THE RED MENACE



A Libertarian Socialist Newsletter

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THE RED MENACE

A Libertarian Socialist Newsletter

Who are we?

The Red Menace is a libertarian socialist newsletter published by a small collective of people living in Toronto and Hamilton. We call ourselves the Libertarian Socialist Collective*.

What do we mean by calling ourselves "libertarian socialists"? Partly, that question is answered more fully elsewhere in this issue (see Contents on page 3) and partly, we are still trying to work it out ourselves. But we share some fundamental ideas:

What do we believe?

We believe that capitalism, the social system we live under (in whatever bureaucratic, "mixed", social-democratic, or "free-enterprise" variation) is deeply and fundamentally destructive of individuals, relationships between people and societies. There may be times when it produces progress of some kind, but its overpowering reality is always its warping and crushing of the potentialities of human beings and societies. Our society and its advanced industrial base give us the possibility of creating a world of abundance in which human needs and creativity shape the future. Instead, capitalism gives us chronic poverty and economic crises, war, alienating and meaningless work, commercialized leisure, immovable bureaucracies, a deteriorating natural and urban environment, oppression of minorities (and majorities), chronic social and "personal" problems, sexual frustration, trashy culture — in short, a crazy, miserable world that seems to be going downhill fast, with no one in control.

For many, many, people, "that's life". That's the way the world is, and there's nothing we can do about it except try to make the best of our lot.

For us, that's not enough. We believe that people can make their own future if enough of them want to badly enough, and act together to do it. We want to overthrow the capitalist system and build a new world in which freedom and creativity can flourish, a world in which people *are* in control, in which they run things democratically and collectively. A libertarian socialist world.

Such an alternative vision of the future can never be legislated, decreed, or installed by a coup-d'etat. It is far too revolutionary for that, for it requires that people change themselves even as they try to change society. Consequently, it requires active participation from the vast majority.

Right now, of course, we are a tiny minority, not a vast majority. But we believe that our ideas are reasonable and exciting, with the potential to capture the imaginations of those who now put up with this society.

*Formerly, we were known as Toronto Liberation School, and before that, as The Marxist Institute. The changes in name reflect changes in the nature and orientation of the group, but a basic continuity remains.

The Red Menace

Our purpose in publishing *The Red Menace* is to reach people with our ideas, to develop and clarify those ideas, and to give other people the opportunity to share their visions and experiences through its pages. Through it, we hope to make contacts with people who like our ideas, and to start working with those people. We would like to branch out into other kinds of activities directed at social change as well: *The Red Menace* is not an end in itself (although the enjoyment we derive from creating it is.)

If you are interested, please contact us

We need your involvement

Thinking about society and how it could change is something that everyone does. It is not the exclusive province of a few theoreticians. We would like as many people as possible to contribute to this newsletter. We are especially interested in brief, to-the-point comments on specific problems; ideas, observations, etc. A couple of paragraphs or a page that offers a good insight is worth more than a long dry treatise that says nothing new. Nor does your contribution have to be "definitive": the tentative, the exploratory, is often the most fruitful.

Among the things we are interested in: articles about where you work, where you go to school, where you live, where you shop, where you play. 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. Poetry. Observations about culture, everyday life. Book reviews. Artwork. Revealing anecdotes. Questions you don't have answers for. Questions you do have answers for.

We need your money

We need money to put out *The Red Menace*. Each issue costs us roughly $500 to put out, enough that we would appreciate financial help from those who like it and wish to support it. Our first two issues have been sent out free — future issues will be sent out only to those who indicate their interest by subscribing or by sending us their own creations. (However, *The Red Menace* will be sent out free to those who can't afford to pay, and those who have already sent money will continue to receive their subscriptions.)

Our subscription rates are $3.00 for 4 issues, but if you can affford to send us more, please do.
Our address is:

The Red Menace
P.O. Box 171
Postal Station D
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

CONNEXIONS
P.O. BOX 158, STN. "D"
TORONTO, ONT. M6P 3J8



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A word of explanation

This issue of *The Red Menace* has been a long time in coming. But we think we have overcome our birth pains, and we now expect to start publishing regularly, hopefully four times a year. Thanks to our friends for their patience!

Some people are still using our old address: please note that our correct address is *The Red Menace*, P.O. Box 171, Postal Station D, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

This issue was produced by the Libertarian Socialist Collective, with a great deal of help from our friends in Kitchener, Ontario:

The Gabriel Dumont Volunteer Brigade
Typesetting for fun (period).



Abolish wage slavery

(cover printed by:)

black thumb press
and don't forget to smash the state



HEY! ARE THESE GUYS FOR REAL?

(Read on, and see . . .)

A Tale of Two Offices

We talk a lot about the working class, we socialists. So much so that we sometimes tend to forget that the working class is made up of actual people, people like those who live next door, like those who we see on the subway, like those we work with, drink with, sleep with. People different from us, but with hopes and fears not so different from our own after all.

We owe it to ourselves, as well as to that entire working class we try to champion, to take a fresh close look at the way we spend our lives (peculiar capitalist expression, to "*spend* your life"), at the way we work, have fun, form and dissolve relationships, learn, waste time, or talk politics. Our lives, after all, are what capitalism, and socialism, and the death-struggle between them, are all about. The roots of our own revolutionary beliefs are to be found in the experiences of our daily lives.

In the Red Menace, we would like provide a forum through which people can communicate what they feel about their jobs, and about the other things that happen to them every day. We think it is vitally important to analyse these things, to work out our own thoughts, and to share them with others. There can be no set format for this — anything from a single paragraph, to a cartoon, to an incident that sticks in the mind, to a long essay could be useful. We ask our readers to send us their thoughts and perceptions.

The article below is one attempt to come to grips with the realities of a particular work experience, that of large institutional libraries.

* * * * * *

I have been an office worker for all of my working life; specifically, a library worker. I've worked in five libraries, in one as a part-time worker and in the rest as a full-time employee. All of these libraries have had their unique intrigues and goings-on, their own particular relationships and power struggles.

For the purposes of this paper, however, I would like to single out only two of them, which for me represent two aspects of the challenge that office work presents to those seeking to bring about radical change.

Both are large institutional libraries with about the same number of staff, around 15. This is a fairly average number of people for an office. (Offices will probably never resemble the large assembly-line factories, for even the very largest offices are nearly always broken down into units and departments with distinguishing aisles and partitions between them).

I should mention that my experiences have only been with women, both as co-workers and as bosses, men still being fairly rare in library work, although this situation is slowly beginning to change.

The Work

Library work is very exact, picky work. Thousands of books must be made easily accessible by giving each book its own set of cards, classification number, cross references, etc., in numerous files which must all be arranged so that any little reference can be found at once. It all takes a very high level of organization and co-operation between sections of the library and between people.

A library itself is usually divided into three functions: the technical services department, which actually creates the files and catalogues for the books; the acquisitions department, which orders the books (frequently put under the technical services department);





and the reference department, which guides users in their use of the library. Some libraries have a strict division between departments, with each staff member working only in one place. Other libraries rotate the staff between the different departments for the sake of both variety and flexibility.

Division of Labour

Library staff are sharply divided into two groups, librarians on the one side, and everybody else on the othe other. The non-librarians are mostly library technicians (this is what I am); in addition, there may be a secretary and/or a bookkeeper thrown in.

The library technicians are either trained at a technical or community college (as I am) or have simply received experience through working. The training programs are fairly new (6 years), but now it is becoming more and more difficult to find a library job without having first attended a community college.

Librarians must have received a Master of Library Science degree.

The difference in pay between librarians and library technicians is considerable: technicians start around $8,000, while librarians get $6,000 to $10,000 more.

Although in the libraries in which I have worked there has been a pronounced split between librarians and technicians, this is not true in all cases. In some libraries, particularly the public libraries, the groups work together more closely and belong to the same union. The great difference in salaries, however, ensures that there continues to be a divison between the two.

Some libraries also distinguish between clerk typists and library technicians. I worked in one such library as a clerk-typist, but I didn't find the division to be very significant.

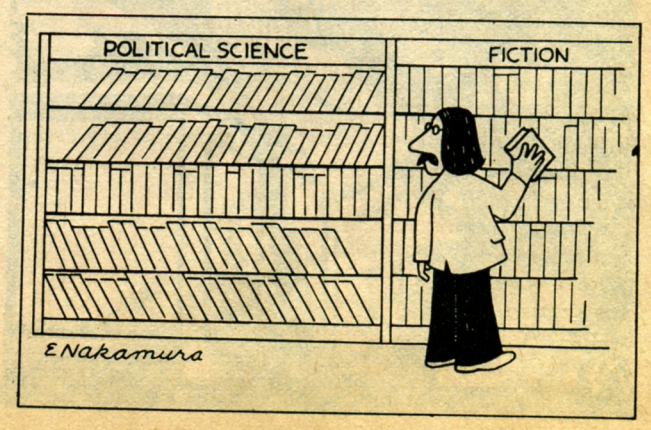
The librarians possess a good deal of authority, but at the same time their authority is far from being clear-cut or absolute. They consider themselves professionals, but at the same time they are very much employees, responsible to their superiors and to those who control the purse-strings. Still, to the technicians, the over-riding fact is the librarians' power over *them*. They have the power to hire and fire, and that is quite enough to make them your boss.

Some librarians are starting to feel threatened by the presence of increasing numbers of library technicians, since the technicians have been trained to do just about everything a librarian can do. Some smaller libraries are now being run by technicians, and in many libraries where both are present, there is a certain tension between the two groups. Librarians are jealous of their positions, while technicians want to be given more interesting jobs and more responsibility so that they can make use of the skills they have been taught. At present, technicians' jobs are mostly clerical in nature, a constant source of frustration and resentment.

Librarians and technicians both get two years of library training. But technicians take it at a community college which only requires a high school diploma for a prerequisite, while librarians need an Honours' B.A. before they can be accepted into the Master of Library Science Program. The course for technicians stresses the practical: office management, materials, cataloguing, and computer application are among the courses taken. The training for librarians includes the same things, but the emphasis is more theoretical than practical.

The division of work in the library assumes a broader knowledge on the part of the librarian, not of library matters, but of the world as a whole. Since libraries have mostly to do with the organizations and diffusion of knowledge, it is assumed that the university education equips the librarian to deal more effectively with research questions.

Librarians are also the decision-makers. While the technicians can catalogue the books, the librarians like to decide whether the book should be put into one subject classification rather than another. Usually the judgements required on such questions are purely matters of opinion which matter little one way or the other as long as the book can be found and read. But these finer discretionary matters are considered to require the wisdom of a university education. Neither technicians nor most librarians really believe the rationale behind this division of labour. There is little doubt that technicians have all the skills needed to run a library. But the rationale behind the strict division of labour is highly advantageous for those who benefit from it, and so, since they have the power, it continues.



Two Libraries

There are two specific libraries that I particularly want to concentrate on. One represents for me the old traditional view of how to run an office and treat employees; the second has a more 'modern' approach which is becoming more common in the offices of today. They each present difficulties which must be understood, but the newer method, I believe, presents the more serious challenge to those interested in organizing and understanding office workers.

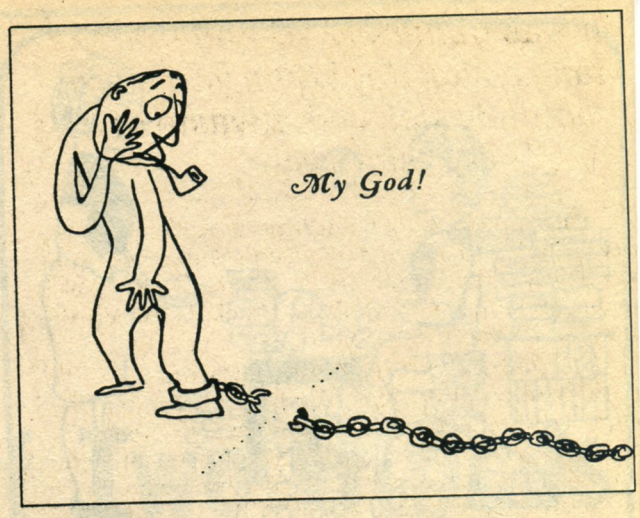
The libraries, which I shall call **A** and **B**, are both institutional libraries, but there the similarity ends.

Supervision

Office supervision can take more than one form, as I have discovered. The most common and straightforward technique is simply the traditional boss-employee relationship. This is what exists in Library **A**, where things are very laid-down and definite. Lowest on the totem pole are Technicians 1 and Technicians 2. They in turn are supervised by Technicians 3. These in turn are accountable to the librarian in charge of their department, and these for their part are responsible to the Head Librarian. Everyone knows her place, has her own function, and never steps out of it.

In Library **B**, there is a different approach entirely, an approach that seems to be much more effective and also much harder to deal with. In this library, technicians are given a great deal of responsibility, and very little supervision. Technicians 1, 2, and 3 largely work together. The very distinction between is considered by most to be stubborness on the part of higher management (outside the library) who control salaries in the library. If the Head Librarian had her way, everyone would be a technician 3. The set-up is somewhat egalitarian, by the normal standards. For example, everyone, with the exception of the head librarian, shares the two worst jobs: filing and and shelving. The more interesting but heavy work-load jobs are rotated to a different person each year, a fair, but not entirely efficient system since a few of these jobs take a lot of training.





But the measure of egalitarianism that exists in job divisions doesn't lessen the contradictions of the work process as a whole: in fact, it aggravates them. The over-riding fact about Library **B** is the extremely heavy workload, and the immense pressure that is put on everyone to get it done. Moreover, because several of the jobs are shared, there is continual pressure to get the work done, not from the librarians in charge (as is the case in Library **A**) but from one's co-workers, from other technicians. This peer-group pressure is much more effective, and nerve-wracking, and harder to deal with, than any close supervision by librarians would be. If you are dealing with a boss who supervises your work, then it is normal to use whatever ways exist of resisting the pressure to do more work. You find ways of trying to lessen your workload, and you use them. But when you are dealing with your equals, you find yourself rushing frantically through whatever task you are doing as fast as you can so you can help out with the shared tasks. You don't want to let others down by saddling them with work you haven't done, and you also don't want to be thought of as someone who doesn't carry her share of the load.

You find yourself rushing frantically through your own job so you can help out with the shared tasks and not be accused of not carrying your share of the load.

As a result of this peer group pressure in Library **B**, people relate to work in a way that is very different from normal attitudes in a large institution or business. For example, people don't cheat on time by arriving late or leaving early, since there are always others around to see that you don't. Perhaps nothing will be said, but you always have the *feeling* that your actions are being noted and disapproved of. In no time, you internalize the pressure, the pervasive work ethic. It becomes a form of conscience. In Library **A** by contrast, to cheat on time, to leave early, to take long lunches, to avoid work, is one of the main objectives.

It was generally agreed that to take a sick day when you were actually sick was a waste of a sick day.

The same kind of thing holds true for sick days. In Library **B**, no one takes sick days unless they are *really* sick. Meanwhile, in Library **A**, it is generally agreed among technicians that to take a sick day when you are sick is to waste a sick day.

Boss-Worker Relationship (Authority)

An equal contrast exists in boss-worker relationships. In libraries, and in offices generally, there are two basic kinds of relationship. Most frequently, you will have the standard pattern of a boss who insists you know your place and stay in it. But in some cases, and Library **B** is an example, you will encounter the boss who doesn't want to seem a boss, the boss who simply wants her staff to form a big happy family, one, of course, in which the head of the family is deferred to by all the other members. In a library, the choice of pattern, or some variation of it, is almost entirely dependent on the attitude of the head Librarian. Even other librarians must yield to her when all is said and done. This power of the Head Librarian, the degree to which working conditions in a library depend on her, often means that when frustrations arise, they are blamed on one person, or on one's immediate supervisor, instead of on the system itself. For example, in Library **A**, everyone blames the problems that exist, such as boring work, widespread tension and general discontent, on the Head Librarian and her second-in-command. Office politics are dominated by the relationship between the two, who openly dislike each other and constantly blame each other for things that go wrong. The assistant always tries to get the rest of the staff on her side against the Head. Sometimes the terms of the situation are accepted as they are laid out, but on the other hand, there was a wide-spread and oft-repeated sentiment that "If they (the librarians) would all go away, we could run the library much better ourselves."

Even if your boss has screwed you relentlessly, no matter how much you despise and detest her, at tea break you make polite, friendly conversation.

However, when you have a library such as **B**, where the Head Librarian has very liberalized, 'non-authoritarian' ideas, the situation is fundamentally the same as under the traditional approach. Orders may be coated with verbal sugar, but they are still orders. The Head Librarian is still responsible for the library and answerable to those who ultimately control it.

Thus, the Head Librarian in Library **B** dresses very casually, and loves to ask in a jovial voice how everyone is doing. But no one is fooled. She has the power to fire, and has used it when she hasn't liked how someone was doing. She keeps the work flow at such a constantly high pitch that no one has the chance to even breathe. She frowns on long vacations, is suspicious when someone takes a sick day off, and cannot be disagreed with, all just like any regular authoritarian librarian. Because of the prevailing myth of equality and friendliness, however, these realities are often shrouded in a dense fog.

In Library **A** the Head Librarian is in a way much easier to deal with precisely because she does not try to be a pal to her employees, and is in every way a strict authoritarian person. Plainly, she is the enemy, and everyone knows it and acts accordingly.

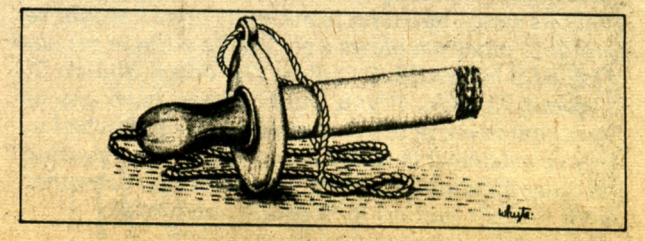
The line, therefore, is no longer "you must work harder for the benefit of the library" but "you must work harder for your own benefit".

New Style, New Pressures

In Library **B**'s 'egalitarian' system, everyone is given the opportunity to do whatever interesting job is around. But this, too, has its negative side. For now it becomes damning evidence of lack of initiative, drive, and ambition, if you do not seek out and ask to do more demanding work. And to lack these qualities, or seem to, is a mortal sin in the "new-style" office of today, with its militant view of how work should be seen.

One incident can illustrate the pressures involved. In Library **B** there is Mary, a quiet, shy person who is fairly content with the routine work she does and who has never asked to be taught anything else. Even though she does her work well, her supervisor, a Technician 3, did not approve of her attitude and complained to the Head Librarian who gave Mary a month in which to change, or be fired. (One technician, whom Mary was especially friendly with, was even ordered not to talk to her!)

The line, therefore, is no longer "you must work harder for the benefit of the library", but "you must work harder for your own benefit. You must learn new things, take on more responsibilities, assert yourself, be decisive, and a go-getter. For the purpose of enabling the office worker to do just that, courses in assertiveness, leadership, and career planning are offered to the clerks and typists of the institution governing Library **B**. The Head Librarian frequently encourages the staff to attend. Ostensibly, this is seen as a push to get more women into the top positions of the institution, but the net result is great pressure to do more, take a greater interest and give more of your energy and psyche to work than you would otherwise be inclined to do.



Politeness and Decorum

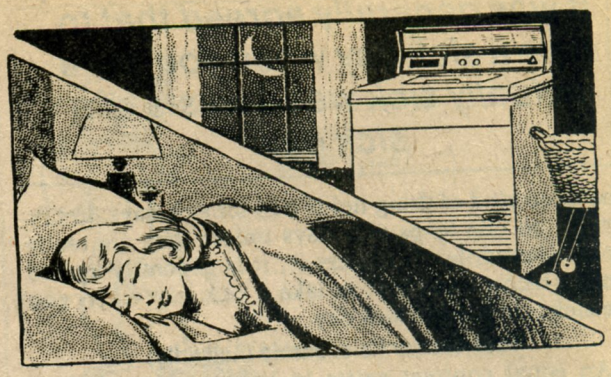
One major way in which offices differ from factories is the façade of "civilized behaviour" which rules the interactions between employees and bosses, and among employees. Open anger and hostility are very seldom expressed. Even if your boss has screwed you royally earlier in the day, no matter how much you despise and detest her, at tea break or whenever, you make polite, superficially friendly, conversation.

In Library A, the hostility between librarians and technicians is at time very intense, but someone visiting the library would never for a moment suspect that the staff were on anything but the friendliest of terms. Nevertheless, although open rebellion or abusive language would be unthinkable, there are other ways to get around the façade of friendliness. (However, one avenue that is not open in an office, unlike a factory, is sabotage, since every discrepancy in records or files or correspondence can be traced back to a single individual.) In an office, indications of employee hostility often take a social form.

At the meeting, the librarians voted to cancel the cookie fund.

In Library A, for example, one practice, much disliked by the technicians, was the "afternoon tea break" when everyone, in two shifts, would gather into the staff room and have tea and cookies, the librarians discussing their concerns, while the technicians listened politely. (The mess from the afternoon tea was always cleaned up by one technician, Sarah, an older woman who was in the lowest category of technicians even though she had been there 32 years and knew the library and every book in it heart. I once asked my boss why all the staff couldn't take turns cleaning up and the answer I got was that the technicians shouldn't expect change too fast since not long ago the staff room was for the librarians only who if they chose would "invite" one or two of the technicians in to join them. Such was the historical perspective of the library that the technicians were still supposed to feel privileged to join the librarians for tea!)

But change did come to the tea break, resulting in a "tempest in a teapot" that helped challenge the all-pervasive myth of friendliness. Specifically, one new technician arrived who found it difficult to adhere very strictly to the traditions of politeness. If asked politely by a librarian if she would do something for her, Myrna would simply say "No" or ask "Do I have a choice?" At the tea break, Myrna would non-chalantly eat as many cookies as she felt like eating (everyone paid into a cookie fund) rather than just politely nibbling one or two. She sprawled comfortably on the couch, making no particular effort to squeeze over to make room for librarians; the librarians suddenly found themselves sitting at the table across the room. The attitude was a bit contagious; soon librarians, who were used to doing all the talking and having the technicians listen quietly and deferentially, found themselves competing with loud conversations among the tecnicians that sometimes reduced the librarians to listeners. In the social context of the library, it was a breath of fresh air, almost revolutionary.



At Christmas the librarians were driven past the breaking point by these developments. Before Christmas, library staff would receive boxes of chocolates from various users of the library. Traditionally, the boxes would be opened by a librarian and passed around. But Myrna simply opened the boxes by herself, ate as many as she could, and encouraged the other technicians to follow suit.

The librarians were furious. The assistant head librarian called a special meeting of librarians (only) to discuss the situation! At the meeting, the librarians voted to cancel the cookie fund so that there would be no more cookies at the tea break for the rude and selfish technicians to gorge themselves on!

To those of us who are accustomed to thinking of power struggles at the work place as involving strikes, sabotage, and walkouts, all this will seem like very small, childish stuff indeed. In Library A, however, it marked the breaking down of a pretense of the greatest friendliness, and the beginning of a much more overt understanding of the power relationships that prevailed. The unilateral decision over the cookie fund

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I would like to share ideas, thoughts, and problems with other people working in offices, either through correspondence or through personal contact. There are so many unsolved problems and difficulties of how to act politically in an office environment that I feel this would be useful to me, and I hope it would be useful to other people as well. Please write to me c/o THE RED MENACE, P.O. Box 171, Postal Station D, Toronto, Canada. If you would like to have any of your comments or ideas or experiences published in this newsletter this would be very useful for starting an on-going dialogue about office work (or any other work for that matter) in THE RED MENACE.



led technicians to demand that they participate in staff meetings and have a part in making these and much more important decisions about the work in the library. Ever since, a greater sense of polarization has existed in Library **A**, resulting in a tension around the work process and power relationships

When one feels annoyed and silly that such a little thing should cause so much fuss, it is because the little thing is far more than what it at first appears to be.

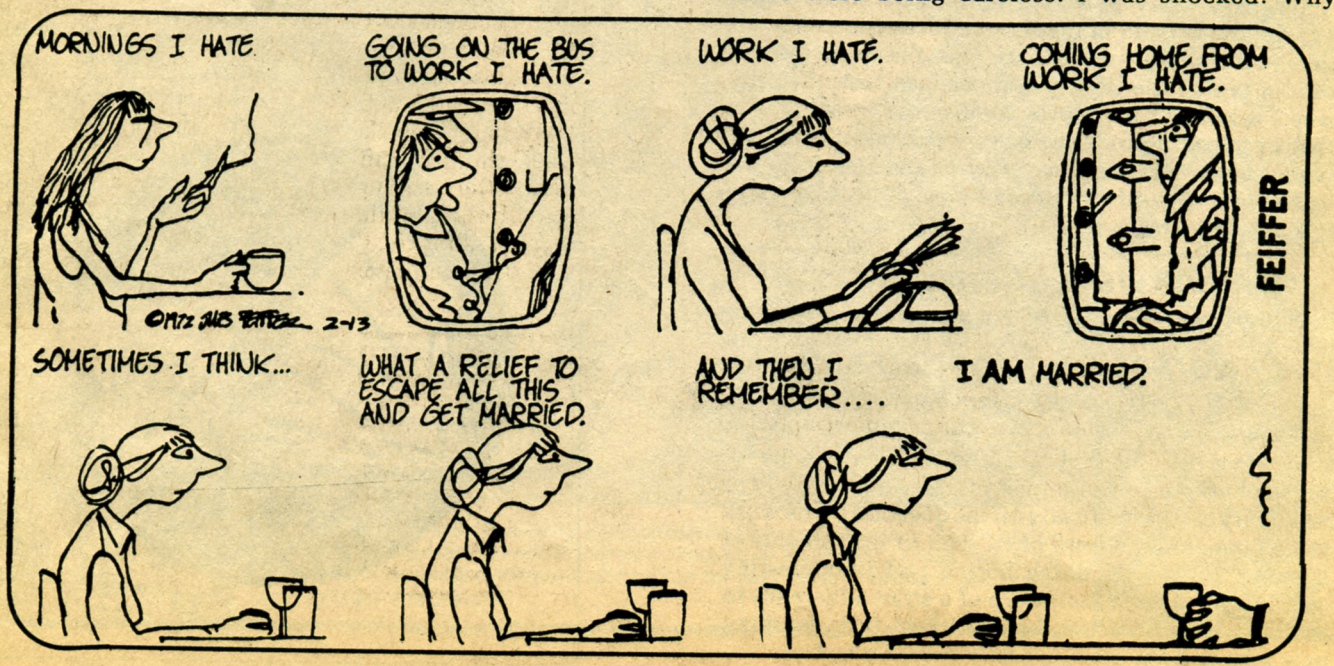
The fact of a trivial incident taking on wider proportions is not unusual in an office environment. In any work place, in fact, it is the small, everyday, almost insignificant events which can be the most effective in bringing out ever-present discontentment and resentment. The little things are seized upon as representing general feelings, unarticulated and perhaps not specifically thought-out and defined. They are concrete manifestations of a general sentiment which suddenly becomes clearly understood when a small event crystallizes and illustrates the issues at hand. When one feels annoyed and silly that "such a little thing should cause so much fuss", it is because the little thing is far more than what it at first appears to be.

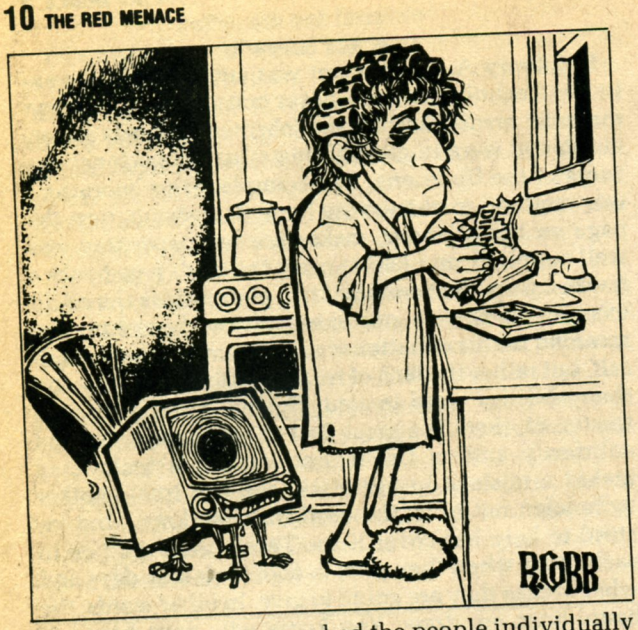
On the question of office decorum and politeness, it is interesting to speculate why this tradition has hung on for so long. There is no doubt that much of it has to do with 'middle-class' attitudes of "niceness" and politeness. But what does middle class mean in this context? Office workers are after all also working class, working in a reality very different from the myths that underlie traditional office decorum.

Trust and Solidarity

In Library **A**, managment was autocratic in the extreme. Technicians were never consulted, were given the most menial and boring jobs, were closely supervised, and were in general treated as the personal servants of the librarians. For example, every morning I was required to change my boss' date stamp, turn the page on her calendar, make sure her paper tray was well supplied, and had to carry the day's new books a few feet from the book shelf to a place where she could examine them with greater ease. What the technicians resented in this situation was not so much the work itself, but rather the lack of respect with which they and their abilities were treated. But on account of such treatment, there is a great deal of cohesion, trust, and solidarity among the technicians. If a technician makes a mistake in her work, she can trust another technician not to let the head librarian know, but instead to help her cover it up. Technicians confide to each other when they plan to take their sick days and what excuse they are going to give. In other words, the battle lines are draw. You know who your friend is and who your enemy is. Life is simple and straightforward.

In Library **B**, on the other hand, where the boss wants to see "a big happy family", the battle lines are confused and obscure. If asked, all the technicians in Library **B** will agree that the head librarian is really fair, friendly, and good to them. Yet one constantly hears mumblings that "Lena is giving a hard time about that" or "how does she expect me to do all this?" Yet , because of peer-group pressure, a technician has to be as fearful of another technician finding a mistake as of a librarian finding it, perhaps even more so. For the technicians realize that they are really the ones who keep the library running smoothly, and they feel responsible for it. It is not unusual here for one technician to lambaste another for a mistake she has made, and have no qualms about criticizing her in front of everyone else. In one staff meeting, one technician said that check-out slips for books were not being properly filed and that the other three technicians were being careless. I was shocked. Why





couldn't she have approached the people individually without complaining to the head librarian? The result was tension, suspicion, and a closer watch by the head librarian on the front desk. But no one else seemed to think her action reprehensible.

I can only conclude from my experience of these two libraries that for solidarity to exist, the battle lines must be clearly drawn. Where they are not, entirely different contradictions can arise. Where they are, it is everyone's first instinct to resist exploitation. Where they are not it is more difficult. The worker who wants her job to have some meaning for her is the easiest one to exploit. She will work harder and longer to get the more interesting jobs so that the daily routine will not be so much drudgery. But this also puts her into competition with her fellow workers, and undermines solidarity.

Unions

It is interesting to note that in Library **A**, where there is a strong worker-boss polarization, there is no union. In Library **B**, where power relationships are more confused and more hidden, there is a union, although it is a large union that covers the entire institution of which the library is a part. (In fact, the only way I found out there was a union in Library **B** was that I noticed union dues were being taken from my pay cheque. I never saw any communication from the union, or met a union representative, or heard anyone talk about the union.)

Unions were often seen as an instrument for keeping the worker doing boring and uninteresting tasks.

However, in other libraries where I have worked, unions have played an important role, although a contradictory one. Specifically on the question of the work to be done, unions were often seen as instruments of keeping the worker doing boring and uninteresting tasks, through their insistence of a strict adherence to job descriptions, which kept workers from learning new jobs or from moving easily between tasks.

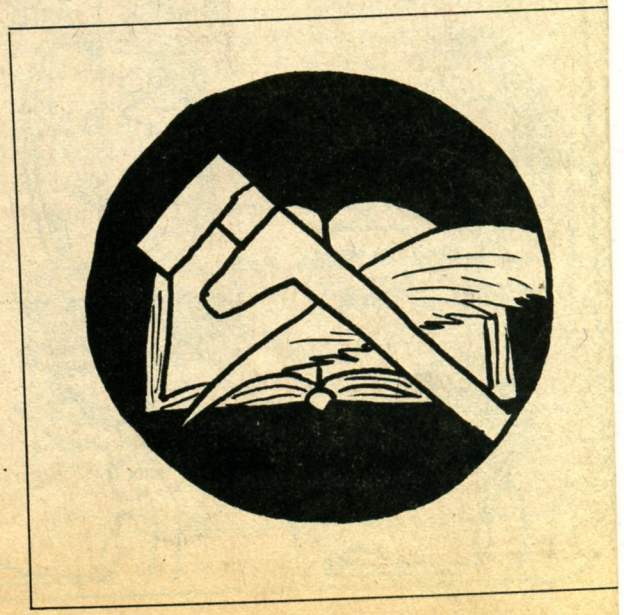
Office Workers & Class Struggle

Many of the people I have known in libraries, and in other offices, have resigned themselves to their life of nine-to-five, typing, filing, answering the phone, and taking orders. Whether or not they are married, hope to be married, or have decided to stay single, most know that their salary will always be needed and few have dreams of escaping (except the dream of winning the lottery).

More particularly, most library technicians have no hope of becoming more than they are since the field is a dead end. No matter how long you work, you can never become a librarian without going back for years of schooling. Many have a dream of getting their own little library somewhere to run all by themselves, which a few technicians have managed to do. But most technicians, in spite of their dreams and talk, do not really see a way out of their humdrum workaday life, and reserve most of their plan-making for what is going to happen after work. They are, in other words, very much like most other workers.

This should hardly be surprising. After all, office workers have been around for a long time, as long as capitalism with its need for records and correspondence has been around. But, although the tasks of office workers are closely linked to and necessary for the movement of industry, capitalism has always sharply separated the two groups. In their offices, office workers have also been separated from each other, often much the same way as a woman is in the home, under the thumb of a boss who is usually male (although this is not the case in libraries). Often, her skills are not nearly so important as her appearance and her ability to charm and flatter. As a result, office workers have been often left behind in the development of working-class consciousness, both as a result of their own identification with the boss and the boss' prestige, and because of chauvinism and prejudice on the part of union militants and organizers. They are, nevertheless, a section of society that the left ignores at its peril.

Kathleen Cole



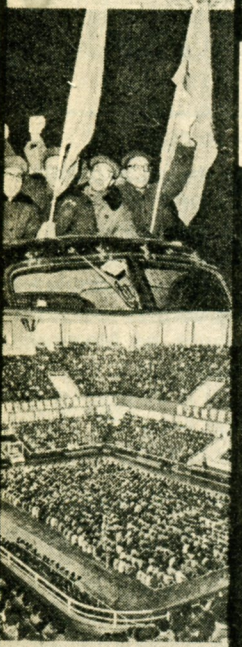
IN MEMORIAM

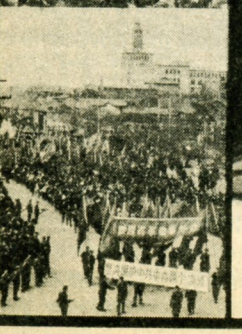
BELOVED CHAIRMAN MAO TSE-TUNG
1892-2643

A LONG, LONG LIFE TO CHAIRMAN MAO!







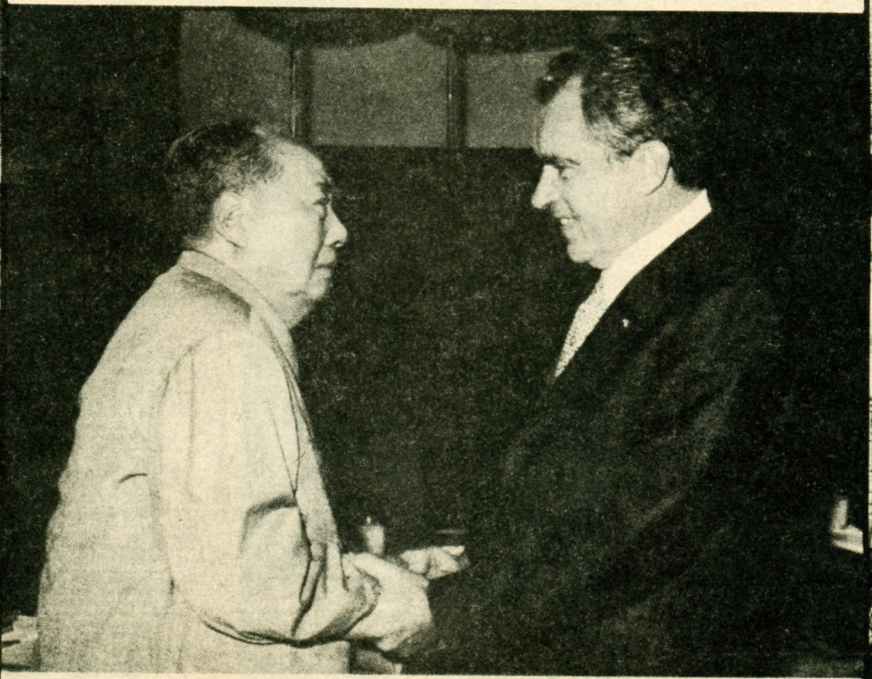




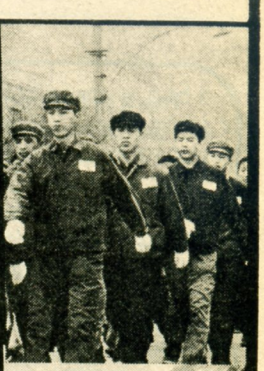
Chairman Mao Tse-Tung on his yearly radio program "Listening to the people": "Here's a good one! A listener from Shanghai asks: 'What about self-management?'!"

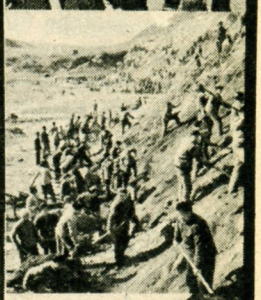


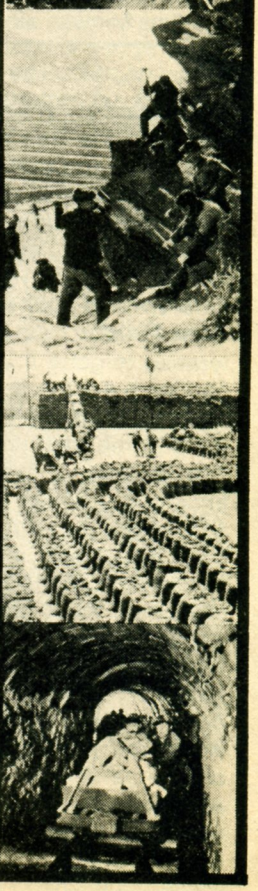
Beloved Chairman Mao bids but a temporary farewell to the world's masses on September 8, 1976.



1972: Chairman Mao Tse-Tung congratulates President Richard Nixon on the bombing of the Hemphanut Children's Hospital in Haiphong. These two great men have frequently expressed admiration for each other's brilliant leadership and military strategies.







Exclusive!

The Red Menace Interviews

There is little doubt that the present period in our history is one of the most critical that the Canadian nation has ever lived through. Dominating public attention is of course the challenge to the very existence of Canada that the election of the Parti Quebecois has posed. But equally important are the twin economic dilemmas of inflation and unemployment, which have called into question the viability of the free enterprise system as we know it, and the whole range of social stresses and problems that are tearing at the very fabric of Canadian society.

During these troubled times, fraught with peril, the tiller of the Canadian ship of state rests firmly in the hands of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Prime Minister since 1968, who then as now dominates the clouded horizons of national politics. For a time, it appeared that the Trudeau administration might be in some difficulty, but in the course of the last year, it has become increasingly apparent that there is no other figure in our national life who has the stature to challenge the Prime Minister. There are currently no creditable contenders for leadership within the Liberal Party, and it is clear that Tory Leader Joe Clark is unable to lead his own party, let alone a country.

So for better or worse, Pierre Trudeau is the captain of our national destiny as we sail into an uncharted future. What are the views of this often enigmatic man? How does he see the future of Canada unfolding?

We are fortunate in having obtained the transcript of a previously unreleased interview that the Prime Minister granted to free-lance interviewer Will Basically last month. It appears that the interview was mysteriously "killed" for "national security" reasons after it was recorded. This magazine, however, obtained a copy of the interview through a government source. After confirming its authenticity, we have decided to publish it here in the public interest. The picture of the Prime Minister and his views that emerges here is perhaps the frankest statement that has been made available to the Canadian public to this time. It should be of vital interest to all Canadians.

Will Basically: ***Prime Minister, you said that the free market society was passé and that we must move to a society with greater government intervention. Now you are saying that we have to rely on the market. How do you resolve that difference in your two positions?***

Prime Minister: I did say that free enterprise is gone if indeed we ever had such a thing in the first place. Galbraith makes this point and I basically agree with him when he says that instead of many competing firms and a government as umpire so to speak, we've got Big Business, Big Labour and increasingly Big Government. What we need is a society where these groups can sit together and work out problems sensibly. Now this will be a society based on different values than the ones we have now. As Rousseau would say ***le volonté génerale . . .*** uh, the general will . . . the good of all must prevail over the particular will. Now there are problems because a lot of people don't see it that way and they need a reminder and the free market society will tend to keep them in line.



"My thinking is along the lines of a transformation of manpower units into basic nourishment materials."

WB: ***How would things be different in the "new society".***

PM: Well take unemployment for example . . . please! We face a real problem here. Basically people are suffering from a surplus manpower situation inasmuch as forseeable demand for increments to the stock of labour supply is increasing at a slower rate than entry into the job market. And this is tough for a lot of people.

Now some of these people are students coming into the job market for the first time and they are saying — give us a high paying job or Unemployment Insurance. Well, instead of rushing in with a makework scheme or welfare the government is saying — if you can't find work here go somewhere else — travel. But don't come begging for handouts.

WB: ***But what about people who can't afford to travel.***

PM: Well, that is a problem and clearly something has to be done. But the situation is different now. We don't simply have a temporary

Prime Minister Trudeau

slump which we can get out of by Keynsian pump-priming. We have a long-term moderate growth prospect with inflationary pressures — we can't just pour in more money and hope for the best. What we are thinking of is something like this. We loan people money to look for work abroad and let them pay us back. We take this money and invest in transportation out of the country thus employing some of our surplus manpower. Eventually we can cut employment down to virtually nil. Now of course some countries may not want our surplus manpower.

WB: *What do we do about that?*
PM: Well if labour can't be sold it's because too much is charged or there's a glut on the market. The same situation applies to farm products like eggs or wheat or livestock. So that parallel between the two markets with their chronic oversupply problems made me think that the same solution applied to farm products could be used for surplus manpower. We could have a marketing board.

WB: *You mean sell manpower just like wheat?*
PM: Yeah, why not? We could project demand and issue positive and negative incentives for families to produce manpower units as the market for them rose and fell. I know it seems like a totally new idea but in a way it's been tried before. In many African countries government sold surplus manpower and it seemed to work pretty well. We could do the same and receive cash. Manpower could be provided at competitive rates and this would benefit the buyer. And owners of manpower would get badly needed food, clothing and shelter without the stigma of being a burden to society. Everybody would benefit. With the extra revenue we could cut taxes and thus stimulate the economy without having to resort to inflationary methods. If we ever ran short of manpower we could always buy some back — but we'd only buy it when we needed it. Now of course even then we might find that the market for manpower units is glutted and so we would have to find other uses. Now we all know that one present cause of inflation is the high cost of food and we could use some of our surplus manpower units to help solve that problem. My thinking is along the lines of a transformation of manpower units into basic nourishment material. Many of our surplus population are relatively well-fed and tender especially students and others who come from middle class families. Many others would be better employed as fertilizer because the toughness of their flesh makes them unsuitable as food. They could however find real satisfaction however in returning to life, so to speak, as food for a happier and healthier nation. They would provide a cheap source of fertilizer for farmers and thus cancel out the decline in revenue resulting from lowered meat prices due to the entry of former manpower units on the market. And of course the money spent on welfare for these people could be used to reduce taxes for food processors and distributors thus cutting food costs. The government could help further by publishing recipes for the preparation of former manpower units as food and by advising how full nutritional value could be extracted from this exiting new food source.

"Confederation is not a dry legal document but a nation united by two languages which anyone can speak at least one of and sometimes more."



WB: *A lot of people will probably criticize this measure as an unwarranted interference by the government in free enterprise.*

PM: Yeah, well what are their solutions? I don't hear any useful suggestions from Broadbent or uh . . . the frizzy haired kid who does the Diefenbaker imitations.

WB: *Clark*
PM: Whatever.

WB: *Turning to Quebec . . . what are your opinions on current developments there?*
PM: Well, I think that the wish to go it alone is only held by a small minority. After all, this nationalism is really a regressive desire to return to the stone ages when savages huddled around fires in their own separate caves grunting curses at anyone who tried to join them. To be fair, I am not saying that this is what Levesque is actually proposing but it is implicit in his policy.

WB: *What can we as ordinary Canadians do to counteract this trend?*
PM: Well, I think that we need a

change in our attitude to the nation. Confederation is not a dry legal document but a nation united by two languages which anybody can speak at least one of and sometimes more.

WB: *And bilingualism is obviously the key to keeping this nation together.*

PM: Right! Because this government has shown such determination to increase the number of posts in the civil service requiring the use of both languages it is now possible for French Canada to have more power than ever before — certainly more than would exist in the banana republic Levesque wants to create. And now it is possible for any French Canadian boy or girl to grow up to become Prime Minister or at least understand him part of the time when he speaks on television.

It is also possible for French Canadians to travel across this country and still be able to use their native language when they travel on the federal transportation system. And when they buy their food at the supermarket they can read in French what it is and contains whether Post Toasties, Pop Tarts, Whip 'n' Chill or whatever. Because of the Governments' firmness and decisiveness bilingualism has been made a reality for Canadians all across this country. The first thing they see when they wake up is their morning breakfast cereal with its contents described in both languages. Even very little children can learn that "Cric, Crac, Croc" is French for

"When you have heard John Wayne speak French you have gained some idea of what bilingualism can mean."



"Snap, Crackle, Pop". This is a very real way the struggle for the hearts and minds of the nation is being won on its cereal boxes. And lest I forget there are French language TV stations financed by the federal government. There movies originally produced in English are shown with French dubbing. When you have heard John Wayne speak French you have gained some idea of what bilingualism can mean.

Inspired by such a policy Canadians from all walks of life can unite behind a vigorous national policy of keeping things pretty much as they are right now. Let our slogan from Sea to Sea (or at least from Sea to the Ottawa River) be "Business as Usual".

WB: *Do you think that the entry of Jack Horner into your government will help the cause of Confederation?*

PM: Definitely. Quebecois will see that English Canadians no matter how bigoted, narrow-minded, parochial, and stupid can still appreciate and accept this government's policies as long as the rewards to them are carefully spelled out.

WB: *Pursuing that last topic how do you see Mr. Horner's rôle in your cabinet?*

PM: Well, first off we will have to provide him a place to sit. While Mr. Horner has not complained I think he feels a bit left out standing outside the Cabinet Chambers during meetings. As to his duties — well, I think that he could play a strong rôle in Transportaion and Energy policy. Specifically he could pack and carry Otto Lang's baggage for him when he makes one of his many airplane trips and he could turn out the lights in the Parliament Building when we have left thus emphasizing how greatly the government is concerned about energy conservation.

WB: *Thank you Prime Minister for an interesting and instructive interview.*

—Tom McLaughlin

앤·랜더스 컬럼
Ann Landers



여비서의 손 버릇
보스를 곤란케해

Dear Ann Landers : 나는 글씨가 엉망진창임에도 불구하고 이 편지를 자작 씁니다. 왜냐하면 여비서 에게 받아쓰게 하고 싶지 않아서죠. 이 비서가 바로 문제랍니다.

"보스"들이 비서들을 그냥 내버려두지 않기때문에 "보스"와 트러블을 가진 비서들의 이야기를 당신 칼럼에서 많이 읽었읍니다. 나는 그 반대케이스입니다.

내 비서는 내 뺨을 두드리거나 머리털을 쓸어 주거나 내 사인을 받으려고 짠을 건네 주면서 내 손을 보통보다 오랫 잡거나 한답니다. 이런것들이 나를 당황하게 만듭니다.

그녀는 28살도 대우 예쁘고 사무실일을 아나부터 끝까지 다 알고 아주 유능 합니다. 나는 딴 비서를 쓰긴 싫읍니다.

어떻게하면 그녀가 내 몸에 손을 대지 않게 할 수있을런지요?

추이 이런일은 5년간이나 계속되었읍니다—— In Urgent Need of Advice

Dear Boss : 그같은 일이 5년간이나 계속됐다면 문제가 그렇게 시급한건 아니군요.

외모에 대한 칭찬
어떻게 대답해야하나

Dear Ann Landers ; 29살이나 된 처지에 이같은 질문을 한다는것이 바보같이 여겨지지만 꼭 해답을 들어야겠읍니다.

사람들이 "아가씬 참 아름다운 눈을 가졌군요. 다른 사람들도 그렇게 말하던가요?" 라든가 또는 "피부가 어쩌면 이렇게 아름답죠? 아가씨한테서 눈을 뗄수가 없군요" 라고하면 뭐라고 대답하죠? "너 알고 있읍니다." 또는 "다른 사람들도 똑 같은 이야기를 하드군요" 라고 대답하는것은 좀 자랑하는것 같구요.

이런 입 비행기를 탈때마

A Political Thriller

Bain Co-op Meets Wages for Housework

Introduction

When you first happen upon the Bain Avenue Apartments in Toronto's Riverdale, a working-class area some two miles east of downtown, you get the sensation that they belong to a different time and place. There is something about them that holds the flavour of an earlier, quieter, more sensible era (even though such an era probably existed only in the clouded reminiscences of our grandparents), something about them that seems to stir the memory or the imagination. Built just before the First World War, the 260 one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments at Bain are clustered around several tree-lined courtyards, each with its own name, which even the Post Office is compelled to recognize ("The Maples, The Lindens, The Oaks . . ."). There is a sense of scale here which is lacking in most larger developments, and a certain quiet charm which partly compensates for the genteel shabbiness that has overtaken the project over the years.

We can surely assume that for the working-class tenants who moved into the newly-completed project in the summer of 1914, this setting must have held forth the promise of a peaceful, prosperous, and stable future.

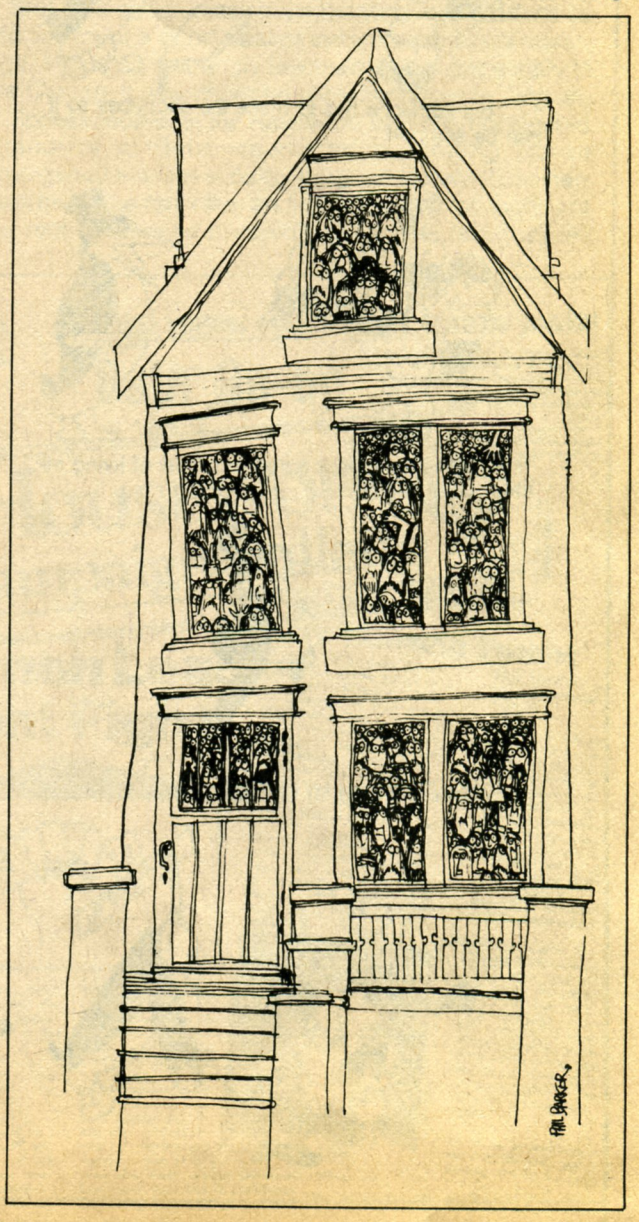
But it was never quite like that, of course, not then, and not now, and the last few years have been no exception. For several years, Bain has been the scene of constant battles, the latest of which, occurring in the early months of 1977, is the subject of this article. At issue was the future of the complex and its tenants; the struggle, marked by a rent strike, furious door-to-door organizing, stormy general meetings, and a large-scale referendum, pitted residents against each other in acrimonious dispute. This struggle, however, can only be understood against the background of the project.

History of Bain

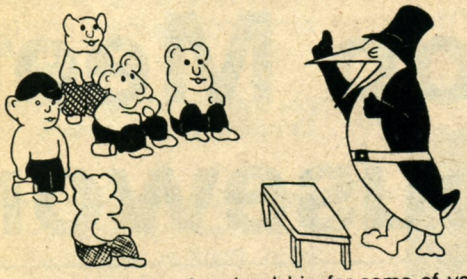
The Bain Avenue Apartments were built by a group of Toronto philanthropists who described themselves as "not a company, but a cause . . ." bringing about " . . . a solution of a problem that vitally concerns both the community and the nation: better housing for working people." And if that praiseworthy ambition in no way conflicted with the continued enrichment of these corporate benefactors, whose wealth could after all be traced back to the labours of this same class of working people, then at least Bain did provide, over the years, somewhat higher-than-usual quality housing at lower-than-usual prices.

But the apartments changed owners, and grew noticeably older. By the 1970's, little of the original concept survived.

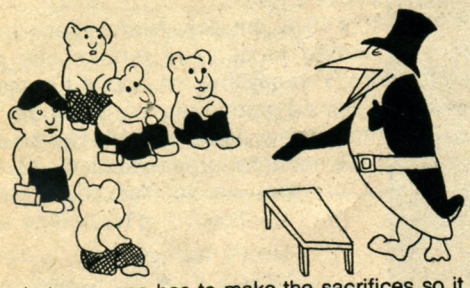
In the fall of 1972, the Bain Avenue Tenants' Association was formed to demand repairs and necessary maintenance. The association applied pressure to the owner, and started getting results, bit by bit. For example, by a remarkable piece of coincidence, two of the leaders of the tenants' organization finally had long



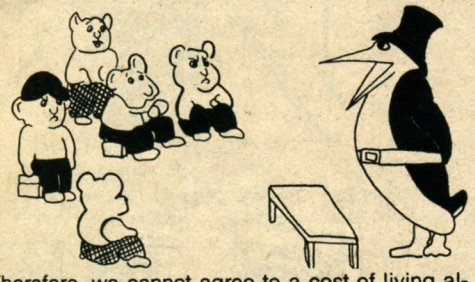
Hamsters



"I'm aware that inflation is a hardship for some of you . . ."



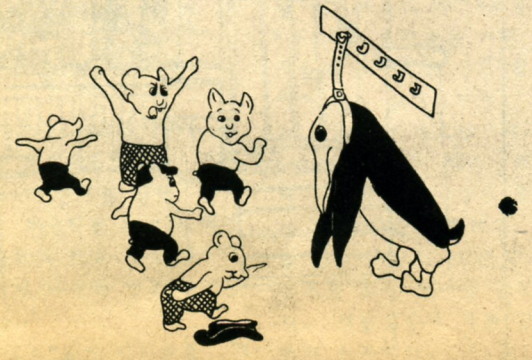
". . . but someone has to make the sacrifices so it can be stopped."



"Therefore, we cannot agree to a cost of living allowance at this time."



"This is a time for belt tightening . . ."



overdue repairs done in their apartments a few days after the organization was formed; other minor repairs followed. A visit by city inspectors, pressured in turn into noticing Bain Avenue, produced a substantial sheaf of work orders and a more systematic approach to the upkeep of the place, including repairs and the hiring of additional maintenance staff. The current landlord even made an excursion of his own into philanthropy in an effort to boost his sagging reputation: he brought Santa Claus to visit the children just before Christmas.

But any adults who might have been inclined to be swayed by this display of Christian beneficence soon found it was Scrooge who was lurking behind Santa's beard. Suddenly, the employers of several Tenants' Association members began receiving phone calls from the landlord, saying the activists had been "causing considerable management problems in the apartments" and were "bothering tenants". Simultaneously, all tenants received notices of a rent hike. Finally, after a year of acrimony, the owner began to issue eviction notices to tenants as their leases expired — with the idea of turning the development into a high-priced condominium.

City Ownership

Tenants responded by looking for alternatives to eviction: co-operative ownership, or city ownership. Eventually, an agreement was worked out whereby the City of Toronto took over the project as non-profit housing with $6-million CMHC funding, agreeing to transfer ownership to the tenants' co-operative when it was satisfied that tenants could afford and manage the project independently.

If there had been initial doubt as to which alternative, co-operative or city ownership, was better, that doubt was gradually removed in the minds of most tenants as the City proceeded to demonstrate that it, at any rate, could **not** manage the project on its own. The single key event was the carrying out of renovations, which the city bungled so badly that the total cost of the mess is still unclear, although it is certain that between improperly done work, work not done, and contractors skipping town, tens of thousands of dollars were thrown away. Naturally, it all came out of the rent.

Meanwhile property taxes on the project leaped up because, as a city-owned enterprise, Bain was taxed at a commercial rate, $20,000 a year higher than the residential rate it would have to pay as a co-op. As if this weren't bad enough, the city corporation actually forgot to pay Bain's municipal tax bill on time, so that Bain had to pay a tax penalty — to the city! The City of Toronto Non-Profit Housing Corporation, one resident said accurately, "has the bankruptcy touch."

Rent Freeze

In this way less-than-delighted residents found themselves paying for the 'advantages' of city ownership with rapidly rising rents. Rents went up 21 per cent, then 10 per cent. In October 1976 the third increase in a little over two years was announced effective February 1977; it was to be 18 per cent. To add insult to injury, Bain people found they weren't protected by Ontario's rent control legislation: marvelously, it doesn't apply to non-profit housing.

With each new raise, tenants voted to go along: refusal would have meant giving up their plans for co-operative ownership and eventual escape from the city's

clutches and the accompanying cycle of rising costs. The battle wasn't all negative by any means: it succeeded in producing a fairly cohesive community at Bain, well-organized, with clear goals, impatient at the city's foot-dragging on the transfer of ownership, angry at the continued mismanagement.

For one group of tenants, however, the latest rent hike was the final straw which caused them to break decisively with the previously-shared goals. This group, consisting primarily of members and supporters of the Wages for Housework Group, began to organize for a rent freeze in the complex. Their position was that low-income tenants simply could not afford the new rents. (The latest increase put rents up to $193 for a one-bedroom apartment, $253 for a lower two-bedroom, and $266 for a lower three-bedroom. Uppers cost an extra $20.)

The freeze group advocated that tenants refuse the increase and continue to pay their rents at the old rate. They canvassed their position door to door, and then put it forward at a general meeting of tenants in December, solemnly promising to abide by the decision of the majority.

The general meeting left no doubt. With 142 of 400 adult residents in attendance — the best turnout at any general meeting ever held at the project — the vote went 120 to 16 against the idea of a rent freeze. Anger about the increase was widespread at the meeting, but most tenants felt that it was better to pay up now, to make some short-term sacrifices, in order not to jeopardize the long-term benefits they saw in co-operative ownership.

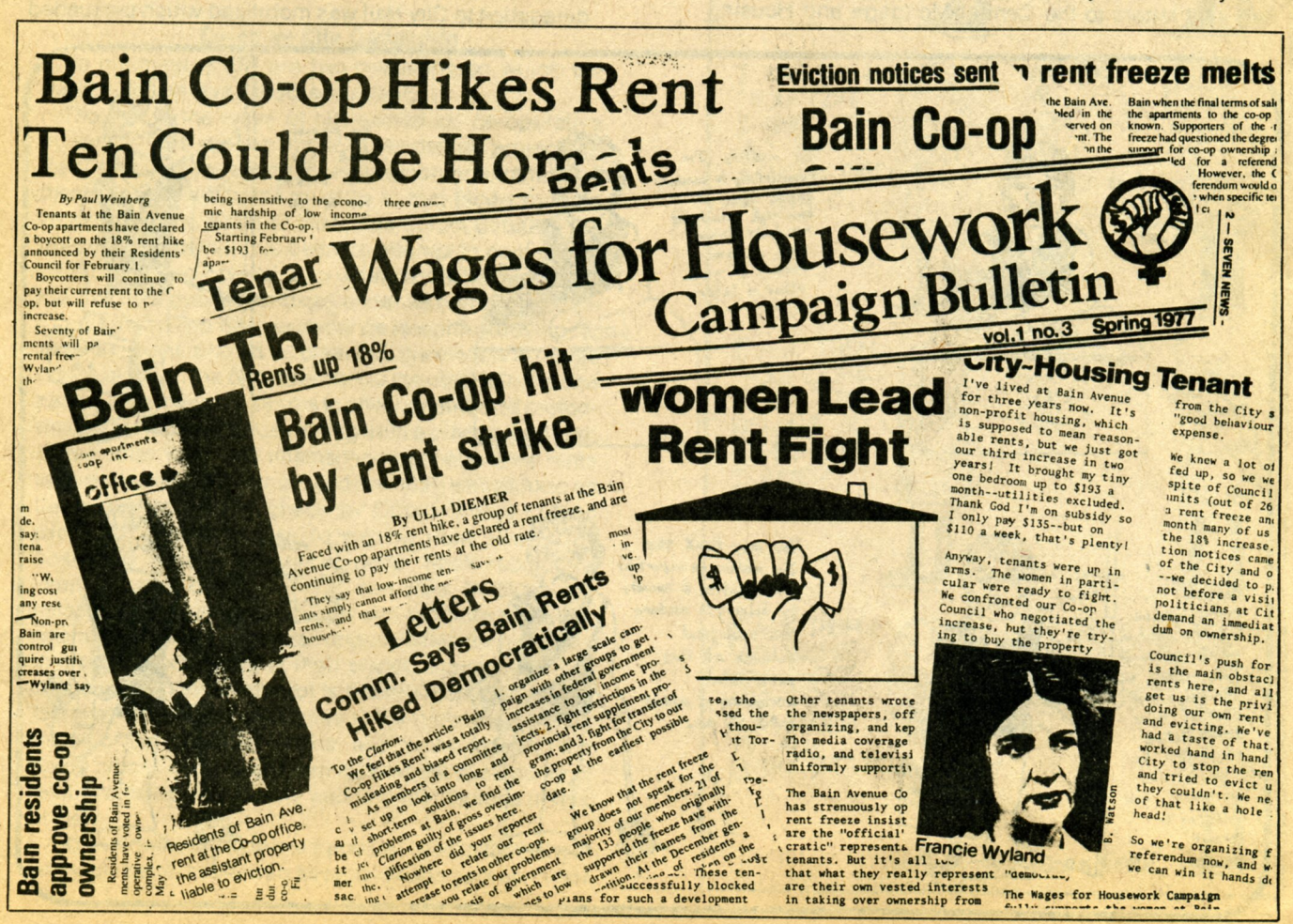
It was generally accepted that the city would use a rent strike as evidence of "irresponsibility" and thus as grounds for refusing to go ahead with the ownership transfer.

With the defeat of their proposal at the general meeting, the freeze group rapidly changed tactics. They could not, they said, sacrifice themselves to the idea of future ownership for anyone's sake, not when they faced immediate hardship. They turned out more literature, produced and printed by the Toronto Wages for Housework Collective, and resumed door to door organizing. If they could sign up 70 of Bain's 260 units in support, they said, the freeze would go ahead anyway.

On February 1, claiming 55 units signed up for the freeze and support from another 35 subsidized units (half the units at Bain receive rent subsidy and thus were not affected by the increase) they went ahead, paying their rent cheques at the old level. When the smoke had cleared and the rent cheques had been counted, however, their claims of support turned out to be somewhat exaggerated. Only 26 units, it seemed, participated in the freeze.

Still their action and accompanying media offensive did win them a good deal of sympathetic press coverage, including a strongly favourable front-page story in the Clarion, a newly-formed left-wing paper in Toronto.

Spokespeople for the Residents' Council, the elected executive at Bain, countered by setting up an emergency internal subsidy program to help those hardest hit by the rent hike, and by criticizing the tactics of the rent freezers as divisive and likely to fail. They ar-



Bain Co-op Hikes Rent
Ten Could Be Hom... Rents

Eviction notices sent ... rent freeze melts

Bain Co-op

Tenar

Wages for Housework
Campaign Bulletin

vol.1 no.3 Spring 1977

Bain Th...

Rents up 18%

Bain Co-op hit by rent strike

Women Lead Rent Fight

Letters

Comm. Says Bain Rents Hiked Democratically

City-Housing Tenant

Bain residents approve co-op ownership

Residents of Bain Ave. rent at the Co-op office. the assistant property liable to eviction.

Francie Wyland

B. Watson

gued that a rent freeze would pit the tenants against each other and against three levels of government simultaneously — a battle they couldn't win.

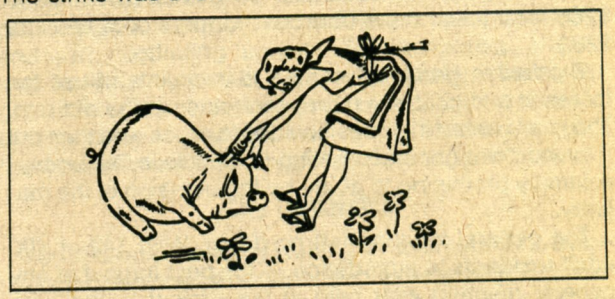
Spokespeople for the freeze group, however, maintained that through united action it would be possible to hold off the governments and keep rents where they were. They pointed to a housing project in Montreal which, they said, had recently fought a similar battle and won. Increasingly, too, they criticized the concept of co-operative ownership itself. It served only to make tenants their own landlords, they said, leaving the basic problems of low-income housing unsolved. As an alternative, they now supported the status quo — city ownership — coupled with a strong tenants' organization to protect tenants.

Supporters of the co-op idea responded by pointing to the long-term advantages. Co-ops in Toronto, they pointed out, were faring significantly better in terms of rent than non-profit housing or the private sector. To achieve this was worth some short-term sacrifices, they said.

Freeze Defeated

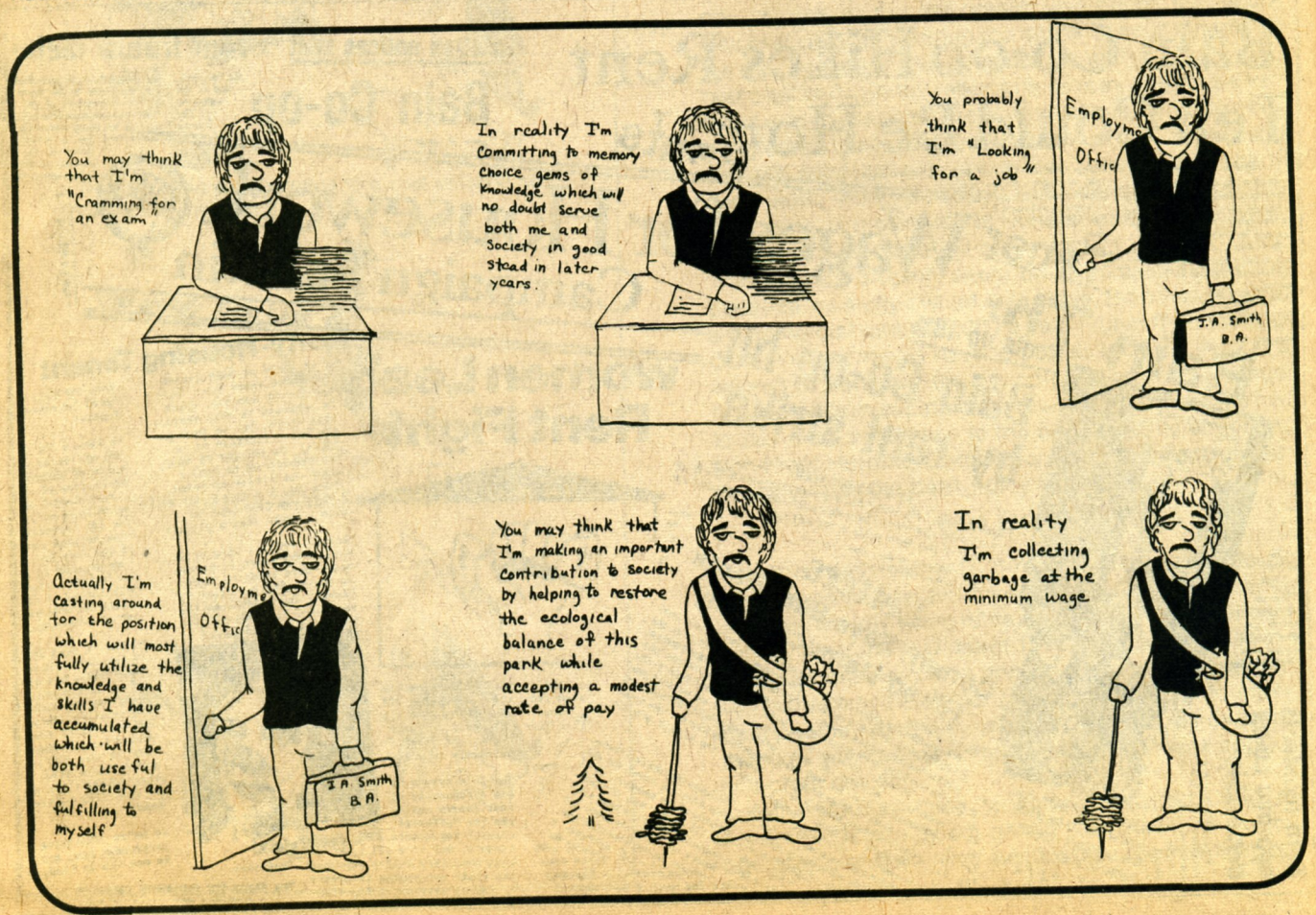
Co-op supporters, meanwhile, were also organizing door-to-door, against the freeze. The freeze, they said, jeopardized the whole project, since it meant that the rent bill could not be paid in full. The freeze, they said, was tantamount to deliberate sabotage of the will of the majority. Even more infuriating to them than the issue of money ("They're ripping off all the other tenants", was a frequent comment) was the fact that the freeze group had sent letters to the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) asking them to hold up the transfer of ownership to the tenants, claiming that tenants did not really support co-operative ownership, and that the appearance of support for a co-op was due to "intimidation" by a "small clique" that controlled the Residents' Council. Similar letters were sent to the City and the Mayor.

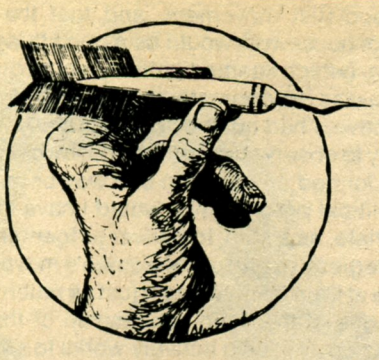
The by now thoroughly acrimonious dispute came to a head at another very well-attended general meeting, which voted by a large majority to issue eviction notices to those who continued to freeze their rents, with a two-week period of grace in which to pay up. The notices duly went out to the ten units still remaining on the freeze; all immediately paid up, and no one was evicted. The strike was over.



The Referendum

The freeze group, however, by now reduced to its original core of Wages for Housework people, still had another card to play. If they couldn't bring down the rents, then at least they'd try to bring down the co-op. A delegation to City Hall was mobilized which persuaded





the City to hold a referendum at Bain to see whether co-op ownership was really supported by the residents. The City was only too happy to oblige.

Another round of organizing by both sides ensued; Wages for Housework predicted that solid majority would reject the co-op.

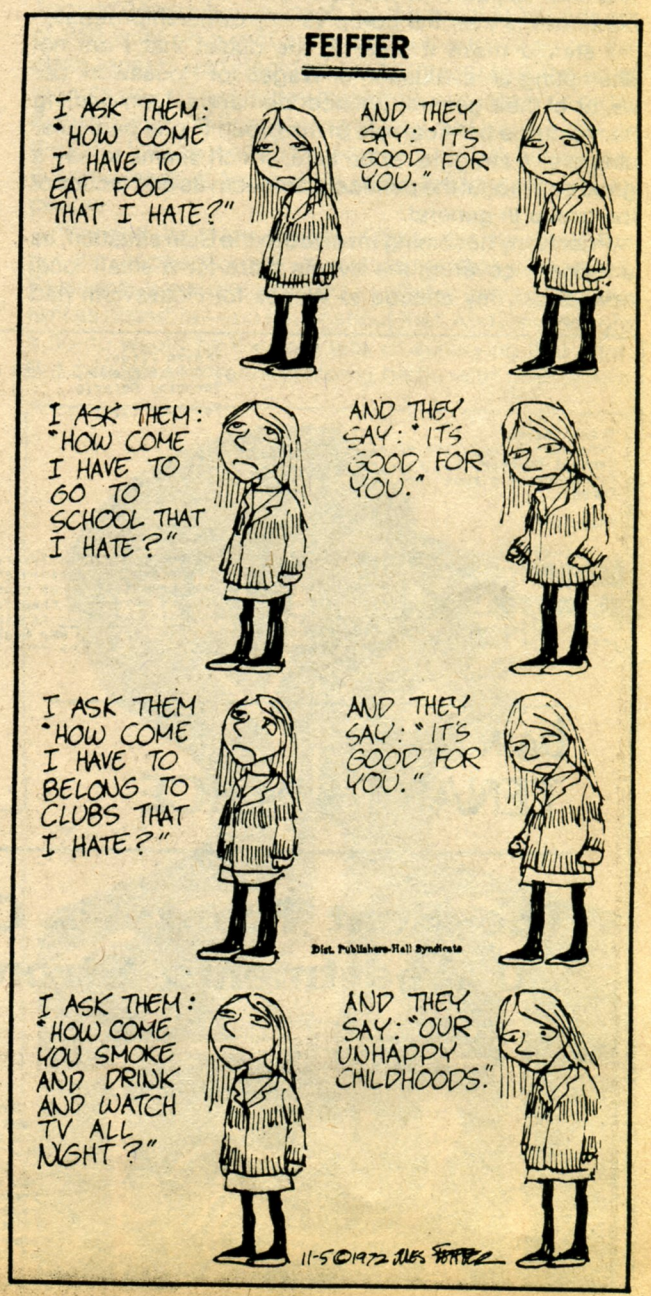
No such luck. In an 87 per cent turnout, the vote went 2-1 in favour of co-op ownership. And at elections for Residents' Council, co-op supporters were once again put into office. Predictably, the results didn't convince Wages for Housework. The group issued a press release claiming victory, then proceded to demand that the City or CMHC overturn the results of the referendum. The City refused, CMHC has yet to reply. Few people doubt, however, that the transfer of ownership will go ahead as scheduled later this summer.

Co-op vs City Ownership

To my mind, there are two questions on which the events at Bain Ave. shed some light.

The first is the issue of city-owned vs. co-operative housing. There are a number of residential projects in the City of Toronto which for one reason or another find themselves in a similar situation to that faced by Bain tenants in 1974. Each of these has in turn debated the question of whether it is better to attempt to convert the project into a co-operative, or whether it is better to have the City take over as landlord under its non-profit housing program. The Bain experience is worth studying for answers, but it is not at all clear that the evidence points conclusively in the one direction or the other. On the one hand, City ownership seems to offer benefits and protection not availableto those renting from a private landlord; on the other hand, city mismanagement can drive rents up even faster than the market does — at least as long as the market is held in check by Ontario's rent control program, which is due to expire next year. Co-operatives have a somewhat better track record for keeping costs down, but this can vary: in older developments, maintenance costs can be quite high. Co-operatives also offer greater opportunities for residents to make decisions about their project themselves, but ultimately residents' control is greatly restricted by the fact that urban land continues to be controlled by the forces of the capitalist market, and by the fact that the co-op comes up at every turn against the the totality of relations that dominate life and impose choices in this society.

On balance, the evidence appears to indicate that it is probably better to be in an already-existing co-op rather than in city-owned housing, but this does not necessarily mean that it is best to pursue the co-op route in a project where the alternatives have just been posed, and where the final objective is still years off. The reason for this is that the process of becoming a co-op is an extremely difficult one, laden with pitfalls and problems, as the people at Bain discovered. Becoming a co-op requires a great deal of time and energy from the organizers, mountains of legal work and endless financial planning. It requires, in short, that tenants form themselves into a disciplined corporate entity capable of dealing with the government bureaucracies which provide the necessary capital, and even, in a sense, that tenants become their own landlord. One of the main drawbacks of the process of becoming a co-operative as it took place at Bain was the way it channelled the energies of a significant number of active and politically aware residents into legal and bureaucratic activities, and in so doing helped to dissipate the political con-



sciousness and energy that had been focussed by the battle with the former landlord. At Bain, the battle seems to have been worth it all now that the goal has almost been achieved, but the problems encountered along the way should be enough to make other projects think very carefully indeed before embarking on the same journey. A co-op is *a* strategy, but it's not *the* strategy. It's no sure-fire way to change the world.

It is ironic that one of the things counteracting the trend to depoliticization at Bain has been precisely the opposition to the co-op mounted by the Wages for Housework Group and their supporters, which drew many residents back into increased involvement with the affairs of the project, and made people think very hard about the goals they wanted to pursue.

The Role of Wages for Housework

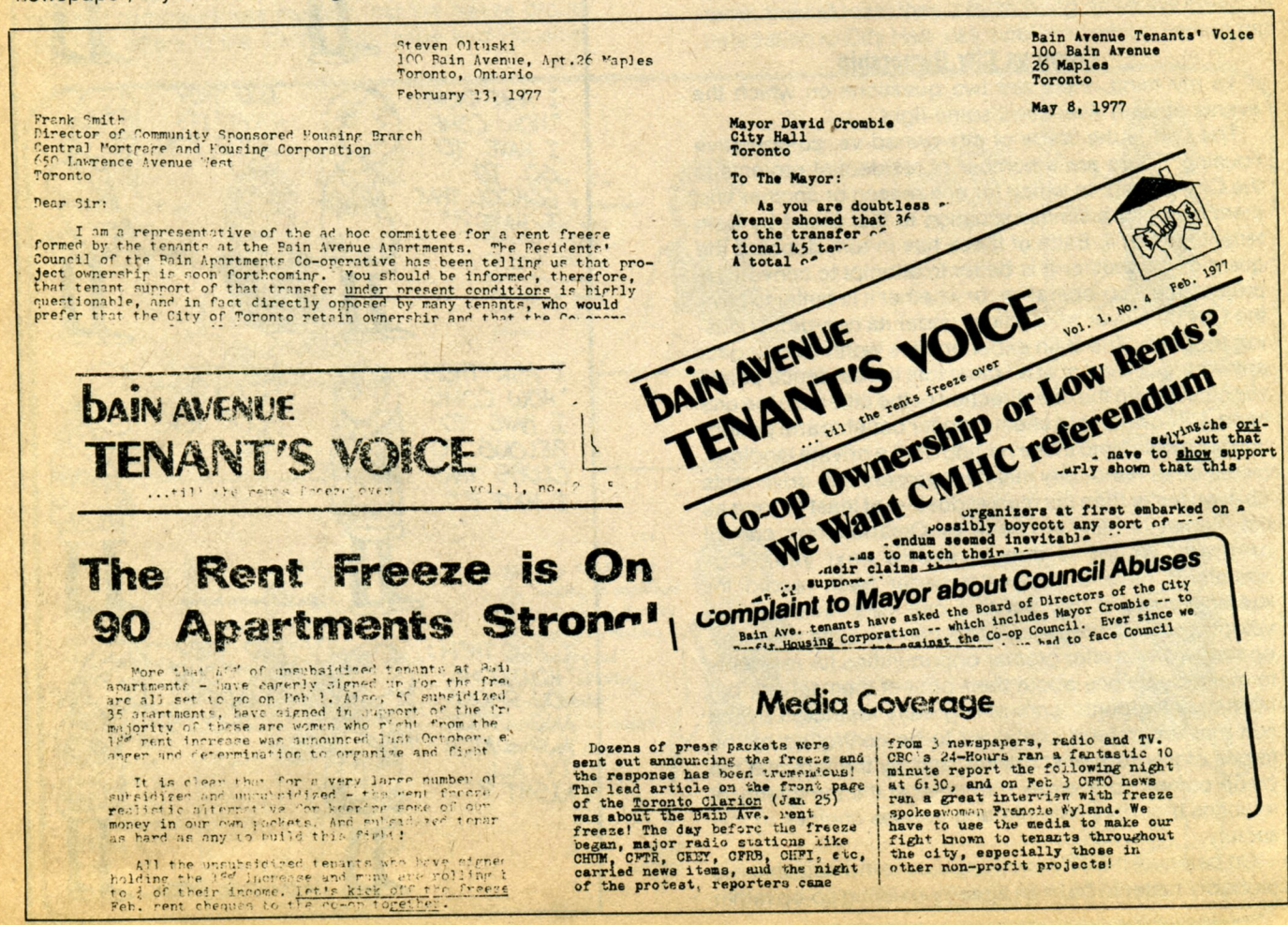
The role of Wages for Housework in the struggle at Bain is the main question I want to pursue here, and it is one that appears to me to offer much more definite conclusions than the co-op vs city ownership debate.

I should make it clear at the outset that I am not attempting an evaluation of Wages for Housework per se, or of their general political demands. I am dealing here with the political role of the group in one particular struggle, a struggle, to be sure, which seems to say a great deal about the political perspectives and tactics of the group in general.

Prior to my becoming involved in the Bain situation, as a reporter covering the events there for a small local newspaper, my attitude to Wages for Housework had been that the group had some valid ideas to contribute to the socialist movement, and that the payment of wages for housework would be a good thing if you could get them, (which seemed unlikely), but I disagreed with what I saw as the dogmatic narrowness of their political perspective. I had not, however, had any particular opportunity to observe Wages for Housework in action, and had not formed any opinion one way or the other about their political practice. Nor would I have thought it very appropriate, as a man, to deliver judgements in print on the strategies of a part of the women's movement. But the struggle at Bain involved men just as much as women — in fact, one of the main spokesmen of the rent freeze group was a man who actively works to support Wages for Housework, while some of the key people on the other side were women. And of course the issues concerned male and female residents equally.

I should also say that when I initially began covering the rent freeze at Bain, I was basically sympathetic to the position of the rent freeze group.* After hearing arguments from both sides, I was for a time more or less a neutral observer, and only gradually, after following events, reading literature, attending meetings, and interviewing people on both sides did I become increasingly critical of the actions of Wages for Housework, and of the assumptions that seemed to underlie those actions.

*The rent freeze group, in fact, distributed the first article I wrote on the struggle (for 7 News, the local paper) with their own literature.



Steven Oltuski
100 Bain Avenue, Apt.26 Maples
Toronto, Ontario

February 13, 1977

Frank Smith
Director of Community Sponsored Housing Branch
Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation
650 Lawrence Avenue West
Toronto

Dear Sir:

I am a representative of the ad hoc committee for a rent freeze formed by the tenants at the Bain Avenue Apartments. The Residents' Council of the Bain Apartments Co-operative has been telling us that project ownership is soon forthcoming. You should be informed, therefore, that tenant support of that transfer under present conditions is highly questionable, and in fact directly opposed by many tenants, who would prefer that the City of Toronto retain ownership and that the Co-operative

Bain Avenue Tenants' Voice
100 Bain Avenue
26 Maples
Toronto

May 8, 1977

Mayor David Crombie
City Hall
Toronto

To The Mayor:

As you are doubtless
Avenue showed that 3
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tional 45 ten
A total

BAIN AVENUE TENANT'S VOICE ...til the rents freeze over vol. 1, no. 2

The Rent Freeze is On
90 Apartments Strong!

More that [illegible] of unsubsidized tenants at Bain apartments - have eagerly signed up for the free are all set to go on Feb 1. Also, 56 subsidized 35 apartments, have signed in support of the fr majority of these are women who right from the 18% rent increase was announced last October, e anger and determination to organize and fight

It is clear that for a very large number of subsidized and unsubsidized - the rent freeze realistic alternative for keeping some of our money in our own pockets. And subsidized tenan as hard as any to build this fight!

All the unsubsidized tenants who have signed holding the 18% increase and many are rolling i to ½ of their income. Let's kick off the freeze Feb. rent cheques to the co-op together.

BAIN AVENUE TENANT'S VOICE ... til the rents freeze over Vol. 1, No. 4 Feb. 1977

Co-op Ownership or Low Rents?
We Want CMHC referendum

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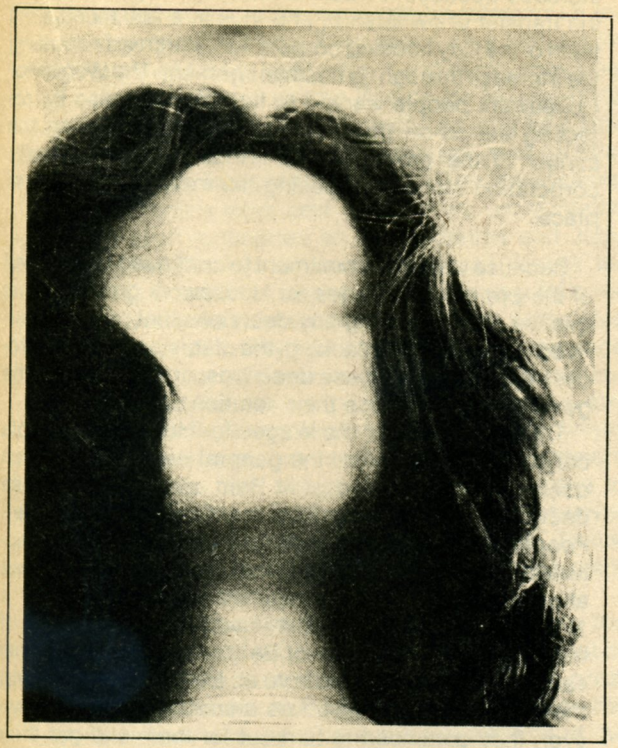
[illegible] organizers at first embarked on a [illegible] possibly boycott any sort of [illegible] endum seemed inevitable [illegible] ms to match their [illegible] their claims th[illegible] support [illegible]

Complaint to Mayor about Council Abuses

Bain Ave. tenants have asked the Board of Directors of the City [illegible] Housing Corporation -- which includes Mayor Crombie -- to [illegible] against the Co-op Council. Ever since we [illegible] had to face Council

Media Coverage

Dozens of press packets were sent out announcing the freeze and the response has been tremendous! The lead article on the front page of the Toronto Clarion (Jan 25) was about the Bain Ave. rent freeze! The day before the freeze began, major radio stations like CHUM, CFTR, CKEY, CFRB, CHFI, etc, carried news items, and the night of the protest, reporters came from 3 newspapers, radio and TV. CBC's 24-Hours ran a fantastic 10 minute report the following night at 6:30, and on Feb 3 CFTO news ran a great interview with freeze spokeswoman Francie Eyland. We have to use the media to make our fight known to tenants throughout the city, especially those in other non-profit projects!



The reason I became critical of the Wages for Housework Group at Bain was not primarily because of the stands they took on co-operative ownership and rents per se, although I did ultimately disagree with them. But it is possible for a reasonable person to believe that it would have been wiser for Bain residents not to have followed the co-op route, and to have rejected rather than accepted the rent increase. But that is not the issue.

The key point is that these questions were considered thoroughly by the residents of this working-class community; that both sides were presented to everyone living in the complex through leaflets, newsletters, door-to-door canvassing, and general meetings, and that after this lengthy and quite democratic process, the tenants came overwhelmingly to a decision in favour of the co-op option and against the rent freeze. Yet the Wages for Housework Group, which had earlier promised to accept whatever decision was made, chose to ignore the decision, to label it the result of "manipulation" and "intimidation" by a "tiny clique", to lie about events that had occurred and about their own support, and to attempt to use every means up to and including deliberate sabotage of the entire project, to get their way.

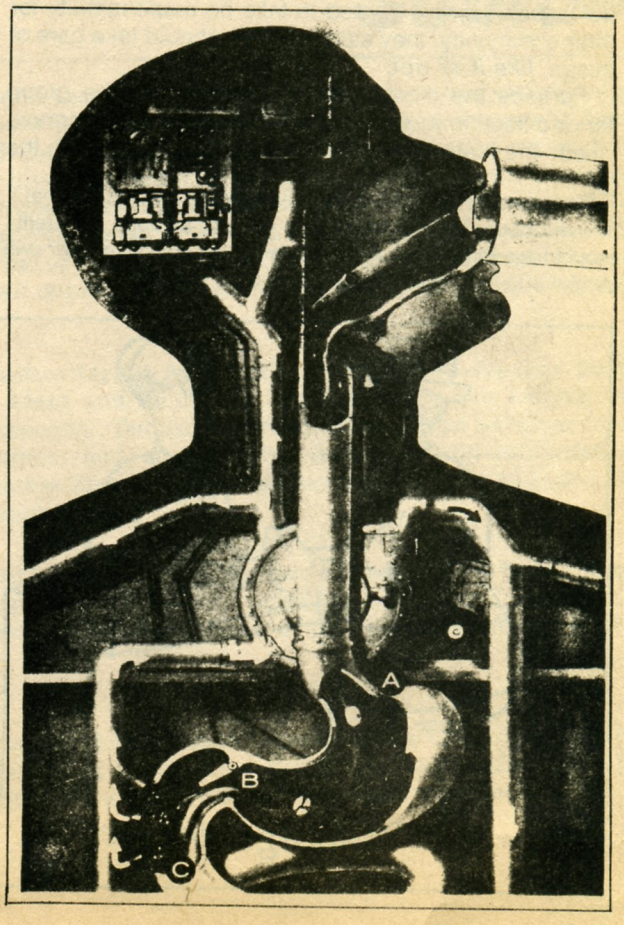
A number of points should be made:

First of all, the claim made by the Wages for Housework Group, and repeated elsewhere, that the struggle was between a group of poor tenants, especially women on social assistance struggling to keep their heads above water, and a group aspiring to become "middle-class homeowners" must be rejected. In fact, fully half the tenants at Bain are poor enough to receive governmental rent supplements; nearly all the rest are working-class as well. A substantial majority of **both** groups were opposed to the rent freeze. The dozen members of the Residents' Council, the elected executive at Bain, (the "tiny clique") were drawn about equally from each group. Nine of the twelve were women, three of them single mothers.

Nor is it true, by and large, that the poorest residents were hardest hit. In fact, those residents whose income was low enough to qualify them for subsidies ***were not affected by the increase at all.*** Their rent remained the same; the increase was covered by an increase in their subsidy. Furthermore, those who didn't qualify for subsidies, but who were hard hit by the increase, were offered and received an internal subsidy from the operating expenses of the co-op itself.

All this is not to deny that the 18% rent increase was an unpleasant blow. But it was something that tenants walked into with their eyes open, a burden they deliberately chose to shoulder. The reason they did so was their decision to accept some reduction in their standard of living now in order to achieve co-operative ownership, which would reduce their costs in the long run, and bring them greater control over their living environment. (I should also be pointed out that rents at Bain after the increase are still equivalent to or lower than rents in Toronto generally.) Incidentally, the fact that 29 units out of 260 went on a rent strike on their own when all the other tenants had decided not to, meant that the other tenants would have to pay more than necessary, in order to make up the difference in the total rent bill payable to the City. This caused some tenants to remark bitterly that it was a case of the middle class feeding off working people.

However, for many people at Bain, the key issue was not the economic one. It was rather that of ***control.*** Residents were of course interested in paying as little rent as possible — no doubt about that. And they thought a co-op would be the best way of achieving that goal. But through five years of doing battle with private and



public landlords, and putting up with constant mismanagement, they had arrived at a very firm commitment to controlling their living environment collectively, ***even if it meant making some short-term financial sacrifices.*** They didn't want a landlord — they wanted to run the place themselves. It is only in the light of this determination that the struggle at Bain can be understood at all. Other issues were subsidiary, tactical questions. The thing that divided the majority of residents from the Wages for Housework Group was their diametrically opposed views on who should control the place.

While the majority were prepared to take on the risks and burdens that residents' control might entail, the Wages for Housework Group rejected the goal of controlling the place out of hand, characterizing it alternately as irrelevant to people's real needs or as a utopian pipe-dream. They didn't care who ran the place, as long as their rents didn't go up: a short-sighted position even in its own terms, since most co-ops do have a better track record on rents in the long run. In making their case against the co-op, they deliberately and cynically played to people's fears of taking over responsibility themselves by suggesting all sorts of problems that might arise* — as if there had not been an incredible number of problems for as long as people could remember with both the private landlord and the city. The Wages for Housework people seemed to have but one solution to every problem: ask the government to take care of things, whether by providing more subsidies, taking management of the project back from the tenants, or paying them wages for housework. And when they couldn't convince residents to support their proposals, they actually turned to the various government bodies to ask them to overrule the decisions tenants had arrived at. To people who wanted to take on responsibility for their community, they said the state should take care of things, *like it or not.*

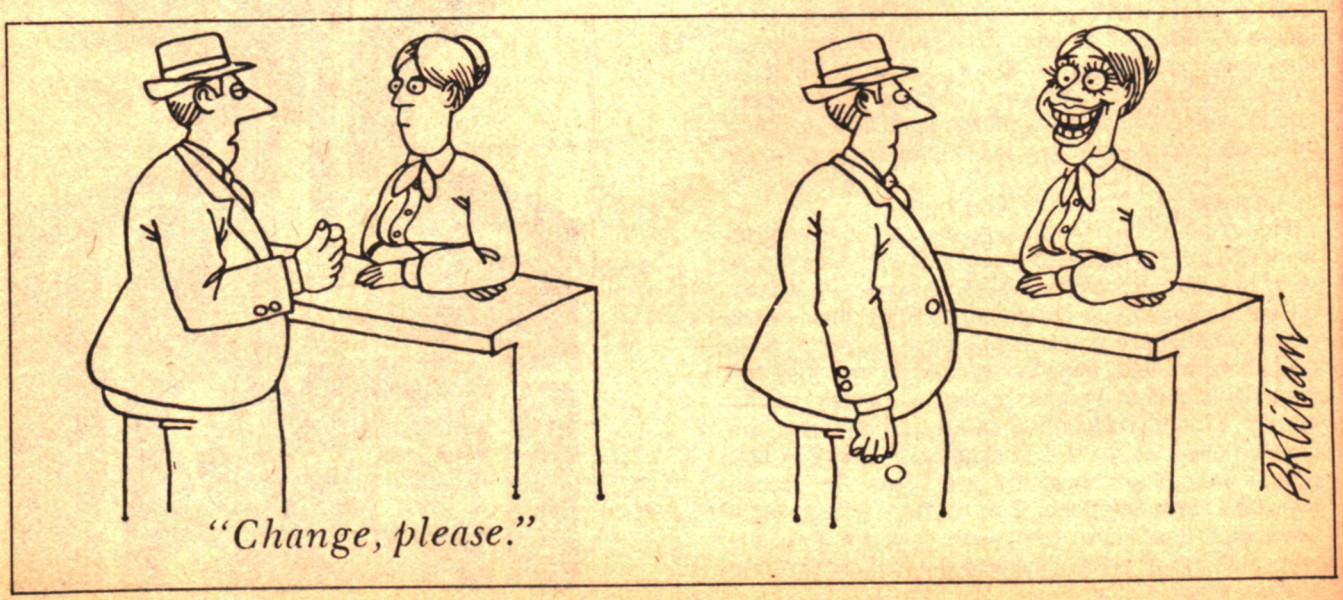
Perhaps the most obvious contradiction the group landed itself in was on the question of the rent increase itself. The majority was in favour of putting up with the increase because it would allow them to proceed with the transfer of ownership, and thus in a few months rid them of the City housing corporation, which was causing the increase through its mismanagement. The Wages for Housework people wanted to fight the increase by rejecting the co-op goal, thus permanently leaving the control of the project in the hands of the same city corporation that was imposing the increase in the first place.

Because of their commitment to continued city control of the project, the Wages for Housework group had no qualms about ignoring any decisions that residents arrived at, or about attacking the decision-making process that produced these decisions, or about asking the government to impose their solutions on residents.

Thus, for example, the Wages for Housework people consistently denigrated the general meetings at which decisions were arrived at at Bain, alleging that these decisions were imposed by the Council (executive). People who took part in general meetings were characterized as dupes of the Council. This, of course, was after a general meeting rejected their strategy by a 120-16 vote. Before that, they had had no criticisms of the meetings, which any of Bain's 400 adult residents can attend, speak at, and vote at. Even after the general meetings were dismissed as charades by them, however, they continued to turn out for them and put their case, and then dismiss their defeats at them as the result of manipulation. These meetings are not of course perfect examples of pure democracy, but the turnout at the crucial meetings was higher, for example, than the voter turnout for Toronto's municipal elections, which took place around the same time. When you see that many working people, who have to get up for work the next morning, spending several hours — their entire evening — on several different occasions, in face-to-face discussion about the future of their homes, you can be fairly sure that you're seeing a form of democracy that's a cut above what is usually considered democratic in this society.

And indeed people at Bain are justly proud of the way they make decisions, of the way major issues are raised in literature put out before meetings, and through intensive discussion at meetings. Not surprisingly, many of

* For example, their literature played up the suggestion that if the old boiler for the apartments were to explode, residents would have to pay over $100,000 for a new one out of their own pockets. In fact, the boiler is covered by insurance.



"Change, please."

them were indignant at the demand from Wages for Housework that decisions be made by referendum instead of general meeting. They saw it as a step backward from the level of involvement and democracy they had achieved. But of course Wages for Housework's advocacy of a referendum only lasted as long as it took them to lose in the referendum the city imposed on Bain after the group's lobbying at City Hall. (The 'delegations from Bain' which were sent to City Hall, incidentally, included such luminaries as Selma James and Judy Ramirez, two leaders of the International Wages for Housework Committee, neither of them exactly Bain residents.) Once the referendum was lost, by a decisive margin, it was off to City Hall and CMHC with demands the results be set aside. In their most recent literature, the Wages for Housework people don't suggest any kind of decision-making process at all — they simply demand that some government body — any government body — impose their will on what even they have to admit is the majority of Bain residents. (They do however say that "the outcome would have been different" if more of their supporters, and fewer of their opponents, were living at Bain!)

Their refusal to make any concessions at all to the goals of democracy and residents' control that most of the people at Bain have shown they care about a great deal seems to be traceable to the political theory that underlines their actions. The entire perspective of the Wages for Housework group apparently centres on a particularly vulgar form of economic determinism: the theory that people will only respond, and can only be organized around, issues that have to do with putting more money in their pockets. The theory says that people can't be interested in something as abstract as controlling their own community so, therefore, they aren't interested, and if they think they are, then they're just being duped. The Wages for Housework philosophy is neatly captured in the symbol they have themselves chosen, and which they used widely during their campaign at Bain: a hand clutching a wad of money.

The implications of their approach became very clear at Bain Avenue, where their campaign was based on exploiting people's passivity and fears and on the latent demoralization born of the long, drawn-out struggles at Bain, rather than building on people's strengths. At crucial moments, their appeal was always to the state to help them out. To the extent that their organizing succeeded, it succeeded in pitting working class people against a few people on social assistance and a group of middle class radicals. It was only their failure to win substantial support that kept them from destroying the solidarity that existed among the people of the Bain Co-op. In the process of trying, they showed themselves to be the epitome of the narrow political sect that is interested in nothing except its own dogma and self-aggrandizement. It is to the credit of the Bain community that they rejected the politics Wages for Housework offered them and in so doing developed a heightened sense of their own purpose and power.

Ulli Diemer

Sources

Libertarian socialism hasn't swept the world (yet!) but libertarian ideas, literature, publications, and groups are to be found in an amazing number of places. If we are to turn these beginings into a full-fledged movement, we will have to establish more contact with each other, co-operate with each other, and learn from each other as we work to improve our ideas and our practice. Listed below are a few libertarian sources, groups, and publications. There are many more: the best place to find out about them is from Synthesis *(see below). Here we have picked out some of the most significant ones, with some emphasis on Canada. We don't necessarily endorse everything these groups have to say, but we think they are worth knowing about. In future issues of THE RED MENACE we plan to mention others, and to describe literature of special interest to libertarians, as well as places to obtain hard-to-get books, pamphlets, etc.*

Synthesis
P.O. Box 1858
San Pedro
California 90733
U.S.A.

"An Anti-Authoritarian Newsletter for Citizen-Worker Self-Management Ideas and Activities" published by the League for Economic Democracy. Publishes correspondence and exhange from anti-authoritarians, and an extensive listing of anti-authoritarian groups from across North America and beyond. $4.00 for 10 issues, 40 cents for a sample copy.

Liberation
186 Hampshire St.
Cambridge
Mass. 02139
U.S.A.

A thoughtful and sensitive magazine carrying some of the best writing currently being done on the left, especially on"cultural" and other questions usually out of the purview of the "official" left. $10 for 10 issues.

Open Road
Box 6135, Station G
Vancouver, B.C.
Canada

Produced by an anarchist group in Vancouver, the Open Road carries news and information about anti-authoritarian communist developments throughout the world. Free, but donations welcome.

Sources cont'd

Our Generation
3934 St. Urbain
Montreal, Quebec
Canada

An anti-authoritarian quarterly journal carrying articles and analysis about political trends and strategy, especially in relation to Canada and Quebec. $7 per year. Also carries selection of pamphlets on radical social theory, urban questions and political movements.

Black Rose Books
3934 St. Urbain
Montreal, Quebec
Canada

Publisher of radical and libertarian books. Free catalogue.

Industrial Defense Bulletin
P.O. Box 306, Station E
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

Published by the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) Defense Local 2, the Bulletin tries to co-ordinate "defense and relief to members of the working class who are being persecuted for their activity in the class struggle". Also sells some literature.

HAPOTOC
P.O. Box 10638
Amsterdam, Holland

HAPOTOC ("Help a Prisoner and Outlaw Torture Organizing Collective") is a libertarian organization consisting mainly of prisoners. Their newsletter contains general articles as well as articles especially about prisons and repression.

Telos
c/o Dept. of Sociology
Washington University
St. Louis, Missouri 63130
U.S.A.

A radical philosophy journal.

Upshot
P.O. Box 40256
San Francisco
Calif. 94140
U.S.A.

"If you're bored by shitless anemic leftists with their elitist manipulations and masochistic reforms — and if you're interested in creative and fun actions against a life of death — drop us a line."

Black and Red
Box 9546
Detroit, Mich. 48202
U.S.A.

Printers and publishers of some excellent libertarian literature. A complete list is available on request.

Philadelphia Solidarity
GPO Box 13011
Philadelphia, PA 19101
U.S.A.

The distributor in North America of London Solidarity's literature, as well as some of its own titles. They carry some first-class literature. Free catalogue on request.

New Hogtown Press
12 Hart House Circle
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

A distributor and publisher of left literature. Not a libertarian group as such, but carries some good libertarian titles. Extensive catalogue available free.

Exchanges et Mouvement
B.P. 241
75866 Paris Cedex 18
France

Publishes a newsletter in both an English and French version that draws together worldwide information of interest to the libertarian left. Subscriptions 10F. or equivalent.

THE RED MENACE
P.O. Box 171
Postal Station D
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

A libertarian socialist newsletter. 75 cents a copy, or $3.00 for 4 issues. We are interested in making contact with people who like what we have to say, to see what we can do together.

What is Libertarian Socialism?

We call ourselves *libertarian socialists*. But why the adjective? Why *libertarian* socialism? Is libertarian socialism any different from socialism as it is generally understood?

The problem, and the reason for the adjective, is that there exists no definition of socialism that is "generally understood". The dilemma of socialism today is first of all the dilemma of the *meaning* of socialism, because the term has been applied to such an all-encompassing range of persons, parties, philosophies, states, and social systems, often completely antagonistic to each other, that the very term 'socialism' has become virtually meaningless. There are more variations of socialism currently in existence than there are varieties of soup on the supermarket shelves, more socialist parties with the correct line than religious sects with a monopoly on salvation. Most of the earth's people are now governed by states calling themselves socialist, states displaying among themselves the familiar antagonisms usually held to be hallmarks of capitalist imperialism, as well as *every* kind of social system presently in existence, from declining tribalism to advanced industrialism. Can there be *any* meaning worth salvaging in a label that has been claimed by Kautsky and Lenin, by Mao and Brezhnev, by Gandhi and Hitler, by Ed Broadbent and Karl Marx? Does the term connote anything more than "just" or "good" to its proponents, "bureaucratic" or "bad" to its enemies?

The temptation is strong to abandon the label entirely, to adopt some new term to indicate the kind of social change we propose. But to do so would be to attempt to side-step a problem that really cannot be avoided. For the terminological confusion is not accidental. Nor is it 'merely' a matter of words. It is rooted in the fact that the dominant social system always acts to integrate that which it cannot destroy — movements, ideas, even words — and therefore destroys them precisely by integrating them, by claiming them. It denies the very possibility of an alternative to itself, and proves this impossibility by absorbing the alternative and emptying it of meaning, by adopting new forms and new language which create the illusion of choice and change while perpetuating the same essential relations of domination. Since the main challenge to capitalism has always come from that which called itself socialism, it is hardly surprising that capitalist social relations have survived in half the world by calling themselves socialist. 'Socialism' has become another name for capitalism, another form of capitalism: in victory, socialism has been more totally buried than it ever could have been in defeat. Capitalism has dissolved the socialist alternative by stealing away its name, its language, and its dreams. We have to take them back, for without words there can be no concepts, and where there is no language of freedom, there can be no dream of liberation.



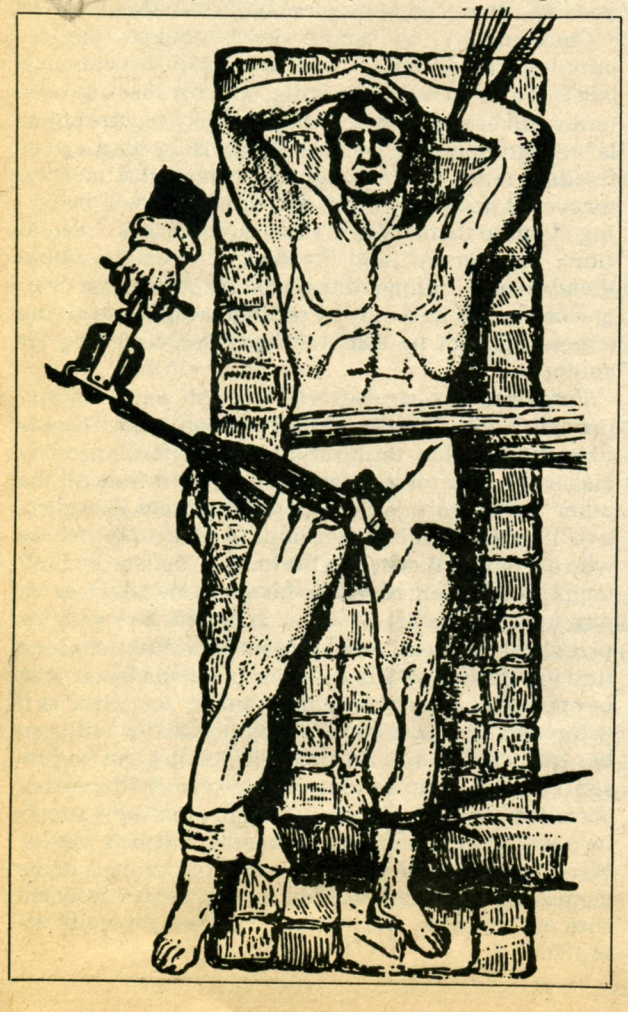
Consequently, we cannot simply abdicate the terminology of socialism and arbitrarily invent new labels. To do so would be futile, both because any new terms will be similarly sucked dry if they acquire popular recognition, and because the existing language of freedom refers to meanings and history that must be recovered from those who now suppress them by laying claim to them. Words such as 'socialism', 'revolution', 'democracy', and 'freedom' do contain within themselves a critique of the existing order. That critique can be realized only by reconquering it and giving it new life, not by abandoning it and searching for another.

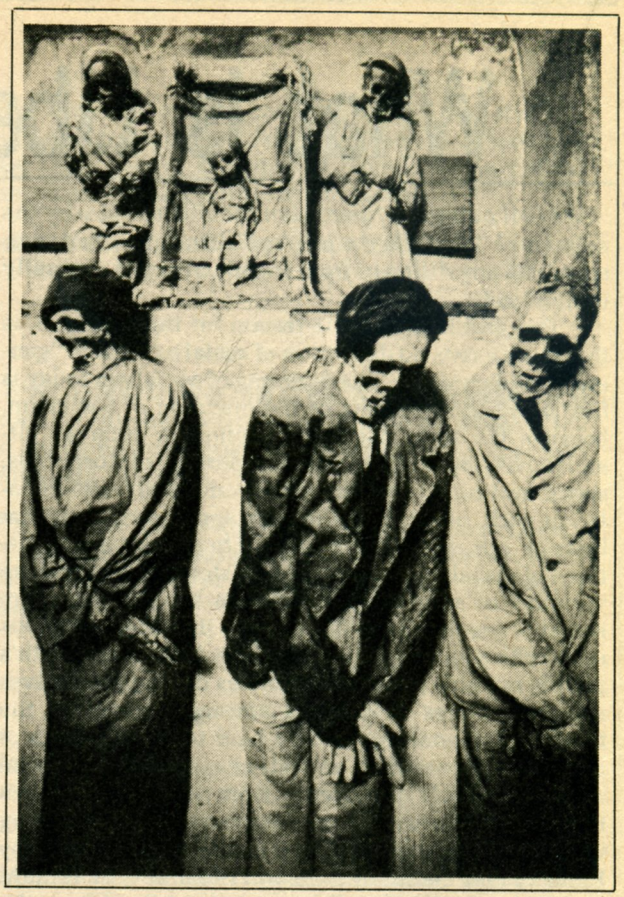
For this reason, we start with the term 'socialism' and precede it with the adjective 'libertarian', which begins to elaborate that term, and which simultaneously makes it a new term, by differentiating it from all the other 'socialisms'. Perhaps most important, the adjective 'libertarian' raises questions in the minds of those who encounter it, whereas the term 'socialism' by itself tends to let itself be taken for granted, to act as an uninteresting vessel which each person fills with his preconceived ideas. And by raising questions, the term initiates the first step in a process of criticism that must be applied equally to capitalism and to 'socialism' as it is "generally understood". This process of criticism has not yielded any finished results that can be presented as a comprehensive picture of libertarian socialism. Indeed, the very concept of critique stands in opposition to the idea of having finished results. What is presented here are some beginnings, some themes for elaboration. Most of the ideas presented here are not new, but neither are they generally accepted.

What is implied by the term 'libertarian socialism'?

• The idea that socialism is first and foremost about *freedom*, and therefore about overcoming the domination, repression, and alienation that block the free flow of human creativity, thought, and action. We do not equate socialism with planning, state control, or nationalization of industry, although we understand that in a socialist society (not "under" socialism) economic activity will be collectively controlled, managed, planned, and owned. Similarly, we believe that socialism will involve equality, but we do not think that socialism *is* equality, for it is possible to conceive of a society where everyone is equally oppressed. We think that socialism is incompatible with one-party states, with constraints on freedom of speech, with an elite exercising power 'on behalf of' the people, with leader cults, with any of the other devices by which the dying society seeks to portray itself as the new society.

• An approach to socialism that incorporates cultural revolution, women's and children's liberation, and the critique and *transformation of daily life*, as well as the more traditional concerns of socialist politics. A politics that is completely revolutionary because it seeks to transform all of reality. We do not think that capturing the economy and the state lead automatically to the transformation of the rest of social being, nor do we equate liberation with changing our life-styles and our heads. Capitalism is a *total* system that invades *all* areas of life: socialism must be the overcoming of capitalist reality in its *entirety*, or it is nothing.





• Libertarian politics concerns itself with the liberation of the individual *because* it is collective, and with the collective liberation *because* it is individualistic.

• Being a socialist is not only an intellectual thing, a matter of having the right ideas or the right intellectual approach. It is also a matter of the way you lead your life.

• A politics that is *revolutionary* because, in the words of Marx and Engels, "revolution is necessary not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing* it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew."

• Because revolution is a collective process of self-liberation, because people and societies are transformed through struggle, not by decree, therefore "the emancipation of the working classes can only be achieved by the working classes themselves", not by a Leninist vanguard, a socialist state, or any other agent acting on their behalf.

• A conception of the left not as separate from society, but as part of it. We of the left are people who are subjected to social oppression like everyone else, who struggle for socialism because our own liberation is possible only when all society is liberated. We seek to bring others to our socialist project not to do them a favour, but because we need their help to achieve our own liberation. Cohn-Bendit's comment that "It is for yourself that you make the revolution" is not an individualistic position, but the key to a truly collective politics, based on the joy and promise of life, instead of on the self-sacrifice that is often the radical's version of the white man's burden.

• We of the left see ourselves as equal participants in the struggle, not as the anointed leaders of it. We put forward our socialist vision as part of our contribution, but we do not think that our belief in socialism means that we have all the answers. We deal with people honestly, as equals, not presuming the right to dictate what they shall think or do, nor presuming that we have nothing to learn from them. We have enough faith in our politics that we do not seek to manipulate people to our conclusions.

• As socialists we form organizations with other people who share our ideas. This is necessary and valid, but it represents a situation that we should continually try to overcome, not one that we should accept and even institutionalize in the Leninist mode. Socialism implies not only the withering away of the state, but also *the withering away of the left* and its organizations as separate entities. Power in a socialist society must be exercised in ways allowing the participation of everyone, not only those belonging to a given organization. This must be prefigured in the political forms and movements that emerge *before* the revolution. The ultimate goal of the left and its organizations must not be to rule society, but to abolish themselves.

• The most important component of socialist consciousness is *critical thought*. We must learn to think about everything critically, to take nothing for granted, nothing as given. Consequently, we do not want people to accept socialist ideas in the way they now accept, partially or completely, bourgeois ideas. We want to destroy *all* uncritical acceptance and belief. We think that a critical examination of society leads to socialist conclusions, but what is important is not simply the conclusions but equally and even more so the method of arriving at them.

• We base ourselves on the heritage of Marxism. This does not mean that we accept all the ideas of Marx, let alone of those who claim to be his followers. Marxism is a point of departure for us, not our pre-determined destination. We accept Marx's dictum that our criticism must fear nothing, including its own results. Our debt to Marxism will be no less if we find that we have to go beyond it.

• Nothing could be more foreign to us than the "traditional Marxist" idea that all important questions have been answered. On the contrary, we have yet to formulate many of the important questions.

• We have to try to maintain a balance of theory and practice which seeks to integrate them, and which recognizes that we must engage in both at all times.

• The centre of gravity of our politics has to be where we are, not in the vicarious identification with struggles elsewhere. Solidarity work is important, but it cannot be the main focus of a socialist movement.

• We don't know if we'll win: history is made by human beings, and where human beings are concerned, nothing is inevitable. But because people do make history, we know that it is *possible* to build a new world, and we strive to realize that possibility. "There is only one reason for being a revolutionary — because it is the best way to live."

Ulli Diemer



Why the Leninists Will Win

The following article was written by a radical in the United States last summer. Although it deals with a different context, we felt that it raised problems and situations that have relevance for us here in Canada too. So we reprint the article here as a contribution to the discussion that many of us are engaging in at the present time.

We anarchists and Syndicalists — indeed all who believe that the liberation of the workers is the task of the workers themselves — were too poorly organized and too weak to hold the revolution on a straight course towards socialism.

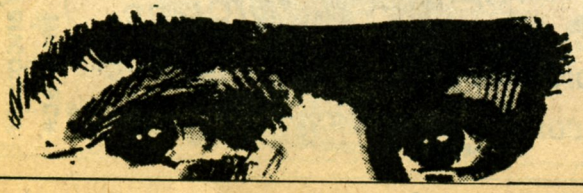
—M. Sergven in the Moscow anarchist newspaper **Vol'nyi Golos Truda**, *Sept. 16, 1918*

Most of the Russian Anarchists themselves were unfortunately still in the messes of limited group activities and of individualistic endeavour as against the more important social and collective efforts . . . honesty and sincerity compel me to state that their work would have been of infinitely greater practical value had they been better organized and equipped to quide the released energies of the people towards the reorganization of life on a libertarian foundation.

—Emma Goldman, **My disillusionment in Russia**, *1925.*

The idea that capitalism in its present form in the United States **will not endure** is hardly to be disputed anywhere. The capitalist class itself debates only the precise mixture of state capitalism, social democracy, and fascism that will best serve to maintain and expand their own power and profits.

That debate is, of course, reflected in Leninist circles. While some maneuver for potential advantage in a developing social democracy, others are busy learning the skills of underground terrorism and urban guerilla warfare. The fortunes of there various groups will ebb and flow with the developing consensus of the capitalist class.



Thus, barring a major nuclear war, we face two possible futures. One, which I think less likely, would see a major uprising against a fascist tyranny, an uprising led by the political descendents of the Weather Underground, the Symbionese Liberation Army, etc. The other future, which seems more likely to me, would feature the electoral victory of a broad coalition that would have evolved from groups we know today as the



Communist Party, October League, Revolutionary Communist Party, Socialist Workers Party, etc.

In a sense most important to us, of couse, both futures would be identical: the working class would have no substantive political and economic power. There would be a lot of speeches about the working class, a lot of red flags flying, a lot of statues of Marx and Engels. There might (or might not) be some improvements in the conditions of ordinary working people. But there would be no real freedom. As the rock song of several years ago put it: "Say hello to the new boss; it's the same as the old boss!"

But what about us? How will the presence of those who believe that "the liberation of the workers is the task of the workers themselves" affect these two futures of Leninist victory?

Therein, as it is said, lies a tale.

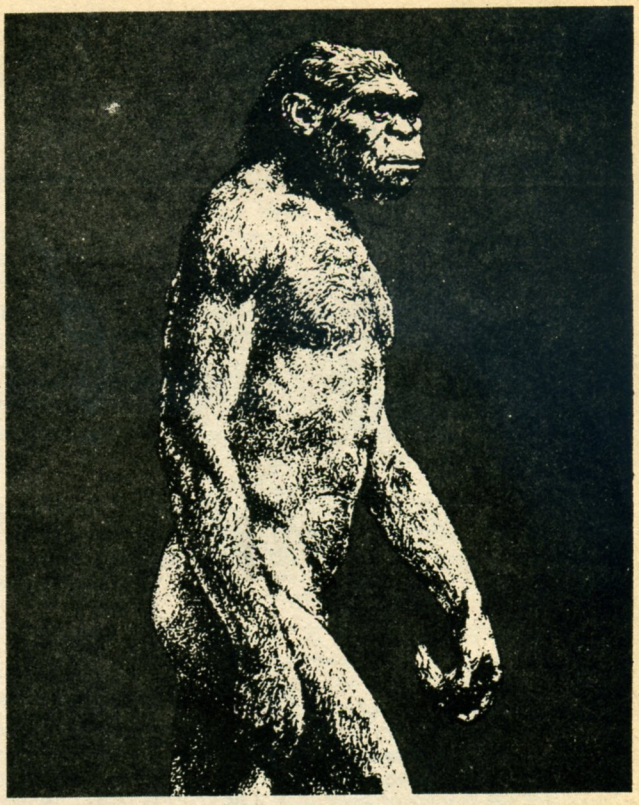
About ten months ago (October 1975) I decided to move to the San Francistco Bay Area from New Orleans. I had spent a number of years working in a very small anarcho-communist collective (usually less than six people), and it seemed likely to me that nothing bigger was going to come along in New Orleans for longer than I wanted to wait.

One thing I expected to find here was a much higher level of class consciousness among ordinary working people than was (is) the case in New Orleans. I was not disappointed. There are **always** thousands of workers on strike here. Frequently they side-step their "leadership" and engage in militant struggle. One can even get occasional glimpses of a kind of primitive socialist consciousness.

But I also expected to find a large number (several hundreds) of people who understood anarcho-communist politics and who were eager to implement those politics in mass struggles. In my more hopeful moments, I saw the possibility of beginning to build a real movement for workers' councils, starting in the Bay Area and spreading across the country.

Of course, why should I expect this? It's not true anyplace else. I have to admit that there was a sizable hunk of romanticism in my "thinking" on this matter. The Bay Area was one of the hotbeds of student radicalism during the 1960's. I had seen some of the pamphlets published by the neo-Situationist groups in the early 1970's, and I assumed these Berkeley-based groups had been steadily growing. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it seemed overwhelmingly obvious that given the class consciousness of ordinary working people in the Bay Area, even a small but active anarcho-communist group would quickly grow towards becoming a movement, constantly expanding, recruiting new people, launching new projects, showing up in the midst of every struggle with our basic





idea: **only** the working class can liberate the working class!

Well, I found the anarchists, anarcho-communists, libertarian socialists, etc., if not by the hundreds at least by the score. I attended one meeting with more than 50 people present and a number of others with from 30 to 40 people present. Not bad for a start, right?

This would be a much easier article to write if I could just say that all those I met were simply assholes. Unfortunately, with only a few exceptions, they aren't assholes. They are people that anyone with our political views would be delighted to work with.

Except that that is the most amazing and sorrowful fact of the matter. The practical definitions of "political work" that I encountered among various libertarians here were simply stunning in their manifest idiocy.

Or perhaps my own understanding is simply too primitive. I think of political work, whatever form it takes, as something we do in order to win over millions of working people (our sisters and brothers) to the idea that we should all run our own lives. It is, or ought to be, clear that both elements are equally important: mass movements, no matter how massive, that are not libertarian will not liberate us; **our ideas, no matter how libertarian, will not liberate us unless shared with millions of working people.**

Instead, I heard arguments like these:

"Who needs a movement anyway? What we really need are more small affinity groups, a few close comrades operating on common politics and trust in each other. That's the only real egalitarian politics; big movements are authoritarian by their very nature."

If mass movements are authoritarian by their very nature, if we **cannot** build an egalitarian mass movement, then we are simply doomed. Small groups will never overthrow capitalism. Instead, the Leninists will do it

and we will always live under some form of class society.

"Hell, it's not up to **us** *to liberate the workers any more than it's up to the Leninists. The deepening of the current economic crisis will convince the workers that they must liberate themselves, without any help from us."*

What is it up to **us** to do? Is our role that of merely sitting back and commenting on the latest trends in the economy? When we say that the workers must liberate themselves, **do we include ourselves in that phrase?**

"We cannot build a movement at all. Movements are built by millions of workers when they want to build them: a small group can't just command such a movement into existence."

It's true that movements by definition are built by millions of working people. But was there ever a movement that didn't begin **when a small group decided it was time to begin?**



"We can't simply go out and build a libertarian communist movement. First we should spend a year or two developing a common theory and building trust in each other."

How many times does it still have to be repeated: revolutionary theory comes **only** from revolutionary practice. Trust come **only** from mutual experience in common struggle.

"Anyway, we don't have to rush into building a united libertarian organization. It's not as if the Leninists are about to take over. They're always squabbling among themselves, committing one blunder after another, hah,hah."

One thing I've noticed out here: the libertarians all take endless delight in the blunders of the Leninists. Now go back and read the quotations at the beginning of this article: **who had the last laugh in Russia?**

"We should not publish a mass anarcho-communist newspaper in the Bay Area. It's too much work and besides, there's already a dozen left papers out here."

That is, we should scorn to reach working people with our ideas because we'd have to work hard to do it and, anyway it's not necessary since the Leninists are already reaching people with their ideas. (!)

That is what the libertarians in the Bay Area say; this is what they do: revolutionary psychotherapy, revolutionary computer programming, revolutionary book store, revolutionary radio, revolutionary film-making, revolutionary camping out at Lake Tahoe, revolutionary trips to Europe, and, most importantly, revolutionary study groups.

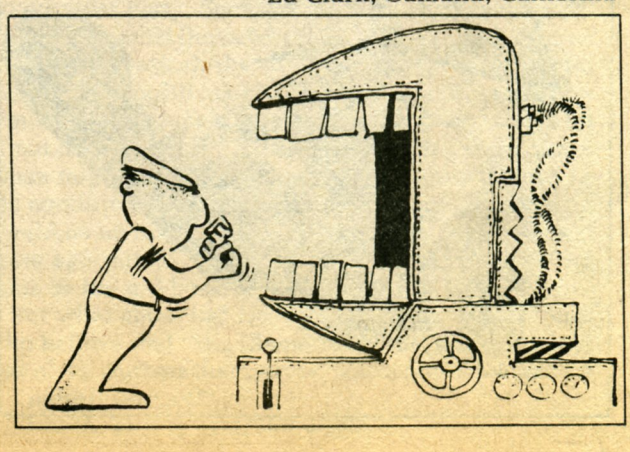
There may be dozens of these groups, some more serious in their studies than others. But they share a common pattern of social invisibility. They are, by and large, closed to new members as a matter of policy. Thus, even if a new person became interested in our politics and (somehow!) found out that one of these groups existed, they wouldn't be allowed to join. (!)

The reader will not be surprised, then, to learn that **nothing** is presently being done to build an anarcho-communist movement in the Bay Area. One naturally hopes that this will not always be the case, **but it will be as long as the libertarians here resolutely refuse to accept their political responsibilities!**

It is nothing but ego-puffing drivel to call oneself an anarchist, anarcho-communist, libertarian socialist, etc. and then sit back and wait for working people " out there" to liberate us. It is nothing but revolutionary nose-picking to sit back and wait for the capitalist class to arrange a convenient crisis and then give up its state power to the working class. It is positively criminal when we, knowing full well the intentions of the Leninists, do nothing except make wise-cracks while they gradually learn enough to take over from the old capitalist class and re-establish class society on a new and much more terrible foundation!

The grim truth of the matter is that when (not if, **when**) the present form of capitalism in this country is overthrown, the Leninists will win . . . unless we overcome our own folly of fragmentation, passivity, and disorganization. The Leninists will win . . . unless we develop confidence in our own abilities to organize a mass anarcho-communist movement. The Leninists will win . . . **unless we ourselves accept the responsibility of fighting to win!**

Ed Clark, Oakland, California



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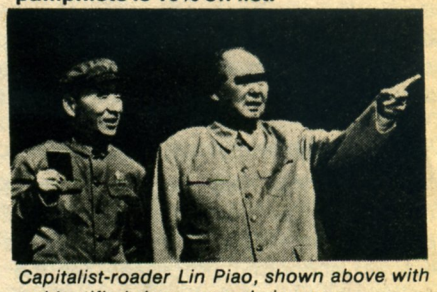
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Libertarian Socialism

Two models of "socialism" presently prevail. They are Social Democracy and Bureaucratic Collectivism. Both the former with its concentration on the welfare state and state intervention in the economy and the latter with its plan attempt to administer society according to a bureaucratic plan or plans and attempt to fulfill the needs of their societies for ever more capital and consumer goods. In both these societies there is a hierarchy that is not hidden by the formal democracy in Social Democracy or the rhetoric of Bureaucratic Collectivism.

Against these two models of society Libertarian Socialists have upheld the principle of self-determination which means not only the control of impersonal economic processes but the collective administration of society by all its members. This is not to be confused with forms of "workers' control" which decide how to implement decisions arrived at from above. Instead it means the democratic determination as well as implementation of the goals of a society.

Why is this important? Not because of any abstract democratic dogma. The collective self-management of society is required if certain needs suppressed in this society are to be realized. In general these needs can be described as reconciliation with nature both inner (desire for immediate gratification) and outer (the sensuous world).

Capitalism requires the endless accumulation of capital goods. Hence any object is a potential instrument for the creation of other instruments. Any quality it has that cannot be employed in the accumulation of capital is abstracted from or even forgotten. Thus capital accumulation requires a repression of outer nature — it can have no worthof its own, it must be simply a source of tools and raw materials. This in turn requires a repression of inner nature — urges to enjoy the sensuous outer world must be repressed.

Along with continuous capital accumulation occurs the production of consumer goods market but this doesn't result in the satisfaction of repressed needs. The consumer must be encouraged to be disatisfied with the present supply of goods so that he/she can buy more. Thus the existence of an infinite possibility of fulfillment of consumer wants results in an endless disatisfaction with the goods already possessed. And of course the consumer will have to continue his/her laborious toil to buy these goods.

This repression of needs must continue as long as capital accumulation remains unchecked. For under such a system it will not be possible to think of the objects produced except as tools to make tools. As objects to be used rather than enjoyed.

Furthermore the endless accumulation of capital reduces that shortening of the working day which Marx called the basic precondition of freedom.

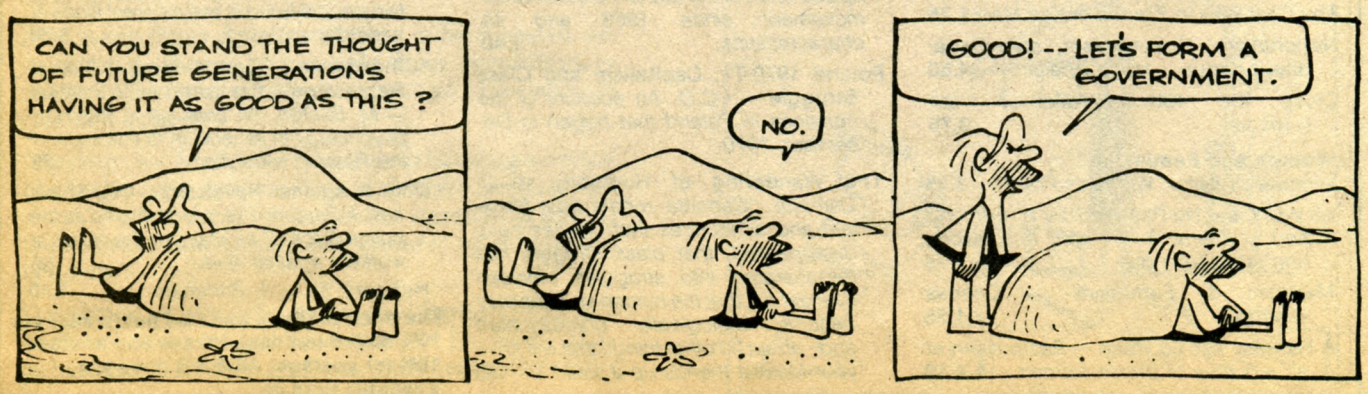
Thus there is a very basic connection between the form of Libertarian Socialism — self-management — and its content — the satisfaction of basic needs through the reconciliation with Nature. Only through the self-management of production will it be possible to produce objects to satisfy needs for enjoyment. At present these repressed needs are expressed in art and play.

In this society play and art have no utility as independent activities — a source of freedom and a limitation. Art abandons any claim to shape this society for the freedom to create its own world where freedom and sensibility are united in an aesthetic form according to its own proper laws. The conflict that exists between a reason bent on domination and sensibility which must serve as a mere raw material is replaced by harmony. The aesthetic form is not imposed upon sensory experience but instead allows it to express truth that is suppressed in daily existence. However Art remains a contemplative activity for most people especially with its enshrinement in museums.

Play however is something that all can participate in at least in its early stages in childhood and in this period it is egalitarian as well. Each player in the simple childhood game takes his turn or plays in a circle. And like art play is performed for its own sake according to its own rules. However, to a large extent it is devolved as trivial, made into a contemplative activity (spectator sports) or comes to reflect a repressive society (card games are played for money and schools compete in hierarchically organized teams that vie for rewards.)

However play is a reconciliation between reason and sensibility. There are rules but they have no other aim than to provide enjoyment.

Both these activities prefigure a new society — one where rules are freely chosen by those to whom they are applied and reason and sensibility are united. It is now more possible than ever before to construct such a soci-





ety. It would mean that play could come into its own and be taken seriously for its own sake. The conflict between freedom and necessity would disappear as work could be performed as an enjoyable activity. In fact enjoyment of work would become a need. It would be performed in accordance with needs for objects of beauty and enjoyment as well as mere utility.

For such a society to be realized there must be a revolt against the present system whereby needs are reduced to the need for objects of mere utility in the cause of infinite capital accumulation imposed by hierarchical plans. In short there must be a revolt against bureaucracy — the predominant trend of societal organization.

While there is no evidence of a mass movement against bureaucratization, still we can observe the following trends:

1) The attempt to reduce all facts to a system of deductive equations is ultimately self-defeating. It can't be done even for natural scientific subject matter, is less possible for societies and is impossible under a dynamic capitalist economy where means of production are constantly changing.

2) Thus it is necessary to summon the resources of those who were to be administered in order to deal with shortcomings that must necessarily arise in the plan.

3) To do this throws the system of hierarchical domination into question.

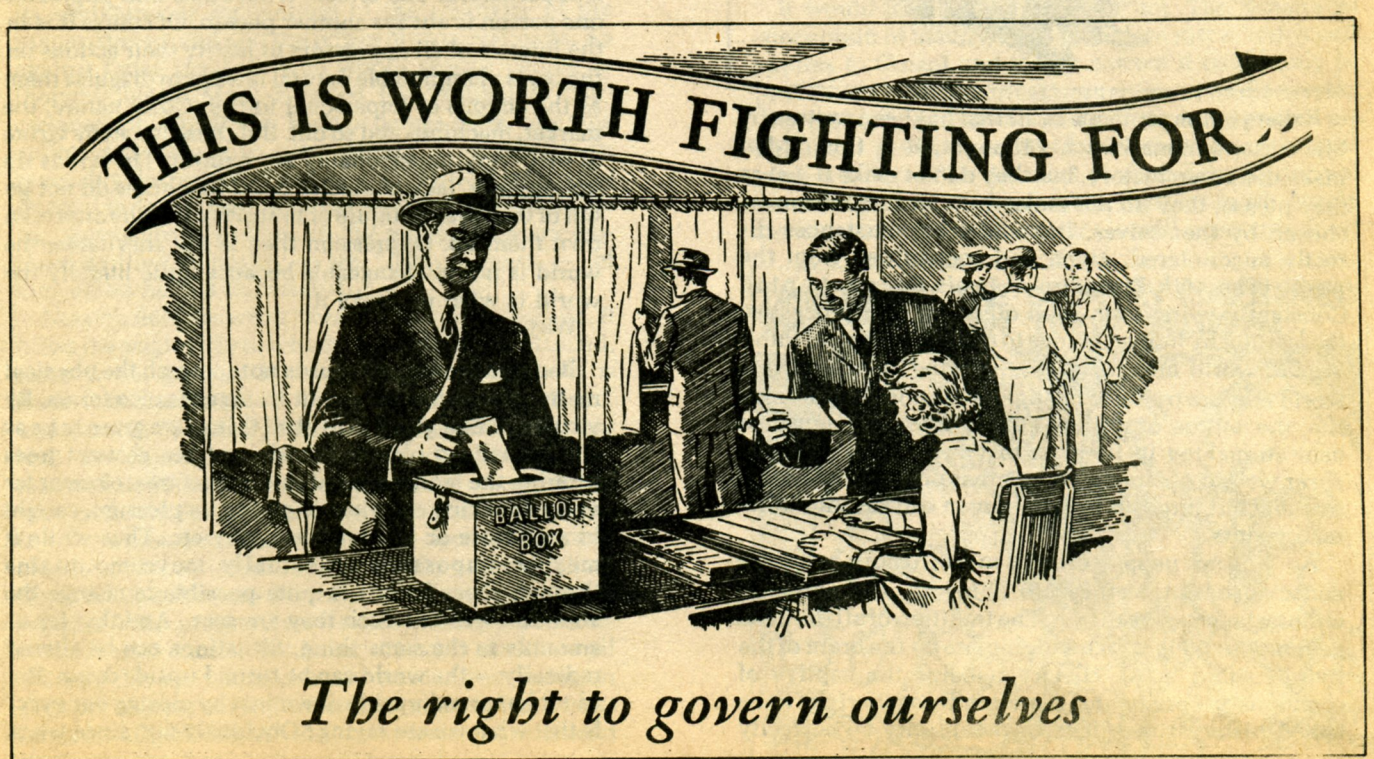
4) Therefore the informal groups that are formed in factories, neighbourhoods, and all other places where it is necessary to respond to bureaucratization must be crushed but can never entirely disappear.

5) Any revolts against bureaucracy that have been internalized can create the conditions for a higher level of consciousness later. Revolts against monopoly capitalism led to the welfare state. Now this cushion against unemployment has led to a revolt against work and labour discipline.

6) This revolt against bureaucracy can become more universal as bureaucratization expands. Thus not only the industrial worker but the housewife, tenant, student must respond to bureaucratization. The revolt can encompass all aspects of daily life.

It should be pointed out that there is no guarantee that any one group in this society — including the proletariat wherever and whatever it is — will necessarily be the bearer of the universal. The World Spirit owes us no favors. All that bureaucratization implies is that more and more the critique of anyone's particular condition can if pushed far enough lead to the critique of society.

Tom McLaughlin



The Crisis of Dialectical Materialism and Libertarian Socialism



If there is one sentence in all that has been written by Marx that summarizes his thought, it is this: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past". *(The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte p15).* Constantly vying with each other are two processes: the attempt by human beings to change the world into a human world and the self-preserving inertia of this world they are trying to change. On the one side human life, the source of all meaning, a free consciousness bent on making its freedom real and on the other the sheer weight of circumstances that not only resist this freedom but threaten to turn human actions into inhuman results.

As long as people do not make history with the consciousness that they are doing so, the power of circumstances prevails — "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living". (ibid. p15). History remains the captive of economic necessity and therefore loses its right to be called history since that word can only be correctly applied to a record of human achievement whereas history prior to liberation is a record of the rule of necessity. History proper begins when this rule has been broken, i.e., when history becomes the enterprise of free individuals acting collectively out of solidarity with each other. Till then men make history not as human beings but as objects blindly reacting upon one another.

Still even if they do it blindly, it is men and women who make history. Were it not for that there would be no hope of liberation. The rule of necessity would be permanent and freedom would not only be unattainable but also unintelligible.

Libertarian socialism starts from this simple but profound truth. People make their own history. Therefore oppression which has so far been the predominant theme of history is not a natural principle. And it is not a supernatural one either. What rules and oppresses one person is always another person. Of course it is in the interest of all oppressors to justify their actions on the basis of immutable natural laws or to disguise them as the actions of impersonal forces (Gods, nature, the market, machines and so on). But these forces by virtue of their very impersonality are neutral. The winds do not oppress, lack of shelter does. Machines do not go out of their way to injure or to stultify life, the ones who own them do. Oppression then is not inevitable, the world is not unchangeable because quite literally the world is what we make it.

Why?

Because the world for us is not so much the physical reality that surround us but its significance for us. By virtue of being given to us at all things are given to us as situationalized objects. We do not see abstract trees littering the landscape but this or that tree, close or far away, blocking our view or giving us pleasure, caught in a glimpse or observed leisurely etc. Thus while it may be impossible to actually move mountains through sheer faith it is quite possible to change the situation within which they are seen. And that for us amounts to the same thing. Situations can be altered radically — the world can be turned upside down. But can it be turned upside down just by closing our eyes? Is that what we are saying? Obviously not, since when

we close our eyes we know perfectly well that the world has remained the way it was. We know, in other words, that we have closed our eyes. If we try to deceive ourselves and start walking with our eyes shut the pain of bumping into things will rudely expose our deception. Hence our ability to change the world and our inability to do so purely through contemplation.



The originality of the Marxian idea is to be found in its simultaneous recognition of the creativity of the human subject and and the power of circumstances. As against those idealists who would reduce people to thought-objects Marx asserted the irreducible concreteness of human life. Human beings suffer and this suffering is unique to every person. It establishes irrevocably the reality of each individual and resists the attempt to drown individual experiences in the totalizing movement of history. In the sense that Marx emphasizes the materiality — the "sensuousness" — of the subject he is a materialist.

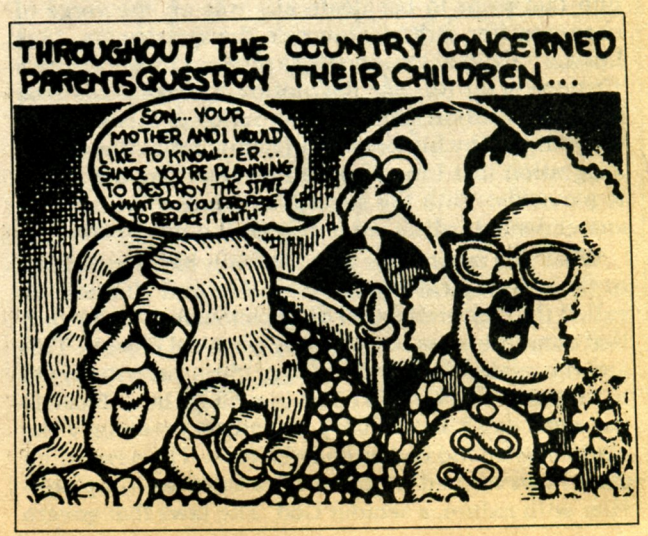
Nevertheless the word "materialist" is misleading. It hides the originality to which we have already alluded, namely, the attempt by Marx to go beyond both idealism and materialism. In his "Theses on Feurbach" and again in "The Holy Family" he makes it quite clear that he rejects "scientific" materialism. The materialists of the 18th century, with their mechanistic view of the subject as a passive receptor of data emanating from objects, failed to grasp the self-creative character of the human subject. Insofar as materialism liberated its adherents from the dreadful mythology of religion it was progressive: it expressed the experience of those who denied comfort and luxury yet knew all too well that the material world was far from being an illusion. As a partial truth therefore, materialism had its function to perform. As *the* truth, however, it turned itself into a mythology. True, "Materialism is indisputably the *only myth* that suits revolutionary requirements" (J-P Sartre "Materialism & Revolution") but it remains a myth and under certain circumstances a dangerous one.

These abstract considerations have very practical consequences. Marx was the first to point out that "The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men who change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating" (Theses on Feurbach" III).

Why then has Marxism come to be associated with a doctrine that proclaims the overwhelming importance of objective circumstances? In part through propaganda. Capitalism being mechanistic in its practice is well suited to denouce opposing theories as mechanistic. Having made freedom precious by denying it it finds it useful to attribute its own sins to the doctrines of others. Still its task would have proved far harder than it has if Marxists had not been so anxious to justify their critics.

When Marx said in "The German Ideology" that "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" he does not seem to have realized the extent to which this applied to him too. Even less did his followers. But Marx was quite adamant about this: "circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances" and "Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge . . . a period of transformation by its own consciousness" (*Preface to "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy"*). Certainly as Marx himself demonstrated so brilliantly we cannot judge the actions of the bourgeoisie by what the bourgeoisie thinks of them, or for that matter, by what the proletariat thinks of them. Are Marxists exempt from historical conditioning?

It would appear that they are not. The materialist conception of history applies to Marx just as much as it applies to Guizot and if it is correct it could only be proven so by the historical limitations of its discoverer. The problem is that the ideas of the ruling class are dominant precisely to the extent that they are universal. It follows that the most profound expressions of the ruling class — those ideas that are most closely associated with its character — will seem the most



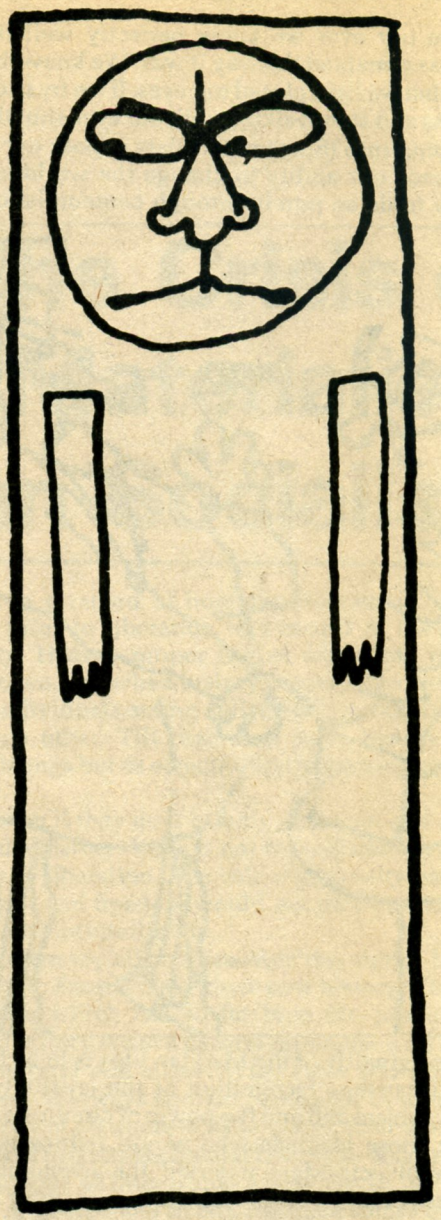
harmless and perhaps even beneficial. That is what allows them to become dominant. There is therefore a constant danger that revolutionary thought will become infiltrated with counter-revolutionary concepts absorbed from the surrounding milieu, a process that is facilitated by the alienation which the revolutionary, no less than the average worker, is afflicted with. It is only after these concepts have been re-exteriorized through praxis that they can be identified for what they are. Revolutionaries will then recognize that their activities have reproduced, albeit in a different form, the pre-revolutionary conditions that they were trying so hard to eradicate. By that time, however, it is quite possible that the original revolutionaries will have become imprisoned in the circumstances of their own acts. It is then up to other revolutionaries to learn from the lessons of those who came before them and avoid their mistakes.

It is in this peculiar situation that we find ourselves today. We realize now that starting with the later Engels (and to a smaller extent with Marx himself) the fine balance between idealism and materialism, subjectivity and objectivity, was upset. The original synthesis, delicate because it was a purely theoretical concept, disintegrated when the attempt was made to turn it into a practical, revolutionary doctrine. Whereas the original balance meant that a distinction was made between economic conditions and the meaning assigned to them by the human agent, the new ideology reduced all human acts to their economic foundation.

From this disintegration two different but ultimately related movements were spawned: in Western Europe, Social Democracy and in Russia, Leninism. Both viewed "men as the products of circumstances and upbringing". The difference was that in Germany circumstances seemed to be changing in the right direction without too much effort while in Russia they were changing erratically and offered the opportunity for intervention. In Germany Marxism developed into an evolutionist doctrine modelled on Darwin's theory and in Russia it developed into the doctrine of vanguardist revolution.

For a crucial period of time, these two movements together, comprised the world total of Marxist praxis. There was of course Rosa Luxembourg, who opposed both. However not only did she die before she had a chance to make a significant impact on the European revolutionary movement but there is also some indication that prior to her death she was on the verge of changing her attitude towards the Bolsheviks. (See Lukacs' "Critical Observations on Rosa Luxembourg's 'Critique of the Russian Revolution' ". Lukacs has to be read with caution since his admiration of Luxembourg was eclipsed by his worship of Lenin. Nevertheless his suggestion that Luxembourg was changing her views is plausible. With the success of the revolution even anarcho-syndicalists went over to the Bolsheviks.)

What this meant was that Marxism had succumbed to that ideological trend which Edmund Husserl has called the "naturalization of consciousness": the view that consciousness is caused by physical objects. This and the related "naturalization of ideas" inevitably led to the belief that human behaviour could be reduced to the rigid and "exact" laws of nature. Previously the world was as God had intended it to be. The new ruling class however had no place for a deity so it replaced Him with nature, a secular God. The laws that govern



billiard balls were thus extended to cover relations between human beings proving once again that things could not be other than they were.

Husserl had the insight to point out that this attitude was at the heart of what he called the "crisis of European man". In progressively reducing the embarassing contribution of the subjective to experience, the naturalist replaced the "life-world" (the world of actual, human experience) with a lifeless, abstract world composed of mathematical relationships. This extreme objectivism however ultimately rested on a subjective, ideal foundation. The attempt to naturalize consciousness and ideas is therefore self-defeating since it presupposes precisely the opposite of what it seeks to establish, namely, that consciousness and ideas, rather than being the *products* of a reaction between physical entities (physical sense data impinging on a physical receptor, the brain) are the basis of all experience. It is only after the world is *presupposed* to be governed by natural laws that such laws can be discovered. The presupposition itself cannot be discovered by the same method.

The spiritual barrenness of the Western world and the triumph of irrationalism were according to the idealist Husserl reflections of the poverty of naturalist thought. Science was able to provide a cure for diseases of the body but found itself incapable of curing the Western soul since it itself was a symptom of the disease. "In our vital need — so we are told — this science has nothing to say to us. It excludes in principle precisely the questions which man, given in our unhappy times (the mid-1930's) to the most portentious upheavals, finds the most burning: questions of the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole of this human existence". (*Crisis* p6) As a solution Husserl attempts to construct a science of the "life-world". Not accidentally, some passages in this project read like paraphrases of Marx. Whereas Marx tied his hopes to radical action, Husserl believed in radical contemplation. Moreover, unlike Marx, he attributed the actual decay of Western civilization to the decay of thought; whereas for Marx the relation was the opposite.



Sartre, another phenomenologist, explicitly identifies naturalism as a form of bourgeois thought. In his early writings this identification was intuitive. Sartre did not become a Marxist till after the war but for a long time before that he regarded the bourgeoisie with revulsion. This revulsion made him allergic to all manifestations of bourgeois thought, the most hateful of which was the spirit of "seriousness" with which the "salauds" assured themselves of their own necessity. "Imbeciles", he writes in "Nausea", "they make laws, they write popular novels, they get married, they are fools enough to have children. And all this time, great vague nature has slipped into their city . . . and they don't see it, they imagine it to be outside, twenty miles from the city. I *see* this nature . . . I know that its obedience is idleness, I know that it has no laws: what they take for constancy is only habit, and it can change tomorrow." Why? Because human beings are not what they are the way stones are. A pebble cannot be anything other than a pebble. Its progression from boulder to pebble to sand is totally determined by laws exterior to it. Not only that but its disintegration only has meaning to a human observer. The pebble is the slave of fate. By contrast the life of a human being becomes frozen into fate only at the moment of death. At that point all that one has done in one's life becomes all that one could have done. Before that point arrives however it is impossible to reduce one's life to a resultant of conflicting natural forces the way one can do for the path followed by a billiard ball. One may have no choice but to become a thief, for example, but the juncture of circumstances that force this decision on one must first acquire a pressing *significance* for oneself. The poor state of the economy and my persistent need for food and shelter are of themselves only abstract principles. Without the meaning I attribute to them they can never determine anything. It is in fact only in the light of my decision that they take on the character of determining circumstances. If I was caught and asked why I "turned to a life of crime" I could reply that my poverty was intolerable and that I could foresee no way to alleviate it other than through robbery. Poverty and lack of work would thus have acquired meaning through my thievery and not the other way round. And that is what distinguishes us fundamentally from billiard balls. The laws of nature determine the outcome of a collision between two balls a hundred years from now, whereas for specific human beings "prediction" must always be in the form of hindsight. That is why we are forever saying "I should have known" and always failing to know.

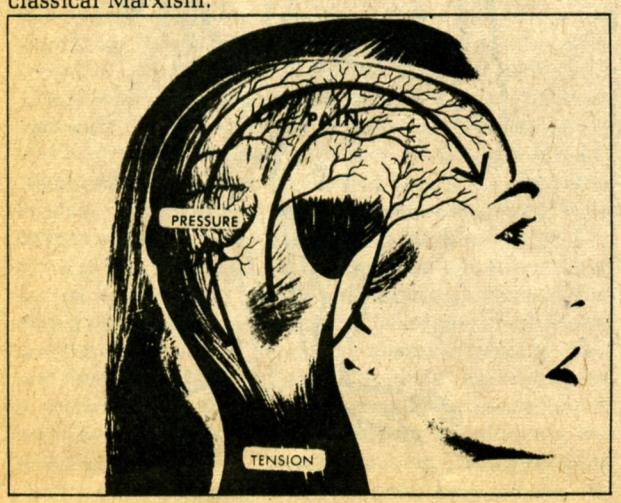
We understand then that by the simple virtue of being human we are in possession of the freedom to alter that very world which is constantly altering us. This freedom is what makes revolution possible and at the same time denies any guarantee for its success. Naturalism is an indirect attempt to relinquish this troublesome freedom, a self-deception aimed at hiding the utter lack of necessity in the way we behave.



Such a deception, tempting as it is under the happiest of circumstances, is even more tempting in a world were human beings do actually experience each other as objects. The naturalization of consciousness is preceded by the fossilization of everyday life: the two perpetuate each other. Revolt too can be naturalized: it occurs as a *predictable reaction* to the fetishization of the objective, to which is opposed the fetishization of the subjective — "decadent" self-indulgence in everyday life and in art, romantic idealism in popular philosophy. Either that or in the case of Leninism classical materialism is taken to the extreme. The hippie and the Bolshevik might at first glance appear to be the antithesis of each other but they have one thing in common which brands both (ultimately) as conformists: the tendency to fetishize, the "religious" outlook. One can always of course distinguish between extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism, solipsism and naturalism, but in practice they are merely components of a single, stable complex.

Nevertheless, of this complex what concerns us most is the authoritarian component. Disorder can in time correct itself, if only because it leaves individuals the freedom to reject it. Authoritarianism, on the contrary, only stabilizes itself with time. Libertarian socialism is defined first and foremost by the negation of political authoritarianism and theoretical determinism. It is this negation which is announced in the First Thesis on Feurbach. In the first thesis however this negation is purely "contemplative". The actual negation had to await the dissolution of classical Marxism itself.

If I have gone out of my way to duscuss naturalism it is because of its disastrous effect on Marxism. We simply have to acknowledge that the principal bourgeois ideology during the early years of Marxism was not so much political liberalism — which even then was well on the way to exposing itself as a deception — but faith in the natural sciences and their objectivism. It was precisely because this faith was shared by all that we have to consider it the principal ideology of capitalism. It was this universality that gave it its effectiveness. And if today there is such a thing as libertarian Marxism it is because naturalized Marxism was a catastrophe that cannot be forgotten. For us this failure is the equivalent of the Holocaust in Jewish tradition. For better or for worse the conception of libertarian Marxism issues from the negation and transcendance of classical Marxism.



In the first Thesis on Feuerbach, Marx had lamented that the *active* side of sensuous activity, the subjective side of human experience, had been developed by idealism rather than materialism. The aim of Marx's own brand of "materialism" was, as we have noted already, to go beyond the limitations of both traditional materialism and idealism. Almost to this day however what Marx wrote in the first thesis remains true: the subjectivity of human experience has had to be championed not by Marxists — who have all along been bent on denying it — but by idealist philosophers like Husserl. So that when the Western world was plunged into a deep spiritual crisis, Marxism automatically excluded itself from providing any answers. How could it? From the perspective of a scientific materialist the crisis did not exist: diseases of the soul show themselves only to those who believe in souls and the communists only believed in matter. So the fascists took over and shot the communists.

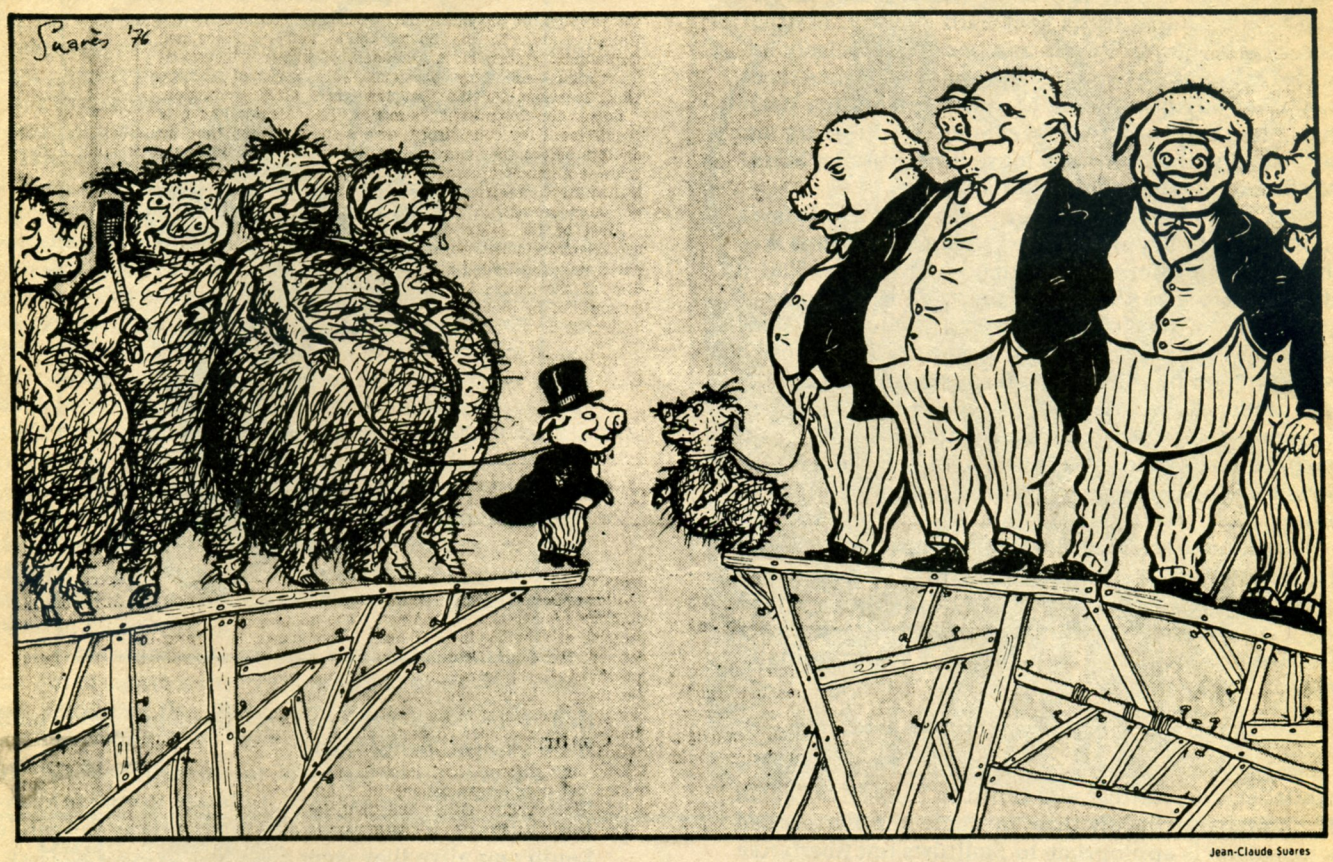
Could it have been any different? I think not. Men make their own history: Marxists could have chosen to be libertarians from the beginning. But men make history under the power of circumstances and near the end of the last century the circumstances were more conducive to the brand of socialism they ultimately produced than to the kind we would like to see. Indeed, our being libertarians has a lot to do with the authoritarianism of our socialist predecessors. If they hadn't made a mess of things we would be less anxious to avoid their mistakes, the effects of which form the circumstances under which we make our own history.

For the early Marxists, materialism represented an ideology which the bourgeoisie had successfully used against the ancien regime, and which the Marxists, with some minor modifications, would use against the bourgeoisies. Plekhanov ("the father of Russian Marxism"), for example, viewed Marxism as "contemporary materialism". What he and other Marxists did not realize was that it was not enough to turn bourgeois thought against the class that had given rise to it. A genuinely socialist theory could only arise out of the active dissolution of bourgeois materialism. To merely "appropriate" the old thought would only lead to a perpetuation of the old system. Similarly it was not enough to take over state power. The objective was to smash it and build something different.

Now Marxism as Marx had conceived it did make a serious attempt to transcend the shallow materialism inherited from the Enlightenment. The problem was that to the degree that Marxism was anti-bourgeois (and not just anti-aristocractic i.e. anti-idealist) it was also idealist. A critique of bourgeois thought and reality would inevitably have to counterpose some form of subjectivism ("idealism") against bourgeois materialism. The critique of bourgeois political economy, for example, is a critique precisely because, not satisfied with examining the appearance of economic phenomena, it directs its attention to the thoroughly subjective lives of those responsible for these phenomena. Marx's critique demonstrated that underneath such objective terms as "value", "commodity" and "labour costs" lay a world of human suffering towards which it was impossible to adopt a neutral position. Indeed if Marx's critique achieved anything it was the demystification of "objectivity".

But how could this theoretical critique be translated

**The difference between Communism and capitalism:
Under capitalism it is dog-eat-dog; under Communism, it is just the reverse.**



Jean-Claude Suares

into a program of action? How could one attack bourgeois materialism when the idealism of the ancien regime was still a concrete ideological force? This problem is simply the theoretical counterpart of a very practical question: what to do when capitalism, a hateful system, is consolidating itself against feudalism, an even more hateful system. If, as indeed seemed the case, socialism was not possible without a preparatory period of capitalism, then the correct strategy was to align oneself with the bourgeoisie in those countries where it was a revolutionary class and oppose it wherever it had consolidated itself.

But it did not work out that way. Even in those countries where the bourgeoisie was no longer threatened with a restoration of the system it had overthrown, bourgeois ideology still had a universal, revolutionary ring to it. This was especially true of those theories and values which were not overtly political. These could stay "undercover" longer than theories that could be linked directly to the new ruling class. In consequences it was not easy for revolutionaries to detect their real enemies. What could be more radical, in the face of a declining and therefore exceptionally embittered autocracy, than to affirm scientific rationalism, the theory of a new age? What could be more disreputable than the atheist belief in progress at a time when for reactionaries, civilization was disappearing beneath the waves? But that which is disreputable in a society is precisely what a revolutionary will go out of his/her way to promote.

So the revolutionaries fooled themselves. They accomplished in fact what bourgeois thought left to itself would never have done: the destruction of those humanist "prejudices" that were left over from the feudal era. Naturalist Marxism with its endless vituperation against the subjective and the "unscientific" lent the bourgeoisie a valuable weapon against its early enemies. If then Marxism, through German Social Democracy, eventually reconciled itself with that very society it had earlier vowed to overthrow, this was only natural, since this Marxism had been nothing more than the most radical form of bourgeois ideology: Marxists, so to speak, had merely played the part of Janissaries, shock troops preparing the way for the bourgeois onslaught... All they asked, these Social Democrats, was that the workers not starve, a demand which capitalists eventually understood to be in their interest to accept. Once that was settled, the subsistence wage came to include not only the cost of perpetuating the physical power of the labourer but also his loyalty. The capitalists simply revised their accounts. Personally perhaps they still despised the workers and they increased wages only grudgingly. Still they increased them because romantic hatred could no more than romantic love compete with the profit motive. Starting with this modification the early and unstable form of capitalism evolved towards an equilibrium. A symbiotic relationship was set up between socialists and reactionaries: the former provided the motive power behind a set of stabilizing reforms, the latter supplied traction by putting up resistance.

In Russia this same naturalist Marxism encountered different conditions and consequently developed differently. In Western Europe, Marxism encountered a

nascent and vigorous capitalism within which it was eventually integrated. In Russia, as the nihilist Tkachev pointed out, revolution was possible only as long as Russia was still a backward country. In other words revolution in Russia was possible precisely because there was no capitalism to speak of. Hence there was never any question of Marxism integrating itself into the structure that preceded it. Finding no capitalism within which to loose itself Russian Marxism had to invent something like it.

One ought to remember here that in Russia capitalism started too late to develop in the same way that it had developed in England and France. Had it attempted to take the latter's example it would have quickly fallen prey to foreign capital in much the same fashion as for example Latin America. The solution was supplied by the Bolsheviks; primitive accumulation under forced conditions. Superexploitation of Russian labour and autarchic economic development took the place of foreign investment and allowed the Soviet Union to become an independent industrial power.

In both cases Marxism objectified those tendencies it had internalized earlier. In the West it helped to develop the system it was born into. In Russia where Marxism was an import it re-created in a distorted form the Western milieu on which it had been originally reared.

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Despite its authoritarianism the USSR is not a capitalist state. Neither was Lenin an "objective" agent of capitalism. Indulgence in such simple-minded schematism is appropriate to Stalinists not libertarian socialists. Bolshevism is imbued through and through with bourgeois ideology but nevertheless it remains a revolutionary ideology. To transcend it, rather than just negate it, we have to historically situate it without overlooking its uniqueness. Instead of doing this libertarian thought has for the most part been preoccupied with villifying it.

This practice more often than not ends in absurdity. It is for example fashionable today to make oneself respectable by claiming to be a "pure" Marxist. Pure Marxism can only exist however if Marxism is reduced to an abstract ideal. If in fact the villains by virtue of their villainy automatically excommunicated themselves as Marxists, then we have to admit of long





that if the Nazis had been *real* Germans they would have stopped being Nazis.

If we give up trying to be respectable however we will view Leninism as the first attempt to realize Marxism. It failed. If there were any doubts about this while Lenin was alive they were dispelled by his successor. But without this failure, without Stalin, Marxism would not have grown up, would have effectively remained unaware of its deep neurosis. It is indeed tragic that this neurosis had to develop into murderous lunacy before it could be purged. The crimes of the past however can only be expiated by the good deeds of the future. One cannot simply dissociate oneself from them through a mere word. To say "I am a libertarian" is to take upon oneself the responsibility of diminishing the horrors of the past. In the same way to say that you are an adult is to admit that once you were an adolescent trying to become an adult. You may have made serious errors but without them you would not have grown up. "It is only those who do nothing who make no mistakes", said Kropotkin and he was an anarchist.

Unless we want all our heroes to be martyrs we have to learn that the world will not be changed without getting a few hands dirtied. Not enough ruthlessness and disorganization can betray a revolution just as much as too much ruthlessness and authoritarianism. We should give Maknho, the Kronstadt sailors, the Spanish anarchists, the French students and all other libertarians their due and then we should note that they *failed*. To become a symbol is not enough. As it is we have enough saints and martyrs to fill a liturgical calendar. Of course there is glamour in tragic failure but only those who survive can appreciate it. For too long now libertarianism has been an outlet for those who can't accept the existing order but who at the same time can't be bothered with doing anything about it. They find in libertarianism a dream of unmatched pur-

ity which they take care to define in such a way as to make it unattainable (See "Why the Leninists will Win" elsewhere in this issue). Then lo and behold, quietism becomes revolutionary. It is not at all surprising in fact that the various Leninist sects are still able to attract recruits. Anybody serious about radical social change can't help but notice that while anarchists have beautiful sentiments Bolsheviks are more likely to do something about it.

Which brings us back to that synthesis of object and subject that has been prominent throughout these reflections. Through this synthesis revolutionary socialism attempted for the first time to overcome the one-sidedness of materialism while at the same time avoiding the perils of romantic idealism. It should be recognized that libertarian socialism must start from this synthesis. One-sidedness in whatever form it occurs destroys the whole project. It is obviously a difficult error to avoid — in view of the Bolshevik experiment it is very easy to say that one cannot be too subjective — but then "the revolution is not a tea-party". Vanguardism ultimately oppresses the working class. Lack of leadership leaves it stranded in oppression. Bureaucratism stifles revolutionary tendencies. Pure spontaneism dissipates them. Rigid centralization is authoritarian. Lack of coordination and discipline is ineffective.

No movement can consider itself socialist that does not put in practice the synthesis that has eluded Marxism since that first thesis. Bolshevism failed by succeeding. Anarchism failed by failing. We'll see what we can do.

Mario Cutajar



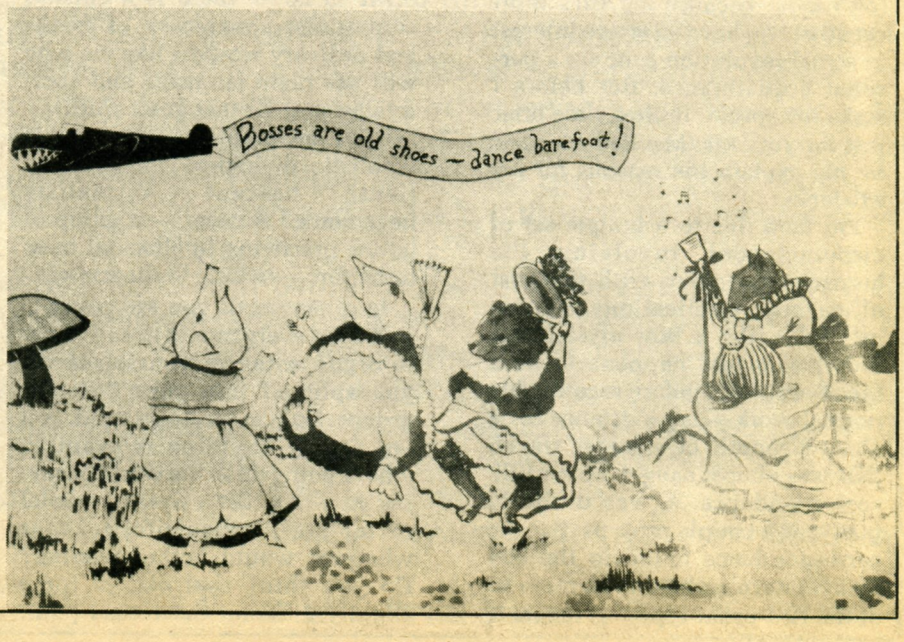
Book Review

Portugal: The Impossible Revolution

Every revolutionary struggle is accompanied by a flurry of "left" books on the subject. Portugal is of course no different. The problem is one of truth, interpretation, and who to believe. The left press is no less guilty of fraud and lies in reporting revolutionary events than the bourgeois press. Phil Mailer's "Portugal: The Impossible Revolution?" is a clear analysis of the events in Portugal from April 25, 1974 to November 25, 1976 with a background chapter. It is clearly and simply written with little rhetoric. It is also openly libertarian, documenting the struggle of the Portugese people against *both* fascism and domination by Leninist parties whose picture of state power differs little from the fascists. The Portugese revolution is one of the three or four most important struggles for western leftists to understand and this goes a long way to shed light on the inevitable final battle that any successful revolution faces: the people vs. the parties. In Portugal this took on a special meaning, as the book makes clear.

The author, Phil Mailer, is an Irishman living in Portugal these past five years. He works with the libertarian paper *Combate* in Lisbon.

Fred Freedman



Letters

Dear Red Menace:

I just saw your first issue. Although I don't muchlike the title, I do like the contents, in particular the article on your editorial policy. My particular hope is that feminists find in your pages a forum for grappling with the theoretical connection, if any, with socialism.

With hope,
Alison Sawyer

Dear Red Menace Friends,

We would like to exchange subs with you — saw your first issue and I find your questions, probes, plans really encouraging.

Margaret for the collective
at Liberation magazine

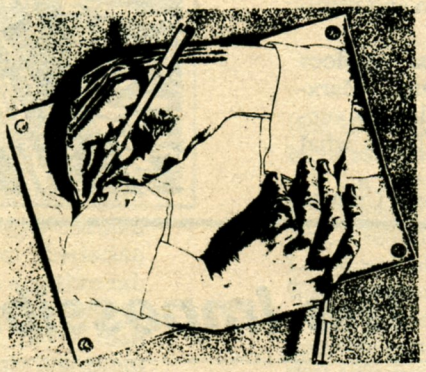
The following is a Red Menace Condensed Edition of a form letter that we have entered a relationship with:

Hi there!

I'm your first Re-invention of Everyday Life form letter! I'm laying right here in your hands talking to you with all the reified warmth & friendliness of a plumbing fixture because my files indicate that you have an active interest in social revolution &/or are a personal acquaintance. But before I make my special limited time offer just for you, Mr./Ms. Red Menace, let me explain the reasons for my existence:

I'm here due to a unique set of circumstances involving the human who (along with the post office box, publications, correspondence files & now myself, this letter) also just happens to be a member of REL. Before vacating his normal work-a-day existence for a chaotic month of summer travel, JNB was almost caught up on REL correspondence, & was dutifully pursuing a coupla projects. But the correspondence found in the box on his return seemed even more so of the two usual types: 1) letters & printed matter from other P.O. boxes who publish & mail things to each other as a form of revolutionary activity, & 2) notes from either faceless people or Boxes, (with no indication of who they are, or of what JNB might have in common with them), saying "What's REL?". . . . I (this letter) will try to get JNB to continue to keep in touch with REL correspondents, but he'll probably have more interest in who they are than in lengthy discussions. He'll probably use me awhile for initial contacts . . . He'll still, however, want to continue a sharing of publications & mutual encouragement . . .

Re-Invention of Everyday Life
(JNB)
P.O. Box 282
Palo Alto, Calif. 94302,
U.S.A.



To The Red Menace

Wow, neat, peachy keen, I just got my copy of Red Menace. What a thrill to know there is a sinister communist conspiracy of freaks and ordinary workers like me who will use plain language and short articles and all that great stuff.

But a few problems — 1/ what is wholistic, dialogical pedagogy, salient, nascent surrealism hegemonic? Answer — a group of lefties practising intellectual masturbation — talking to themselves.

In other words you are going to grind out every month or so a paper to argue amongst yourselves till you split off into your different groups. Do you seriously think you are saying anything relevant to what's going on in the world or saying anything that a worker, mental or manual, housewife, teacher whatever would bother reading? Do you think that except for a slightly different theoretical point of view you are different in any way from any other left group?

Or maybe you want to be like other left groups? Do you want to talk about what people should be doing or talk about talks people had where they talked about what people should be doing? Your workers centre, education conference and all that were all structured from above for an inner group that either got invited there or had the fortune, may Marx and the LIP bless us all, of being subjects in a fun little experiment for the kids from the big city.

I think the independent left should get together. So, have a party. Phone up everybody you know, have them phone up everybody they know and everybody brings their own. Most people will get drunk and/or stoned, some will get their rocks off, and we can all argue with each other about 1917 and what happened to the left.

Thank you
Peter Cassidy



Comrades:

Thanks for sending the first issue — we're encouraged!

Revolutionary greetings
Steve Landstreet
for Philadelphia Solidarity

Dear Bros. and Sis.,

Keep on conspiring.

Fraternally
Allan Moscovitch

Secret Pocket "Pen" Radio
$2.59
Listen almost anywhere! Slips into pocket like ordinary pen. Tiny earphone for private listening. Pulls in radio waves from air. NO BATTERIES NEEDED. Ground wire included for best reception, but will work without grounding. Guaranteed to receive several stations, although reception will vary from place to place. Hear SPORTS, MUSIC, NEWS, etc. in office, school, bed, etc. Solid-state circuit. Complete, ready-to-play. ☐ 7062. Spy Pen Radio $2.59

CAPITALISM IS ICKY!



Help us clean up the mess!

(. . . subscribe.)

It's a nasty, dirty system. And it's going to take a lot of work to get rid of it, once and for all. Sometimes it's hard to know where to begin. We have decided that one place where we can begin is with this newsletter, THE RED MENACE. Obviously, the RED MENACE isn't going to start the revolution on its own, but it is something that we think can be valuable and productive. We hope to use it to develop and communicate our ideas about libertarian socialism, and we hope that other people will also use it to share their ideas and experiences. Through the RED MENACE, we would like to make contacts with people that will make it possible to branch out into other kinds of activities as well: the RED MENACE is not an end in itself, although the enjoyment we derive from creating it is.

Meanwhile, we need contributions — artwork and writing, but also money. It is costing us about $500 to put out a single issue, not a phenomenal amount, but enough that we would appreciate financial help from those who like it. Our first two issues have been sent out free — future issues will be sent out only to those who indicate their interest by subscribing or by sending us their own creations. (However, the RED MENACE will be sent out free to those who can't afford to pay and those who have already sent money will continue to receive their subscriptions.)

Our subscriptions rates are **$3.00 for 4 issues,** but if you can afford to send us more, please do.

Our address is: **THE RED MENACE P.O. Box 171 Postal Station D Toronto, Canada**

The Red Menace
P.O. Box 171
Postal Station D
Toronto, Ontario
Canada



