

THE RED MENACE

HAND OVER THOSE OTHER TWO BOOKS!

WHEN I READ THESE THREE NOVELS, I'LL BE ABLE TO CONQUER THE WORLD!



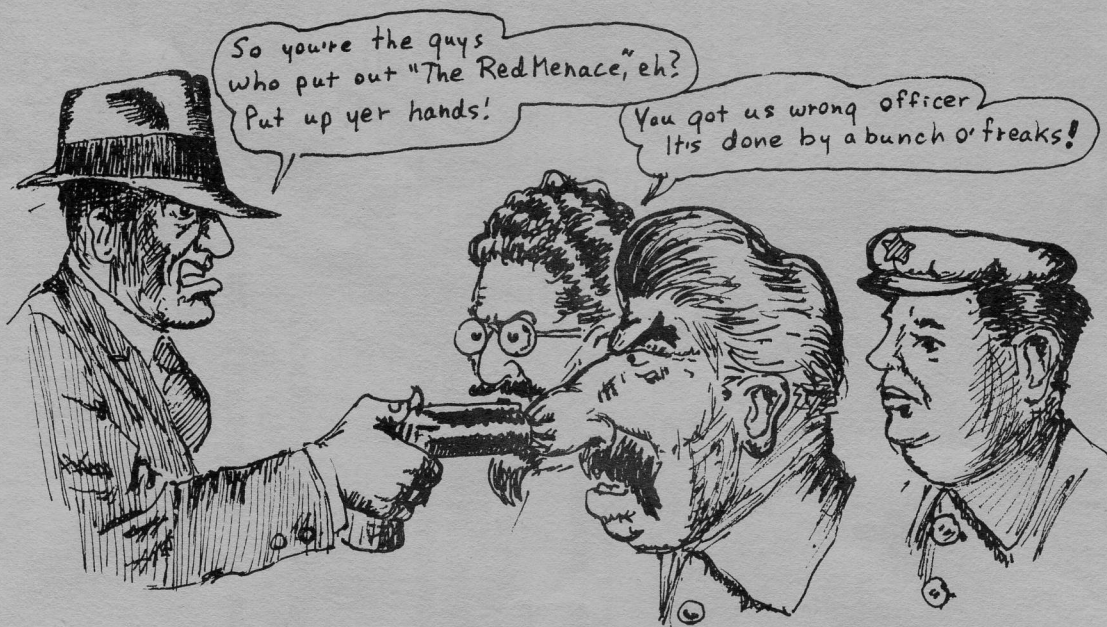
Vol. 1 No. 1
February
1976

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Toronto
Liberation
School

What Is The Red Menace ?

The Red Menace is published by Toronto Liberation School. Toronto Liberation School is a group of libertarian socialists, independent of any political organization, who see a need for a broad range of educational and cultural activities that contribute to transforming this society. We see the constituency for these activities as all those people who have become concerned about their lives, their communities, and the problems of this society and its institutions; people who have become activists at the workplace or in the community, for their own needs and rights, or around national and international issues; people struggling for their liberation. We believe that liberation requires a fundamental restructuring of social and economic relationships, suited to the needs of all people rather than only to those of the few. This we would call "socialism", but by it we mean neither the band-aid reformism of the NDP nor Russian-style totalitarianism. Socialism to us is possible only through the self-activity of working people towards a completely democratic society. Toronto Liberation School hopes to contribute to this in any way that it can. In the past, we have put on lectures, courses, and helped to organize a conference on Popular Education, and participated individually and collectively in a range of political activities. We see this newsletter, The Red Menace, as one part, but by no means the only part, of our political practice and development.



Introduction...

The Red Menace is not a theoretical journal. It is not a mouthpiece for the correct line of a political sect. What it is is a newsletter, an organ of communication. Not a one-way conveyor of communication, from a few theoretical "heavies" to the unwashed masses, but a vehicle of encouraging vigorous participation from as many people as possible. (In some ways, we look back to the early development of modern science, when there was a dynamic, anarchic, and marvelously efficient, exchange of ideas and information between scientists in different countries through the exchange of 'news letters'.)

Theory and writing have to be de-mythologized. Thinking about society and how it could change is something that everyone does. And no one has all the answers.

We don't just want to print long, dry, ponderous articles. We are at least equally interested in brief, to-the-point comments on various problems. A one-page observation on some specific issue or idea is more valuable than a 15-page article that is academically competent, but has nothing new to say. Nor are we looking for "definitive statements" on particular topics. We are much more interested in the tentative, the exploratory, the contribution of someone who is unsure of what s/he says, but is willing to air it to the comments of others.

So please put your thoughts on paper and send them in. We are interested in:

- articles about where you work, where you go to school, where you live, where you shop, where you play
- analytical articles about political activities and organizations you are/have been involved in
- criticism and evaluation of what's happening on the left, in the women's movement, in society at large
- articles about theoretical and strategic questions
- poetry
- artwork (black and white)
- humour, satire
- experiences in and analyses of mass culture, everyday life, etc.
- analysis of leftist newspapers, posters, films, music, etc.
- book reviews
- revealing anecdotes
- questions you don't have answers for
- questions you do have answers for

Oh yes--we need money, of course. Money to keep this newsletter going, especially since we are trying to distribute them free as much as possible. A dollar or two will

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help, five or ten dollars would be really nice. If you're sending a cheque, make it payable to Toronto Liberation School. And if you're involved in a publication yourself, we'd be glad to trade subscriptions.

WRITE TO US:

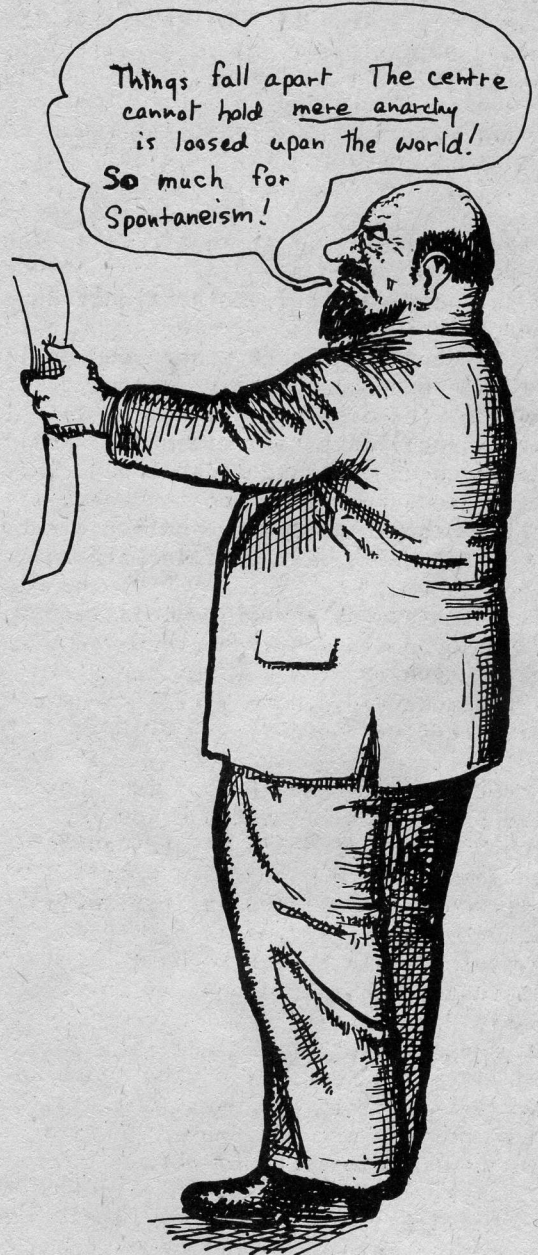
The Red Menace
P.O. Box 171
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Toronto, Canada

...And More Introduction

The Red Menace, as the name implies, is a sinister communist conspiracy of fanatical revolutionaries sworn to poison the fabric of our national life, extremists who will stop at nothing in their ruthless determination to undermine the moral values which are the bedrock of this society and its institutions. In the pursuit of their treacherous goals the agents of this Red Menace are willing to go to any length. Their aim is nothing less than the wilful subversion and final overthrow of all that is most sacred in our precious free enterprise society: wage labour, exploitation, bureaucracy, authoritarianism, the nuclear family, even the state itself.

The newsletter you are holding in your hand is put out by a number of dupes, fellow-travellers, and conscious tools of this red conspiracy who have formed themselves together in an organization called Toronto Liberation School. Our intention is to use this newsletter, The Red Menace, as a mouthpiece for the conspiracy.

This, however, requires the assistance of other people who agree with our objectives.



We would stress, first of all, for the benefit of prospective fellow-travellers, that this publication is a newsletter, not a journal or magazine. We in Toronto Liberation School do not want to be the editors of a product which will be passively consumed by a readership. What we intend, rather, is that The Red Menace be a vehicle of communication between independent socialists in Canada, a forum in which there can be discussion of experiences, strategy, and theory. It is a project for which we seek the active participation of as many people as possible across Canada.

Our decision to publish The Red Menace stems from our understanding of the current state of the independent

left in Canada. It is a situation where there is widespread and diverse activity, on the one hand, and a significant degree of isolation and strategic confusion, on the other. There are some who do little except talk and theorize, and others who are very active, but reflect very little about what they are doing, and why. Few groups have a developed class analysis of the situation in Canada itself. Many are oriented exclusively to the Third World, doing solidarity work which is valuable, but which can hardly be the main activity of a socialist movement in Canada. Few groups have a perspective or strategy for their own development; most have little sense of where they are going.

Yet the independent left is a positive phenomenon. There are now many groups and individuals across Canada who are committed to a politics based on marxism, who have rejected any temptation to withdraw from political activism, and who have similarly rejected the spurious alternative of joining one of the innumerable "vanguard" sects.. Among many (although certainly not all) of the groups and individuals of the independent left there is at least implicit rudimentary agreement around certain fundamental questions of revolutionary politics. This unity has however tended by and large to be implied or expressed by practice alone: this is why it has remained implicit, rather than being made explicit. This in turn has set sharp limits on the extent to which this

basic unity could be developed and elaborated. The failure to confront strategic and political questions on the part of much of the independent left may be partially explicable by the basis of unity on which many left groups currently exist. Coalitions of people with different political viewpoints, they have avoided debate for the sake of self-preservation, for frank discussion might easily uncover political differences that would threaten the viability of some organizations. Yet this failure to probe political questions in a serious way has imposed a handicap that is often stifling: an inability to collectively develop perspectives and directions. It also means that the independent left, the product of social movements which marked a radical departure from the "old left" and its politics, has nevertheless largely failed to assimilate the lessons of those social movements, of the new left, the women's movement, etc., as well as the traditions of a wholistic, critical, libertarian marxism. As long as it fails to do so, its prospects are problematic indeed.

These problems are neither surprising nor especially blameworthy given the degree of isolation, from each other and from the working class, in which so many groups operate. Fundamentally, of course this isolation is an expression of the level of class struggle in Canada. It cannot be wished away or arbitrarily overcome by organizational measures or by finding the "correct" strategy. Organization and strategy are universally applicable formulae that are "discovered" by some clever theoretician steeped in the marxist classics and then applied every: they are ways of exploiting as much as possible, and as realistically as possible, the options which are presented by a particular moment of the class struggle. They constantly have to be re-evaluated, adapted, and amended in the light of particular circumstances and changed situations. The vision of "the" strategy is a mirage.

But, nevertheless, it is our belief that the level of political activity permits more initiatives, in terms of organizational links and in terms of development of strategy and theory, than are presently being developed. Hence The Red Menace.

One of the most important needs which we see this newsletter responding to is therefore the simple one of overcoming isolation, for more communication within the independent left. In this process of communication, one of the most important priorities must be the sharing and criticism of political experiences and activities. This could involve, for example, a particular collective describing and analyzing a project, organizing campaign, or whatever, that it has been involved in. The purpose would not be simply to convey information about what is being done by various groups, (although this can be useful in itself) but to encourage critical evaluations of various forms of left practice, and the theory underlying it. This evaluation would come in the first instance from people describing their own work and using the opportunity to reflect critically on what they have been doing. Response from others in the pages of this newsletter could then potentially comprise a positive ongoing discussion of the experience being considered and of related activities.

A process of constructive criticism should help to develop the habit of looking at individual projects in a larger strategic, political, and theoretical context. It should also make it more common for revolutionaries to draw lessons from their practice and to learn from each other, so that positive lessons are generalized and negative ones not repeated over and over again. This is clearly something that can occur only with established communication links.

At the same time, in this way we can (and must) avoid the rigidities of the Leninist form of organization which seeks to subject everyone to a uniform "line" and centralized discipline, which seeks to guarantee political unity by organizational measures.

Another priority of the newsletter, related to the first, will be similar discussions of experiences at work, at school, in the community, at play, and in the other activities which constitute daily life in this society. It is our belief that marxist politics must deal with not only the 'high politics' of governments, monetary crises, wars, etc., but also with the politics of ordinary life, the level at which

the oppressiveness of capitalist society is experienced by most of us on the day-to-day level. ("The Critique of daily life") We believe that it is crucially important that marxists analyze this level of reality with the same energy that they have traditionally given to the affairs of states and capital, and that they incorporate this analysis into their strategy.

An emphasis on specific analyses of specific situations should make it possible to broaden participation in this political exchange, so that not only the "theoreticians" take part, but also those who now participate little or not at all in the formal development of concepts, strategies, theories, etc. The newsletter will be strongly committed to aiding the democratization of the political process within the left, a matter not only of formal principles but of practical utility, for the left needs to engage the minds and imaginations of all of its members.

Another priority of The Red Menace will be the project of developing a coherent political perspective, partly out of these different examinations of experience, but also through discussions of theoretical, strategic and organizational questions. Our purpose, after all, is not communication for its own sake, but the stimulation of a definite political process toward definite political goals.

Accordingly, we approach this project of a newsletter with a certain set of political attitudes and beliefs. This is not the place to set out our ideas in great detail: this is not a manifesto. Indeed, to be honest, at this point we in the TLS collective have worked out our ideas in much less detail and with much less sophistication than we would wish, although we believe that we have progressed in the right direction. The content of The Red Menace from issue to issue will necessarily be the best indication of our politics. Hopefully the interchange in its pages will cause us to deepen, re-affirm, and change the ideas we carry to it at the outset.

But we do not intend that this newsletter reflect a single political line, not only because we do not believe that a coherent and comprehensive "correct line" exists but more importantly because we believe that a

necessary condition, and pre-condition, of libertarian politics is the widest and most open discussion. We cannot consider any questions closed. And certainly there will be many times when we print contributions that we do not ourselves agree with. At the same time, we consider it neither possible nor desirable to throw open the pages of The Red Menace to all possible shades of opinion.

The project we are committed is that of developing a libertarian marxism which takes as its project the critique of the totality of human life in capitalist society. This critique cannot simply content itself with generalities or with conclusions drawn decades ago in a world that was significantly different. To understand something means to understand it in detail, in historical context, and in all its complexity.

Based on this critique, we are committed to developing a revolutionary politics that is liberatory in the fullest sense of the word. Capitalism is a totalistic system of oppression that invades all areas of life: socialism must be the overcoming of capitalist reality in its entirety, or it is nothing. Or more concretely, a socialism that is partial can only become a parody of the liberatory ideals it espouses. The disastrous results of a "socialist" movement that equated socialism with nationalization of industry speak clearly enough in this regard.

Our belief in a total revolution impels us to underline the assertion that Marx made the first point in the statement of principles of the First International: "The emancipation of the working classes must be achieved by the working classes themselves." Nationalization to be sure can be carried out by a vanguard party installing itself in state power. Social liberation, human liberation, however, is a process that must go to the root. It cannot be decreed. Nor can it be achieved without the participation of the vast majority of the population. A collective project, and therefore individual as well, socialism must be self-liberation in every sense of the word. We in TLS hope to contribute to this project because our own lives are shaped and misshaped by our capitalist reality. Whatever contribution we make will stem from our role as participants in a great human adventure,

not from any self-proclaimed standing as the "vanguard of the proletariat" or any such reactionary nonsense.

We do not consider it a priority to engage in lengthy debate with those whose political identification is with the corpse of Bolshevism. But The Red Menace will concern itself with some of the elements of Leninist theory and practice, not for themselves, but because they are based on principles which most of the independent left has not sufficiently analyzed. Without fully understanding their mistakes, it is impossible to develop a marxist politics which avoids them. "The traditions of all the dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living". Such a critique is especially important since these encrusted orthodoxies tend to dominate much of left discussion through their controlled presses and the sheer volume of the noise they generate. They do not convince, but often they manage to deaden thought or disrupt or prevent intelligent public debate with their incessant "interventions".

We will also seek to foster critical discussions of other theories and tendencies on the left which pose important issues for a revolutionary movement in Canada.

We hope that the kind of discussion we envisage will enable the newsletter to contribute to a process of political unification on the independent left in Canada. In this, we differ from those who propose that various organizational ties be created to pull different groups together, that we should all "get together" now. We believe that this latter kind of unification is a rather mechanical approach to the problem which would almost inevitably come to grief because it sees the process only in organizational terms. Political problems cannot be solved by organizational measures. Lasting organizational unity is possible only where there is fundamental agreement on questions of theory, principles, and strategy. And to assume that such agreement exists at present is to blind oneself to reality. Indeed, a number of groups united primarily around practical tasks, are finding it difficult to develop further because the requisite common political outlook is lacking. For them, the alternative may be a choice between relative stagnation resulting from an inability to develop politically

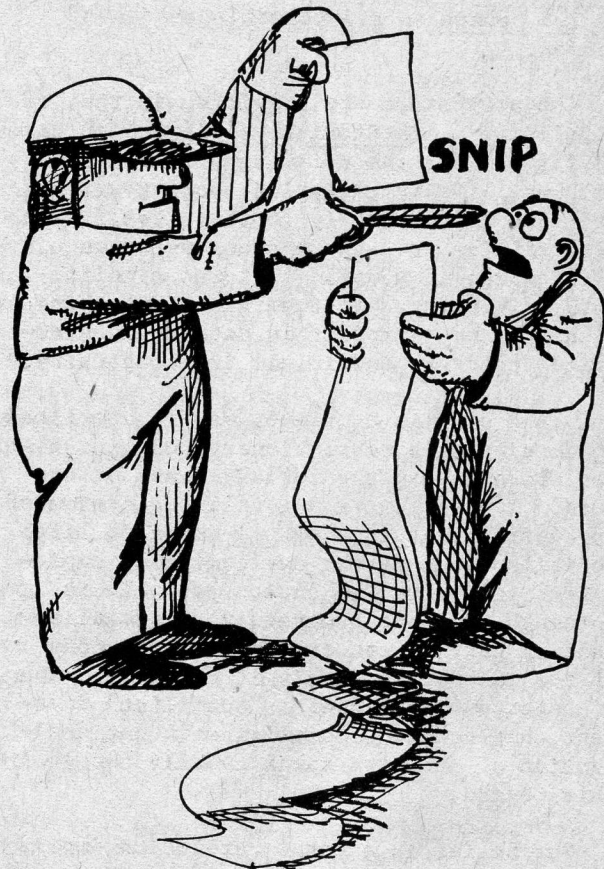
(or fear of doing so), and attempts at political development that result in polarization and splits.

We do not think that it is a service to anyone to be over-hasty in trying to create organizational links. Such links should grow, not from an a priori belief in the virtues of bigness or centralization, but from the actual needs of the groups concerned. We should create whatever structures are needed to accomplish agreed-on and clearly defined common tasks. Such pragmatic links, if accompanied by conscious efforts to discuss issues of common political concern, whether they be the mutual critique of practice, or theoretical discussion, can stimulate a process of political drawing-together that is organic and rooted in real situations.

Some people disagree. They want to "get on with it" and be done with all the talk. However, we cannot accept the often assumed idea that everything has been said and that for socialists now it is just a matter of doing things. Most of us have been involved in enough groups that demand frantic activity but little thought to be wary of such an orientation. (We are similarly wary of those who fail to recognize that theoretical practice is also a form of practice, a form that is quite important at the present time.) We think that the socialist movement in Canada faces many unanswered questions (indeed, many unasked and unformulated questions) that have to be dealt with before we can progress significantly. (Not least among those questions are "What is socialism?" and "Why does a socialist revolution seem so distant?") that the level of discussion on the left is so dismally low is an indication of how much socialists, like everyone else, are alienated from their own intelligence: so many people want ready-made answers, but are unwilling to think things through for themselves.

For us, one of the implications of marxism is the conception that there is a close link between form and content in political work. Consequently we will endeavour to pay close attention to form in The Red Menace. We will persistently

try to encourage the use of plain language rather than left jargon, and try to foster the ability to express complex ideas in as simple a way as possible without losing the meaning. We will also use graphics, cartoons, etc. as much as we can given the rather



Articles should be BRIEF!

severe limitations of the newsletter format. As much as possible, we want to use The Red Menace as a medium with which we can experiment, in which we can try to develop different ways of getting our point across as effectively as possible. This too should be an area in which radicals can learn from each other (and from non-radicals). Hopefully we can develop livelier forms of communication that can be used in our political work. Accordingly, we will sometimes be guilty of poetry, satire, having fun and similar violations of political orthodoxy. There should be no reason why marxist politics have to be as deadly and

dull as they generally tend to be. The task is serious, but creativity, playfulness and humour are resources that we must learn to draw on in our struggle for a socialist future. Their repression is itself one of the indictments of capitalism, and of any politics that fail to combat that repression.

It is impossible to stress enough that the flowering of creativity demanded by a revolutionary socialist politics demands the widest possible participation. By this criterion, the project of The Red Menace, modest as it is, will be a failure if it doesn't win the active involvement of considerable numbers of the people who receive it. This is especially so because we are not a theoretical journal in the traditional sense. We are not terribly interested in seeking out articles that are the definitive last word on some particular topic (though if you do happen to have such a definitive interpretation of the world, we would be happy to see it.) We are more interested in fostering an orientation to theory and strategy and tactics that rejects the idea that these are the exclusive preserve of theorists, strategists, and tacticians. Everyone has something to contribute to these questions, if not in the same degree. Our task is to create an environment where such contributions are drawn out, and where we all learn to get the maximum benefit from them. This means that theory has to be de-mythologized. Theoretical practice is not only the writing of books and articles, important as that may be. It is also drawing conclusions from various situations, making generalizations on the basis of one's experience and intellectual resources. This is not necessarily a grandiose undertaking: a one- or two-page comment making one or two basic points about some particular topic, experience, or problem is often more useful than a long treatise that is read by almost no one, and says nothing new at any rate. A tentative exploration of a problem is often valuable in provoking further thought: there is no reason to insist that people have to have fully thought out all aspects of a problem before they venture an opinion on some part of it.

One consequence of this is that we will try to maintain a definite bias in favour of brevity in The Red Menace, although we will undoubtedly make exceptions. But it is less necessary to encourage the self-confident theoreticians than those who don't think of themselves that way, so we are "bending the stick the other way" with an extra stress on the importance of short comments, feedback, letters, and the like, in the process of dialogue that we are seeking to develop in The Red Menace.

The purpose of this introduction is to open discussion, not to close it with definitive pronouncements. So it will end here. A fuller definition of what this newsletter is to be will have to emerge from its practice. And that will be determined by those who participate with us in this project.



Know thy enemy

Know thy enemy:
he does not care what colour you are
provided you work for him

and yet you do!

he does not care how much you earn
provided you earn more for him

and yet you do!

he does not care who lives in the room at the top
provided he owns the building

and yet you strive!

he will let you write against him
provided you do not act against him

and yet you write!

he sings the praises of humanity
but knows machines cost more than men.
Bargain with him, he laughs, and beats you at it;
challenge him, and he kills.
Sooner than lose the things he owns
he will destroy the world.
SMASH CAPITAL NOW!

But as you hasten to be free
And build your commonwealth
Do not forget the enemy
Who lies within yourself.

--Christopher Logue

Popular Education Conference



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On October 3-5, 1975, a "Popular Education Conference" was held in Toronto with the participation of a large number of independent left groups and individuals. Altogether, close to 300 people from 47 groups attended all or part of the conference. Most were from the Toronto area, but some came from as far away as Windsor.

In order to help generalize the experience of that conference, and to stimulate ongoing discussion of the issues it tried to grapple with, we are presenting a number of items relating to the conference here.

The first piece is simply an edited version of the agenda. It is followed by a fairly lengthy article, both factual and analytical, by Ashley Chester, a Manitoban recently transplanted to Ontario, who as a relative outsider is able to present a fairly detached look at the strengths and weaknesses, not to mention the peculiarities, of the Toronto left, as evidenced at the conference. After this comes a few short comments from the Toronto Liberation School collective, predictably unable to restrain itself from putting in its two cents' worth. The final piece is another short comment from Steve Izma, a socialist from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Agenda

October 3rd, 4th, and 5th. St. Paul's Centre, 121 Avenue Rd., Toronto.

Friday, October 3rd.

8:00 p.m.: Panel discussion on "The Formation and Transformation of Consciousness in Advanced Capitalist Society".

This discussion will probe the means by which consciousness develops in advanced capitalist societies. Among the issues to be considered is the role of various social institutions such as the mass media, advertising, and education, and the ways in which people accept, reject, or otherwise respond to the forces which seek to shape their consciousness.

Followed by a discussion period.

Saturday, October 4th.

9:30 a.m.: "Feedback" from the "Watching" Committee. The watching committee is an innovation adapted from other conferences whose role is to provide some feedback about the process and political development of the conference while it is actually occurring. It is proposed that a dozen or so people be chosen from different parts of the conference (workshops, planning committee, chairpeople, etc.) who would then meet during breaks in the conference to analyze what is happening,

what issues and questions have been raised, etc., and briefly present their perceptions to the conference as a whole. This is not a decision-making body.

9:40 a.m.: Panel discussion on common themes and problems in presenting political issues in a popular manner; based on the experiences of a number of groups operating in Toronto. As much as possible, each of the panelists will address themselves to a set of common questions based on the particular experience of their group.

Panelists: Toronto Committee to Liberate Southern Africa; Daycare Organizing Alliance; Women's Press; Brazilian Studies Group;.

Followed by a general question/discussion period.

2:00 p.m.: Workshops: Participants to be divided into workshops to discuss further some of the questions raised in the two previous panel discussions.

Sunday, October 5th

9:30 a.m.: Feedback from the Watching Committee.

9:40 a.m. Workshops on the "Politics of Communication".

What these workshops will concern themselves with is not only the communication of politics, but also the closely related question of the politics of communication. The stress will not be on the technicalities involved in taking a picture or pasting up a newspaper, but on the political inter-relation between form and content. The workshops will consider the implications of different answers to such questions as "Who are we trying to reach?" "What are we trying to say?" and "How do we say it?" They will also look at such related questions as "Why use a particular form of communication rather than others?" "What are the advantages and disadvantages of a given medium?" "How do we maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages?" "What presuppositions do we make about the audience or constituency in choosing a particular medium?" "What effect does this choice have on our ability to get our message across?" "What are the constraints or peculiarities of this form?"

Each workshop will be led by a resource person(s) either working in or familiar with the area under discussion.

The topics:

1. Uses of the Discussion Circle.
Sandy Siegel.

The workshop will centre around the question of the role and value of consciousness-raising educational processes in the Canadian revolutionary movement. The application of the educational work of Paulo Freire will be discussed. The workshop will aim at developing an understanding of the analysis and method such an educational process involves and a discussion of both how and where it could be applied in revolutionary struggle in Canada.

2. Art and Posters. Don Carr.

This workshop will attempt to develop a critique of collectively produced art with an emphasis on the Atelier Populaire

of Paris in May 1968 and the street art and mural movement of North America and Chile in the late 1960's and early 1970's.. There will also be a brief investigation of the function of poster art in both capitalist and socialist society. We will also examine the role of the artist in today's society and the questions: "What can artists do to bridge the gap between their work and the wide public?" "What can the media do to interpret contemporary art in less esoteric terms, to increase its audience?" "How can artists bring the price of art-work within the reach of low-income people?" The purpose of the workshop would be to develop interest in starting an art-producing collective with a social and political direction which would include people of varied abilities (ie. artists, photographers, designers, printers, and others who could provide criticism.)

3. Film and Audio-Visual. Film League.

Using the film Forget it Jack as an example, this workshop will explore questions of the use of film and other audio-visual media as instruments in the development of political consciousness. The focus will be on the general problem of placing modern communications media at the service of the working-class in distinction to the way in which these media usually serve corporate interests. The interests which produce, promote, and distribute audio-visual materials at the present time will also be critically discussed.

4. Journalism. Bob Chodos.

The workshop will deal with the basic techniques of news writing and presentation, how they are used by the commercial press, and how they can be used to express alternative points of view. The concept of objectivity will be examined critically and the biases inherent in news style will be discussed. Selections of facts, ordering of material, use of terminology and layout will be examined as propaganda tools. Reference will be made to articles in the previous week's issues of the Toronto Sun, Globe and Mail, and Star by way of illustration.

5. Comic Books as a Popular Education Tool.

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Exploding Myths Comic Book Collective.

A discussion of comic books as used for Popular Education with members of the Exploding Myths Comic Book Collective discussing their experiences in producing comics on the food and housing industry. These comics were designed to analyze issues in a form that will have mass appeal and inspire political action. Discussion to include "How do you present an analysis of an issue in a visual and entertaining way?" "How do you distribute analyses to those you want to reach and how do you go beyond information to a ction?"

6. Materials for Children. Women's Press.

This workshop will examine such questions as how children of different ages develop, the uses of fantasy or realism, and how to get past obstacles such as parents, schools, and television. An attempt will be made to present information about materials that are available for use by radical parents, who want their children to be exposed to alternatives to the surrounding society.

7. Photography. Lynn Murray.

Can photography be an effective tool in doing educational work? Does photography have anything to say or is it limited to the world of objects d'art? The workshop will also look at various photographers' work and discuss their relevance to this society.

8. Theatre. Joyce Penner.

9. Pamphlets. New Hogtown Press.

New Hogtown Press, publishers and distributors of radical pamphlets in Canada, will discuss their experiences. The discussion will focus on such issues as why and how pamphlets can be useful, problems in reaching people you want to reach, and the differences between various kinds of pamphlets such as historical ones, those oriented to use in schools or universities, those dealing with immediate issues, and those dealing with more general issues.

10. Music. David de Launay.

This workshop will try to develop a perspective on how to see all music in a political context. It will be led by David de Launay, a professional musician working in Toronto. Much of the initial presentation will be done through recorded examples. Starting from these examples our discussion and debate can be kept concrete and centered on how to view music politically. Even more important, we will deal with how music is and can be used as a political force or tool.

2:00 p.m.: Feedback from the Watching Committee.

2:10 p.m.: Final plenary on the role of the left. In this session an attempt will be made to bring together some of the previous discussions. Hopefully this should include strategic formulations as well as specific proposals for inter-group co-operation, joint projects, and other possibilities. A key question should be what the left in Toronto can most effectively do at this time.

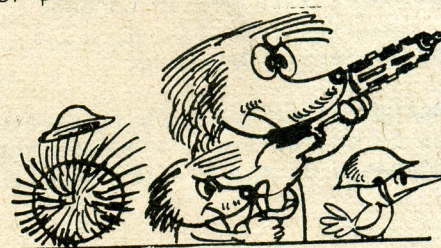
5:00 p.m.: Adjourn.

Note: The conference planning committee has suggested a number of general questions which they propose as a basis of discussion throughout the conference. These are:

How do we move from a critique of a particular aspect of capitalism to a critique of the system as a whole, in our popular education?

How do we best build on people's impulse for resistance rather than further strengthen the feelings of powerlessness, cynicism, and apathy generated by the system?

How does popular education fit into a larger political strategy?



looking at the conference

By Ashley Chester

How do average people become socialists?
How can the left break through its isolation?
How can intellectuals become revolutionary educators?
How does revolutionary education differ from the prevailing form?

These essential questions were raised by the Popular Education Conference held in Toronto over the weekend of October 3-5, 1975. Organized by six Toronto based groups, it was intended as an opportunity for the local non-sectarian left to present its practice to a critical and collective scrutiny.

Friday's session opened with a talk by D'arcy Martin of the Development Education Centre. Two themes were particularly important-- the description of "problem-posing" education as an alternative to "banking" education and the danger of the left's isolation.

According to Paulo Freire, conventional education is based on the depositing or "banking" of objective knowledge within the empty skull of the student. It is totally consistent with a social system that renders most people objects of an incomprehensible and uncontrollable leviathan.

The educator ignores the insights and experiences that might prompt people to learn in a systematic manner and assumes that his/her language is the only one that can describe reality. Dialogical problem-posing education seeks to restore the humanity of all involved by creating a truly egalitarian relationship between educator and student. The educator discovers with the students those dilemmas in their lives that can neither be understood nor changed with the concepts they had been using. Instead of providing broader

conceptions she/he continually probes the students as they collectively struggle to develop the intellectual tools necessary to confront their own existence.

Martin generally confined himself to the critique of "banking" education and the explanation of Freire's basic theory without dealing with the problems of applying it to our situation. He did not elaborate on the opposition of this pedagogy to the pedagogy employed by most Leninists and other exponents of "scientific" Marxism, though he did decry the identification of propaganda with education.

The second theme, the left's isolation, was very much on people's minds. According to Martin, the Toronto left has both an obstacle and an advantage in the existence of a leftist culture. The fact that there are many leftists who meet each other frequently allows them to accomplish things that would be impossible if they were less numerous. However, they are not forced, as they otherwise would be, to make personal links with the working class. They are insulated.

Unless the Toronto left can link up with a strong progressive movement it is in a very dangerous position individually and collectively. Individually, its members can become cynical, disillusioned and can crack up. Collectively, it faces the threat of repression against which it will be powerless--- October, 1970 was not an aberration. Unfortunately there was little useful response to Martin's talk in the discussion period that followed.

Saturday's session began with a brief report from the "watching committee". Intended as a representative group of participants, the watching committee were to

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analyze the Conference as it progressed, summarize issues and questions raised, and suggest possible points of departures.

Their main criticism of Friday's session was that it did not develop what it means to work with people in a non-dogmatic manner, it was not specific enough in defining "our constituency", and it did not explore whether there is a "mass base for a socialist transformation", whatever that means. It seemed possible that some aspects of those questions would be broached by the Saturday morning panel--representatives from Women's Press, the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa's

Colonies, the Daycare Reform Action Alliance and the Brazilian Studies Group.

Frumie Diamond of Women's Press gave a straight forward account of her group's history and some of its problems. When first formed, the collective expected that manuscripts would be submitted which could then be screened. But now this process seems inadequate and the collective is considering the problems of manuscript development. Some of its future publications will likely be the result of collaboration with groups which have a specific need, such as for a daycare manual or a labour organizing manual.

Diamond also indicated that her group is aware of the fundamental question that has to be faced by those using print media: who reads what? Women's Press aims to get as many of its books into schools and libraries as possible, though that in itself raises the question of how to make a book "acceptable" without making it politically useless.

Further problems stem from the general ambiguities of the women's movement. Some of their publications have individualized history in an effort to reveal the role of women in it. Another example simply reversed roles while leaving intact the ideal of a middle class nuclear family.

Judith Marshall of TCLSAC, listed three functions for her group--education on the liberation struggles in Southern Africa, provision of material aid for these struggles, and the development of leverage within Canada that can assist these liberation processes.

TCLSAC provides speakers, films, and books and organizes visits from representatives of the various liberation movements. It has organized campaigns to provide material assistance to them, in the past having bought a ten ton truck for FRELIMO, and having raised \$10,000 for Guinea-Bissau. At present TCLSAC is conducting a campaign to get an ambulance for Namibia's anti-colonialist organization.

Examples of the kind of leverage campaign TCLSAC sees as part of its function include a petition campaign that successfully pushed the federal government to recognize the revolutionary government of Guinea-Bissau, and the current campaigns going on to expose the role of companies such as Gulf Oil and Falconbridge in southern Africa.

In general, Marshall summarized her group's activity as "support for liberation groups elsewhere in an attempt to develop the struggle here". She noted the danger of encouraging a type of left "consumerism" in which concern and energy are diverted to the struggles of other peoples which seem more advanced or immediate than our own. In response to this problem three new committees are being developed to relate the work of TCLSAC to women, to the labour movement, and to schools.

The discussion that followed Marshall's presentation was the most critical of the day. Repeatedly participants questioned how TCLSAC can engage in anything other than propaganda. However Marshall

fielded these queries confidently, indicating that it is her group's sensitivity to this problem that has led to the formation of its three new committees and has prompted greater attention to focusing on the links between struggles within Canada and those in southern Africa. For example, communication has been established between striking employees of Falconbridge in Sudbury and those working for the same company in Namibia.

One of the more salient points made in support of this kind of solidarity work is the effect of successes abroad on the already committed leftists within Canada; if it contributes to the development of "a culture of resistance" it is important. As for reaching beyond the more or less committed, one of the best suggestions came as an example offered by a member of the audience: the Quebec Conference on International Worker Solidarity. Apparently it began with Quebec workers discussing amongst themselves the various conditions and problems they face. It then proceeded to discussions of the same sort between Quebec workers and their counterparts abroad. As an example, ALCAN employees from Quebec met with workers from that same company's plants in Guyana. However, this kind of an event in itself presupposes certain conditions within the labour movement that may not exist outside of Quebec.

The other two groups represented on the panel both have a narrower educational perspective. Julie Mathien of the Daycare Reform Action Alliance, explained that her group was formed in response to an attempt by the Ontario government to decrease the staff-child ratio in daycare centres. It consists of parents, daycare staff, and other concerned activists and professionals. Initially it

produced a video tape with the assistance of the National Film Board, which showed what the effect of the government policy would be by comparing daycare centres using the different ratios. The tape was a success as a tool in mobilizing the considerable opposition to the proposed policy change, and the government backed down.

One of the difficulties in this type of movement that Mathien noted, is that its focus on a government funded or subsidized service encourages an electoral strategy--vote for a change, any change that promises action on that one issue.

At present the Alliance counts around twenty "very active" members, with a mailing list of over 200. It is not involved in actual daycare organizing but sees itself assisting other groups trying to start centres. It is also undergoing a period of re-assessment now that the campaign around which it was originally organized has subsided.

The Brazilian Studies Group is essentially a research group. Its representative, Herbet de Sousa, described its aim as researching the specificity of neo-capitalism and the future of political struggle particularly in Latin America in light of the failures of the recent past. It prepares articles in Portuguese, Spanish and sometimes English and French, which are distributed to around 400 activists or sympathizers in Latin America, Europe, Africa, and North America.

Speaking to the purpose of the Conference, de Sousa warned that "we can not be effective if we know only one side". Rather we must understand how people are educated in advanced capitalism, and what are our opportunities, where are the contradictions.

On Saturday afternoon conference participants were assigned

to one of a half dozen workshops in which they were to discuss the questions raised in the previous panels. As a discussion aid the Watching Committee suggested five questions to be considered. Most of these were hopelessly broad for an afternoon discussion among people who hardly knew each other. In the workshop I attended everyone gave a short personal political history by way of indicating their particular interest in popular education. This was essential but time consuming.

Two questions were raised in our workshop that seemed important to me. The relationship between popular education and organizing was recognized as fundamental but perhaps for that reason it was skirted as being too difficult. The second, how to avoid reinforcing feelings of powerlessness and despair, was perhaps difficult beyond our experience.

Sunday promised to be the most fruitful day, with the morning devoted to a variety of workshops on the politics of different media of communication. The afternoon was to be a concluding plenary.

A film called FORGET IT JACK was used to explore the use of audio-visual media in the promotion of political consciousness. This film was not the most appropriate choice, being rather a fine example of straight forward, old fashioned propaganda. Produced by Jim Littleton with narration by Harry Brown, this film documents the case of Simcoe County hospital workers, members of the Service Workers' International Union, charged with an illegal strike. It was skillfully executed but its possible use was very limited. It may have given the facts to activists wanting to help the

strike depicted but was of little use in developing political consciousness beyond this point. Unfortunately the producer seemed unable to envisage any other form of political film making. He identified the workers with the union and ended the session with a patronizing little lecture on respecting the workers' i.e. union tradition.

Next, to the Theatre Workshop. It was conducted by Joyce Penner, director of Toronto Automatic Repertory Theatre Ensemble. If half the communications workshops were led by people as thorough and conscientious as Penner than the Conference was worthwhile. In the short time available she managed to indicate the theoretical and practical work that faces radicals seriously interested in theatre.

Quoting Brecht on "preaching to the converted", she defended the use of theatre to strengthen a nascent culture of resistance. But if it is not mistaken for a documentary form, the dynamism of theatre gives it even greater potential with an uncommitted audience. To achieve this potential it must be taken out of the conventional setting.

Penner went on to discuss some of the methods of developing a theatre group. One of these is the "open theatre" technique. A play or elaborated idea is treated merely as "words for action", which the company collectively interprets, revises, and forms into a theatrical whole.

Street theatre or guerilla theatre is another form that deserves reconsideration. If the group attempting it is cohesive, carefully rehearsed and clear in its political intentions it has a far greater chance of reaching an

audience than a soap box orator.

Improvisation is also stressed by Penner, though not in its conventional sense. As suggested by surrealism, "automatic improvisation" is intended to strip away the actors' superficialities. Though "blocking" can be a problem she insisted that it can be overcome if the actors are serious about exploring the unconscious.

Returning again to Brecht, she endorsed his famous concept of alienation effect. To be revolutionary theatre must promote thought, not just indulge the emotions. It must avoid "sucking" the audience into an uncritical empathy; it should instead distance the political questions raised from the "life" of the theatrical characters. Signs of slogans or quotes, slides of historical events, a chorus commenting on the "action" have all been used to "break the spell" in order to make political questions inescapable.

As her group is still in the process of formation, Penner could only relate how it hopes to relate to audiences. She felt that prisons, schools, hospitals, unions on strike, tenants and housing groups might all be receptive to a theatre group. She stressed a dialogical relationship with such groups which would hopefully extend to teaching theatre to some of the potential audience. Fantasy as a vision of the future can raise important strategic and tactical questions.

Though there may be much to debate with some of Penner's notions, her theoretical richness and boldness of scope should serve as an example, if not a goad to the "independent left".

The final plenary suffered the same problem as the earlier ones - a lack of direction that could not be solved either by the best efforts of the watching committee or the chairpersons. The question to be discussed - "what the left in Toronto can do most effectively at this time" - was premature to say the least. The floundering that occurred should have demonstrated that the basic level of unity assumed by that question just does not exist among the so-called independent or non-sectarian left in Toronto.

There was much hair-pulling about or status as "intellectuals", intellectual-workers, "petty bourgeois", or workers. There were pleas for some hair-splitting to ensure that further confusion be avoided, (eg. lets define the working class).

Workerism came with facility to some, (you have to be part of working class life, whatever that is, before you can...). Economism was an easy answer to others, (why aren't we organizing around food prices). And there was the 'craving' for "an organization" to be formed by the conference to look into all the problems raised by it. (Surely a mother to cuddle us is no more necessary than a father to discipline us.)

One phrase heard often at the conference was "non-dogmatic Marxism". People wished to distinguish themselves from the Leninist left but how? It seems that the distinction for many is not one of fundamental assumptions. Instead they seem content to hold views that are merely less rigid than those of the Leninists. Until people who call themselves "non-dogmatic" begin to explain what distinguishes them from Leninists then it will be just to assume that the distinction doesn't really exist.

In its own educational terms how should this conference be evaluated?

It was organized on the basis of certain conclusions that did not seem to be the result of any dialogical process between the organizers and the participants. That is not at all surprising. It is a commonly held assumption that anyone who has been to university or who has a job that is "white collar" or who is radical, in fact, must be an intellectual. The corollary to that assumption is that intellectuals learn best in a conventional educational setting, i.e. the lecture and the seminar. Both assumptions are problematic.

One obvious conclusion from the conference is that a distinction should be made between intellectuals and intellectual-workers. Though the distinction is not discrete and it does not apply to artistic creation, I would argue that the latter have been educated to work in the assembling and distribution or dissemination of ideology; the former have been educated to be the theoreticians of that sort of production. The people involved in the immediate production of ideological offerings are not necessarily better equipped to develop a theoretical critique of their own production than are autoworkers. Nor are they necessarily more predisposed to do so.

Even the intellectuals who organized this conference to begin the development of that kind of critique need this kind of mixed experience to fully assimilate the implications of dialogical education.

By the end of the conference sufficient dialogue had occurred to make possible a guess at some generative themes that might be posed to the independent left.

How do we develop conscious practice when we are so defficient in our theory? How can we grasp the need or significance of theory when we have such limited practice?

The traditional left provides a "religio-scientific" evasion to these questions and in so doing perpetuates authoritarian relations. But until we develop some serious efforts to cope with this dilemma, those same traditional concepts and methods will dominate us, and ours will be a poor confused relative of a practice we abhor.



our two cents' worth...

The Popular Education Conference raised more problems for us than it provided solutions. We consider that a mark of success, a step beyond the attitude, all too common on the left, that we have all the answers. When it comes down to it, we don't even know a lot of the questions.

The conference was a success to the extent that it posed problems, impelled people to evaluate their theories and their experiences, stimulated processes of critical and self-critical thinking.

At the same time, raising questions is not the be-all and the end-all of political activity. By itself, this can leave us wrapped in confused frustration, and indeed there were those at the conference whose experience was exactly that. One reason for this was that the conference itself was a poor example of problem-posing education. Despite all of our rhetoric about the need for new forms of political education, the conference was organized along rather traditional lines, although some attempts were made to develop a more participatory and reflective approach. (Perhaps we should consider the possibility that conferences are simply not suitable vehicles for the kind of collective self-education we are trying to develop.)

However, most of the problems of the conference had to do with the assumptions, experiences, and expectations of the people attending it and planning it. The original impetus came from a fairly wide-spread feeling on the independent left in Toronto that we were spending too much time talking to ourselves. How could we "reach" the working class? The answer, which was of course really no answer at all, was that we had to do "popular education". But how? What is popular education? How do you do it? None of us had answers that were very satisfactory.

Yet, there are after all many independ-

ent left groups and individuals engaged in a variety of different activities. It was hoped that bringing them together at a conference would result in a pooling of experiences and ideas.

The planning process for the conference took longer than anyone had initially expected. The problem was not with the technical details, but with political content and forms. To devise an agenda, arrange speakers, decide on topics, set up a balance between plenaries, workshops, displays, etc. meant making a series of political decisions, decisions about popular education as it was to occur at the conference and how it was to be presented at the conference. In effect, the planning committee had to develop a basic analysis of popular education before it could even set up a conference on the subject. With hindsight, it is easy to say that we were not terribly successful in working out a positive vision of what could and should happen.

But the shortcomings of the planning process cannot be attributed primarily to the planning committee, which in its politics and affiliations was fairly representative of the independent left in Toronto. The lack of political clarity among the planners of the conference, which is undeniable, was largely an expression of the political level of the left of which they are a part.

One thing that the conference served to emphasize was the fact that the independent left is not a homogenous whole. Yet it is frequently assumed, at least implicitly, that it is. But really the main thing that seems to bind it together, in addition to its general adherence to socialism (usually left undefined) is a rejection of the sectarian left. This rejection is more often than not not accompanied by any clear analysis of just what is being rejected and why, or of what the alternatives are. Perhaps that is because the sectarian left is so obviously off base. It seems unnecessary to analyze its politics in a detailed way. But such an automatic rejection can have undesirable consequences. For one thing, it can lead to a tendency to reject large parts of the revolutionary socialist

heritage simply because the sectarian left has loudly laid claim to it. This can cut us off from fruitful historical and theoretical lessons. On the other hand, a failure to analyze why the sectarian left is off base, why it is irrelevant, can and often does lead large sections of the independent left to continue accepting the basic assumptions and methods of sectarian leftism, even while rejecting its specific politics. The rejection is superficial, not based on a serious analysis of the root errors involved. For example, there are independent leftists who reject the various leninist parties that currently exist, but continue to accept various leninist formulae, like the need for a vanguard party, the transmission-belt theory of consciousness, the equation of education with propaganda, etc. Some of the specifics have been rejected, but the underlying assumptions remain. As long as these basic assumptions have not been rigorously dissected and examined, and either consciously rejected or consciously adopted, it is very difficult to construct a new politics that has a positive theoretical and practical basis.

This was a problem that was apparent at the conference. Beneath an assumed common purpose there lay an astounding hodge-podge of political conceptions that were rarely articulated, seldom discussed, and often not even thought out by those who held them. This in turn accounted for the fairly frequent and frustrating inability to find a common basis for dialogue. People were on different wave-lengths,

Yet this point should not be overstated. Many people have worked out their politics in some detail, and many more have at least a gut-level understanding of what constitutes good politics. Under different circumstances, this would have been enough to stimulate more solid political discussion than actually took place..

One problem was the rather passive, consumerist attitude of many of the people who came to the conference. People sat back, waiting to be educated. This again seemed to be at least partially due to the format; there was far more discus-

sion in informal get-togethers than there was at any of the plenaries that were supposed to "draw it all together". Of course, these informal discussions were part of the conference, but it is unfortunate that this process and its results could not have been generalized more. The fact that it wasn't stands as a challenge to our conceptions of popular education.

A cliched but important idea about the conference was that it had to be a moment in a process of political development. That it was, although the process proved to be less advanced than some of us had hoped. But the important thing now is that this process continue, that the questions raised there be pursued and discussed and re-defined and answered. Certainly the most encouraging result of the conference has been the amount of ongoing evaluation and discussion that it has provoked.

To reiterate some of the concerns that emerged:

What is the relationship between socialist groups and mass organizations at this time? What can it be?

The relationship between organizers and educators. Are they separate? Does this distinction imply political choices?

What is the relationship between solidarity work and organizing against capitalism in Canada?

What is the effect of mass culture on consciousness?

How can we integrate our theory and practice, to overcome the tendency for them to develop in isolation?

What can we do to assist the political unification of the independent left?

These are questions we all have to consider, carefully, thoroughly, and soon.



The Popular Education Conference had a general characteristic which was quite refreshing and, in my experience, significantly advanced from left conferences of the last few years. In a manner more concrete than I am used to expecting, the level of discussion was brought down to actual examples and practice quite in contrast to the sloganeering and shallow definition of terms that is typical of most formal intra-left gatherings. In many of the discussions we found ourselves at a level of description that demanded a much more precise use of language than I have come to expect in encounters among left people who have had no prior common practice.

For example, the term "working class" was nearly inoperative and was one of the first concepts to be challenged. It was necessary to talk about specific kinds of workers and their specific kinds of experiences, exploited situations, and world-views before any of our talk about strategies became comprehensible. We had to expand the area of analysis usually occupied by the "working class" to include other exploited areas of life, like consumption and education. People felt the necessity to redefine other terms, so often riddled with assumptions, such as "consciousness", "socialism", "political organizing", and, of course "propaganda/popular education".

Part of the reason why were able to discuss these things so readily and so fundamentally (although, not fundamentally enough for some people at the conference) is the common but scattered experiences we have had over the last few years. Many of us have had to deal with the sectarian left, either within it or outside of it, and have been frustrated by its effects on ourselves, fellow left people, and anyone else in contact with such groups. There is no point in over-emphasizing this rather negative characteristic which gives us a basis for unity, but I think that as we have tried to come to grips with the problem posed by our experience with "them", we come to some common conclusions more or less on our own and in isolation from most other "independent left" groups.

These problems we discuss in various ways, but with essentially the same content: the

question of a Leninist party; the building of non-authoritarian organizations; whether or not revolutionary democratic organizations start now or "after the revolution", and even, "how the hell can you have a dictatorship of the proletariat?"

Unfortunately, as a few people pointed out in the final plenary, our critique during the conference of the sectarian groups did not go beyond rejection of them. Not enough did we venture into the important area of constructive discussion around these points. I sense, but maybe I am just optimistic, that these discussions could lead to a more specific, clearer form of unity among us, at least in ideas (which is only a start) and perhaps in the development of some common projects.

But I don't think we should consider success merely in terms of more "concrete" links among us as left groups. We must as well realize that this kind of discussion among people who have been involved in so many uncoordinated or unconnected situations can be crucial to developing our abilities to work in our own situations. Hopefully we will come back from discussions like this not only with a renewed enthusiasm for our own projects but also with new ideas and new strategies.

However, we are confronting problems not only in the nature of the links among ourselves as independent left groups, but also in the forms of communication we use for popular education. We can easily be critical of the simplistic rhetoric used by vanguard groups in their newspapers, pamphlets and posters, but how critical are we of our own language in the same media? Do we understand our own elitism when we use brief words to represent concepts which we ourselves have taken much work to understand? To what extent do our own words mystify or even "dazzle" other people? Such habits are not much less manipulative than the rhetoric of you-know-who.

Crucial to our understanding of what kinds of language are appropriate is our notion of what the "mass media" is all about. Not knowing or being able to agree about the nature of the group with whom we are communicating doesn't help us shape a relevant language. But there are many assumptions uncovered once we look into the area of mass media with as critical an eye

as we have used for discussing class.

Why are we interested in developing a mass audience or winning away the audience of the mass media? Helping people see through the misconceptions and manipulations of the commercial media is a crucial liberating step. But attempting to do this by substituting ourselves as writers of mass media is quite another thing. Is there really such a homogenous group of people as "the masses?"

I think, rather, that it is more important to challenge people's concept of themselves as part of such a "mass". This is not to de-emphasize class consciousness, but rather to help people build collective identities based on what is real and specific. Present concepts of mass that gloss over regional, cultural, sexual, and other distinctions and never detail the specific conditions of different workers and other people end up ignoring or causing people to ignore real needs and possibilities. This is manipulative rather than liberating.

Therefore, does the size of our "audience" determine the particular form of media which we use? How can we communicate with any large grouping of people without continuing a use of the same form as the dominant/dominating media, that is, an authoritarian monologue. Even though we might not intentionally be manipulative through our dissemination of information, how do we overcome the condition that has been well established by present educational and mass media systems whereby information is passively accepted and consumed rather than actively understood or rejected in terms of one's autonomous experiences? How can this active learning process take place in the realm of one-way print media?

This is not an implication that print media be abandoned as a means of popular education. What it means is that written words need always be supplemented by interaction of writers with readers. Perhaps at this point, given the lack of effective periodicals for reaching beyond the circles of the left, the priorities should be interactions between the so-called educators and the people--so that learning proceeds in both directions and that language and conceptualizations may be more realistically

developed. In this case, writing would be a supplement to practice.

We generally agree on the ways in which these interactions should not take place. The elitist intervention of vanguard groups in strikes and other issues has often been more divisive than unifying. Our practice will probably be as small groups offering skills and resources and some exchange of ideas.

The strength of the left in situations like these will be in its versatility: the ability of the small groups to adapt their resources to the particular circumstances of each struggle. This is quite distinct from the sectarian strategies that reduce all struggles to a particular rhetoric, or emphasize particular areas of activity to be revolutionary, exclusive of all others.

The fact that the independent left already experiences a great variety of activity gives us an important basis for this versatile, more comprehensive practice. As we fully realized at the beginning of the conference, a serious problem is that these experiences are largely uncollated--we don't know enough about what each other has done. But we need to see this variety as a positive aspect and not merely as a hindrance because of its fragmented nature.

It should be reassuring to look upon our range of experiences and see all that we have to draw upon; from workers' struggles in and out of trade unions, from activities in capitalist owned or state controlled factories and institutions right through to worker owned, occupied or controlled workplaces. Among our resources must be counted many research and educational groups, grant funded or not, because they can work to provide essential information for workers in industrial situations who have little extra time for such research.

It is quite likely that further conferences similar to the Popular Education Conference will be held. But the kinds of direct linkings that are needed among left people interested in these concepts cannot wait to be developed within such conferences. Nor should we wait for directives sent out by any coordinating groups delegated at such times.

organizing in a small town

This article was written by two members of the Toronto Liberation School Collective.

Introduction

We spent one year living in a small central Ontario community where, with a core of town residents, we attempted, on a minute scale, the 'revolutionary' project discussed below.

The town, with a population of 5400, survives on the long-established tourist industry based around the lakes on which the town is situated. A majority of its working people are employed directly in service and recreation jobs related to the tourist trade, most on a seasonal basis, (in hotels, resorts, motels, parks, stores, transportation, utilities). The average income in the town is only two-thirds of the Ontario average. Tourist industry salaries average about \$3000 a year. There are a number of small industries in the town, many new, making wood products, plastic pipe products, and paper products. Wages are somewhat higher in manufacturing, averaging \$6000. Casual labour and construction is also a major source of income, complementing the seasonal service and tourist trade.

The town is controlled economically and politically by the business elements who benefit from the tourist industry, old established families who have founded the town (these families still own much land in the area, as well as some industry and enterprise), and the managers of the manufacturing plants who run the factories for the U.S. multinationals which own them. These class elements are economically, ideologically, and socially integrated and exert a hegemonic control over policies, economic development, social service, and official institutional and cultural life.

Waged and salaried working people make up 80% of the town's population. These working people share a long tradition of rural living, a strong belief in self

reliance, individualism, and native independence as well as a long history of collective inactivity and deference to a visible and paternal ruling power.

We wanted to discuss our activity in this town from a critical perspective to help us reflect on our experience and to offer it in the newsletter as a contribution to the debate on the development of the revolutionary process in an advanced capitalist society.

In this account we will try to do four things: first, to describe our revolutionary vision of what we were attempting to create in this political project; second, to describe how we attempted to attain this vision/goal; third, to critically evaluate the process; and fourth, to raise and comment on some general political questions that hopefully can be dealt with in future issues of the newsletter.

Why Were We There?

Our intent in the long run was to participate in the recreation of a popular working class culture and the raising of the socialist/class consciousness of the working people of the town. To do this we moved into the town and immersed ourselves in the local working class community, in its daily life and contradictions. We lived, worked, shopped, played, and socialized in the community--the struggle of the people was our struggle. We realized that we were not there to lead the workers anywhere but rather, to understand the needs of the working class area and begin to articulate and act upon the realization of such needs within the community.

We accepted Wilhelm Reich's definition of socialist (class) consciousness and it guided us in our struggle. Reich puts forth the following as a response to the question 'what is class conscious-

ness?":

"The class-consciousness of the masses is not a knowledge of the historical or economic laws that govern the existence of the human being, but

1. knowledge of one's own vital needs in all spheres;
2. knowledge of ways and possibilities of satisfying them;
3. knowledge of the obstacles that a social system based on private property puts in the way of their satisfaction;
4. knowledge of one's own inhibitions and fears that prevent one from clearly realizing one's needs and the obstacles to their satisfaction....
5. knowledge that mass unity makes an invincible force against the power of oppressors."

Reich further states that the revolutionary liberation from capitalism is the final act which will grow from the fully developed class consciousness of the masses once the revolutionary leadership has understood the working class in every aspect of their life.

We wanted to be part of the process of people becoming aware of what was happening to them politically, socially, economically and culturally, of developing a critique of everyday life. We wanted to help people take power over areas of their daily lives, areas where they themselves expressed a need (eg. raising their children, information regarding their rights in a capitalist society), etc. We wanted to assist them--and ourselves--to understand obstacles, both systemic and personal, that prevent realization of basic needs. And finally, we wanted to help people collectively work out alternative ways of meeting their needs.

What We Wanted to Create (The vision)

We tried to do all this by creating a working class 'territory' or Centre where workers could come together. This centre would be an ongoing physical presence in the community, a place where different kinds of working people could meet, organize, discuss, and socialize. The centre was eventually to be control-

by the workers of the area themselves through a council of elected representatives.

The centre was to involve itself with the social, economic, and political struggles of the community. By building upon workers' self-activity and through the initiation of alternatives and educational processes, an attempt was to be made to develop collectivity in the working class neighbourhood and create an increasing sense of community, and a new communal desire and ability to struggle for control over everyday life in every way and in every relation.

The centre was also to be an attempt to overcome the fragmentation, privatization, and isolation of people from one another that is so characteristic of advanced capitalist society. It was to be a physical, social, intellectual, and emotional focus, a space where critical and revolutionary self activity among working people could take root and begin to grow. From this space revolutionary action could develop in their work, home, and community, through which workers could become capable of creating and struggling for a new vision of how to realize their interests and needs.

What We Did

We will now discuss the centre in relation to three central themes:

1. the extent to which its activities, services, and programs fostered our revolutionary vision of helping working class people take control over various aspects of their lives;
2. its strategic and relevant linkages with the daily life and struggles of working people and;
3. the legitimacy as an existing town institution which it was able to achieve in relation to the existing power structure and ruling sectors, and townspeople in general.

For fostering control, developing linkages, and creating and maintaining local legitimacy were in turn the short-range goals upon which the ultimate creation of this 'working class territory' rested.

Community Centre Program:1. Information Centre

Initially the community centre ran three kinds of programs. The first was an Information Service run by centre staff with community volunteers, on a drop-in and telephone basis. The Information Service was launched publicly as a new service to all residents of the town. Its advent was in keeping with current government and civic support for such information agencies at the community level in Ontario. Its presence was thus grudgingly tolerated by local establishment and social service mandarins, for there was no other such service to be had in either the town or district. We ran the information service mostly with our own labour, and the help of some neighbourhood people for over eight months, and received about 750 calls or drop-in inquiries. Most people called us either looking for jobs or wanting help with U.I.C. claims. The landlord-tenant act and labour code violations, welfare claims, workmen's compensation, inquiries about decent housing, babysitting were the other things most asked about. Through the information service, we wanted to do three things: first, to provide information to individual working people about their rights and the benefits available to them. In many cases working people didn't know their legal rights or the proper procedure for getting benefits. Second, we wanted to advocate for people unable to get what was legally theirs. Such was the arbitrary nature of oppressive economic and political power in the town that even when they knew their rights, many working people (especially the young and the old, as well as women and the disabled, in short, those in the 'weakest' power positions) had great difficulty in getting them. Third, and most crucially, we wanted to foster autonomous self-help groups around problems. Such groups could be actively involved in analysing and attacking the root of their difficulties together, eg. senior citizens' groupings, tenants' groups, mothers for day care, etc.

Through the Information service, we

made contact and became familiar with the problems of many working people. We were also able to help many of them on an individual basis to become more aware and capable of realizing their rights.

Further, the Information service gave us legitimacy--we had a reason for operating in the community on a day to day basis. It even gave us a legitimate pretext for soliciting establishment funds for our centre.

However, the Information service proved to be far less valuable (central) in creating links with working people in the process of systematically and collectively challenging power relations. For the Information service largely failed to draw people into the centre to discuss their problems, and was equally unsuccessful in providing a stepping stone from an individual to a collective approach to their problems. The diversity of problems covered, the wide geographical area the service related to, the importance of anonymity in the running of such a service, and the reluctance of people to come in person to talk to strangers about personal problems were a number of factors which contributed to this.

The one exception to this was with a number of working class mothers wanting day care facilities for their children. Our of the initial information contact grew a series of meetings in the centre which led to the establishment of a play-school co-operative run by working class parents for their children. This project became our second area of program involvement in the centre, one which opened far more valuable possibilities of links, action, and control than the first.

2. The Playschool Co-operative

The Playschool rooted us in the working class community allowing us to become involved in a collective alternative to one aspect of the everyday lives of working class families. Through it we established day to day relations with working people around a non-work issue of great concern to them. It also opened

up the possibility of working with them around other areas of their daily lives. Further, through the operation of the Playschool, we established a trust and a familiarity that opened up other possibilities. The parents' expressed need for day care was partially fulfilled through the creation of this autonomous alternative to the existing nursery school. However it was originally seen as a short range project which would eventually lead to the establishment of a municipal day care facility.

The Playschool lasted over eight months and involved about thirty working class families. It attempted to achieve three goals: 1. the establishment of liberatory child rearing practices, 2. the encouragement of liberating, humanizing relations between the parents and the children, and 3. the establishment of a collective, creative alternative to the existing facility which was too expensive and served a different population (class): the children of professionals (doctors, lawyers) and ruling elements of the town.

The Playschool was organized cooperatively. Both the mothers and the fathers helped set up and maintain the program through day to day staffing, fund raising, participating on committees, and through the standing working group and executive which came from their ranks. One of our collective was the coordinator to assist the parents in designing and implementing the program.

The Playschool began during the summer in a public school gym. Through the summer project the parents became involved to the point where they saw the need and importance of carrying on the project on a more permanent basis. The parents demanded and received the upstairs of the town Community Centre which had been standing vacant for years. The parents organized support from a number of city councillors, some people on the Recreation Committee, and a couple of teachers to aid them in securing the Community Centre.

They assembled en masse in the Director's office and pressured him to allow them the use of the facility for a nominal rent.

The principles of the playschool program were developed through an ongoing educational process (discussion circles) with the parents. The transformation of the traditional social relations between parents and children was the 'visionary' aim of the playschool. The coordinator and the parents worked out a program which was continually discussed and re-evaluated. It was based on following humanistic and liberating principles, on developing independence and creative ability among children on fostering sharing, co-operation, mutual respect, and non-sexist practices, a flowering of a sense of self worth.

The Playschool did gain some legitimacy in the town. One reason for this was that the participating parents included many long-time citizens of the town. Also, the existing nursery school wanted support in an appeal to the provincial government for a municipal day care facility. They saw the new playschool as added proof of the need for day care. So they reluctantly supported the parents in their endeavour in exchange for their support in their government bid. Also, a few teachers in the high school contributed to our legitimacy by bringing the children into their classrooms to work on projects beside their high school students.

The Playschool gave people a sense of power over a part of their lives that had formerly been beyond their control. Both husbands and wives were involved in the Playschool process at some level, and it became an important experience for them. Through it they saw that collective action provided them with an alternative and a new sense of the possible for themselves, each other, their children, and the community.

3. Critical Education Circles

After the Information Centre and the Co-operative Playschool had been underway for a number of months, we organized a third program, regular weekly educational circles at the Centre. We saw this educational program as growing out of the

first two, and in turn, deepening involvement and struggle in them; while at the same time opening up the possibility of transforming the very nature of the Centre itself.

The idea behind the critical education circles for both men and women was to provide a regular discussion context, where groups of working people could come together to begin to critically reflect on the nature of their lives, relations, beliefs and problems in a dialogue with other working people (ie. with people who had objectively and in many ways subjectively the same experiences of life as members of a structurally subordinated class.) The learning process of the circle was based on the educational methodology of Paulo Friere and discussion content was informed by a locally specified Marxian analysis of power relations in the region at various levels from the political and economic to the realm of the personal. We were continually attempting to develop and reapply this analysis, from the time of our entering the town, in all aspects of the centre's activity. In short, then, we saw this kind of educational process as a vital dimension of all our work, ie. as a way to transform what was initially as issue or project orientation among working people involved, into an understanding of the need for and a commitment to the collective self creation of a new and combatative working class community and culture.

Two groups functioned over ten sessions at the centre: the first with local working women from the surrounding neighbourhood. (Contact with the 13 women in the circle came from our previous work in the information service and the playschool). Discussion in the women's educational circle centred around family life in a general sense. Themes talked about included liberating principles and philosophies of child rearing (similar to those being established in the Playschool); relations between them and their husbands (questions of equality, sexism, economic support, etc.); emotions and the personal (fears, hopes, desires);

and social questions (advertising, consumption, T.V., soap operas, and the role of the schools.) At the end of the first educational circle, the women decided to meet again in the new year to further discuss and try out new methods of dealing with their children day by day. Secondly, ideas developed in the circle began to filter into and reinforce the Playschool program through women who were involved in both. The women also agreed that they would like to meet with the men to discuss marital and personal relations together, in a first beginning attempt to solve some of the conflicts that were being brought out.

The second educational circle was conducted with a group of 11 working class men. Through the operation of the two centre programs we developed a friendly, informal relation with families touched by or involved in these projects. We were invited into their homes and came to share our leisure time with them regularly. So when it came time to organize the sessions, we went around to each home and personally explained what we wanted to do and asked people if they were interested. In most cases the men were willing to give the group discussions a try. Though we advertised in the town newspaper as well, all eleven participants came from this personal contact.

The men's critical education circle was then, in a sense, something new, for though we had worked with some of the men in the Playschool, this was the first attempt to bring them and other male workers from the town together in their own right, on a regular basis.

The topics for discussion over the ten weeks came from our own perceptions of what we saw and heard as key issues and problems affecting the day to day lives of workers in the town, and from the weekly suggestions of the group itself. We discussed such matters as the class, economic and political structure of power in the area; the nature of their work (feelings about bosses, frustration with authority, young vs. older workers, satisfaction derived or denied through manual labour, etc.); quality of community life

(relations to friends and neighbours); changing family and personal life (relations with their wives and children); and general social issues (media, consumption, credit, advertising, welfare, inflation, big government).

Throughout the circle meetings there was a tension between a need to understand a particular situation/problem and a need to take action in a concrete and immediate way. The discussion circle originally stressed the former, but towards the second half of the sessions, as the process of group formation took place, concrete alternative forms of action for the group were placed on the agenda for preliminary discussion. The possibility of setting up a workers' community organization, a working group to co-ordinate the organizing of unorganized plants, putting out a newsletter, as well as setting up various alternative co-op ventures alongside the Playschool, such as a credit union or food co-op were all discussed.

However, it must be pointed out that our intention for this first critical discussion sequence was not to produce direct and immediate action. We wanted to stimulate a critical analysis by these working men of their everyday lives which would lead to the formation of a group having a collective understanding of the conditions they were submerged in as well as a common resolve to initiate alternative action which had a chance of seriously challenging the oppressive status quo in key areas. Previous experience in community organizing made us wary of immediate action around issues as a firm basis for building this kind of strong, sustained and organized working class presence and self-activity on a community level.

In its own right, the discussion circle was successful in providing an informal social basis for the creation of trust and solidarity among these men, something clearly lacking at the outset.

Economic, social, and cultural differences between workers in the group (between skilled and unskilled, low and higher income earners, local, town, and new arrivals, and young and old workers) provided a real and formidable barrier against the likelihood of collective solidarity in action developing among them. Over the course of the sessions, primarily through what was usually animated and heated group discussion but also through beer and shuffleboard at the tavern after the meetings, and a number of parties in each others' homes, a sense of solidarity, common purpose, and commitment began to emerge.

The men's own evaluation of the process in the group can best attest to the progress made in it. For in their own estimation the circle had permitted them

1. to break down the isolation between them which had led them to personalize responsibility for their situation and remain passive while at the same time faulting other working class people for not doing something to change things. They could now see that their problems were the same as other workers' and that the blame for them lay with the people who ran the town against them.

2. They also asid their awareness of the nature of the forces against them and the reason for their situation economically and politically, locally and nationally, had been increased by the circle discussions and debates and, finally, 3. They felt they had found a group of men whom they could trust enough to act with to change things.

At the end of the sessions, plans were made to meet again after the new year to continue the process. Further, the men wanted to have occasional joint meetings with the women's circle to discuss common problems (the question of family responsibility as a block to militant social action, problems of how to talk to their wives about their feelings, etc.) Finally, group support was thrown behind the Playschool and a collective offer was extended to help on anything that needed work, eg., building more furniture and equipment,

fixing up the centre, etc.

Evaluation

At this point, after a year of activity, the centre had to close. We must now evaluate its development. Unable to secure even a LIP or OFY grant from local authorities and running out of personal funds, we were unable to open the centre in January. We spent the fall fighting bill collectors and, with the threat of a court order over our heads, the collective broke apart and the centre program fragmented, then stopped under this continuous financial pressure. As well, pressure from ruling elements of the town extended from financial veto on government grants and community donations to continually trying to foil or discredit our projects in any possible (letters of support suddenly withdrawn, wild rumours about our personal lives, etc.) The experience of one year however, led us to a number of strong realizations about the work we were attempting.

In a positive sense the project and process we initiated with working people in the town allowed us to affirm through our own experience, the possibility of working class men and women coming together in order to: grapple with the social relations of everyday life in which they had previously been submerged; expand their understanding of the socio-economic structures which oppressed them; realize a growing sense of working class community out of a social world of isolation and division; and finally, to collectively struggle for control over their lives.

It was the emergence of this kind of potential for community and combatative self activity among the working people we knew, concretely shown in the manner outlined above, and in many other ways not mentioned, that was the significant political lesson learned from the project.

In a negative sense, our experience showed us the difficulty and slowness of the task of fostering revolutionary consciousness and popular alternative

culture among ourselves and working people. It showed how much time, energy, and resources were necessary and the deep level of personal commitment required for the task in any community.

For our own part, our estimation of what economic basis would materialize for the project was naive (government grants, local community funds, etc.) and our commitment, although sincere and not consciously short-term, lacked the kind of realistic resolve which only the experience itself has provided in hindsight.

In short, then, what the experience has taught us is that to work toward the creation of a working class territory or space in the way we still envision requires a degree of rootedness in the community and a level of financial independence which can best, and perhaps only, be provided through a collective decision by a grouping of political activists to live and work politically in one area, on a permanent basis. The creation of such a space then can proceed upon steady personal incomes and pooled resources derived therefrom, and out of a mutually binding commitment.

Further, our experience has shown us that without this kind of permanent stake in the creation of such a space for everyone concerned (toward the liberation of 'activists' as much as working class residents!) the risk of becoming either opportunistic (getting out when the going gets rough) or paternalistic (helping the workers with their oppression) is more than formidable despite the best intentions of the activists. And finally, though we do not believe that the lessons of the struggles won, the new understandings reached, and the experience in self activity gained were lost to the people we worked with; it still remains true that the closing of the centre ran the risk of increasing an already apparent working class cynicism about the possibility of meaningful social change. Political activists must be aware of this cynicism, put it in its proper perspective, but most of all originate a 'politics of hope' which will overcome it not reinforce it.

Political Questions

This year of activity allows us, we feel, to make some observations on a number of questions central to the issue of revolution and revolutionary process in Canada today.

Questions which we will try to comment on from our experience to open for discussion are as follows:

1. How do libertarian political activists intervene in the daily lives of working people?

2. How do such activists, once they have become rooted in this daily life, prevent reformism and co-optation from turning their efforts against them?

3. How do they maintain and sustain the level of struggle from its initiation over an extended period of time (like a lifetime)?

4. How do local struggles, once initiated, become integrated with and linked to a wider revolutionary movement?

The question of how to intervene to begin with must be answered in the light of a prior question--intervention for what purpose? Our answer to the prior question must be "intervention for the purpose of taking part in the transformation of the totality of people's lives"--for it is this life in all its aspects which is integrated within the capitalist structures of domination, and which is lived, despite the conditions which may stunt and limit it, for its own sake and as a unity by working class people.

To the derivative question "how to intervene?" the following answer can be given: By political activists collectively entering and positioning themselves in an ongoing way within the everyday lives of working people, alongside them as co-combatants in a struggle to 'change life' in the process of transforming capitalist society.

It is to this end that the notion of a territory or space has been presented as a setting where a new combatative working class self activity and critical culture could develop in opposition to

the influence of the capitalist integration of daily life. From this space such self activity and critical culture could develop and extend into all areas of the terrain of daily life, into the home, the workplace, and the neighbourhood; and address both work and non-work issues in their full variety.

Our work outlined above at least pointed in this direction. Our centre provided a base, a space, where people could socialize and make friends across working class sector lines and begin to critically reflect on the nature of their experience, relations, beliefs, and problems. It was a place where, further, they could begin to get involved in collective self-help alternatives for themselves and their children; learning co-operation and gaining through the struggles they became involved in the confidence and experience necessary to increasingly exert control over their lives.

In short, the direction that the centre aspired to move in was toward the creation of such a space within which a sustained and organized working class presence in the town might have been forged; one capable of initiating an ever wider wave of hegemonic and militant oppositional action in any and all areas where their interests were denied at the local level.

Such a notion of a territory is not confined to the storefront centre we were involved in, but can refer to any space; the house of activists in an area, a community centre, a student residence building, or a union hall and eventually perhaps extended to whole streets, blocks, and neighbourhoods. For the term refers to any physical area where the libertarian analysis and strategy of direct action outlined in this article is being carried out.

Let us turn to the second question, the problem of reformism and co-optation. Briefly, there are a number of ways in which this approach to direct action at the community level does differ from more conventional and well-known approaches to community organizing and as such does attempt to take into consideration and deal with the danger of co-optation in a more comprehensive and realistic manner.

1. First, the territory notion of community organizing differs in intent from liberal and certain left ideas of community organizing. The latter concentrates on organizing people primarily around issues or the provision of alternative services; the former, from the outset aims at becoming permanently integrated in the struggle to build a new way of life with working people. In the former orientation, struggle around issues and the creation of alternatives become steps upon which a new self activity, a heightened class and self-consciousness, and a new way of life based on socialist and human principles can develop in its own right.

2. In order for this kind of purpose to be realized, such a strategy of community intervention must be based on an in-depth class analysis of an area and the relation of class forces within it, i.e. an analysis which includes an understanding of the structures of control at every level of life and the limits to possibility such structures represent. Thanks to Marjalena Repo's well-known critique of the type of community organizing which was carried on without the benefit of such analysis, such an understanding of class forces need not be a lack in such community work but the basis of it. In so doing, we can proceed to overcome the contradiction between class analysis and community organizing, which Repo originally posed but which too many people have since reified and taken as a permanent barrier to organizing working people in a revolutionary way around non-work issues where they are living.

3. Armed with such an ongoing class analysis, a collective of activists in this setting must not only bring with them a good array of organizing skills but a real ability to relate to people on the basis of a working understanding and an action critique of existing capitalist social relations of all and every form within the bounds of a common everyday life. These relations include those of working class parents to their children; men to women; women to men; in and out of the family setting; sectors

of the working class to other sectors; working people to authority whether of a class, economic, judicial, governmental, or social nature; working people to the 'educated' and to 'intellectual authority' including here ourselves as 'left educators'; in short, the relations in and through which authoritarianism, sexism, racism, status differentiation, deference, and inadequacy serve to cement the power and hegemony of capitalism in the lives of working people on a day to day basis.

4. Further, a group of activists must be prepared to move from such a political understanding and action critique ability. And they must move through a strategy which allows working people in a community to collectively work out and develop alternative forms of relating, thinking, acting, and being which are best suited to their own needs and culture (way of life).

5. In order to sustain such an ongoing action critique and a self creation of alternative forms of living, a critical education component, based on working people collectively reflecting on their daily experience of life under capitalism must be built into the inner workings of the direct action process. Such a critical education process, informal, yet effective once developed, can provide an ongoing means for working people to grasp the roots of their oppression however felt and experienced. It also can provide maximum opportunity for them to gain a working insight into the significant limits and ways beyond the various forms of immediate action they may become involved in as they struggle on a local level to realize their interests.

To summarize, in the town in which we worked; it was the relation between each of these five aspects of a libertarian strategy, worked out in many cases only partially and unclearly at the time, and their constant overlapping and reinforcing of a general progressive direction, which gave our approach its fullness and unique quality in meeting the dangers of co-optation. Through dialogue and debate, through socializing and sharing of leisure time, through common work projects and tasks, through the struggle around key issues, through helping each other out in

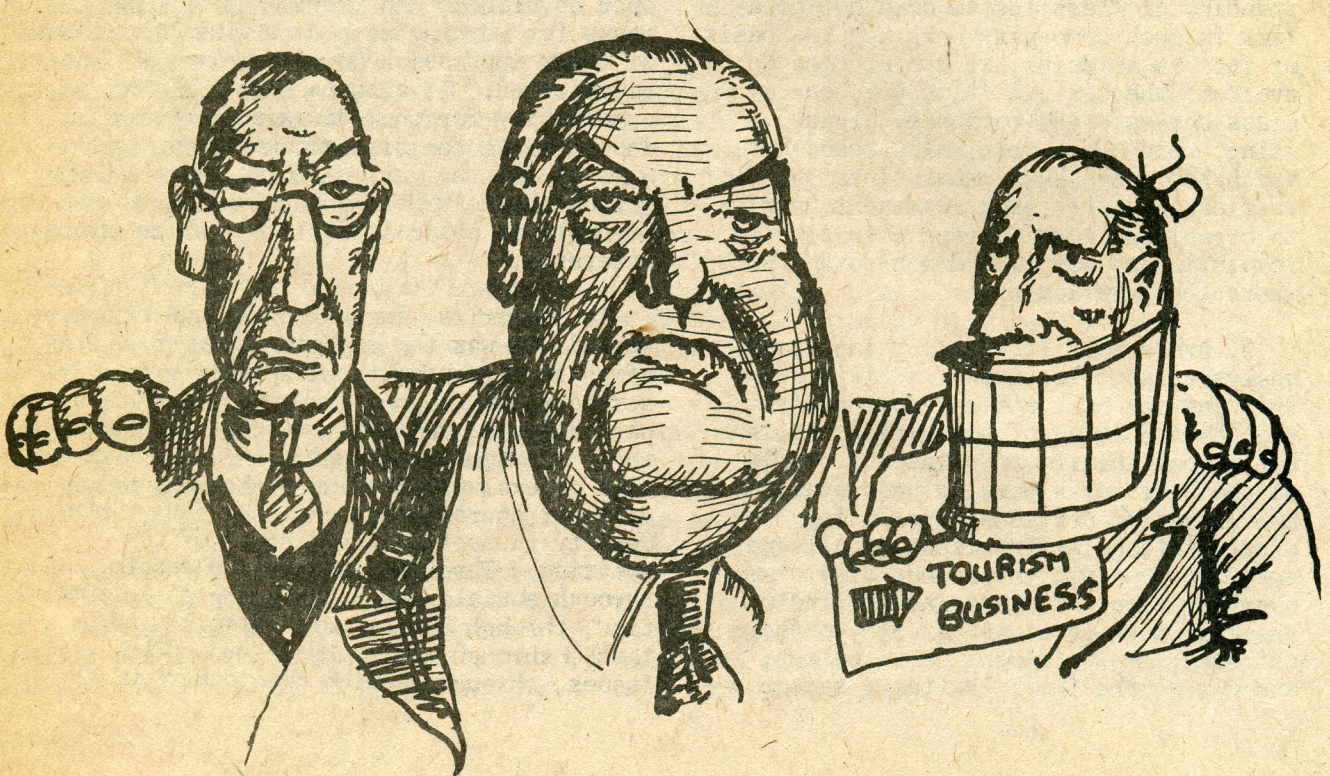
hard times and sharing the good; an organic process took place which made the struggle for the lot of us less a question of a particular issue or an immediate demand and more one of the need to collectively strive to build a new and better way of life.

As to the question of sustaining struggle, we feel the development of the revolutionary process can only proceed if the blossoming of the revolutionary self-activity of working people as a cultural reality is at its heart. If this view of revolutionary process in Canada is in any way correct, then revolution will be an organic process renewing itself through the collective effort, imagination, and struggle of thousands and thousands of people. The self sustaining capacity of this revolutionary process, then, we see as integral to its daily operation. In short, in the process by which people fight for, build, and ever increasingly live revolution in their lives.

The human energy released through the realization of the collective human potential of working people must provide the self sustaining capacity

of any revolution, as the struggle for a new socialist way of life intensifies. We glimpsed traces of this new energy and the possibility it can hold in the work we did in our centre. It is nothing more than the energy of new-found hope, imagination, friendship, creative power, and community, which a collective struggle to control one's own life can unleash out of a world of isolation, loneliness, cynicism, and despair.

As for the final question of the links and co-ordination of local struggles with a larger revolutionary movement, space does not permit much else than the stating of the question for discussion in future issues. However, we see the logical development of the notion of the working class space outlined above in the direction indicated by people like Schecter, Milner, and Roussopoulou of Our Generation; towards the emergence of forms of local neighbourhood control, the gaining of socialist hegemony over the public terrain of municipal politics, and the linking of local territories with larger regional struggles and co-ordinating structures.



PORTUGAL

By Richard Swift

(Richard Swift is a socialist activist in Toronto. He works with the Development Education Center (DEC). He visited Portugal in the spring of 1975.)

The revolutionary process in Portugal is not one that lends itself very easily to a coherent political analysis. Political leadership is quickly thrown up by the creative energy of the workers and peasants and as quickly discarded as its usefulness to them wears thin. In many ways it recalls the French revolutionary process of 1789. Like the revolt of the first estate in France, Portuguese events started at the top with the revolt of the Spinola group attempting to engineer a neo-colonial solution in Portugal's African territories. As in France, this created a dynamic in which more and more demands on the revolution were being made from below. The strongest similarity with France is in this political process whereby a political grouping reaches power (the Girondins, Jacobins, or the Directory) just in time to see the alliance of social classes which created it broken down by the emergence of new needs and fresh polarizations which rob it of its initial social

support. In Portugal this dynamic has caught up with the original Spinola grouping of officers, the alliance of Armed Forces Movement and political party moderates and radicals and most recently the Portuguese Communist Party and its military allies. The present 'coalition' government is being subjected to the same pressures.

Each new regime has promised its own form of 'normalization' to meet its own ends. For this purpose a whole arsenal of repressive legislation such as the Censorship Law and the Labor Relations Act have been created but seldom applied. This legislation has remained on the shelf and 'normalization' has not proceeded very far because the initiative has not rested with these governments. The initiative rested with those workers who have taken over and are running their factories, the peasants who have seized the large estates, the tenants who have occupied and are co-operatively running vacant housing, neighbourhood committees, and perhaps most importantly the soldiers' committees which have challenged the whole hierarchical concept of a traditional army. Each political crisis has meant a new gathering of strength for the working class. In the last year and a half, Portugal has become a vast laboratory of experimentation and apprenticeship for large sections of the Portuguese people in learning to run their own society. Whatever political arrangements are finally arrived at, this self-activity and the confidence it has created have become an integral part of Portuguese working class experience. It will not be forgotten.

The growth of socialist consciousness is

widely evident all over Portugal but particularly in the urban areas and in the south. After decades of acute censorship the signs of intense political debate are everywhere; posters covering walls and monuments, posters on the inside of banks (Banco de Atlantico), insurance companies taken over by their workers, mass demonstrations, socialist literature on sale in the streets, and groups of men gathering spontaneously to discuss current political issues. The Chinese technique of communication by means of wall posters has been widely adopted. In Lisbon's railroad station workers gather to read the latest rumours of fascist political maneuvering or the political position of one of the myriad left groups. After years of enforced 'apolitical' existence under the Salazar and Caetano regimes there is little of the reluctance to view life in its political dimensions which characterizes many of the countries where the bourgeoisie have been able to establish a more effective cultural and spiritual hegemony. Although there is a healthy mistrust of political parties, it is not rooted in the same apathy, cynicism, and feelings of powerlessness which impede working class self-activity in much of Western Europe and all of North America. The ruling groups of Portuguese society have been badly compromised by their years of collaboration with the fascist dictatorship

and its policies of colonial aggression. They are having trouble regrouping politically, let alone establishing their credibility as the legitimate powerholders. In fact the traditional instruments of their legitimation such as the press and the electronic media have become an important force in the struggle for working class control. It is in this light that the struggle for workers' control in the newspaper Republica and the Catholic Radio-Renaissance should be seen.

Many events in contemporary Portugal take on spontaneous political implications. A New Year's Eve celebration became a spontaneous festival of the 'blaze of freedom'. A village discussion of the lack of daycare facilities leads to the occupation of the local manor house. A factory discussion on increasing the wage levels of the lowest paid leads to an attempted takeover of production. There is also widespread awareness of the international dimensions of the class struggle. The liberation struggles in Africa have exerted a powerful influence in Portuguese society. This can be seen both in the 'models of socialism' debate and in the sentiments of indebtedness to and solidarity with the liberation movements. Rallies in support of the Chilean resistance and the recent sacking of the Spanish embassy in Lisbon to protest Franco's ruthless policies of repression are recent examples.

The revolutionary process in Port-

ugal has been badly distorted in a well-orchestrated campaign by the international press. The cold-war lenses through which the wire services see the struggle for Portugal have little to do with Portuguese realities. The scenario is familiar. Any advances by the workers' movement or democratization of the army are seen as part of a Moscow-run plot carried out by the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) to usurp the newly-won freedom of the Portuguese people. The campaign centers in the leadership factions of the Portuguese Socialist Party (PSP) who have become the major rallying-point for international capital. This campaign, mostly in combination with economic pressures from the European Economic Community, are aimed at forcing a moderation in the process of democratizing Portuguese society both economically and politically. The international bourgeoisie is greatly concerned that the April elections failed to provide a parliamentary channelling of revolutionary energies. As always the focal points for the development of workers' power in everyday life lie outside the field of parliamentary representation. The 'plot' theory they are using to explain Portuguese events takes advantage of the well-known Stalinist proclivities of the PCP. However, it is based on a vast overestimation of the Communists' strength.

This situation has been further

reinforced by the Communist Party and their allies abroad who have been quick to identify the party's fortunes with those of the revolutionary process as a whole. This has led to a very serious misunderstanding of the very ambivalent role the PCP has played in this process. To be sure, the Communist tenure in power was one marked by vast conquests of power by the workers' movement. This is particularly true in regard to the cultural dynamization carried out by the Armed Forces Movement in some of the most socially backward rural areas. It is also true of the emergence of political debate inside the armed forces and the beginnings of the struggle for democracy there. The Gonsalves regime allowed the breathing space for these things to take place. However, as often as not, factory occupations, land seizures, strikes, and the building of institutions of political power in the neighbourhoods were opposed by the Party. The Communists plainly saw that they were losing control of the mass movement. Things were getting messy. The movement could not be used simply as an instrument of party policy. Working people were developing needs and aspirations of their own. Not only that, they were acting on them.

This is perhaps most clear in the struggles taking place in the nationalized industries. According to the Communist Party, once an industry had been nationalized, the workers in that industry ceased to have any 'class enemy'.

This by now covers over 50% of Portuguese enterprises. Authoritarian relations of production were to be allowed to remain intact even though private property in the means of production had been abolished. This is perfectly compatible with the bureaucratic collectivist model of eastern Europe where both production and society are controlled 'for the workers' by a caste of professional politicians and bureaucrats.²

However, workers in the nationalized sector, starting with the steel industry, began raising their own demands and creating their own forms of organization. Demands for control over work conditions, wage equalization and a greater say in creating production policy were all important issues to the workers. Workers' commissions and councils were formed. These organizations and their counterparts in the neighbourhoods, army, and rural areas, represent a very high stage in the process of creating a self-managed socialist society. Because they are rooted in production and the daily life of the people, their capacity for mobilization is much greater than that of the "Committees for the Defense of the Revolution" envisioned by the Communists to be instruments of mass mobilization. These committees were to have a strictly ideological function.

The 'models of socialism' debate has been an important part of the developing political situation in Portu-

gal. There is considerable dissatisfaction in Portugal with both western European Social Democracy and the eastern European model of socialism. Even the moderate 'Melo Antunes' group of officers felt it necessary to dissociate themselves from both these forms in their political statements. The influence of FRELIMO and the other liberation movements on sectors of the army has meant that their conception of socialism is one with a heavy emphasis on popular democracy and participation. This influence as well as the strength of several neo-Marxist currents in the Portuguese left has made the 'models of socialism' debate a particularly lively one.

This debate is closely tied to the analytical controversy over what kind of society Portugal really is. One position states that Portugal is a 'third world' society within Europe. This analysis concentrates on the rural nature of the country, the Portuguese workers who are forced into the western European labor market, and the authoritarian political forms that have dominated Portuguese society. The other view stresses the semi-industrial nature of Portugal (Paul Sweezy recently pointed out that only one-third of the population is in the agrarian sector) and the European traditions of the Portuguese.³

While it is not possible at this point to identify clear political conclusions and strategies which flow from these different views, they obviously relate to the economic and social needs and poss-

ibilities on which a socialist strategy will be based. One of the most obvious issues facing any such strategy is the severity of regional disparities in Portugal. The relationship between the 'internal colony' in north-eastern Portugal and the industrial belt running from Lisbon down to Setubal has been reproduced on a political level in the struggle between the anti-Communist north and the Lisbon-area 'red' belt. Such uneven development leaves room for much reactionary maneuvering as recent events all too clearly show.⁴

A survey of the revolutionary groups on the Portuguese left reveals the success of those political organizations which have developed a dialectical relationship with the popular movements. Those groups have been able to relate to and play an initiating role in the formation of workers' councils, to help bring about the expansion of workers' power, and to understand and even learn from the emerging needs and aspirations of the people. The Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat (PRP), the Left Socialist Movement (MES) and the League for Unified Armed Revolution (LUAR) have all played an important part at different times and in different areas in this process of developing workers' power. In this way these groups have been able to grow and become rooted in the working class.

Those groups which have fetishized

their own organization and political 'line' and have attempted to use the workers' movement as an instrument of their own party policy have not fared as well. This is illustrated by the several Marxist-Leninist (Maoist) groupings which have emerged mostly since the coup. The collapse of their politics has reached such a point that the two largest Maoist organizations, the largely student based Movement for the Reorganization of the Proletarian Party (MRPP) and the Popular Democratic Union (UDP) have engaged in gunfights with one another. The Portuguese Communist Party (M-L) which has official Chinese sanction, has been supporting the 'Melo Antunes' group of officers and the right wing of the Socialist Party against Communist Party 'social fascism'. These forms of authoritarianism and sectarianism have impeded significant growth and creative political activity. Of these groups only the Popular Democratic Union is of any size or consequence within the working class.

The recent rise to power of a western-backed Social Democratic coalition has brought renewed pressure to reverse popular conquests of power. The polarization of the army is reaching a point where the differences between radicals and moderates are becoming clearer and clearer. Top officers in all three services have been pushing for the exclusion of politics from the barracks and the isolation of the soldiers' movement from the workers' movement. Radicals

in the army have shown a high level of combativity in resisting this process. The recent formation of a rank-and-file soldiers' organization, "United Soldiers Will Win" (SUV), and the continued refusal of the internal security force, COPCON, to support these repressive tendencies, have provided poles of opposition to this 'normalization'.

The new assaults on the popular movement demand a more consistent and co-ordinated response from the left. To this end, several organizations including the LUAR, the MES, and the PRP have formed the United Revolutionary Front (FUR) to improve the organization and stimulate the combativity of the popular response. It is hoped that this will help fill the void created by the vacillation and manipulative policies of the PCP and the decline of its working class support and capacity for mobilization.

The mechanisms of international counter-revolution are by now well-known. The economic pressures, massive misinformation campaigns, and straight counter-insurgency efforts exert a powerful influence. Only popular mobilization on the widest possible basis can ensure a level of combativity necessary to defeat these forces. This can only be achieved by organization which is a tool of working class needs and aspirations. To reverse this and make the working class a tool of organization can only

lead to cynicism and passivity. Only a working class which sees itself as the subject of history can ensure that Portugal will not be the Chile of Europe.

This article was written before the recent failure of left-wing military officers to seize power. The purges in the military and the press which have followed this ill-planned and defensive attempt are severe reverses for socialism and are likely to intensify the pressures for 'normalization'. The lack of co-ordination between the military and civilian left and the political vacuum created by the timidity and sectarianism of the PCP were obvious factors in recent events. The movement toward some form of social-democratic solution with authoritarian undertones will likely be accelerated.

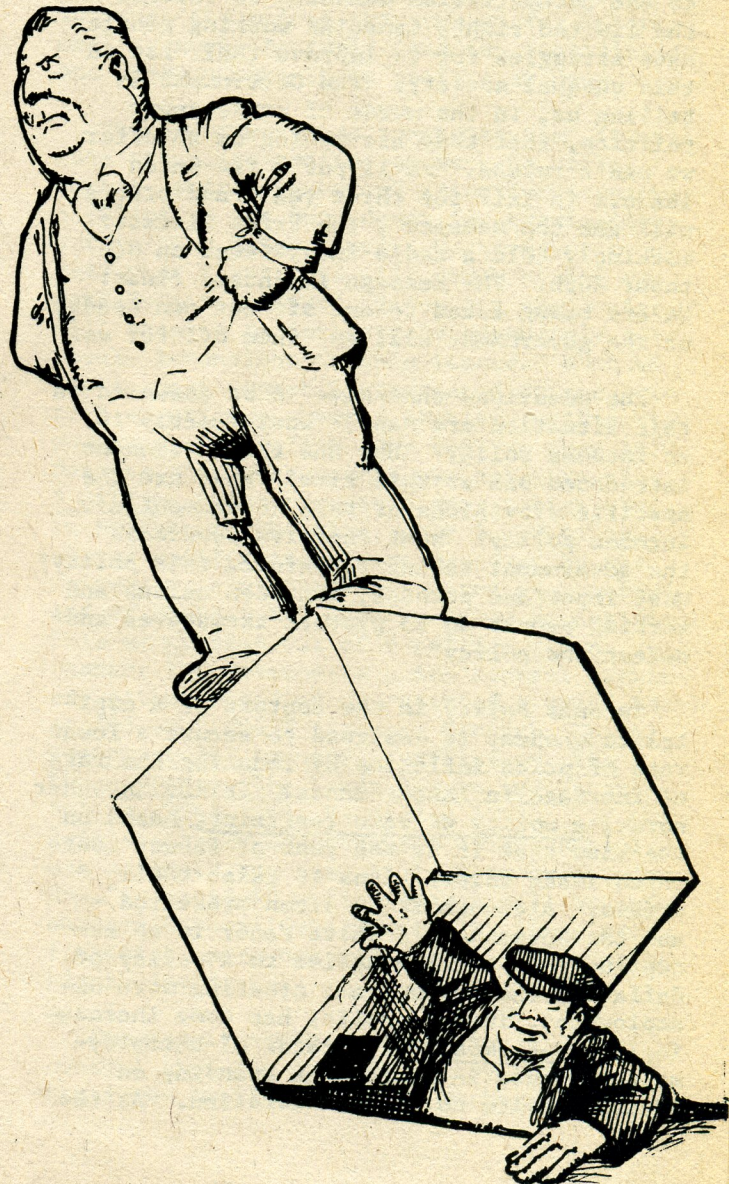
There are, however, some factors that the new rulers must take into account in the long run. The intense politicization and "revolution of rising expectations" will create severe pressures for the Socialist Party both internally and externally. The internal tensions created in social-democratic parties elsewhere because of their failure to win concessions for their working class base within the framework of capitalism will be further intrnsified by Portuguese conditions. It is unlikely that an overtly authoritarian regime will emerge so that some room for organizaing by the left

will remain. In addition, the revolutionary left in Portugal are used to working in situations of extreme political repression, and at this point have over 20,000 weapons stolen from the military as insurance. But perhaps most importantly, the Portuguese working class has the experience and confidence gained through their own creative self-activity in struggling for control of society. This will be invaluable in building a working class 'culture of resistance'.

FOOTNOTES

1. On the cultural dynamization program and other articles on Portugal, see Fred Strasser, "The Cultural Dynamization Program", Liberation, Summer, 1975.
2. For a more detailed analysis of the creation of popular power and the struggle in the nationalized industries, look at Portugal: A Blaze of Freedom, published by Big Flame in England and available through Radical America (P.O. Box B, North Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A.) or from the Development Education Centre (DEC), 121 Avenue Rd., Toronto, phone 416-964-6560.
3. "Class Struggles in Portugal", Monthly Review, Sept. 1975.
4. For good background information on Portugal see Kenneth Maxwell, "The Hidden Revolution in Portugal", New York Review of Books, Apr. 17 and May 11, 1975.

5. For a less schematic view of the activities of different left groups in Portugal, see People's Translation Service, 1735 Allston Way, Berkeley, Cal., 94703, USA. Also just published by PTS, a booklet entitled Portugal: Key Documents of the Revolutionary Process. Also available at DEC, 121 Avenue Rd., Toronto, phone 416-964-6560.



wage & price controls

by Professor Leo Panitch

Canadian working people have now joined the ranks of workers in other western capitalist countries who have been subjected to a statutory incomes policy. The Liberal Government's "anti-inflation" programme seeks to cut back on the bargaining freedom of unions. The situation is a grave one, implying as it does a governmental decision to use authoritarian measures to reverse the limited rights Canadian working people have struggled for to improve their lot in this unequal society. The Government is telling us, in the words of crude power politics, that they are making us an offer we can't refuse: "We'll put a few union leaders in jail for three years and others will get the message", the Prime Minister mockingly told a radio interviewer on October 26th. The message is indeed clear: We are being asked to cut off our own heads, or the government will cut them off for us.

The questions that have to be answered in this situation are many. What exactly is an incomes policy? Why has the government introduced one at this time? What are the specific provisions of this Government's incomes policy? What coercive powers is the government taking to enforce this policy? Most important perhaps, what can unions and working people do to protect themselves and defeat the policy?

Incomes Policy in the context of a capitalist economy is designed to secure a lower rate of price inflation by reducing the rate of increase in labour costs. It is, in other words, a policy of wage restraint, based on the view that it is the push of labour costs which leads corporations to raise their prices. Although it is often presented - and the Government's White Paper is no exception - as an alternative to a policy of deflating the economy and creating more unemployment, incomes policy has come increasingly to accompany high rates of unemployment and cuts in government spending on social service to induce deflation. At the

same time as the wage restraint legislation is going through the house of Commons, so is the Unemployment Insurance Bill, where the Government is redefining the normal rate of unemployment as 5.6% rather than 4%. The incomes policy is not designed to reduce our current high rate of unemployment, but is based on a recognition of a fact - evident throughout western capitalist countries - that apart from the political dangers involved in relying on unemployment alone to stop inflation, this will not be effective on its own.

But it is not merely inflation that the wage restraint of an incomes policy is designed to deal with. Governments introduce an incomes policy when the collective industrial power of workers threatens to redistribute the share of the national income from profits to wages and salaries. This can be seen clearly in the Canadian case, in terms of the Liberal Government's first attempt at an incomes policy in 1969-70. One of the Commissioners of the Prices and Incomes Commission, George Haythorne, has explained why the attempt at an incomes policy was made at that time: "From 1957 to 1963 the share of Canada's national income going to profits and capital had risen steadily. The situation was reversed in 1964 when labour's share began to rise, a trend which continued until 1970. Given these conditions ... action to stabilise the economy was clearly required." ("Prices and Incomes Policy: the Canadian Experience 1969-72"; International Labour Review, Vol. 108, No. 6, Dec. 1973)

Under the impact of the Trudeau Government's policies, especially the creation of a great deal of unemployment in 1970-72, the trend of increasing national income going to labour was indeed reversed. The percentage of the national income accounted for by wages and salaries fell from 72.8% in 1970 to 67.0% in the first half of 1974 (see appendix two). Since the middle of last year however, the picture has changed. Labour's share increased to 69.4% by the end of 1974 and by the middle of this year rose to 70.8% while big business profits and interest fell to 21.1% by the end of 1974 and to 20.1% by the middle of this year. This shift, which has by no means yet carried labour up to the share it has achieved in 1970, has taken place because of an increase in the militancy of workers expressed in

high wage demands and increased strikes. It has taken place in a context, however, where due to the world-wide capitalist recession, and especially the recession in the United States, Canadian corporations have convinced the Government, despite a higher rate of inflation in other countries, they cannot raise their prices to protect their profit margins if they are to remain competitive in the international market. They have convinced the Government of a squeeze on profits, which is not yet particularly marked, but which the Government is apparently determined to prevent occurring. Hence its new policy of wage restraint.

There is no doubt that a major attraction of an incomes policy is that it promises price control as part of the package. Public opinion polls in Canada as well as elsewhere show that workers are anxious to get off the treadmill of wages chasing higher prices and that many would in fact accept lower wage increases if prices were kept stable. Yet there is generally a major misunderstanding of what the prices aspect of this kind of policy entails. The policy operates directly on wages but only indirectly on prices. That is, the guidelines explicitly say that prices cannot rise above a certain figure. Prices may rise to cover increased costs, whatever those may be. There is in other words a norm for wages, but no norm for prices established in the policy. Rather than hold down prices and have wages adjust themselves accordingly, the point of the policy is to hold down wages and hope that prices adjust themselves accordingly. The advantage to corporations is clear - they know in advance that their real profits won't decline due to the policy. Workers however have to buy 'a pig in a poke' - they have to accept a ceiling on their increases to start with and then hope and pray that this is enough to cover their increased costs.

Thus the policy is in principle unbalanced between prices and wages. In practice, the situation is in fact much worse. First of all, the policy does not apply to a number of key elements in the cost of living even to the extent of keeping price rises in line with cost rises. Basic food prices, energy prices, interest rates are all exempt as is the cost of land, which in recent years has

greatly pushed up the cost of housing, under conditions of a land speculators dream-come-true. Secondly, for even those prices which are supposed to rise only in relation to costs, the ability (and willingness) of the Government to make this stick is very limited. Whereas wage bargaining takes place behind the closed doors of boardrooms, and we only find out about the occurrence after the fact. There are in addition many means of fudging costs, especially for the 1500 large corporations the Government is dealing with, who each can employ as many high powered accountants for this purpose as will be available to the Anti-Inflation Board. The American multinational corporations that dominated the Canadian economy can easily increase the prices they charge for intermediary goods to their Canadian subsidiaries and thereby take their profits at home.

The Government has suggested that it will ease its price monitoring task by asking that a limited number of price increases be notified to the Government for examination before they take effect. We have yet to be told what items this will cover or how the Anti-Inflation Board, given its small size, will be able to investigate adequately corporate intentions in this regard. What we may in fact expect is indicated by the British experience where a similar notification policy operated from July 1967 to June 1970. Despite the Government's own estimate of 3 million price changes a year taking place in Britain at the time, only 2,162 price change notifications were received by the Government over the whole three year period, and of these 1,807 were accepted as notified. This meant that out of 9 million price changes the Government price control machinery either modified or rejected a grand total of 345 or 0.0004% (See Leo Panitch, Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy, The Labour Party, The Trade Unions and Incomes Policy, 1945-1974, MacMillan 1975). If the British Labour Government's price control was as empty as this, it is easy to imagine how "successful" price control will be under our own Liberal Government with its close financial, personal and ideological ties to big business.

The merely symbolic exercise in price control that the incomes policy involves has grave implications for workers who are

subjected to the policy's wage guidelines. The 10% ceiling on increases is made up of 8% to match rising prices and another 2% to match the growth of output of the economy. There are two problems with this, the first is that the 2% growth rate figure is a low estimate and runs the risk that in actuality the economy will grow faster and the excess growth will go to profit, which the guidelines specifically allow for. More important, however, is the simple fact that at the moment the rate of inflation in Canada is not 8% but 11.3%, and if this situation doesn't change under the weak price controls, workers real incomes even including the 2% for productivity will fall by 1.3%, and they will get no share of the growth in output of the economy. It is only those workers who can make a catch-up case and obtain an additional 2% allowed by the guidelines, who will keep their heads above water at all. Those workers who managed to obtain real wage increases in the past, on the other hand, may find their future increases cut by 2%, leaving them with an 8% increase at best, including the productivity provision. If the rate of inflation doesn't improve - they will suffer a real wage cut of over 3%.

There are some who believe that an incomes policy is designed to benefit the worst-off people in our society. They could not be more wrong. In its most general sense, the policy is designed not to redistribute income but to freeze the present distribution of income, since everyone is to get the same percentage increase whether their income is high or low. In a society as unequal as Canada's this means freezing a situation in which the top twenty percent of income recipients get about 50% of the total income, while the bottom 20% get only 2%, indeed the top 40% of individuals get 75% of the annual national pie, leaving the rest of us, the majority of the population with only the crumbs. (1971 data from Statistics Canada, Perspectives Canada, 1975, Table 7.3 page 156) To be sure, the Government provided a minor amendment to this freeze, allowing those workers with incomes below \$6,000 a year to get as much as \$600, while limiting those earning over \$24,000 a year to a maximum increase of \$2,400. Under the heavy criticism the policy was faced with when it was introduced, the Government said it would go further and allow increases which would bring low paid workers up to \$3.50 an hour (or \$7,280 a year) even

if this involved more than a 10% increase. It is on this basis that the policy is supposed to benefit the lowest paid. This gesture would be laughable if the situation were not so sad. Apart from the simple observation that if the government really intended to benefit the low paid, it would give them \$2,400 and give those earning over \$24,000 only \$600. a few other points should be made. First of all, the \$600 (or \$3.50 an hour) is not a guarantee of this amount but rather "permission" to get it. This is very nice until one remembers that workers earning wages that low don't necessarily have the power to get an increase that size. If you are poorly organized, or unorganized, if you are working in a low profit and low productivity industry, the government may allow you to get a \$6 million increase but that will do you no good. The amazing part of this, is that the government is suggesting to better paid workers that if they hold back on their increases, the lower paid workers can move ahead. Nothing could be more ludicrous. If workers in the higher paid industries accept the call to restrain their increases, does the money saved in these industries become transferred to workers in low paying jobs? Does the Government possess the means to transfer profits from, say, the car industry to subsidize low pay (in, say, the textile industry? Even if the low paid workers submitted larger claims than the rest and they were endorsed by the board, the employers of the low paid would not be able to meet these claims unless the industry in question was also a high profit industry, which of course are not.

The situation is worse for public employees. The average annual increase for members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada between 1967 and 1974 was only 7% a year, while the average increase for all industries over this same period was 9%. This means that federal public employees are already getting a smaller share of the national income and the incomes policy is likely to exacerbate this situation. For the operation of incomes policies in other countries has shown that public employees are always the most strictly controlled, and are chosen by the government to set an example for the rest of the economy. Even in the case of its lowest paid workers, governments do not act in fear of upsetting "comparability" with private industry.

This is only one main way in which low paid workers obtain better wages in the existing society, and governmental "permission" to get higher increases has nothing to do with this. It is for low paid workers to follow a breakthrough made by a stronger and better organized group of workers. The incomes policy is designed to prevent this. If better paid workers really want to help low paid workers the way to do it is not to follow the government's advice, and restrain their wage increases, but to fight the incomes policy and offer low paid workers their experience in organizing effectively.

But if low paid workers are unlikely to do better under the incomes policy, it is precisely those at the other end of the scale who are likely to benefit most. Professional fees, executive salaries, board of directors payments cannot be controlled because these people set their own incomes. The Government's promise to restrain dividend increases is worthless not only because the guidelines allow companies to increase dividend payments to obtain capital on the stock market, but also because dividend payments could be paid out to the owners of corporations after the policy ends. A dividend payment may be deferred in other words, but a wage increase foregone is gone forever. What this suggests in practice is therefore much worse than the freezing of the distribution of income that the guidelines offer in theory. It suggests a redistribution of income toward the rich and powerful. We might quote in this context a newspaper report from Timmins, Ontario on June 28, 1974, during the last election campaign:

"Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau maintained his onslaught on Conservative prices and incomes restraint policies before a large noon-hour crowd here yesterday.

"Mr. Trudeau said the proposed ninety day freeze, followed by up to two years of controls, would take vast numbers of bureaucrats to administer. Even then, it wouldn't work he said:

"You can't freeze executive salaries and dividends because there are too many loopholes to squeeze through'.

"Mr. Trudeau said Conservative leader Robert Stanfield had already

said he would not freeze the prices of farm produce and fish. He could not freeze the prices of U.S. imports or Arab oil, and he admitted he would exempt housing prices.

'So what's he going to freeze?' Mr. Trudeau shouted, 'Your wages. He's going to freeze your wages.' " (quoted in the Toronto Star, October 28th, 1975)

The Government is backing up this wage restraint policy with considerable legal powers. The Anti-Inflation Board (see Appendix one) will be able to examine any agreement, concluded or pending, and decide what the permissible increase is. If the Board can't get its report accepted "voluntarily" by the parties, or if the Cabinet decides to act against a wage claim even without a board report, the Government's "Administrator" may make an order prohibiting anyone from contravening the guidelines. He may require either an employer or a group of workers to pay to the Government a fine equal to the amount they received in excess of the guidelines and may even apply an additional fine of up to 25% of this amount if he feels the guidelines were contravened "knowingly". If the order of the Administrator is not complied with by an employer, a union, or an unofficial group of workers, they may be subject to a fine, on summary conviction, of up to \$10,000 and two years imprisonment, or on conviction on indictment, to an unlimited fine of not less than \$10,000 and five years imprisonment.

These are harsh penalties to go with a harsh and unjust policy, but they do not guarantee that the policy will in fact work. This is because wage restraint affects workers not as individuals but in their collective capacity as members of unions. When the Government increases taxation, the worker faces the state on his own, as the increased taxes are collected by deduction from his pay slip, or indirectly via a sales tax added to the price of goods in the shops. Similarly when the government increases interest rates, the individual worker and his family are on their own in paying more for credit or higher mortgage payments. Incomes policy, however, only operates by acting on workers collectively, in that it seeks to modify the wage bar-

gaining behaviour of their whole group, as expressed through their union. Thus the union is the direct object of an incomes policy.

In this situation there are distinct limits to what legal sanctions can achieve. A large strike in defiance of the law is always difficult to deal with, and fining or jailing strike leaders does not guarantee the end of a strike nor prevent the emergence of sympathy strikes. Moreover, the whole field of collective bargaining, even that of the top 1,500 employers in the country, is very difficult to police, and if no one pays attention to the policy, if workers don't police themselves, the laws against breaking the policy will be as generally effective as laws against jaywalking, unless the government either vastly expands its administrative and police machinery or begins to deny Canadians basic political freedoms such as the right to free association, free speech, and even the slightest resemblance of free collective bargaining. In other words, in order for legal sanctions to operate effectively, at least mass worker acquiescence in the policy is required, and for this to be created an invaluable ally is the union itself, which can legitimate the policy in the eyes of its workers. This is why almost all attempts at incomes policy, including the present one, have involved in the first instance an attempt to get voluntary union cooperation. This is why, even though the Canadian labour movement rejected such a voluntary policy in 1969, and again in Turner's "consensus" talks earlier this year, and yet again when this policy was announced, the Government is still trying to get union cooperation.

The Government strives for union cooperation because it wants the unions to be the agent of control, applying the policy to its own members. The Government seeks to get unions to do this by appealing to a common interest between workers and employers, by stressing an ideology of harmony between labour and capital. But in a society such as ours there is no fundamental harmony between labour and capital; there is an underlying conflict between employers and workers which lies at the heart of every wage negotiation. The union is created to be the representative of workers in that conflict, but what an in-

comes policy seeks to do is to get the union to put the wage restraint policy to union members, and to thereby administer the government's and employers' incomes policy for them.

When the government is successful in getting union cooperation, incomes policy can work in terms of wage restraint for a time. The American incomes policy reduced first-year wage agreements from 13.5% on the quarter before the policy was introduced in August 1971, to 6.4% by the end of 1972. This helped bring the wage and salary portion of the U.S. national income down from 74.5% in 1971 to 72.5% in 1973 while the percentage going to big business rose from 14.6% to 16.2%. Similarly in Britain in the 1960's, the incomes policy reduced the rate of wage increases by about 1% a year from what they otherwise would have been. This wage restraint was seen as well in the number of agreements that were not only reduced but which were delayed by government interference and board investigations.

The underlying conflict that exists between employers and employees does not go away under an incomes policy, however; indeed that conflict is intensified. And it is always unions, the direct object of the policy, who first begin to bear the brunt of workers' dissatisfaction with their position. This is inevitable since workers can do little about the political system, in an immediate sense, but can have a real and immediate influence on their unions. The discontent that boils up in the unions due to wage restraint is just beginning to be seen now in the United States. It has been seen very clearly in Britain, where the only periods in which union membership has fallen since 1945 was during the two periods when unions cooperated in an incomes policy, in 1948-1950 and 1966-67, the latter period falling by 2%. Together with this effect on membership, British unions experienced increased unofficial strikes and the defeat of union leaders who went along with the policy at union conferences. This led to a new and more militant union leadership which not only verbally opposed the incomes policy but led their membership in strike action against it and in the process reversed the wage losses experienced earlier. This led to a tremendous increase in union membership, and finally defeated the incomes policy. (It should be noted in this

connection that no parliamentary government in the west that has introduced a compulsory wage freeze has been reelected in the subsequent election, although the emptiness of these purely electoral victories was usually seen when the parties that won these elections themselves turned around and introduced incomes policies under pressure from business groups.)

The implications of this experience elsewhere is suggestive for the threat that Canadian workers now face. Unions and workers must be made aware--and bring this point home to their employers--that wage demands and agreements above the guidelines are not of themselves illegal. The exceptions allowed for in the policy--higher wages to hold workers or attract new ones, the comparability clause, the exception for fringe increases for health and safety, or the elimination of 'restrictive practices'--all leave the Board and the Government with a large task of interpretation in any particular case. This must be played to the hilt, not in the sense of going to the Board "cap in hand" for special consideration, but in the sense of realizing how difficult it will be for the Government to prove that anyone "knowingly" ignored the guidelines in most cases. Similarly, unions should give as little cooperation to the Board as possible. Under the voluntary incomes policy of 1969-72, the unions officially opposed the policy, but cooperated with the Prices and Incomes Commission on the 15 wage cases it examined. As the Commission itself noted, this permitted it to examine more cases than it otherwise could have done.

The Canadian Labour Congress has refused to endorse the incomes policy or anyone on the Board, and has put forward a ten point programme which calls for cheaper housing, higher old age pensions, full employment policies, regulation of oil and gas prices and supervision of corporations, to ensure that the money saved on wage restraint is in fact invested to create jobs. This shows the CLC's concern but it does not go far enough and implies that with a few changes the CLC might endorse wage restraint. Donald MacDonals, the Minister of Finance, has suggested the union leadership is

opposing the policy in public but supporting it in private. This kind of statement may be designed to split the labour movement and certainly there is little evidence of this yet apart from Joe Morris' statement at first that the law would be obeyed and that the CLC's special fund established to fight the policy would not be used for strike support. This statement seems to have been retracted, but the danger remains, partly because some union leaders and especially some misguided New Democrats seem to believe that with a few touches the incomes policy can be changed from a capitalist policy to a socialist one. A little rent control here, a bit more price control there, and we will have turned one of the ugly sisters into Cinderella. What must be understood, however, is that an incomes policy has nothing to do with equality or economic planning nor, simply because the Government intervenes in the economy, does this mean that its action is somehow 'socialist'. The incomes policy does not seek to replace the capitalist market economy, it rather puts a lid on the market, primarily the labour market in order to back with the strength of the state the employers' resistance to wage demands.

If the Canadian labour movement does not undertake a militant response to the incomes policy; if it does not mobilize itself to take solidary action against the application of the policy to any one group of workers; if the CLC limits itself to some sort of vague educational campaign which politely criticizes the policy and does not lead demonstrations, withdraw from government boards, and provide aid to strikers against the policy, Canadian workers will not only suffer a loss of real wages, they will find their union organizations seriously disrupted and weakened by the policy. The capitalists have embarked on a policy of political confrontation with Canadian workers and unprecedented restraints on their freedoms. The labour movement will have to respond politically as well with tactics and strategies that are also new and unconventional. If the confrontation is not met, we shall all lose.

The Anti-Inflation Review Board is the front line in the government's program to control inflation. The Board has two purposes. One is to sell the program to Canadian Workers. Secondly, and much more importantly, this Board decides whether a wage increase or a price increase violates the government's program. When the Board finds a violation it tries to get voluntary compliance from the violator. If this fails the case is turned over to the "Administrator" for legal action. The critical point to be aware of is that this Board has the power to determine which wage or price increases will be reviewed, and consequently on whom the "Administrator's" power to fine and jail can be brought to bear. Therefore, it has a lot of discretion. How it is likely to use this power can be seen from the characteristics of its members.

The Anti-Inflation Review Board is highly "inflated" with business connections and corporate power. The Board members between them have held eleven corporate directorships. Jean-Luc Pepin, Board Chairman, appropriately enough headed the list with six of these influential positions. They were:

Power Corporation of Canada Ltd;
Canada Steamship Lines;
Celanese Canada Ltd.;
Collins Radio Co. of Canada Ltd.;
Westinghouse Canada Ltd.;
Bombardier Ltd.

Incidentally Power, the biggest Canadian Corporate Conglomerate, seems to have other ties with the Liberal government. Between 1968 and 1972 this powerful corporation received \$10 million in federal grants (Ottawa Journal, May 17, 1973). Pepin, who joined the Board of Power after losing a safe liberal seat in 1972, is just part of the close connection between the Liberal Party and the business world. As a past Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce he was undoubtedly a useful asset in the board room.

William Ladyman, the "Labour" representative on the board is also no stranger to the board. A retired member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, a past vice-president of the CLC, he was reported by the Financial Post to

to have "a foot in the management camp" when he joined the Board of Directors of Polymer in 1966. Since then he got the other foot in by becoming a consultant to Great-West Life Assurance Co.; a director of Ontario Housing Corporation; Member of the Economic Council of Canada and Governor of Queensway General Hospital. By joining the Anti-Inflation Review Board, Ladyman is ignoring the CLC's and other labour leaders' condemnation of the government's program as only controlling wages. His acceptance of a position on the Anti-Inflation Review Board indicates that he has come all the way over to the management camp.

Other board members, Jack Biddell and Harold Renouf, have enough expertise between them to know that it is impossible to monitor prices, as both are accountants. Renouf is a past governor of the Canadian Tax Foundation, as well as a director of Associated Accounting Firms International, based in New York. Jack Biddell, President of Clarkson Gordon Ltd., an accounting firm, may have no mechanism to control prices but he has formed some novel ideas about controlling wages. Earlier this year he suggested the government "encourage company and regionally oriented unions" and discourage industry-wide bargaining as a way of clamping down on the power of big unions. (Maclean's pp. 29-31, April, 1975). While the logic of Biddell's argument is unclear, his anti-union sentiments are plain as day.

The remaining members of the Board are Claude Castonguay and Beryl Plumtre. Both have a long standing association with the Liberal Party. During 1970-73, Castonguay was the Quebec Minister of Health and Social Affairs and was number two man in Bourassa's cabinet. During this period, he was the chief architect of the Quebec Pension Plan. He devised the machinery to channel pension funds into grandiose Liberal Party projects such as the James Bay Development. After leaving provincial politics in 1973, Castonguay re-entered the business world as a Corporate Consultant and picked up a directorship in I.M.A.S.C.O. Ltd. Beryl Plumtre's alliance with the Liberal Party goes back to the 1950's. Through her connections with the Pearson government she was appointed to numerous public positions. These included director of the Canadian Welfare Council. She also became

President and Director of the Government sponsored Consumers Association of Canada, (created by the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs). On the basis of that job, she became Chairperson of the Prices Review Board with a salary of \$40,000 a year.

These are the people who the government has chosen to sell Canadians the virtues of restraint. That the product to be sold is wage restraint is clear. The final insult is that people like Pepin will be paid \$54,000 a year to tell workers earning \$10,000 a year to "bite the bullet" and do their part to create the "just society" in Canada.

Canadian Workers must demand that the CLC and its component unions stay off the Anti-Inflation Review Board. The token representation of labour on such boards is not designed to facilitate the expression of workers interests. It is intended to separate leaders from the rank and file, and to submerge them in the heady world of corporate power in the hope that they will confuse their own "success" with the success of the labour movement as a whole. Indeed, workers must press the CLC to withdraw its representatives from the other "public" boards on which they sit. The Government is much more likely to listen to the patter of workers feet on the pavement than the measured tones of Labour spokespersons in comfortable boardrooms.

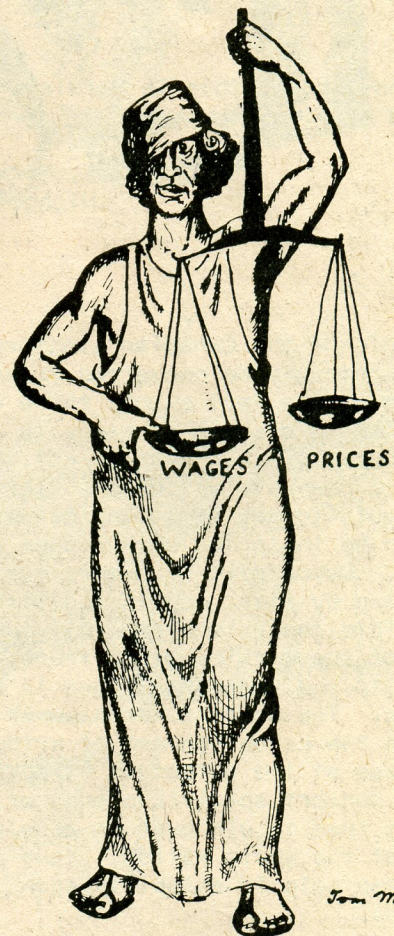
Leo Panitch is active in the Ottawa Committee for Labour Action. He teaches at Carleton University in the Political Science Department. He is about to have a book published on incomes policy in Britain. The book, titled Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy: The Labour Party, the Trade Unions and Incomes Policy, will be released in February 1976 by Cambridge Press in England.

This pamphlet was originally produced for the Ottawa Committee for Labour Action with the help of: Graham Deline, Don Swartz, Rosemary Warskett, Ken Young.

The Ottawa Committee for Labour Action is a group of activists in Ottawa doing support and educational work with trade unions. The Committee can be contacted at: P.O. Box 4257, Station 'E', Ottawa, Ontario. Telephone: (613) 235-5657.

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comments from our readers



All I know is, if this is Marxism, then I am not a Marxist.

K. Marx
Highgate, England

If the whole of the Canadian electorate could miraculously be converted to socialist ideals at one fell swoop, there would be no reason to discuss strategy in the present context....But such is not the case. In a non-revolutionary society and in non-revolutionary times, no manner of reform can be implanted with sudden universality. Democratic reformers must proceed step by step, convincing little bands of intellectuals here, rallying sections of the working class there, and appealing to the underprivileged in the next place. The drive towards power must begin with the establishment of bridgeheads, since at the outset it is obviously easier to convert specific groups or localities than to win over an absolute majority of the whole nation. Your publication can help to establish such bridgeheads.

P. E. Trudeau
Havana



I don't know much about politics, but I know what I like. I like the Red Menace. It's my kind of bag.

L. D. Bronstein



"Theory must be
de-mythologized...."

