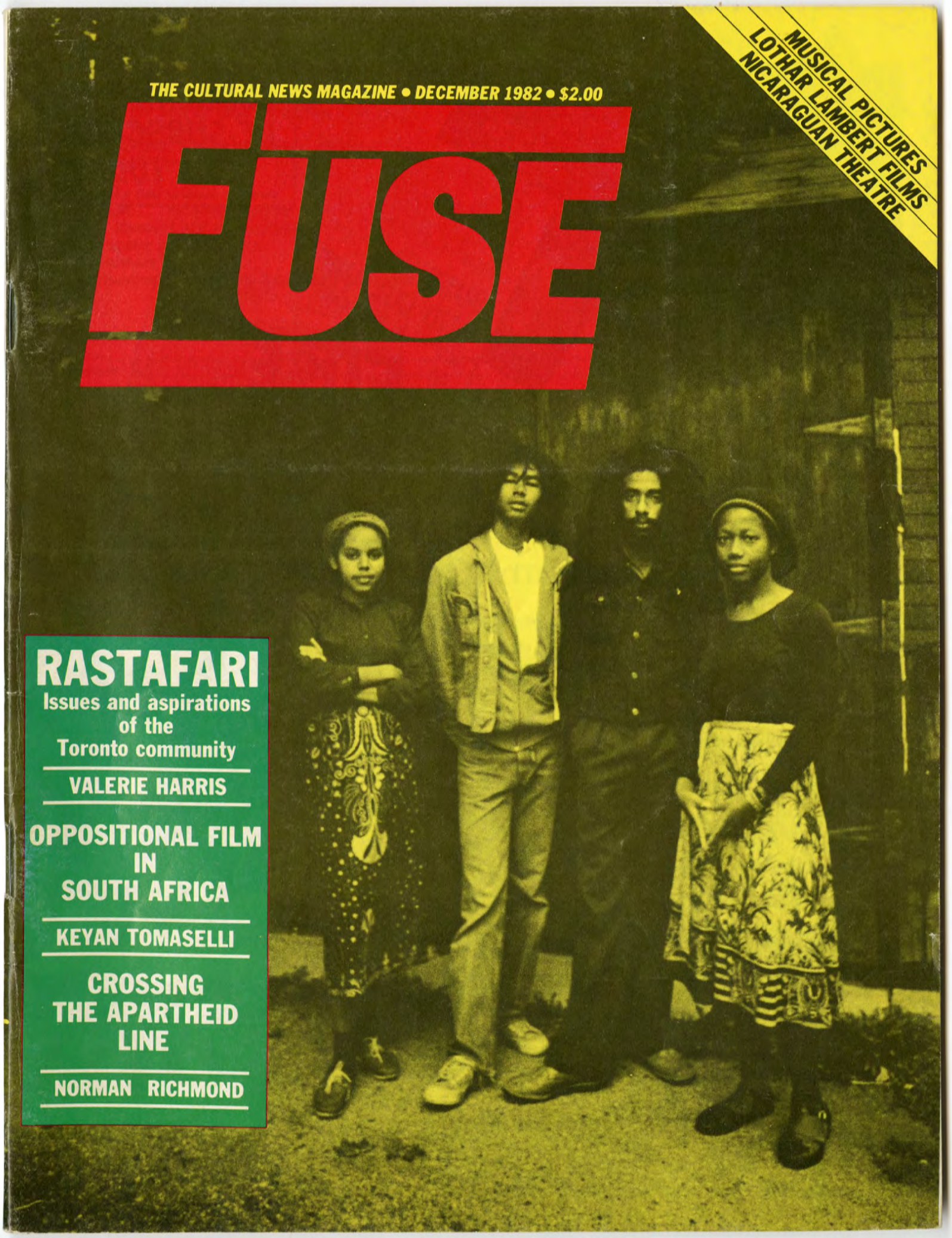
THE CULTURAL NEWS MAGAZINE • DECEMBER 1982 • $2.00

FUSE

MUSICAL PICTURES
LOTHAR LAMBERT FILMS
NICARAGUAN THEATRE



RASTAFARI
Issues and aspirations of the Toronto community

VALERIE HARRIS

OPPOSITIONAL FILM IN SOUTH AFRICA

KEYAN TOMASELLI

CROSSING THE APARTHEID LINE

NORMAN RICHMOND

SUBSCRIBE OR RE-SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

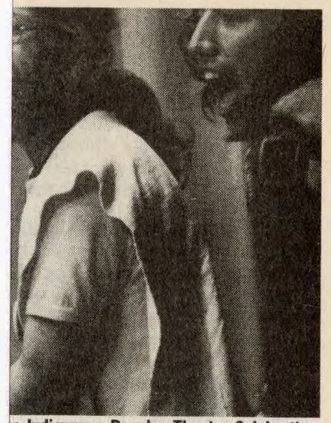
HOT, PERCEPTIVE, PURPOSEFUL, FUNCTIONAL AND CRITICAL, WE GIVE YOU A UNIQUE MAGAZINE THAT BUILDS FROM A COMMUNITY OF SHARED CULTURAL INTERESTS AND PRACTICE.

ARE YOU RECEIVING US?

"A consistently interesting forum for some of the best cultural journalism in North America"
- Allan Sekula, artist and cultural historian (Ohio State University)

"Lengthy and critical reviews excellent . . . recommended for public libraries and schools which have strong humanities programmes"
- Liz Austrom (Emergency Librarian), Vancouver

☐Enclosed is my cheque ☐Please Bill Me.
Name _____
Address _____
City _____
Province _____ Code _____
☐1 yr. $12 ☐2 yrs. $20 Institutions: ☐1 yr. $18 ☐2 yrs. $27
Outside Canada add $3/sub/yr. for postage



e Indigenous Peoples Theatre Celebration.

Carole Conde, Lynn Fernie, Jeff House, Norman 'Otis' Richmond, Clive Robertson, Lisa Steele, Alexander Wilson.
Martha Fleming (Montreal), Sara Diamond (Vancouver), Tony Whitfield (N.Y.C.), John Greyson (N.Y.C.).
COPY EDITORS: Renee Baert, Joyce Mason, Clive Robertson.
CONTRIBUTORS: Don Adams, Ric Amis, Jody Berland, Bruce Boone, L. James, Ross Kidd, Arlene Goldbard, Robin Hardy, Valerie Harris, Glen Richards, Leila Sujir, Keyan G. Tomaselli.
FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHER: Ric Amis.
PHOTOGRAPHERS: Jules Elder, Brian Dyson, Charlie Lane, Sheree Levine, Erika Rabau, Errol Taylor, Michael White, Judith Woodrow.
ILLUSTRATIONS: Mike Constable, Mecate, Union Arts Service.
DESIGN: Clive Robertson.
LAYOUT: Carole Conde.
TYPESETTING: Jackie P. Malden.
PRINTING: Delta Web Graphics, Scarborough.

PUBLISHER: Arton's Publishing Inc.
DIRECTORS: Clive Robertson, Lisa Steele, Joyce Mason.
BUSINESS MANAGER: Joyce Mason.
CIRCULATION MANAGER: Kate Tucker.
FUSE is published five times a year (includes one double issue) by Arton's Publishing Inc., a non-profit artist organization (Parachute Center for Cultural Affairs Society). Our editorial offices are located at 379 Adelaide St. W., Toronto, Ontario Canada M5V 1S5, (416) 964-6848/368-6227. All newsstand inquiries should be sent to this address. Second Class mail registration No. 4455.

Subscription rates: Individual $12.00 per year; Institutions: $18.00 per year (in Canada only). For U.S. and elsewhere add $3.00. Decisions regarding who qualifies as an 'individual' subscriber remains the right of the publisher.
Printed in Canada. ISSN 0226-8086.
FUSE acknowledges partial assistance from the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council.

FUSE

VOLUME SIX NUMBER 4
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1982

Business Reply Card
No Postage Stamp Necessary if
Mailed in Canada

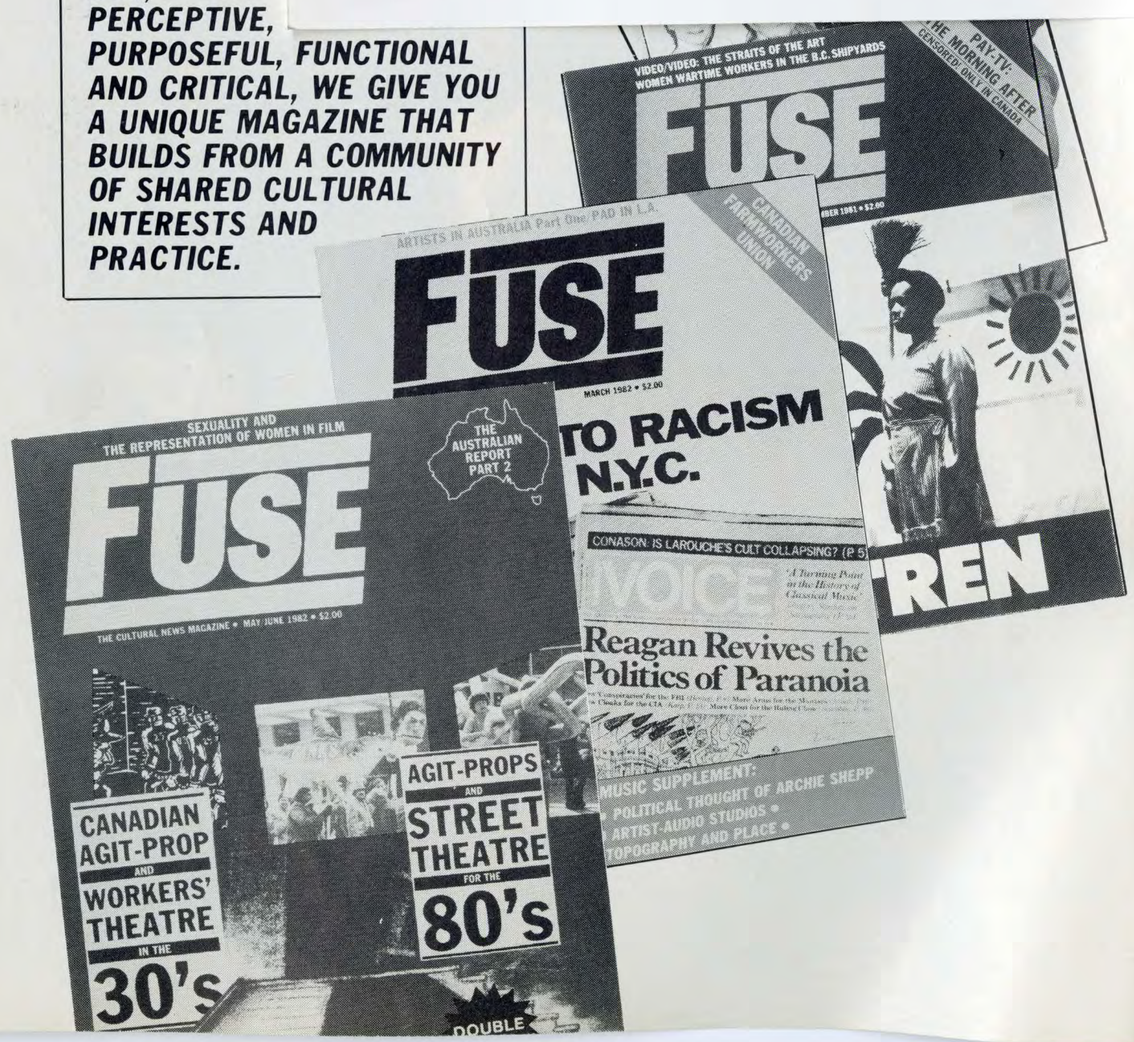
Postage will be paid by:

Canada Post Postes Canada 39055

FUSE

379 Adelaide St. W., Toronto
Ontario, Canada M5V 2Z8

HOT, PERCEPTIVE, PURPOSEFUL, FUNCTIONAL AND CRITICAL, WE GIVE YOU A UNIQUE MAGAZINE THAT BUILDS FROM A COMMUNITY OF SHARED CULTURAL INTERESTS AND PRACTICE.



Charlie Lane

Mecate group performing at the Indigenous Peoples Theatre Celebration.

Front Cover: Carla Steele, Anthony Farguharson, Chikuyu, Charmaine Montague. Photo by Ric Amis

MANAGING EDITOR: Clive Robertson
EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE: Karl Beveridge, Carole Conde, Lynn Fernie, Jeff House, Norman 'Otis' Richmond, Clive Robertson, Lisa Steele, Alexander Wilson.
Martha Fleming (Montreal), Sara Diamond (Vancouver), Tony Whitfield (N.Y.C.), John Greyson (N.Y.C.).
COPY EDITORS: Renee Baert, Joyce Mason, Clive Robertson.
CONTRIBUTORS: Don Adams, Ric Amis, Jody Berland, Bruce Boone, L. James, Ross Kidd, Arlene Goldbard, Robin Hardy, Valerie Harris, Glen Richards, Leila Sujir, Keyan G. Tomaselli.
FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHER: Ric Amis.
PHOTOGRAPHERS: Jules Elder, Brian Dyson, Charlie Lane, Sheree Levine, Erika Rabau, Errol Taylor, Michael White, Judith Woodrow.
ILLUSTRATIONS: Mike Constable, Mecate, Union Arts Service.
DESIGN: Clive Robertson.
LAYOUT: Carole Conde.
TYPESETTING: Jackie P. Malden.
PRINTING: Delta Web Graphics, Scarborough.

PUBLISHER: Arton's Publishing Inc.
DIRECTORS: Clive Robertson, Lisa Steele, Joyce Mason.
BUSINESS MANAGER: Joyce Mason.
CIRCULATION MANAGER: Kate Tucker.
FUSE is published five times a year (includes one double issue) by Arton's Publishing Inc., a non-profit artist organization (Parachute Center for Cultural Affairs Society). Our editorial offices are located at 379 Adelaide St. W., Toronto, Ontario Canada M5V 1S5. (416) 964-6848/368-6227. All newsstand inquiries should be sent to this address. Second Class mail registration No. 4455.

Subscription rates: Individual $12.00 per year; Institutions: $18.00 per year (in Canada only). For U.S. and elsewhere add $3.00. Decisions regarding who qualifies as an 'individual' subscriber remains the right of the publisher.
Printed in Canada. ISSN 0226-8086.
FUSE acknowledges partial assistance from the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council.

FUSE

VOLUME SIX NUMBER 4
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1982

Editorial

A Letter From Toronto

Today was the day that the infamous Mayor of the Borough of York, Gayle Christie (see News: 'The Christie Crisis') was elected out of office and the now never-to-be-forgotten Hummer Sisters came second in Toronto's mayoralty race with 7.3 per cent of the popular vote or 11,787 votes. Running under the stolen slogan ART v. Art (Eggleton) (used by Mr. Peanut in a Vancouver mayoralty race) The Hummers in reality used ART for Art's (Eggleton) Sake. Deanne Taylor, the Hummer candidate was quoted in NOW as saying that they wanted to "put flesh on the bones of democracy".

Out of the tory blue, 'politics' and curated exhibits of 'public speaking' (a number of galleries have organized lecture series) are the beginnings of what for many is another 'season'. The emergence of 'political issues' and the recognition that from time-to-time the task of accomplishing what one seeks to do necessitates some direct political involvement have not been taken on with much vigour, or as artist Joseph Beuys would say — seriousity, within Toronto's artistic community. Funding cuts, censorship bureaucracy and public defamation by elected officials have become unavoidable questions that are demanding speedy and largely unprepared answers. Attempts to build true political defences are often undermined within the community itself in an effort, one can't help but assume, to keep politics at an arm's length so that it can remain optional as 'content' and not overly demanding as engagement.

As the artist community, and its tentative attachment to the various artist spaces that have been formed in its name, age — the rough edges of defiance (increasingly described as 'rhetoric') are being replaced by the bureaucratisation of intent. What hopes some of us had for a cultural opposition (the artistic community being a minor partner in this move) within artist spaces, rusted into less ambitious desires to instead become part of the 'new establishment'. This melding of dissension into the interests of the 'upwardly-mobile' is as Canadian as maple syrup, as any reading of 'Saturday Night' and its arch-liberal, Robert Fulford will testify. In fact Fulford himself has described 'alternatives' as the establishment of the future, a prophesy that doesn't seem to need tomorrow to be lived out today.

Within the community proper, among its past and present participants, there is a crisis of historical discontinuity. It has been said that those who have the analysis no longer have the energy to refuel the grassroots fight, while those with the energy don't have the history. Progressive organizations like the Women's Cultural Building or the extinct Cultural Workers Alliance become endangered not so much by 'sectarian' fights as by the intensity of responsibility, while other essentially useless cultural organizations remain comparatively secure in their stagnation. Longevity and passivity seem meant for each other, if not for us.

In all of the discussions I have heard around the issue of Metro Toronto's artist-space funding cuts (Trinity

The chain of events has been much like someone taking away your apartment and replacing it with a cardboard box. The recent funding cuts herald the intention of now taking away the cardboard boxes. Maybe the ultimate 'pragmatic compromise' is to bow and scrape for paper bags?

Square Video, Art's Sake, A Space), there has been much said about strategy without first identifying the social position from which artists may assert themselves. On the one hand there is, if anything, a re-introduction of wanting the privileges and protectionisms of patronage — necessitating a strategy of sidling up to the men in power — and on the other, some fading memories of the purpose of self-determination. Even in these economic times, the issue of funding cuts has been addressed mainly as censorship and political interference rather than as an issue of loss of income (fees) for artists. Self-determination within the artist community has been waged in terms of the control of the means of production (distribution remaining an elusive megaproblem, shared with the Canadian industrial sector).

The periodic call for self-determination within the community, and attempts at its practice, have variously been described internally as 'self-righteous' and 'Stalinist', which for readers outside of the community should at least give some indication of what political phobia sounds like up close. The political differences between 'alternatives' as replacement, and, 'oppositional demands' for structural change have never been clearly examined or seemingly understood by Toronto's artistic community — in part perhaps due to its favoured size and proportionate demands met by various forms of State funding. Such agencies, formed to 'service the needs' of the arts community, have never been challenged to effectively restructure themselves into a model consistent with any democratic needs. In fact, *the collective needs of the community have never been defined*, so the 'servicing' involves a high degree of guesswork and inefficiency.

Though the formation of artist spaces marked a significant progression from the traditional position of artists, working in isolation from and in competition with, each other — the institutionalisation of this new-found inter-dependence was unnecessarily marked through the formation of an umbrella organisation, ANNPAC (Association of Non-Profit Artist Run Centres) whose very existence encouraged the blurring of distinction between cultural managers and cultural producers. Though artist-curators often straddled such separations, the infiltration and invitation into artists' workings by managerial careerists, augmented the illusion of artist as 'professional'.

'Professional' or casual labourer?

The *economic* reality of artists has, is, and will continue to be *casual labour*, *not* consultant, *not* independent curator/producer. That artists generate their own labour (though even this is debatable) does not necessarily place them within the classic class definition of 'intelligensia'. To even suppose that there is a class distinction between artists and the working class due to the consciousness of the former over the latter is a presumption not borne out by example. That artists comparatively can be said to be part of a class that produces ideology denies the worker role (prior to its commodification) in the development of western street culture as it has arisen and shaped our lives since at least the Fifties. Artists, in my experience, are cultural workers who gain employment through casual labour — 'professional' being merely a status title without economic substance.

Where 'oppositional' cannot be confused with 'alternative' exists clearly in economics. The target for such opposition is the structure in which artists are denied the right to make an equitable living. Despite Canada's real history of Nationalism, the government has wilfully weakened any domestic protection of its own cultural industry as has been well-documented. (Currently, under renewed pressure, the Federal Minister for Communications is again poised to "wrestle control of film distribution" out of the hands of American interests.) It is in the area of distribution where the right to make a living becomes a brick wall.

Unlike other workers, artists accepted a substitute by acknowledging as legitimate, the pursuit of non-guaranteed state funding and occasional flirtation with re-newed patronage through private enterprise. The politics being, that private enterprise controlled the marketplace and ensured the continuous supply of foreign goods. Artists even under co-operative conditions could not survive and the government responded (with the approval of the business sector) to set-up band-aid funding agencies, who in turn set-up anesthetic 'programmes'.

The artist-spaces responsible for producing 'alternative' media products well understood the implications of this shut-out, and its token compensation, but have failed with the exception of a few briefs and interventions to take the matter further by developing their own organizational strength or piggybacking on existing industrial labour structures. The chain of events has been much like someone taking away your apartment and replacing it with a cardboard box. The recent funding cuts herald the intention of now taking away the cardboard boxes. Maybe the ultimate 'pragmatic compromise' is to bow and scrape for paper bags?

In the new issue of **Parallelogramme**, the quarterly publication of artist space activity in Canada, gay activist and self-described former "teenage communist", Tim Guest has written an article titled "Intolerance (The Trouble with Social Realism)". The article itself is a re-working of his participation in A Space's series of "informal lectures": *Talking: A Habit*. This is not Guest's first informal ideological rap for **Parallelogramme**. His debut came with a piece titled "For the restoration of a critical and strategic programme for the Association of National Non-Profit Artists' Centres. All power to the new line." Guest genuinely seems interested in generating a debate with often less than willing participants. However, his methodology is in varying degrees offensive. His earlier analysis of what is wrong with artist-spaces whitewashed any political differences and recounted a history in which he had little participation. The views he quoted were not so much the views of the production community but the opinions of the 'new managers' who need to defer any critical judgements that would question their independence. Calling for critical discussion begs the question why has it taken so long? The last ten years have produced few forums (with the exception of one or two uncritical conferences) and what is beginning to take place (in the lecture series) is the middle of a dialogue which has yet to have a beginning. Guest, probably through default rather than intention, is moving towards becoming the ideological spokesperson for ANNPAC and its increasing respectability within the new establishment.

Red-baiting

His essay "Intolerance" has been decried as red-baiting and he has been likened to Barbara Amiel (the 'liberal' journalist who swung effectively right). Guest denies these accusations, though there is (in the informality of his address, and the proximity of his comments) much slopiness that suggests otherwise. As he writes in "Intolerance", "anyone who's had any experience in the left knows that socialists are generally quite intelligent and honest people", and Guest himself is no exception. But, what he has ignored is the phobic context into which his criticisms of the left fall.

As my own experience tells me, artists whose work explicitly criticizes the State or whose work attempts some clear integration of issues of class/economics are admonished by all sides on all levels. It is virtually impossible not to be misidentified with left party structures and therefore be dismissed as a party hack. Red-baiting, as Guest well knows, hurts the independent left the most. Although, what artists have to say about their political relationship to society or what they perceive as the interpolitical relationships of others is often formative, and from an historical perspective, perhaps naive, this has not been its undoing. Many works by artists whose political content is perceived as more marginal (gender associated issues, or issues of race, for example), while not so readily dismissed on all sides, may hold this position of dubious distinction more due to their being generally perceived as mere side-issues by the liberal establishment. The impact of this work has suffered more by virtue of its being ignored than by its being perceived of as part of a communist plot.

Sexuality, the very issue which

terminated Guest's involvement with his Trotskiest friends is — give or take the obscenity laws — what Western society has expected its art to contain. Art has been the 'safe' conduit for sexual repression. I would suggest that what is *not* tolerated, thus allowing for this ongoing form of 'red-baiting', is art whose content addresses issues of class and economics. The automatic association of these issues with the Left *and* its party structures implies a belief that these issues are the sole property of "The Party".

In asking the question why do socialists make such narrow-minded art? Guest writes, "It's because Joe Stalin still casts a long and very dark shadow over political art", thus re-affirming the simplistic association carried at large. What connections, you might ask, would a woman making a tape about rape need to have with Joe Stalin? The answer is none.

I'm sure that Guest's informality is partially responsible for his carelessness with lines like "It appears that socially responsible artists are making a comeback". But he continues to feign ignorance of what is meant by selling out to the "other side" while living and working in a society that smothers its citizenry in bureaucratic 'affectations'. Most of Guest's recent article is devoted to an attack on Socialist Realism and by association, Social Realism in its contemporary form. Guest's protest of the intolerance of the left, with which I am not essentially in disagreement, is more interesting if his argument is inverted.

In essence he is arguing for art, which in his own words is "simply emotional or amorphous or evocative (ambiguous and contradictory)" without demonstrating any consideration that his argument also exists as the centrepiece of those who wish to believe that art is apolitical, or those who relinquish any responsibility for any political message that their work may contain. Simultaneously he decries the left for not "supporting civil rights for homosexuals" and in particular the lack of response in cases against **The Body Politic**. The contradiction lies surely in that the artists whose work is defiantly 'apolitical', in its traditional sense, were not those who came to the support of the **Body Politic** whereas those artists who Guest dismisses as "feeling socially responsible towards an abstract morality (operating on the vaguest of principles and snippets of rhetoric)" in fact did, and continue to.

It is finally the uncritical nature of what Guest wishes us to have tolerance for which contradicts his desire for a "internalized understanding" or the development of a "critical discussion". More than the dogmatism of the Left, it is the convenience of caution (not to be seen, heard or read as being wrong) which typifies the reluctance for critical analysis. Whether it's between genders, sub-generations or those of similar sexual preference, intellectually there seems to be a trend of wanting to place particular cultural and political issues on hold. Institutions and traditions are now described as being 'inevitable'. The inadequacy of finding solutions has generated a passivity which allows relatively new directions to be accepted as permanent environmental fixtures, — Corporate control of our culture, being within our own interests, the most pervasive.

On a community scale, and returning to the issues of politics as they currently affect the Toronto community, it is the undermining of artists, as one social grouping, and of their rights to self-determination and coherent organization which is most intolerable. Artists must clearly define their needs and push their collective requirements within the political framework. There can be no coalition of supporting organizations while these needs remain undefined. Bits and pieces of traditional political strategies cannot, through will alone, be sewn together with any semblance of function. Lectures and 'public meetings' are inadequate forums for the basic discussions that are long overdue.

Today the P.Q. government announced budget cuts of $650 million in the areas of social assistance and cultural spending — the subject is not one of political interference or intolerance — but how can you organize in sixty seconds or less? ●

CLIVE ROBERTSON

With this issue, the Managing Editorship of FUSE is being replaced by the Editorial Collective who in turn will now be responsible for the editorial functions of each issue on an issue-by-issue basis. Clive Robertson is taking an editorial 'vacation', while remaining co-publisher and Art Director.

Letters

Sexual "liberation" v. practice

In Alexander Wilson's article "Gay Conference" (News and Reports FUSE Vol. 6 #3), the words of Pat Califia and Gayle Rubin, two lesbian activists who spoke on certain matters of sexuality at the "Doing It" conference in Toronto last July, were quoted in such a way as to give the impression that their views on some sexual practices of sexual minorities were representative of the views of the majority of those attending the conference. ("I'm tired of the battle for sexual liberation being an exceptionalist battle, of people saying 'Well, what I do is okay, but kiddie porn, torture, drag queens, that's going too far.' What's the difference between that and saying, like people did in the fifties, that 'if we let people be homosexual where will the line be drawn?' We're not asking for one more exception, but for sexuality itself to be validated . . ." etc.)

Since I did not attend the conference, I do not want to dispute the impression that the presentations there shared this point of view. However, I do know both gays and lesbians who attended the conference and did not agree with this position. Given how hotly these issues are currently being debated within the women's and gay movements, I think it would have been better for Alex to have indicated that Califia's and Rubin's views are not representative of a majority of feminists, and that the debate includes a considerable variety of differently conceived and articulated positions.

I do not share Rubin's and Califia's views. I do not agree that **sexual orientation** and sexual practices such as pedophilia (with the attendant ill of "kiddie-porn") are equivalent issues, either psychologically or socially; nor do I think that, aside from sexual orientation, every other kind of sexual practice presents us with the same kinds of questions. Drag queens, foot fetishists, S/M devotees and those who are enamoured of pre-pubescent children are not involved in sexual practices which can be said to be directly identical in terms of their individual or, most importantly, their social impact — at least in my opinion. The making of pornography in a capitalized and industrialized setting, with real human beings; the attendant social relations involved in that process and the images and values which are thus generated present another complicated set of issues. Rubin's use of the term "sexual liberation" is very different from mine. While I hope to take up some of these issues in a forthcoming issue of **Fuse**, I thought it was important to register the fact that the debate lives within the editorial board as well, and to ensure that readers were aware of this situation.

Varda Burstyn, Toronto

Not Just A Grievance

I'm writing to support the views expressed in your last editorial, particularly where it said, "Benefits should be planned as real social and cultural events, instead of cop-cat venues with repetitive line-ups . . ."

I've just spent the past year in an all-women's band here in Vancouver and we played a number of benefits for various different campaigns and causes.

It's undoubtedly been fun and we appreciated the chance to play and raise money for something worthwhile. However, there were times when the organizers (and this includes the women's community) treated us with less respect than we received in sleazy downtown clubs. Once we were even told (and I repeat "told") to stop playing in the middle of a carefully worked out set so someone could make a speech! This insensitivity infuriated us and people who came to see us play. There were also times when there was a reluctance to pay us even a bare minimum to cover expenses, despite the fact that we practise everyday leading up to a gig and spend usually a solid 12 hours on the day lugging heavy equipment, setting up and then staying long after everyone's left to clear away and take equipment home. We worked it out we got less than ¼ cent an hour each.

However, this is not just a musicians' grievance letter. I do know what it's like putting on benefits and realize that many people put in time for no pay. I've worked for years in political campaigns and support groups and being part of a political community is an important part of my life.

I would like to see, however, more communication between the different factions in such a community. Sometimes the emphasis on "how much money can we raise" actually limits this very goal, because it results in the event being just another dance that only the bored, or the committed, attend. Whereas it could be an inspiring catalyst attended by people who wouldn't normally go to such things.

The 'Rock Against Racism' and 'Rock Against Sexism' gigs in London in the late 1970s had a strong effect on many people (including myself). For one thing they got me back into playing music and feeling a lot more positive. But copying events inspired by a different set of circumstances in a different place won't really do either. It doesn't help to mature the community much. We've had a speight of 'Rock Against' gigs in Vancouver over the past two years and if anything they've helped to advertise the political community's lack of imagination.

Fuse has done much to cover cultural alternatives (the interview with Mama Quilla II where they discussed the women communities' resistance to womens' rock, was excellent) — I wish these issues could be taken and discussed seriously in our communities instead of being put into an "entertainment" category (therefore politically irrelevent, therefore "trivia") and only discussed when it's time to "make money" again.

I have personally been more inspired and strengthened by good alternative cultural events than an endless stream of rallies, demos, occupations, picket lines, meetings etc. over a period of fifteen years or more! We need to strengthen our alternatives and build up the good things in order to be able to fight the bad, the oppressive and the boring.

Marian Lydbrooke, Vancouver

Clear the decks!

In reference to your last editorial, "When Benefits become Detriments" (FUSE, September 1982) I would like to clarify an error. The described meeting of "alternative media representatives" who were organizing a "summer coalition dance" was not, as suggested, merely planning a "good time down by the lake". Ironically we initiated this event primarily as a benefit for local bands. It's a pity Clive Robertson chose to slur those who were in fact doing the very thing that his misinformed editorial proposed.

Jennifer Lawrence, Toronto

Crossing the Border

In September a number of students registered to attend the New York program offered by the Ontario College of Art were denied entry to the United States by the U.S. Immigration authorities. An Immigration officer stated that the College was not approved to operate a school in the U.S.

OCA's New York program has been operating for the past six years. Administered by the Department of Experimental Arts, 25 students have been able to spend one or two semesters working in the New York studio space maintained by the College and pursuing a course of independent studies. The program has been a successful and valuable option to students who wish to familiarize themselves with New York's offerings.

One of the students who had been refused entry met with Robert Begley, the Registrar of the College, and was told that the OCA did not become aware that it was operating in the U.S. without Federal approval until January 1982. At that time, two students had been turned back at the border because they did not have the Student Visa Form required by U.S. Immigration. During its investigation into these students' refusal, OCA realized it required Federal as well as State approval to operate in New York; it therefore applied for this approval and issued those students with the appropriate form signed by the Registrar, but the space for the Federal Approval Number was left blank. This form allowed these two students entry to the U.S.

The Registrar further said that in the spring of 1982, he had had to decide whether to close the New York program until it received approval from the U.S. Government, or whether to take the risk, based on the previous six years, that students would "get through." He decided to take that risk on behalf of the students, and issued all students with the incomplete form. While 19 students were allowed entry to the U.S. with this form before September 15th, 5 students who attempted to cross the border after the 15th were informed that from now on students from the OCA would not be allowed into the U.S. until the College had Federal approval.

While it is understandable that the OCA Administration did not want to close the NY studio, it is inexcusable that the Administration did not inform the students that they would be in the U.S. illegally, thus allowing the students to decide for themselves about taking this risk with U.S. Immigration. According to one Immigration officer, students "could be arrested at the border for attempting to enter the U.S. with unauthorized documents and those students now in New York could be deported." As a further complication, those students who were refused entry now have their individual names on the Immigration Department's computerized list of people not allowed into the States **at all** and, presumably, these students will be refused entry to the U.S. until the College receives its Federal approval.

Regardless of the College's current efforts to speed up Federal approval from the U.S. authorities, students have not only been placed, without prior knowledge, in a legally compromising position, but also have found themselves back in Toronto without accommodation (it isn't easy finding temporary and affordable student accommodation in the middle of September), out a significant amount of money (cost of transportation back and forth from the border, the higher cost of short term housing, and the loss in exchange rates between buying and selling the U.S. dollar, etc.) from an already extremely low budget, and out a month's worth of expensive tuition.

Here we go again . . .

When one of the students brought these concerns to Dr. Fleck, the President of OCA, he initially told her that "the College was not responsible for getting students across the border . . . that they expected their students to be mature enough to make those arrangements." She pointed out to him that she had crossed the border many times in the past and that it was the Student Visa form issued by the College and the lack of Federal approval for the operation of the NY Campus which had resulted in her not being allowed entry and that she felt, therefore, that the College should share in the financial losses occurring because of this situation. Dr. Fleck stated that this wouldn't be possible because the College's books are audited and that there aren't legitimate funds budgeted for this type of emergency. It became evident during this conversation that for the College to share in the financial losses which they have caused students would mean that the College would be admitting culpability. This is obviously something the Administration does not wish to do.

Dr. Fleck did offer three suggestions: (1) work in the school as a monitor (which means, in essence, that students could work approximately 100 hours to rectify the results of the school's error), (2) apply for a Bursary, (although there was very little money in the bursary fund and it was unlikely students would receive one), or (3) the College could refund student fees (thus losing a scholastic year at OCA while still being out money for the additional expenses outlined above).

If the Administration of the Ontario College of Art is going to take the risk of jeopardizing its students' status with U.S. Immigration, it must ensure that these student's names are cleared with U.S. Immigration — which it is attempting to do — as well as recognize its responsibility to compensate students who are out money and time — which it refuses to do. This refusal is indicative of the current Administration's lack of concern for the students attending the College (see "Fleck Strike II, **Fuse**, Vol. 6, No. 1&2) and of its attitude of protecting itself from the responsibility of its own errors at the expense of those it has a mandate to service. ●

L. James

The Christie Crisis

On October 15, in Toronto, the contemporary arts community was dealt a hefty blow by Metro Toronto politicians. Grants to Trinity Square Video, A Space and Art' Sake (three local organizations) were refused by City Council. Funding lost totalled $20,500 — a small amount of money compared to the combined overall budgets of these groups (approx. $350,000) and to Metro Toronto's cultural service budget of $3.5 million.

Metro Toronto's decision is important in that it has provided a spark that could bring disparate interests within the downtown artistic community closer together; the same community is now seriously lobbying for allies, and has formed an action committee ("Citizens for the Arts") which is planning a number of public forums and involvements in the current municipal elections.

Borough of York Mayor Gayle Christie, who proposed the cuts, gained fresh press coverage for her interest in arts funding as a political issue. (Christie's own Borough Council's fiscal unaccountability and her fights with York's service employees have in the recent past, provided her with media attention). A citizens group within the Borough of York is currently requesting that the Province of Ontario set up a commission of inquiry into the Borough's affairs to investigate Christie's alleged mismanagement. It is not remiss to suggest therefore that her proposal for 'saving money' or 'qualitative spending' on local arts groups is a convenient smokescreen for Christie's own political misfortunes.

On October 15, at the Metro City Council meeting which discussed the Metropolitan Executive Committee Report (no. 32) on Cultural Service Grants, Mayor Christie used the meeting as a courtroom and even went further by making Solicitor-General like statements such as: "I only have time now to deal with these three groups. The material I have in my files only hits the tip of the iceberg." Christie's voluminous "files" which were on display at the meeting are believed to have been initiated by *two* 'concerned citizens' who have already effectively closed the GAP (an artists-space) and who also interfered with permits for Gay celebrations at Grange Park.

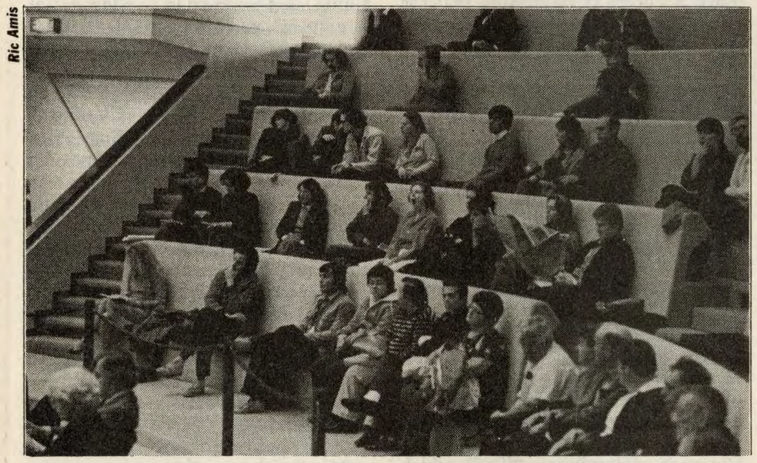
Mayor Christie said "I suppose I'm one of the more dangerous people to have around because I've taken some sketching and I have a drop of talent that could have probably been expanded, although I've gotten into another area where I'm expanding in other ways." (NOW, July 1st.) Christie has used the press to make inaccurate and obscure statements about the individuals and organizations involved, by posing false questions on the validity of the art being produced and exhibited by these groups. One statement was that a director of Trinity Square Video (Elizabeth Chitty) had urinated in a yellow pail at a cultural performance at the Art Gallery of Ontario. This statement was totally inaccurate. The performance referred to was performed by Montreal artist Marie Chouinard back in March of 1981. (What is surprising is that funding to the Art Gallery of Ontario was not in question for presenting this performance.) Kim Tomczak's "Museum of Man" presented at A Space was criticized for containing excrement in a small glass bowl without mentioning that his exhibit was a gesture on the horrors of war.

In Mayor Christie's presentation to City Council, on October 15, her most detailed arguments concerned financial viability. She questioned the role of public funding as the sole support of the artistic community. She detailed A Space's sources of funding in terms of income generated against government funding received. With an increase of nearly $30,000 in government grants over 1981, A Space was only able to increase its own earned income by $800. Armed with this type of selective information it was easy to find support for her arguments: that funding for A Space, Trinity Square Video and Art' Sake be withdrawn. Mayor Christie's problem stems from the fact that she already opposes social welfare and what she terms 'grant welfare' for arts groups is merely an extension of her refusal to acknowledge the rights of employment for all. There are two main structures which have developed for the dissemination of public funds to the arts community. One is based on the premise that grant giving should be at arms-length from the political process. The second is the model which Metro Toronto City

Ric Amis

Gayle Christie addresses City Council Meeting, October 15, 1982.

Ric Amis



Concerned Artists and others.

David Silcox (third from left).

Council has adopted, and allows for direct political involvement in the funding process. Which of these two are the best might be left to argument, but in the final analysis *all* public funds to the arts are affected by political decisions. e.g. 84% of the Canada Council's annual budget is granted by a federal parliamentary appropriation.

One grave mistake was made by the artist community. They did not realize who the players in the game were, much less the rules. Rather than lobby Executive Committee members who were eligible to vote against Mayor Christie's proposal, these groups opted instead to deal personally through David Silcox, the Cultural Affairs Officer for Metro Toronto. It became quite obvious at the City Council meeting that Mr. Silcox's position was not that different from that of the Sanitation Engineer who was seated next to him. Silcox was there to advise and only when requested to do so. Trinity Square Video and A Space, in the week before the City Council meeting, did try to lobby Council members. It was a little late. Mayor Christie had undertaken substantial research and detailed information seeking, complete with reports from the Health Department and enquiries into the affairs of many more arts organizations, other than the three cut. The aldermen supporting the arts groups could only speak in aesthetic generalities. They had no time to familiarize themselves with most of Mayor Christie's financial specifics, though most of her generalizatons were easily refutable. If, in the five months since the community had heard of the problems with funding (through the newspapers) up to the day that the final decision was made; those involved had spent that time lobbying City Council members, the decision might have been much different.

There are some important issues regarding process here. None of these groups were formally informed of any problems with their grant requests. The city had no external (to those elected) advisory committee and no system of direct appeal if funds were not given, and had made no prior statement of criteria by which funding would be decided. One of the motions that Mayor Christie recommended, and was accepted by Council, is that "all future applications contain information regarding the grant criteria, the grant process, and appeal process which may be available to groups which have been denied funding or have received a reduced amount of funding." It was also passed by Council that "an Arts Advisory Committee be established to review the criteria (content), prior to its submission to Metro Council".

Often it takes time to learn that where there's cheese there are often mouse-traps close by. In the past the downtown artist community has naively remained outside of the civic political process and therefore has been unrepresented. The Christie Crisis invites a series of demands to correct this neglect.

Ric Amis/Clive Robertson

"Citizens for the Arts", P.O. Box 219, Station "C", Toronto, Ontario M6J 3P4. Ric Amis (416) 536-9183.

Michael Behnan 1947-1982

Record Cover Michael Behnan.

Michael Behnan, musician and artist, recently died in Toronto of cancer at the age of 35.

Michael was known and respected by a wide range of socialist and progressive people through his work on common projects, as well as his performances at local bars, the Trojan Horse Coffee House and folk festivals. His drawings, paintings and monoprints were displayed in art galleries and in his published books of drawings. Some of his most recent works were included in a group showing at Partisan Gallery in Toronto. Influenced by singers like Phil Ochs and painter and friend Fasanella, Michael showed an open and empathetic attitude towards the conditions of his subjects; the local people of Gores Landing, (where he made his home), the peasants of Guatemala and the people of Ireland whom he met on his travels and featured in his drawings and monoprints.

His albums, "Night Shift Life", and "Sweet Casima" (both self-produced and distributed) were influenced musically by folk and country and western, as well as rock and roll. Lyrically, the songs are full of the ironies of working class life. In work with others, Michael lent his musical talents to several slide/tape shows, the radio program "From a Different Perspective" and to the film, "Up from the Bargain Basement".

His last series of published drawings, "Hospital Drawings" depicted his own struggle against cancer, and the despair and hope which he found in those around him in the hospital. Michael suspected that the chemicals found in the printer's ink which he had used in his monoprints, were related to his cancer.

At a memorium, held near his home, friends and relatives gathered recently to pay tribute to Michael's life by singing his songs and some of their own. He will be sadly missed by his friends and colleagues, though his musical and artistic works will keep his spirit alive for all of us.

Glen Richards

CORRECTIONS

PHOTO CREDIT:
Jean Paquin, "United Front of Cultural Workers in Quebec", page 91.

apologies to Kay Armatage, whose name was mispelled in "The Judy Chicago Paradox", page 93.

from Volume 6 #1 and 2.
Apologies to Jayne Cortez, whose name was mispelled on pages 72 and 74, and to Hamiet Bluiett whose name was mispelled on page 74.

page 72: "On the new album I have Bill Poe playing the shinai" should read: "On the new album I have Bill Cole playing the musette".

Now you see it . . . Soon you won't

40% OFF REGULAR PRICE
$15 Complete Volume
$3 for each issue

Send me _____
Enclosed cheque ____ **Bill me** ____
Name _____
Address _____
State/Prov _____
Code _____

FUSE 379 Adelaide St. W. (2nd floor)
Toronto, Ont. Canada M5V 1S5

Women and Culture

MUSIC
The Women's Music Industry - Susan Sturman (Dec. '80)
The Slits - Martha Fleming (Dec. '80)
The Raincoats - Andrew Paterson (Dec. '80)
Inuit Throat and Harp Songs - Ellen Moses (Dec. '80)
Mama Quilla II - Clive Robertson, John Greyson (May '80)
Hildegaard Westerkamp - Clive Robertson (Mar. '82)

VIDEO
It's Not Your Imagination (Women in Focus) - Lisa Steele (Mar. '81)
Nellies (Terry Chmilar) - Lisa Steele (Mar. '81)
Love, Honour and Obey (Third World Newsreel) - Tony Whitfield (Mar. '81)
Black Women: Bringing It All Back Home (Black Women for Wages for Housework) - Lisa Steele (Mar. '81)
Feminist Film and Video Conference - Nancy Johnson (Aug. '81)
Domination in the Everyday (Martha Rosler) - Tony Whitfield (Nov. '81)
Secrets from the Street: No Disclosure (Martha Rosler) - Tony Whitfield (Nov. '81)
Gloria (Lisa Steele) - Clive Robertson (Nov. '81)
Sacrificial Burnings (Nancy Nicol) - Clive Robertson (Nov. '81)
Split (Ardele Lister) - Clive Robertson (Nov. '81)
Delicate Issue (Nancy Nicol) - Clive Robertson (Nov. '81)
And Now the Truth (Vera Frenkel) - Clive Robertson (Nov. '81)

FILM
In the Bag (Amy Taubin) - Meg Eginton (May '81)
Nine Months; Two of Them; Just Like at Home (Marta Meszoros) - Isobel Harry (May '81)
Thriller (Sally Potter) - Tony Whitfield (Nov. '81)
Shadows of a Journey (Tina Keane) - Tony Whitfield (Nov. '81)

BOOKS
Sterilization/Elimintation (Nan Becker) - John Greyson (May '81)
Seven Cycles (Lucy Lippard) - John Greyson (May '81)
Project 73-80 (Miriam Scharon) - John Greyson (May '81)
Jails (Romaine Perin) - John Greyson (May '81)
Women and the Mass Media (Matilda Butler and William Paisley) - Alison Beale (Aug. '81)

PERFORMANCE
L.A./London Lab - Tony Whitfield & Lisa Liebmann (Nov. '81)
Mind the Gap (Rose Finn-Kelecey) - Lisa Liebmann (Nov. '81)
Spinning into the Eighties (Martha Rosler) - Lisa Liebmann (Nov. '81)
Broken Shoes (Cheri Gaulk) - Lisa Liebmann (Nov. '81)
Yoga with interference . . . (Carlyle Ready) - Lisa Liebmann (Nov. '81)
Sprouttime (Leslie Labowitz) - Lisa Liebmann (Nov. '81)

Labour and Culture

PHOTODOCUMENTS
Houdaille:Closing Down - Frank Rooney/Karl Beveridge (Dec. '80)
Canadian Farmworkers Union - Carole Conde/Karl Beveridge (Mar. '82)

FILM
A Wives Tale - Gillian Robinson (Mar. '81)
Moving Mountains - Gillian Robinson (May '81)
Les Voleurs du Job - Lisa Steele (Nov. '81)
A Time to Rise - Frank Luce (Mar. '82)

VIDEO
Enclosed (Nicola Mallson/Dawn Mason) - Lisa Steele (Mar. '81)
The Michelin Bill (Tom Berger/Bill McKiggan) - Lisa Steele (Mar. '81)
On Est Au Coton (Denys Arcand) - Lisa Steele (Mar. '81)
Building your Future - Women in Manual Trades (U.K.) (Mar. '81)
Telecommunications Workers Union (Amelia Productions) - Gillian Robinson (Aug. '81)
This Line is not in Service (Amelia Productions) - Gillian Robinson (Aug. '81)

OTHER
Maritime Labour Struggles - Kenneth Coutts-Smith (Mar. '81)
Art in the Workplace Conference (Australia) - Jody Berland (Mar. '82)

Native Rights and Culture

Native People's Rights - Norman Zlotkin (Dec. '80)
Treaty 9 Rights - Norman Zlotkin (May '81)
Crow Dog - Kenneth Coutts-Smith (Aug. '81)
The Aboriginal Nations - Heather Ross (Aug. '81)
Corporate 'caring' in North - Lisa Steele (Aug. '81)
Aboriginal Art (Australia) - Kenneth Coutts-Smith (Jan. '82)

Immigration

Trial by Television - Clive Robertson (Mar. '81)
Immigration Raids - John Greyson (Mar. '81)

VIDEO
Wataridori : Birds of Passage (Visual Communications Inc.) - Tony Whitfield (Mar. '81)
Pinoy (Sonny Izon) - Tony Whitfield (Mar. '81)
Omai Fa' Atasi : Samoa Mo Somoa (Mai Fa'Atasi) - Tony Whitfield (Mar. '81)

Black Culture

The Secret History of Black Music in Toronto - Norman Richmond (Dec. '80)
Diasporic Music - Norman Richmond (Mar. '81)
Gayap Drummers - C. Robertson /John Greyson (May '81)
Betty Carter - Norman Richmond (Mar. '81)
Music in Cameroun - Hank Bull (Jan. '82)
Political Thought of Archie Shepp - Norman Richmond (Jan. '82)

THEATRE
Sistren - Honor Ford Smith (Nov. '81)
Sistren's QPH - Lisa Steele (Nov. '81)

FILM
Valerie: A Woman, an artist . . (Monica Freeman) - Valerie Harris (May '81)
But Then, She's Betty Carter (Michele Parkerson) - Valerie Harris (May '81)
The Cruz Brothers and Mrs. Malloy (Kathleen Collins) - Valerie Harris (May '81)

Race Relations

Blacks Britannica - Richard Royal (Dec. '80)
Nazis are no fun - Rock Against Racism (UK) (Mar. '81)
Two Versions - John Greyson (Dec. '80)
A Minor Altercation (Jackie Sheaver-film) - Valerie Harris (May '81)

Gay Culture and Rights

Telling Stories (CBS Gay Power, Gay Politics) - George Smith (Mar. '81)

Telling Secrets (CBC Sharing the Secret) - John Greyson (Mar. '81)
Nothing Personal (Ieuan Rhys-Morris & Ron Moule) (video) - John Greyson (Mar. '81)
Gays go to work on Bill C-53 - John Greyson (May '81)
Fighting the Right (5th bi-National Lesbian Conference) - Sara Diamond/Helen Mintz/Lisa Steele (Aug. '81)
Homosexuality: Power & Politics (Gay Left Collective) - George Smith (Aug. '81)
Pink Triangles: Radical Perspectives on Gay Liberation (ed. Pam Mitchell) - George Smith (Aug. '81)
Dangling by their Mouths (Colin Campbell) (video) - Clive Robertson (Nov. '81)

Cultural Policy

CBC 2: Seeing Double - Clive Robertson (Mar. '81)
Flagging down the Gravy Train - Clive Robertson (Mar. '81)
Video Crisis - Clive Robertson (Mar. '81)
Save the Last Dance for Me - Clive Robertson (Mar. '81)
Less Screening, More Trouble - Clive Robertson (May '81)
Artists' Rights Societies - Roland Miller (May '81)
Services or Commodities? - Cultural Workers' Alliance (May '81)
Love and Money: Politics of Culture (Oberon Press) - Clive Robertson (May '81)
The Decline and Faults of Ontario's Empire - Lisa Steele (Aug. '81)
Business as Usual - Gillian Robinson (Aug. '81)
Business and Culture (Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee) - Clive Robertson (Aug. '81)
Affirmation Action (Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee) - Lisa Steele (Aug. '81)
CRTC and PAY-TV - Clive Robertson (Nov. '81)

Dominant Culture (Ideology)

Twilite's Last Gleaming - Robert Reid (Dec. '80)
"The Worthington Letters" - Clive Robertson (Mar. '81)
The Chinese (John Fraser) - Anthony Chan (May '81)
Wealth and Poverty (George Gilder) - David Mole (Aug. '81)

Oppositional Culture (Ideology)

Photography/Politics: One (Photography Workshop, London) - Terry Smith (Dec. '80)
Television in Nicaragua - Richard Fung (Mar. '81)
Waking Up in NYC (PAD, NYC) - Jerry Kearns/Lucy Lippard (Mar. '81)
Manufacturing the News (Mark Fishman) - Paul Weinberg (May '81)
The Mozambique Caper - Jamie Swift & Art Moses (Aug. '81)
Post-Franco Spain - Jeffry House (Aug. '81)
Rattling the Chains (Kent Commission) - Clive Robertson (Nov. '81)

The New Underdogs - Lisa Steele (Nov. '81)
After the Cataclysm (Noam Chomsky) - Richard Royal (Nov. '81)
The Sociology of Youth Culture & Sub-Cultures (Mike Brake) - Alexander Wilson (Nov. '81)
Subculture: The Meaning of Style - Alexander Wilson (Nov. '81)
Modernism and Modernity (symposia) - Bruce Barber (Nov. '81)
Too Long a Sacrifice (Jack Holland) - Andrea Lynett (Nov. '81)
Militant Culture (theatre) - Timothy Rollins (Nov. '81)
Route 1 & 9 (theatre) - Tony Whitfield (Nov. '81)
Public Art (PAD Festival, L.A.) - Micki McGee (Mar. '82)
At the Lenin Shipyard (Stan Persky) - Robert Reid (Mar. '82)

Oppositional Culture (Production)

VIDEO
Transvideo - Tom Sherman (Mar. '81)
Michelle on the day of surgery; Steel and Flesh; Transvideo; Love Tapes; Weak Bullet; Videage; Get Ready to March; Ma Vie C'est Pour Le Restant De Mes Jours; The Breakfast Table; Peter George; Dogmachine; Casting Call; Virtuality; Test Tube; I Bet You Ain't Seen Nothing Like This Before - Clive Robertson (Nov. '81)
Prime Cuts; Wonder Woman; O Superman; Remnants From the Beginning of the Period of Destruction - Lisa Steele (Mar. '82)

MUSIC
Industrial Records (U.K.) - Clive Robertson (Dec. '80)
Guest List/Government - Clive Robertson (Dec. '80)
Green Fields of Canada - Norbert Ruebsaat (May '81)
The Mixed Means of Production (artists audio studios) - Clive Robertson (Mar. '82)
Horizontal/Vertical Band - Clive Robertson (Mar. '82)

OTHER
Fresh Air - Laura Kipnis (Mar. '81)
Performance Text(e)s & Documents (ed. Chantal Pontbriand) - Clive Robertson (Mar. '82)
Books by Artists (ed. Tim Guest) - Clive Robertson (Mar. '82)
Off The Wall (Derek May) - Clive Robertson (Mar. '82)

The Law & Civil Rights

Constitution: What's Really at Stake? - Jeffry House (Dec. '81)
Constitution: Who's Going to Profit? - David Mole (Dec. '80)
The Shit Shops Here! - Clive Robertson (Mar. '81)
Dowson v RCMP - Jeffry House (Mar. '81)
Covert Action Information Bulletin - Daniel Tsang (Mar. '81)
CounterSpy & C.A.I.B. - John Greyson (Mar. '81)
A History of Metro Police - Allan Sparrow (May '81)
Padding the (Police) Budget - Gillian Robinson (May '81)
Malicious Prosecutions - Mitchell Chernovsky (May '81)
In Us We Trust - James Dunn (Aug. '81)
The Corridart "Fiasco" - Jean Tourangeau (Aug. '81)
Family Protection Act - James Dunn (Aug. '81)
Censored! Only in Canada (Malcom Dean) - Lisa Steele (Nov. '81)
In the Belly of the Beast (Jack Henry Abbott) - Jeffry House (Nov. '81)
Writers and Human Rights Conference - Patrick McGrath (Jan. '82)
C.I.R.P.A. - Clive Robertson (Jan. '82)

Environment

VIDEO/FILM
The Uranium Question (Andy Harvey) - Lisa Steele (Mar. '81)
Song of the Canary (Josh Hanig/David Davis) - Tony Whitfield (Mar. '81)
Experts of Evil (Fugitive Films) - Nick Macrombie (Nov. '81)

BOOKS
Acid Rain: The North American Forecast - Bill Glenn (Nov. '81)
Before the Rainbow: What We Know about Acid Rain - Bill Glenn (Nov. '81)
United States - Canada Memorandum of Intent on Transboundary Air Pollution - Bill Glenn (Nov. '81)

OTHER
Artists Against Uranium (Australia) - Jody Berland (Jan. '82)

Everything you might have missed in FUSE Volume 5

Upfront

ARLENE GOLDBARD AND DON ADAMS

SPEAKING OF MONEY

Americans discuss support for "progressive, political arts"

The economics of cultural production rarely receives serious attention, especially by those on the left. Aside from the mass media industries, most cultural producers live under semi-feudal economic conditions awaiting the benevolence of some anonymous patron, and this, of course, affects the discussion on the economic realities under which cultural producers live.

The following report first appeared in **Cultural Democracy** July/Aug. '82 (issue #23), and is an attempt to address the economic plight of 'oppositional' culture. Although conditions are quite different in Canada, particularly in the role of the state in funding the arts, there are many common themes. The lack of a cohesive network, the need for an aggressively defined cultural strategy, and with it the development of sophisticated and convincing forms of production are as true for Canada as they are south of the border.

In the spirit of the following discussion, I would like to make a couple of observations. The first regards the lack of any mention of organizing cultural producers as an industry, and related to this a discussion of existing cultural workers' unions such as N.A.B.E.T. (National Assoc. of Broadcast Employees and Technicians), the Musicians Union, Screen Actors Guild, the unions of cultural institution's support staff etc. Although it is true the discussion focuses on the funding of oppositional culture as such, the organization of cultural producers as a whole would have important economic consequences for oppositional cultural production. Such broad based organizations could demand equitable forms of funding distribution, the payment of fees by cultural institutions, and could eventually address such issues as minimum wage, social security, producer control over production and distribution etc.

The idea of approaching mass media unions no doubt appears formidable, but it is not without precedent. In fact, any long term strategy would necessitate such a move. An example which makes this seem less far-fetched is that of the media and communications workers in Australia who are presently demanding both greater control over the introduction and use of technology and, in this case, national content quotas. It should be noted that there are tangible connections between Australian cultural producers and these unions (see **Fuse** May/June 1982). The concept of worker control, which is an issue within industrial unions, would have interesting consequences in the media industries.

This leads to the more general observation that much of the following discussion seems to be predicated on seeing the production of oppositional culture as not only isolated from mainstream production, but as qualitatively separate from it. The danger here is that alternatives are seen in moral rather than political terms; economics becomes an issue of self-sufficiency rather than that of political action.

This is, of course, all very easy to state. In the meantime, who's going to pay the rent?

(drawings by Mike Constable) Karl Beveridge

Late in June, the first national activist arts brainstorm came to a close. **Cultural Democracy** readers know its history: At the end of February, arts activists from around the U.S. got together under the auspices of PADD (Political Art Documentation and Distribution) in New York to talk about the need for national networking and cooperation within our movement. We decided to take on a project that people across the country could take part in — something that could strengthen our sense of shared struggle and shared resources, and something that would be of value to us all.

It was decided to conduct a round-robin discussion on support for progressive political arts work in the U.S. We wanted to look at the support situation for artists and groups whose work is socially critical, linked to organizing efforts, or aimed at calling into question the status quo. Groups and individuals would hold meetings, write essays or use other methods of inquiry to participate in the brainstorm, and at the June 30 deadline **Cultural Democracy** would collate the results and publish the following excerpts and analysis.

Cultural Democracy welcomes your response to this article. If these contributions give you new ideas, or please you, or anger you — if you have reactions to share — please drop us a line. As your new ideas come to us, we'll publish them.

One note: contributors to the brainstorm talked, depending on their own proclivities, about "oppositional" art, or "activist" art, "leftist" art, "progressive" art, and so on. New York video artist **John Greyson** began his contribution to the round-robin with *"a plea to cease and desist with the misuse of the term 'political arts.' The Right has a much greater right to it — for every SPARC billboard, there are thousands of MOBIL messages; for every copy of HERESIES, there are a million copies of LADIES HOME JOURNAL."*

This disagreement over terminology ought to be seen as an indication of the diversity of the movement: there is no single political or aesthetic "line" just as there is no single organizational form or community setting or program model that makes sense to everyone. Ironically, the only respect in which progressive artists are given uniform treatment is by the establishment arts and funding worlds, to whom all of us apparently look alike.

Why is there no financial support for progressive political arts work in the United States?

At a group brainstorming session during the People's Theater Festival in San Francisco, a number of participants raised objections to the terms of this question. There is in fact considerable support, they said, though it doesn't always come in the form of cash. Berkeley writer Shepherd Bliss pointed out that volunteer time, donated materials and space had sustained many activist arts organizations; the assertion that there is no support offended him because it ignored these crucial contributions.

Most participants apparently took this question as hyperbole, however, and it seems to have touched a chord: By far the largest portion of the contributions to the brainstorm focused on the question of why support was lacking. As you will see, suggestions about how to solve this problem got far less attention.

With this, as with all the other round-robin questions, participants seemed to stick to their own experience: if they'd looked to government for support, they analyzed government's reluctance to provide it; if they'd looked to the arts market, they analyzed its shortcomings; if foundations were their target, they speculated about foundation biases; and so on.

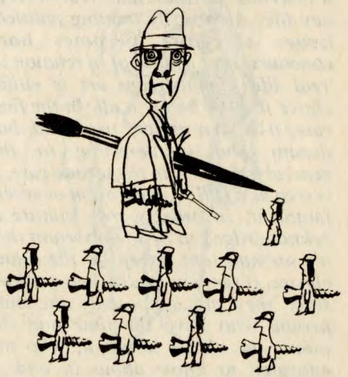
Whose Public Sector?

People generally felt that the government now has other priorities and it is unreasonable to expect support from that quarter. From **Tim Rollins** of **Group Material** in New York: *"We should all get one thing straight right away. It is **ludicrous** to expect the monied or the government to consciously finance anyone who loudly criticizes and challenges the society they dominate."*

Lucy Lippard and **Greg Sholette** from New York PADD speculate that government will become less and less of a prospect for support: *"With the recent loosening up of controls on domestic surveillance, FBI director Webster's statements that groups producing 'propaganda, disinformation and "legal assistance" may be even more dangerous than those who throw the bombs,' the threat to arts funding will escalate to direct financial censorship within arts groups. These will range from liberal-cautious ('They won't take anything from a Left perspective so there's no use applying') to radical-paranoid ('Applying will just give them more information to use against us').*

*"Even in the best of times, populist and progressive cultural forms are often unexpected, unfamiliar, and therefore unacceptable to the dominant culture. You'd think that after two decades or more of the most outrageous avant-gardism, anything would go in art. Yet there are still forms which, **when used for progressive ends**, are called into question, while the identical forms, if used ambiguously or 'lyrically', are not questioned.*

*"In addition, due to lack of individual economic support (galleries, collectors) for radical artists, their applications to grant-giving bodies are often less 'professionally' presented, less backed up by a body of previous work, less formal and bureaucratically kosher. **Within** the NEA/NEH panels, it is easier to gain support for 'non-political' art because such panels are based on compromise. Middleground, inoffensive submissions are likely to please everybody; only an impassioned progressive panelist is likely to argue strongly enough for his/her own values and persuade the rest of the panel to squeeze in a populist or activist subsidy. Not many such people are asked to join panels in the first place, or have the clout to be effective once they get there."*



Jean Catellani, reporting on the brainstorm held by **Xchange, Seattle Art and Politics**, said, *"Instead of*

supporting progressive political art, the present administration 'contributes' to art by dressing Queen Nancy in the latest designer gowns."

The **Community Murals Magazine** editorial group put its view of current government priorities concisely, according to a summary by **Tim Drescher**: *"More money on military, less on other things."*

Many of these points were echoed by participants in the brainstorm sessions at the Activist Artists Advance and People's Theater Festival in June (see coverage beginning on page 1 of this issue); it would be pretty silly to argue that the present federal administration is likely to step up its support for socially-conscious art.

But we were disturbed by some omissions in this analysis. First, it is discouraging to know that people regarded government as a fixed quantity, a lost cause. Progressive artists pay taxes too; even if we don't stand to determine the current direction of public cultural policy, we surrender our future impact by failing to provide a strong voice for a policy of cultural democracy today. If the federal government looks like a lost cause, then perhaps activist artists stand a better chance of making their voices heard by state and local governments. But can the movement afford to let government totally off the hook now?

Swimming Up the Mainstream

PADD explored the reasons the art world doesn't support much political work: *"Mainstream fine art is not considered political, and culture is generally considered something that transcends politics and real/-everyday life. Art overtly treating political issues therefore becomes* ***hors concours****, that is, taboo. In relation to 'real life', mainstream art is either above it all or below it all. In the first case, it is seen as very profound, but distant and uninteresting to the general populace; in the second case, it is seen as a frill — decoration or entertainment. In other words, culture is acknowledged to be so important that it's unimportant, except to the ruling classes. It remains under their control, since they are supposedly the only people who have the time and the money to bother about it, who are educated to know about it, and to determine what is 'quality.' They are also the only people with the power to select and impose their taste on everyone else.*

"Art, then, tends to be supported mainly by do-gooders (missionaries to the 'other' classes) and by those who want to use it for their own political ends through hegemony." When these people support political art, Lippard and Sholette assert, their aim is *". . . often to oppose and defuse any progressive culture, to co-opt and patronize it. Within the artworld this has taken, so far, the form of making 'political art' into a temporary* ***style****, rather than acknowledging it as an ongoing endeavor that adapts to and develops within current situations. At three points within the last 16 years this has happened: in the late '60s when the antiwar movement reached out of the general left community; in the mid '70s when the bicentennial called 'patriotic' issues into question; in the early '80s when Fear of Frying and rebellion against Reaganism also emerged from the grassroots. We are riding the crest of this last wavelet now . . ."*

Others, especially at the Activist Artists Advance, pointed out that traditional patrons and collectors don't support progressive artwork, quite simply, because its message is repugnant to them or its form unacceptable. For some, this was trying to get blood from a turnip; some Advance brainstormers felt that the acceptance of the traditional artist's role impeded the progressive artist's work — *"Stop trying to please the arts world and get on with it"* was the message.

Charles Frederick of New York's **Pandemonium Group** offered another angle on this question: *"The artist who wants to socialize his work often feels that he has to give up being an artist, when actually his responsibility is to create work which shows the contradiction of that — the problem of individuality within a socialized society . . . One of the poignant positions of the artist right now is that at some point people will recognize that the notion of artist which prevails at the moment is no more than a superstition."*

But other brainstormers saw the possibility of altering the artist's stance in order to increase support. From Tim Rollins: *"Just as Brecht's corporate shark keeps his pearly white teeth out of sight, so too must the left learn how to tell the truth in a more accessible, clever fashion.*

"I think if progressive culture began dropping those old dripping red letters and stencilled fists and began to develop a broader, less defensive, less negative approach to making critical social art, then we would gain a broader financial support from sectors not especially inclined toward financing 'political art'."

Promoting Private Grants

Private philanthropy was a big object of speculation in the brainstorm. At the Activist Artists Advance, participants pointed out that political artwork fell between various funders' priorities: Traditional arts funders tend to consider political art illegitimate; establishment funders in general shy away from any progressive work, whether arts-oriented or not; and the small funders who focus on progressive projects generally see cultural work as a low priority within their own purviews.

Like PADD and the People's Theater Festival group, the Advance brainstormers thought progressive artists worsened the situation through self-censorship: by not applying for funding, they encourage funders to see political artwork as marginal, a fringe activity; and when they do apply and receive support, progressive artists sometimes internalize funders' biases and tone down their reports and proposals to ensure continued support.

Most discussants felt that activist artists had been remiss in educating potential supporters — in all sectors — about the development of our tradition. It was asserted that potential funders can easily dismiss each socially-conscious arts project as an individual aberration or departure from the mainstream, because we have done very little to educate people about the long and varied history of political art movements. Advance participants pointed out that political art is always seen as existing in opposition to other, more legitimate traditions; our responsibility is to legitimate its own inspiring history. They also pointed out the movement's handicaps: most of our supporters don't have the kind of access to funders that establishment arts boosters have; and often they haven't got the clout — or the desire — to argue for progressive arts projects when they must compete with equally worthwhile social service programs.

Considering the Audience

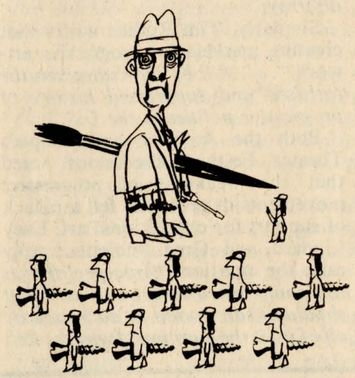
Others raised the question of identifying audience. People's Theater Festival discussants felt too much work was addressed to a too-narrow public: *"Preaching to the converted."* Some felt activist artists would do better to define their audience more broadly and work accordingly. Brainstormers at the Advance felt we just didn't know enough about who our audiences are, and how best to address them; it was suggested that research is needed into who does support artwork, what cultural enterprises now interest our desired audiences, and where their interests in new work would be greatest.

It was repeatedly pointed out that few members of our society are involved with artwork outside the consumer culture industries. How many people go to plays, or buy original artwork of any kind — much less progressive? Not many, according to Xchange: *"At the grassroots level, the deepening depression means people are spending less money on entertainment overall. Whatever money is available usually goes to a sure-thing, a guaranteed good time — such as a Hollywood movie recommended by friends and given positive TV newspaper reviews. If you've only got $7 for the weekend, why blow it on some little-known, marginal group whom you've never seen before?*

"The entertainment consumer is often more interested in the product than the process. Therefore, the high priority questions are: What film, play, etc., is happening? Will I enjoy it? Is it worth the cost of admission? The low or no priority questions are: Who is making money at this event — a capitalist theater or a workers' collective? Is this a fundraiser for a group or cause worth supporting? Is this a political education? In the end, the money that is spent goes for a few games of Pacman and a beer, not to a political art event."

In other words, brainstormers kept coming back to that fact that activist artists don't enjoy any sort of immunity from the conditions that affect the entire society: few people spend money on artwork to begin with; worsening economic conditions exacerbate the situation; and socially-conscious artists, already in a marginal position, suffer the consequences.

Brainstormers didn't agree on the question of marketing artwork. While Tim Rollins of Group Material and some People's Theater Festival participants thought progressive artists needed to change their ideas about marketing, some of the Advance artists suggested that "marketing" was



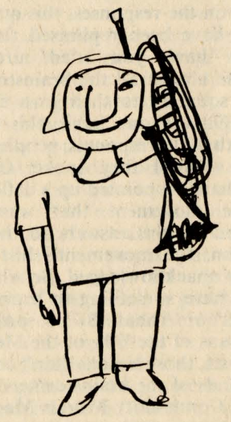
an inappropriate description of the way we need to reach potential supporters — that "organizing" fit better.

For Charles Frederick, the real question is what function art work is able to perform: *"Culture provides for a symbolic arena; a cultural language — a language of symbols — allows for contradictions to be playful. It allows . . . the questions of the society to be given play safely, within a bounded object . . . So if we talk about a leftist culture, we're talking about the fact (to me) that we have a left which is in incredible disarray. We have a kind of distorted mirror image of the mainstream society in the left . . . We are isolated from one another . . . according to various issues and various positions of struggle."* For Frederick, then, progressive artists have the opportunity to provide such a symbolic arena for the left — but have so far not grasped that opportunity.

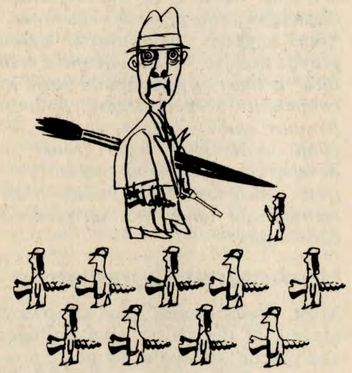
Jim Yates works with **Partners in Learning**, a Florida popular education project, and sees a contradiction in the support of his work that carries over into other areas of cultural action as well: *"The present educational system is very much a part of the dominant social, political and economic order, though it may appear to be autonomous. We liberating education folks realize that our programs are reinforcing and serving this system . . . We need to develop an empowering organizational base independent of the educational system . . . We must be prepared to go it alone when the money dries up because of our continual challenges to the present social order."* Yates suggests that cultural action groups need to *"Create alliances with local activist organizations such as community organizations, unions, feminist and civil rights groups. We could work with these groups to develop education programs and projects which serve and involve their membership and the surrounding community."*

Up Against Ourselves

Most brainstormers looked toward aspects of the artist's own attitudes and practice to lay the blame for non-support. John Greyson criticized the movement for being reactive and too thinly-spread: *"We're up against a bucks blockade which controls every viable venue of distribution in this country and culture, and our 'networks' of 'umbrellas' of 'coalitions' must be recognized as reactive responses to this very political stranglehold . . . My point is that we are still a small handful, and while we may be trying to make up for the vast inequities of silence that typify status quo culture, we could well be undermining our effectiveness by gadflying from issue to issue, forgetting to do effective community outreach."*



Brainstormers at the People's Theater Festival thought that much political art simply isn't good, and pointed to the scarcity of resources for training artists working outside of mainstream traditions. PADD also considered the forces that limit artists' development: *"In the U.S., progressive and activist art has a relatively short history since it was cut off in the '40s. Effective forms take long, hard work to develop; activist artists tend to give studio time to organize and*



support organizations, depleting their own creative energy and fragmenting their individual developments. There are few effective models and many progressive groups work in isolation, unaware of the models that do exist because of lack of mainstream media coverage."

But then the confusion and lack of unity on the left must be taken into consideration. Charles Frederick tells a story: *"A friend of mine just got back from Nicaragua, and we were talking about the problems . . . One of the extraordinary problems for any third world country which has waged a revolution is that they're left with no infra-structure — no way in which resources are organized, in which information, material, etc., flows through some organized means. And what we don't have right now is an infrastructure to support leftist art. And that infrastructure is essential. The reason we don't have the infrastructure is because the left is in disarray."*

Similarly, Tim Rollins writes that creating markets for progressive artwork *". . . will be difficult given the tortured and suppressed history of progressive politics in the U.S."*

Both the Advance and People's Theater Festival discussions noted that the weakness of progressive movements in general is felt as a lack of support for oppositional art. Lucy Lippard and Greg Sholette simply raise the question: *"An aspect that is too complicated to get into here, but should at some point be addressed by all of us, is the question of why the Left itself has not supported political art and why working people in general shy away from it. It would be extremely useful to have a 20th Century history of the relationships of various artists and art styles to various leftwing parties and political groups — who has supported whom, and why, and when."*

Xchange points to a decline in progressive culture *". . . reflecting overall disillusionment and apathy in these hard times. . . It appears that many people are so concerned with minimal survival that there are fewer risk-takers making and/or consuming political art that advocates systemic change."*

Lastly, competition among progressive artists takes precedence over cooperation, according to the Advance artists. Tim Rollins agreed: *". . . perhaps the greatest deterrent to our financial support has been the cultural left's total lack of realistic, cooperative organization. All our little groups across the country must compete for those few token grants and foundations that are available."* And from PADD: *"One of the great economic hardships we impose on ourselves is the duplication of effort, competing for the same bit of the unwholesome mainstream pie instead of uniting to bake our own."*

What strategies to address this problem have been attempted so far, and how have they succeeded or failed?

Based on the responses, this question might have been rephrased to read, "What have **you** tried already?" because almost all the brainstormers stuck squarely to their own experience. On the one hand, this was a strength of the responses: people really knew whereof they spoke. On the other hand, it pointed up a deficiency of the movement that was also revealed by the answers to the first question: the movement's history is largely unacknowledged. So while we might have something to learn from the labor theaters or political musicians of the '30s, or the Mexican muralists, those lessons didn't come to the minds of the brainstormers.

The **Community Murals Magazine** group again put their response to this question quite simply: *"Look to people, not foundations . . . Remember, 10,000 people at $1 each is $10,000."* Their plan is to expand distribution of the magazine; if they continue to donate labor, they believe costs can be covered though subscriptions and sales.

PADD has a laundry list of sales possibiities to generate earned income, with a caveat at the end; their experience, like some others', is that such projects have eaten time and returned less than might be hoped: *"Strategies may not be exactly the right word, but an attempt to apply various marketing devices has been the Left's main response to self-support, aside from applying for grants and looking for the mythical patron or matron . . .*

"Here are some of the things we've all tried to market: Publications, T-shirts, buttons, posters, tote bags, calendars, bumper stickers, and mailing lists. Here are some other ways: Benefit parties, auctions (including skill auctions), art sales, bake sales, craft sales, rummage sales, fundraising letters to a broad audience, donations in kind from local merchants for events, events such as poetry readings, performances, film showings, dances, concerts . . . begging in the streets . . .

"Most of these seem like stop-gaps. They take a lot of work from which most people get little satisfaction, and don't make huge amounts of money (though sometimes a benefit auction can reap up to $35,000 when the cause is as popular as what can be bought; we're thinking of an art sale for Chile right after the coup)."

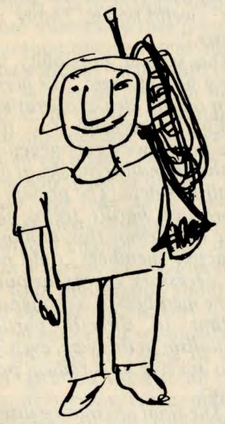
Tim Rollins shares Group Material's strategy: *"Group Material does theme exhibitions. We devise a social theme — a context — in which a huge variety of artworks can take on political meaning. (If 'they' can neutralize our political art, we have found that we can often politicize their 'neutral' art as well!) Group Material also borrows different sites for exhibitions — we negotiate with the administration of a middle-class neighbourhood*

*shopping center (where we're planning a show about consumer society) as well as with the headquarters of an anti-imperialist coalition (where we've just finished a show in solidarity with Central American Struggles). In both realms we've encountered an avid interest in a critical (but, **please**, engaging and entertaining) art."* He adds that artists ought to look to *"the encouraging successes of 'art stores' selling inexpensive multiples by members of Co-Lab, Fashion Moda and Group Material here in New York."*

Some Advance artists also pointed to the success of income-generating businesses, for instance, the Women's Graphics Center at the Women's Building in Los Angeles. And they again supported the idea of selling small, inexpensive art objects — perhaps ent of larger projects. Someone pointed out how much money establishment artists like Christo made selling books and souvenirs and artifacts of their larger installations.

Dig Where You Stand

John Greyson believes the focus should be on clearly identifying one's community and working with it, and points to *". . . signs of hope (including) the gay and feminist press where reviews of more 'experimental' work*

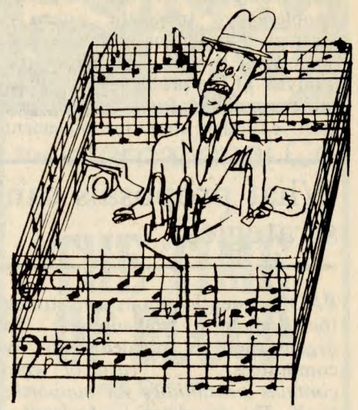


*are starting to sneak in . . . More and more gay cultural workers seem willing to actively integrate their day-to-day struggles into the work they produce. Two friends recently held a fund-raiser for their documentary **Before Stonewall**, concerning an American century of struggle for gay rights. It was sold out — featuring early films and more recent documentaries, it was a recapturing of a lost history that New York's community was obviously ready for. It was also a very effective community fundraiser . .*

Another friend is working on a documentary concerning the assassination of Harvey Milk, the gay supervisor in San Francisco. Richard has just launched an extensive fundraising campaign, aimed at those in the gay community with bucks . . ." John sees this as a risk because *". . . like other minority business communities (Black, Chinese) the gay businessmen contend to be very conservative, primarily because they are vulnerable to straight white male controlling business interests. Nevertheless, these non-governmental, non-corporate/foundation community fundraising efforts demonstrate an alternative to the suicidal depressions that set in when your third NEA grant in a row is turned down. It involves a process of simultaneously identifying support systems and developing audiences from a community standpoint. It means getting closest to what's close to you, instead of jumping around from cause to cause."*

Both the People's Theater Festival and Activist Artists Advance groups emphasized the importance of such linking up with *"natural constituencies"* — people who share your concerns — with reports on experiences that ranged from *"going to where you find people — conferences, picket lines"* to *"workplace programs"* to emphasizing the *"secondary 'saleable' aspect of work inherent in your goals"* — for instance, anti-vandalism or anti-arson groups have supported arts work that helped to educate people about their concerns.

Charles Frederick shared his experience: *"I'm working with religious imagery. Now why do that? Because socially there's going on in this country one of the main forms of reactionary ideology, it's happening in a religious image arena. So it's important to be able to make some kind of comment with the images to break them open so they can be thought about differently . . . . Also to make sure that people understand that this is a real question — the question of what is of spiritual value, what images hold in the society — and begin to look at them rather than simply . . . to pooh-pooh them . . . So there are a lot of progressive churches around. They have space, they have resources, they have organized communities, and . . . they tend to be more open to a particular debate than a rigidly materialist leftist would. They've got alternative resources around if you know how to make use of them."*



A Little of Everything

Xchange, like many progressive arts groups, has relied on a diversified funding base. Beyond NEA grants, this is how Jean Catellani lists them for the group:

"1. Soliciting donations from groups with an interest in the issue;
"2. Selling memberships in Xchange;
"3. Sponsoring events and charging admission; and
"4. Personal tithings (of great joy?!!) from Xchange members."

For one event, the Art Politik conference, Xchange *"broke even using this combination of grant money, admission fees, donations and barter."* For another, the "Chained Reactions" series of disarmament events, Jean says, *"If we had done more advance planning and aggressive fundraising prior to the events, we wouldn't have ended up using our own pennies to cover costs."* One Xchange member had recovered costs in producing and distributing an audiotape by writing letters soliciting underwriting from potential sponsors; they were made to see that their donations would result in the wide distribution of the work.

Some Advance artists had tried traditional fundraising devices like direct-mail campaigns, but with disappointing results. One participant suggested that non-arts groups found that direct-mail could be very important if a few conditions were met: you need enough capital to do several mailings and to keep up contact with donors; telephone follow-up insures a much higher return; and much care and research goes into the preparation of a successful direct-mail appeal.

Responses to these questions

revealed that activist arts groups haven't been very imaginative in their fundraising so far. By and large, people have tried the same few strategies: apply for grants or make something to sell. Though in their analysis of the problem many brainstormers called for educating prospective funders about the movement's history and impact, few have undertaken this work; and though almost every respondent emphasized the notion of identifying and cultivating a community where there is an affinity and a commonality of concern, translating this into concrete action is slow going.

But these groups, whose stock-in-trade is creative problem-solving (and we would be hard-pressed to better describe the territory progressive artists have carved out), are just beginning to apply that imagination to the problem of support, as responses to the third question will illustrate.

What proposals can be offered for new strategies?

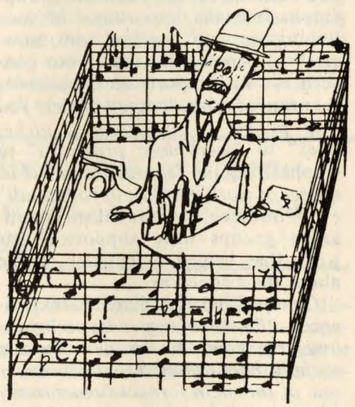
PADD is developing its own strategy for long-term self-support. The organization is divided into five committees. *". . . each of which contains possibilities for supporting itself. The newsletter — **Upfront** — has in fact paid for itself so far. The Archive committee is a potential coppermine; when the Archive is large and well-organized enough, we will ask for donations from scholars using it, charge for reproductions, loans, etc. We are just beginning work on a series of slide-show packets about various issues and aspects of political art; these will be for rent or sale and be accompanied by an audiotape or written text, which could be sold as pamphlets. The first of this series, being developed this summer, will be a 150-slide overview of visual culture in the June 12th march; cable TV is also being considered, combining slides and videotape.*

"Eventually a mailorder catalogue could be developed from the archive . . . We have also discussed publishing a bibliography and a catalogue of the archive (this might be done by the PADD Study Group). It could include multiples for sale, perhaps by non-member artists as donations to PADD.

"We also have a huge mailing list of people interested in left art from all over the country. Proceeds from selling it might be contributed to the Networking Committee.

"The only continuing project of our Public Works Committee is the monthly Second Sunday forum. Next year we hope to develop a mini-lecture series within that framework, charging a subscription fee and selling transcripts. Another possibility is to hire ourselves out to unions, universities, schools and political groups as curators of exhibitions geared to their own interests and needs."

And PADD has had no shortage of other ideas for its own support: *"Other ideas that have come up: get progressively-minded night clubs to hire us to do temporary decorations for specific events; do publicity and stage-work for political bands or music groups, slides, etc.; lease and renovate a space and then rent out gallery and studio space to artists; offer workshops or classes for 3-month periods on skills PADD members already possess (carpentry, graphics, photography, writing, languages, art, research, pasteup, typography, video, etc.); open a coffee shop; start the multiples project with some catchy anti-nuke object (bomb in plastic ice cube???)."*



Lucy and Greg note, as have many brainstormers, that *"Distribution is the area in which coalition or co-operative work would be most effective."*

Tim Rollins sees most future promise in the sort of strategy he is pursuing now: *". . . our work has to change and the challenge of our job is how to create affordable, appealing cultural products for a broad audience without over-compromising the political purpose behind our work."*

Xchange used the opportunity of the round-robin to examine its own possibilities for new income: *"At present we're trying two routes: applying for foundation grants and brainstorming on what 'service' to offer the community to drum up some bucks . . . Three possibilities for a service were suggested:*
nonprofit production company;
profitmaking enterprise that benefits the community (e.g., a restaurant or silkscreen workshop);
coordinating body of an alternative arts fund."

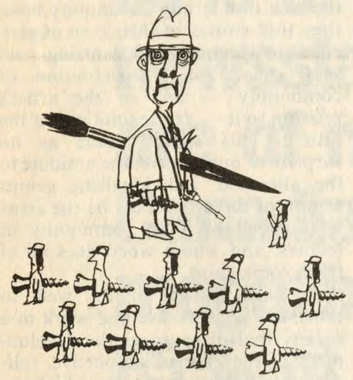
Of the first possibility, Jean writes, *"Our focus would be on producing topical, political, and environmental issues, being careful not to duplicate the efforts of other existing local production groups (Stepping Stone, Wise Women Productions, Good Fairy Productions). Long-term planning would be essential, beginning with researching who has already attempted this around the country, and what the successes/failures have been. We see ourselves running big-name headliner performances to make enough profit to allow production of less well-known, more marginal artists."*

The second possibility seems less likely to Xchange: *"We aren't all that keen on the idea of operating a profit-making enterprise for the simple reason that we'd get bogged down with all the incredible hassles of operating a small business. The present economic depression hardly seems like a good time to attempt this, and our handful of active members could not sustain the necessary energy to pull this off. Some members of Xchange are also reluctant to directly participate in capitalism in this way, even if our goal is to survive as a radical political art group.*

"The final alternative discussed was operating an arts fund, which would offer money to qualifying art/political groups doing progressive work. The recipient would later restore these funds through fundraisers or grants. Xchange could also coordinate essential technical services (e.g., bookkeeping), solicit donations from individuals, etc., and be compensated for our work."

Xchange was the only group to raise

the possibility of a loan fund. But a number of brainstormers said that their organizations lacked the capital to undertake fundraising through benefits, direct mail, or the manufacture of objects for sale. It's conceivable



that the availability of a fund — and technical assistance — for such ventures would be a wise investment.

Attitude Adjustment

Many round-robin participants recommended some form of attitude adjustment — and not necessarily a new device or technique. At the People's Theater Festival, several people said the artist's vision of making money has to change. Some of the Advance artists said that progressive arts groups often present themselves to the public as "marginal"; their graphics or written materials or other aspects of their public presentation promulgate the message that "we are just about to go under", which is unlikely to be appealing to donors.

And over and over again, people recommended that progressive artists help funders change their own attitudes in a variety of ways: besides providing solid information about the movement's impact and history, some brainstormers urged progressive artists to give up all forms of self-censorship: give full value to all your in-kind contributions when making proposals; don't forego applying or edit all the social content out of an application in anticipation of disapproval; share information and collaborate on projects when possible; get other social institutions to advocate for you (churches and other non-arts community groups can help convince funders that cultural projects should be supported — and you can reciprocate when they go for funding).

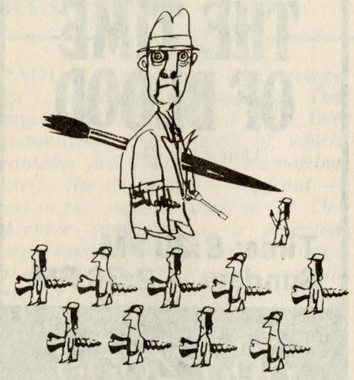
Some brainstormers touched on the possibility of raising support through access to commercial culture industries or distribution systems, but this extremely touchy question wasn't given the consideration it would warrant. We think it would be a good topic for a future brainstorm, but for now it's just a kind of wish: people would like to use the mainstream productions and distribution systems, but not if they have to surrender the values and consciousness they now bring to their work. Some people think this is possible, and some think not; but by and large, none of the brainstormers has the direct experience to answer this question for certain.

Artists Building Culture

John Greyson maintains that *"Our concepts of 'community' must . . . be rethought"* and shares his own experience to illustrate: *". . . as a video artist . . . working within the independent film/video community, I'm appalled by the lack of internal critical debate and dialogue . . . I'm also active in the National Association of Lesbian and Gay Filmmakers, and am even more appalled at the low level of critical dialogue which accompanies gay lib media production. Nevertheless, I feel this is a place to start — more and more gay and lesbian cultural producers are working **with** the community, bring gay folks **into** the traditional venues as gay people (galleries, theaters, dances) while at the same time trying to develop alternative venues within the gay community (so far primarily through special events at conferences and community meeting places — in larger cities, some non-commercial institutions have begun to rear their heads)."* John says this *"getting closest to what's closest to you . . . shouldn't be seen narrowly, but instead strategically — and it could mean replacing 'correctness' with 'commitment'."*

Charles Frederick suggests that the left constitutes a primary community for progressive artists, and proposes that the task is to *". . . create artwork which is of a progressive aesthetic (by a progressive aesthetic I mean an artwork which recognizes and makes use of . . . the experience of alienation, pluralism and a struggling — however atomized — spirit of democracy in this country). Such artwork allows the various subjects to be in an entertaining conflict with one another and that will allow, on the left, a place where the different points of view can happen freely — without rancor, without defense — because it happens*

within a symbolic arena rather than in the . . . fractionalized disputing arena we usually see on the left. It allows people to see that there is some way they can all talk . . . It's as much a work for the left right now to organize itself as it is to organize what they feel is another society." As Charles sees it, *"One of the ways in which the left can overcome some of its disarray . . . is to provide an infrastructure for leftist cultural work.*



"The result of societal change," says Frederick, *"would be that we would probably have the richest, most resourceful infrastructure in the world . . . On the other hand, we don't have it yet. And one of the ways in which you can train people to take it over is by creating an alternative infrastructure right now, to give more and more people a means of support so they can be making this alternative — which becomes something that people can see. It's there. It belongs to people."*

And for now? *"Get that vision out . . . at least raise the question of a possible infrastructure from among the various fragments that presently lie on the floor . . . The left should become a massive network so that work which is done will affect the left. Present a question to every isolated, alienated leftist in the audience and then fight about it, so that the work becomes open-ended because it reaches into the audience in terms of their own experience as well as their wish for something to happen in the world . . . The artist can be someone who has a power or talent for a certain kind of articulation which is needed in a community of people . . . The more you can do in certain ways symbolically, the more you can prepare for less misunderstanding and miscomprehension when it comes to activism. Once you can try and create on some symbolic level the notion that there is a people growing in the midst of oppressive conditions, then I think you are on the way to really helping a political program . . ."*

Envisioning the Future

The national brainstorm has made several things clear. First, it must be noted that no more than a hundred people, all told, participated. At its inception, one goal of the round-robin was to demonstrate — or at least develop — the movement's capacity to cooperate on a common project. At the conclusion of this first brainstorm, we've learned that that capacity needs a lot more development: whole sectors of the movement — musicians, for instance — had no voice in the brainstorm; and few of the participants looked beyond their own direct experience for guidance. If our ability to engage others in dialogue needs so much work, it should be no surprise that our ability to earn others' financial support is weaker still.

Second, the brainstorm pointed up a rather surprising quirk of the movement for cultural democracy: while activist artists are resourceful and ingenious in creating their artwork, not much of that imaginative quality rubs off on fundraising. Most of us try the same six things, over and over again. Perhaps the solution's as simple as utilizing the same methods to develop a fundraising project that we utilize in planning an arts project.

Third, the round-robin reminds us how progressive artists must swim in the same social and cultural sea as all the other poor fish. When people have less money, they spend less money on activist art; when government moves to the right, progressive arts projects lose out along with other socially-constructive work; when government talks up the primacy of the private sector and the marketplace, even activist artists hear the call of the cash register.

Fourth, the most-used word in the entire brainstorm was *"community"*. People blamed their lack of support on the lack of a strong community base; they told stories of their own experiences in community organizing; and they called for a redefinition of community — and of the artist's relation to it — as the solution for the future. This should come as no surprise to our readers: the antidote to the alienated, individualistic genius notion of the artist must be the artist who is in and of a community of fellows, and whose work does all of them some good.

But we would all do well to remember that we live and work in a society that discourages the development of the kind of supportive, self-determining community on which the notion of cultural democracy is based. No artist — regardless of the nature of his or her commitment — can call a community into being where before there was only a collection of atomized individuals. Building a more humane society is irrevocably a group project — and not a test of the talents or capabilities of an artist.

And finally, the brainstorm reminded us of how difficult it is to imagine a future not completely circumscribed by the limitations of the present. Some kinds of speculation were entirely omitted by the brainstormers: for instance, no one considered what cultural democracy might have to offer the movement for economic democracy. Progressive artists today might dream of a future in which the decentralization of production and distribution also meant decent work for artists in their own communities — as artisans, as teachers, as neighborhood workers, as programmers for community media, as planners of public environments and buildings, and so on. Dreaming doesn't guarantee the future we desire; but without dreams, we'll have no voice in the future at all.

If something you've read here infuriates or pleases you, if your imagination is engaged by this exercise in putting our heads together, send us your thoughts and the discussion will carry on. ●

Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard are editors of the newsletter 'Cultural Democracy' and staff members of NAPNOC (Neighbourhood Arts Program National Organizing Committee)
Box 11440, Baltimore, MD. 21239, U.S.A.

RASTAFARI

Issues and aspirations of the Toronto community

VALERIE HARRIS

On the weekend of July 23 to July 25, 1982 an historic cultural event took place in Toronto that passed relatively unnoticed by most Torontonians, with the exception of the police department, the department of immigration, the press, and the black community. It was the first International Rastafarian Conference, and its purpose was to facilitate exchange among Rastafarians in North America, the Caribbean and Britain, as well as to inform the non-Rasta community of Toronto about Rastafarian culture. Co-organized by Charmaine Montague of the **Universal African Improvement Association** (UAIA) and Terrence "Chico" Paul of **Truths and Rights** reggae band, (both members of the **Rastafarian Cultural Workshop**, with support from members of the **African Sisterhood Organization** and local community activists), the conference attracted Rastas from Jamaica, Antigua and Dominca, St. Thomas, St. Lucia and St. Kitts/Nevis, from Ottawa and Winnipeg, from Rochester and Detroit. One of the conference's objectives was that from these delegates would come an international committee to plan future conferences. It would be this new committee's task to select the location and to raise money for transportation and accommodations. According to Charmaine Montague, the gathering was held in Toronto per se "for no specific reason other than that the people who organized it happen to live here." At the press conference on July 22, it seemed necessary to stress the insignificance of place since police and immigration department officials were apparently wary of a bunch of Rastafarians descending upon the city, as evidenced by an interdepartmental memo circulated among police officers, alerting them of the delegates' arrival. In response, the conference committee issued its own memo and distributed it to the police department, airport personnel, and to press conference attendees, who included representatives from the CBC, the *Star*, *Contrast*, and independent journalists. The committee's memo concluded, ". . . We have taken the precaution of informing all international delegates of the necessary criteria needed to enter Canada. It is our expectation that the delegates should be treated in the same manner as other delegates who have attended other international conferences held in the past . . . we do not expect any preferential treatment to be given to our delegates, nor do we expect any unnecessary discrimination and harassment."

After the press conference I spoke with Charmaine Montague at the UAIA office. Charmaine is involved in numerous activities in the black community; she is a journalist, photographer, video producer and, by her own assessment, "first and foremost a Rastafarian". She told me that during the past 10 or 12 years, since there has been a significantly visible Rastafarian community in Toronto, Rastas have been "badly burned", not only by police harrassment but by consistently negative portrayal of Rastas as criminals and members of some kind of a deviant cult by the Toronto mainstream press. "The media and the police work hand in hand," Charmaine said, as the UAIA's telephone rang for the fifth time, "because it's the police who give the media its information. You can't separate them." Charmaine answered the phone. The person on the other end identified himself as a reporter.

Charmaine: "Oh, I can give you the information now. It starts on Saturday at 10 o'clock, at Oakwood Collegiate, Oakwood and St. Clair. And Sunday at the Palais Royale at 6 pm there's a cultural show with various artists. Are you going to write something about the conference? . . . Oh, you're just gonna come to the conference, I see . . . Yes, the conference starts tomorrow but that part is closed to the public. It's only for Rastafarians. Tomorrow is Haile Selassie's birthday so it's a religious ceremony . . . Exactly . . . No, are you Jamaican? Oh. Well, Friday is closed to the public, doesn't matter who you are. It's closed . . . Not just *any* Rastafarian can come, believe me . . . Yes, well we have to because of the police and all that, hey? . . . So are you gonna do something? Are you gonna mention it on the news some time before the conference? Because if you're gonna do that maybe you could mention the artists who are performing on Sunday, because they're well-known artists in Toronto . . . Okay, it's **Truths and Rights** reggae band, **Gayap Rhythm Drummers**, **20th Century Rebels**, **R. Zee Jackson**, and **Africana Dancers**, traditional African dances, hey? And a little poetry and arts and crafts exhibits. Saturday is four workshops — Rasta and Theology . . . yes, that's open to the public . . . Rasta and the Family, including the role of the Rasta woman . . . Rasta in the Political and Economic Structure and the fourth is Rasta in the Black Community and Society at Large . . ."

I asked Charmaine why do Rastafarians continue to hold press conferences for a press that ignores the positive aspects of their culture and continuously misrepresents them. Her reply was that Rastas in Toronto still have hopes that the establishment media can be used as a means to an end — to educate the people about Rastafari. But these often-dampened hopes are borne out of frustration with the lack of alternatives. "If we had a good newspaper that we could rely upon to represent the Rastafarian community, we'd have no need for press conferences. We'd just say what we have to say and send it out and know that the people would get the message. But we don't have that facility. We have *Contrast* and *Share*, and it's up to the editor. Sometimes, depending on who's in charge, they're no better than the white media, no better at all. In the past, when we've read bad things about us in any of the newspapers, we've found that they hadn't even talked to any Rastafarians. They got their information from the police. So that's why we'll continue having press conferences and inviting them to meetings because this way we know that they're getting the truth. We just have to hope that they'll print it."

One media representative for whom Charmaine has a certain degree of respect is Sol Littman of the CBC. "He's been at his job a long time and has a lot of influence over what is presented in his programs, so I know that if he does a story right there's a good chance it'll come out that way. He did a news report on Rastafarians from a previous press conference and it was pretty good. I hope the little difference we had at the press conference today won't change his attitude."

The "little difference" occurred when Littman attempted to commandeer a personal interview with Sam Brown, a delegate from Jamaica and the key speaker at the conference. After the press conference was officially over, Littman pulled a chair up to the table where Brown and some of the other delegates were sitting, remarking in a personable manner that Brown "is a very famous man in Jamaica." Though the camera was still rolling, Littman instructed his cameraman to turn off the sound, stating that what he had to say was "off the record, between me and Mr. Brown." He leaned in very close and was about to fire away, when Charmaine deftly interceded. It was the conference committee's policy that no individual delegate was to talk to any media person without a prior OK from the committee. "We didn't want any of the delegates to be *used* as a spokesman for us in Toronto because an individual's remarks could be used against us, and we have to live here. So I told Sol Littman that if he wanted to talk about the Rasta community or about the conference, to talk to Chico or to me."

Nyabingi

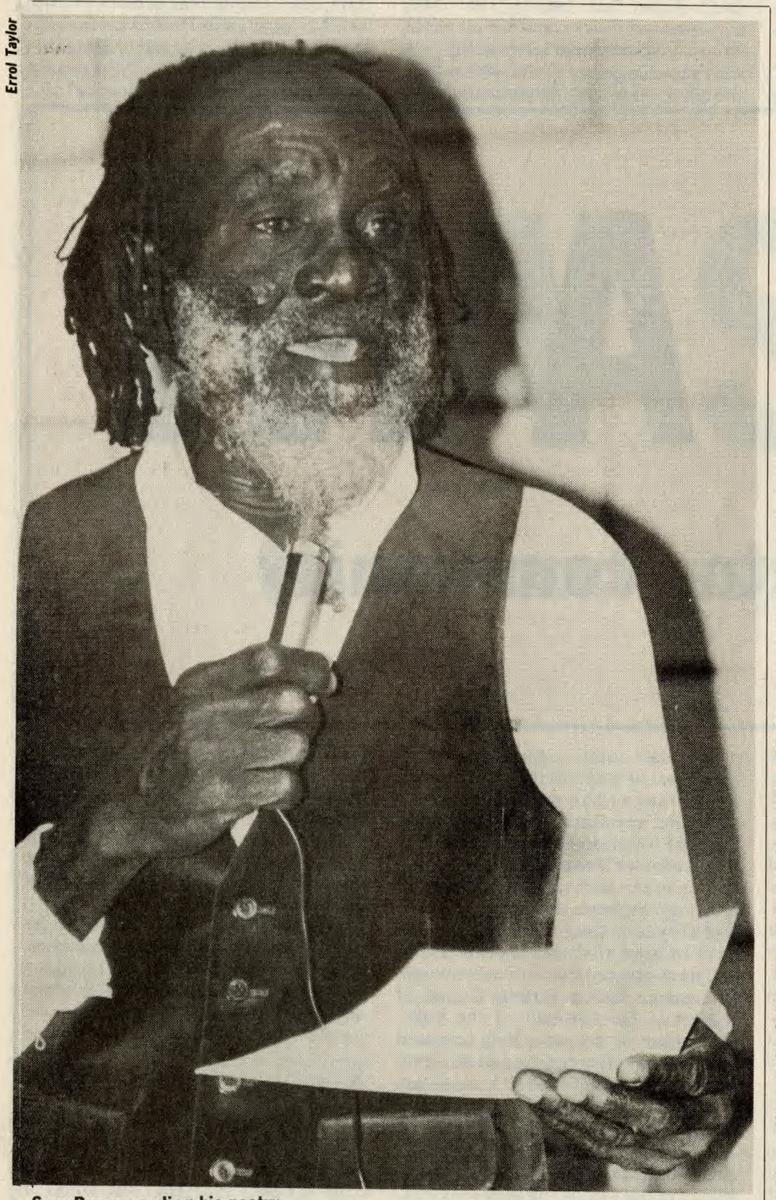
At this point our conversation was interrupted by a phone call from a black police officer.

Charmaine: "No, the ceremony on Friday is a religious ceremony, it's outside of Toronto and it's closed to the public . . . C'mon, we're not *friends*, I don't have any friends who are policemen . . . Really? Do we need another death in the community to bring about change? . . . Sure, the individual police-

man on the beat might be okay, but the ones at the top don't relate to the community at all . . . Yes, the workshops on Saturday are open. Any individual policeman can come, but are you going to apply what you learn to your practices in the community? . . Okay, so who's coming from the ethnic squad, do you know? . . . Well, I hope one of you come . . . On *Saturday*, not Friday . . ."

Since the ceremony on Friday was causing so much curiosity among reporters and police officers, and since it was closed to the public anyway, I wondered why the conference committee had bothered to announce that it would take place at all. At any rate, Charmaine seemed to have no problem telling non-Rastas that they were not invited. Sometimes she even made it sound as if they were not invited for their own good; the ceremony, called a *nyabingi*, can reach such a level of intensity that even some Rastas can't handle it.

Errol Taylor



Sam Brown reading his poetry.

"It started in Africa, in Uganda, and then it went to Ethiopia and to the Caribbean. It would be difficult for non-Rastas to relate to a ceremony like this because it's a lot of drumming, a lot of praying, a lot of chanting and a lot of smoking. You have to really be in tune to that kind of thing to cope with it. Nyabingi means Death to Black and White Oppressors, and surprisingly enough, it was started by women. It began with one of the wars against the English. The women took up arms against the European but before they went to war they performed this ceremony of drumming and praying. In Africa it was more like physical fighting and women played a major role. But like any cultural thing as soon as it comes under Western influence it changes. So now in Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean, the nyabingi is more of a spiritual ceremony. Instead of fighting the oppressors, you're chanting them down. But now you don't have women beating drums and you don't have women smoking *challis* — the big pipe that is passed among the brethren. You wouldn't have women doing that unless it was a woman's nyabingi, or one where there are more women than men. Lots of Rastas don't know the roots of nyabingi."

Rastafari: Ideology and Religion

Rastafari ideology and religious thought are linked by an indisputable belief in the deification of Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, who died, or whose spirit transcended it's physical manifestation, on August 27, 1975. It is this concept that non-believers, or more specifically, Christians, have latched onto as justification for a straight-out rejection of Rastafari as a valid religion, as Haile Selassie was "just an ordinary man," and God exists as a spiritual being and Jesus Christ was his son, and so on. We westerners who are not particularly sold on Christianity, but who consider ourselves politically progressive, also reject the concept, one reason being that we would perceive power of that immensity, invested in one person or even in one party, as a potentially dangerous weapon to be used against "the people", and we have various historical data to support our opinion. It should be noted that the coronation in 1930 of Ras Tafari (Selassie's real name) as Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of Judah, indicated to those who became his devotees that a **Biblical** prophecy, as pronounced in the Book of Revelations, had been fulfilled. Rastafari religious theory is a selective reinterpretation of the Bible, and in this sense can be said to be a derivative of Christianity. It should also be noted that Rastafari has its origins among the indigent workers, farmers, and the dispossessed of colonial Jamaican society, all of whom were black. To accept the divinity of Ras Tafari was to resist adherence to the imagery of Christianity that had been imposed upon them by those who had colonized and oppressed them: imagery in which God the Father was white, His son Jesus Christ was white, the angels were white, and the Holy Ghost was a sort of white cleansing agent. To embrace Haile Selassie as the new black King of Kings was to resist the dominance of the white King George and his consort, whose portraits were on the walls of every public building. As a first step, this rejection of a colonial sovereign and his constituent ruling class would have to be seen as progressive.

Rastafari is not merely a religion, nor should it be viewed solely as a political movement. Rastafari is a **culture**, a black culture, and as such influences the spirituality and the social consciousness of those who live it. It is a relatively new culture and still an evolving one, for not only are its political and religious doctrines in contradiction with the dominant culture of every Caribbean, North American and European country in which Rastafari is practiced, but as products of those dominant cultures, particularly black Americans and whites, become followers, the contradictions within the new black culture begin to demand acknowledgement

Jules Elder

Drumming in part of the Nyabingi ceremony.

Rastafari: SAM BROWN INTERVIEW

The following interview with Sam Brown took place on July 22, 1982, in Toronto. Also present were Chico Paul and Donald Dread of Toronto, Danny Dread of Jamaica, and King Babuta of Antigua.

Chico Paul had arranged for me to interview Sam Brown. I asked Charmaine to clue me in about this "famous man." She respectfully described him as "an old, old Rastafarian. Sam Brown's been troddin' the path for Rastafari since before I was born." What makes Sam Brown particularly significant in Rastafarian culture is that in 1961 he ran as Independent in the Jamaican General Elections, under the title of the 'Black Man's Party.' He, of course, was defeated, but his campaign is part of Rastafarian political history, as he was the first Rasta to engage in national politics in Jamaica. At that time he wrote a charter of 21 statements that became known as The Foundation of the Rastafarian Movement, and founded the Rastafarian Movement Recruitment Centre in Kingston, which was destroyed when armed police moved against the Rasta settlement of Back O'Wall in 1965. Under pressure from less progressive members of the Rasta community, Sam Brown retired from involvement in organized politics. He continues to be influential among Rastas as a writer, philosopher and lecturer on Rastafarian theology.

Valerie Harris: Why do Rastas maintain a relationship with a press that consistently misrepresents them?

Sam Brown: Remember that even *Pulse*, a magazine that tries to speak our truth, is under the system. Rastafari is a doctrine that extends time to all people who want to share their thoughts, from evil to good. Me make certain me tell these people that if they misquote me, they couldn't talk to me again. So these people from the CBC, dem have world coverage, and *Pulse* does not. When we give CBC our thoughts, people in the Caribbean where I come from will hear them. And if it is distorted, we know we can have a case against these people if we so desire. You see what we doing for you now, this personal interview? CBC couldn't come to a personal interview, because they is a bunch of white people that don't understand a word of dread I speak.

VH: Why did (CBC reporter) Sol Littman say you are a "famous man" in Jamaica?

SB: Because he come to Jamaica already and he was exposed to some of my works. So he know I from before. But I don't know how a man see a next man. I don't see myself as famous, I just see myself as doing my work.

VH: And what is your work?

SB: My work is the redemption of black humanity, you know, to help in liberation struggle to free all people who is being trod upon. I have no higher work than that. That is why I

and resolution.

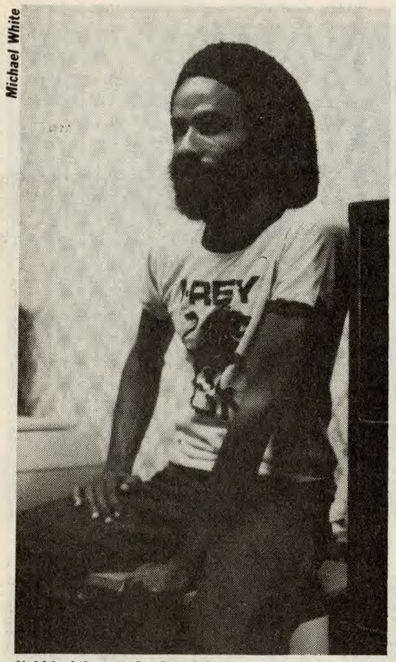
In order to place Rastafari within an historical cultural context, it is necessary to mention Marcus Garvey (1887-1940), whose rallying cry of "Africa for Africans" and energetic attempts to create an African identity embracing all black people, greatly influenced Jamaican society, popular culture and politics in general. Between 1914 and 1921, Garvey founded the **Universal Negro Improvement Association** (UNIA); a cultural/political journal, *Negro World*, whose circulation reached 200,000 internationally; the initially-successful "Black Star" shipping line; the African Orthodox Church in New York; and a host of other publications, organizations and businesses. In Jamaica he formed the first organized political party, the now-defunct People's Political Party, and championed the rights of the poor by calling for such measures as compulsory improvement of urban areas, guaranteed employment, and the expropriation of private lands for public use. Garvey came to symbolize racial pride, for his primary cause was the redemption of Africa through *repatriation of all people of African descent*. This principle of repatriation is a fundamental of Rastafarian ideology, even if the journey is of a spiritual rather than a practical nature.

Garvey also became known among the poor as a prophet, one of whose most important prophecies concerned the crowning of a black king in Africa, "the God of Ethiopia". Because of the subsequent coronation of Haile Selassie, Garvey is regarded by Rastafarians as their greatest contemporary prophet.

The image of the lion occurs frequently in Rastafarian paintings and poetry because they believe that Haile Selassie embodied the power and fearlessness of the king of beasts. It was said that lions roamed his garden, slept at his feet and ate meat from his hand. Yet Marcus Garvey also foresaw that the contradiction of feeding meat to lions while the Ethiopian peasantry starved would lead to Selassie's overthrow and plunge Ethiopia into a continuing class struggle. This "prophecy" Rastafarians choose to ignore, as Selassie's moral and political actions are not subject to questioning.

Besides the lion, other Rastafarian symbols include the dreadlocks, and the colours red, black, green and gold. According to one source, the locks indicate an identification with the warriors of the Masai and Galla tribes of Africa, as well as the power of Samson's hair and his destruction of the Philistines. And each Rastafarian colour has a significance: red represents the blood of the martyrs; black is for the people; green is for the land; and gold is for the Rastafarian faith.

Michael White



Yahbi, delegate for Dominica.

Toronto's Rastafarian community, or at least those who attended the conference, tend to stress the religious aspect of their culture. They compare themselves to Catholics and insist that their faith should be given the same universal acceptance and respect. Realistically, however, the analogy to Catholicism is an inflated one. It would be more accurate to compare Rastafarians to Jehovah's Witnesses, who seek to establish a theocracy under God's rule, or even Hassidim Jews, as these groups, because of their dress and the larger community's ignorance of their ways and doctrines, have also been subjected to misinterpretation and harassment.

Since the beginning of the Rasta culture in the 1930's, Rastafari have been ostracized from Jamaican society and at times actively persecuted by the state. In April 1963, after a group of Rastas marched in protest against the segregation of Jamaica's north coast (Negril, Montego Bay, Ocho Rios — the playground of North America) *all*

Michael White

Sam Brown with Carol Carew, Donald Yabi and others.

leave Jamaica to come here so. This is no picnic business I upon, you know. I come here because I know that in all regions of the world, black or white conscious-minded people, people who are looking for truth, will hear of Rastafari. I have about 20 youths in West Germany who correspond with me every week. When I go back to me house I know I'll see a whole heap of letters piled up there, you know, from these white people. But I don't curse the white man really when him say him a Rasta. I say, 'Go 'head, you can be Rasta.' Same way the black man could be Rome (Christian), I gonna make the white man be a survivor too. The same way Rome tie up people's brains with Rome-ish hypocracy, I and I gonna go fill people's brains with Black theocracy.

VH: What does Rastafari have to teach the international community?

SB: Rastafari is slated to supplant all ficticious religions in the world, chief among them being Rome. You remember the Catholic report of a couple months ago dealing with Rastafari? You can realize that Pope John Paul hand over the mantle of St. Peter to I and I, you know. For him say Rasta right, that mean Rome wrong. The Pope himself telling bishops and priests, "Show Rastafari the recognition and respect that they deserve because Rastafari is a valid and legitimate religion that have something to teach the world. Their mode of dress, their lifestyle, and all things these of Rastafari must be respected." Well, as far as I concerned, to my ears the Pope say I right. That mean the Pope wrong . . . Rastafari is not a sect of people bent upon lawlessness or any act to overthrow anyone by force or anything like that. The Rasta man is a teacher so that all nations can know themselves as one people. In Canada, I believe these brethren are gonna bring the black population to a closer affinity, one with each other. I was talking to the Chinese girl downstairs, who work for the CBC. I admire and respect the way I see Chinese people all over the world, the way they keep that clannishness of race, that clannishness of Self, that oneness. That is what the Rastas want for black people in Canada, be they Caribbean or not, to realize that we are one people in foreign territory. We are in an outpost of white civilization. So we must be one. And we must show the establishment that they must break off the harassment of Rastafari, because rape and murder and those things are foreign to our policy. So, the first thing the Rasta man wants, in any country he's in, is to weld the black people together, and generally to bring all nations of the world to the acceptance of the guidance of Rastafari. And to teach you, my lady, to regard all men under the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God, Rastafari. Those are always our chief aims.

VH: So the politics and theology are one?

SB: Let I define politics to you because politics as we see it in Western society is poli-tricks. We know the time gonna come when righteousness and Rasta theocracy shall rule the earth and cover the earth as water cover the sea. When man realize the future is in this theocracy, he will hang his sword up on the wall and study war no more. The black man knows that he is surrounded by poli-tricks. He has to find ways and means to get around those things there, without stepping too hard on the toes of society, and still keep a balance with them. We don't necessarily want to run for no office in no white man's land. Politics and theocracy have no equation where the Rasta man is concerned. What we are dealing with is something bigger than politics, bigger than economics. We're dealing with the preservation of black humanity, to raise it to the standard it was before the white man came. So what we're dealing with can't be equated with political parties or government structures. What we are dealing with is world-wide, comprising a world of people, the way it was intended from the beginning to go.

VH: I hear what you're saying, but how does a Rasta relate to this system that he lives in, now that he is removed from Africa?

SB: Well, look, and believe me you'll have to look good, too. Whether any Rasta man run for an office in any of these countries or not, the Rasta will always be an enigma to the powers-that-be. Because the Rasta knows that a political office would not be a fit device for his aspirations. If the Rasta man become a mayor of a city out here, he knows that it is only a little bone they throw to him when the whole cow's out there. These bones they throw to deter the Rasta from fighting for his rights. Those who control arms and ammunition are keeping stiff, but they will eventually have to bend.

VH: You say the Rasta will always be an enigma to the powers-that-be. Is this just because the Rasta refuses to conform in his physical appearance and lifestyle to western society?

SB: You have some children?

VH: No.

SB: But you are your mother's child. Do you believe that the child should dictate to her mother on policies of moral living?

VH: No.

SB: Well, the African is before the European, so if the Mother and Father of Creation is Africa, which the Rasta represents, then Europe cannot dictate to us the way we are to live. The Rasta man capture the secret of the ages. We know what is right. We come to teach them to live right and save them life. You are a journalist, you go in the society and you can see that the things they have done are not right. Those kinds of actions will always break down any physical or moral resistance of a people. Babylon built the civilization of Rome and it fell because of their immoral doings. And we know the war society of the United States and the rest of Europe, we know their deeds. If Rasta were a people who did those things we would be nothing, non-entity. We commit purity. We are a pure and clean race of people, whether black or white, because we don't fight the white man or our brown brother or anyone because of principles of colour. Jah's garden, without blues, without reds, without greens, would be a drab garden. The Father make a variety of colours to make creation glorified.

VH: Why do you think white men fear Rastafari?

SB: You know why? If you tell a lie, or if you hurt a one, you always lookin' over your shoulder when you walkin'. The white man will always be in fear of every other nation in the world although he have more arms and things like that. He know in the final hour arms can't save him because the world is overwhelmed with numbers hurting from his doings. The white races of the world take all men as chattel so that they can live forever. But for the race of *man*, destruction is their endeavour.

Danny Dread: The white man carry a grudge against black people because of the sexual vibration we project. He sees that a black man has a certain amount of strength and stamina and energy and the white man cannot produce that kind of vibration. He has carried this grudge against us for a long time.

Rastafari on the island were made subject to arrest. Troops were licensed to shoot those who resisted, and the Jamaican press waged a virulent anti-ganja campaign, claiming its users were prone to violence. The campaign legitimized continuous raids on Rastafari settlements and the arrest of hundreds of Rastas under the Dangerous Drugs law. After the arrests, the state sought to further humiliate the brethren by hacking off their locks, a practice that continues. Rastas in Kingston, as in Brixton, Brooklyn and Toronto, are still easy targets for police harassment, yet because of their metaphysical interpretation of society (i.e. Babylon: destructive, pitiless, corrupt) and their own identifity as outcasts and exiles (sufferers), Rastas usually refrain from organized political action against such abuse. Interestingly enough, the "sufferer"/alien/outcast" aspect of the Rastafarian identity is internalized in a positive rather than a negative way, in that the "low self-esteem" that sociologists have historically attributed to North American blacks is antithetical to Rastafari culture. The dread happenings that Rastas encounter are not perceived as a reflection upon themselves, but rather as just a phase of life in Babylon with which Rastas have to deal.

Ric Amis

Anthony Farquharson (L.) and Chikuyu (R.), committee members of the Rastafarian Cultural Workshop.

Rastafarians preach economic self-sufficiency, and blatant employment discrimination demands that they practice what they preach whenever possible. In the Caribbean they are weavers and craftsmen, and organized groups have petitioned their governments for land on which to establish cooperative farms. In North America and Britain the means to self-sufficiency is usually through a small business, often cooperatively owned. And then there is the music. At the Toronto conference Rastas complained that the media continuously exploited them by either presenting them as criminals or by stressing the entertainment values of their music while ignoring any political content. While bands who play to predominantly white audiences tend to tailor their songs and performances in such a way that any ideology becomes seductive on a sensual level, or simply alienating in a totally non-threatening way, *real* roots, rock, reggae developed in the late '50s, early '60s as a form of cultural resistance. Rasta and non-Rasta poor folk got together in the yards, where the drum re-emerged as a tool for non-verbal communication of the people's discontent. The songs that were sung, like "By the Rivers of Babylon", while calling for spiritual deliverance, were also grounded in social criticism. Ska, which preceded reggae, was a fusion of Jamaican **mento** (dance rhythm) and the rhythm and blues of black Americans, and challenged white American music's dominance of the island's airwaves. When reggae began to emerge toward the late '60s, the tradition of popular resistance was inherent in it. At that time, a new group called **The Wailers** recorded a song called, "Why Must Men Suffer?". Ten years later, when **Bob Marley and the Wailers** had attained international stature, the mass commercialization of Marley's image still could not counter the political impact of songs like "War" (taken from a speech by Haile Selassie), "Get Up, Stand Up" and "Zimbabwe".

But where the progressive consciousness of Rastafari culture comes to a grinding halt is in it's attitude toward the role of the Rasta woman. It is on this issue that the line between culture and religion becomes particularly muddied, as brethren consistently refer to the Bible to justify the various taboos associated with women and the restraints imposed upon them.

Rastafarian religious thought and practice is male-oriented and male-dominated — as various negative myths are perpetuated about the seductive nature of women, the role of a righteous Rasta woman is that of a submissive "queen" to her "king". Fidelity is expected of her, as invoked by the Old Testament, and this same text is used to prove the acceptability of sexual infidelity for men. Birth control is rejected; it is viewed as a form of genocide, since the Old Testament states that "the seeds of Israel shall be numberless." (Rastas see themselves as the true descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel.) A menstruating woman is considered unclean and is not allowed to sleep in the same bed with her man or prepare his food. And while women also grow locks, they must not appear in public with their heads uncovered, as their hair is considered a personal and seductive part of them that only their mates may enjoy.

A "liberated" western woman, then, would undoubtedly reject Rastafari as being oppressive and backwards, and might easily imagine Rasta sistren to be meek and submissive, their potential and their woman's consciousness repressed. But in the heated debate that took place during the 'Rasta and the Family' workshop at the Toronto conference, Rasta women argued that they are not oppressed by Rastafarian *religion*, but by its loaded interpretation by Rastafarian **men**. Beyond this, it remains for Rasta women to speak for themselves about how they live within their male-prescribed roles, and to apply their own interpretation of their faith to moving the culture forward.

The Conference

On Saturday, July 24, the first International Rastafarian Conference convened for a day of workshops wherein Rastafarians and delegates from various communities could engage in dialogue. There were four such forums two concurrent morning sessions and two afternoon sessions. The topics to be discussed were as follows: Rastafarian Theology, including the concept of Haile Selassie I; repatriation; and dietary laws; Rastafari, the Black Community and Society at Large, including relationships between Rastas and non-Rastas; the media and the police; Rastafari and Education Within the Political and Economic Structure, including discussion of such questions as 'what constitutes education?', 'should Rastafarians vote?', etc; and Rastafari and the Family, focus-

Ric Amis

Carla Steele (L.), secretary of the Rastafarian Cultural Workshop; and Charmaine Montague, co-ordinator.

SB: If you put down an egg and sit on it, for any length of time, that egg will bring forth a chick, because of the heat. And if you put the same egg in the fridge forever it will never hatch a chick. Well, life come from the incubator of Africa, that's why the white man afraid of we. We're full of life, we're full of energy, we're full of heat, him full of cold! Cold cannot bring forth life. Africa is an incubator. First life come from this.

Danny Dread: And that's why we talk about repatriation because I and I can't live scattered away from I and I home all these many years. Black people from all over the world have got to know that we have to come as one to get back our homeland. I and I been all over these parts, America, London, Canada, the Caribbean, we've been carried across all borders against I and I will, by brutal force. It is in Africa that I and I will get the treasures of life, our own original thing, you see it? And everything will be Rastafari.

King Babuta: Rastafari is the new word that disturbs men, that is so terrible among men. You can say Jesus, you can say Muhammed, you can say anything else. But when you say Rastafari, it rattles the bones of the wicked.

Danny Dread: In America and all over the world there are black people who have decided to settle in them strange lands there, who grow up in them society and get indoctrined into them society and some even say they gonna fight for them foreign lands there. Well, I say them black people are some kind of idiots or must be joking or something, because Africa is where black people come from and is the only land they should be fighting for. So I want black people all over the world to see themselves as Rasta because Rasta care for them. Rastafari is on the whoops for them.

SB: It is not disrespect to you when I say this now. But see the mentality of the blacks, especially in the western hemisphere? The only aspiration they have is to have a job, make money, have a car, have a house, have TV, have tennis courts, drink beer. They don't remember that they come from somewhere. And they bemoaning and wailing the fact that they have to go down in the subway every morning. So the Rasta man in the community look at that and say, well, I have a purpose in life and it's not just to raise money. I like money too, you know. Because these CBC boys we were talkin' to this morning, if they come to Jamaica I make them pay for every word I speak. If this was Jamaica they'd give me 500 U.S. dollars before they walk in the door there. But I didn't come here to disrupt anything. I come here to balance a thing, and when I leave I know there'll be no great pressure on Charmaine and Donny and the rest of the brethren who hold the fort.

VH: Why was it important for you to attend the conference?

SB: I come to sharpen my iron. To see all I and I meet, from all different places, tends to give us a balance and understanding of where our power is. We know. We see how advanced Rasta is in this age. Once upon the time Rasta was only known as a little beany seed in Jamaica, no other place on earth. Not even Ethiopia. So we receive persecution from established society. Until now we become a big cheese so they can't hang we because we all over the world! When I look I see man from Trinidad, man from Guyana, man from Grenada, man from all about, right in Toronto here. And when we see each other we don't say, "Well, me don't know this man, here." We know them! Because they bear the mark of the same thing that I and I in Jamaica project. The spirit of Rastafari brings all people together. ●

ing on the role of women within the family and the culture.

The workshops were preceded by an opening presentation. We entered the auditorium to the sound of drumming by some of the visiting delegates and members of the Toronto Rasta community who were seated on the stage. I sat on the front row and was joined momentarily by a young white woman wearing a head wrap, long skirt and a countenance of peace and love. She said her name was Isabelle, and I learned that she was German and had come to Rastafari during a visit to Jamaica last year. She assumed that I, too, was of the faith and when I informed her that I was not, she said pointedly, "You're not of the faith and you wear your hair in locks?" While I explained to her that it is not necessary for a black person to be a Rastafarian in order to wear locks, as it is the most *natural* way for a black person to wear her hair, I wondered where Isabelle, and all the other 'Isabelles' I'd seen around Toronto, fit in. What role do these white women play in building and strengthening the new black culture? How do black Rasta women relate to them, and what rationale do Rasta men use to justify their choice of them as mates? Meanwhile, Charmaine Montague, the prime mover of the conference, was on stage introducing the visiting delegates. Among them was one uncomfortable-looking white man, with blond, matted hair and beard, who held, like a modern

Jules Elder

Originally, "drumming in" or Nyabingi was a ceremony to prepare for war.

day Moses, a staff painted with the Rasta colours. Charmaine introduced him as Brother (Somebody) from New Hampshire, but Isabelle misunderstood. "I'm so glad to see the brethren here from England," she said. "The movement is really catching on there." I told her that New Hampshire is in the U.S., not Britain, that there had never been many black people there, and that I suspected this particular brethren to be, at least, one of the few remaining American hippies — a die-hard. Isabelle shook her head disbelievingly.

Several brethren representing Rastafarian organizations in the Caribbean spoke of the activities and problems of Rastas in their countries. These included land acquisition proposals in St. Lucia (so far denied because the government assumes the land will be used to cultivate ganja); co-operative employment ventures in Dominica; and the political mobilization of Rastas in St. Kitts. The key presentation was then made by Sam Brown, whose speech sermonizing the roots and development of Rastafari, and ending with selections of original poetry, was punctuated by much drumming, clapping, and affirmative shouts of "Truths and Rights!".

I attended the forum on Rastafari and the Black Community, moderated by Chico Paul. He began by stating that his main objective was to educate the community about Rastafari in order to dispel the negative myths propagated by the establishment media. He commented that there has been several articles written about Rastafari that were, if not particularly negative, of negligible value because their focus was on Rastas as the creators of reggae rather than as a cultural minority that faces discrimination in employment and housing and from the police. "I know Rastas," Paul said, "who write articles and submit them to the newspapers and they are either rejected or altered to present the paper's point of view. Or we might consent to do a television interview and the more serious parts of the interview are not shown. So the substance of what we wanted to say is never broadcast."

An Asian woman identified herself as a member of the press and said that it is very hard to get any "serious information" from Rastas. "Anyone who knows about Rastas knows about Jah and Haile Selassie, but if I wanted to ask about the daily life of a Rasta I'd find Rastas to be very close-mouthed about it." A participating Rasta responded to this by saying, "Being a Rasta is as simple as being any other man. When you approach a Rasta with certain questions, he thinks, 'Why?' He is not strange or odd. You would not approach a Catholic for an interview just to ask him about his lifestyle." Another participant, a non-Rasta concurred, "The media wants to make an odd-ball of the Rasta, that's why it's always exploiting the Rasta's image, why they refuse to recognize Rastafari as a religion. Newspapers would never print, 'Catholic Robs a Bank'. The media has to overcome its own prejudice and understand that a Rasta is no different than a Catholic, no different from a Moslem."

Someone asked, "How can we get the media to reflect a positive image of Rastafari?"

William Doyle-Marshall, a Toronto journalist, responded. "All of us here understand that the media manipulates people's thinking. So instead of sitting here talking about how they do it and why they do it, we, Rastas and non-Rastas, should use the means that we have to create our own media outlets. All of us together could produce a publishing company. You must write and print your own stuff, because if you don't you will always be waiting for someone to come and interview you and hoping he doesn't twist around what you say." A Rasta from Chicago commented, "There are other forms of media. Check out the music, Jah music, poetry or paintings — that's media too, I and I *are* media." Another Rasta added, "When a man go on stage with his instrument and his voice, the song and the word is power. It's not that the media don't know I and I — they *know* what I and I represent and that's why they fight I and I. That's what Revelations say."

Jules Elder

Press Conference: activist lawyer, Charles Roach (L.); Chico of Truths and Rights Reggae band; Dudley Laws, director of Universal African Improvement Association; Charmaine Montague, co-ordinator of the Rastafarian Cultural Workshop.

A non-Rasta woman said, "But the media only reflects the feelings of society at large. We *do* have a negative conception of Rastas because we don't understand what they're about. Why should we so readily accept this fringe group? Why should the media?"

One Rasta's response was, "I think we should look at the theology of Rasta before we argue about Rasta and the media, because if we look at what Rasta stands for, it will become clear what the connection between Rasta and the media is. Our future is in the repatriation of the black man's land, and the future of this system is going the other way. This system is moving toward outer space, so when we talk about African tradition and repatriation it sounds like something totally backwards. So we don't have time to go to the media and say, look, we don't deal with violence and we don't do this and that. It's up to the media to check out who we are."

A member of the East Indian community led the discussion in a different direction by asking about the kinds of police brutality that Rastas in Toronto encounter. One man told a story of four men, including one Rasta, who were arrested for having herb in their car. After being taken to the police station the Rastafarian was separated from the others. He told them later that the officers had used him in a game of Russian Roulette. To the next question of what Rastas in Toronto were doing to combat police brutality the responses were, "We continue to live our way of life." "Rasta-man is the base of civilization therefore he will be subjected to oppression." And, "A policeman is programmed to regard certain people as possible suspects, so the Rasta man becomes a victim."

In the face of these remarks a Rasta from St. Kitts who had spoken earlier about the political mobilization of Rastafarians on the island responded somewhat heatedly. "What we fight against in St. Kitts, and with much fervour too, is that the police deal with us on a personal level. If I'm rolling a spliff of ganja and a police arrest me for that, I could never have no evil against that officer. That is his work. But if he not only arrest me but mistreat me, that's something else. Work, shit — that's hatred! And I think that Rastafari in Toronto should deal with police brutality to that extent." The moderator tried to interrupt, but the brethren continued. "Now me sure the majority of police in Toronto are white people. It's not easy for white people to love black people, and the few who have any love for black people I'm sure have nothing to do with the police department of Toronto. I've been a short time in Toronto but I check it. Some of us were standing outside Strictly Ital (a Rastafarian restaurant) and a police car pass by. Man, the observation alone — I could *feel* the hatred coming from the police toward I and I."

A young white man in plain clothes was identified by a participant as a member of the ethnic squad, and was asked to speak on the issue of Rastas and the police. He began explaining that as a police officer he had a hard time differentiating between "the wolves and the sheep, when they both dress the same. You say you want to live your life like anybody else. Well, that's fine. Most policemen agree with that type of thinking. However, you have a lot of people wearing the locks and the colours, identifying themselves as Rastas, and the police have to deal with them day in and day out. If someone describes a Rasta as having committed a crime we have no choice but to investigate." But as could be expected in a forum of this kind, and given the existing tensions between the Rastas and the police, the discussion became a sort of verbal free-for-all, with both sides getting their shots in. The police officer ended by saying, "Let's face it — we don't like each other!" and a brethren asserted that only when the policemen all became Rasta could there by any meaningful dialogue between them. After some religious allusions to the forces of evil, the moderator called for order and opened a discussion about Rastas and the black community. He began by saying that black people teach their children a history that doesn't really represent them. "In school I had to study European history when I didn't even know my own." A black non-Rasta community member stated that heretofore the discussion had focused on the problems of Rastafarians, as though their problems were different from those of the black community in general in Toronto. "If Blacks didn't have a problem there'd be no need for the Human Rights Commission. But if you're claiming that the racism and oppression that Rastafarians experience is more intense than that of the black community in general, then how can Rastafari be offered as an alternative to black youth? What you're asking them to do is to take on extra burdens without offering them the means of overcoming them." The same black woman who had spoken previously remarked that, "... if I walk in and apply for a job and a Rasta woman applies for the job I have the advantage because I look closer to the accepted norm. But there are a lot of blacks who are very resentful toward Rastafarians. They don't support them and they don't want to be associated with them." Chico said that he did not recognize a separation between the Rasta and the black community, and that in his work, with **Truths and Rights** he represents both communities when he speaks about the persecution he's experienced. There was unanimous acknowledgement that in this society, *anything* outside of the Anglo/European norm is subject to repression. A supportive community member commented that no one was advocating that Rastafarians give up their beliefs, but that they analyse the structure of this society and their place in it, as he was having a hard time understanding how Rastas reconcile their theology with the context in which they live. The Rasta response was: "If your truth is truth and another man not see it, does it mean that you just lay it down so? Rastafari teaches your youth truth and right. Now if that's too steep, then you confuse him and give him education and assimilation and acculturation and this and that." "... My life is no burden. My life is lighter because of Rastafari because the heaviest burden you can carry is ignorance. This society is controlled by invisible people. The economy is set up to get the rich richer and the poor poorer, using politicians as mediators between the invisible and the poor majority. I and I fall within that poor majority. Therefore the only relations we can have with these structures is to stay one step ahead of them." "... Until you see the fullness of the lights of Rastafari you are a slave to society, you have no control over your thinking. When you see the light of Rastafari you bring forth your creations, you're not interested in a 9 to 5. You go out there and claim your prize for your work and you don't need to work for anyone else. We all have to develop our talents to survive. That is what we believe and that is why we are the answer because through creation you find liberation."

A young non-Rasta participant closed the session on this note: "What I've found out through my readings is that out of all religions of the world Rastafari comes the closest to preaching a black identity, and the truisms of the black man's role in the history of civilization. Christianity, which is the alternative that blacks usually take, is the same Christianity that moved into Africa and purposely deceived, distorted and destroyed black history."

* * * * * *

Due to some error in scheduling I missed the beginning of the Rasta and the Family workshop, arriving when the session was in full-swing. I was immediately disappointed to find a man, Ato Seitu, an active member of the Rasta community, moderating this session, as its focus was to be the role of the Rasta woman. This is THE hot issue within the Rasta community, and its discussion made this the most lively and the most disorderly of all the workshops. Of the three most vocal participants, two were Americans who had come up from Detroit, but it was evident that many of the women present were waging their own private struggles with the questions being discussed. Some were silent but attentive. Others supported their more assertive sistren in carefully articulated phrases. But all were in agreement about the inequity of relationships between Rasta men and women. Everyone seemed to agree that the family needs a strong base, and that the Rasta woman should fulfil the role of family nurturer, but is that her only function, and is it hers alone? For me, the underlying assumptions of the male participants and the nature of the questions discussed made this forum a downpressing experience. Should a man have more than one woman? Does a man have a role in raising a child? Who is biologically more necessary to create life? ("Life is in the sperm and it takes nine months for you to release that life.") Is man to woman what Jah is to man? Is Jah a chauvinist???

As the hour moved on and the debate threatened to get out of hand, Ato said he had one last statement to make before bringing the forum to a close. "The women themselves are going to have to take certain initiatives, they are going to have to assert themselves without fear. Through whatever means a woman can express herself — through poetry, art, music, nursing — that's what she should do because it's only a matter of time until consciousness applies itself to certain realities. Our culture has far to go. There are some brethren who say one thing to their woman and when they are among men they say something else. We must weed these brethren out. We must give the woman room to grow and develop." (At this point the three voices of dissent called out, "She must take it! She must take it!") Ato continued, "But let me conclude to the women that if you want to get involved with Rastafari there are certain things that I and I will have to accept without questioning if it's right or wrong. Because if you begin to question everything you are putting yourself up against a force that you will never be able to penetrate." And with that warning, the workshop was CLOSED. ●

Jules Elder

Chico, of Truths and Rights Reggae Band and one of the co-ordinators of the International Rastafarian Conference 1982.

Michael White

Charmaine with delegate from St. Lucia and Donald Holas Toronto, who designed the Conference poster.

Rastafari:
CHARMAINE MONTAGUE INTERVIEW

The following post-conference interview with Charmaine Montague took place in the UAIA office on July 30, 1982. When I arrived Charmaine was discussing the coverage that the conference received in the black press, and she continued that discussion with me.

VH: So we have these two articles that reported on the Rasta conference, one in the July 31 issue of *Share* and in the July 30 issue of *Contrast*, as well as an editorial in *Contrast*. What are your problems with these articles?

CM: The *Share* article starts out by saying that about 50 delegates from around the world participated in the conference. There were more than 50 delegates, there were over 100 people registered. And the person who wrote the piece wasn't even there. He came 10 minutes before the conference ended, so his count of 50 delegates is misleading. The article doesn't say anything about the amount of work that went into the conference, about the workshops or what we discussed. The man just came, took some photographs, went back and wrote something. Listen to this caption for this photo of Sam Brown and this brethren: 'Many of the younger members of the faith turn to Sam Brown for advice during the three day conference.' That's an insult, as if we don't know what we're doing, as if we were kids or amateurs. Everything was well organized by the time Sam Brown got here. He came as a delegate, not an advisor.

VH: What about Rella Braithwaite's article in *Contrast?*

CM: Rella's was the best of the three articles. She touched on some key points of the workshops, like how people view us as Rastafarians. The only problem I see is with the photograph. The caption says, 'King Babuta admires a carved bust of His Imperial Majesty' (Selassie). He's not just admiring it, this brother carved this thing, it took him three years. It would have been a better caption if they'd mentioned that. But what I think happened is that the photographer didn't take the opportunity to talk to him. He saw him there, took the picture, got his name and just put something there. They didn't investigate it, and that's a problem with *Contrast* and *Share*. They assume things and feed it to their readers. But Rella's article was okay. She was in the workshops and was quite active. But in the other article in *Contrast* there are several mistakes. The writer identified Ianola as the original name of St. Kitts-Nevis when it is the pre-Columbus name of St. Lucia, even though she'd asked me for this information over the phone. She misidentified Chico as Clarence Paul. His name is Terrance Paul and it's on the program.

VH: So do you think the black press covered the conference as a sort of obligatory thing?

CM: I think there is a competition going on between the two newspapers. *Share* responded to the first press conference some weeks ago, where we discussed the memo that circulated within the police department. *Share* wrote an editorial about it and supported the conference. *Contrast* did not come to that press conference. When I phoned the editor to ask her why not, she said that the publisher thought we were getting too much publicity about the conference. But from what I know of journalism, news is news, how could there be too much coverage of something that's going to happen? Anyway, after *Share* came out with a front page article on the conference, the following week *Contrast* came out with one to catch up.

VH: This editorial in *Contrast* says "the conference came short of its objective of involving Rastas from the local Toronto community, and this was a serious shortcoming." Do you feel that's true?

CM: It's true to a degree. I explained to her that, one, we placed more emphasis on the international delegates; two, there are several Rasta organizations in Toronto and they had their activities at the same time (weekend of Haile Selassie's birthday) and, three, we had more Toronto Rastas at the nyabingi on Friday and the cultural show at the Palais Royale than at the workshops, so that shows where their heads are at, right? So, it's not that we didn't get their support, but we got it in specific areas. And I explained this to the editor over the phone.

VH: So what was missing from these articles to make you feel they could have done a better job? What kind of coverage do Rastas need?

CM: We need coverage on the positive aspects of the culture. After all the negative reporting on Rastas, here you have in Toronto an international conference. The press should have seized this opportunity to talk about the Rastafarian in his true light. But they didn't, not the white press nor the black press.

VH: Did you get any coverage from the white press?

CM: Nothing of significance. What we're planning to do is issue a statement from the conference committee and send it to the various media. Whether they print it or not is up to them.

VH: A media person at the workshop said she can't get any straight information from Rastas. And often when a real, concrete question was asked, like what is the Rasta community doing to combat police brutality, or why don't Rastas start their own publications, the answers that were given were more ideological, theological than practical. Do you have a practical answer to those questions? I understand about the publications; that's obviously a question of economics, as it was clear from the conference that there's a wealth of organizational talent in the Rasta community. But what about police brutality?

CM: To answer that question you have to consider the black community in general because police brutality affects not only Rastas but all of us. There's not much black people can do about it in Toronto because we don't have any power. All we can do is lodge a complaint. I know a Rastafarian brother was beaten up really badly by two black police officers. They seriously injured his ear. The case was put off several times and finally thrown out, although the Rasta, a black person, had witnesses.

VH: There seemed to be a real disparity between the black community and the Rastas, especially among the younger non-Rastas who attended the workshops. They didn't see Rastafari as a viable alternative at all. They called it an extra burden in the face of already pervasive oppression.

CM: The problem between the black community and the Rastas started way back in the Caribbean, it didn't start in Toronto. Jamaicans used to beat them, they used to kill them. I remember as a child we used to say, "Run, for the black heart man come kill you!" And the black heart man was the Rasta. So when these same Jamaicans emigrate here, they bring with them the same conceptions of Rastafari. Even my father sees Rastas as rascals and criminals and they'll never be anything else to him. A lot of West Indians are very colonized, they still believe in the queen as the head of the country. They still believe that white people are better than black people. They still believe that they are inferior. Rastafarians come out and say, No!

VH: Yes, Rastafari is definitely a doctrine that thinks black *first*.

CM: First and foremost. It's a culture that gives pride and dignity to the black race. Of course, a colonized people oppose that.

VH: But there also seems to be something about Rastafarian culture that is very accepting of persecution, like I and I take up the cross and trod with it, and strength through tribulation and all that. On the other hand it has also been called a culture of resistance. Do you see this as a contradiction?

CM: You must understand that a Rastafarian is first a humble person, but he won't be stepped on. He's gonna defend his rights — when I say he, I mean he or she, you know my position on that, right? We are firm as a humble people. But if we see our rights have been violated, you'll see some Rasta who will react differently. Some will react in a spiritual manner, sing and chant and call on Jah to strike down the aggressor. Others will physically fight the person. It's up to the individual as to how they deal with a particular situation.

VH: Among Rastas in Toronto the emphasis seems to be on the spirituality of Rastafari, rather than resistance of domination that I know is part of the culture. I went to the July 9th concert of **Truths and Rights** at the Palais Royale, and although I had a good time, I had a problem with them. The brother was saying 'we not gonna fight no war in South Africa we not gonna fight no war in Indochina, we about peace and love.' I always refer to Bob Marley because he is who got me interested in Rastafari, and Marley said that as long as there is war in South Africa *we* are at war. Plus, **Truths and Rights** had their overwhelmingly white audience singing 'I love Jah, I praise Jah' when most of them don't know who Jah is or anything about Jah. I had a problem with the one big happy Happening vibe because it diluted any message other than peace and love.

CM: Well, white people tend to jump on anybody's bandwagon. When they go to a reggae concert they'll smoke, wear their red, green and gold tams, the women throw on a long skirt, and they're Rasta for the night. Tomorrow they're any other white person.

VH: Well, I felt that **Truths and Rights** was catering to this frivolous attitude toward the culture. I mean, they put on a *show*, a performance, nothing heavy at all, which would be okay, except that its members then complain that the media doesn't take their music seriously. There was something, a metal structure hanging from the ceiling of the Palais Royale, and the lead singer jumped up and grabbed it, and was swinging from the ceiling and this kind of thing. Why would anyone take what he was saying seriously?

CM: I know those brothers from before they became a band. They're personal friends of mine. I know them from when they were involved with the Immican project, and I've seen them develop over the years. Their music now is more soca (soul-calypso) mixed with reggae, rather than roots, rock, reggae. But few bands in Toronto play really hard-core reggae music. If **Truths and Rights** played real roots reggae they might not be able to exist as a band in Toronto because they play in a lot of places where a lot of black people don't go. They might play in certain clubs and most Rastas don't go to clubs because of the cigarette smoking and the drinking.

VH: Where would a Rasta go to hear real roots reggae in Toronto?

CM: Well, I usually go to community-oriented parties, parties related to my job as a community worker. Most Rastas would invite people to their house and have a basement party. That's part of the culture from way back to Jamaica. Traditionally we don't go to clubs because in Jamaica we wouldn't be able to afford to. We party in the ghetto.

VH: Why was a man moderating the Rasta and the Family workshop? Why this particular man?

CM: Why him?

VH: Why a man, period?

CM: The original plan was to have a man and a woman. It's sad to say but we couldn't get any Rasta sisters to moderate that workshop. I went through my book and called sisters — some were shy, some had to stay with the kids — for various reasons none of them could do it. I asked a husband and wife and they agreed to do it, and at the last minute they chickened out, said they couldn't. Then Ato agreed to do it. Now, this particular brother, I

Jules Elder

Journalist (L.) with Chikuyu, a committee member of the Rastafarian Cultural Workshop; and Charmaine Montague, co-ordinator.

know his position on the issue of women, and compared to other brothers, he's pretty good.


Jules Elder

VH: Yeah, he seemed somewhat sympathetic . . .

CM: **Compared** to other brothers. I value his opinion because I know he looks at both sides of the question. Ato Seitu is that kind of Rasta. But I wanted a sister to co-moderate with him. Anyway, I heard he did a pretty good job.

VH: Were you the only Rasta woman involved in organizing the conference?

CM: There were a lot of non-Rastafarian sisters who were active in planning the conference. Without their assistance it would have been much more difficult to accomplish what we did. But I would have loved to see more Rasta women involved. I would call them and say, listen, we need help with this and that, but a lot of them had their families to look after. I am a single person so maybe that has something to do with it. I don't know. But even if you do have a family I think you should still contribute some time to the struggle. The sisters should be more active. Look at the delegates that came up — not one sister from the Caribbean. They were all men, which was eerie, but I would love to see a sister representing a Rasta organization in the Caribbean.

VH: Why do you think that's not happening?

CM: I don't know, not really.

VH: Let's face it, you're not the average Rasta woman, Charmaine.

CM: What do you mean?

VH: You *are* the exception, which is why I'd like to do a separate, in-depth article on Rasta women. There were a few women at the workshop who were quite vocal.

CM: All the sisters that came as delegates from outside of Canada came from Detroit, about eight of them. They were all black Americans and they were very outspoken. I wasn't there, but I heard they were very active in the workshop and had some very strong opinions about Rasta women and the family. They were also at the nyabingi on Friday and some of them had their heads uncovered, showing their locks. One brother was extremely upset by this. He said, 'I don't know what's the matter with these women. When Big Man is talking to them they don't wanna take Big Man's advice.' But one of those women was a Big Woman herself, she has nine kids. These women are not used to the restrictive aspects of the culture. Sure, they wear locks but I don't think they follow the traditional philosophy of Rastafari. I doubt it.

VH: Why?

CM: For one thing, their way of dressing. At the nyabingi one brother said, 'This isn't a nyabingi. In Jamaica you think they could uncover their heads like that?' And another brother read several passages from the Bible that contained some downpressin' things about women. Critical things, like a woman who wears jewelry is wicked and such. Everything he read you could look at this group of women from Detroit and apply it to them. So one of them got very upset, and afterwards they had a big argument with him. But they reasoned with him and after a while they parted with no bitterness. My position is that I'm used to hearing these kinds of negative things about women. It doesn't upset me anymore. But in 1978 I went to a nyabingi in Jamaica. I met this brother and he asked me, 'Do you have a king?' I said no, and he said, 'Well, you can't go to Zion without a king.' And I cried, because I was really young at the time and I hadn't been exposed to that kind of attitude. Here in Toronto if I wanted to do something I just did it. I guess that's why West Indian men say that North America is woman's country. But it upset me when this brother said I have to go through a man to get to Zion. Here I was seeking knowledge, and my search is no different from any man's.

VH: One of the arguments in the workshop came about when a man said 'You're trying to say that Jah is unjust.' The woman said, 'It's not Jah who is unjust, it's man.' Do you have any problem reconciling your faith with your individuality as a woman?

CM: I don't know what you mean.

VH: Do you find that there are things in Rastafarian theology that are oppressive to you?

CM: Oh yes. It's only a foolish person who will not analyze what she's into. To strengthen oneself, one has to analyze and evaluate one's faith. Sure, in Rastafari you have positive and negative, right? But the positive thing about it for me is that it is a black identity, a black culture, a black way of living. So I can relate to it as a black woman. The negative thing about it is that in certain areas women are restricted, and these things come from the Bible. I find that the restrictions that a Rasta woman experiences are not that much different from those placed upon a strictly Christian woman or a Moslem woman. All religious women go through the same thing. A Moslem woman goes through even more.

VH: But do you obey these restrictions that come from the Bible?

CM: No. To me the Bible is a history book. The only thing that God gave to human beings is the Ten Commandments, you know. I'm a writer, and everything that's in the Bible was written by disciples or prophets who were supposedly inspired by God. But I'm inspired by God, you're inspired by God, everybody's inspired by God. So what a brother was inspired to write about thousands of years ago in Egypt or Caana — I don't feel I have to obey it. So I have no problem being a Rasta woman and at the same time shooting video, or writing, or doing photography.

VH: A lot of brothers would disagree with you.

CM: Sure they would, but so what? There are various ways to spread the message of Jah, and everyone must do her work in her own way. Our work is to inform and educate people, to help our brothers and sisters, to help our black race. I do this through video, writing and community work. I believe in having the person best suited to do a job do it, whether it's a man or a woman.

VH: And you think Rastafari culture supports your belief?

CM: Yes, definitely, because I deal with African tradition. In African tradition you don't have anything like a fight for equality, or women's liberation. You have man playing his role, woman playing her role, both complementing each other. You don't have competition between the sexes. I preach unity of the sexes. Some men say I'm a woman's libber — what's a woman's libber? It's just that I don't believe that anyone should be restricted in fulfilling her role. I have never studied the North American concept of women's liberation. That's white women's business as far as I'm concerned. What I'm talking about as a black woman is really quite different.

VH: What do you see as the main difference?

CM: Well, usually these are white women with middle-class values who have black women at home cooking and cleaning and watching their children, which frees them to get out there and talk about all the things they want to do that has been denied them. But black women have always been active, liberated if you want to say that. Because we had to go out in the plantation and work just like men. In Africa we had to go out and fight battles against the Europeans just like men. We have to go out and plant in the field just like men. We've always had to work just like men. This is what white women are just now fighting for. I don't know if you agree with me?

VH: No, I don't think middle-class white women are fighting to work just like men. I think they're fighting for a piece of the pie that white men have had all to themselves, and I don't think they're much interested in sharing that pie with black women, except perhaps in a token way. But my feelings about black women and feminism is that, for most of us, it's beyond theory, particularly in our relationship to work, economic independence, being responsible for ourselves. Historically, for us that's been an economic necessity.

CM: In African history, women's role has always been an active one, and any black man who has studied African history can see that. All over the continent there have been great queens, in Mozambique, in Ethiopia, who defended their countries against the Europeans. Right now, in South Africa there are lots of women taking up their big guns against apartheid. There is a sister here in Toronto now who fought in the revolution in Grenada. She had to pick up her gun and defend her country like any man. If you don't defend what's outside your home, the land, the community, how can you defend what's inside? The enemy is outside, not inside.

VH: Have you ever organized a workshop or study group for Rasta women?

CM: I've tried several times and it hasn't worked out. I would love to sit down and reason with some Rasta sisters, exchange ideas. I'd also like to do a pictorial book on Rasta women, but what I'd probably have to do is spend some time in Jamaica and deal with some older sisters. The older women are more seasoned in their thoughts.

VH: When did you come to Rastafari?

CM: I knew of Rastafari since about the age of 12, in Jamaica. I always thought the older Rastas carried themselves with such dignity and pride, even though they were poor. When I was 15 I became more conscious of the faith, and I came to Toronto when I was 16. Then I was like any other teenager, into parties and clubs and running around. At 17, I got serious about Rastafari, and at 18 I began locksin' my hair. It was a very difficult period because I was young, I was just starting college, and I was scared. I didn't know what to expect from my parents, and I knew no older Rasta sisters to guide me. There were only brethren around to teach me certain things. But I became determined to finish college and to live my life as a Rastafarian . . . All Rastafarians should strive to be self-employed, and in the Caribbean, for the most part, they are. I have community skills and communication skills, so I've started my own promotion company, Masani Productions. What I hope to do is to bring in other Rastafarians who don't work for the system but want to utilize their skills. I want us to move as a collective force . .

When I was much younger I put a lot of emphasis on my career. I still do, because I want to do certain things in the name of Rastafari. Anything I do has to reflect my black culture, as a black woman, which is one reason I don't work for white institutions. Well, indirectly I do, because community projects receive a certain amount of money from white institutions. But now, if I had to choose between my career as a journalist or my faith as a Rastafarian, I would always choose Rastafari. It comes above my career, any relative who fights against me, above everything else. Because it's an inborn concept, it's part of me, like my hand or my foot. I can't explain it any further. It's who I am. ●

Addition sources for this article are:
Rastafari: Culture of Resistance, Horace Campbell.
Race and Class, Vol. XXII, Summer 1980, Number 1. Institute of Race Relations, London.
The Rastafarians, K.M. Williams, Ward Lock Educational, Living Religions Series, London, 1981.

Valerie Harris is a dramatist/journalist from New York.

KEYAN TOMASELLI

OPPOSITIONAL FILMMAKING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Although cinema was used by Afrikaner Nationalist elements to fight the cultural and economic domination of English-speaking South Africans as early as the 1940s, it is only in the last decade that a critical and independent film movement opposing apartheid has asserted itself. Its perspective straddles both liberal-humanist and socialist positions. The films of the former are unaware of the economic basis of the apartheid political economy, while films falling in the latter category, although conscious of the structural determinants of apartheid, are less aware of how cinematic style can obscure their intention in a way which may lead to their appropriation by capital.

Radical film-makers in the Third World and Europe have suggested ways of overcoming this danger. Jean-Paul Fargier, for example, argues that "In the cinema, the communication of knowledge is attendant upon the production of knowledge about the cinema."[1] In other words, to effectively communicate how the capitalist relations of production systematically exploit the proletariat, film makers have to understand: (1) How cinema reproduces knowledge through theoretical ideologies such as geography, history, economics etc., and (2) How film which articulates its conditions of production and relationship to its subject community can escape ideological confusion and consequent co-option by the ruling hegemony.

Characteristics of Oppositional Film

In the South African context, an oppositional film is likely to be low in cost and funded by its makers, or by organizations known to be opposed to the status quo. Profit is not a criterion. Such films avoid commercial exhibition venues, thereby minimizing the threat of discovery and censorship. Often they are made in conjunction with the subject community, which is invited to participate in all stages of the production process. More specifically, an oppositional film may be defined as one which documents and offers directions for cultural resistance against a reactionary and oppressive social order.

Funding

Although a state subsidy for commercial feature films has been available since 1956, not a single cent has been granted to shorts, documentary or experimental film. This situation still pertains despite continuing pressure from the film industry and from consultants engaged by the Board of Trade and Industries.

The initial suggestion for an experimental film fund was made by John Grierson of Canada's National Film Board, who was consulted by the South African government on the establishment of a national film board. Grierson's report, submitted in 1954, pointed out that experimentation was germane to national cinematic and democratic progress. The proposed film board was to provide the ideal mechanism through which the exploration of film could be fostered within a democratic context. Set up ten years later, the structure of the National Film Board (NFB) in South Africa differed in crucial ways from Grierson's original proposals. These proposals were devised to stimulate a vigorous political forum for the democratic discussion and dissemination of information within the body politic through film. As constituted by the South African government, however, the NFB subverted Grierson's democratic assumptions and, until its dissolution in 1979, functioned primarily as a production and distribution facility for Nationalist Party propaganda.

It is not surprising, therefore, that state funds are not forthcoming for experimental film making. This kind of cinema tends to be politically critical and socially introspective. Given the extreme fragility of apartheid ideology, such films could easily pose a threat to the status quo.

Oppositional and independent film makers have had, therefore, to search out other sources of finance. Other than personal investment, funding has been made available by the National Union of South African Students (**Wits Protest**), the South African Council of Churches (**Alexandra, This We Can Do For Justice and Peace** and **A Film on the Funeral of Neil Aggett**), NOVIB (Holland) and the International University Exchange Fund (**You Have Struck a Rock**), various trade unions (**Fosatu: Building Worker Unity**) and private benefactors such as the Maggie Magaba Trust (**Awake From Mourning**), financed by an expatriot South African now living in London. Limited funding has come from the Danish anti-apartheid movement (**The Other South Africa**), while substantial amounts have been awarded to Ross Devenish and Athol Fugard by the Ford Foundation and the BBC (**The Guest, Athol Fugard: A Lesson From Aloes** and **Marigolds in August**). The sums granted range from as low as $100 to $1000 in the case of oppositional films, while the more commercial fare of Fugard and Devenish, shown in cinemas and on television, might solicit as much as $40,000 from a single source.

Oppositional film-making only began to occur with any regularity towards the late 1970s. This spurt was stimulated by a number of interrelated factors. The first was the improvement in Super-8 technology, with which most oppositional films are made. Furthermore, the lifting of the embargo on video technology to facilitate the setting up of a broadcast television service in 1976 made small-format cameras and recorders available to the low-budget oppositional film maker. The third, and most significant factor, was the introduction of film and television studies at the university level during the mid-1970s. Within a very short time, working with equipment supplied by universities, some students started producing material critical of capitalism and apartheid (e.g., **On Gunfire Hill**, **Women in Process**, **Diagonal Street**, **Education**, **Rhythm and Dues** and a number of productions on the subject of resettlement). The makers of some of these productions have resisted the lure of the established industry and have found alternative sources of finance after graduation.

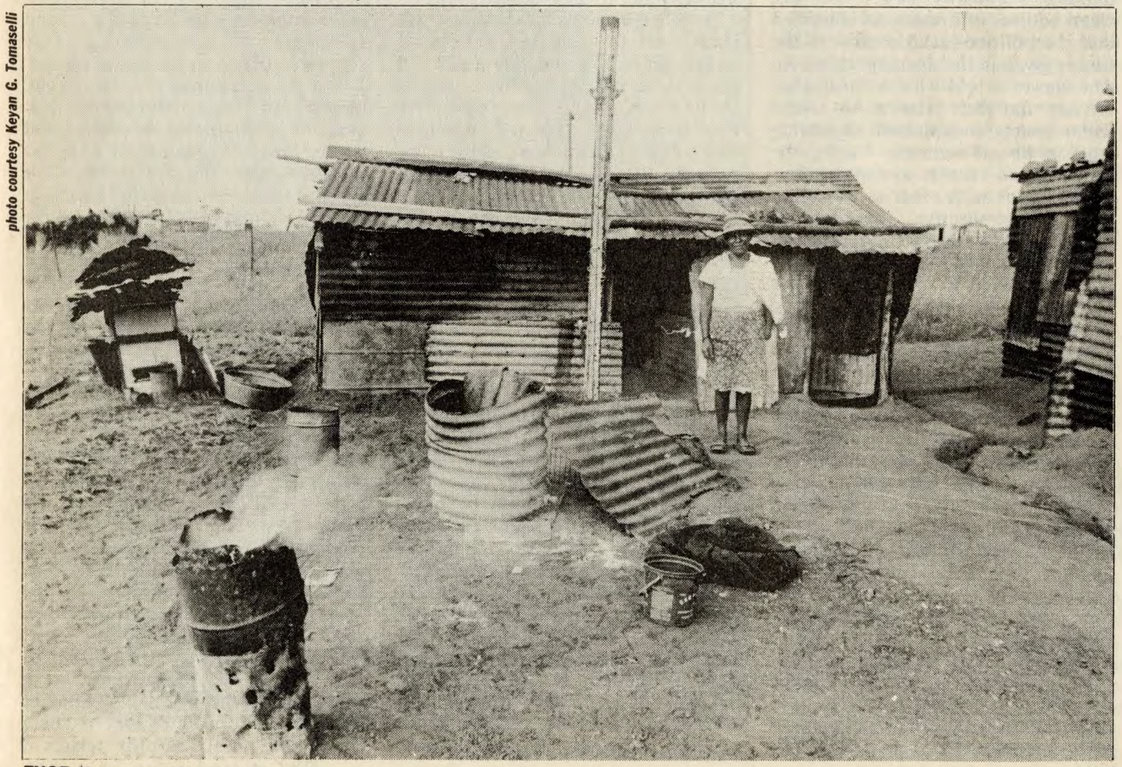
Currently, most of these film- or video-makers are petit-bourgeois and white. Despite their counter-ideological tendencies, they show a continued allegiance to a culturally-ingrained stance on aesthetics and form. They often succumb to the mystique of film-making and take too much for granted. Unable to maintain a critical distance from their own ideologies, many have produced confused statements which, paradoxically, lend themselves to appropriation by the dominant ideology. As a result, recurring bewilderment occurs when films like **This We Can Do For Justice and Peace** (1981) and **Awake From Mourning** (1981) are granted censorship clearance. The reasons are generally attributed to the recently 'enlightened' attitude of the censors. A more valid explanation, however, is to be found in the relation of the film to its context. Where the context is displaced or obscured, the film is likely to be passed.

Social Documentaries and Cultural Resistance

These films not only report on resistance but are often a part of it. Three of

A Shanty town in the Ciskei area where the film 'This We Can do For Justice and Peace' was made.

photo courtesy Keyan G. Tomaselli



these will be dealt with in some detail: **This We Can Do For Justice and Peace**, **Awake From Mourning** and **Fosatu: Building Worker Unity.**

On a surface analysis, these films appear to be offering counter-ideologies. However, certain structural weaknesses evident in the respective film texts have created the conditions which allow co-option. **This We Can Do For Justice and Peace**, was denied exposure in a non-white cinema during the 1982 Durban Film Festival (unlike **Awake From Mourning**, which experienced no such discrimination). While adhering to the same journalistic conventions as previous British television documentaries, **Justice and Peace** presents alternative views rarely seen on television or film. Where some British programmes (e.g. **The Defiant White Tribe**) have traded on clichés and stereotypes, **Justice and Peace** presents the **opponents** rather than the protagonists of apartheid. One is black (Bishop D Tutu) and one is white (Rev. Peter Story). Both are employed by the South African Council of Churches (SACC). This organization and the individuals working apparatus within it are consistently harrassed by the repressive state. The assumptions which lie behind the making of **Justice and Peace** are clear: sources of finance are identified and the politico-social context of the film is given in the opening narration. The viewer is told who the protagonists are and their relationship to the wider society is explained. Operating from a liberal-humanist stance, the film calls on viewers to explore their relationships with other races from a Christian perspective. The film was initially confiscated by the police after its director/producer, Kevin Harris, had screened it to a public audience without having obtained a censorship certificate. On submission, the Directorate of Publications committee ordered 12 deletions. On appeal, however, the film was unexpectedly passed in its entirety on the basis that "if the whole is not undesirable, then the parts are also not undesirable". The rationale of this seemingly illogical decision can be traced to the attempt by the censors to co-opt the film to serve the interests of the hegemonic alliance: "The one-sided presentation and lack of balance is unfortunate, *but it is likely to be counter-productive*" (italics added). This decision is not an isolated one, for in the case of novelists such as Andre Brink and Nadine Gordimer, the Directorate has also appealed the decisions made by its own committees. This incestuous situation has arisen because the Appeal Board is located within the Directorate itself, not the courts.

Justice and Peace, similar to many films made by the BBC, can be criticized in terms of a structural analysis. It perpetuates a common confusion with respect to causation: the viewer is, for example, told of the financial 'cost' of the relocation of blacks to their 'homelands', and later of the labour reservoir function of these so-called 'national states' — but this is presented as a contradiction rather than a structural economic determinant. The film then tends to obscure race with class, suggesting that apartheid is based on ethno-centricity rather than economic exploitation. Questioned on this, the director responded that, in the area of the Ciskei where he had shot much of his film, the cost to the state exceeded the economic benefits to it. While this may be true in specific situations such as the Ciskei, which is the most depressed area in the country, the assertion is not valid for capital in general, because the homelands subsidize the cost of the reproduction of labour power. Increasingly too, the homeland governments are subsidizing the costs of class repression and 'influx control' (or the control of worker mobility).

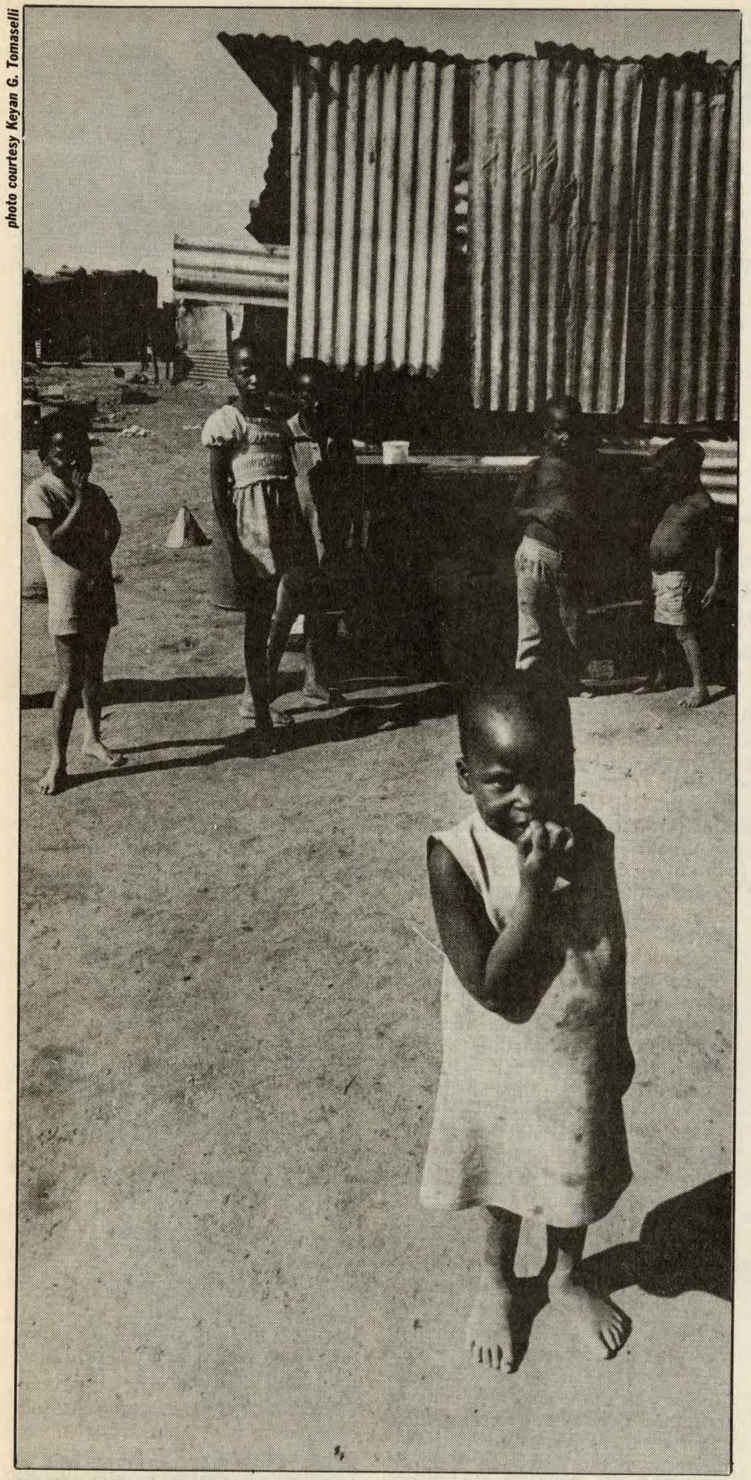
Another aspect of the film which lends itself to criticism is its use of staged actions to illustrate a story of poverty being told by Bishop Tutu. While this is a conventional documentary technique, it is one which is increasingly coming under scrutiny by radical film-makers. Ethnographic integrity and a direct relationship between narration and picture is fundamental if the film purports to reveal rather than propagandize. If the dislocation cannot be avoided, the viewer should be warned that the scene is a reconstruction, and thereby be made aware of the conditions of production and how the film is communicating.

In other respects, **Justice and Peace** is clear on use of style and conventions. In contrast, **Awake From Mourning** muddles the conventions and styles of feature film, TV documentary, actual and dramatized film documentary. This film documents the role of black women in building community cohesion and providing much-needed social services following the Soweto riots of 1976. In particular, it follows the work of four prominent black women trustees of the Maggie Mugaba Trust, which financed the film. It raises more questions than it answers: how was it financed, who made the film, what is its intention? We need to know what the relation of the trustees and the Trust is to capital and the dominant class alliance. The absence of male participation in the social reconstruction of the black community after Soweto is not explained.

Unlike *Justice and Peace*, this film works best with audiences of the converted, who are prepared to accept uncritically not only its ideology, but also its considerable structural and technical weaknesses. The content gets confused through disjoined continuity, and the camera movement often seems to contradict the action. Despite these flaws, both South African and overseas audiences have responded with empathy. In essence, the film justifies liberal ideology — given the 'opportunity', anybody can 'make good' — through bursaries, lessons in petty commodity production and discussion groups on ways of coping with social and economic hardships.

These covert messages of the film are to be found in its structured absences. Through analyzing what is absent in relation to what is present, some clues as to why the film was passed for both black and white audiences may be identified. The positive decision by the Directorate was not expected by the producers and exhibitors — previous experience suggested that it would not be passed. While the film purports to be critical, the viewer is forced by certain omissions to supply both the context and the missing information in terms of his/her *own* class position. The censors intuitively realized this, for a structural analysis reveals that **Awake From Mourning** is not a serious challenge to the status quo, although it is a criticism of it. While work such as that undertaken by this Trust can alleviate hardships as far as individuals are concerned, it ultimately misrepresents the economic determinants of apartheid. The film celebrates individual initiative while ignoring structural limitations on class mobility. In so doing, **Awake From Mourning** mystifies economic processes, and misdirects avenues of cultural resistance. More seriously, the context of the social and cultural action depicted in the film is *reduced* to the Soweto school riots of June 1976. What was a brutal repression by the state is suggested as the context rather than the *site of conflict*. The film has thus confused context with resistance. In the process, the film has isolated the uprising of June 16, 1976 from (and unsatisfactorily relates it back to) the wider context of apartheid.

photo courtesy Keyan G. Tomaselli



'This We Can do For Peace and Justice'

If *Awake From Mourning* reproduces ideology through subverting revolutionary zeal into wishful thinking, the film on Fosatu, a socialist-oriented federation of South African trade unions which feels that it is contributing to revolutionary action, fails dangerously. **Fosatu: Building Worker Unity** is a dense muddle of incompatible codes and techniques. While context is provided, the narration relies on verbal codes which are seldom connected with the image. The narration, for example, tells of workers on strike, but presents shots of them working. The contradictions of this film occur because the producers have been caught in the orthodox trap of trying to be accurate. The literal reflection of situations, or 'things as they are', can only trap the producers in a vise with propaganda pulling on one side while 'objectivity' is pushing on the other. This film should have imposed a point of view through an *integration* of visual and aural signs. Although the commentary indicates that the makers of **Fostau: Building Worker Unity** do have an understanding of theoretical ideology, they have failed to encode this awareness in the image because of a lack of understanding about film itself. People within the film are not always identified and many who were and who are actually working towards a socialist economy are paradoxically portrayed as sinister conspirators hiding behind white skins and dark glasses.

"Culture and Resistance" Conference

These are not the only South African-made films to have fallen prey to ideology through either a lack, or misinterpretation, of context. A number of other films which were screened in Botswana at a conference entitled "Culture and Resistance" during July this year have likewise experienced the same problems. The most serious omissions were those of context and historical continuity. **You have struck a Rock**, which deals with the resistance of black women to the pass laws (which control movement of migrant labor from the homelands), ahistorically begins in the middle of this century and was confusing even to the radical conference audience. Two others, **The Dispossessed** and **Crossroads**, provide coherent analyses of re-

settlement and the plight of squatters outside Capetown, respectively, though both would have benefited from the inclusion of maps to illustrate South Africa's peculiar social geography. Both of these films are banned in South Africa, providing further evidence that films which understood race and culture as a rationale for the existing class system are more threatening than those which offer a liberal/humanist critique.

The question rarely asked by the makers of these oppositional films concerns the relationship of technology (i.e. film and video equipment) to content (the theoretical) and style (knowledge about film itself). Where these three crucial variables are not taken into account, even when a coherent class analysis is presented, mystification and ideological co-option are the inevitable result.

Relationship with Audience: Connection not Alienation

"If the masses were often on the screen, they were rarely in the audience".[2] A further alienation occurs when the film-maker him/herself is no longer aware of where and to whom the production is being shown. Cultural workers using Super-8 or small format video generally handle distribution themselves. In this new context, the film-maker is usually present at the screening, which is held in university lecture theatres, film festivals, conferences or in the home. This close working relationship should ideally lead to some production decisions being made by the subject community itself, for the film-maker can never objectively capture the quotidian experiences of another social class. By working with real people rather than actors, actual locations rather than sets, the film-maker will be less inclined to romanticize or to *displace* the economic causation with biographical/psychological interpretation.

The university film graduates mentioned earlier have largely maintained their connection with their subject audiences. The cheaper, non-broadcast small format of film and video can be used easily in the areas where the 'masses' reside. Censorship is difficult to impose under these circumstances, although film-makers have fallen, and continue to fall, afoul of the more than 100 Acts of Parliament which control the flow of information.

The Future of Oppositional Film

Unlike oral media such as worker theatre and song, film represents a longer-range strategy in the struggle against oppression. Even as small a sum as $50 can fall beyond the means of a commited film-making group. At present its full potential is best met by university film departments which concentrate on oppositional documentaries made against the background of Fargier's dictum. In at least one media department, the emphasis is placed on portability, getting to the people, communicating with them on *their* terms and reporting processes and issues in a structurally conscious manner.[3] 'The way things are done' should be questioned since these 'rules' and aesthetic conventions serve capital through disconnecting film- and video-makers from their subject communities/audiences. Oppositional film-makers need to remind their audiences not only of their own contexts, but of how those contexts relate to what is seen on the screen in terms of the aesthetic techniques demanded by film and video technology.

South African oppositional film-makers have yet to work through the notion of 'well-made' film, the Ter Cinema response of "garbage aesthetics" or the various manifestations of radical film. South Africa is not unique in its practices of racial, cultural or economic discrimination. Its oppositional film-makers are part of an international community of interest. What binds this community together is a critical view of capital and political hegemonies. This vision is nourished through the radical nature of their social and film theories, outlooks and understanding of how even a critical cinema can be turned against itself by the ruling alliance.

In any class struggle, concepts, definitions and methods need to be forged out through an interaction of theory and practice. If strategies of cultural resistance are to be mapped out successfully, it is first necessary to deconstruct the 'ready-to-wear' set of conventions provided by the various media and to examine how they are used by the dominant ideology to secure the interests of capital. Only then does it become possible to construct signs and messages which can become part of the arsenal of cultural resistance. Even after a week of noisy and, at times extremely vitriolic, argument at the Botswana "Culture and Resistance" conference, for example, delegates were unable to agree on whether the fundamental oppression was race or class. Issues and definitions were, not unconsciously, submerged under an emotional experience fueled by the hypnotic music of King Force, Dollar Brand and Hugh Masekela, not to mention the magnetic field created by the 800 would-be revolutionaries who passed through the conference hall.

The emphasis of almost every paper and discussion centered on the *production* of the individual artist. Distribution, exhibition, and, most important of all, the *audience* (in the collective or participatory sense) were largely ignored. With few exceptions, the films discussed above fall into the same trap. While there is no doubt that *all* the films I have mentioned, as well as those shown at the Botswana conference, are major and significant advances, we as film-makers should take care that we are not intellectually blinded to the inherent dangers which lie in the wake of a theoretically uninformed approach to production.

A further danger of naive representations on film is the tendency of the oppositional film-maker in a polarized society to reduce critical observations to the 'correct party line'. Political positions tend to be absolute and usually demand a leap of faith, which precludes cogent argument in favour of unquestioning political belief. If and when a more sympathetic government attains power in South Africa, this does not necessarily mean that oppression will automatically cease. The struggle will continue, though on a different plane, and cultural workers will have the benefit of hindsight with which to plan and aim their strategies at the inequality and exploitation that remains. ●

References

1. Fargier, Jean-Paul, reproduced in Christopher Williams., **Realism and the Cinema** (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul with the BFI) pp.181-182, 1980.
2. "Beyond Cinema Novo", by Robert Stam and Randal Johnson in **Jump Cut**, 1979, No. 21 (Chicago, Illinois).
3. For more detailed information see "The Teaching of Film and Television Production in a Third World Context: The Case of South Africa", by Keyan Tomaselli in **Jour. of the Univ. Film and Video Assoc.**, 1982 (Forthcoming, Fall) (Carbondale, Univ. of Southern Illinois).

Keyan Tomaselli teaches in the Dept. of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University, South Africa

NORMAN RICHMOND

CROSSING THE APARTHEID LINE

Representatives of the **African National Congress** of South Africa (**A.N.C.**) and the **South West African People's Organization** (**S.W.A.P.O.**) visited Canada to attend a Canadian Solidarity Conference at the University of Ottawa, from May 7 to 9, 1982. The conference sought to build links between the Canadian people and the **A.N.C.** and **S.W.A.P.O.**

There are two liberation movements in South Africa, the **Pan Africanist Congress** (**P.A.C.**) which has existed since the late 50's and the **A.N.C.** which is currently in its 70th year. Both of these organizations have permanent observer status at the United Nations.

Norman (Otis) Richmond conducted the following interview in Toronto, on May 12 with Thado Mbeki, a member of the National Executive Committee of the **A.N.C.** Mbeki is based in Zambia and came to Canada with **A.N.C.**'s delegation.

Norman (Otis) Richmond: What were the results of the conference?

Thabo Mbeki: We thought it was a very successful conference in the sense that it brought together very many people, over 400 delegates, and drew together all the forces in Canada that are involved in the solidarity movement with the peoples of South Africa. There was a unanimous adoption of what we felt to be a very good programme of action to give a basis for the solidarity movement to work in areas for the isolation of the South African regime, for material assistance for the liberation movement, for organization, activisation of the labour movement, of the youth, of the women and so on. It's clear that wide sections of the Canadian population are sensitive to the issue of racism and colonialism in South Africa. Perhaps they need more information all the time, more current and continuous information to break the kind of silence which the establishment media maintains on this thing — to tap what we think is a large reserve of hostility towards the Apartheid system in the area.

N.R: 1982 is supposedly the "Year Against Apartheid", which the U.N., I think, has sanctioned. What type of progress have you made in this part of the world in terms of the press, radio and news media. Do you feel that the International Year Against Apartheid has been neglected whereas the Year of the Disabled and the Year of the Child got more attention?

T.M: The problem is that powerful interests in North America have a large stake in the continuation of the Apartheid system in South Africa, in the continuation of the colonial domination of Namibia, and are therefore not about to start agitating against the system. It's quite clear that the established media has tried to ignore this international year of mobilization for sanctions, which was a U.N. decision, so we want to make this year a reality, to achieve some progress as the U.N. intended. It's quite clear that we can't depend on the established media, on the establishment, we've got to reach out to the people who don't have a stake in the Apartheid system, who don't have shares in the Royal Bank of Canada, or Alcan or Falconbridge, in order to make the year as successful as other years of this kind.

N.R: What is the official position of the ANC on sports figures and entertainers going to South Africa? Is there a different position on Black entertainers and sports figures than white entertainers and sports figures?

T.M: Let me settle it by saying that there was a very large and successful conference earlier this year in London, as part of this Mobilization for Sanctions. The Secretary General of the ANC spoke at that meeting and said that we wanted to alert this kind of person to the fact that, when they go to South Africa they are walking into a war zone, and it should come as no surprise to them if they get caught in the cross-fire. That was a serious warning, we're not threatening anyone

photo courtesy of N. Richmond

Jimmy Cliff

but just stating a fact. For instance there was an Italian Opera singer who went to South Africa despite the warning, and the youth decided to take whatever action they thought was necessary, and now the man is virtually a cripple. That's the nature of the situation in South Africa when sports people, artists of one kind or another go there. When the people of South Africa have said "isolate this regime, don't come", it amounts to siding with the regime, in which case you will get hurt in the process. No, we don't make any distinction between black and white, we say that we need to isolate the regime because the regime uses such visits as a demonstration that Apartheid is not as hated by the international community as the ANC would suggest. They say, "Look, here comes **Jimmy Cliff**, here comes **Frank Sinatra**", and use it as a way of breaking the isolation. They are very keen to use it because of course isolation weakens them, and improves our own possibilities of overthrowing the regime, so that's why they pay these huge sums of money to attract people to come. I'm saying that whoever goes is making a political declaration as much as anything else, they are saying that this regime is not so bad, they are prepared to deal with it.

N.R: I read that there was a South African group, Harari, from Soweto, a black group that had signed a deal with A & M records, an American record company, and they were going to tour the U.S. for the second time. What would be the position of the Liberation Movement on Harari coming to America to perform?

T.M: It depends who they are. It's quite clear that culture has become a very important weapon in the struggle in South Africa. As a people, never mind what the regime says, we are sensitive to beauty, music, art, sports etc. and so there are lots of poets in the country who are writing about the condition of the people and who are saying that this situation cannot go on, we must liberate ourselves. They do it through poetry, through music, on the stage. When some of the patriots in the country get killed, you get very prominent football teams that walk onto the pitch in mourning with black armbands. There is a theatre in South Africa, a progressive, revolutionary theatre, which is mobilizing the people. Sometimes, and it's very rare, theatre groups such as this will come out of the country with whatever material they have, to perform. We have no problems in dealing with them because they become part of the process of educating the international community; but there is another kind of person who comes and puts on shows as though there was no crisis in the country, sometimes shows which say there is no crisis, and of course we are opposed to these, we wouldn't want this kind of person to be accepted by the international community because effectively, whether wittingly or unwittingly, they become part of the tools of the regime to misinform the world.

N.R: There is another argument that I have heard put forward by entertainers from the West and these are entertainers that are classified as progressive, like Peter Tosh, Gil Scott Heron,[1] Jimmy Cliff and Donald Byrd. They say they will go to South Africa to show the regime that they are conscious black people in the West that know that the situation in South Africa is wrong. They are not afraid to go and state their case to the people in South Africa, black and white.

T.M: The oppressed people in South Africa are of course very conscious of the importance of the International Solidarity movement — of the importance of a voice raised, by people such as we are talking about — but would prefer that these people say, "I don't recognize this regime. I refuse to go to this regime which is oppressing my people. I refuse to deal with it." — even if invited to perform by a black promoter, even to perform for the black people only. They will only allow them to enter the country if they think it's to their advantage. Black people would prefer that they say "I won't deal with this regime, therefore I won't come. I will continue to raise my voice, wherever I am, against the system. I will continue to contribute whatever I can to overthrow that system."

N.R: I want to ask one more question on culture. I was speaking to Ndiko Xaba[2] once and he said that when F.M. radio came to South Africa, Apartheid policies were adopted for it, in the sense that they gave the Zulus an hour, another tribe an hour and so on. How did it work? What was their game plan to deal with something like that?

T.M: That's how the F.M. system started. As it stands now, let's take the example of the Zulu language: it broadcasts a complete radio programme, throughout the day until late at night. They broadcast exclusively in Zulu, news, sports, religious services, as complete and comprehensive a radio programme as any other station. Now the result is that if you are Zulu speaking, you stick to that station. They'll pump you with a lot of news about the Zulu people and their situation, and very little news about the Sothos people and their situation, never mind that you are neighbours. They want to narrow consciousness, to restrict and confine it to a Zulu mentality so that you forget that there are other people in South Africa. You don't switch from program to program because that makes you conscious of this total South Africa. They therefore seek to develop a captive audience, so that they have the exclusive possibility to preach their message. The F.M. system is very localized in order to reinforce the sentiments of tribal exclusiveness and to make sure they have this captive audience which will be absorbing, day in day out, the propaganda of the regime.

N.R: How do you see the difference in the position that the U.S., Canada and England took towards sanctions against Poland, and that of sanctions against South Africa?

T.M: This is the situation. Canada and the U.S. — the ruling classes in both these countries — have a very large stake in South Africa which is getting larger every day because of the Apartheid system, with rates of profit they can't possibly hope to make in Canada or the U.S. and they make it because of the oppression and exploitation of the black people, so they say "No" to sanctions. In Poland they lost their property after the war, when Poland decided that it wanted to go socialist and wouldn't allow private ownership. They wanted to reverse that situation, they wanted to claim their property, so you get sanctions against Poland. That's a very important element in what is obviously a hypocritical position, because they want to tell the lie that sanctions don't work, so we are not imposing sanctions against South Africa. They don't want to tell the truth, that they are protecting their investments. Then the following day, very hypocritically, sanctions suddenly can work, on the issue of Poland, or on this issue of the Malvinas (Falkland Islands). It's essentially because they are constantly pursuing the position that they must dominate the world. If General Motors can re-establish itself in Poland, if Falconbridge can go back to Poland that's the situation that they

Thabo Mibeki of A.N.C. speaks at the Canadian Solidarity Conference in Ottawa.

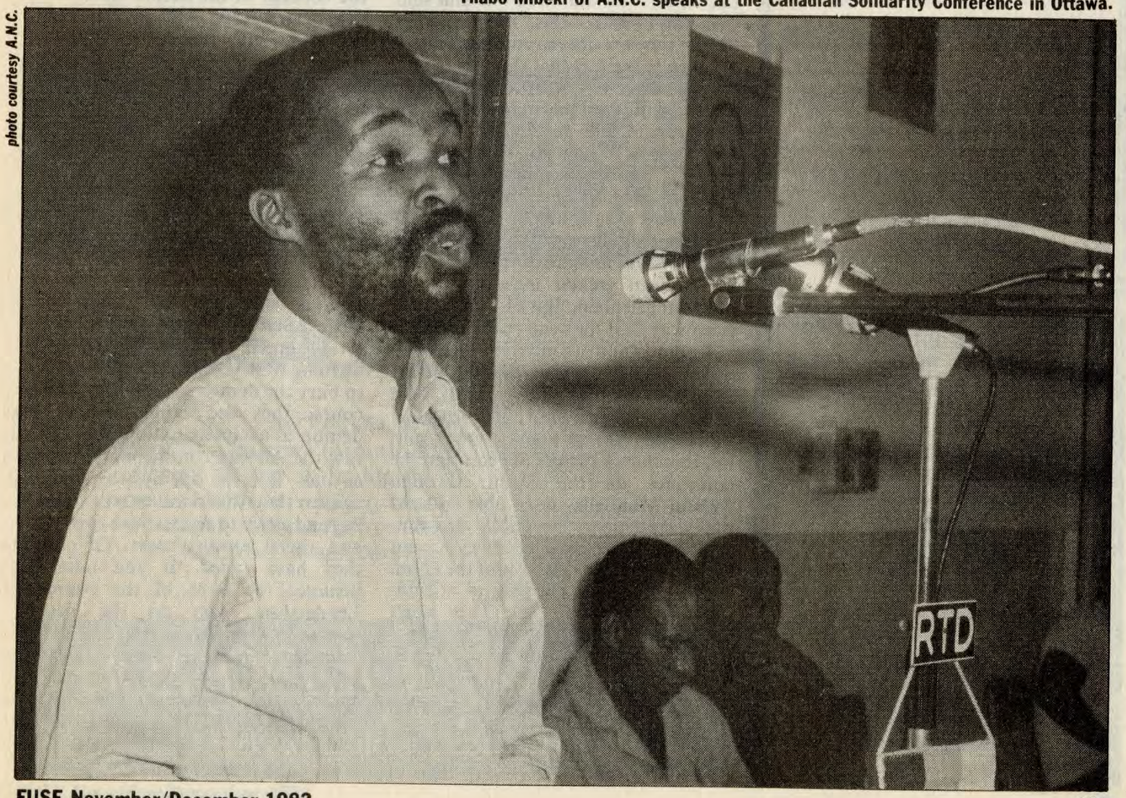


photo courtesy A.N.C.

want. It's a consistent position which seeks world domination. As far as South Africa is concerned, the Reagan administration has publicly admitted that the regime is an ally of the U.S. so that's how you treat an ally. You pose sanctions on the Polish question in order to encourage a similar type of ally to come to power in Poland. America wants to rule the world.

N.R: Recently we read that Nelson Mandella[3] was moved from Robin Island. What's the story behind this move?

T.M: The regime have refused to comment on this. They have said that they undertook this measure for administrative reasons. That really means no comment. But we think it's an attempt to split up the leadership on Robin Island. The regime have publicly admitted to having failed 1) to break the spirit of the community on Robin Island, and 2) to break the link between the community on the island and the rest of the movement outside. There has been the possibility, for many years, for communication to go on — with the community on the island participating in the formulation of policy and the general direction of the struggle. Their Minister of Internal Affairs has admitted this and said "We can't control this. They are very clever; they are able to communicate." So despite the fact that they are in jail, there has been input from the people on the island into the intensification of the struggle. The regime has decided that the best thing to do, to stop this, is to split this leadership into little groups — which will reduce the level of discussion among the prisoners, and also the contact with the outside. We see this move as a measure which aims at an even greater isolation of the political prisoners. But of course there is no way that they can really succeed.

Robin Island is a maximum security prison and it's a little island, cut off from the mainland. Everybody who goes there, as a visitor, gets searched thoroughly going in and coming out, but less than a couple of years ago the comrades on the island, through **Nelson Mandella**, were able to send out a statement, for public distribution, which discussed what was current in South Africa — the role of the youth in the movement, the general orientation of the struggle, etc. They won't succeed in cutting off this participation, whether the leaders of our people are in prison or not. For the enemy, it's a victory to have captured so many hundreds of people and locked them up so that they cannot participate in the struggle. But it's also a defeat for the enemy; because, when you bring together such large numbers of leaders and activists in the liberation movement, this becomes a very big and prominent revolutionary centre. They want to make sure that it's not a centre, so you have little groups scattered all over the place. They had announced that they wanted to close Robin Island. It had become too much of an embarrassment for them. The whole world knew, when you said Robin Island what you were talking about. It is like saying Alcatraz. So they decided it was necessary to close the prison and shift it to the mainland. Of course, what they are afraid of is that the chance of these comrades escaping becomes greater on the mainland; already 3 of our comrades have broken out of a maximum security prison in Pretoria. And so again, they are minimizing the loss to themselves in case it does happen, by putting (the prisoners) in little groups.

N.R: The ANC started in 1912 as the African National Congress which was Pan African in the continental sense, you were attempting to break down tribalism back then.

T.M: That's right.

N.R: They were trying to break down the concept of the nation state?

T.M: The ANC was in fact established by the people of Southern Africa. They were the people who were actually present and participated, and when the leading organs were elected, they reflected this composition of people from South Africa, from Botswana, from Zambia, from Zimbabwe, that's why it was called the **African National Congress**, not the S.A.N.C. Even our national anthem says "God bless Africa" not South Africa. Among South Africans a very famous statement was made. Dr. Pixley Seme, a prime mover in the establishment of the ANC, said at the opening of the conference that we have to bury the demon of tribalism: and of course, they also wanted to bury the demon of exclusive nationalism. They saw the African continent and people as one. But the enemy was fighting against that, they want to take us back beyond 1912, to re-establish this tribal and racial exclusiveness. Of course they have failed. If you take for instance the issue of the National Leadership, who do the people recognize as their leader. They had to introduce this banta system where they said to the Zulu people, "Here is your leader", they went to the Sothos people and said, "Here is your leader," and so on. They were all puppets, to whom (the enemy) gave every possibility to establish their influence with the respective groups. In March, virtually 30 years after they introduced this programme, their own researchers and those of the legal media have come out with results reporting that 75-80% of the people recognize **Nelson Mandella** as their leader.[4] The enemy has failed to instill this 'tribal consciousness', the people have a national consciousness. **Nelson Mandella** is our leader. There is no possibility that the enemy can succeed. They are trying to reverse the process of history.

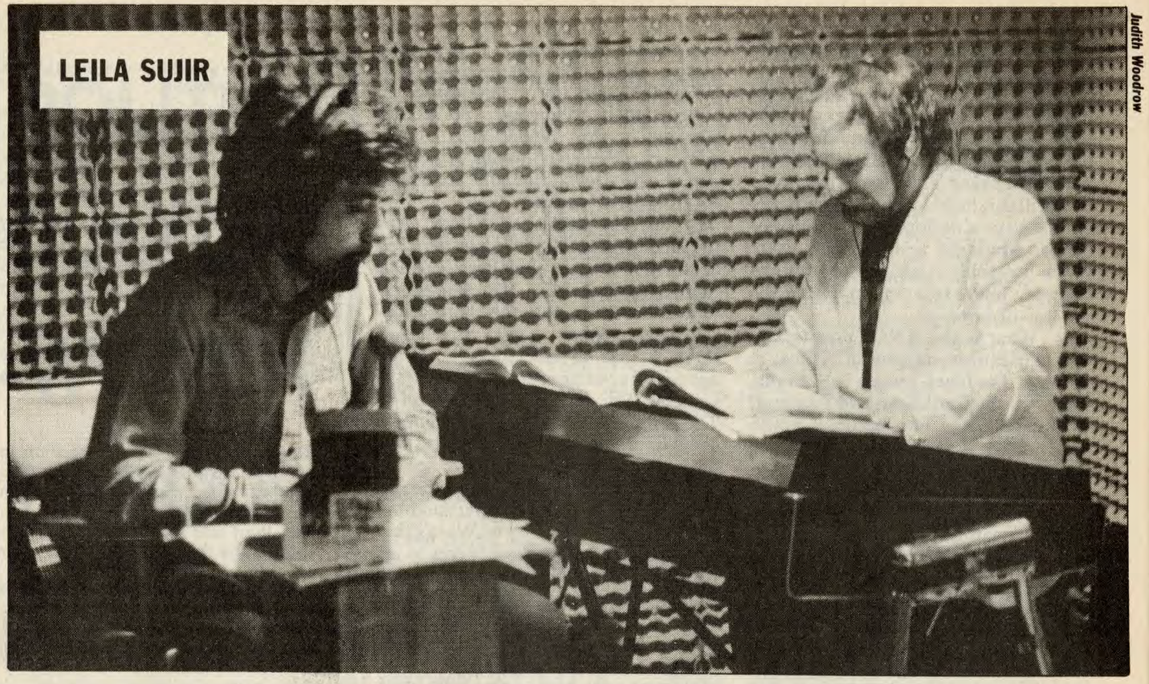
N.R: What is the ANC's position on Pan Africanism outside of Africa, in terms of the black people in Canada, the U.S., the Caribbean and England?

T.M: The ANC, the people of South Africa have a rather long history of concern about oppressed and struggling people everywhere, something that Reagan is angry about. The first official relations between the ANC and the Soviet Union were established in 1927. And the president of the ANC actually paid an official visit to the Soviet Union. The reason for this was because before that, all the Western countries had tried to isolate the Soviet Union, tried to destroy it. For all the people at home who understood that this revolution in the Soviet Union had been to liberate the oppressed, to remove the yoke of oppression from their necks, they understood it, and felt themselves to be on the same side. They wanted to express their solidarity. The second element is that being black South Africans we've lived under this racist system for a long time and are therefore highly sensitized to it. So naturally, the position of the ANC was that the oppressed and exploited need at all times to get together — to use their united strength. It's clear everywhere that the issue of the liberation of the black people — the lifting up of them — has to remain high on the agenda. Racial discrimination exists in Canada; I'm sure it's very extensive. The people in the North of this country are de-humanized by this system. One has only to go to New York to see the conditions under which black people live. There is no official Apartheid but you can see it in the streets. We say that it's necessary for all these forces to get together — for the black people of South Africa to contribute what they can to the liberation of the black people in the States, for the black people in the States to contribute what they can to the liberation of the black people in Canada, and so on. Anybody's liberation contributes something to our own liberation. That would be the position that the ANC would take.

N.R: Is there anything you would like to add?

T.M: What I should like to add is that we think we've got a natural ally and a base here in Canada; and I'm talking about the black community in this country, which we understand to be fairly substantial. We would like that rear base to be active, to raise the concern about the continuity of collaboration between South Africa and Canada, and to contribute whatever it can to the strengthening of SWAPO, and the strengthening of the ANC. ●

1. **Gil Scott-Heron** held this position in 1976. In a recent interview with this author, Scott-Heron said he'd perform in South Africa on Independence day. Donald Byrd held these views in 1975.
2. **Ndiko Xaba** is an ANC cultural worker living in Toronto.
3. **Nelson Mandella** is the acknowledged leader of the ANC. He has been imprisoned in Robin Island for 20 years.
4. This was reported in *The Johannesburg Star*.
5. S.W.A.P.O. is the South West African People's Organization. They are waging the struggle in what is called Namibia.



Judith Woodrow

TAKING BIG DOG FOR A CITY WALK

"Big Dog" is a Calgary-based community activist band, led by intermedia artists Brian Dyson and Paul Woodrow. Woodrow's musical history has cycled from participation in the original British rhythm and blues revival, through to Fluxus events musics — including collaboration with members of Throbbing Gristle and American avant-guitarist, Eugene Chadbourne along the way, while Dyson has provided the political groundwork and cultural energy behind a number of Calgary survival projects, including organized opposition to neighbourhood destruction (see "LRT? Over my Dead House!" FUSE, July 1980), the emergence of Calgary's controversial coalition tabloid, *City Limits*, and the development of SYNTAX (a co-operative cultural production facility).

"Big Dog", both musically and lyrically is a composite of music hall wit, bar room delivery and political indignation. Their songs are both multi-lingual and historically referential, proving that a regional base will provide more than an adequate ground upon which a big dog can learn new tricks and innovative strategies.

An interview between Leila Sujir (LS) and Brian Dyson and Paul Woodrow of Big Dog (BD).

LS: How would you describe the songs generally?
BD: Some of them are straight forward rock'n'roll songs, but others are combinations of musical styles. As artists we're interested in art and social practice, and using music to carry ideas in a popular format makes sense to us.

LS: I find the forms you have chosen to use are accessible to a larger group than the traditional art audience.
BD: We're hoping to maintain a high quality whilst appealing to a very broad group of people.
LS: Would you say you are artists working with music then?
BD: Neither of us has had any formal music training. We're both trained as visual artists and our area of interest is multi-media — mass media forms of communication — and our interest in music as a vehicle is an extension of that.
L.S: Do you find you work differently from musicians, possibly because you have jumped across disciplines?
BD: Because we are not musicians in a formal sense we can do things that we think are appropriate and which seem logical and normal to us, whereas other people who were interested in working in a popular music format would go into it with a preconceived idea of the music, depending on what

Brian Dyson

Paul Woodrow and Peter Moller at Syntax (R.)

'genre' they identified with.
LS: Is any of the music you are working on coming out of a concern for this particular place, Calgary, and the political situation here?
BD: There is a political content in our music. This is not unusual today. I think there inevitably has to be, just by the way we focus on things. Some songs are more overtly political than others. We tend to be more satisfied with a more subtle statement at this point. But in terms of Calgary specifically, we have done a song about Light Rail Transit (LRT) which deals with a specific situation which is a major issue in the community. To continue to use the music to comment on and criticise the local situation, and be effective, we would have to produce new material every three months or so. We are not a performing band. We don't have the time or the resources to do that, so we would have to find a vehicle through broadcast radio. There is Radio/Radio which is a rather limited form of community access radio which we could use, but the audience would be rather limited.
LS: Do you see that as a possibility?
BD: At present, no, although it appeals to us as a long range plan. Without accessible non-profit media production facilities this is not possible in the immediate future.
LS: So you use the parody of popular music styles to make the songs more accessible?
BD: In some songs, yes, but we also write songs which are quite conventional. However, the use of popular musical forms beyond a rock'n'roll format probably interests us more than anything else. In 'Charisma' we combine the formats of popular French music and Latin American music. The French sensibility in popular music is very sentimental. We are trying to reinforce the lyrics by very careful selection of the form of music we choose to carry it. It's very straight forward really. In 'Charisma' we use a parody of French popular music and Latin American music. The lyrics are in English, French and German. The music changes in relation to the language of the lyric.
LS: Did you use any found language in the lyrics of 'Charisma'?
BD: The introduction came from the back cover of a paper back book — it was a précis of the story inside. Paul wrote the French section and the section about charisma was taken off the side of a milk carton. It was a United Way appeal referring to hemophilia. We just substituted the word 'charisma'.
LS: What is moving your ideas in 'No More Painting'?
BD: We were just criticising 'avant-garde' painting — that constant regen-

NO MORE PAINTING

It's coming off the wall
Well isn't that exciting
It's occupying space
Pretty soon they'll have it walking
Pretty soon they'll have it talking

Shake n' Bake art
Velvet painting for the mind
Think I'm going to choke
No more painting

Painting makes you weak
Painting makes you selfish
Painting makes you blind
Painting makes you careless
Painting makes you splash your booties

It's coming off the wall
Well isn't that exciting
It's occupying space
Pretty soon they'll have it walking
Pretty soon they'll have it talking

Shake n' Bake art
Velvet painting for the mind
Think I'm going to choke
No more painting

Painting makes you forget yourself
Painting makes you believe in fiction
Painting makes you nervous
Painting makes you talk too much
Painting makes you boring . . .

IMMIGRATION

Took a flight to the promised land
One way ticket, suitcase in my hand
Destination YCR, land of snow and sand
Where no man goes hungry, an' all the people are grand

Land of the ocean, land of the free
Land of the mountains and democracy
Land of the beaver, land of the just
Land of the rainfall, land of the rust
Land of the islands, land of the log
Land of the jungle, land of the jog
Land of the English an' colour TV
Land of the Lion an' the UIC
Land of the gardens, land of the hope
Land of the salmon run, land of the dope
Land of the playboy, land of the whore
Land of the get rich, land of the poor

Went down town to get a bite to eat
A man called me nigger as I crossed the street
No place a Roti shop, went into a bar
All the men were drinking so I ordered a jar

Feelin' sick, Feelin' pretty shy
Went to the bathroom, felt like gettin' high

Bump-de-bump with an uncoloured guy
Took me by the arm, said "You ready
to fly?"

(repeat chorus)

I said "Sure am boy, you got something
to smoke?"
He said "Sure do man, I've got dynamite
dope"
He said "Come this way", led me into
the stalls
He gave me the reefer and I took a long
draw

Feelin' good, Feelin' pretty high
I gave him the money and he gave me
the eye
He said "I've got you boy", slipped
the bracelets on me
He said "I'm with the government,
with the RCMP"

(repeat chorus)

I came up for the judgin, went down
for the count
The bastards they floored me, now I'm
down and out
They gave me my own room, three
square meals a day
Six months relaxation and no rent to pay

So I gaze at the mountains through
these rusty bars
And dream of the beaver and joggin'
on Mars
Roar like a lion in the land of the free
Lost in the jungle, guest of her majesty

(repeat chorus)

Copyright 1982 Dyson/Woodrow

CHARISMA

Stan is seventeen
On the verge of a nervous breakdown
Could he have contributed to his
mother's illness?
Why does his mother's boyfriend, Paul
Lambert, make Stan feel so uneasy?
And what really happened to Lambert's
son on his seventeenth birthday?
Stan knows what he has to do
He must find the answers to these
questions from his past
Before he can live out his future

J'ai une obsession
C'est ma seule posession
Je veux seulement la puissance
Pour la montrer
Qui est le bosse . . . un homme

Ma seule posession
Est ma petite obsession
J'ai besoin de la puissance
Pour la montrer
Que je suis un homme

Je parle de ma mere
Je n'ai besoin d'une autre
Pas quelqu'un à aimer
Je n'ai besoin d'un frère
Quand j'ai ma mere
Je n'ai besoin d'un autre amante

J'ai une obsession
C'est ma seule posession
Je veux seulement la puissance
Pour la montrer
Que je suis un homme

Amoureux de sa mere
Amoureux de sa mere
Amoureux de sa mere
Amoureux de sa mere

If you love a little boy
You should know about Charisma
Charismatism is painful (to watch)
Charismatism is crippling
Charismatism is incurable
Charismatism is increasing
Charismatism affects families
But charismatism can be treated
And the charismatic have a normal life
His family can live a normal life
If someone cares

Stamp out Charisma
Stamp out Charisma
Stamp out Charisma
Stamp out Charisma

Wenn du einen Kleinen jungen liebst
Soll test du uber charisma wissen
Charisma ist schmerzlich (su sehen)
Charisma ist kruppelhaft
Charisma ist unheilbar
Charisma ist wuchernd
Charisma betrifft famielien
Der charismatischen kann geheilt
werden
Und die charismatischen haben ein
normales leben
Seine famielien kann ein normales
leben leben
Wenn jemand aufpasst

Zerstore Charisma
Zerstore Charisma
Zerstore Charisma
Zerstore Charisma

Copyright 1980 Dyson/Woodrow

eration of ideas with a slight pushing in a direction that's not been exploited before. The search for 'The New' over the last couple of decades and longer.

LS: The lyric reflects your professional involvements in art education then?

BD: What interests us as critics of art, I suppose, is the way that painting as an area of investigation has dried up. In actual fact, painting has not only been pushed off the wall, but in the last few years has been pushed right back into the rectangle again. Look what is happening right now with the 'New Painting'. Suddenly everyone and their dog are painting again. Jean Clair, for example, as a champion of the 'New Painting' in Europe, is obviously trying to revitalize a very depressed market — a market that not only supports commercial galleries, but directly supports institutional galleries, contemporary criticism, art education and so on. Criticism as marketing strategy . . . it's quite logical. The only option is to leave that system altogether. This is not so easy. Records still should be able to pay for themselves, even if they don't make a profit.

LS: So music becomes a vehicle for art criticism, in a sense, but in a different format?

BD: Yes, just as music has become a vehicle for criticism in other areas. This is nothing new. The best music of the past decade has had a critical edge to it. The systems and sub-systems contained within the field of aesthetics are sound within their artificial parameters. We are directing our criticism at their ultimate social impact within a commodity marketing system of economics. I think more than anything we are criticising the 'landslide effect' that follows any significant progression in art, whereby the style is assumed and appreciated by the educational establishments. It becomes a focus for critique in the history of art; a focus for studio work. That's our criticism of painting really — it's a closed system interested only in itself, and only of interest to painters, critics and curators. It seems an absurd way in which to train the charters and documentors of our culture. It's basically too limiting in relation to the task at hand and its limitations are in the final analysis purely based in economics. So when a painter tries to tell you that s/he and the work transcend politics you know they're full of shit. So, we have this landslide effect where 10,000 art students are pushed into the stylistic treadmill and spend most of their time running to keep up with the 'movements' before they even have time to establish their own areas of focus and concern as members of the community.

LS: You can use the songs to parody a particular attitude towards art activity then?

BD: Yes, I guess, whether that activity be painting or popular music or whatever. That landslide effect is always there and it will end up being co-opted no matter how 'avant-garde' or 'off the wall' it is initially perceived to be.

LS: Would you say that 'Cantina' is structured similarly to 'Charisma' in that you move through a number of musical styles?

BD: Yes, there are English and French versions of the lyrics, and within the music there is a distinct bridge between the two — the opening bars of the French national anthem.

LS: With 'Cantina' are you attempting to break the historical progression that art history represents?

BD: We are being irreverent to those names, although we don't hold them accountable. We don't accept the system of values and the historical precedents that this list of names proposes. It's important to remember that we are doing this for ourselves as well as a hypothetical audience and it is enough to think that we might be dismantling, only for ourselves, the whole cultural/historical myth of twentieth century art. To make claims beyond that for a popular song seems to be pretentious. We had a good laugh doing it and hope that the people hearing it will enjoy it too.

LS: Why the particular choice of these artists — Da Vinci, Pollock, Bosch, Holman Hunt, Marinetti?

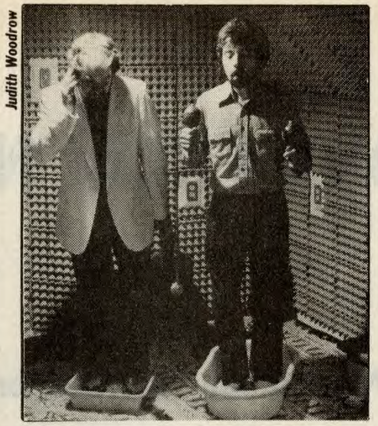
BD: There was some attempt to identify the major movements through the artist that initiated them. So of course, all these people are included. The final selection of names was based on what particular vulgarism we could rhyme with their names.

LS: These are the people that represent the beginning of various movements, that landslide effect you spoke of?

BD: Not all of them, but they definitely hold an important place in art history. We are not so much criticising the innovators as much as the copyists and the clone breeders in the art schools and universities — the process which can move the larger part of a whole generation into a pre-occupation with style.

LS: So you are reconstructing the story of art history that is so powerful, especially for students?

BD: That attitude towards art history



Judith Woodrow

Bathing Big Dog

is wrapped up in the idea of a producer and a consumer, where the artist makes a marketable product, like a record . . . which we are doing ourselves . . . so it's not that simple . . .

LS: How would you describe the structures you are using in the music?

BD: In one sense, when we join the music and the lyrics together, we are making a painting. We are influenced by popular musical forms, and we select the style of music that will best carry the lyric. And because the music parodies the various styles, it is able to reinforce the lyrics.

LS: In 'Remember When' are you using the lyrics to comment on the quality of consumer life our society offers?

BD: Yes, it was written in reaction to the things we have to tolerate daily through the mass media such as television. People are portrayed as being so wonderful with white teeth and spotless clothes. That image of cleanliness is a facade for what's really going on. It's as if the human race has to be antiseptic in order to be beautiful and healthy. The song is a more realistic description of human behaviour.

LS: Do you observe any changes from the first songs to the songs you're writing now?

BD: With the older songs, such as 'Charisma', the music carries the idea, as it bridges from one style to another. In the newer work there is only one style used to carry each lyric, except for a C&W number on art education which uses Nat King Cole's 'Mona Lisa' as the chorus. 'Sad Cafe' uses a Latin American style, which is a logical choice to fit the lyric. The latest songs, 'Sad Cafe' and 'Immigration', have a strong narrative structure, whereas the narrative in 'Charisma' was more discrete, since it implies a story line which extended over a period of years. The latest narrative songs cover a period of a few hours at most.

LS: So you're using story as another kind of container for the ideas?

BD: Yes, 'Sad Cafe' is a microcosm of certain South American situations re the US's clandestine involvement down there.

LS: Are you collaborating with other musicians when you produce the songs?

BD: On the first series of songs we worked as a five piece band on the arrangements. Since we wrote the material, we would talk about what we wanted to develop around the basic rhythm and melodic structure. This turned into a three year process. This time we feel it will work better to get the arrangements worked out as fully as possible before hand in order to cut down on rehearsal time and to maintain a freshness when we actually do the taping.

LS: When will the first record, '99, Change Hands', be released?

BD: Hopefully by Christmas.

LS: What were you implying by the choice of title for the record?

BD: We were referring to the mechanical aspects of human behaviour and social interaction. We seem to be a race of sleep-walkers. This is dealt with directly in songs like 'Clone/Drone' for example. We also have a tendency to be embarrassed by the seriousness of it all. We are very serious about this activity because we feel that we are in a very critical period, made even more critical by this 'sleep-walking' we talked about. However, we do tend to modify this seriousness with a rather vulgar sense of humour and the expression is actually a reference to masturbation and the masturbatory aspects of creativity, particularly in a studio context, but equally so in our own case.

LS: To sum up then, would you say as artists that you are advocating a different kind of practice, and if so, how does that practice differ from the traditional role of the artist?

BD: What we propose as a legitimate philosophy for contemporary artists is an active participation in all aspects of society, including politics and economics, etc. We are advocating a philosophical practice whereby we claim the right to involve ourselves as artists in society and community life, not as some liberal idea of 'public service' separate from our 'professional' lives, but as the activity which incorporates all other activities, including 'making art'. ●

ROSS KIDD

A TESTIMONY FROM NICARAGUA

An Interview with the Nicaraguan Farmworkers' Theatre Movement

In May and June 1982, Nidia Bustos, the co-ordinator of MECATE (Nicaragua's Movement of Campesino Artistic and Theatrical Expression) took part in TESTIMONIOS DE NICARAGUA, a cross-Canada educational tour focusing on the experience of popular education and culture in the new Nicaragua. The purpose of the tour was to give Canadians an understanding of the explosion of creativity and popular expression in Nicaragua since the Revolution. Through a photographic exhibit, slide-tape presentations, and participatory workshops, the three-person team (which included Deborah Barndt, a Toronto-based photographer/popular educator, and Daniel Caselli, a Uruguayan photographer, both of whom have recently worked in Nicaragua) presented the images, stories, and analysis — the testimonies — of the Nicaraguan people.

During the tour Nidia talked about the development and activities of the campesino theatre movement (MECATE) and how it supported campesino expression, community education, and national reconstruction. During her stop-over in Toronto, she was interviewed by Ross Kidd, one of the tour organizers.*

*I'd like to thank Ana Bodnar, Rosa Diabo, Daina Green, May Ann Kainola, and Lucio Telles for their help in translating the five interviews.

What existed in the way of campesino theatre before the Revolution?

There were a few pockets of popular theatre activity but not the flowering of popular culture that you see today in Nicaragua. Popular culture was repressed and the validity of campesino culture undermined.

A number of campesino theatre groups sprang up in the mid-'70s in different parts of the country as a response to community needs and as a way of supporting the liberation struggle. This was an entirely spontaneous development, each community on its own deciding to set up a theatre group. Each created a theatre group out of its own set of circumstances.

The first was a group in Las Lagunas, a small community way up in the mountains. They needed a way of raising money to build a school and a small church for the area. A few community members had taken part in a socio-drama during a workshop run by the Catholic Church. They decided to give it a try and developed a short skit as a fund-raiser. It worked and **Los Alpes** was formed. At first their skits were mere comedy. Later on as the struggle intensified, their plays became more and more political. They dramatized the atrocities of the Somoza regime and called on their own and neighbouring communities to support the revolutionary struggle. After a while their activities became known and the National Guard came to investigate one of their performances. Someone alerted them and they burned their props and costumes before the National Guard arrived. Soon after they joined the fighters.

During the same period (1975-1976) another group got started in the south in the community of Cantimplora. Its choice of name — **Frente Sur** (Southern Front) — indicated its militance. Some of the members were older men — fighters — people who had fought with Sandino and had been involved in the struggle for several decades. Their aims in forming a theatre group were similar to those of Los Alpes:

- to make people aware of problems in the community, to get people to make decisions about solving them, and
- to motivate people to become involved in the struggle.

How did you get involved?

At the time I didn't know about Los Alpes or Frente Sur. I only discovered what they had done after the Revolution. I was working with the Asociacion de Trabajadores del Campo (ATC) — the Farm Workers Union — which was set up in 1976. It's a mass organization of people who work the land. These are the people who fought the most fiercely to win their freedom and they are the same people who would be the most willing to support any revolution against tyranny on earth.

The ATC started out as an association of small and medium cultivators and later grew to include the wage labourers. (After the Revolution a new organization was created for the small and medium cultivators and the ATC became exclusively for wage labourers). The ATC was concerned with the integral development of the farm workers and they saw the importance of cultural work right from the beginning.

It is not only with arms that a revolution is made. Revolution is made in every moment of one's life and our experience confirms this. It is made with music because the guitar too was aimed and was fired to the point that the guitar and the gun got mixed up. Revolution is also made by writing poetry and by organizing popular education.

What I'm trying to say is that the ATC was concerned with all aspects of the campesinos' lives and saw that the people's own culture — the forms of expression which are rooted in the lives of the people — could be a weapon in the hands of the farm workers. Campesinos don't need to be told how to do theatre — it is in their veins, in their blood. And the ATC recognized that this skill could be used as a tool of horizontal communication, conscientization, and organization, preparing people for that difficult but necessary option — taking up arms against the Somoza dictatorship.

Our job in the ATC was to organize the farm workers and small farmers in different parts of the country. Popular culture was one of the organizing tools. There were few of us at the beginning. Our work was clandestine and we were constantly under the threat of repression or death. This made the work difficult but it also made it passionate and intense.

One of the communities I was working with was Pio Doce in the Municipality of Masatepe (Masaya Province). People in this area were very militant. Part of their motivation

Mecate group (Nicaragua) performing in a park.

Charlie Lane

Nidia Bustos returned again in August 1982, along with three of the MECATE animateurs, to take part in the "Indigenous People's Theatre Celebration" which was held in Peterborough, Ontario.
The photographs accompanying the text were taken from the MECATE performance at the Celebration.


Charlie Lane

Nidia waiting to go on stage in a Peterborough park.

and consciousness came from the Catholic church. Some of the community members (who took the lead in forming the theatre group) had undergone special training which prepared them to be deacons, although they were farmworkers. They worked with a Christian conscience, committed to the people's struggle.

People in this area were highly committed and generous. If someone was needed to look after children so that women could get involved in political activities, they'd look after children. If someone was needed to distribute pamphlets, they'd distribute pamphlets. If the community needed to be defended because the National Guard was approaching, they'd grab their guns and get to work. That's why we can say it was the culture of the people which was growing. It was like a second birth. It's not as if the culture of the people did not exist. But it's as if it had died and had to be reborn, to be reincarnated in the Revolution, in the struggle of the people. That's why we call it "popular culture", because it is the fruit of the daily tasks, the struggles, and the suffering of the people.

The theatre group (Caldil de Pueblo) grew out of the popular education and organizing activities in this area and was formed from young farm workers. Many of them could play the guitar and I encouraged them to form a musical-cum-drama group. They developed performances of short skits, songs, dances, and poetry and put these on for their own community and neighbouring communities. Their performances reflected the life that they were leading, a hard life filled with repression, and the scenes were often unpleasant showing rapes, murder, torture, etc. But they also showed a way forward, the need for violence to answer the violence of the Somoza regime, the violence that people had suffered for centuries. The plays showed the conditions under which the people were suffering and then presented a possible solution. Sometimes the play would become an open discussion, with everyone present, on various strategies for action. The purpose was to motivate, to conscientize, to explain the task to be done. It was dangerous work, but the members regarded it as their political task.

What happened to these groups when the fighting became more intense?

All were persecuted by the National Guard to the point that one of the groups — Los Alpes — was forced to burn all their masks and costumes.

The others buried them, left the village, and joined the armed struggle. It was another way of showing that they were like other people in the community who had joined the fighting forces. They didn't just tell people what to do — they also acted. There is an old saying in Nicaragua that words convince people but actions pull you along.

The groups didn't exist as groups any more because the members were scattered around various battlefields. But wherever they were, they managed to do a little theatre to lift the spirits of the fighters and to raise morale. And they learned a lot from their fighting companeros.

What happened after the Revolution?

The original groups — Los Alpes, Frente Sur, Caldil de Pueblo and a few others that had been formed before the final offensive of the Revolution — regrouped and started to perform again. It's important to remember that the theatre activity by the campesinos before the Revolution was entirely spontaneous. The Sandinistas did not manipulate or impose cultural activity on them. Each of the communities developed a theatre group on its own. So when we started to organize after the Revolution we had a base of experience to work from.

Many new groups sprang up in the enthusiasm and revolutionary spirit after the final offensive. Los Alpes, Frente Sur and other groups travelled to other communities and helped new groups get formed. The Farm Workers Union (ATC) began to organize on a broad front and as part of this organizing effort encouraged the formation of campesino theatre groups. The national literacy campaign was an additional source of mobilization: cultural brigades were created to promote participation in the literacy effort. There was a groundswell of cultural expression now that people were no longer held back from saying what they wanted to say.

MECATE, however, as a movement had not yet been formed. It only existed in our dreams. In our revolutionary work in Nicaragua things have always been created as a response to needs, not just because it went through somebody's head. We could not just invent a cultural movement. We had to work in the countryside first, to identify existing cultural work, to encourage new cultural activity, and to let the movement develop out of experiences in the field. It was only after a lot of activity in the field — community performances, training, exchanges, etc. — that MECATE came into being.

Before the Revolution the campesino theatre groups had been isolated and cut off from each other and didn't know of each other's existence. But after the Revolution, as more and more groups were formed, there were increasing contacts between the groups. The ATC cultural organizers encouraged these contacts, getting the experienced groups to help the new groups and running a number of training sessions at the local, regional and national level.

The first national seminar was held in Masaya in November 1979. Its aim was to develop the cultural creativity of the groups and to strengthen links with the ATC. A number of international popular theatre workers helped to organize the seminar — Carlos Nunez (Mexico), Oscar Jara (Peru), Raul Leis and David Calden (Panama), and a number of others.

The second national seminar was held in Boaco in April 1980. Eighty campesino cultural workers from all over the country attended the seminar. At the end of the one-week gathering participants expressed the need to continue the contacts and exchange among the groups. They proposed the formation of an organization which would co-ordinate and give an impulse to their efforts.

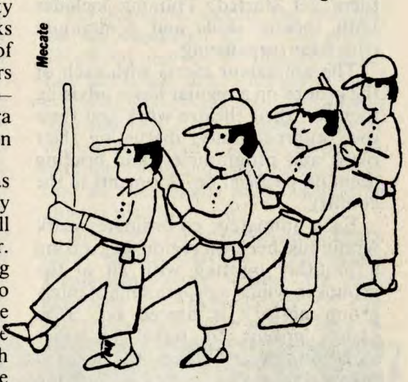
One of the campesinos, a member of Los Alpes, came up with the name **Movimiento de Expresion Campesina Artistica y Teatral** (MECATE) — Movement of Campesino Artistic and Theatrical Expression. MECATE, which means lasso or rope, a tool used daily by the campesinos, seemed an appropriate acronym for an organization whose primary aim is to unify all the campesino groups in the country.

MECATE attempts to bring together all the campesino cultural groups, under the direction of the Farm Workers Union, in order to exchange experiences, support one another, work out common strategies, and promote the development of popular culture. It is more than a theatre movement — it covers all forms of campesino cultural expression — drama, music, poetry, dancing, drawing, painting, etc. It is a movement of the farm workers — they set it up, they organize it, and they are the members. At the founding meeting in Boaco — on April 12, 1980 — they asked me to be the co-ordinator and elected a number of campesinos to be animateurs *(promotores)*.

At present there are about 80 groups belonging to MECATE. About 75% are theatre groups and the rest musical groups. Some groups have as many as 35 members. I would say that we have over 1,500 members.

What are the goals of MECATE?

To start with it is a forum for exchange among the farm workers' cultural groups. The groups get to know each other and to help each other. It also has an aim of rescuing and reviving popular culture, which has been repressed by centuries of domination and swamped by the penetration of North American culture. Our job is to identify this hidden or submerged experience and to encourage its


Mecate

revival. A third aim is to promote popular expression, to encourage the farm workers to express themselves, to have their say, to sing and dance and declaim what has been bottled up for centuries. Our final aim is to support the reconstruction of our country.

What does MECATE do? How does it function?

You must remember we're linked to the Farm Workers Union (ATC). In fact we operate as the cultural arm of the ATC which is one of a number of mass organizations in the country. Some of the other mass organizations (e.g. the Sandinista Youth Movement) have cultural wings as well, but MECATE was the first to be formed.

We have a central team in Managua with four full-time staff involved in field support, co-ordination, training, publications, and administration.

The bulk of our work, however, is carried out in the field through animateurs. The animateurs are all campesinos, drawn from the most experienced campesino theatre groups. At present there are eight animateurs *(promotores)* based in different

regions of the country. Our long-term aim is to have an animation unit in each of the ten provinces in the country, but at present we can only afford to pay eight animateurs so all of them cover more than one province.

What does each animateur do?

Their job is to promote the formation of groups and to assist with the artistic and ideological development of the groups. The animateur encourages experienced groups to visit communities which have no cultural activity in order to stimulate their interest. If a community decides it wants to form a group, the animateur meets with the group on a regular basis and helps them get started. Training includes both theatre skills and community education/organizing.

The animateur meets with each of the groups on a regular basis, advising them on their theatre work and their own internal unity, discussing their plans and programmes, and briefing them on political developments in the country.

Each animateur co-ordinates work within his/her own region, organizing a monthly meeting with all of the groups in which a programme of inter-group activity is agreed on. S/he assists groups to travel to other communities and takes the lead in organizing major events within the region — e.g. cultural brigades, training seminars, etc.

The animateur serves as an information link between the groups in the region and the central MECATE team. S/he distributes information and publications from MECATE to the groups and keeps the central team informed about activities and problems in the region. Since the animateurs live with the people in the communities they get to know the problems intimately.

Another function of the animateur is that of "cultural recovery" — studying and documenting the cultural forms and expressions of the campesinos in that region (poetry, music, dances, etc.). We print the poems, songs, stories, etc., in booklets and popular magazines and send them back to the poets, musicians, communities, etc., who created them in the first place. In this way the campesinos get to know about their culture, to re-appraise it, and to take pride in it.

Could you talk about the different activities that MECATE organizes?

We normally speak of four types of cultural activity:

- community performances (veladas)
- cultural encounters
- cultural brigades
- national cultural events

A **velada** is the most common form of activity — an evening of entertainment, the sharing of news, discussion, and socializing organized at the community level. Local groups put on their **montajes** — short improvised sketches — and everyone joins in the songs and the dance which is held at the end of each **velada**. It is an extension of the traditional form of community entertainment and socializing and is held on Saturday nights. In addition to its entertainment value it also serves as a fund-raiser for community projects and as a forum for community discussion and education.

A "cultural encounter" is an inter-group activity. All the groups from a province or two neighbouring provinces come to a community at the invitation of the local group. Each group presents a play or musical number it has prepared and each is critiqued. Often the cultural encounter is organized in support of a particularly pressing need in that area or to commemorate an important event. (For example on 27th March 1981, Los Alpes organized a cultural encounter for all of the groups in its region in order to celebrate its 7th anniversary). This reunion of all of the groups in a region is also used to do some promotion of the region's own distinctive culture — its poems, songs, dances, etc. — and to evaluate work done in the region.

The "Cultural Brigades" are the most direct form of cultural support for national reconstruction. They are 8 - 15 day campaigns organized to raise the morale and understanding of people involved in mass reconstruction work — e.g., literacy, production, health and other national campaigns. A brigade or a number of brigades tour the area in which the reconstruction program is taking place, putting on performances, organizing discussion, and often getting directly involved in reconstruction work (e.g., the harvesting of coffee). The tours are co-ordinated with other government departments and mass organizations. A cultural brigade is formed from members of a number of campesino theatre groups. The campesino actors join the brigade for the campaign period and at the end return to their own village, their regular job, and their own theatre group.

Many of the brigades have been used to entertain and raise the morale of the large numbers of farm workers involved in the harvesting of coffee, cotton, etc. During the day Brigade members take part in cutting the coffee and researching the local situation and the problems of production. In the evenings they improvise short, humorous sketches that entertain and at the same time bring out the importance of production for the national effort. Raising the level of production is very important right now because our economy is being systematically undermined by counter-revolutionary forces — as happened in Chile.

Charlie Lane

Mecate in Peterborough

MECATE also organizes national cultural events. Over the last few years these have included a festival of campesino music, a poetry competition and an art competition. In addition, MECATE organized in 1980 a huge festival of campesino art which included all kinds of performances plus exhibitions of campesino painting and drawing. A major objective of these festivals is to promote the revival of campesino culture.

What kind of structure does MECATE work within? How do you relate to other cultural organizations?

We're a mass organization existing outside of the Ministry of Culture but our activities are co-ordinated with those of the Ministry of Culture. We belong to the Council of Popular Culture, the umbrella organization for culture in Nicaragua. It has representatives from the cultural wings of the mass organizations — e.g., the Women's Organization, Youth Movement, etc. MECATE was the first national cultural movement to be established; since then other mass organizations have set up cultural wings. From all this we can see that on the part of the state there is a great interest in reviving and supporting the culture of the people.

You spoke at the beginning of the interview about the cultural invasion from North America

Yes, it's a fact. It's our legacy from the days of Somoza. One of the tasks that the animateurs have undertaken is to look at this cultural penetration and to get rid of it. As time goes on and the campesinos sing their own songs, write their own poems, and make their own plays they'll start giving up all kinds of reactionary influences from outside.

It's interesting to note that the indigenous culture of Nicaragua — its songs and dances — expressed resistance against oppression. The songs and dances mocked the different regimes that have ruled Nicaragua.

Are any of the campesino groups full-time?

No. All of them have full-time jobs as wage labourers and do their theatre work in the evenings and on the weekends. Occasionally they go off on tour with a cultural brigade but it only lasts for one or two weeks and then they return to their work on the plantations. If the campesinos become full-time actors they'll lose their connection to the land and be viewed as privileged in the eyes of their fellow campesinos. We don't want to create that kind of inequality. There's been too much of that in the past.

We're now planning to establish a permanent cultural brigade but the members will be drawn from the different cultural groups on a rotating basis. One or two full-time professionals will lead the group and provide the continuity. Members will be drawn from all parts of the country and will rotate every three or four months.

This national cultural brigade would be like a motor for the whole movement, moving around the country supporting groups, encouraging the creation of new groups, giving the campesino actors in the Brigade fresh experience, researching campesino culture in different parts of the country, and taking up issues and performing dramas. It would act as a mobilizing force: for example, if there is a problem on a farm between the boss and the workers, the brigade would go there, study the issue with the people, and create a play or get the workers to make a play themselves. The campesinos in that region would see the play and become more conscious about their problems and how to organize together.

Charlie Lane

Nidia Bustos of Mecate inviting everyone to join in the round dance.

MECATE, from what you have said, seems to have two distinct primary objectives — on one hand to promote cultural expression by the campesinos, on the other hand to support national reconstruction. How are these related?

We cannot separate the main activities of the Revolution from the tasks that the groups have at the community level. The two are dynamically interrelated. The campesinos need to know what is going on in their country and to know that they are working for something, for some broader social purpose. That's where popular culture has a role to play. While giving the campesinos the opportunity to express themselves, it can at the same time help people to understand what is going on, to discuss problems, and to raise morale and participation.

We don't need to force the groups to accept such topics as literacy, health, popular defence, production, etc. The groups recognize these issues as their own, as in their own interest, and take them up. And when a new campaign starts, they decide how they are going to develop the issue in terms of their local situation.

For example, during the national literacy campaign all of the groups developed plays on the literacy theme. Literacy is like milk — it's basic — and everyone recognized the importance of the campaign. Even campesino groups who were already literate helped by making propaganda and mobilizing so that all Nicaraguan people would be able to read and write.

Los Alpes, for example, developed a play called **Literate Campesinos Demanding Their Rights**. The play describes the exploitation of two campesinos who were tricked because of their illiteracy and paid less than the minimum wage. After learning to read and write they asked to see the record books and demanded the wages that had been stolen from them. The boss tried to bully them but with the support of the farm workers union they were able to win their demands.

Our current campaign is on raising production and defence. We are threatened with invasion by the U.S.A. and that's why we need to set up popular militias to defend ourselves. We tell the peasants that we fought and won the Revolution but to

keep the rights that we won, to defend our Revolution, we need to keep fighting. That's our job now — to convince the peasants to join the militias. And each of the theatre groups has developed a play on this theme.

How are plays created and how do they relate to what is going on in the community?

Once the group decides on a problem, they go out and do some research, finding out what people are saying about the problem, what people are thinking, and what people would be most interested in knowing about the problem. This research also attempts to discover the expressions and images that people use in talking about the problems and these are incorporated into the play.

Community input doesn't stop with the selection of the theme or the research. Group meetings and rehearsals are open and other community members often drop in. The plot is developed collectively and everyone joins in suggesting changes as the play is developed.

What about the performance itself? Is there a lot of audience participation?

Yes, but let me give you an example. One group was putting on a play about Machismo. (This shows that we're not only doing plays that have direct political concern, although this too of course, has a political root.) In the middle of the play there is a big argument between the wife, who wants to attend a women's organization meeting, and her husband who refuses to let her go.

Mecate

The woman who was playing the role of the wife wasn't just acting. She was talking about a real problem she was facing in her own life with her own husband. She was really getting angry when all of a sudden she remembered that she had a whole bunch of people around her in the audience. (The actors and audience are very close and sometimes it's difficult to distinguish between them.) She turned to a woman who was near her in the audience and said: "So what do you think? How come you're not sticking up for me? Don't you think he's wrong?". And the woman in the audience stood up and started arguing with the man almost to the point of slugging him. Other women joined in and other members of the audience. You could hardly tell who was on the stage and who was in the audience. It became a huge argument between those who stood up for the wife, including a few men, and those who supported the husband. You couldn't tell who was acting and who was arguing for real. It was such a vital issue for everyone in the community that what had started as a show became a real discussion with everyone involved.

This close integration with the audience is a common feature of campesino drama. People really get involved and the thing becomes a heated debate. Often the actors are making a point and they'll just turn to the audience and say: "Are you with me? Who agrees with me? Raise your hands and help me argue with this person — I need your help", and audience members will raise their hands and shout out things to help the actor or disagree with him. There is always this type of interaction.

The cultural work of the farm workers develops out of the reality in which they live. What they do in theatre is what they do in their daily lives in the community. They try to express what people do and feel and they give it a political and social content. They try to share with their fellow campesinos the kind of clarity and understanding they have about certain kinds of problems. That's why there is such a strong connection between the campesinos and this kind of theatre.

You see it in the response to the performances. I remember people saying — "There is Maria, there is Ramos", talking of real people in the community. And sometimes they come out of the shows and start to fight because they don't like the way they appear in the play — "I saw myself up there and that's not what I do . . . "

As you know, to resolve a conflict often you need to take it to its most extreme form of crisis. Almost always when a new person is born the birth is accompanied by pain. In the socio-dramas we're never afraid of provoking problems because after the problems are presented comes the solution. We stay on after the drama to discuss the solution with the audience. It's not a matter of hit-and-run. We help the groups struggle through the process of finding a workable solution.

You've talked of theatre being used as a mobilizer for the mass campaigns and as a medium for raising community problems. What about its role in exposing contradictions in the new Nicaragua?

Yes, theatre is also used for criticism and self-criticism. The Revolution established this practice and this allows us in the mass movements to correct ourselves, to discuss problems, to identify and overcome difficulties. And nobody in Nicaragua escapes from the criticism of campesino theatre.

Let me give you an example. One group noticed a certain lack of discipline in the local militia — soldiers were leaving the commando unit without permission. The farm workers thought this was dangerous since Nicaragua is constantly under the threat of counter-revolutionary attack. When the group discussed this information with the community, people were shocked by the news but supported their idea of doing a drama on the problem. After developing the piece, they got permission from the commander to show it to the militia. He was equally disturbed to hear what they had reported and when they performed it, the soldiers were very moved. It had a salutary effect on their behaviour.

What kinds of action have come out of the community theatre work?

Let me give you some examples. At one time the members of Frente Sur belonged to a rice co-op. The co-op failed and in order to pay the debts the members applied for jobs in a state factory. They were given a promise of work but each time they went to the factory they kept being put off. Finally in frustration they made a play about this problem and offered to perform it to the administrators of the factory. The latter were so impressed by the drama that they hired them immediately. They are still working in the state factory.

In another community the Sandinista Defence Committee was not working well and this had a serious effect on community morale. The local theatre group put on a play about the problem and this resulted in the reorganization of the SDC.

In another community a woman approached the theatre group and asked them to expose her husband's drinking habits. The group agreed. After the play was presented, the husband decided to join the theatre group and started to overcome his drinking problem. The owner of the canteen in which the liquor had been sold, closed the canteen and also joined the group. Now people with a drinking habit have to walk a long way to get their liquor!

Nidia, could you talk about MECATE's problems and achievements in its two years of operation?

A major problem has been resources. The work gets bigger and bigger and we have few resources to support the work in the field. At the same time this can be seen as our strength — we've been able to create a movement of over 80 groups relying largely on our own resources and in particular the spirit and commitment of the groups.

Another problem has been maintaining the morale and unity of the groups. As in any group situation there are conflicts. So far we've been successful in helping to resolve these conflicts and keep all the groups functioning except one. This says a lot about their morale and commitment.

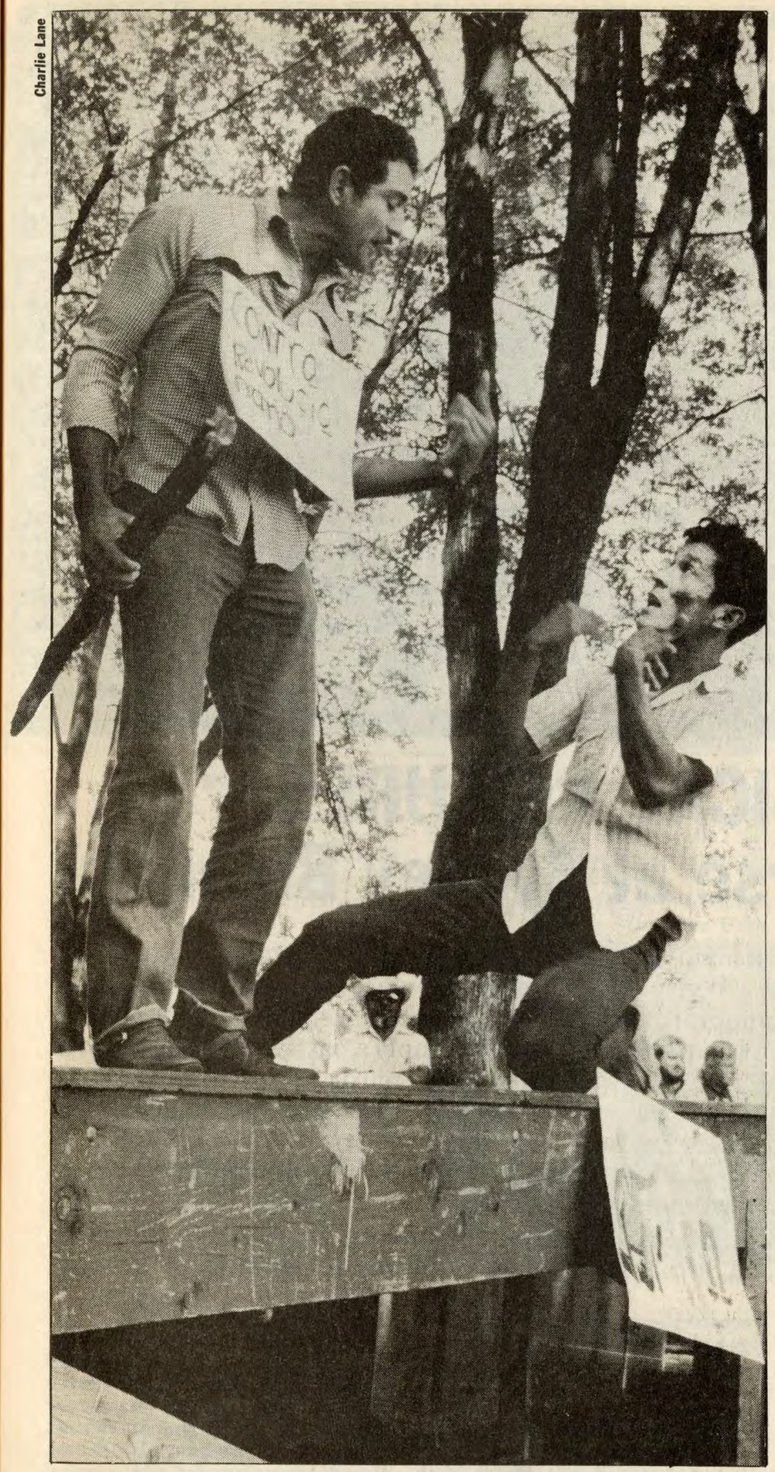
In terms of achievements our major success has been the recovery of our own culture. Under Somoza, popular culture was repressed. MECATE has helped to release this expression — to let the campesinos express themselves in an artistic way with their own vision of the world. The campesinos have the ability to translate their lives into poetry, music, dance, etc., and this has helped in re-establishing their identity and self-confidence.

MECATE has been created by the campesinos as a flexible organization — one that allows the campesinos to organize for their own interests and at the same time respond to the needs of the Revolution. MECATE has shown that the tasks of the Revolution can be joyful, that music and dance and poetry can be mixed with the tasks of reconstruction. Government has recognized that campesino theatre is one of the most important means of mobilization at the community level, of increasing the understanding and participation of the campesinos on the major tasks of reconstruction.

Campesino theatre has become a critical mirror of Nicaraguan society — the eyes and ears of the community, the conscience of the nation. ●

Ross Kidd is an educator and member of the Participatory Research Group, Toronto. He's currently writing a doctoral thesis on "Popular Theatre and Social Action in the Third World".

Charlie Lane



Vivid portrayal of a counter-revolutionary in the Mecate production.

Ebert Roberts

MUSICAL PICTURES
Art Discourse at Sydney Biennale

The Sydney Biennale hosted a major international exhibit of sound tapes in May. The intention of the exhibition was to give recognition and exposure to soundworks as an "official component of contemporary arts", as one of its organizers, Robert Owen, put it. But this inclusion, this act of endowment, was not simply a passive recognition of a cumulative move by visual artists towards recorded music or of an increased willingness by rock culture to "experiment" with the electronic wizardry of advanced technology. This incorporation of soundwork into the visual arts mainstream was also an act which created conditions which it then named as its own. In attempting to begin an exploration of this act, and its conditions, I have focused on a limited number of tapes; there were many works in the exhibit, and it was neither possible, nor sensible, to discuss all of them. The criticism that this review is selective is readily acknowledged.

I

The virtual obscurity of the Biennale's soundworks exhibition in the Sydney Conservatorium (May 3-14) encouraged an informal appropriation by its select and loyal attendants. The conservatorium had lent an unprepossessing classroom for the two week "exhibition"; the space made a relaxed atmosphere of ironic observation seem perfectly appropriate. The audience talked, wrote letters, listened, read newspapers, exchanged addresses and technical suggestions, or accompanied the tapes with impromptu performances on the piano.

One could also retreat to another corner with private cassette deck and earphones to hear an unscheduled selection. But neither this strategy nor the conviviality of the three or thirteen gathered in the room could diminish the distance between the original performance and its present listeners,

(L.) Brian Eno cancelled his appearance (R.) Philip Brophy of ↑→↑

or turn the event into a familiar experience of sound. What was this event, and how should it be conceived? Its method of presentation offered little help, as the schedule followed an arbitrary alphabetical sequence, moving from **Laurie Anderson** (U.S.) to **Anti-Music** (Melbourne), from **Hannah O'Shea** (U.K.), singing unaccompanied litany for women artists, to **Dean Richards** (**Equal Local**, Aust.), playing his flawlessly arranged, rhythmically discombobulated techno-punk-jazz. The cassette recorder was the magic equalizer. The Biennale's surrogate master of ceremonies, David Lucas, replaced each tape with implacable serenity.

William Furlong introduced the sound section in a short essay in the Biennale catalogue. His rationale for the decision to exhibit tapes is similar to that made for the production of artists books: no mediation by documentation, no editorializing, no alteration or unsuitable re-emphasis in content or context, no *distancing*. Rather, the cassette allows greater control by the artist, which "short-circuits the distancing process of print-based media." This strategy prevents the manipulation of the work's concepts and it allows the audience to approximate the first-hand experience through "structurally 're-entering' the acoustic space where the event originally took place."

This theme is pursued in Furlong's reprinted exchange with **John Cage**,

Inner City Sound

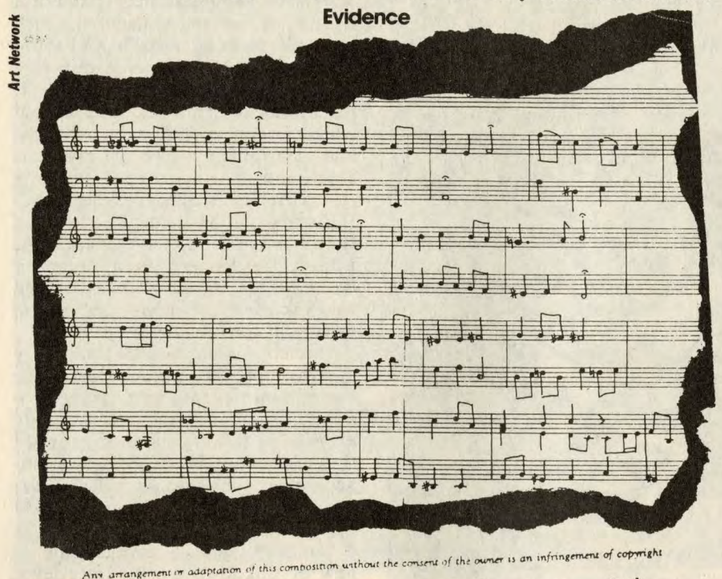
David Chesworth, member of Essendon Airport

who refused to submit a contribution on the grounds that he is "in principle opposed to performances of recorded music". (Unless, a postscript adds, it can't be heard any other way.) Furlong responds by stating his own intention, namely, to "bring together a growing, and important, body of work that only exists on, and is accessible through, the medium of magnetic tape." This sounds great for an archive, but it is problematic for an event. Of course the goal is logical, and laudible, coming as it does from the founder of *Audio Arts*, which regularly releases tapes of experimental music, sound works and literary art in England. But it's not true of this collection, which included tapes of records and radio programs, as well as tapes made for, or from, multi-media performances. (It would have been interesting to sort out which pieces, in fact, were produced and distributed solely on magnetic tape, and whether those had any tangible distinctive features.) Furlong's emphasis on the purity of the medium seem to represent fully the rationale of Robert Owen, organizer of the Australian section, who justified the exclusion of non-taped sound events on economic grounds.[1]

A celebration of cassette technology — why not? The importance of the cassette in contemporary music production and distribution is justly exposed in this emphasis. In terms of the dissemination of otherwise inaccessible sound works, *Audio Arts* and other cassette magazines — *Fast Forward* in Melbourne provides a different example — have distributed new or unknown works, interviews, and historical material. They have also worked to encourage the de-mystification of sound recording, so that easily available technology beckons as a route both to new methods of production and to direct and inexpensive distribution. The very process of "composing" has been vastly altered by the gregarious accessibility of cassette recorders, which constitute the sole recording instrument for many sound productions. Technological populism is certainly a trend of the future. What puzzles me is why a body of works chosen because they were composed for and through the "means of mechanical reproduction" should then be praised for their ability to lure us into the original acoustic space. Some pieces, indeed, attempt to do so. And the sound is, more or less, the same. But the original sound event did take place somewhere else. That's precisely the raison d'être of tape recording — to place the original sound elsewhere. Does it mean anything, then, to talk about the work of art **designed** for mechanical reproduction, as Walter Benjamin does? In which case, are we talking about a new and different musical experience?

Judging by much of the music heard in this exhibition, we are. This is not music that invites its audience to participate in any way in its performance —

except intellectually, in thinking with it, or imaginatively, in a kind of mental drift. In this respect, much of this music works in a very different way from the post-Cage performance tradition within experimental new music, which elaborate countless



A detail from David Chesworth 'Four Representations Four Propagations'.

strategies for cajoling, terrorizing, and otherwise involving audiences, and also from the foremost characteristic of popular music, which invites (if not **demands**) dancing. It makes sense that taped music should work differently from these traditions, given the ostensibly deliberate relationship of the artist to the tape medium. But in addition this use of the medium has intensified certain directions which are already visible, not only in music but throughout the performance arts (as well as in art theory). If music always involves some performance, some **presence**, these often appear in these works as absences: "the play of the will that takes place where presence once was."[2]

II

Since the invention of electro-acoustical equipment for the transmission and storage of sound, any sound, no matter how tiny, can be blown up and shot around the world, or packaged on tape or record for the generations of the future. We have split the sound from the maker of the sound. Sounds have been torn from their natural sockets and given an amplified and independent existence. Vocal sound, for instance, is no longer tied to a hole in the head but is free to issue from anywhere in the landscape . . . A record or tape collection may contain items from widely diverse cultures and historical periods in what would seem, to a person from any century but our own, a meaningless and surrealistic juxtaposition.

Murray Schafer,
The Tuning of the World

And I said, okay, who is this *really*?
Laurie Anderson, *O Superman*

III

The selection of tapes, made by William Furlong and Robert Owen, offers a view of the effects of the growing liaison between the visual arts and popular (and other) music. This view is directed towards the as yet underdeveloped perspective of the visual arts community, so that it will sit-up and take notice ("and modify their own structures accordingly" - W.F.). It will be a challenge to figure out how such (which?) structures ought to be modified, though no doubt it makes sense that they should be. In this instance, sound was presented completely independently of any visual image-making, even in instances in which sound was originally intended for/as performance — **Laurie Anderson**, **Dan Graham**, **Ulay/Marina Abramovic** are well-known examples. The exception was a series of live performances which coincided with the exhibition: , **David Chesworth** and **Essendon Airport**, the **Connotations**, all of whose tapes were also included in the sound exhibition. All of these groups used some visual media (slides, film, video) in their performances. The other extension of the sound exhibition was the airing of music selections on 3JJJ, an independent radio station in Sydney, once a week. Of these contexts, by far the most successful in terms of audience size and reception were the live performances. Not wanting to appear reactionary in preferring the live performance, I might argue that these particular works were in fact intended for performance, and rely on visual imagery to complete their meaning. In addition, the performances demanded a series of decisions related to the different contexts — galleries, clubs, bars, etc. — to which musicians could respond through their method of performance. This is somewhat different from going to a "neutral" room and examining an **object** (i.e. a tape) which may or may not invite us into its originating space (e.g. from **Leigh Hobba** a didgeridu in a Turkish well, from **Gunther Christmann's** an express-way), but which, in any case, raises the

old question about the relationship of the artist to the audience in a new way, over time and space, by attempting to reach our ears directly, impervious to surroundings.

Furlong has proposed a number of themes for the collection: technology as verb, or the structure of technological space; spoken language; the visual expressivity of sound patterns; art/rock. Attempting to go beyond these categories towards any thematic reconstruction of the event may imply an underlying coherence that wasn't there. Still, this seems preferable to a series of encyclopedic "impressions", even at the expense of losing a few details. There were over forty artists represented. The event acted as a frame which helped to expose certain themes as they emerged from the music itself.

In the room that housed the event, a long reproduced article about Brian Eno (recently named "musician most likely to influence the '80s") shared wall space with selected Biennale biographies. Perhaps his own comments, transcribed from one of the tapes, can provide as good a reference point as any.

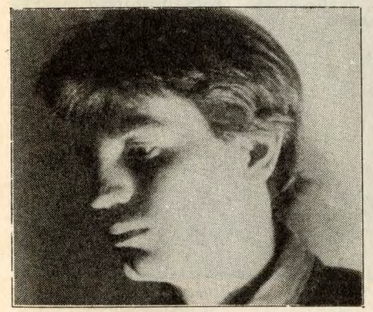
I think of myself more and more as a sound-painter, if you like, and work as a painter does. I tend to work alone, and I tend to work in a painterly way . . . At the moment, there's not much I can do on stage. I'm not a brilliant player of any instrument; I'm not a great singer or anything like that, and I don't see myself as a personality-type figure in music. So my inclination is to work where I can, which is in a studio. Of course there's always a lot of pressure to perform, but at the moment I don't see what I would gain by performing, I don't see that it would make any difference to the music to do that. Though that's changing, in my mind, and I'm starting to think about performing . . .

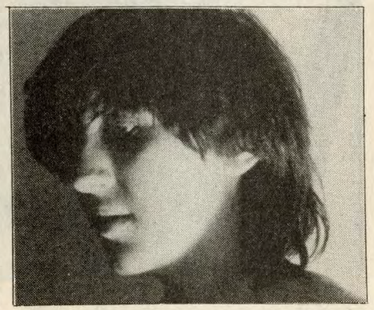
I tend not to want to use music as a vehicle for my own passions . . . I tend to want to keep myself out of the music, to an extent, and certainly with works like Discreet Music, and Music Records, they're very impersonal. I *think* they are, but then again, when I listen to them, I think, who else would do a record like that? So in a sense they're still my music, but — they don't pretend to transmit some emotion that is in me, and which I then put in the work for other people to pick up on, I don't use music as a transmitter in that sense.

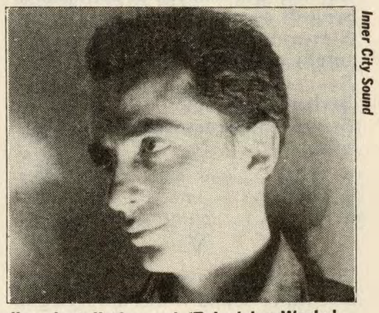
Brian Eno Interview,
Biennale sound exhibit

Eno apparently didn't have time to think longer about performing, as he cancelled his scheduled appearance at the Biennale. However, his influence was evident in the collection of tapes. Or perhaps they are all responses to the same general shifts: from conceptual and/or performance art to sound; from autobiography to construction; from rock to a new approach to music which is markedly less expressionist and personal. "Somewhere between art and pop" becomes not only a place, but a subject of investigation, which explores the conceptual and expressive nature of sound materials, and subjects conventional music or musical contexts to its own means of interrogation and play. The distance created by listening to many of these tapes was not only because their producers were absent. Some of the musicians were partly "absent" while they were playing, too.

Eno's music is rather more environmental than conceptual; it doesn't work at provoking you into thinking about what's not there. Nor does its architectural sculpturing of sound invite us into its originating space, or inward into ourselves, so much as it adds to and intensifies our presence where we are. Its planes of sound represent a conscious move away from expressionistic art-making, and a rejection of the cult of the individual "signature" in the fine arts. He proposes a different approach to culture, one which makes use of its inherently traditional and conventional nature. Tradition, with its various languages and memories, moves to centre stage. Musical and cultural conventions are existent objects whose images may be changed or altered by the intervention of the present act — as David Kerr tries to show, somewhat clumsily, in his rescues of "found tapes" which have been marred by encounters with car wheels and ditches. Susan Hiller's lengthy reiteration of Hebrew chants represents another sort of encounter with tradition and location: an attempt to free herself through immersion.







Inner City Sound

↑→↑ with new projects such as 'Asphixiation' disco installation and 'Television Works'.

IV

By voluntarily giving up the freedom to do whatever momentarily comes to mind we are, as a result, free of all that momentarily comes to mind . . . The human expressive activity, which is assumed to be innately human and associated with improvisation and similar liberties, is what we could do with less of right now.

Steve Reich™

In the popular arts, the question of tradition is very interesting, because most popular work is about 94% tradition and about 6% innovation. That seems to me a good kind of ratio, as well. I believe that the function of culture that is always overlooked by people who are into the avant-garde, and experimental music, is not only to innovate, but to keep rehearsing and rehashing what exists already. Rock music is a great example of this, there's always things that are being recalled and built back into

the structure again. And of course what you choose to ignore and what you choose to re-enhance, what you choose to use again, is just as important a statement as the innovations you make.

Brian Eno

Brophy: Rock and roll is supposed to be about what happens to you. You know, it happens to you, like in the blues: I woke up this morning. The total statement of something happening to the self. I woke up this morning, AND - you know. I walked down the street. They're two really classic lines . . . That's a very strong thing in traditional historical rock and roll which we haven't got away from. . . . Rock and roll is really based on some sort of ignorance of repetition. And ignorance of history. It's a history that's sort of there through a feeling — not through a conscious knowledge that there is this preceding evolution . . . Rock and roll is unconscious, in that sense, because it doesn't see purposes for doing things. When someone plays that 3-chord thing, they don't need a reason for it.
Berland: Perhaps it's just a different reason, rather than being "without reason".
Brophy: I don't think it even comes into reasoning . . . There's still an unconscious activity going on there. Even when they're quoting, they're quoting on a base of comfortable familiarity with what they're doing.
Berland: But that can be done consciously as well.
Stevenson: I think if they were totally conscious they wouldn't do it.
Berland: Why not?
Stevenson: Because they'd be aware of it.

May 1982

V

The "order" that contemporary musical or sound works are trying to escape is not a strictly **musical** order or language: the days when tonal harmonic/rhythmic structure dominated experimental musical practice as a force to be negated are over. Contemporary music tends to reject improvised free play, abandoning a previous generation's search for True Meaning in sounds freed from all constraints of given musical form. This seems to mean abandoning the search for a new purely musical order. The more interesting works point to a re-examination of cultural frameworks and their meanings, and thus to a partially determined reaction to their limits or possibilities. Superman. Rock culture. Expression. Masculinity/femininity. Art/noise. Audience/location. These oppositions are examined from a perspective that refuses to take its place within their framework. From this common point the paths of these artists diverge. If "participation" has had to give way to observation for those listening to this music, the same is true for its makers. To various extents, they stand back and look (or listen) at what is said (or played). Here of course I'm talking about only a portion of the Biennale exhibition, not a "category" so much as a thought in search of one. The Australian contributions were the quintessential articulation of this tendency, in its deliberate and yet perhaps also culturally determined distance from the conventions to which they respond. The position of observer is manifested most pro-

Lyn Gordon

Equal Local.

grammatically in the music and writings of ↑→↑ and the **Connotations**, two Melbourne groups whose musical semiology carries images of musical/social behaviour from which they remain detached, in form and in principle. Rock appears as musical/visual/social text whose highly conventionalized movements are isolated, held out like diagnostic photos for scrutiny, and damned as coded languages.

These tapes ("Asphyxiation" from ↑→↑ , "Rhizomatics" from the **Connotations**) isolate fragments of media culture and music (rhythm, melody, text, or movement) and play with them, the absence of "meaning" echoing about them. Fragments, dreams, clichés, are extricated from their "place" as though only decontextualized objects create understanding. At their best, these groups are effectively ironic toward the hidden aggressiveness of mainstream sexuality, of disco, of the whole apparatus of social performance. Their coolness and wry superiority doesn't inhibit a conceptually stimulating and musically enjoyable experience, especially seen in performance in juxtaposition with slides, gestures, and a peculiarly deadpan humour. Their work is acutely clever and disturbingly naive at the same time. The disapproving clicks of the tongue which sound the name of ↑→↑ sometimes seem very appropriate — not "arbitrary" at all. One inevitably wishes they'd relent, from time to time, not in critical intent but in scope, to enable a "deconstruction" of their *own* "performance", which represents them as critical observers unwilling to accede an ounce of potentiality to the "conventions" of rock, or to any popular discourse. In this performance the renunciation of the originating acoustic and social space is more or less complete.

Anti-Music, also from Melbourne, have produced a tape of monumental musical amateurism, employing a prototype of neo-constructivist structuralism to achieve an effect of ominous fracture. The primitivism of the vocal and instrumental work, its coolly apocalyptic destruction of musical clichés or expectations, its refusal to expose itself, are evocative of a contemporary cabal of Schoenbergs in a cavernous space manipulating patterns of sound with deadly earnestness. One of the most effective uses of the tape medium in the collection, the sound is both fascinating and alarming. Their tape, in one of those many ironies of technological progress, is only available from *Audio Arts* in England . . .

The sight of **David Chesworth** playing drums defies description. The movement is lyrical and buoyant, like his music but without its driving beat. He moves from drums to keyboard with matter of fact urgency, dropping the sticks in transit. Chesworth's performance in Sydney coincided with the Biennale, in which two of his tapes "Layer on Layer" (also an album) and "Industry and Leisure" (also a performance) were featured.

Some distance beyond his earlier "Sonic Investigations of the Trivial", these works expand the range of techno-minimalism to produce multi-layered polyphonies of rhythm-enforced melodic phrases and musical/verbal dialogues. Chesworth's drumming seems a visible as well as aural manifestation of the disarming heart of this music, urging a musically and historically sophisticated synthesis of patterns, phrases and fragments without losing sympathy for their peculiarities. Presumably it is in this spirit that Chesworth functions as coordinator of the **Clifton Hill Community Music Centre** in Melbourne. The Clifton Hill Centre has been of crucial importance in Australia to the evolution of experimental music of various descriptions in the past five or more years, producing open performances, sound installations, a magazine (*New Music*), and continuing dialogue among its participants and audiences. Aside from this more social accomplishment (though undoubtedly encouraged by it), Chesworth's music is an acute and sympathetic statement, pursuing an interrogation of his own position as a composer whose energy pushes his listeners into a sensual appreciation of complex musical thought. These are highly accomplished and beautiful works, which give further testimony to the importance of the Melbourne musical terrain, and which may help to motivate the Biennale into closer examination of the range of work which it has catalysed before the next exhibition's strategy is conceived . . . Other contributions from Melbourne or associated with Clifton Hill, included tapes by **Severed Heads**, **Equal Local**, **Laughing Hands**, and **Signals Slave Guitars**. Their variety and competence point to the evolution of an important centre of systematic exploration and challenge in contemporary music.

VI

It's not a love song
It's not a hate song
It's not a swan song
It's such a simple word:
It's called hegemony.
Clive Robertson, "Popular Songs"

You are envious of your reflection
because it appears to be doing something.
David Chesworth,
"Industry and Leisure"

Popular Songs, a record from Toronto, attempts to confront the experience of social power and struggle without following the familiar patterns of "progressive" political music. Conceived and rendered by Robertson alone in his home recording studio, the music establishes an unusual distance from the bluntness of the words by its haunting and nebulous commentary. Its words point in a clear direction: the symbolic mainstays of power (patriarchy, apathy, ideology) are confronted by incitements to recognition and resistance. The music's abstractness evokes the dilemma of the artist seeking to articulate commitments in an uncommitted time and without a clear language or context at his disposal. This is not a collection of "popular songs" but one which, by representing an absent critical dimension, seeks to promote the possibility of a genuine popular music arising with a new voice. In that sense it is a conceptual piece, didactic in its representation of something absent, yet reluctant to explore that contradiction directly. For this reason it's an interesting if less successful counterpoint to Laurie Anderson's powerful evocation of the failure to confront the reassurance of power and domination: Oh Superman. O Judge. O Mom and Dad . . . "I was interested in infantilism but I don't feel infantile. I don't think you have to be what you talk about."[4] Her approach is both more Brechtian and more empathetic; confronting us with a familiar mood, it invites listeners into a space that is "distant" but filled with a suddenly recognizable and questionable desire. Representing in both cases a move from performance to recorded music, these works point to the pressures felt by artists seeking to enter into a recording "space" in order to reach beyond it.

VII

Music resonates at the centre of a constellation of prized mythologies. For early modernism, it was the sacred art to which all others (so they said) aspired: expressive, abstract, powerful, rational, cathartic and yet blissfully autonomous. It still evokes the sentiments to which we are most attached, while being itself attached to the most powerful social institutions. To hear music in this disembodied, formalized manner is to hear the most strident and subtle inquisition of its myths. It is to see technology at once master and instrument, forcing listeners to question the freedoms and functions of musical enjoyment. It remains to be discovered how far this inquisition can go without ascending to the heights of hermetic self-importance (achieved, certainly, by some selections in the collection, such as **Jacki Apple's** "sound work). This question, like the music, involves access to and use of technological means — but doesn't depend on it. Recorded music can mediate distances in any number of ways — and can confront listeners with those distances with or without surrendering to them. Given the abstract nature of this collection's approach to recorded works, these inconclusive ruminations reflect the transitional moment to which they respond — no doubt an appropriate symptom. ●

1. Statements not otherwise attributed were made in interviews I conducted in Melbourne and Sydney, May 1982.
2. Michel Benamou, "Presence and Play", *Performance in Postmodern Culture*, Center for Twentieth Century Studies, Madison, 1977.
3. Michael Nyman, *(Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, Schirmer Books, N.Y., 1974.)
4. Steve Reich, quoted in Michael Nyman.
5. Laurie Anderson, Interview, *Live 5.*

This article was first published in *Art Network 7*, Sydney 1982, and has been revised by the author.

ROBIN HARDY

FILMS OF LOTHAR LAMBERT
Notes of a sexual archivist

Nine films by Berlin director Lothar Lambert were shown in a retrospective of his work at the recent Festival of Festivals in Toronto. Lambert began making films in 1972, and they have been seen in Berlin, West Germany, Amsterdam, London, New York and Montreal where he has attracted a significant following. He favorably compared the enthusiasm of his Toronto audiences (people were turned away from the door almost every night) to his good receptions in Europe's two 'freest' cities — Amsterdam and Berlin. Unfortunately the comparison ended there. The series, which was organized for the festival by critic David Overbey, was to have been the first definitive retrospective of Lambert's work outside of Germany. The Ontario Board of Censors, however, insisted that three minutes of homosexual fellatio in the film **Berlin-Harlem** were *verboten*. Consequently it was withdrawn from the festival. Censor-in-chief Mary Brown protected the minds of several hundred filmgoers, and Lothar Lambert was accorded a status of dubious prestige during his first visit to Toronto.

Lambert's most obvious accomplishment is that he's been able to make his feature-length films — some in black and white, some in colour — for about $7000 apiece. He shoots in the streets, parks and apartments of Berlin with one 16mm camera, one light and a cast of various friends, acquaintances, street people, and the occasional professional actor who volunteers his or her time for the privilege of appearing in a Lambert film.

He documents his own life, and the lives of his friends, keeping a journal on film instead of on paper in a notebook. His casts — which usually include Lambert himself — play out the lives of characters which they have invented, and when a certain amount of film has been shot, Lambert extracts a narrative, and shoots the connective scenes which are needed to tie everything together.

Speaking to audiences after the nightly showings during the Festival, Lambert delighted in giving away his low-budget secrets. For example, since his camera is too noisy to record sync

photo courtesy L. Lambert

The Ontario Board of Censors insisted the film 'Berlin-Harlem' was verboten.

sound, he usually tapes the dialogue later, and as it is nearly impossible to match dialogue to the movement of the actor's mouth, the camera will often focus on the person who is listening rather than the person who is talking. A simple and straightforward idea, but judging from the audience's surprised reaction to this disclosure no one had really noticed it, and certainly it was not a limitation.

"It is especially important to put away the myths about film so people can do it themselves. I want to show people how easy it is to make films, not how glorious," says Lambert. He began in 1972, with several friends as accomplices and with more of an interest in acting than in directing. For his first few films, he hired a cameraman and an editor. As costs went up he learned how to do these things himself. "Shooting a film is hard work. Editing is what I love the most. I am alone, by myself, in the editing room then and I create the film.

It is the editing which can make or break a low-budget film (any film, for that matter) and Lambert is a wonderful and clever editor. Generally, his films are fast-paced. A certain meditative quality is added by frequent voice-overs, and by a technique he uses of reversing the chronology of an event in a particular montage. Lambert uses almost all the footage he shoots, yet nothing in his films appears to be gratuitous. Not all his films are consistent: **Tiergarten**, the story of sexual escapades carried on in a famous Berlin park, is tedious, while **Fucking City**, in which "Berlin destroys everything. Love is kaput," and **Nightmare Woman** which stars Ulrike S., Lambert's favourite actress, work very well.

The drawback to Lambert's method is that it disqualifies the films for state grants because he can never submit a script for approval. Only one, **Berlin Harlem** — Lambert's favourite and the one which, thanks to the censors, Toronto did not get to see — received a one-time grant of $20,000 given by the German government to new filmmakers.

Judgement and morality

It is a moral stance of a substantially different order than the one underlying censorship which has made modern German films or "the new wave", so attractive to North Americans over the last few years. While American and French films continue terminally sophisticated attempts to entertain, so many German films insist on being heavy. They pose questions. Invariably these questions are left unanswered but there is a judgement and a morality implied by the questions which in these times many people find appealing.

In Schlondorf's **Circle of Deceit**, for instance, the question is "Who are the good guys and who are the bad guys?" (in Lebanon's 1976 civil war, in life). In Reinhard Hauff's **Knife in the Head**, what happens when humanist Germany (symbolized by a biogeneticist who plays violin) confronts fascist Germany (a young policeman) and one of them has a gun? And during the parlour game in Fassbinder's **Chinese Roulette**, the ultimate question asked is "What would this person have been during the Third Reich?" — a question which tortured Fassbinder, contemporary Germany, and ultimately the modern world.

"I thought **Chinese Roulette** was just another kitsch Fassbinder film," says Lothar Lambert who, when he is not making films is financing them by freelancing as a film and television critic for various German periodicals. "I cannot identify with Germany, with the German character which is, like Faust, always looking to the bottom of things. That is German heaviness. It is possible to be philosophical in another way. Germans do it to the limit. They lack a sense of humour."

Berlin humour

Lothar Lambert's films can also be quite kitsch at times, but this is due to his Berlin humour — a brand of humour which distinguishes that city from the rest of Germany. He was born in the cellars of a castle in Thuringia in 1943, his mother avoiding the bombs raining on Berlin, where Lambert was to grow up. "Berlin humour is famous for having heart," says Lambert, "for not hurting anyone."

Snide mockery in the face of imminent demise is typically Berlin. In the closing days of World War II, Berliners would nudge each other in their battered city and joke, "Enjoy the war! With the Russians on one side and the Americans on the other, peace is going to be hell!"

Lothar Lambert admits that his films are infused with this tradition of humour, which distinguishes them from so many of the other German films which North American audiences have been exposed to. In a film by Lambert, the humour can be almost corny, and often melodramatic. In **The Late Show (Nachtvorstellungen)** a 30-year-old man is attracted to homosexuality, impotent with his fiancee, and tied to the apron strings of his older sister. He climbs into bed one night and begins reading a book entitled "Sexual Neurosis in Film."

photo courtesy L. Lambert

Erika Rabau

Ulrike S. in Nightmare Woman (top)

From the film 'Dirty Daughters' Lothar Lambert plays Betty. (bottom)

Lothar Lambert.

Lambert poking fun at his own pretensions to seriousness is a frequent and welcome motif.

Often his humour takes the form of an ironic commentary by his selection of the music which is played over a scene. Again, in **The Late Show**, the protagonist is impotent in bed with his fiancée. She becomes hysterical, sobbing desparately that she has failed as a woman, and as the man brusquely tries to comfort her, a soppy MOR love ballad is playing on the radio. "I'm affected by kitsch music, but at the same time I don't trust those feelings. So I try to make ironic commentary so you are not overwhelmed by them," he explains.

In many instances Lambert's narratives are strung with clichés but these clichés tend to work because they are a part of everyone's secret embarrassments, and therefore utterly commonplace. Who has not, in the privacy of their own room, danced before a mirror or pretended that the tape recorder's voice is their own. "Every cliché must be honest inside or it wouldn't be cliché. I try to show how people live *in* these clichés, how they take them as instant feelings to feel something."

These feelings are about the only ingredient which Lambert's characters use to enrich their sexual wastelands. One after the other his films are filled with sexual violence, sexual tension, sexual boredom and no release. In **Sein Kampf: Ein Schuss Sehnsucht (His Struggle: A Touch of Longing)** a young man is passed over for a promotion at the office. He joins a left-wing political group and buys a gun to become a terrorist, all in order to cure his impotence. In **Faux pas de Deux** an older woman keeps a gigolo. She bursts in on him mocking her at a party, and later finds out he frequents gay bars. In **Die Alptraumfrau** (Nightmare Woman), Ulrike S. is a woman scarred in her early life by an eye squint which has been surgically corrected. The emotional scars remain, along with a personality crisis, and a wealth of unrelieved sexual fantasies. In **Dirty Daughters** (directed by Lambert's cohort Dagmar Beiersdorf and starring Lambert in his "dreamrole" as a drag queen) the woman finds romance with a Turkish worker but when the relationship comes down to a choice between love or money, she chooses money and goes back to being a prostitute.

"To show people drinking coffee says nothing about them. To show how someone treats their partner says so much. People cannot be natural with sex, and often their motives in having sex are not sexual motives. I try to show the jungle underneath."

Slippery solutions?

Lambert treats his characters sensitively, with love, and makes their clichés palatable with humour and irony. But his films offer no solution or resolution to their sexual hangups. The husbands generally remain uninterested or impotent, the women have no outlet for their sexual fantasies and the homosexuals are neurotic, alone and abused. Lambert's intentions are good. "In marriage, men get sex outside but the woman is less advantaged and more trapped. The morality of the '50s is still functioning in marriage. Therefore the position of the woman is longing." But when asked why his version of sexuality is so utterly bleak, he denies that it is, and points to **Now or Never** as an example of an "optimistic" ending.

Now or Never is Lambert's ode to the city of New York. It begins when the heterosexual hero (played by Lambert) is bored with his wife, and inherits a plane ticket to New York from an aunt who has just died. The first half of the film is concerned with this character's sense of displacement, depression and anomie as he explores New York, and adjusts to being away from home. He meets a strange actress named Telly Brown who, in voice-overs, talks about how similar New York and Berlin are. Both have been through wars, she ways. Berlin had bombs dropped on it. In New York they bomb themselves. The south Bronx looks as bombed out as parts of Berlin used to. There is an end-of-the-world documentary quality about all this, and the film moves along on a spectacular montage of New York in the summer of 1978, teeming with human life among the streets, buildings and monuments of this immensity. Suddenly these dizzying vistas end, and the narrative switches to the lonely protagonist curing his depression and anomie by exploring (for no discernable reason) gay S/M sex and meeting drag queen prostitutes. Eventually, this character also begins wandering the streets in drag, somehow happy now and — it's unclear — liberated? He then returns to his wife in Germany noting as the film ends that the two of them are much happier and talk a lot more than they used to. It is a confusing and pusillanimous conclusion to a film about a personal transformation through a voyage which is both sexual and geographical.

Says Lambert in defence, "The audience sees these broken characters and they have to identify with them and it makes them start to think about their own sexuality. Some people in Toronto — men and women — came to me after seeing my films and said very seriously that this was a part of their lives on the street."

But in **Fucking City**, Lambert's last film made in 1980, Lambert seems to be admitting to an impasse in the way in which he has been dealing with sexual themes. A married couple is bored with their marriage and with each other sexually. They advertise in the classified ads of the newspaper for young foreign men to help spice up their sex life by having threesomes. The husband has bought a camera and is going to make a film. The final scene is a terminal confrontation between husband, film, wife and a Black man they have picked up. Ultimately it illustrates the barren and fatal tendencies of Lambert's own camera.

Lothar Lambert's ironic treatment of his characters' dilemmas doesn't allow them to resolve their situations any more than moral ponderings would, and their sufferings are left unredeemed. His films, then, are really no more than the notes of a sexual archivist, recording without analysis the genital antics of modern life. Fortunately, he is a pretty good archivist; brutally honest about so much sexual squalor. His films imply that it is not people who are shortcircuiting — but that the whole bloody civilization is.

Humour in the face of imminent demise — even Berlin humour — may be brave, but it does not avoid the imminent demise. Which undoubtedly is one reason why people love German films so much. Whether they raise questions, or make us laugh, they possess a sense of unending futility and have all the weariness of **die Gotterdammerung** down pat. ●

Robin Hardy is a journalist and political writer living in Toronto.

BRUCE BOONE

"Stoned out of my gourd"

The Tenderness of the Wolves by Dennis Cooper
The Crossing Press, 1982.
$6.50
Available from Glad Day Books, Toronto

On the cover of his new book *The Tenderness of the Wolves*, Dennis Cooper's image looks out suspiciously, his back against what's possibly an art gallery. Given the extraordinary title, tilted perspective and film-noir looking shadows, you probably wouldn't be off-base in thinking of this picture as werewolf-ish. Is sensationalism OK? ("A lit match would Tinkerbelle down," says the voice-over in Cooper's story, "A Herd" and then we notice the body, there on the ground, doused in kerosene). Dennis Cooper is one writer for whom being inflammatory pays off in a big way. Glamour and control are the hallmarks of this writer. From your first encounter with him you're aware of this strange/morbid/fascinating etc. preoccupation of his, with *image* (in the whole spectrum of meaning of the word). You see it there for you, and as you watch it, it distends and fills out, grows murky and disturbs —

He stood alone in the shadow.
His hands and his shoes jutted
out of the dark, with some dope
smoke. The rest of his body was
vague but exact, like a hologram
glimpsed through thick glasses

— as Cooper says about himself in the first poem of *Tenderness*. And if the poem isn't about Cooper himself, it is about an **image** of his.

Not yet 30, Cooper has, among experimental writers, a reputation for work that's both solid and sensational. His ability to produce a writing of quality that's paradoxically both innovative and accessible, makes him attractive to younger gays, to New Wavers, to writers and artists and others. You could say Cooper has a lot of "crossover" appeal — in many directions at once. His life itself has indicated some of these interests. At one point Cooper was a punk rock musician. Then he made experimental movies. Currently he's been showing a flair for the organizational and even business side of writing. He's a successful editor and publisher (**Little Caesar** magazine and **Little Caesar Books**). As director of the **Beyond Baroque Poetry Series** in Los Angeles for several years, he's almost single-handedly turned around a definitely unremarkable and moribund L.A. writing scene — making it at least competitive. And if Cooper tends to startle you with the virtuosity of these successes, that response might in turn suggest something about the aggressive seductions of this writing.

The glamour of this writing could be called its advertising — as in a Brian De Palma movie. Its cold neon surfaces and ingenue textures don't claim to do a lot for you healthwise. They want to grab your attention. Cooper's sensibilities are quite post-modern in this sense. All the visual flak — high and low art allusions, smoky sexuality, pushing of dreck and commercial values — help to make the writing self-conscious, not superficial. There are no false promises here. Nothing's delivered but the hard edges, and that's a guarantee of integrity.

So we watch out-takes from a life. Through a haze you get what it's like to grow up a rich kid in L.A. — the dope, sex stuff. Cooper's feelings are so incredibly distant! A patchwork map of California from 20 miles up. The thin air is so heady; it lessens pain —

Mark and I take the new space ship up.
The wind wants it.
We pop like toast from the earth's
atmosphere

— as Cooper says in an early piece called "Space Case". Numbness and a sense of scale go hand-in-hand here. The disadvantage naturally is that you are not on the planet any longer. Curiously, the substitution for lost feeling — life is fun, free-play and flexibility — quite human qualities. In his earlier work, the problem Dennis Cooper developed was — how do you tie utopian qualities like these, securely, to a real but inhospitable (planetary) surface? Cooper's writerly answer to this, all along, has been to tap into legend.

So, from earlier excursions into the first person, in *The Tenderness of Wolves* Cooper removes himself more frequently to the third person. He tells us for instance in the poem quoted at the beginning that,

. . . punks, jocks,
everyone watched him, pictured
him sprawled at a desk, clothes
torn apart by ulterior powers,
his sneer smudged with girls'
kisses, boys' wet red fists.

Apparently, legend means a lot to Dennis Cooper — though particular legends can be discarded one after the other. In the case of the above poem it happens to be the **Rimbaud** legend, distanced by throwing in a lot of suburban brattiness (spoiled rich kid genius nastiness), but it could be anything. And at least in formalist terms, or technique, this use of figure on an empty ground puts Cooper squarely in the most vanguard, post-modernist company — **Julian Schnabel** and the neo-expressionists in painting, and **Robert Gluck** and **Kathy Acker** in literature. As a spinoff, it gives Cooper's work chic. Legend is the figure on an empty ground.

Cooper's choice of such techniques is hardly arbitrary, but clearly conditioned by attitudes about how you should act if you are to survive in the world. His allegiances are first to brains, then emotions. Implied is a perception that this is the modus operandi of society itself. Winners know this, misfits and losers can't. Should this social tough-mindedness be applied to art, too? It's not a question that needs arguing, for Cooper. "It was my favorite film," he says in this introduction to *Tenderness* (speaking of **Alain Resnais's** movie *Providence*), "it held the right combination of smarts and emotion — starring the first, with a cameo by the latter. When I established myself as an artist . . . I'd do something like it." Even pleasure itself, from this viewpoint, is not important when compared with consciousness. Or rather, pleasure gets to be defined differently. In one of the sex poems of this collection, "No God", Cooper tells us about going out cruising, finding someone, a guy that looks like a shadow. He'll go with him. "Like me he's just moving farther away" Cooper explains non-judgmentally. The only ones who aren't stupid wrecks are the few with consciousness. The rest in society are just undead.

But consciousness like this can never be sure of itself, unless others confirm its objectness — by watching, by being subjects. And that's where a very peculiar character called God comes in. In one piece, the long narrative called "A Herd", God looks down from his heavens on the grisly doings of the mass murderer, Ray, with something approaching serenity. In another, "An Aerial View", God is a sort of artist — he's called a "dilettante". Dispassion about human life and death is his key signature, and the buried narrative suggests that's what a writer is like too. With a terribly short attention span and lots of cool, God's folkloric. A doper; an old man with a Texas Chainsaw Massacre sense of humour. Cooper's portrait of him in "An Aerial View",

His lips are lava which has cooled,
as wild as the tree tops
as dope touched to match, breath

is as sardonic as it is envying. For a final number? The trickster just disappears! — "drifts slowly away like a freighter unloaded of all its cargo." As an answer to the problem of the subject who guarantees you, God's been put on hold — or maybe self-destructed. So the problem apparently still stands.

As I mentioned earlier, Dennis Cooper used to write in a lighter vein, but even then — if you look back — there were elegiac qualities that pointed to this more serious, more philosophically-oriented future for him. There were the love lyrics, like this called "Billy McCall's Summer 1976", from Cooper's late 70's chapbook, *Tiger Beat* —

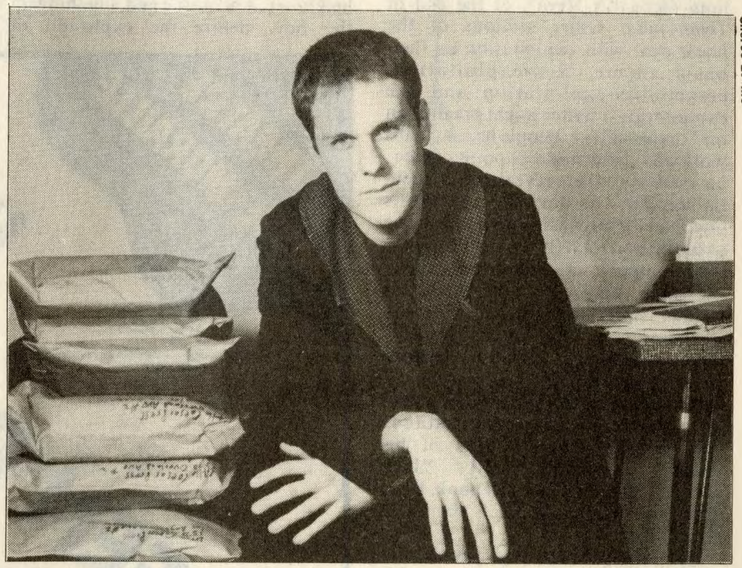
You are willing to sleep now,
unafraid of missing something.
you are going to be rude forever

— about a 22 yr. old who thinks, now at his "peak," that "drugs were a pretty good game/school was worth it." But in the disavowal of the disintegration to come —

there are no signs of death
in you, only energy
and pleasure controlled

— isn't there a more urgent sign of its presence? There's a good-bye look, once loved by Chandler, another L.A. writer.

But for now that look is still (mostly) present by its absence. Instead there's a high-spirited, manic type of fun, a payload of obviousness that gets you high like nothing else in your life. It's a love of fantasy. So, in the poem "David Cassidy," Dennis imagines winning a date with the media star on The Dating Game. A breathy, hysterical emcee announces their prize to the dazed pair, turning to the star —



Sheree Levine

Dennis Cooper

David, we'll be flying you and
your date
to . . . Rio de Janeiro! You'll be
staying at the luxurious Rio Hilton
and attend a party in your honor.

Later the poem shows terrific sex (Dennis eats out David, David obliging with a great consciousness of his own worth), and then comes the obligatory publicity appearance for David's fans. While cameras "angle to get David's sheathed body", Dennis knows the real truth —

. . . "This is David,"
I say, smelling my face like a corsage,
and pull him close, stoned out of my gourd

— that this sex bouquet is indisputable evidence that he's really David's date.

Tiger Beat was followed by *Idols*, Cooper's major book until *The Tenderness of the Wolves*. What *Idols* did, essentially, was completely map out the territory that Cooper would then treat more analytically in *Tenderness*. *Idols* finds Cooper just getting high on sheer exuberant possibilities — syntax, lexical items, themes, imagery — the elements of a world that will be unmistakeably his. After *Idols* we'll be able to recognize his catalogue of riffs, shticks, paradigms. So you get, for instance, a sequence of John Kennedy Jr. poems, postcards of the young Kennedy on his way to manhood. Another series has as its subject matter a bunch of hustlers, models and second-rate media stars of rock and kids' magazines. Then there's the beautiful series called "Boys I've Wanted", lyrical portrayals of classmates from other days. In *Idols* we encounter the world of desire, and it doesn't matter whether it's for commodities, celebrity, fame, sex or whatever. And if we don't have to worry yet about desire's deeper meaning(s), that's OK. There's a lot to be exuberant about in just what we do see. I

dreamt of taming him
with my body, my mouth
so wet he would drink from it
like a kid does a hose
when he has been running all day
and must stop, must drink

says Dennis in a breathtakingly perfect portrayal of sexual longing, called "Mark Clark." "My skin tattooed there", Cooper said in "My Type", on the picture, the image, of an old lover —

its mind as set as
Danger's, says, Dennis
plus Mike forever.

Tenderness takes us to the deeper, darker meanings. Both subject and object are now torn loose from their former moorings in context. The object of desiring tends to become more and more an 'image', or fantasy, while the subject becomes the colonizer of that image. And this is, I think, the meaning of Dennis Cooper's long piece, "A Herd", at the end of *Tenderness*. Other sections of the book deal with exploitation as their basic theme. Sex-exploitation, commodity-exploitation and the exploitation a writer might practice on his "material" (i.e. people he uses in his work and, from another point of view, his readers too) are revealed as tendential murder. The story "Dinner" shows one man literally using up another one sexually and then throwing him away. And Cooper as narrator does exactly the same thing with a prostitute his friends "buy" for him in "For My Birthday". In the story "Lunch", there's an implicit equation between what an art work is and murder. A performance artist (apparently) with a tape recorder and a distanced attitude goes around making tapes of his friends' voices. Then finally — "Jack checked off a list in his notebook. Four down and fifteen to shoot. So far it was going well."

But unlike the anti-porn people, and the anti-sex moralizers, for Cooper it's also important to tell of the satisfactions of the commodity world — to insist that distorted satisfactions are also real, and shouldn't be dismissed. There's one moving example he gives in a poem called "Being There", a sort of mystical monologue of a street hustler, who's clearly headed downward — a loser. When tricks are with him, older men, usually, who just want to use him, he dreams of his past. "Hey, dad," he exclaims achingly, "it's been like this for decades". Then comes the matter-of-fact reversal. "It means tons to me", he thinks.

But even with these qualifications, Cooper's frightening last word is "A Herd". Accounting for nearly half of *The Tenderness of the Wolves* in actual length, "A Herd" is a long narrative with several parts and often coinciding, several viewpoints. Everyone has a story to tell about the central fact of a(nother) young man's murder, beginning with the mass murderer, Ray. Mother and father of the young man, the murder victim, high school friends and sex-friends, even God — they all get into the act. It's a weird story altogether. A crazy guy wants to kill kids so they'll finally become *objects* for him. Of course mother and father just don't understand — behind their eyes they're only Ozzie and Harriet. Too bad for them. God might understand, but he's out of the picture — he doesn't count. As for the kids? Maybe. Maybe in a confused sense they know, but even that's not certain. But Ray knows, the murderer. He's heard voices — like Joan of Arc — and he *knows*. And at the end, chaining up the boy, before the explosion of sadistic violence, he looks for the "idol's look", as Cooper calls it — which he can't find. He grows weary in these situations, but when a boy dies, Ray gets his prize. And

. . . with the facial expressions dulled
and in place he would gradually find
that the kid brought to mind some
ripe child whose hit songs were stuck
on the radio's dials, whose visage
beamed down from most billboards.
Then, what Ray had done took on
meaning —

As, I think, Dennis Cooper's somber book does too. These hard-edged meditations on the meaning of commodity society bring us as close as any poetry to a confrontation with the meaning and structures of our own lives. ●

Bruce Boone is a San Francisco writer. His most recent book, with Robert Gluck, is *La Fontaine*.

dreamt of taming him with my body, my mouth so wet he would drink fro like a kid does a hose when he has been running and must stop, must drink

says Dennis in a breathtl portrayal of sexual l "Mark Clark." "My there", Cooper said in " the picture, the image, —

its mind as set as Danger's, says, Dennis plus Mike forever.

Tenderness takes us darker meanings. Bot object are now torn lo former moorings in object of desiring ten more and more an 'ima while the subject colonizer of that image. And this is, I think, the meaning of Dennis Cooper's long piece, "A Herd", at the end of *Tenderness*. Other sections of the book deal with exploitation as their basic theme. Sex-exploitation, commodity-exploitation and the exploitation a writer might practice on his "material" (i.e. people he uses in his work and, from another point of view, his readers too) are revealed as tendential murder. The story "Dinner" shows one man literally using up another one sexually and then throwing him away. And Cooper as narrator does exactly the same thing with a prostitute his friends "buy" for him in "For My Birthday". In the story "Lunch", there's an implicit equation between what an art work is and murder. A performance artist (apparently) with a tape recorder and a distanced attitude goes around making tapes of his friends' voices. Then finally — "Jack checked off a list in his notebook. Four down and fifteen to shoot. So far it was going well."

But unlike the anti-porn people, and the anti-sex moralizers, for Cooper it's also important to tell of the satisfactions of the commodity world — to insist that distorted satisfactions are also real, and shouldn't be dismissed. There's one moving example he gives in a poem called "Being There", a sort of mystical monologue of a street hustler, who's clearly headed downward — a loser. When tricks are with him, older men, usually, who just want to use him, he dreams of his past. "Hey, dad," he exclaims achingly, "it's been like this for decades". Then comes the matter-of-fact reversal. "It

But Ray knows, the murderer. He's heard voices — like Joan of Arc — and he *knows*. And at the end, chaining up the boy, before the explosion of

Gluck, is *La Fontaine*.

Business Reply Card
No Postage Stamp Necessary if Mailed in Canada

Postage will be paid by:

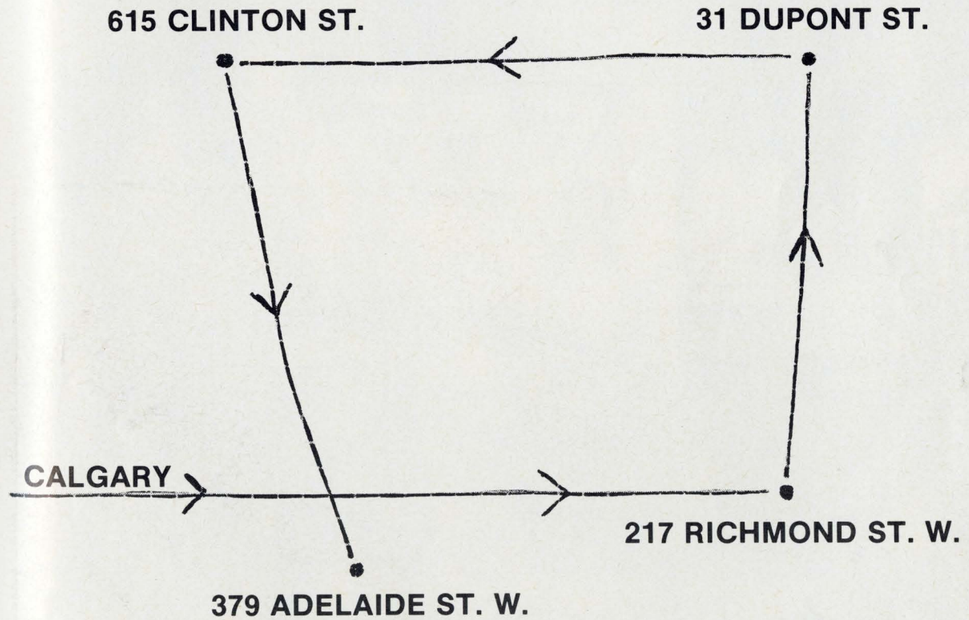
Canada Post Postes Canada 39055

FUSE

379 Adelaide St. W., Toronto
Ontario, Canada M5V 2Z8

CHANGE OF PERMANENT ADDRESS

Yes, this is our final move. Please update your records so that your mail doesn't have to wear itself out just trying to find us.



All correspondence, accounts payable, editorial enquiries and distribution returns for **Centerfold** magazine, **FUSE**, **Arton's Publishing Inc.**, and **Voicespondence** should be re-directed to: **2nd Floor, 379 Adelaide St.W., Toronto, Ontario, Canada 1S5**

VOICESPONDENCE
VSP 007

ZION GATES
SWEET AND FREE
FANTASY WORLD
CHILDREN OF BABYLON

INFLATION
THE CHALLENGE
WE, THE PEOPLE
OPEN UP YOUR EYES

THE CHALLENGE

GAYAP RHYTHM DRUMMERS

PRODUCED BY GAYAP, MICHAEL BROOK, CLIVE ROBERTSON, IAUWATA AND MOHJAH
ENGINEERED BY TOM ROGERS

FABRIQUE PAR/MANUFACTURED BY VOICESPONDENCE ARTISTS' RECORDS AND TAPES
#206, 379 ADELAIDE STREET W., TORONTO, CANADA M5V 1S5

MAIL ORDER DISTRIBUTION:
GAYAP, SUITE 228, 238 DAVENPORT ROAD, TORONTO, CANADA M5R 1J6