats" who were to participate as an important element in it, describe quite clearly the main theme and intention of Working on cotton. How the film attempts to clarify the reasons for the worker's alienation and life impoverishment by linking it with an analysis of present day capitalism.

Now, we must understand that any attempt at explaining to the working class concretely why they are oppressed and concretely who benefits from their oppression, has traditionally been called "revolutionary activity" (Sydney Newman, the NFB commissioner, doesn't call it that - perhaps because most of Canada's "revolutionaries" are presently working for the state on Local Initiatives Programme and Opportunities for Youth grants. And "revolutionary" is a good word, a government bait word which must not be used in any derogatory sense at the present time!). The ruling class in any capitalist society will see to it that all forms of truly revolutionary activity are quenched, it's as simple as that. No violence, unless absolutely necessary - in the case of Working on cotton, the violence of censorship was necessary. The Canadian Textile Industry was up in arms: the workers had been made to think, rather allowed to think openly, and worse than that, allowed to speak about their experiences. The film was therefore put on index.

The Government Film Commissioner, Mr. Newman, doesn't state his case as bluntly as that. No, the official reasons given in his letter to Andre L'Heureux from the CNTU (reprinted in this issue) and the press are, as you can see, those of a reasonable man, committed to truth, justice and the good reputation of the National Film Board of Canada. He cannot and will not allow a documentary film about the working conditions in the textile industry to be shown as long as it contains factual errors. He asks "is it right to have a worker in it (a man of undoubted honesty) mistakenly say that as a Quebec textile worker he could earn \$1.25 an hour more in the United States than he does here in Canada. Surely, you [Andre L'Heureux] know that the average wage of a Canadian textile worker is approximately the same, if not more, when considering cost-of-living as that of an American textile worker".

For a moment one is stunned by such scrupulous honesty, such unflinching commitment to a fair cause. Until the memories start creeping back, and one remembers a few things... I haven't seen Working on cotton (who has?), but I have seen most of the other NFB films purporting to deal with work and the nature of the working class. And why are those films not blacklisted? Most of them lie from beginning to end. Most of the "factuals" are correct, perhaps, but these films present worse and more complicated lies: they deliberately and totally misrepresent the whole reality of working class life.

Of all the NFB films I've seen about work, only one allows the workers to speak for themselves about their reality. That film is called The backbreaking leaf, made in 1960 by Terence Macartney-Filgate. Dealing with tobacco workers in Ontario, it is the only film in which the workers speak. In all other films they are mute. People speak for them in various capacities - NFB narrators, company managers, experts, union officials. But the workers themselves are robbed of the use of language. It is presumed, I suppose, that they have nothing important to say. Rather, the ruling class knows that the step from speaking your mind to getting what you want, is a short one. Therefore, the labour force - which after all is made up of humans capable of human forms of expression, must be kept from articulating their needs, their experiences, even to themselves. Words must be rendered alien to them, and any exercise of critical thinking must never be allowed. For words carry meaning, and meaning must not enter working class life, except of course in the form of resignation to a joyless existence.

In The backbreaking leaf, at least the workers speak about why they are tobacco picking, how much they are making, where they are from, and what they plan to do with their money. Their work is filmed in a straightforward, subject oriented way (as are the interviews with the men), but of course no attempt is ever made to question or explain their reality. Not by the film maker, not by the workers.

The other NFB films, about work and workers, are either sentimental journeys into working class land, where working class people are presented as some kind of cute, picturesque, sometimes bizarre sub-humans. As in for instance, September 5 at St. Henri, by Hubert Guin. Again, without any attempts to question anything. The emphasis is on "people going about their business as usual", as if our present system were the human condition. No deepgoing social change is asked for by anybody. Or worse, it isn't even thought possible, as the title of another film, The things I cannot change, by Tanya Ballantyne, suggests.

In most cases, however, the workers are featured in the films only as "workers", robots on the job, performing machine functions - as if they had no life whatsoever aside from their function as "manpower".



Photo: National Film Board

Films like "High Steel" glorify workers as heroes, but do not deal with their actual experiences. Needless to say, they are not censored by the NFB.

Or if they do, it is a problem-free, affluent kind of existence. One can see this approach in films like Normetal by Gilles Groulx, We live in Mining (producer unknown) and Miner by Robin Spry. These films are all propaganda for American and Canadian capital.

Then we have the "stakhanovite approach", the worker worship approach, as in High steel, by Don Owen. Here the workers are portrayed as some kind of super-capable sports heroes whose work is nothing but a highly skilled game performed in a world where the sun is always shining. To make things worse, this film is also a contribution to the noble savage cult, for the workers are all Indian, and are presented as having no problems whatsoever, due to, it would seem, their racial superiority in terms of agility and fearlessness. It deserves an article all by itself.

Nowhere is the workers' experience of alienation dealt with. If it is, it is done in such a way to render any form of solution to it impossible. In Day after day by Clement Ferron (who also wrote the script for Mon Oncle Antoine), the everyday experience of workers - this time in a paper mill - is presented as so absurd, so totally avoid of meaning that any rational processes are out of question.

Again, this is a film which never allows a worker to speak about his or her experiences. Rather, we are forced to listen to the droning voice of a woman reading an endless non-sense dialogue against the background of machine noises. On the screen are long close-up shots of what must be paper-mill machinery (could be any kind of machinery), often turning pulp around in a tub.

There is never a sequence which would give the viewer an idea of how much and what kind of work a worker has to do in a day. All the shots involving people are too short and too mixed up for that. What this film seems to aim for is a sort of "poetic" vision of the inner life of a worker. Doggerel it is, but not poetry. There could have been poetry, had the film maker allowed the subject of his film - the human beings we call workers - to express itself in all its many dimensions. But then we would have had the kind of poetry that is too real for the NFB, because any meaningful statement about the working class experience cannot help but imply a strong criticism of our present social conditions. And that isn't what the NFB is there for. The NFB exists to produce films that cover up reality so that social change appears impossible. And what could be better than a film like Day after day which in a most seductive way tells you that the workers have all gone crazy, the poor things, machines are taking over and there's nothing we can do about it.

The list is much longer. But this is not the place to deal with it all. It's enough to say that the NFB hasn't got a leg to stand on, were it to defend itself against the accusation that it is anti-working class. There isn't one film in the catalogue, about work and workers, which could not be accused of misrepresenting and actually falsifying reality.

The other thing that bothers Sydney Newman about Working on cotton is the way it deals with silicosis, or "cotomite" as the workers call it. He states in his letter that the "incidence of silicosis is very low [in the industry as a whole] in contrast to the impression given in this film."

We have heard this argument before. We have heard it from company managers and company doctors in Sudbury, Canada, and Kiruna, Sweden. And if those places are at all representative of the world's mining industry, the argument must be heard all the time in all the mining countries in the world. The "incidence of silicosis" is always lower than the workers make it out to be! Perhaps, Sydney Newman, it depends on who compiles the statistics and who sets the standards for silicosis in the first place! Instead of asking people to take your word for it, why don't you arrange for a film to be made with ample worker representation, about health conditions in a textile plant in Quebec?

Concerning both Andre L'Heureux' and Sydney Newman's complaint that Working on cotton, as Newman puts it, "unfairly and unwisely downgrades the often magnificent role played by the trade union movement in helping the industry modernize itself", one can only say this: we have yet to popularize the documentation of how and why the unions led the working class into the present quagmire of "industrial relations". It is a complicated story - but not so complicated it cannot be grasped. Gerald Godin mentions in one of the following articles that perhaps the major weakness in this film is that it does not explain why, when at one point someone says that the union leaders defend the company as much as the bosses do."

And what does this all add up to? What is the meaning of the censorship of Working on cotton?

Sydney Newman in his letter to the press makes a lot of references to fairness, honesty and factual truth, as lacking in this film. The film is not fair

to the ruling class of Canada, nor to its representative, Sydney Newman. Well then, in all fairness, must it not be said that the ruling class of Canada, and particularly its faithful servants like Sydney Newman, are pathetic in their gutless rage, their self-piteous, hollow appeals to Truth, Honesty and Professional Judgement, while at the same time censoring a document that works for a solution to

Introduction

It may seem a rather confusing thing (to say the least), that a film like *Working on cotton* was ever made in the first place. The fact is, however, that this film is in most ways typical of the production methods of the National Film Board. Generally speaking, there are few full length films which when finished are in line with what was originally intended. It is important to analyse the underlying reasons for this phenomenon. It may be because once the film maker has succeeded in getting loans for his film, he is very much free to do what he likes (he doesn't have to account for anything until the film is finished - only then do his financial worries begin). One must look at this as a most efficient way of diverting the bureaucracy which is by definition stifling (and inescapable).

But the thing that puts *Working on cotton* outside of the regular NFB procedure is the fact that this film has been withdrawn from circulation. This has in effect happened to other films as well, but then it has usually been done in a way that is much more subtle. In the case of *A crazy country* (*Un pays sans bon sens*), the circulation of the film was limited to non-commercial distribution (commercial distribution was explicitly prohibited). Another method of stopping a film is to keep it out of distribution while talking about the possibility of showing it on TV (this is what was done to

the major problem of our times: the exploitation of man by man.

This doesn't make them any less dangerous. *Working on cotton* is a blacklisted film. Sydney Newman has even called it "a dead film . It will never be released." (Cinema-Quebec, June-July 1971). Must this remain a fact?

by **Cinéma-Québec**

L'Acadie, L'Acadie, and it is very difficult to understand why it took so long for it to be released.) In the case of Denys Arcand's film, a brief message signed by Sydney Newman was all that was necessary to put an end to all hopes. "There have been criticisms about film's objectivity that have come to me from a wide variety of sources - enough to make this action necessary."

To understand the reasons for this embargo, and the nature of the criticisms that the film was to stir we must go back three years to the time when Denys Arcand was planning to make a film about the "technocrats". For reasons which he explains in the following interview this project was never to be completed. Instead, after many hesitations and much research, he began making a documentary film "about the working conditions in the textile industry of Quebec."

That was in November 1968. The film crew consisted of Denys Arcand, Serge Beauchemin, Pierre Bernier, Alain Dostie, Gerald Godin and Pierre Michard, there was one very significant detail: this film was to be made with the blessing and direction of the NFB and the Canadian Textile Industry.

Therein lies the source of the first of the misadventures. The Canadian Textile Industry had its ex-



Photo: Pamela Harris - McLeod

tations set on a film which would "adequately represent the Canadian Textile Industry". The film makers, however, intended to portray the Quebec workers. Anyway, it is thanks to this misunderstanding that the film crew was authorized to do the filming in a textile mill of their own choice. They were even allowed to spend a day in the headquarters of Dominion Textiles, in Montreal, as well as in the offices of Edward F. King, president and general manager of this company. We can well imagine the disappointment of Mr. King and Co, when they were presented with the results.

For, the very first screening of the film - in the early 1970 - caused an outbreak of official protests and complaints. Certain company directors decided there and then to take "every possible legal means" to prevent the release of the film. Mr. Edward F. King demanded that the parts showing his participation be cut out altogether. This was in fact done. In the course of the following months the film footage was submitted to a great number of changes. The NFB even hired a team of lawyers to study all the possible legal implications of the film. At their suggestion certain problematic passages were cut. The War Measures Act (fall 1970) with its retroactive effect

forced other changes in the film. But this time all scenes implying any form of violence had to be cut.

And so, in January 1971, a new version of *Working on cotton* was born. But Mr. Newman's message, noted above, was to dispel any illusions. His blacklisting of the film proved to be so rigorous that it wasn't even mentioned in the annual retrospective survey (for strictly internal use, moreover), which the NFB presents at the end of every fiscal year in order to take stock of its productions. Only after protests from members of the French film crew was it placed on the list. This screening was to be the last one - officially.

In May 1971 the CBC showed on their programme "Dossiers" a film which dealt with the situation in Canadian textiles. This film represented most eloquently the point of view of the Canadian Textile Institute, and gave the viewer a very clear idea of what the industry had meant by an "objective presentation". We have noted that the major "fault" with Denys Arcand's film was the fact that it allowed the workers to speak too often. Through their words we learned that the life they lead wasn't necessarily the life they would want to lead. To let such things be know is, of course, an unforgivable offense.

How the film came to be

an interview with Denys Arcand

Denys Arcand: I had originally planned to make a film about technocrats. Around 1965-66 a generation

of technocrats was working within the government of Quebec. It is to them that we owe what was called the



Photo: Pamela Harris - McLeod

"Quiet Revolution". This fascinated me even more since I had known those people in the university. At one point I had even thought of making a documentary on some department in the Quebec government, such as for instance the Ministry of Education. But in 1967, the Union Nationale came to power, and that sounded the death knell for the technocrats.

I then decided to avoid the problem by gathering together a group of specialists who would in some way resemble the teams of technocrats that the government organizes when, for example, it is going to prepare a white paper. This is how some of the people that appear in Working on cotton came together: they were present as part of this initial project. I am thinking in particular of Claude Lemelin, Gerald Godin, Jacques Durand and Helene David.

From then on Gerald Godin and I thought that the best way of actually doing something with this team was to choose the problem in Quebec which seemed to be the most desperate. We weren't going to choose just any problem, but we wanted a situation which at first seemed hopeless, and then we would try to draw out of it the possibilities of a solution. So we studied all the crucial problems facing Quebec. However, in most cases the problem seemed to stem from the fact that the people responsible were incompetent. In those cases the solution then was to put competent people in charge.

Now, if you take on the problem of the textile industry in Quebec, you do in a sense also take on the whole of Quebec's industry. But however that may be, the separate problem of the textile industry seemed to us to have the greatest implications.

As we went to work on this project, the people that we came to meet became so important after a while that the initial group of technocrats soon were eclipsed. From then on they appeared only to pass on information.

Cinema - Quebec: In the beginning, did you have a detailed plan for the film? Did you have an exact goal in mind?

D. A.: Our steps were guided by this observation: that the textile industry was on the decline; we wanted to know what could be done with a dying industry. There was also the fact that we were dealing with an industry where the working conditions were very, very bad. So, we were interested in finding out how people could accept such working conditions all through their lives. And in the end this question became the most pressing: how can people go on living under such conditions?

But the strange part was the structure of the film. We didn't discover it till the last few months of filming. That's when our original hypothesis was proven false.

We had told ourselves that life in a textile factory is just sheer hell. The history of the unions in this industry is simply appalling and the bosses are known to be extremely harsh. Therefore we thought a silent revolt must be churning among the workers. We screened the film with a view to capture this revolt, and we began filming with a view to present it. But there was no such revolt. In fact, the significant drama was the very fact that there was no revolt. The workers satisfy themselves with resignation, and a pale imitation of happiness. *

C-Q: It's the worker who has silicosis who finally tells you, impassively, that there are worse illnesses. But how was the filming done?

D. A.: Sort of blindly. At the time there was a factory at Coaticook that was going to be shut down. We decided to go there. We filmed at closing time and found people there who were kind enough to describe their situation to us. That's how we made friends, among them Carmen Bertrand. We decided to follow the shutdown of the plant.

We also felt that it was necessary to place the whole situation in an historical perspective. Gerald Godin had heard of Madeleine Parent who is now practically in exile in Ontario. She was quite wary of us at first, but after a while she started trusting us and agreed to portray her former life as a young activist, which had resulted in her being prosecuted for seditious conspiracy.

Finally we needed someone who was actually living under the present conditions in the textile industry. So we attended union meetings in the small town of the Eastern Townships. At one of these meetings we met Bertrand St. Onge. And we followed him back to Grand

Those are the three leading themes of the film. There is an enormous amount of material that we have been able to use, in particular a whole sequence filmed in the U.S.

Q-C: What reasons did the Canadian Textile Industry give that resulted in the censoring of Working on cotton?

D. A.: The primary reason is that it promoted class struggle. "A class struggle between the Anglosaxon exploiters and the exploited workers." In the first film there were scenes with the bosses that we were forced to cut, or else be sued. One of them, to take only one

* Ed. note: This is a familiar view of the working class, only partially and superficially correct. It happens often that these same workers, pronounced "integrated with the system" and "resigned", put these pronouncements to splendid shame through their actions. The "affluent" and "co-opted" French workers practically took over the country in 1968; the "resigned" Quebecois workers recently managed to occupy a town, Sept-Isles, in Quebec. It might just be that the methodology of social scientists - as well as filmmakers - is inadequate: they cannot penetrate beyond appearances. Just as a matter of common sense: in the case of Working on cotton, what could individual workers say in front of a film camera, that would not be detrimental to them, sooner or later? What is it that the filmmaker and the filmmaking process can give them in return for their "truth"? Also, we know from experience that an interview with an individual yields very different results from collective discussion with workers. There is nothing but vulnerability in an individual interview; there is anonymity and solidarity in a group interview (or in the filming of a meeting, say). (See, "From the workers: a practical critique of bourgeois sociology", in the last issue of TRANSFORMATION, on how the individualization of workers distorts their experiences).

example, had to be omitted because it showed the bosses speaking to the workers in English. That leads you to believe that the workers have to speak English, whereas you are told that the workers can speak French in the factory. This is true, but this particular freedom usually stops at the foreman.

Finally, the textile officials did not understand that there could be a critical attitude towards the unions.

A didactic film

by Denys Arcand and Gerald Godin

Gerald Godin: It seems to me that a film like *Working on cotton* is meant above all for textile workers, since here they are given a lot of information. In this film the task is to dissect the situation of the textile workers in Quebec, from top to bottom, i. e. from the point of where the guy leaves his village to look for a job in textiles in the city, till the time when he must retire on account of the illness he calls cotomite. This whole process is shown - the usual process in the textile industry.

But that's not all. It also shows the place occupied by the textile industry in the Canadian economy as well as in the whole of a multi-national corporation. I think then that the didactic aspect of the film is extremely important since it serves to expose reality. It's a didactic film because it teaches people how they are exploited, by whom, and under what conditions.

But the film is interesting on another level, too. It shows that everyone in the textile industry must have a second source of income in order to make ends meet. The imagination and resourcefulness that the workers must exercise in finding a second job is simply phenomenal. So much energy is expended in that search that it eats up any urge for revolt. Without the second job there would be some very serious conflicts in the textile industry.

Denys Arcand: With regard to the didactic aspect of the film, it must also be said that the majority of the people who work in textiles do not know who they work for and have never known. They signed up because they saw a sign at the door saying "men wanted" (in English). They know absolutely nothing about that immense superstructure which has at the same time New Zealanders, South Africans and Quebecois working for it... That scene where Claude Lemelin explains to St. Onge about the immense superstructure he works for - he had really known nothing about it.

Godin: The scene with the deputy mayor of Coaticook is also revealing. He, a man elected by the public, confesses that the inside business of the company is sacred: the Books cannot be seen or touched.

That explains the behaviour of the Quebec working class. They don't know; basically these bosses are a mystery to them. Since they don't know, their anger, when they get angry, is undirected, does not know where to attack. They are naturally mad at the

They would have understood, had we adopted the position of the unions, which is basically the same as theirs, with a few exceptions.

What happened in fact is that they had hoped to see us improve their public image whereas we actually worsened it, or more precisely, we justified the bad reputation that the industry has in the public eye.

bosses, but who are they? When it comes to that question, they're no longer sure of anything.*

One of the weaknesses of the film seems to me to be that it doesn't take the trouble to explain things further. A narrator is needed to explain the situation. The film doesn't seem to me to be didactic enough - take for example the conduct of the union leaders. At one point someone says that the union leader defends the company as much as the bosses do. This deserves to be explained in more detail because it is very important. But maybe that's a completely different film.

Arcand: But it's not just the workers who know nothing. People have often asked me why I introduced Madeleine Parent in *Working on cotton*. Quite simply because I didn't know anything about her, because I was unaware of her role in the textile strikes. No one ever told me about her.

The people who are part of all kinds of actions today in Quebec, think that they are the first ones, that before them there was nothing but darkness. That is completely false. Quebec has always been more or less as it is now. There was always a small minority of strongly committed, informed individuals, and Madeleine Parent was one of them. But they were quickly forgotten because the extraordinary power that exists for making whole sections of our history disappear.

There have been people who've been clubbed by the police in the past as well. There have been people in the past who've spent seven long years in court accused of seditious libel and seditious conspiracy. There is nothing new about that.

Godin: In fact, *Working on cotton* establishes a rather gloomy fact. It's a film about the alienation of the Quebec working class and its capacity for becoming integrated into the system.

The film seems to me, then, to hold a lesson for a certain section of the Quebec left, which is constantly talking about the working class without ever asking themselves what stage of consciousness the working class has reached or to what degree the workers recognize their own alienation. The film is therefore didactic for the left as well.

Arcand: That's very important. The left often annoys me more than the bosses do. At least the latter know

quite accurately the people they are exploiting. But the left is too often in fantasy land. They are waiting for the masses to rise up. We are saying (exaggerating our own pessimism a little): nothing is going to happen, don't expect anything.

We must begin by establishing some basic facts about our society, facts not as yet established. That is what we have tried to do in Working on cotton.

* Ed. note: There is a little bit of mystique here about the meaning of knowledge. The workers don't know the names of their oppressors, the structures of the corporations they work for, it is argued, and therefore they cannot direct their anger at them... If they would only know, they could act... But why don't then the sophisticated and educated members of the middle class act, since they know so much, so many details

of the nature of oppression in class society (including their own oppression)? Isn't it in both cases, that to know the details of one's oppression, is not enough? Perhaps it is more important to feel one's oppression and to know that others feel the same and to want to get rid of it - and perhaps it is even more important to be able to join an organization that provides direction and leadership in the struggle? Is there such an organization anywhere in Canada, anywhere in Quebec? (In Quebec there are militant trade unions, but as yet no militant working class movement or party; in English Canada there aren't even militant trade unions!) Is it then not rather sensible not to take your anger out on the bosses if and when the action around that anger cannot be sustained, since there are no real forces in motion? Why is it that when workers act in a non-revolutionary way in a non-revolutionary situation, they "disappoint" the left intellectuals, who themselves behave pretty safely in similar situations?

Translation by Lynn Center



The Quebec textile workers history is filled with dramatic events of rebellion and resistance. Here in a 1952 trial, eighteen workers face charges growing out of the clashes at Louiseville between textile workers and provincial police.

Textile workers protest...

[The following is a copy of the telegram sent on October 26, 1971 to Sydney Newman, Commissioner, National Film Board and to Gerard Pelletier, Secretary of State, Ottawa, by Andre L'Heureux, Director of the Secretariat for Political Action, Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU), and signed by thirty-one textile workers' unions in Quebec.]

Gentlemen,

Several years ago, at the request of the National Film Board film makers who were looking for subjects for films concerning various sectors of Quebec industry, I proposed three themes:

- 1) The Maritime dockyards
- 2) The effects of rationalization and

plant shutdowns

3) The textile industry

The third suggestion was accepted and a budget of about \$90,000 in public funds was to be allocated for this project.

A first version of the film called Working on cotton was presented to, among others, a group of company managers, who were scandalized by certain aspects of the film. They secretly organized a lobby to discredit it and prevent its showing, because it did not glorify the role played by the employers.

Having struggled many times alongside textile workers, I know that this industry has for several generations been exploiting, and still mercilessly exploits, tens of thousands of Quebec workers. The NFB commissioner (Sydney Newman) has announced that this film has been censored and will not be shown to the Quebec people. I never knew that a bureaucrat, commissioner or not, could just like that, prevent the Quebec people from seeing a NFB film. This arbitrary and unilateral decision is unacceptable unless the NFB is actually supposed to be an instrument of propaganda for the exclusive use of the state and the employers.

I saw the 21st version of the film, I think that, for instance, the struggles of the unionists in the CNTU since 1937 have been ignored in this film: since that date, and especially in the 1950's, it was the CNTU membership in Magog, Sherbrooke, Drummondville, Montmorency and elsewhere who struggled hardest to win certain advantages from the companies, advantages which all workers now have, whether or not they belong

to the CNTU.

But is it Andre L'Heureux who should decide whether this or that part of the film should be changed? Is it up to the executive of the CNTU? Or maybe the delegates affiliated with the National Federation of Textile Workers (CNTU)? Or company presidents and managers who couldn't exercise "directing" privileges or the right to veto a NFB film? Should the NFB commissioner be the one to decide? Why not the Prime Minister? Or the cabinet?

These questions were submitted to the elected union delegates of the Federation of Textile Workers (CNTU), who decided the following:

"A film called Working on cotton was put out by the NFB at the taxpayers' expense, on the subject of textile workers. The only ones who are in a position to say whether or not this film corresponds to reality are first and foremost the textile workers themselves."

That is why we are doing what I myself have already done without success - we are asking for a print of the film Working on cotton. We will show it systematically to the textile workers and their families in every town where there are textile factories. After the show, the workers will meet in workshops or otherwise to decide whether or not the film is realistic.

(This decision was adopted unanimously by the following union delegates in the presence of the executive committee of the Federation, with brother Paul-Emile Comtois as chairman. Delegates from 31 textile workers' unions signed the telegram.)

...and NFB exercises "public responsibility"

November 3, 1971

Monsieur Andre L'Heureux
Director of the Secretariat for
Political Action
Confederation of National Trade Unions
1001 St-Denis Street
Montreal, Que.

Dear Mr. L'Heureux,

Many thanks for your letter of October 26 in which you ask that the film Working on cotton be released for distribution. Because this issue has become a matter of public concern, and because you sent your letter to the press, I am doing likewise.

May I, at the outset, tell you that it grieves me very much to withhold a film made at such pain and cost, from being seen. The trouble is that no matter how well intentioned it was in the making, it simply does not adequately, nor indeed fairly, represent the textile industry nor the thousands of people who make it what it is.

You ask in your letter by whose authority can a film be stopped. My answer must be by the same authority that grants permission for the

film to be made in the first place - the Government Film Commissioner, who is given the responsibility by the National Film Act of the Parliament of Canada. But there is another authority - that of tradition. Why has the National Film Board of Canada been so respected an organization for over 32 years? As the Film Commissioner, I know I am walking the same path as the six commissioners before me, all of whom have tried to do an honest job of showing Canadians to other Canadians and to people around the world. The Film Board and its staff both French and English and others have made films of significance and importance about this complicated and now troubled country of ours, sometimes with beauty but always with integrity and fairness.

Working on cotton, which is over two hours long, sets out to be a documentary film on the textile industry. It is often moving, with moments of gritty conviction, but I am afraid does not always adhere to factual truths.

In a film of fiction - a drama, a love story - factual truths may not be of over-riding importance but the very word "documentary", which is the basis of the Film Board's work and in particular of films like Working on cotton, demands factual truths which are incontestable, not only

continued on page 57



Photo: Pamela Harris-McLeod

SOCIOLOGY MISCONSTRUES THE WORKING CLASS

Part II

Class conflict outside the workplace

by Gary Teeple

Part I of this article, "Class conflict in the workplace" (TRANSFORMATION, vol. 1, no. 3), dealt with the question of how class conflict in the workplace is treated in the literature called "industrial sociology". It attempted to show how bourgeois sociologists have analyzed problems arising from the contradictions inherent in capitalism and how they have sought to mitigate this conflict and thereby increase the "happiness" of the workers at work, and of course, increase production for the capitalist, which is the explicit aim of their research.

It was shown that the conflicts were inherent in the system as a whole and they remained despite the efforts of the sociologists. Yet the bourgeois sociologist, analyzing "problems" in the interests of those who pay him, sees only the immediate and particular problems of a limited social setting.

By contrast, the Marxian view sees the fundamental contradiction between labour and capital as the essence of capitalist social relations. This contradiction is manifested in the actual conflict between the capitalist and working classes of industrial nations. It is a conflict which predominates in such nations and, taking a multitude of forms at many levels, profoundly influences relations between individuals as well as between countries. Herein lies the reason why an analysis must perceive society as a whole if it is to grasp reality.

The Marxian method allows one to analyze the whole, to see fundamental social relations as the product of the major contradictions in the society. The "parts" of society at whatever level (be they individuals, groups or institutions), are nothing if they are not seen in the context of the whole and as products of this contradiction between workers and capitalists. The "parts" can never be understood if they are treated as separate, isolated entities, as does so much of bourgeois sociology. Individualism, the hall-mark of bourgeois ideology, analyzes society in these terms - the whole is ignored and the individual is considered "free", subject to the whims of his "will" and constrained primarily by "contracts".

In this second part, I want to examine how sociological literature perceives the worker outside the workplace. It will be shown how the individualism which pervades bourgeois sociology is used very explicitly in the analysis of workers' consumer habits and social and political activities.

The kind of individualism in which sociologists might frame their "research" can vary among several approaches. For example, behaviour may be perceived as a result of the "pleasure principle" (that is, the result of "hopes and fears" or the pursuit of self-interest). Then again, although related to the above, "instincts" might be conjured up to explain away "negative" forms of behaviour as we shall see later. Another approach could be called the view of the "free and open society". Naturally, this last one finds particular favour in the U.S.A., because it most easily fits into a national belief in competitiveness and individualism as the foundation of the American Way. This approach simply suggests that individuals rise, fall from, or remain in their "position" in society according to their "intelligence", their innate or learned "abilities", and so on. More concretely, this view is found in the

sarcasm of a popular American quip: "If you're so smart, why ain't you rich?"

The examples from "industrial sociology" that are examined in this section all follow one or the other or some variation of these approaches. And it is through these approaches that bourgeois sociologists try to understand the profound effects of the alienation created by modern capitalism. The many so-called "escape" activities of the working class, such as excessive drinking, abusive sexual relations, familial violence, and laziness etc., as well as the "left-wing" and "right-wing" proclivities of the working class, its "authoritarianism", and so on, are all "explained" in terms of individualism. The basic assumption is always that the source of the "problem" ultimately lies with the individual.

The effects of the capitalist mode of production on men are consequently left unexamined. The social and psychological aspects of life as a worker - a commodity, an object, a non-being - are treated as the result of personal defects or thwarted instincts. The real cause, capitalism, is ignored; it is not considered a relevant aspect of the workingman's or woman's life. It is assumed as a constant - an invariable, an ordinary or a normal way of life.

It's all instinct . . .

One of the earliest applications of the notion of instincts as applied to the explanation of industrial life is found in the writings of C.H. Parker. In his article, "Motives in economic life", he lists a catalogue of instincts . . . "that includes . . . those motives to conduct which . . . are found to be unlearned, universal in the species . . ." (1)

One of the "instincts" he lists is "gregariousness", and he writes:

"Modern economic history is full of that strange irrational phenomena, 'the trek to the city'. The extraordinary piling up of labor masses in modern London, Berlin, New York, Chicago, has created cities too large for economic efficiency, for recreation, or sanitation and yet despite their inefficiencies and the food and fire risk, the massing up continues. Factory employment, though speeded up and paid low wages, grows popular for it caters to gregariousness, and domestic service is shunned for it is a lonely job." (p. 140)

Men, or more particularly workers, are herein reduced to so many lemmings as they "trek to the city". The "trek", however, has nothing to do with what one might expect, namely, the search for jobs or food or welfare of any sort. No, the workers are marching - hungry, tired, dirty, risking disease and grasping for poorly paid jobs - to be with one another, following an instinct primeval, gregariousness.

Such an important instinct as this, however, is not limited to a single function, rather there is a second "gregarious" reflex. It is described as follows:

"The instinct is the psychic basis for his (the worker's) proclivity to react to mob suggestion and hysteria. In a strike, each

striker has a perfect biological capacity for violence if the group seems to will it. Because of this same gregariousness a panic can sweep Wall Street, or an anti-pacifist murmur turn into persecution and near lynching." (p. 140)

Parker evidently learned from religious philosophers who, when in doubt (frequently), in ignorance (profoundly), or in disapproval of anything, posited a god or devil as the explanation. Our sociologist chose to posit "instincts" which would find greater "scientific" credibility than the supernatural in explaining the unwanted results of alienation and class conflict. His list of instincts, however, is just as contrived as a compendium of Greek gods or Christian sins and requires just as much faith to be "understood", let alone believed.

After listing sixteen such instincts ²⁾ which form the economic motives of man (especially workers), Parker turns to the effect that the blocking the expression of these instincts has. This blocking, as any Freudian will explain, can have serious and unfortunate results. Parker describes the symptoms of the "blocked" or "balked" worker:

"The balked labourer here follows one of the two described lines of action: first, he either awakens, becomes inefficient, drifts away, loses interest in the quality of his work, drinks, deserts his family, or, secondly, he indulges in a true type of inferiority compensation, and in order to dignify himself, to eliminate for himself his inferiority in his own eyes, he strikes or brings on a strike: he commits violence or he stays on the job and injures machinery or mutilates the materials. He is fit food for dynamite conspiracies." (p. 150)

Here, all the crushing effects of an exploited and meaningless life of the worker and his family are explained away in terms of thwarted instincts. Industrial violence, from the strike to machine smashing, is likewise interpreted as manifestations of balked innate desires. Such a view ignores the real cause of demoralization in workers' lives and the nature of industrial violence; it ignores the exploitation and alienation inherent in the capitalist system; and it ignores the attendant physical and mental anguish and impoverishment of life under such a system.

Parker also uses his instinct theory to analyze the International Workers of the World. "The I.W.W.", he states, "can be profitably viewed only as a psychological by-product of the neglected childhood of industrial America." (my emphasis). The "neglected childhood" is the hunger and misery of industrializing U.S.A. The "psychological by-product" is human reaction to these conditions. He elaborates on the latter:

"Their philosophy is, in its simple reduction, a stomach philosophy, and their politico-industrial revolt could be called without injustice a hunger-riot." ³⁾

In a single sentence the militant I.W.W. is dismissed as the manifestation of thwarted instinct - hunger. It is admitted that American capitalism is causing such misery and distress, but the explanation for the rise of the I.W.W. is sought for in

terms of the "psychological causes". As Parker puts it:

"The modern psychological study of human behaviour makes it impossible to view an I.W.W. as a mobile and independent agent, exercising free will and moral discretion." (p. 653)

The "Wobbly" is a worker whose actions are not rational, at least to a bourgeois social scientist.

Such an explanation is not to be found only in the early decades of the Twentieth Century. In more recent works, similar psychological explanations of industrial conflict are not lacking.

Class conflict becomes "human conflict"

One of the more salient articles on such a topic is Arthur Kornhauser's "Human motivations underlying industrial conflict" (1954). The article is a mild plea for more emphasis on the psychological rather than social aspects of labour-management disputes.

He begins by asserting that "industrial conflict is human conflict". ⁴⁾ At once, the economic and political aspects of industrial conflict are thrown to the wind. He has set the stage, in a short sentence, for an assertion of the primacy of individual aspects of conflict and for the relegation of broader issues to a secondary place. "At its core" (i.e. of industrial conflict or human conflict), he insists, there are people with one kind of value system and motivational structure which "oppose" people with other systems and structures. In short, industrial conflict is reduced to different and opposing needs, desires, goals, motives, etc., of individuals.

That "core" is explained at greater length. "Social forces", Kornhauser admits, are the basis of industrial conflict, but these "forces" are "multifarious" great in number and variety. The particular role these "forces", or "influences" as he calls them, will play in producing industrial conflict or harmony, however, is determined by the individuals involved. (p. 76). For this reason, he argues, it is profitable to study individuals' "actions and motivations" because here lie the real determining factors in the making of conflict or peace.

In this view, there appear to be no principal "forces" or "influences" which produce conflict. There is simply a great number of "influences in situation" which exist but are not active. The way they become active in or relevant to a situation is through the "weighing" action of an individual. The "influences" are sifted and interpreted by an individual; and only after this screening, and because of it, is it clear which of them produce conflict or peace. The importance of the individual is made paramount by giving him the active role in determining what factors among many will affect the making of industrial "peace" or "war". The real forces, therefore, his "social forces" or "influences", are seen as static; they require a "sorting out" before they are really of importance. One can then see the primacy given to individual "motivations", for Kornhauser has made them the determining factor in "producing conflict or harmony."

Such a view distorts the reality of industrial conflict. To see the internal dynamics of capitalism simply as "influences" which require individual "motives" to be of some consequence in life is a fine example of idealist thinking. Reality becomes dependent on the "motives" of individuals - motives which are not derived from the real world but from inherent desires and wishes, etc.

Thus, whether it is an examination of workers' behaviour or management's decisions, the main question at hand for many bourgeois sociologists is the effect on behaviour of the wishes, desires, motivations or instincts of the people involved. The relevance of economic, social and political factors to the existence of conflict is sometimes paid lipservice to, but the central focus, the "core", lies in the individual make-up of the persons concerned.

The instinct approach to the study of society has been used as above in "demonstrating" the basic irrationality of man - in particular, workers. The "motivations" approach revealed that it was only the individual who could establish some sort of order amongst a number of factors relating to a situation and could use the more important ones to arrive at a decision.

These approaches have distorted the reality of the working class as a product of the capitalist system of production and misconstrued the basis of decisions affecting labour and capital. Another approach, however, which has not revealed such blatant distortions is the "case study" or life history approach.

These studies generally examine a number of individuals (at home or at work) or families with the intention of discovering their innermost values, aspirations, and general behaviour. Others of these works pursue the same objective - the unveiling of working class problems, beliefs, customs, and life style - but strive for more generalized knowledge by taking a large sample of working class "interviewees". The resultant studies usually reveal a great deal about working class life. They delve into all realms of workers' and their families' lives with the obvious purpose of analyzing those aspects which might be changed better to enhance production or played upon to aid advertising.

The role of the sociologist becomes very clear when the objectives of such studies are examined. Once over the "pursuit of knowledge" rationalization, conclusion after conclusion states unabashedly the relevance of the "discoveries" to the established order of things and frequently suggestions for manipulation are given to business enterprises or government agencies.

The element of individualism appears in these studies as an implicit part of the "case-study" or "life-history" approach. That is, despite the frequent lip-service paid to the "working class", seldom is the "class" treated as such. The term is never used to mean anything other than the "lower strata", and therefore, there is little sense of an existing class. Rather, there is an impression of individuals or families in an income strata, all of whom potentially could "rise". Moreover, the studies are seldom explanatory; description abounds and suffices for explanation.

How to "motivate" the workers to produce and to buy more

One of the studies that most clearly reveals the suggested purpose of the "case study" or "life-history" research is "The motivation of the underprivileged worker" (1946), by Allison Davis. Based on a sample of several hundred working class families, he has quite accurately described the life - albeit briefly - of a section of the urban working class in the U.S.A.

He deals with the "realities", he says, "with the habits of sleeping, of medical care, of joint communal living, of housing, of tavern and night-club life, of gambling, of sex, and of the social competition that the underprivileged worker learns from his slum environment."⁵

After describing a variety of physical and psychological "pressures" which afflict the worker and reduce his ability to work well, he writes:

"To improve the underprivileged worker's performance, one must help him to learn to want and to be anxious to attain social goals for himself and his children."

(His emphasis) (p. 90)

Because "we" want better performance and do not want to resort (figuratively speaking, of course) to "whipping a poorly trained mule" (p. 90), it becomes "... a problem of changing the goals, the ambitions, and the level of cultural and occupational aspirations of the underprivileged worker." (p. 90)

If there is any doubt as to what he is saying, he further clarifies it:

"Like people in every class, every culture, they learn to regard their environment and their living habits as decent and satisfying. This is the circle that our society must break (my emphasis), in order to increase the consciousness of economic needs among the masses of workers (his emphasis) and thus lead to fuller production and better labor." (p. 94)

How much more blatant could one be? He writes that the "underprivileged" worker finds his adjustment to the extreme alienation of sporadic employment "decent and satisfying" - a very questionable argument. Yet, he has the audacity to suggest that this "decent and satisfying" circle has to be broken, all in the interests of greater production.

His point of view - that of the ruling class - is made even more clear in these lines:

"If we wish to change the habits [which he lists as "recreation, relaxation, and pure laziness from Friday night through Sunday night..."] - and these are a great burden upon our production, because about one-third of our total population falls into this group - we must offer the underprivileged worker real rewards." (p. 104)

The "real rewards" include a "decent home", "steady work" and "a fair prospect... of improving his status". This last one is to "convince him that he can secure a better life by hard work..." In other words, integrate him into the system and production will rise and "our survival as a nation" (p. 106), will be secure.

The ideological content of this article needs no

comment. The role of the sociologist is clearly to aid "our industry, business, and government" in understanding and manipulating the working class.

But such research for manipulative purposes is repeated over and over.⁶⁾ One work, however, that is just a little more blatant in its intended purposes is Workingman's Wife (1962), by Rainwater, Coleman, and Handel. It is subtitled, Her personality, world and life style, and it is precisely these things that it researches. It is not just for knowledge, however, but "to provide some clues regarding how best to reach these people with advertising and sales messages."⁷⁾

The book divides into three parts. The first examines in minute detail "the psychological world of the workingman's wife". The purpose of this section is clearly spelled out in the text:

"...we need to know some of the basic facts about the working class housewife's personality and life style, about the pressures which bear in on her, and the satisfactions she seeks, before we can understand her or predict her behaviour or influence it through counselling or education, or persuasion, or advertising." (My emphasis) (p. 27)

"...the business and professional man must learn how to deal with the realities of this working class world if he is to do the best possible job of dealing with these people and increasing the vitality of the American business system." (p. 31)

The book as a whole, then, is social research for the purpose of discovering how best to sell consumer products to the wives of American workers. The first section deals with those "realities" of a workingman's wife which will be useful for commercial purposes. It is an expose of their innermost world and patterns of relationships which now may be played upon and exploited by those "businessmen and professionals" who will read the book.

To make the reading easy for this audience the authors have italicized the points more pertinent to the object of selling. For instance, in this paragraph, they help the reader see the main selling point:

"Not only are working class women seeking greater stability. They also want to add some brightness to life. They do not expect that it can become altogether rosy, but there is hope that the dullness can be relieved..." (p. 60)

This section has numerous such emphasized sentences to bring home the key discoveries about workers' lives. Since the book is written for businessmen, such italicized sentences can help to clarify the "selling points" of workers' wives.

The second part of the book delves into the "consumer behaviour" of these wives. Here is examined how she decides to buy products and why. We learn about her performances and "aesthetics". And it is made clear how these factors relate to her consumer buying.

The last part of the book is entitled, "Strategy in marketing and advertising". As if the earlier exposures of workingmen's wives' habits and aspirations were not enough, the authors have added a section for

guidance to "reaching the workingman's wife". (p. 217) Here the book is summed up. All the major discoveries in the earlier chapters are put into the perspective of advertising. Thus we find a series of general rules, as it were, on selling products to the wives of workers.

The ideological framework of the book is given to us in the first chapter. It is made clear that the consistent use of the term "working class" has no meaning beyond the concept of "strata". As the authors put it:

"Social class in a democratic society is always a subject of some ambivalence, since we believe that people should be equal, but know that in day to day life they are not always treated as equals. Our solution is generally to believe that all people are essentially 'good' even though their experience in life gives them higher or lower social prestige, and greater or lesser amounts of the goods which the society has to offer." (p. 22)

The concept of social class, then, is reduced to a question of prestige and material possessions. Such a notion clearly conforms to the ideology of individualism or mass society in the U.S. - a notion suggesting that we all arrive at a particular "station in life" (strata) through our "experience", i.e. talents, abilities, ambitions, etc. Moreover, if we are capable, we rise in the social structure, if not we occupy that position most suitable to our "experience". The saving grace, however, as these authors see it, is, that regardless of our unequal treatment, we are all "essentially good".

Studying the unemployed (or how to keep the workers pacified)

How to encourage better work habits among the "underprivileged worker" and how to sell consumer goods to a workingman's wife, are not the only kinds of manipulative studies that have gone on. The question of unemployment has long been of concern to business and government leaders. Naturally, large numbers of men and women without work can spell conflict and violence in the country and disruption to the established order of things. As a result, sociologists have been busy collecting data on unemployed men and their frustrations in looking for work. The object of such studies has been to understand the problems of unemployment and job-hunting, thereby better knowing how to deal with such problems when they become a danger to the established economic, social and political order.

One such study of unemployment was published in 1940. It was clearly in response to the massive unemployment in the late Thirties and the threat of dissidence being organized by the left. Edward Bakke's Citizens without work, examined the problems that unemployment presented to the American Way. He wrote that his book was to study:

"The adjustments made by the unemployed workers and their families in their relations to the neighbourhood, to friendship groups, to religious organizations, to politics and pressure groups, and the rearrangement

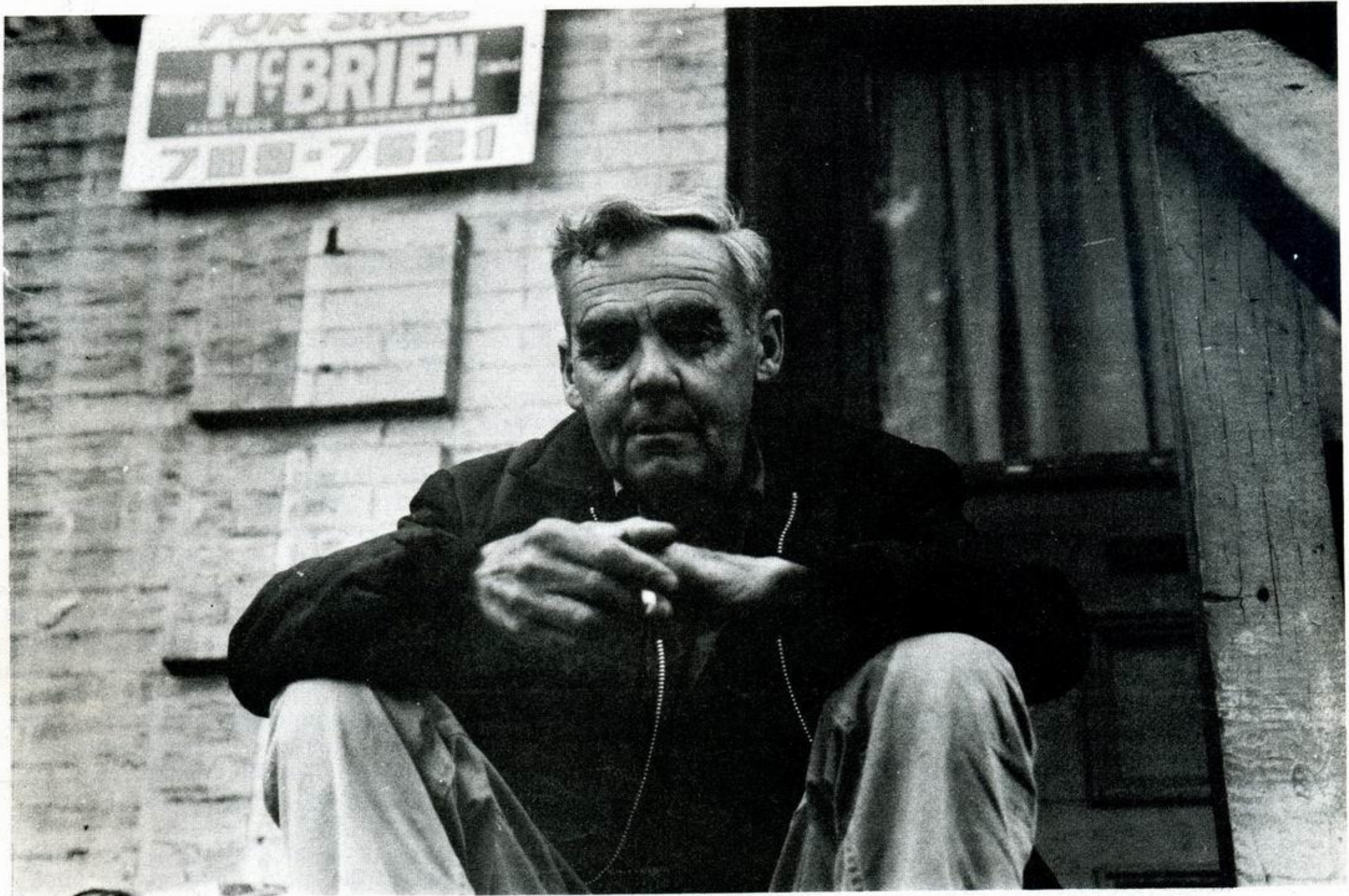


Photo: Lynn Murray

Unemployment to the bourgeois sociologists is just another "psychological problem" afflicting the worker. Far from advocating fundamental changes in the capitalist order, they will propose therapy and job-counselling.

of the structure of family life are here recorded."⁸)

His point of view throughout the book is individualistic, that is, he treats the question of unemployment as an individual problem, something that afflicts workers as individuals and not as a class, and something that is causally unrelated to the economic system. His chief interests, then, are those stated in his introduction - how the worker adjusts to unemployment, what effect it has on his social relations with the community and how it affects "the stability of the family".

The reason for his emphasis on the family remains unstated, yet the whole second part of the book deals with the effect of unemployment on its "stability", that is, its coherence and function in bourgeois society. The nuclear family in capitalist societies is a fundamental institution where the young learn the basic values, traditions, and expectations inherent in such societies. The ideology and reality of bourgeois individualism, then, are maintained and propagated through the institution of the nuclear family.

Should massive unemployment disrupt this social unit on a large scale, one of the basic means of instilling discipline (as responsibility to the family) would be lost, and the consequences for the status

quo would be profoundly negative. Here lies the unstated reasons for Bakke's concern for the family. His focus on the family reveals the importance he sees of holding such a unit together for the stability of the system itself. As Bakke puts it:

"We have already demonstrated the two major problems, lack of income and lack of jobs, are amenable to reduction through the assistance of unemployment insurance benefits geared to the size of the family and sufficient to keep families off direct relief, and through work relief whose standards of production and industrial relations approximate as close as possible to those of high standard private employment. As long as private employment continues to be the only or the chief culturally accepted form of self-maintenance opportunity, of course, less than perfect results may be anticipated from the partnership of these stop-gap devices with the forces working for stability within the family itself." (p. 59)

He encourages the use of such "stop-gap" measures as unemployment insurance and relief-work to help maintain the stability of the family which he equates with the stability of the social order. It is not being suggested here that unemployment insur-

ance is not a desirable thing for workers without work and a minimum guarantee against unemployment. What must be understood is that such insurance is a "stop-gap" measure, a means by which the ruling class moderates the severity of recessions or depressions and minimizes the threat of organized violence against the state. Capitalism will never be able to provide full employment (3% of the work force unemployed is currently in Canada the meaning of "full employment"), so the vagaries of its employing ability must be mitigated.

Needless to say, the depression of the Thirties brought many thousands of Americans into the fold of the Communist Party, and the CPUSA influence in the labour movement was very strong during this period. Thus, aside from the family, Bakke is concerned with what he calls "the challenge from the left". Despite this "challenge", however, Bakke is quick to dismiss any potential development on the left. He writes of the "suspicion of 'Foreign Ways'":

"The characteristics of his own world define for the worker a way of living which is his conception of the 'American Way'.

That radical solutions for his problems would deviate from this American Way is enough to damn them in the minds of many workers, even those whose place of birth was on foreign soil." (p. 59)

Bakke follows this argument with a number of examples equating America with goodness, and badness or radical ideas with Russia or Moscow. He concludes the argument with:

"This identification of all radical ideas with Russia is all but universal. From listening to New Haven workers one would never suspect that any brand of radicalism could spring, native born, from American soil." (p. 70)

The American Way is somehow too good for these unemployed to think badly of it - regardless of their condition.

Bakke found a few unemployed men who did not "decline the bid of the radical spokesman". But of those who did accept the radical ideas proposed from the soap-box, he said this: "Probably the acceptance of radical action was an adjustment to their problem." (p. 242) (his emphasis). Thus, radical ideas among working people are effectively dismissed as coming from Moscow or as an individual "adjustment" to an individual problem as Bakke would have it. There is no suggestion of the validity or possible validity of the ideas.

The conclusion to the book reveals most clearly his perspective on the problem. The book has intended "to furnish middle-class Americans with a realistic picture..." (p. 306) of the problems entailed in being an unemployed worker. These "middle-class" Americans are undoubtedly those in a position to use the information in providing more efficient and adequate "stop-gap" measures for the disorders caused by unemployment. It is in the interests of this class of Americans not to have the established order fundamentally challenged. Their well-being rests on the stability of the system.

To be unemployed is a "psychological problem"

Bakke is not alone in reducing working class, problems of unemployment to questions of "readjustment" and "self-reliance".

A more recent study called *The job hunt* (1966)⁹⁾ also assumes unemployment to be a largely personal or individual problem. The purpose of this study by Sheppard and Belitsky was to discover the social and psychological "components that affect a job seeker's chances for success, and to find out if these components are related to the nature and intensity of an unemployed worker's search for re-adjustment."

The book analyzes these "social-psychological" elements in great detail. In the second chapter, we find a description of "blue-collar" social and economic characteristics that might affect the possibility of finding work. The third and fourth chapters examine the workers' actual behaviour in looking for work. The next analyzes the "effectiveness of the techniques used by workers to find re-employment". The eighth chapter looks at the "mobility propensity" of workers. Here the authors admit that "the findings increase our understanding of the problems involved in facilitating the movement of workers to 'areas of improved economic opportunities'". Such is one solution to the "displaced" (as the authors call them) or unemployed workers of America. If one is "displaced", it only makes sense given this "logic" to "re-place" him.

The "research recommendations" of the study form the last part of the book. In suggesting modestly that they have not yet uncovered everything about the behaviour of the unemployed workers, they insist their research has been of some help. As they put it: "As our country moves more and more into programs involving direct action with individuals and local communities to solve the problems of unemployment, poverty, and economic growth, the need for such information increases." (p. 221)

These social scientists are studying the social patterns of unemployed workers so that the government will be able to mollify the conditions created by capitalist enterprise. Capitalism for bourgeois sociologists is the norm, the given - like water is to fish - and they do not see how it engulfs them and blinds them to their very social existence. Industrial "peace" is the watchword, while capitalists continue to oppress and exploit. Social scientists, as it was once said, are not the "doctors", they are in fact part of the "disease".

Nowhere is it suggested that the massive unemployment of 1963, with which this book is concerned, had anything to do with the economic situation in the U.S. Unemployment is only identified as a "problem" which has "socio-psychological components". The individual or certain individuals as a group are analyzed regarding their characteristics and behaviour that are relevant to the "job hunt". The conclusions admit to the possible need for manipulation of unemployed workers in order to "solve the problems", mere problems, of the contradictions of American capitalism.

Other "problems" and "solutions"

Studies of the "problems" of the working class in the U.S.A. have not been limited to the variety of studies examined so far. There are few realms in workingmen's lives where the bourgeois social scientist has not tread.

A large number of labour mobility studies have been done to examine how frustrated workers are in terms of "upward mobility". In capitalist society "mobility" boils down to question of the greater acquisition of wealth and prestige. The argument of these studies runs as follows: if mobility is "blocked" or thwarted, careful watch must be maintained to guard against potential "unrest".

Moreover, a large number of the studies done in the field of criminology, deal with the working class. Very generally, what is perceived as the "problem" here may be one or some of a "value conflict", "poor socialization", "thwarted desires", "blocked opportunities", or just plain working class "adolescence". And just as frequently, the "recommendation" lies in resocialization programs, or "opening up opportunities" for the criminal or delinquent. The point of view of the criminologist is the same as that of the industrial sociologist - from the vested interests in the established order, the ruling class.

Although our main concern has been to deal with the literature in "industrial sociology", which tends to examine the industrial proletariat, there is a new and growing area in sociological literature, namely the sociology of poverty. In this area, sociologists (in the main) have turned their attention to the lumpenproletariat - the most severely depressed and alienated class in capitalist society.

"Culture of poverty" - another excuse for the status quo

Since the publishing of Michael Harrington's book, The other America, in 1962, sociologists in both the U.S. and Canada, have "discovered" a new area of study, namely poverty.¹⁰⁾ The general argument found in these works runs somewhat as follows: poor housing, poor health, poor environment, poor food, poor clothing, poor opportunities, poor jobs, and poor earnings, all produce and perpetuate a "culture of poverty". Because these conditions are seen as "self-perpetuating", their "cause" is assumed to be inherent - part of the cycle. Given this assumption, there is seldom any question raised as to why these conditions prevail. It is assumed that they do and that they must be "fought" - in "wars" - by "reaching", "inspiring", or "helping" the people so affected. A familiar analogy can be made with the doctor who treats the symptoms and not the causes of illness.

In short, bourgeois social scientists see poverty causing poverty. Never is the question of capitalist production raised as the cause of poverty. Yet the very roots of this mode of production lie in scarcity. The capitalist/imperialist ownership of the means of production generates unemployment and the attendant poverty. The cause of poverty, therefore,

cannot be sought for in itself, in poverty, but in the system that produces it.

The question of poverty, and the utter degradation that accompanies it, has just begun to be examined in Canada. A few sociologists have spewed forth some descriptive, "theoretical" and statistical papers on the subject. And most of these clinical pieces seem to have been collected in anthologies by W. E. Mann of York University - no doubt for use in "poverty courses", taken by budding technocrats who will soon be administering the "health and welfare" of the Canadian poor.

But notable outside these assorted apologies and praises sung to free enterprise is the book, The poverty wall, (1970), by Ian Adams. He has presented in it a very real picture of poverty in Canada; and the brutalizing effects are described with some insight into the cause but without a hint of pity so frequent in such descriptions. As well, he has grasped the vastness of poverty conditions and handled statistics in such a way as to give them a vividness not found in academic books or papers.

He has grasped, superficially, much of the underlying cause of poverty. Examine these lines:

"...those who are publicly demanding that something be done about the inequities of our system are often the ones making the most money from the conditions that exist. And much of what continues to be done in the administration of business, politics, law, education, and all the other institutions that form the working machinery of our society, has the net effect of keeping the poor that way."¹¹⁾

He has fallen short, however, of a clear theoretical and concrete analysis of the class structure of the Canadian nation-state. The description is accurate enough but the people who make the major decisions in this country are not "middle-class liberals", as Adams suggests (p. 149). It is not these "middle class intellectuals" or "liberals" or "experts" who own the factories and mines, the largest retail stores and service companies, or the manufacturing and distribution firms. It is not they primarily in whose financial interest laws are made and enforced and government policy devised. There is a ruling class and it can be defined theoretically and concretely.

Its definition is no closely guarded secret. The ruling class in a capitalist economy owns the means by which raw materials, finished goods, and services are "produced" and distributed. Adams makes a good start on describing who owns most of Canada - American imperialists - but does not take the description far enough. We are not shown how American big business and Canadian comprador capitalists¹²⁾ unite to profit from the labour of Canadian workers. When the comprador bourgeoisie and the American imperialists as the ruling class of Canada are analyzed in their relation to those who work in their mines, factories, service industries and so on, then, poverty, as a consequence of our colonized social and economic system, will be understood.

Class analysis needed

Similar notes might be written on the "Renegade report on poverty",¹³⁾ for which Ian Adams was greatly responsible along with Bill Cameron, Brian Hill and Peter Penz. The report is a mass of detail describing the means by which the "poor" are held in their place - the means by which, it should be pointed out, almost every sector of our economy profits by making people poor, not just "keeping them that way". But the report does not analyze poverty in terms of which class profits the most and leads the effort to "keep the poor that way". Because there is no class analysis, there is little sense or suggestion of what can be done. For unless the class relations of the system can be revealed, there can be no discussion of the struggle for socialism.

The real cause of poverty, as it has been argued, is discussed in an article by Cy Gonick who wrote:

"Poverty does not lie outside our political economy, it is produced by it: by its inability to assure continuous full employment, by its crazy sense of priorities and its distorted allocation of resources; by the way it rewards achievement. The poverty wards may

diminish during boom periods and during wars but they are always replenished by the inevitable periods of slowdown and decline when unemployment is high. And they are replenished also by economic progress itself as uncoordinated technological change banishes large numbers of workers to the lower margin of the labour force."¹⁴⁾
(emphasis added)

Here we find sketched the principle causes of poverty. But again, what is not made clear is the class basis of poverty. Our society does not have "a crazy sense of priorities", it has class structured priorities, and unless the class relations are understood the suggested solutions to the real cause of poverty can never be discovered. Examine, for instance, Gonick's proposal - as he puts it - for "probably the only effective solution" to poverty:

"...a regional development strategy that includes wide-spread powers of public planning, direct public industrial investment, and a great expansion of housing, medical, hospital and educational and vocational training facilities." (p. 76)

These are fine goals, but if we look at the devel-



Photo: Lynn Murray

Poverty in a capitalist society can always be justified by some new sociological "theory". In essence these "theories", such as the "culture of poverty" theory, argue that "the poor will always be with us".

opment of countries which have adopted them, a different story emerges. Both England and Sweden, as the two foremost examples of the adoption of "welfare" policies, still have poverty.¹⁵⁾ They still have poverty and unemployment and, as long as the systems remain fundamentally capitalist, alienation and the attendant stifling of human creativity is pervasive and profound.

Gonick's analysis of the cause of poverty, however, is far more to the point than Adams' analysis in The poverty wall. Nevertheless; neither makes a class analysis of the question of poverty and thus both have denied themselves the possibility of clearly understanding the way to overcoming poverty.

Poverty is inherent in the capitalist system and it has not been abolished in systems of welfare state capitalism. It is an integral part of capitalism because of the exploitative class relationships found in such a system. What must be understood is that a particular class (the indigenous or imperialist bourgeoisie) owns and controls the places of work and the products of labour, and that it is this class which causes unemployment in its pursuit of profits. There could be no ruling class, however, unless there was a class to rule and to exploit. That class is the working class and it is ruled and exploited in ways both subtle and violent by the capitalist.

As long as workers do not present any great danger to the fundamental relations of production, they are ruled generally in subtle ways. They are made to feel a part of "democracy" by being allowed to cast ballots, etc. They are allowed to "bargain" with employers over the terms of their wages and working conditions and so on. But should they demand too much or should workers decide they want to change basic relations of ownership of the means of production, the ruling class uses everything in its power from the courts to the military to maintain its ruling positions.

This is why, returning to the question at hand, that if poverty is to be abolished, the very class that perpetuates the social, economic and political relations which creates it must be struggled with and overthrown. It is not enough to suggest "public ownership" for small or large sectors of the economy. The examples of England and Sweden present too clearly a negative result to suggest they have solved the problem of poverty through public ownership. The only road to the abolition of poverty is through the struggle for socialism. Welfare state capitalism found in countries or provinces governed by social democratic parties is not socialism. Socialism begins with the overthrow of the ruling class and the establishment of workers' control over the means of production, not with state or "public" ownership as advocated by social democrats.

Nowhere has a social democratic party in power overturned a ruling class. On the contrary, they have produced a complacent working class through the deceit in the notion that they represent the interests of the working class.

No reforms or studies or public companies or "wars" on poverty will change the fundamental situation. The poor are created in a capitalist society; they are a "natural" result of class relations. It is not true, as sociologists parrot, that poverty is

"self-perpetuating". This is but a cliché because poverty is no more self-perpetuating than the bourgeoisie is self-perpetuating. Both do exist and persist, but both are produced by the very nature of the capitalist system. And if both are to be ended, the system must be ended. The struggle for reform should continue, but reforms should be struggled for in the contest of the struggle for socialism, not as ends in themselves.

Social scientists: the handmaidens of the system

As for the sociologists who have made this "field" of poverty their specialty, they act essentially as weatherbeacons for the establishment. They study, in the most intimate details, the life of the "poor" and recommend policies and reforms to alleviate the harshest, the most horrible of the conditions of poverty - those conditions that might give rise to protest. The general state of affairs, however, remains the same.

Implicitly or explicitly, the view point of sociologists has been and is the viewpoint of those who pay their salaries. They are paid by universities, the government, by business, or by a variety of institutions whose job it is to administer the "health and welfare" of the population. Sociological research, then, reflects the point of view of the established order.

It is a view that is committed to the maintenance of the system. And such has been the function of the research centers and the universities which have sponsored sociological research into the "problems" of American and Canadian society. With regard to industrial conflict, the growth of university institutes for "Industrial Relations" at Harvard, M. I. T., and the University of Toronto, for example, are to be understood as the growing attempt by advanced capitalism to integrate the working class into the system, to dampen existing class conflict and potential revolution and better to aid in the exploitation of workers or colonies, where such exists.

The research procedure has been to study, with a view to "solving" the problems of workers on and off the job and in search of jobs, thereby attempting to soften the effects of alienation and atomization in capitalist society. The "solving" has been largely a question of "rehabilitation", "resocialization" or "correction". In reality, such solutions are a question of manipulation, amelioration, integration and selling. In short, the function of industrial sociology has been to discover the sources of conflict, real and potential, and to recommend the means ("solutions") to overcoming them within the social, political and economic boundaries of capitalism or imperialism.

Sociologists have to reorient themselves

But how can sociologists do research, teach and write from the point of view of the workers? This question is not easily answered for the intellectual arrogance that develops during one's university training is not easily overcome. And a working

class background is little protection against the smugness that the university imbues in its members. Indeed, as George Orwell suggests in The road to Wigan Pier, the working class student who makes it to university is frequently the most arrogant of the lot. But to overcome this intellectual arrogance or snobbishness is a major task for those wishing to assist the working class overthrow its oppressor class. To wipe bourgeois smugness and prejudices from the mind, however, is not simple, but requires profound self-criticism over long periods of time.

Both of Orwell's books, The road to Wigan Pier and Down and out in London and Paris, provide some insight into this problem that "intellectuals" face when deciding to work in the interest of the working class.

From a less personal position, the sociologist wishing to break his attachment to bourgeois ideology, should read books on the nature of bourgeois thought. Marx's The German ideology and Engels' Anti-During are a good place to start in discovering the basis of bourgeois ideology. Christopher Caudwell's Studies in a dying culture, and Further studies in a dying culture, deal more specifically with the question of bourgeois ideology in twentieth century England. In order to see through the visors that bourgeois ideology places on the sociologist these works should be studied.

When the class prejudices and academic smugness of the sociologist has been understood, criticized and to a greater or lesser degree overcome, the social scientist can begin to struggle in the interest of the working class. And one way he might do this is to analyze the ruling class with the intent of developing strategies for the struggle for socialism from the point of view of the working class.

Above all, in a country like Canada - colonized by the U.S. - sociologists must study how the country is exploited as a nation by the U.S.A., and what classes and groups will support the struggle against American imperialism. They must study the changing structure of all the classes in Canada in order to determine the trends and developments for such an anti-imperialist struggle.

Moreover, sociologists must practice their sociology. They cannot simply study, for true knowledge of the basic conflicts and their direction can only be learned by involving oneself in the struggle.

Footnotes:

1) C.H. Parker, "Motives in economic life", Publications of the American Sociological Society, Vol. xii, 1917, University of Chicago Press, p. 139.

2) Parker's list of instincts runs as follows: Gregariousness, parental bent, curiosity, acquisition, fear and flight, mental activity, the housing or settling instinct, migration and homing, hunting, anger, revolt at confinement, revulsion ("The social nausea which society feels towards discussions of sex, venereal disease, leprosy, certain smells, is not found on wilfulness"), leadership and mastery, subordination and submission, display, and sex.

3) C.H. Parker "The I.W.W.", in Atlantic Monthly, Vol. cxx, Nov. 1917, p. 655.

4) A. Kornhauser, "Human motivation underlying industrial conflict", in Industrial conflict, by Kornhauser, Dubin, and Ross, McGraw-Hill, 1954, p. 62.

5) Allison Davis, "The motivation of the underprivileged worker", in Whyte, W.F., Industry and society, McGraw-Hill, 1946, p. 86.

6) See for example, P. Martineau, "Social classes and spending behaviour", The Journal of Marketing, Oct. 1958; D. Katz, "Satisfactions and deprivations in industrial life", in A. Kornhauser, (ed.), Industrial conflict, and especially, W.F. Whyte, Money and motivation, 1955, to mention but a few.

7) L. Rainwater, R.P. Coleman, G. Handel, Workingman's wife, her personality, world and life style, MacFadden-Bartell Books, New York, 1962, p. 13.

8) E.W. Bakke, Citizens without work, (A study of the effects of unemployment upon the worker's social relations and practices), Institute of Human Relations and Yale University Press, New Haven, 1940, p. vii.

9) H.L. Sheppard and A.H. Belitsky, The job hunt, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1966, p. viii.

10) It is not that poverty did not exist before Harrington wrote his book, but that social scientists were not so numerous and the "poor" had not become so "vocal" in the preceding decades, as they were in the 1960's.

11) Ian Adams, The poverty wall, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1970, p. 105.

12) Originally, the term "comprador" referred to a native servant or agent in a European business in China or India. Presently, the term is applied to that part of the capitalist class in a colony or semi-colony which profits by serving the interests of an imperialist bourgeoisie. The strongest part of the Canadian ruling class has always been comprador, first profiting from the various phases of British imperialism and then American imperialism as it grew to dominance in Canada at the turn of the last century.

13) Last Post, vol. 1, no. 8, 1971.

14) Cy Gonick, "Poverty and capitalism", in W.E. Mann (ed.), Poverty and social policy in Canada, Copp, Clark Co., 1970, p. 77.

15) Regarding Britain, see, Townsend and Wedderburn, The aged in the welfare state, 1965, and Abel-Smith and Townsend, The poor and the poorest. Similar books in Swedish, if and when they have been written, have not been translated into English.

Gary Teeple has just finished editing a collection of articles dealing with class analysis of different aspects of Canadian society and history. ■



Photo: John Phillips

AN EXCHANGE ON ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS

Some realities to remember

By Gill Hague

I feel it would be constructive to make certain observations in connection with Rose-Marie Larsson's excellent article on children's playgrounds ("Children's play and official playgrounds", TRANSFORMATION, vol. 1, no. 3). I agree totally with the sentiments expressed in the article and share with the author her initial enthusiasm at the vision of adventure playgrounds, where children can REALLY play, springing up all over England. I would like to point out, however, that most such enterprises (in London anyway) have

- a) a very limited life-span
- b) a continual hassle to obtain any funds whatsoever, and
- c) great difficulty in finding competent, radical Youth Leaders to supervise their projects.

The Youth Leaders are generally paid (indirectly at least) by a local authority which automatically introduces another problem of allegiance and accountability. In addition, many playgrounds encounter continuing hostility from local residents. Although Rose-Marie Larsson does mention most of these points in passing, the picture is not nearly as rosy as she paints it to be.

An important consideration is that the concept of Community Control has not yet developed to any great extent over here (no doubt it will be passed down the colonial line to the colonial Left in England in time!). There is, therefore, very little community involvement in most adventure playground situations and actual parent participation is usually zero. All playgrounds of this type are situated in low income,

working class areas, and are frequently administered and run by liberal, middle class elements, who are alienated from the local community by virtue not only of class differences but also by pure physical distance. Volunteers, play-leaders and committee members tend to live miles away in their own neat neighbourhoods and to commute in to the area concerned to do their bit for humanity! (Let me note here that criticism does not apply to all adventure playground workers.)

Another fact-of-life that must be taken into account when evaluating English adventure playgrounds is that these centres always (and most naturally) become hang-outs for the local "bad kids", whose parents are only too glad to see the backs of them. This, of course, leads directly to frequent and often violent conflicts with the so-called Law-enforcing Authorities. In one situation with which I am particularly familiar, the kids decided a few months ago to break down all their structures, and completely wrecked the place. The committee in charge thought this was O.K., reasoning, thankfully, that the playground belonged to the kids, and that if they chose to wreck it, then it was nobody's loss but theirs. The police were, however, prompt in arriving, and upon warrant, interrogated various kids, removed one young boy to their van and probably

man-handled him, and insulted the play-leader using incredibly obscene language. The playground was subsequently closed for several months and is only now struggling to re-open. I am merely quoting this case to dispel the myth of the friendly British policeman and to demonstrate how little difference there actually is between our two countries when it comes down to the nitty-gritty, and repression is deemed necessary.

I would like to make a final point. The seemingly benevolent provision of facilities such as adventure playgrounds, dole money (unemployment pay), the "welfare state", abundant subsidies and council housing etc., by the British authorities should not be misconstrued. It must be remembered (and is too often not even realized) that the powers-that-be are merely handing down to the working class luke-warm sops, carefully calculated to quell any potential militancy. The British worker has been most effectively bought off over the years (at the expense of his comrade in the neo-colonial nations), and the capitalist government with its controllers may congratulate itself on having perfected the art of subtle appeasement via the kid glove approach. Please let us not be deceived of the naked reality of oppression lying beneath that kid glove on both sides of the Atlantic.

Playgrounds are only one aspect of the struggle

By Rose-Marie Larsson

Gill Hague's observations help to further the main point of my article, namely that organising against oppression of working class children necessarily involves actions of a revolutionary political nature, and therefore ought to tie in with all other actions of a revolutionary political nature. One is forced to say ought to, since what is considered the Left in this country, in Sweden, and obviously in Great Britain, tends to disregard the oppression of working class people as it affects them away from the work places, as if "oppression" is something that exists solely in the factories as a result of the boss-worker relationship (for clarification here, see Marjaleena Repo's article on "The impoverishment of the Canadian left" in this issue).

The fact is - and the working class knows it - that working class oppression begins at birth, or rather, at the exact moment of conception. The human being born from the union of two orgastically impotent individuals, grown in the womb of a woman whose daily existence is deprived of joy, who's driven by society into a rut of pointless activities, that child born into a world which is an overcrowded downtown housing project or a stripped down, stereotype suburb - is he born free? He who has been raised on wonder-bread and anti-life ideology, who has been punished for masturbating, been force fed, toilet trained and told to shut up and do what he's told - by

parents who are always too tired, who have so many problems to cope with, who are so fragmented, so torn between what they want and what they can get, constantly; and the frustrations and unhappiness that result - where does his oppression begin? No end, and no beginning.

The thing is, once one begins to challenge one aspect of working class life, one discovers a million tasks to be done. One discovers connections between things that at first seemed not to be connected. One quickly discovers that one is dealing with the quality of life and real human beings - in the case of adventure playgrounds one is dealing with kids who have real parents, who in turn have real jobs or are really unemployed, who have real historical backgrounds, who have real life problems, who have real home situations and who are as real, perhaps more real, than the one who comes to them and wants to set up an adventure playground.

And just as a union reform demands for better working conditions and better wages won't solve all the problems of workers, neither will adventure playgrounds supply the wonder solution to the problem of society thwarting children's growth. What an adventure playground can do is allow the children a space where they will have more of a chance to survive as healthy individuals - health being the ability to trust your senses - and thereby grow up critical. If done

with awareness, an adventure playground could become the focal point for discussions - involving parents and children - about such things as relationships between people: why they are so bad and how they could be instead. And that would then automatically lead into numerous, concrete attempts at finding out what the obstacles are, i. e. how society puts obstacles in the way of people's growth. People's own experiences are full of evidence. What one needs to do is connect them, the personal experiences, with all progressive movements in all fields of human endeavour - education, medicine, the arts, psychology and mental health care, architecture and housing, nutrition and ecology. The list is endless, rich, full of possibilities. What one must realize is that this list also works the other way, the reactionary way. The working class is getting screwed by professionals from all those fields of "human" endeavour, and has been for a long time.

And here again one must refer to the responsibility of the Left. If truly oriented towards the working class, it will attempt to deal with all aspects of working class oppression, including such important things as children's playgrounds. If not, they will create a vacuum which the state and its PR-men - the church, charity organizations, liberals functioning within the system - will take advantage of and use as a base to hinder the development of progressive struggles taking place elsewhere.

That seems to be exactly what has happened in England, and I know for sure that it has happened in Sweden. For instance, Gill Hague mentions that most of the playleaders and playground administrators in London tend to be liberals of middle class background with little or no communication with the working class parents of the children they work with. The information I have from Sweden indicates that the same holds true there. The result of well-meaning liberals intervening in working class people's lives is the usual: when faced with the reality that far-reaching, total transformation of human relations is necessary to rid the world of agony and pointlessness, they soon opt out. As soon as they discover that simply setting up an adventure playground for "deprived kids" by no means at all suffices to still the hunger for creativity and life rampant among the working class; that on the contrary, innumerable problems will present themselves as the result of it and will have to be dealt with or stagnation will set in - they show their true nature and either turn to other new "projects" or introduce regimentation of a kind that turns the kids and/or parents against them.

I will give an example. Last year in one of the suburbs of Stockholm, an adventure playground was organised by a community organization in the area. (I am not quite sure of how much was the result of parent participation in this case and how much depended on the adventure playground activists connected with the organization in Stockholm that pushes for this kind of community activity. I do know, however, that that organization, Arkiv Samtal, was at the time thoroughly imbued with populist ideology and has, as long as I have known it, constantly avoided dealing with any issues as symptoms of an underlying, class structured social-economic reality.)

This is what happened: as soon as they began the

actual construction work they were faced with a crucial problem. The older kids in the area - the 11, 12 and 13 year old ones - tended to take over all the activities and leave nothing for the smaller kids. So, it was decided that the older kids should be allowed to build their own adventure playground, which they did. They built a whole little village of huts and cabins, and proceeded to stay there late at night to drink beer, smoke hash and presumably, make love. That, the community organization couldn't deal with. Their whole boy scout idea of what an adventure playground was supposed to be fell to pieces. Because they were trapped in their own narrow, liberal ideology they could see no connection between sexual oppression of youth and children, and oppressive anti-creative playgrounds. They had gone ahead with a project, eyes covered with "rosy pictures" indeed, totally blind to the real needs of the people they wanted to do something for, in this case kids approaching puberty.

The result was that many kids were forbidden by their parents to go there, and the place became a kind of hang-out for "bad kids" before it deteriorated because of lack of adult support. Back to the old social set-up. The "good kids" stayed away, and the "bad kids" went back to their age old, underground, guilt ridden activities. "Bad kids" are constantly finding secret places to drink beer, smoke hash and make love. This time the so-called "progressive" adults missed their chance to gain an in-depth understanding of that phenomenon, the sexual alienation of youth, by simply outlawing or neglecting it - let alone the fact that they were unable to allow the kids any form of participation in the struggle for social change on issues directly related to them.

Similarly, it must have been precisely because the playleaders and administrators in Gill Hague's playground, by virtue of their own class origin and ideology, had been unable to establish any form of meaningful communication (most people don't even know what meaningful is!) between themselves and the working class people in the area, left themselves wide open to reactionary blows, like the police harassment mentioned. Because, had the playground served deep-rooted needs in the community it would have been very difficult for the police to intervene as they did, let alone close down the playground. Parents and older sisters and brothers would have turned out in person to defend what they considered theirs.

So, we are faced with two things. One is the blatant oppression of working class children, specifically manifested in the kind of play areas available to them. The other thing is the insistence of all conscious and unconscious anti-life elements to jump on the bandwagon and turn an initially exciting, spirited endeavour into a sappy, stagnant, regimented pseudo-activity, because of their absolute inability to understand and their fear of dealing with the the multifold aspects of dehumanization and with the immense work needed to eliminate the causes of it. Only when organizing for children's play is tied in with a conscious program to root out all forms of oppression will it prove successful, and one must add, dangerous to the system. ■

Silencing the workers, continued from page 43

in detail but in their generality. We do not win over 70 awards a year for films because they lack the truth or because they smell of propaganda.

You have seen this film, along with other trade union officials. May I ask is it right to have a worker in it (a man of undoubted honesty) mistakenly say that as a Quebec textile worker he could earn \$1.25 an hour more in the United States than he does here in Canada? Surely, you know that the average wage of a Canadian textile worker is approximately the same, if not more, when considering cost-of-living as that of an American textile worker. Surely you and the members of your affiliated textile unions know that a considerable part of the Canadian textile industry is largely owned by Canadians, a fact which the film avoids but looks to statistics relating to a large American conglomerate to prove foreign ownership.

The film gives the impression that Quebec textile workers are being made deaf by the exclusive use of old-fashioned looms while the Japanese work with silent looms. However, by the time the film was finished the plant where important filming was done had over 80 silent looms in operation. You must also know that the facts about the man in the film with silicosis are not even vaguely representative of the industry as a whole - the incidence of silicosis is very low in contrast to the impression given in the film.

For a film of such exhaustive length it's ironic that economists and others should say that the film misses one of the main points about the Canadian textile industry; it should have paid more attention to the problem of imports into Canada from countries where the wage scales are considerably lower than our own.

You are quite right in suggesting that the textile companies have protested to me about the facts in this film but so, Mr. L'Heureux, have trade unionists who think that the film does not adequately represent an up-to-date view of the entire industry. They say that it glorifies the blood and strife of worker-boss relations during the 1930s and '40s and that it unfairly and unwisely downgrades the often magnificent role played by the trade union movement in helping the industry modernize itself. You, yourself, pointed out in your letter that the film neglected the good work of the CNTU. Other trade unionists feel even more strongly.

To save the film one might reason "why not merely eliminate the statistical errors, etc. in the film?" Believe me, we have considered seriously asking the film-maker to do this. Reluctantly, and according to our best professional judgement, this cannot be done. The contentious factual content interweaves the entire film. As in a bolt of cloth, take the woof out and the warp fall apart.

May I add this note. I am not casting any stones at the makers of this film. They made it with passion and belief. The Film Board's output is not the same as the maker of identical cans of beans. Each film is an individual item handmade with consequent results not guaranteed. That is the nature of the craft that the workers here live their lives for. Despite this, our record over the

years of films withheld from showing is less than one-half of one percent.

I am happy to write this letter as fully as I have and to add to the many frank statements I have already made which have been published widely in the press. I hope the workers in the 30 or so unions on whose behalf you wrote will understand that the reputation of our films and of our staff, is too valuable to lose because of one film. For the reasons stated above, the Film Board cannot release this film. This may be called censorship; I call it the exercise of public responsibility.

Sincerely
Sydney Newman

The impoverishment, continued from page 34

a boredom that the participants are trying to cover up with a fervent belief in "the cause". It has become an accepted fact in the left circles, that "politics" are boring, and to complain about that is to complain about "the nature of things". One tolerates boredom on the left as one tolerated boredom in all aspects of one's life.

Slowly but surely one gets the clear impression that one is in the presence of a pathological phenomenon. It seems that the left in its alienation draws to itself extremely alienated individuals, for whom the movement or the party becomes often an alternative to a serious psychotic breakdown.⁴³ The groups provide the already alienated and disconnected members with structure and discipline and a situation in which personal problems cannot be dealt with. Certain crucial dimensions of one's person (one's doubts, fears, longings, needs, dreams) have to be cut off and are done so with the rationalization that they are not "political", but rather personal. It is easier for just about anyone in this society to talk confidently about external matters, than it is to talk about the mess one finds oneself in. Imperialism is an easier topic than is one's own unhappiness. And to talk eloquently about the auto pact is less demanding than it would be to talk about why people literally fall asleep listening to these eloquent speeches.

We need a different kind of left

There is no particular reason why the left has to be undialectical, incompetent, life-negating and boring. Just because groups calling themselves "left" have been so, does not mean that it has to continue that way. What has to be created in this country is a movement that challenges the capitalist character structure in ourselves (and not just "out there", in other people), and is able to change it into the beginnings of a communal character structure. This movement rejects the pathology of "normalcy", as it manifests itself on the left, the centre and the right. It calls forth the creative energies of the participants, instead of suppressing them in the name of the "correct line". It cultivates health, physical, mental and

43) See footnote on page

sexual, in its participants, and regards ill-being in any of these spheres of life a serious political problem. The meaning of health, that is, good functioning, will emerge as the key problem to be solved, because one cannot talk in bland generalities about something so critically important.⁴⁴⁾ (Can you visualize a political conference where the nature of health in general and sexuality in particular is seriously explored?) Furthermore, the practice of health will be an integral part of such a movement.

This movement will therefore change the meaning of what is "political". It will not accept as meaningful methods of political work to have predictable demonstrations, where one calls for predictable meetings in order to sign and distribute predictable petitions, which call for predictable demonstrations... Meetings, demonstrations, petitions - all of which presently are the only methods of political work - will be methods to be used sparingly and only to dramatize ongoing processes, but political work would be organically connected with everyday life at work and outside of work. It will be considered more important to function as a real change agent at one's work place and with one's friends, than it is to stand in street corners and sell largely irrelevant left newspapers. It will be considered more important to find a capable nurse to do birth control work at a public hospital or clinic and to involve other professionals in such work, than it is to get 100 bypassers to sign a petition to make abortion easier. The nurse is a living change agent, the petition is an empty ritual. It is also far more important to find a group of university teachers who will set up exciting courses in Canadian literature, history, sociology, politics, science and so on, inside and outside the universities, than it is to get 1000 signatures on a quota campaign petition from strangers, who are not mobilized to back up the petition with any strength.

Most significantly, in this movement nobody will go out to "organize the working class", in the plants or in the communities, unless they have made some headway with their own constituencies, and have some real experience, knowledge and skills to offer. It will not be possible for a "radical" student, thoroughly alienated from and contemptuous of the rest of the student body, to "drop out", and move into a working class district, as hundreds of alienated radicals have been doing for the last half-a-dozen years (and are now doing with federal financing). Anti-intellectualism, so prevalent today among radicals, will be a thing of the past, as knowledge and skills will be highly valued, despite the fact that they are obtained in "bourgeois" institutions (what other kinds are there?).

It will also be necessary for all members of such a movement to be involved in work with small children, as the liberation of children will be a central task of the movement. When everybody works with small infants, it will be impossible to create the kind of politics that exist now, in which men, untouched by the needs of children and women, can build empires for themselves, at the expense of women and children. It is no accident that the most active members in various movements are either married men with no visible duties towards their children, or childless men and women. (The only concession usually given

to the reproduction of the species is that make-shift babysitting arrangements are created so that the mothers of children can attend the boring meetings and conferences!) Furthermore, caring for children becomes in a real sense caring for humanity, because one cannot conceivably be only concerned with one's "own" physical children and movement children; one ends up thinking about how to create structures that allow all children to be free of the usual oppression. "The first duty of a revolutionary", becomes then in the words of Paul Adams, "to build a society geared to children."⁴⁵⁾

There is something else that this movement will be, which will differentiate it from the present left groups. Critical thought and investigation will be encouraged, not stomped on. Nothing will be taboo: no truth, no discovery so final, that one cannot question it. There are no forbidden books, no forbidden topics, and an ability to be critical of oneself and of the movement will be valued above all.

How will this kind of movement be built? The movement builder will have to be qualitatively different kind of person from the usual "left winger" or "radical". He/she has to represent real health or the possibility and pursuit of real health in a sick society. He/she has to be more perceptive, more sensitive, more affectionate, more openminded, more capable than others in society, and willing and capable of transmitting these qualities to others. A movement builder is an educator and a healer in one person - meanwhile always remembering that he/she too is in the process of learning more and functioning better. A movement builder never "arrives" at optimum health and happiness and knowledge; beyond good functioning and extensive knowledge there is even better functioning and further knowledge, and totally new dimensions of both that one hasn't even been aware of before.

No matter how thorough the process has been to create alienated and unhappy men, women and children, there are people today in Canada, who have retained some elements of health in their lives. They do not, as a rule, consider themselves "political" (although they can be active in various fields), and

43) This is not just a cheap psychiatric putdown of people involved with left politics. But it has been my personal experience over the years, that people who function like machines within a political organization, collapse, when supporting structures (authority and discipline) are removed (say, when they are expelled), and that people facing serious crisis in their personal lives, "escape" into political movements, where they are allowed to function on a very superficial level, both intellectually and emotionally.

44) In a coming issue an article will open up the discussion about healthy sexuality. Titled (tentatively), "Give heterosexuality a chance!", it deals, among other things, with childhood sexuality, and offers a critical perspective on homosexuality.

45) Paul Adams, one of the contributors in the book, Children's Rights: the liberation of the child, Elek Books, 1971.

they have rejected left politics for many of the reasons presented in this article. So far they have not been able to challenge these alienated politics effectively, since many have in the process of rejecting "Marxist" movements, become anti-Marxists and anti-theory themselves. Many have gone the counter-culture way, but with their critical faculties have seen through the limitations of this "alternative" as well. Presently they are "floating", so to speak, waiting for a real alternative to the impoverished left to be created. You can find these people in all walks of life: among workers, professionals, artists and students, and few of them are aware of their strengths as movement builders. It has not yet dawned on them, that they themselves are to create that alternative to the present left.

Tasks for movement builders

The potential movement builders have definite tasks ahead of them, to prepare themselves for the time when serious movement building can be started, and to enable them to do what they are in fact fundamentally capable of doing.

1) They have to become students of Marx (not Marxists, but life long students of him and Engels), in order to be able to develop an adequate methodology to transform the present social order. They need to have a thorough understanding of dialectics (some are already natural dialecticians, have like the average leftist - survived the worst conditioning in the schools), and a thorough knowledge of historical developments, both of which will enable them to challenge the distorted "Marxism" of the left groups. The methodology has to be applied to create a thorough understanding of how life is experienced in a capitalist society, and of what needs people have for a different kind of existence, i. e. a different kind of society.

2) They have to familiarize themselves fully with Wilhelm Reich's work in order to understand the inter-relationship between the capitalist order and individual unhappiness. The armoured man, in Reich's terms, unaware of his armour, cannot be a change agent, and will resist changes with all his might (and nothing is more dangerous than an armoured "revolutionary"). One has to assimilate the diagnostic skills that Reich makes available, and to grasp his concept of positive health, and to apply these to oneself and the rest of society. At the same time one has to avoid becoming a "Reichian". The task here as well as with Marx is to move "beyond", towards an even more complete understanding of the human reality today. Both Marx and Reich, to use a cliché, are necessary but not sufficient for that understanding.

3) One has to create a methodology to cultivate physical and mental well-being. The movement builders of the (near) future have to be aware of themselves as physical beings, and not live as tenants in a strange body, as most people presently do. The movement builders have to prove with their own example that even in the present society one does not have to be obese or undernourished because of wrong nutrition and underlying unhappiness; one does not have to lack energy and suffer from all kinds of chronic ailments. It has to be demonstrated to people that to

the extent that the present society obstructs the pursuit of health and happiness, that society has to be fundamentally changed. From (limited) personal experience it seems to me that the practice of yoga is one good way to physical health and increased self-awareness, and that this awareness has to be combined with a new understanding of the meaning of nutrition. 46)

4) One has to develop a thorough understanding of human creativity, and what allows that to bloom and what stifles it. This understanding has to deal with education as well as social organization. It is necessary to know exactly under what circumstances children grow up to be creative, healthy adults, capable, as Reich puts it, of love, work and knowledge - all areas in which we presently are so stunted, so incapable. And one has to familiarize oneself thoroughly with the history of collective liberation (usually called revolution), when oppressed people attempt to create forms of social relations in which their humanity, their creative powers are allowed to flourish. This takes us from the Paris Commune (starting arbitrarily from there, but one could go further back into history, looking for examples), to the Soviets, to the workers' councils in Winnipeg General Strike, to sit-down strikes in the 30's to factory occupations in popular uprisings (France 1968), to anarchistic experiments of all kinds. There are invaluable lessons in these for all of us who want to create a different kind of social order, and do not intend to wait until the "revolution" is made (by whom? one might ask).

5) With the above tasks well under way, the future movement builder will function as a change agent in whatever environment he/she is in, utilizing whatever skills and abilities he or she has. He/she will not set up artificial little "projects", that presently cover the country from coast to coast, in order to practice a self-indulgent form of "radicalism" (no different from "doing one's thing"), and neither will she/he attempt to start a movement that repeats all the errors of past and existing ones. (Most left groups come into existence through a group of people constituting themselves as the "central committee", with a full-fledged programme, to be adhered to by those whom it manages to recruit. The "ordinary" members are deprived of any creative participation, and are assigned a role of uncritical obedience. Another tendency is to start a movement, and then set up a huge bureaucratic structure, when in fact there is no clear understanding of how a movement ought to be built, and no agreement as to the nature of the movement.) The time, of course, is not yet ripe in Canada to start another movement: first persons of movement building calibre have to emerge. ■

46) It is my contention that wrong nutrition, rather than lack of nutrition is the cause of widespread health problems in advanced industrial countries. Anyone interested in exploring what good and cheap nutrition is, has to read Frances Moore Lappe's Diet for a small planet, Friends of the Earth, Ballantine Books, 1971.

clear and unmechanical

Your magazine is beautiful. Hitting us here at a particularly good time. Many of the ideas about alienation and class consciousness are extremely clear and unmechanical. Being a baker, I particularly liked "Makers of our daily bread". We have developed a People's Bakery in Minneapolis, employing about 30-40 workers, a bakery that serves an expanding Food Co-operative movement, as well as many people in the inner city. We make only whole grain breads. A People's Grain Mill is opening up now, supplied by a network of small farmers, who sell directly to us, bridging the town and country split. The bakery is run and owned by its workers, an interesting experiment in socialism. The counter-institution organizing, of course, has its limits and weaknesses, and can only be successful if it has a dynamic relationship with a larger socialist organization, that deals with people in other than just service functions. Many of us are attempting to develop socialist political strategies in connection with the co-ops. We are also beginning to organize with the New American Movement, which has brought a lot of people out of isolation into new energy, movement, and development of coherent direction.

J.J., Minneapolis, Minn., U.S.

needs more copies

I am happy to hear that TRANSFORMATION hasn't given up the ghost and will continue. I find it one of the most enjoyable and useful magazines to have around.

I have a subscription to it, but find that I keep running out of copies. Could you send me five copies of each issue that's been produced so far.

M.G., St. Mary's, Ontario

required reading

I greatly enjoyed the review of Lorimer's Working people. I am using this book in my social stratification course and plan to add Repo's review to the list of required reading.

D.W.M., Toronto, Ontario

impressed with analysis

I have been extremely impressed with your analysis and in particular with your articles dealing with labour, Keep up the good work.

R.D., Ottawa, Ontario

book review style intimidates

I have one criticism: I liked the original bits of the review you did of James Lorimer's book so much that I wish they were in a separate article. That is, it is fine to do book reviews, but the material and perspective you use to criticise him from can and should stand on their own. This is why: I would like to be able to give the analysis to people I meet and work with, some of whom are not college-educated and would be intimidated by the book-review form, but who would really identify with and understand the things you say

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about working class culture. So I wish you would do an article or pamphlet of straight analysis I could use that way.

M. T., Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

can relate to it

I have just finished reading the second issue of TRANSFORMATION, and I was most impressed! For some reason I could really relate to it - and I am not a super political and often times don't dig a lot of left publications at all.

L.A., Regina, Sask.

political consciousness appreciated

Our group thinks quite highly of the three issues of your periodical that have been published so far. The political consciousness expressed in TRANSFORMATION is quite refreshing to view, following the stagnant attempts of the Young Socialists and the Internationalists to produce literature, intended to "propagate socialism". Good luck to you; our group expresses its support for your work.

D.C., Ottawa, Ontario

helpful

I have just seen a copy of TRANSFORMATION. A friend of mine had saved it since last year when he picked it up in Toronto. I read your article on the "Fallacy of 'community control'", and it was extremely helpful to me. I am beginning to work with some working class students on a project in a community outside of Washington: it has been difficult, if not impossible, to find articles that deal squarely and clearly with the concept of class. Much less class analysis in a Marxian sense. I have been looking for Marxist analyses of concrete situations.

C.A.E., Washington, D.C., U.S.

excellent

Your magazine is excellent. I find it, unfortunately, to be at a level beyond what most of the U.S. left has been doing. I hope you'll continue doing things on theatre, children, photography, while at the same time continuing the fundamental pieces on community organizing, the working class, bakery workers etc. Keep up the fine work. We across the border here in Minnesota, as persons of the "new left", are finally getting over a lot of our alienation and disdain for the people - and getting down to some roots amongst the people that we can build on.

M.L., Minneapolis, Minn., U.S.

special relevance

I have found TRANSFORMATION to be the most enlightening, sensible, intelligent etc. etc. journal I have read in the last three or four years. The magazine has a special relevance for me, since I am engaged in areas of work directly or tangentially related to the "organizing the poor".

R.F., Chicago, Ill. U.S.

applicable to Australian conditions

Congratulations on your excellent magazine. We find many of the articles incisive and relevant to the Australian scene (especially "The fallacy of 'community control'"). We are very glad to have TRANSFORMATION as part of a small resource centre we have just started here and we find the general response to your magazine enthusiastic. It's good to have such thorough-going analyses.

J.R., Victoria, Australia

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WORTH READING

Quebec Labour: The Confederation of National Trade Unions yesterday and today, edited by a Black Rose Books Editorial Collective (Black Rose Books, paperback \$2.95). This is the official translation of the recent CNTU documents, such as the "Second Front" (1968), and "Let's rely on our own means", a document adopted by the CNTU convention in June 1972. The main value of this documentation appears to be in an economic analysis of Quebec and as a critique of capitalism and imperialism, but the book itself does not provide any overall analysis and presents very little in terms of a solution, unless an undefined "socialism" is accepted as such a solution. The publisher intends to bring out a second volume of similar documents. Hopefully that collection will contain an explanation as to why the CNTU convention in June saw fit to condemn not only capitalism and economic liberalism, but Marxism as well.

Get a copy of Wilhelm Reich's What is class-consciousness? (available from Liberation 339 Lafayette, N.Y., N.Y. 10012 U.S., and costs \$1.00). This is an extraordinarily valuable document, containing Reich's criticism of the so-called Marxist left, written in 1934, but just as valid today. Shows clearly how we have to undo the left tradition, since nothing can be built on it.

The May 1972 issue of Liberation contains another useful article, Michael Schneider's "Vanguard, vanguard, who's got the vanguard", which is a critique of the German left, by one of its members. Originally called, "Against left-wing dogmatism, a 'senile disorder' of communism", it will have a second part that will discuss the Left's use of the "borrowed language" of Leninism, and it will also deal with the problems of revolutionary organization both in terms of Rosa Luxemburg's critique of the Bolshevik conception of the vanguard party, and in terms of the lessons of contemporary struggles in the West (particularly in Italy). Sounds promising and will cost you 75 cents for each issue.

A history of Canadian wealth, by Gustavus Myers, is another important book from James, Lewis and Samuel (paperback \$2.95). First published in 1914 in the U.S., it has never before been published in Canada. Having ceased to be a "rare book", this edition should help to demystify the role of Canadian capitalists in the same hair-raising manner as did Myers' the History of the great American fortunes.

Read Canadian: a book about Canadian books (James, Lewis and Samuel, \$1.95), edited by Robert Fulford, David Godfrey and Abraham Rotstein. A helpful book that provides basic bibliographies on Canadian history, economic history, labour history, foreign control of the economy, Canadian society, women, urban studies, poverty, Canadian literature and many other topics.

It's a "basic book" that will educate Canadians as much as it will inform American war resisters and professors in Canada.

Marxism and aesthetics (a selective annotated bibliography of books and articles in the English language), compiled by Lee Baxandall. This book is an absolute must for those interested in developing a critical perspective on art. It covers every area of the arts from dance to drama, from painting to cinema, from fiction to music, to architecture. It uses the term Marxist in the largest and least exclusive sense and includes related non-Marxist listings. Organized according to nationalities, the volume also has extensive topic-indexes, making it possible to locate quickly the writings relevant to a given author or artist, or a topic of concern. An invaluable reference book that should be available in every library.

The scalpel, the sword: the story of Doctor Norman Bethune, by Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon (McClelland and Stewart, paperback \$2.95), an important life history of a significant Canadian revolutionary, whom so few Canadians know anything about. The book was first published in 1952, and has been out of print for a long time. The new edition was long overdue and is most welcome.

"Immanuel Velikovsky reconsidered" is the title of the whole May 1972 issue of Pensee, a publication of the Student Academic Freedom Forum in Portland, Oregon, U.S. This issue is a follow-up to the book, The Velikovsky affair: the warfare of science and scientism, ed. by Alfred de Grazia (University Books, 1966), which dealt in depth with the investigations and theories of perhaps the most exciting scientists of this century, as well as with the scandalous treatment Velikovsky received at the hands of the science establishment (who still today regards him as a crackpot). His works, Worlds in collision, Ages in chaos and Earth in upheaval all exemplify the mentality of a highly creative, dialectical scientist, who was able through his methodology to raise fundamental questions about such varied fields as archaeology, history, geology, geophysics, astronomy, egyptology, religion and mythology, to name just a few. Velikovsky's greatest contribution was to show the interconnectedness of all these fields, as opposed to the usual fragmentation of bourgeois sciences. For those of us who are long-time admirers of Velikovsky's unorthodoxy, it is gratifying to know that his numerous hypotheses keep proving to be correct, and are slowly earning him recognition among younger and/or more open-minded scientists in different fields. (Pensee can be obtained from P.O. Box 414, Portland, Oregon 97207, USA, and costs \$2.00 for a single issue, \$1.50 for 10 or more and \$1.00 for 100 or more. The Velikovsky affair is available from FOSMOS, 1503 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, USA, cost not know to us.)

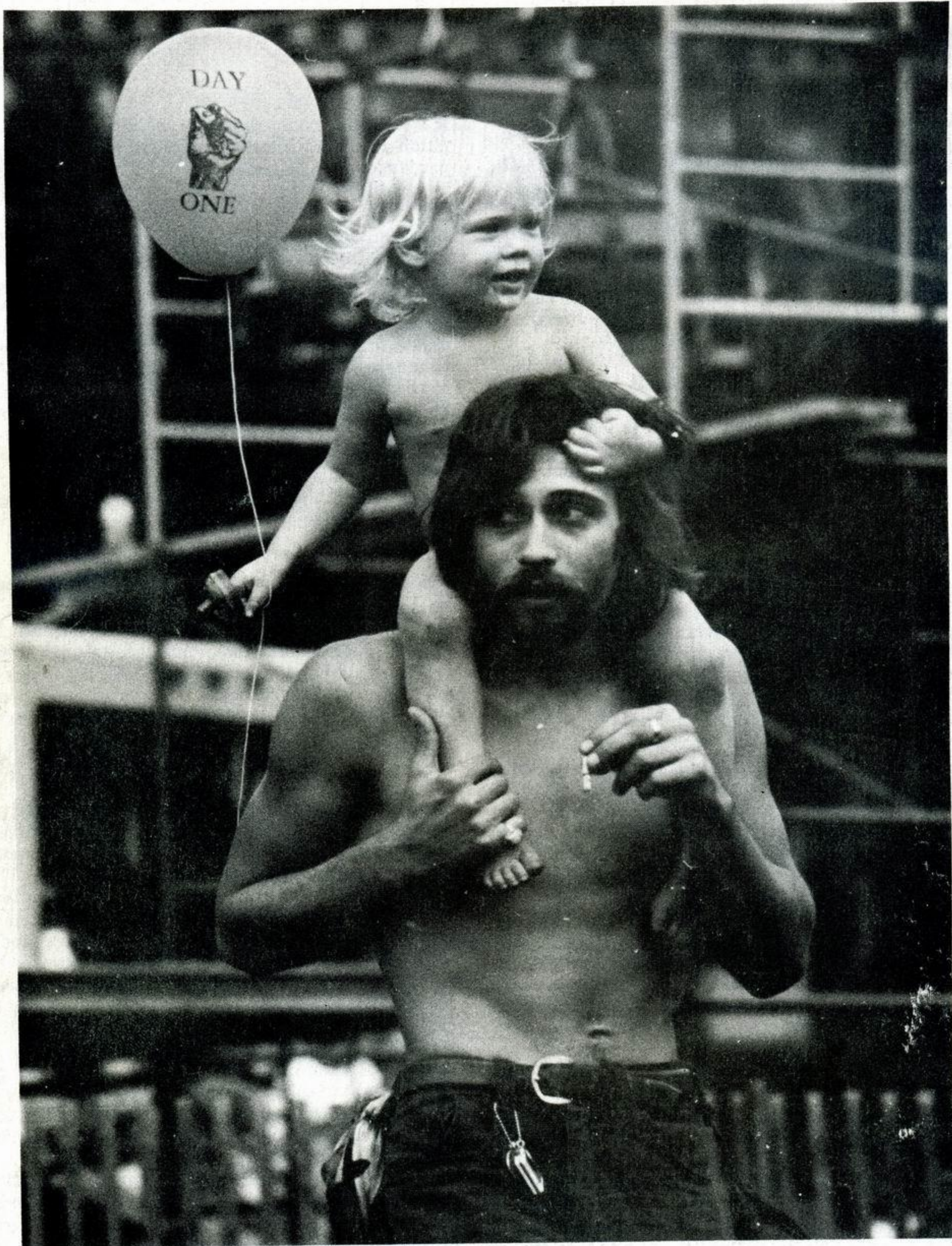


Photo: David Lloyd

*"The first duty of a revolutionary
is to build a society geared
to children."*

Paul Adams