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END OF 1984

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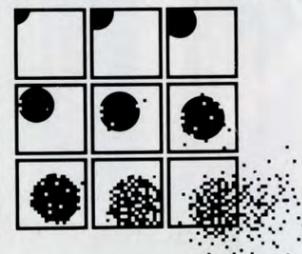
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FUSE

NOV '84-JAN '85 • VOL. VIII, NO. 4

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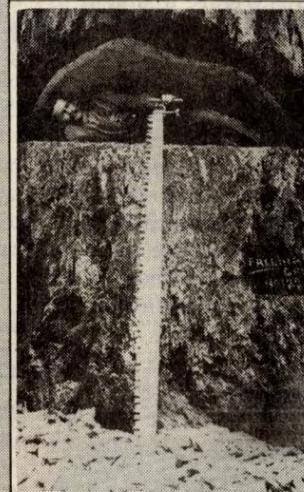
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1984



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INGRID KOENIG

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 MARLENE PHILIP

Cover: Artwork concept and design by Richard Peachey & Chris Reed; film work by Montecolour.

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 Ann Wallace

Diage of Heaven And Hell
 Earrings By Sharon Stevenson

Change
 w: Performance As Resistance

Labour's Cultural
 .C.

Art & Working Life
 ond

with Africa
 YAN TOMASELLI

B. C. Solidarity Update
 SARA DIAMOND

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INFORMATION DIFFUSION
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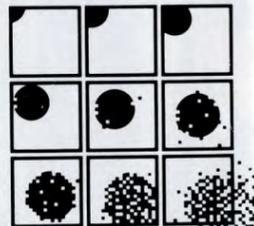
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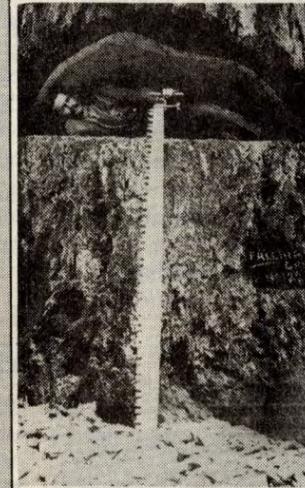
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Encouraging Criticism

I AM WRITING IN RESPONSE TO Clive Robertson's letter on Critics Grants from the Ontario Arts Council in the Summer 1984 issue. Clive's comments are both very well taken and timely.

When this program was introduced some three years ago, it was recognized by all concerned that there would likely be a limited number of writers eligible to apply, given the relatively small community the program was designed to serve, and the specialized nature of the work. As

well, it was recognized that there would be even fewer writers who would be recognized as peers by the applicants and therefore qualified to serve as adjudicators.

As Clive mentioned, he did indeed provide me with a list of possible adjudicators (although it was fourteen names, not twenty). The selection of adjudicators is always a complex process, but the ultimate composition of a panel must be a direct reflection of the specific areas of expertise and experience required to assess the work of the applicants to that particular adjudication.

Given this, I would like to join Clive in encouraging more writers to apply, and in particular to ask anyone concerned to forward suggestions for potential adjudicators to me.

—Nancy Hushion
Visual Arts Officer,
Ontario Arts Council

In Praise of Struggle

THE SPECIAL PORN SUPPLEMENT in the Summer 1984 issue was thought-provoking. Pornography degrades humanity. Men and women must not be divided over this symptom of a sick society but must unite to

request structural change.

Censorship is not the answer. It will only reinforce the agents of social control and serve as a tool to prevent people from joining together. Pornography is a symptom of a society that places a higher value on material gain than it does on human dignity.

Pornography is a power struggle but it is not a struggle between men and women. It is a class struggle. Porn must be stopped but we must not bury our freedom in the attempt.

—Robert L. Ewing
Toronto

Erratum

REGARDING THE REVIEW I WROTE on Serge Guilbaut's new book *How N.Y. Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (Fuse, Spring 1984), I wish to apologize to the author for a slip of the pen on my part. Where 'Miriam Schapiro' is mentioned, it should read *Meyer Schapiro*. Meyer Schapiro was a leading American cultural intellectual, and Miriam Schapiro is an American feminist artist. I'm sorry for any inconvenience this slip may have caused.

—Ingrid Koenig
Halifax, N.S.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION WAS omitted from Bruce Barber's article "Technophiles, Technophobes and Technocrats" (*FUSE* Vol. VIII, No. 3). The sentence on page 27 first paragraph beginning, "Perhaps what is needed..." should have read "Perhaps what is needed is one, probably several, epidemiological studies to examine the effects of the virus - the new technologies. But then, this might stand in the way of progress. And if there is a phobia to which few would openly subscribe, it is the fear of progress."

The full title of the article was "Techne, Technophiles, Technophobes and Technocrats: The Artist Run Centre in the Age of Bureaucracy."

PLEASE NOTE (REGARDING FUSE Volume 8, No. 3, page 25) that Elizabeth Chitty is not the national chairperson of ANNPAC; rather she held the staff position of managing director at the time of the "Artists and Technology Conference", in Halifax.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

NewsSpeak (Doublethink)**Now Is The Winter Of Our Discontent**

JOYCE MASON

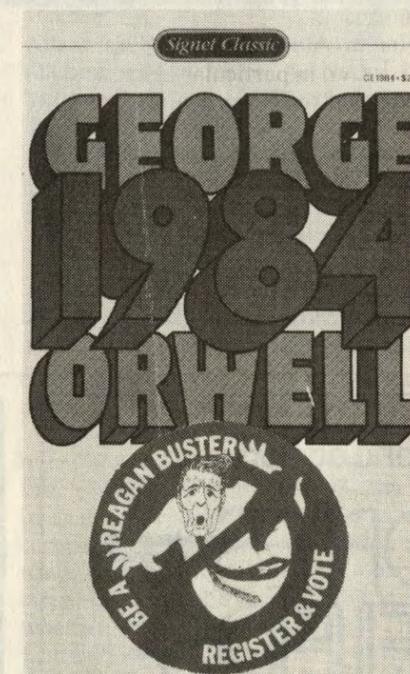
AS THIS YEAR OF 1984 NEARS ITS end, the electoral climate of Canada, the US and England offers us some innovative manifestations of the concept of 'newspeak' which was introduced by Orwell in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In these countries and many others, as in Orwell's Oceania, the most highly developed examples of usage are to be found in the press of the powerful:

The leading articles in the *TIMES* were written in [Newspeak], but this was a tour de force which could only be carried out by a specialist.*

In the real 1984, manifestations of the goals and functioning of such a restructured language would more accurately be referred to as *NewsSpeak*. And, two of his linguistic inventions, in particular - "doublethink" and "bellyfeel" - now have new resonances of meaning. The word "bellyfeel" which in "newspeak" implied "a blind, enthusiastic acceptance" seems descriptive of the current relationship between the electorate and the poll-reporters (whose concern is more the how than the why of votes). The word "doublethink" in the novel referred to the means whereby one could think the opposite of what was true (primarily, by repetition of the appropriate slogans). We might now, as easily, use the term to refer to the journalistic phenomenon of "balanced reporting", the simultaneous holding of contradictory beliefs or ideas (sometimes in the same article, but almost always in the same newspaper).

*All quotes are from Orwell's Appendix to the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* "The Principals of Newspeak".

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Current polls which claim victory for Reagan and support for Thatcher in their respective countries and others which show condemnation of their policies and actions, combine to provide another manifestation of the current possibilities of both "doublethink" and "bellyfeel". Contemporary electoral politics and mass media reporting of them provide ripe ground for an exploration of the destruction of meaning in language as well as of the need to encourage political loyalties which will be "as nearly as possible independent of consciousness".

The *NewsSpeak* of 1984 is not, of course, equivalent to the "newspeak" of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell wrote

a piece of fiction based in the political realities of 1948 - not a prophecy. But the reduction of politics to elections, of substance to style, of policies to slogans is now common and it has been accomplished by means of language and by a strict control of meaning which is based in nothing more than the power to define. For example, Reagan's restricted usage of the word "democracy".

In such a political climate and crisis of meaning in language it is undoubtedly no accident that this "end of 1984" issue of *FUSE* reflects our own growing hunger for information, understanding, meaning, context and analysis:

Poetry reviews which present an exploration and an insistence upon meaning in language; oral histories and analysis which provide a recognition of continuity and context (Unearthing of Labour's Cultural History in B.C.); reports of the politically conscious and activist performance of Toronto and of Halifax which give the lie to notions of a pervasive political consumerism; reporting from British Columbia - seemingly Canada's most outstanding example of right-wing government to date - which provides a warning and an analysis not available to the daily press gleaners (neither in specifics nor in scope); as well as a feature which outlines the context and development of the progressive grassroots presses of South Africa (you won't read about this in *The Globe and Mail*).

Recognizing the vital importance of language, meaning, reception and intention, to cultural producers, these contents must serve as our humble and enthusiastic offerings.

Joyce Mason

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Death of Wolfe by Benjamin West, London 1776

Hats Off

IT IS WITH THE SENSE OF IRONIC humour which I have recently come to recognize as my only armour that I note that something vital was lost in the 'translation' of my editorial, "Letter from Quebec," (*FUSE*, Fall 1984) even though the original was in English.

Graphic space considerations seem to have required that the soldier bearing the French surrender flag across the

Plains of Abraham to Wolfe's deathbed be excised from history and its representation, regardless of the fact that, in good mannerist form, the entire left-hand three-quarters of West's 1776 canvas sweeps towards the indication of the flag-bearer's arrival. But even in Fuse's edited version of the work which I chose to illustrate my article, the painting's structure still has the last word as it now glaringly points to absence and erasure. There could

have been no better visual example of the problem I describe in my article along with the form it takes within the political organisation of culture. All that is visible of the flag-bearer is his little hat in his hand: I'll follow suit and doff my hat from the sidelines to the accidental unveiling of the continuing historical reality disguised by West's depiction of an historic event.

—Martha Fleming
Montreal, Quebec

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Porn Again Distributor Censorship and Vancouver's Newsstands

IN MAY OF THIS YEAR, THE VAN-couver City Council took action to stem the availability of pornography in this city. Frustrated with the inactivity of the B.C. Attorney-General's office and federal enforcement agencies, City Council delegated its Committees on Community Services to develop an anti-porn strategy. The Committee dug up an aged and ignored by-law (Number 4450), which requires all retailers selling "sex paraphernalia or graphic sexual material" to have an "Adult Entertainment License." After some debate, the Council decided to escalate enforcement of the by-law, hoping to contain pornography to specific outlets. Unlicensed retailers were given thirty days to remove "sexually graphic material."

This decision elicited a mixed reaction in the women's community and concern in the gay and artists' communities. Criticism centred on the definition of pornography as "sexually graphic material." Some women wanted to replace the definition with the magazine distributors' title of "men's sophisticate magazines," while others wanted to incorporate a more thorough definition of pornography — one based on its misogynist, not its sexual, elements. Groups such as the Vancouver Status of Women expressed concern that women's bookstores, erotic art, gay and lesbian publications and sex education material could easily be included in the definition as it stood. Some women felt that it was up to the Attorney-General to lay criminal charges and that the by-law would be ineffective.

Artists' organizations had different concerns. The Vancouver Artists' League interim board of directors and Video Inn opposed the by-law. While the by-law's lack of definition was cause for concern, artists tended towards a more general opposition on the basis that it constituted another level of state censorship and control over imagery. Alternate visions could easily come under the gun, as has so regularly been the case in Ontario. Artists' organizations might face licensing

NOV '84 - JAN '85



EXPO 86 Chief/Porn Distributor

and future pressure to submit material to the B.C. Classification Branch.

Artists and feminists were joined by film distributors and small retailers in their criticism. The by-law was unenforceable. No guidelines existed to accompany the directive to remove sexually graphic material and corner stores throughout the city fretted over whether *Playboy* or *Esquire* or *True Confessions* could remain on their shelves. The City Council decided to reopen discussion on an amended by-law. This was originally to be a public process, through submissions to the Community Services Committee. However, the process has since been put in the hands of the city's legal department, thus closing off the possibility of community input.

While the city took its initiative against pornography, magazine distributors, led by born-again Christian EXPO chief, Jim Pattison, suggested that a review committee be set up for the industry. It would be comprised of three concerned citizens. Pattison had recently come under fire as the owner of Mainland Magazines, the distributor of 250 porn titles. (In 1980, a subsidiary of Mainland was convicted in Ontario of breaching the Criminal

Code for distributing torture/sex/violence magazines.) While some women support the review process, many think that the distributors already knew the Criminal Code guidelines and that the process would simply define some porn as acceptable while others were not, thus burying feminist concerns with the anti-woman nature of the genre. The industry would be rescued by women!

In the meantime, a group of critical feminists developed an alternate by-law. These women felt that controlling porn by ghettoizing it into specific outlets was not viable. For some, the goal was for the by-law to be effective against porn in general. Others were concerned about the existing broad powers of the state to censor sexual material. The group prepared an amendment to bring the by-law into line with the Dworkin/McKinnon initiative in Minneapolis. A more developed definition of porn was included and the right of libraries and non-profit societies (such as women's groups and artists' organizations) to maintain collections of porn for research purposes was incorporated. Feminist art or writings about sex were considered to fall outside of the definition of pornography and would not come under attack. Pornography would not be permitted on business premises and private clubs whose purpose was to sell or view pornography would also be illegal.

Unlike the Dworkin initiative, which leaves the right to initiate a case against pornographers in the hands of community groups or individual women, this proposal leaves the right to prosecute in the hands of the city police. The state, then determines what is offensive.

But even with the Dworkin/McKinnon example some aspects of the definition ride on very subjective interpretations: "Pornography [is] the sexually explicit subordination of women, graphically depicted, whether in pictures or words, that also includes one or more of the following: 1) Women (children, men or transsexuals) as dehumanized; as sexual objects, things or commodities; or... 5) women's (children's, men's or transsexuals') body parts — including but not limited to vaginas, breasts or buttocks — (and

are exhibited such that women are reduced to those parts..."

To date, the city has not amended it's by-law. When it does, whether through a revision of the initial containment strategy or through the Dworkin/McKinnon strategy, the by-law could provide a threat to art and video exhibitions as well as to the sale of feminist material concerned with sex. Perhaps other strategies, such as sex education, the use of by-laws that restrict display to certain heights and areas of the store, thus relieving women and kids from constant visual bombardment with such imagery, and community organization against porn might be alternative routes for Vancouver. As it is, there are no guarantees that other materials - materials which are essential in undermining the existence and effects of pornography and in countering the vast misinformation about sexuality (particularly women's) - will not be either further ghettoized or suppressed.

- Sara Diamond

Ontario Censorship Update

IN THE LAST ISSUE OF FUSE, WE provided a critique of Bill 82 (Fall 1984, p. 5). To date, (Oct. 18, 1984), the legislation has not yet been re-introduced. In the meantime, here is an update on what has been happening.

Since May there has been a continued profusion of letters, meetings, demonstrations and critical articles in mainstream and parallel presses - partly in reaction to Bill 82 and also in reaction to the Censor Board's recent attacks on artist-run centres, artists, and ideas.

In August representatives from OFAVAS AND ANNPAC visited the office of Corporate and Consumer Affairs. Mr. Elgie and his ilk seemed to consider Bill 82 as a necessary extension of the Theatres Act, although he mentioned the possibility of a special dispensation for arts organizations.

A letter from Donald McGibbon, chairman of the Ontario Arts Council, had been sent to Mr. Elgie suggesting that films and videos funded by the Council and shown in such places as public art galleries, artist-run centres, and non-commercial film festivals be

extended a special exemption.

At the meeting, however, Ric Amis, general manager of ANNPAC, pointed out that special exemption would fragment the broader community of people who are against censorship.

On September 17, 1984, an International Meeting of Film Regulators (read Censors), organized by the Ontario Government, began an 8-day session of seminars, work-shops, etc., in Toronto. Immediately the Artists' Union called for a demonstration at Queen's Park to protest the meeting as well as the existence of censorship laws in Ontario.

Varda Burstyn, a professor of cinema studies and feminist film critic spoke at the demonstration. She catalogued injustices perpetrated by



David Hlynsky, Randy Giehill & Montecolor

Gate Against Censorship

the Censor Board: in the name of protecting women they "...banned *Not A Love Story*, attempted to cut the feminist feature film *Born in Flames*, ...and raided and seized feminist and peace movement documentaries (and equipment) from *A Space Gallery*. [see *A Space Update* below] Clearly the Censor Board is more interested in censoring ideas which depart from their conservative status quo, rather than protecting the rights of women."

Lisa Steele, feminist video artist, Artist Union organizer and FUSE contributing editor called for "...all artists, feminists, and audiences to stand up and say NO to the censorship of our voices."

Many people at the demonstration were carrying banners made by the Ad Hoc Committee Against Censorship, a coalition of artists, film and video producers, feminists and activists. This committee was formed in the early summer and the culmination of their summer's efforts was realized on September 20, 1984 when 400 people attended a benefit dance at the Palais Royale to help raise money for groups such as OFAVAS and A Space who are in legal battle with the Ontario Censor Board.

OFAVAS continues its own fundraising and maintains a high level of community support. Performers at a benefit on October 14, 1984, at the Royal Alexandra Theatre (Toronto) included host, Keith Lamberts and Salome Bey, Tom Kneebone, Jackie Burroughs, Carole Pope, The Clichettes, Sylvia Tyson, Lorraine Segato, Laurie Conger, Billy Bryans, Rita Tushingham, Sheila McCarthy and Brent Carver.

-Pat Wilson

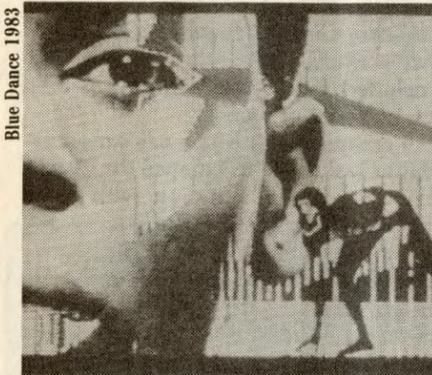
A Space Update

IN A 23 PAGE JUDGEMENT DATED October 2nd, County Court Judge J. Douglas Bernstein ruled that the section of the Ontario Theatres Act empowering inspectors of the Censor Board to seize materials "is inconsistent with the Charter, to the extent that it authorizes a warrantless seizure, removal or holding of film, and it is therefore, to that extent, of no force and effect." He ruled that, "The film seized by the inspectors is to be returned to the appellant [*A Space*]."

A Space was the subject of an unprecedented raid by the Ontario Censor Board on May 31st 1984 for reasons of noncompliance with the Ontario Theatres Act. No charges were laid, but video playback equipment and videotapes were seized by the government. After meeting with *A Space* lawyer Lynn King in June, the Censor Board returned the equipment because in their judgement "no public good would be served" by keeping it. The tapes, however, were to be "forfeited to the Crown." Immediately following this 'forfeiture', *A Space* filed its appeal in County Court.

"There didn't seem to be much doubt that the tapes would be returned," said

board member Lisa Steele, "but we are gratified to see that the presiding judge chose to pay such close attention to our lawyer's presentation - an argument which referred rigorously to the Canadian Constitution's provisions against unreasonable search and seizure."



Blue Dance 1983

Alter Image

Doug Sigurdson, *A Space* co-ordinator, added, "It's our understanding that Judge Bernstein could have chosen to make no more than a simple administrative decision which would have overruled [Chief Censor] Mary Brown's previous action. It now appears that fully three aspects of the Theatres Act have fallen into Constitutional difficulty. Last year the Supreme Court of Ontario ruled the Act unconstitutional in terms of freedom of expression; now the Act's sections on seizure and the Director's hearing following seizure have also come into question."



Polkadots & Moonbeams 1983

Sandra Goldbacher

This latter point raised by Sigurdson, refers to a part of Judge Bernstein's judgement which declares Section 6 of the Theatres Act (dealing with provisions for "a hearing by the Director" following seizure) to be logically "inoperative" in light of the unconstitutionality of unwarranted seizure itself.

-Joyce Mason

Housing Cuts

RECENT CUTS IN FUNDING TO co-op and non-profit housing in Canada suggests less support for social housing units, despite an increased need. In Canada, most housing units being built (non-profit, co-op, private) receive some form of government assistance.

Non-profit and co-operative housing programs began in Canada in 1973 when amendments were made to the National Housing Act. Three levels of government are involved in the funding of these units: the federal government (via CMHC) guarantees long-term mortgages; the provincial government (via Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing) funds rent subsidies; and the municipal government provides money for site acquisition and administrative services.

ARCADIA



HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE INC.

In 1982, Co-op housing received \$31 million. Allocations for 1984 across Canada were cut by 45%; Metro Toronto's allocation was cut by 65%. Despite an obvious need for more housing units in Canada, there was a 25% decrease in the number of units for social housing projects this year. Ontario was granted 1,400 units by CMHC, even though Ontario Housing Minister, Claude F. Bennett acknowledged a need for twice that many.

Toronto, with a vacancy rate of less than 1%, originally received no unit allocation from the province for 1984. Lobbying by opposition parties and

non-profit and co-op housing groups resulted in an allocation of 400 to 500 units. Three co-ops to be built at Harbourfront, have been kept waiting by Harbourfront and CMHC (both Crown Corporations). One of the co-ops, Arcadia, is to provide housing for people working in the arts. Arcadia's consultant advised CMHC to give the unit allocation in 1984, rather than 1983, because Harbourfront had not yet prepared the site. CMHC refused, and granted the allocation to Arcadia in 1983, which it was unable to use at the time. CMHC did not re-allocate the units in 1984, despite the finished site preparation at Harbourfront. Roads and sewers are now ready - waiting for an allocation of units in 1985. The members of Arcadia (which was formed in 1981) are waiting to move in. There is currently a waiting list of three years for subsidized housing at non-profit projects in Toronto. There is obviously a tremendous need for an increase in funding, unit allocation, and co-operation by the government agencies involved.

-Sandra Gregson

Tory Cabinet

WITH THE ELECTION AND POST-election hype finally finished and the largest, most evenly distributed cabinet in history now appointed, there remain many unknowns. We will be watching a cabinet that has twenty rookie ministers, eleven of whom have never even served as MP's before. Few of the appointed are known outside of their local constituencies, and so, it is difficult to predict what this cabinet will do. But, what DO we know?

Regional representation has been achieved. There are thirteen ministers from the West, eleven from Quebec and five from the Atlantic provinces. Ontario contributed eleven, with Toronto having only three Ministers which should finally teach us that we do not have dominion over the rest of Canada. This new "small town" cabinet is indeed unique in that only ten ministers were appointed from Canada's eleven largest cities (which comprise over one half of the country's population). And unlike the Liberal cabinet's of past years, which were dominated by Quebec ministers who often received the most coveted senior

portfolios, few Quebec posts in Mulroney's cabinet are influential ones.

We note, as well, the historic appointment of six women to the Cabinet, twice as many as have served in any previous government. Even so, the appointment of Walter McLean (the new Secretary of State) as Minister responsible for the Status of Women, having been announced in a press release following the naming of cabinet, appears to have been an afterthought. McLean, a Presbyterian minister, is considered to be on the 'left' of the Conservative party and opposes testing of the cruise missile in Canada. He has spent the last three years as Secretary of State critic for the Tory opposition.

Other key cabinet posts include:

tion' of foreign investment regulations and the promotion of trade.

Perrin Beatty, the youngest Cabinet Minister at 34, accepts the ominous job of Minister of National Revenue. As a Tory MP, Beatty led a Conservative campaign last year alleging abuse and problems with the government's tax collection system.

Michael Wilson, Minister of Finance is described by some as "stolidly intelligent, wealthy and discreetly right-wing". As a former vice-president of Dominion Securities Ltd., his appointment was met with virtually unanimously favourable reviews by the Canadian business community. It is worth remembering that Wilson proposed a two year tax holiday for some businesses when he ran for leader of the Conservative party.

Joe Clark for the party leadership during the 1983 convention and eight of the nineteen who supported Mulroney. Elmer MacKay, who resigned his seat last year allowing Mulroney to run in a by-election so that the new leader could have a seat in the House of Commons, was appointed Canada's Solicitor General. None of the nineteen MP's who backed John Crosbie were included, although Crosbie himself did get the post of Justice.

Perhaps one of Mulroney's most arduous tasks was to balance the visibly right wing representation with some "moderates". This was done by appointing Michael Wilson to the finance portfolio and Joe Clark to External Affairs. Clark's appointment should come as a relief when one considers that the other leading contender for

Mike Constable (Union Arts Service)



Flora MacDonald, Minister responsible for Employment and Immigration, is the most senior female member of the cabinet. She has been a Conservative party leadership candidate, a former External Affairs Minister under Joe Clark and the Conservative critic on Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal-Provincial Relations, External Affairs and the Status of Women. Her appointment was generally met with optimism.

In contrast to Ms. MacDonald, Sinclair Stevens - now Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion - is on the right wing of the party. He is a fan of U.S. President Ronald Reagan's economic policies and supports U.S. intervention in Central America. Chief among his duties will be the 'liberaliza-

tion' of foreign investment regulations and the promotion of trade. Marcel Masse, Minister of Communication, has been active in Quebec provincial politics for years. As a Union Nationale cabinet minister he held the portfolios of Education, Intergovernmental Affairs and Natural Resources. Masse has so far suggested that government assistance may be given to educational television provided that these networks expand their French language services. He has also promised to meet with the Revenue Minister, Perrin Beatty, and members of the arts community to discuss Revenue Canada's current treatment of artists, writers and other arts creators who are protesting unfair tax treatment.

The new cabinet includes ten of the thirty-eight Tory MP's who supported

this job was Sinclair Stevens. Mr. Stevens is a vocal friend of the United States on all issues, including intervention in Central America.

Finally, the largest cabinet in history has a correspondingly higher price tag - an increase of \$444,895.00 a year in salaries and expenses. When Parliament opens in November we will begin to observe and assess how these players will shape our political future. Until then we can only guess as to whether the cabinet will fulfill election promises and how they will live up and down to our expectation of a new and conservative government.

-Lisa Freedman

WESTERN EXPO SURE As The Breadlines Grow

SARA DIAMOND

IT MAY SOUND LIKE A BAD JOKE, BUT THE SOCIAL Credit government really did declare September 30 to October 8 to be "private property week". For students, the unemployed, trade unionists, women, seniors and minorities, a special week is unnecessary. For us, this province is all about private property, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

AS THE WINTER FOG ROLLS IN, the breadlines are growing. The Food Bank, a private agency, originally intended to feed those not eligible for social assistance food vouchers and the unemployed, has increasingly become a mainstay of Vancouver's welfare recipients. But it has reluctantly begun to turn away those in need; there is simply not enough food to meet the demand. In March of 1983 the bank fed 2,700; this October 12,000 are expected to need the weekly bag of onions, canned soup, potatoes and other starches. Of these, 2,000 will leave empty-handed. Cuts in welfare that designate some as ineligible for assistance along with the low, frozen monthly rate mean that many simply do not have enough money to pay their rent and also afford food for themselves and their families. (A single person receives about \$360/month; the average rent for a one bedroom apartment in the East End is about \$350.)

Mill closures and public sector cuts continue. B.C. Hydro recently announced that thirteen hundred workers (fifteen percent of the crown corporation's labour force) will lose their jobs. B.C. Ferries is eliminating one hundred and thirty from its payrolls, drastically

cutting ferry service to the northern coast and islands by as much as seventy percent. The SocCredits are bent on decimating the trade union movement, using EXPO '86 to place construction unionism in peril, while threatening to remove the right to strike from the battered public sector. The government is restructuring and cutting both public and post-secondary education.

The Trade Unions

Throughout the summer, the EXPO board played cat and mouse with the building trades' unions. In May, the membership resisted the employment of non-union construction workers on the site through walkouts and mass rallies. After a round of hard bargaining in late June, the trades' leadership accepted a tentative pact that would require unionized tradesmen to work with non-union workers, but required non-union contractors to pay union scale, with the exception of the \$5.00 an hour benefit package. Union rates would apply retroactively to the non-union Kerkhoff contract, and to all future contracts and suppliers. In return, the unions would agree to forego invoking their non-affiliation

clause, which allows them to walk off jobsites where non-union workers are employed. The pact represented a major compromise on the part of the unions.

While the Carpenters' Union met the agreement with a powerful 95% rejection vote and called on the other trades to resist the infringement of non-union companies into largescale construction in B.C., other trades accepted the pact. To the embarrassment of their own negotiator, Jim Pattison, the EXPO Board overturned the agreement. They were not interested in paying union scale, especially retroactively, and felt that non-union companies were capable of building the entire project. In the following months, the board and the government took every possible initiative to move non-union contractors into the key place as builders of B.C.'s major housing projects, road construction and development projects.

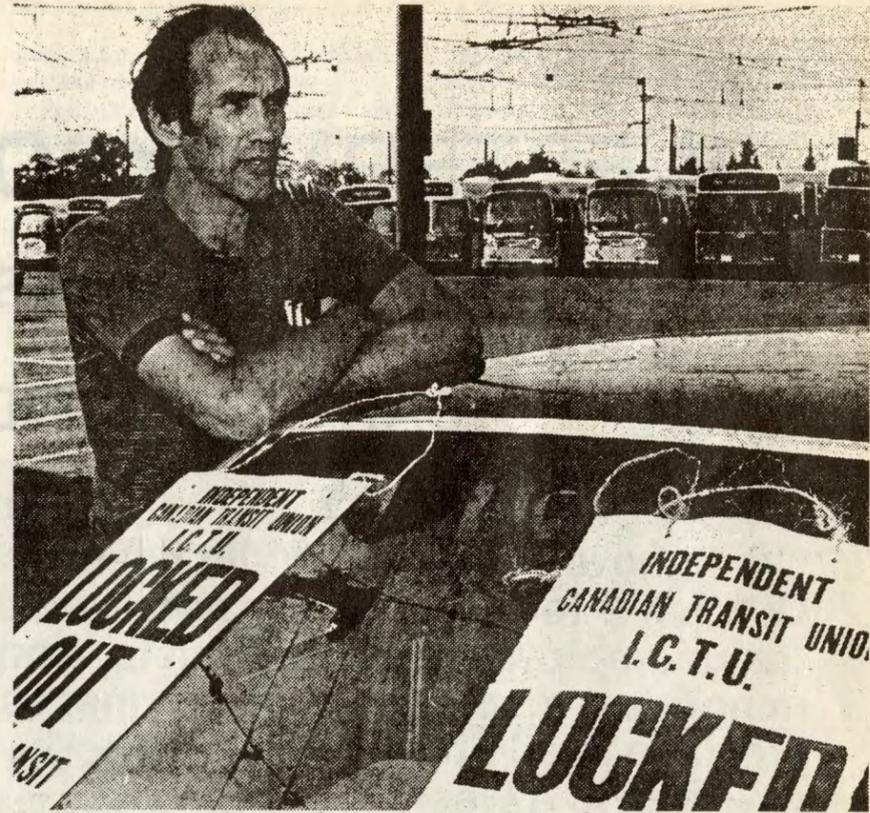
In June, Chief Justice McEachern found a chastened building trades leadership to be guilty of a "criminal contempt for the purpose of advancing all unions", for their militant resistance against Kerkhoff's first major contract at the False Creek housing project in Vancouver. (See FUSE, Summer 1984.)

B.C.
SOLIDARITY

He imposed a \$30,000 fine on the unions. In response to the cancellation of the tentative agreement at EXPO the trades threatened to organize a national union boycott of the project. Meanwhile, the government ordered a two meter fence built between union and non-union sites at EXPO, to protect non-union firms from "property damage". Kerkhoff won the contract for the main gate, service tunnels and first aide building. On August 22, construction unionists walked off the site because of the premature arrival of Marbella Pacific, another non-union firm on the EXPO grounds. The walk-off was in defiance of threats by the president of EXPO to cancel all union contracts.

The unions' right to invoke non-affiliation clauses against non-union jobs at EXPO went to the Labour Relations Board for a ruling. In the past, the Board had decided that each of B.C.'s economic development projects constituted one large job site, because they were managed by a single agency. This had given the trades the right to refuse to work alongside non-union workers on that site. Given past precedents, it was likely that the LRB would reach the same decision for the EXPO site. Fearing such a decision, the Cabinet acted. On Labour Day weekend it passed a series of orders-in-council that designated each project within EXPO as a separate "economic development project"; EXPO now was made up of fourteen separate job sites, each a unique project! This tied the hands of the Labor Relations Board, invalidated the legal use of the trades' non-affiliation clause and de facto removed the right to strike from workers on the site. A victorious Kerkhoff, recently awarded yet another \$4.6 million dollar plum, declared, "The war is over...My feeling is that we'll see more and more of EXPO go non-union."

While the construction union bashing continued, the Cabinet and their friends, the Fraser Institute, took the ideological offensive. Industry Ministry Don Phillips pontificated that B.C. needed "free trade zones", where union rights would be prohibited. Such zones



"bus drivers want to be part of a transit system that works well"

currently flourish in Malaysia, Mexico, the Phillipines and Ireland. Herb Greubel, a professor of Economics at Simon Fraser University and member of the Fraser Institute, elaborated on the concept in the *Vancouver Sun*. The zones would be "designed to change the legal environment in which unions operate." For starters, non-affiliation clauses would be outlawed, unions would be automatically decertified when a company went bankrupt, thus freeing the successor company from unionization; decertification would be easier and organization very difficult. The goal, of course, would be to attract foreign capital to British Columbia. The article cited supposed "intransigence" on the part of unions as basis for legislation. The membership of the Ironworkers' Union had recently turned down a sweetheart deal signed by their local leaders that would have allowed AMCA International (a US firm) to pay them at twenty-five percent less than the union rate, in "exchange" for the creation of seven hundred and fifty jobs.

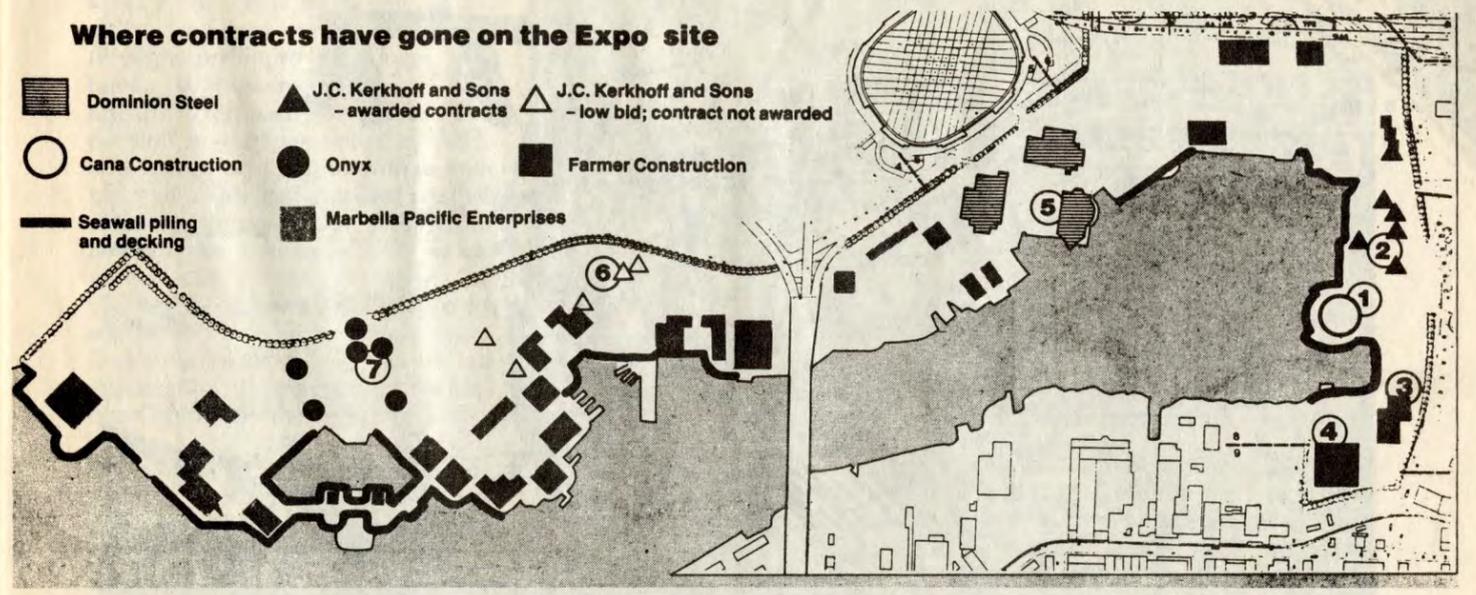
This summer brought the first major public sector confrontation since last year's massive strike wave. For months, the Independent Canadian Transit Union has followed a cautious and

public-minded course in fighting for a collective agreement. Through their "unstrike", they wore civilian clothes, refused to collect fares and held rotating strikes, in the hopes of winning a contract and guarantees of a decent level of service for the bus system. The union insisted that drivers, "very much want to be part of a transit system that works well. They take pride in their jobs. There is nothing a bus driver hates more than missing connections or not picking up passengers because of overcrowded buses." The stakes in the dispute were high; the Metro Transit Operating Commission, with the support of the government, were trying to introduce three hundred and fifty part-time drivers, as well as cuts in service levels. Bus routes and driver schedules, traditionally divided by seniority, would now be arbitrarily assigned by the company. As public sympathy for the union grew, the MTOC put the brakes to the transit system in Vancouver and Victoria by locking out the workers. They hoped that a long shutdown would result in public outrage against the workers and create the conditions in which the drivers could be ruled back to work with an imposed settlement. The goals of MTOC were not

Ian Lindsay

Where contracts have gone on the Expo site

- Dominion Steel
- ▲ J.C. Kerkhoff and Sons - awarded contracts
- △ J.C. Kerkhoff and Sons - low bid; contract not awarded
- Cana Construction
- Onyx
- Farmer Construction
- Seawall piling and decking
- Marbella Pacific Enterprises



only to crush the union but also to cut transit subsidies from Victoria by cutting the level of service. This would create the basis for a privatization of transit.

The lockout wore on through the summer, becoming increasingly known, with the help of the media and government, as the transit "strike". Surprisingly, the public did not abandon the union. Small merchants pressed for an independent industrial inquiry commission, echoing the union's demand, as did Seniors Without Any Transit (SWAT). This latter, highly active group, donated hundreds to the drivers' strike fund, picketed at bus stops to underline the lack of transit for seniors and developed a petition calling for the independent inquiry. The drivers bore the burden of the "marathon". The union had no strike fund and many lost mortgages, rental accommodation and cars as bills went unpaid.

At last, the government called in a one man independent inquiry commission. Despite the union's strong protest, they appointed Joe Morris, one time IWA honcho. Morris had absented himself from the labour movement for a number of years and was completely unfamiliar with the current B.C. situation. His proposal was a death knell for the union; it suggested a four year contract, accepted the basic

concept of management control of scheduling and did not include an exemption from the notorious Bill Three (a clause that other B.C. public sectors had won in the 1983 strike). This laid drivers open to intensive victimization. The lockout continued.

In early September, the Cabinet acted again, ruling the drivers and company back to work and threatening non-compliance would lead to new legislation removing the right to strike from B.C.'s 250,000 public sector workers. Although the B.C. Federation of Labour promised to support ICTU if it defied, the drivers had had enough. They returned to work and are currently awaiting the findings of Clark Gilmour, the province's chief arbitrator; he will develop the final arbitrated settlement. Bob McLelland, the province's labour minister, will soon initiate province-wide hearings to determine the merits of retaining the right to strike for the public sector in B.C. He has already publically stated that he is opposed to this right. All is not lost, however. To date, civic councils and administrators have called on the province to leave public sector collective bargaining, including the right to strike, intact.

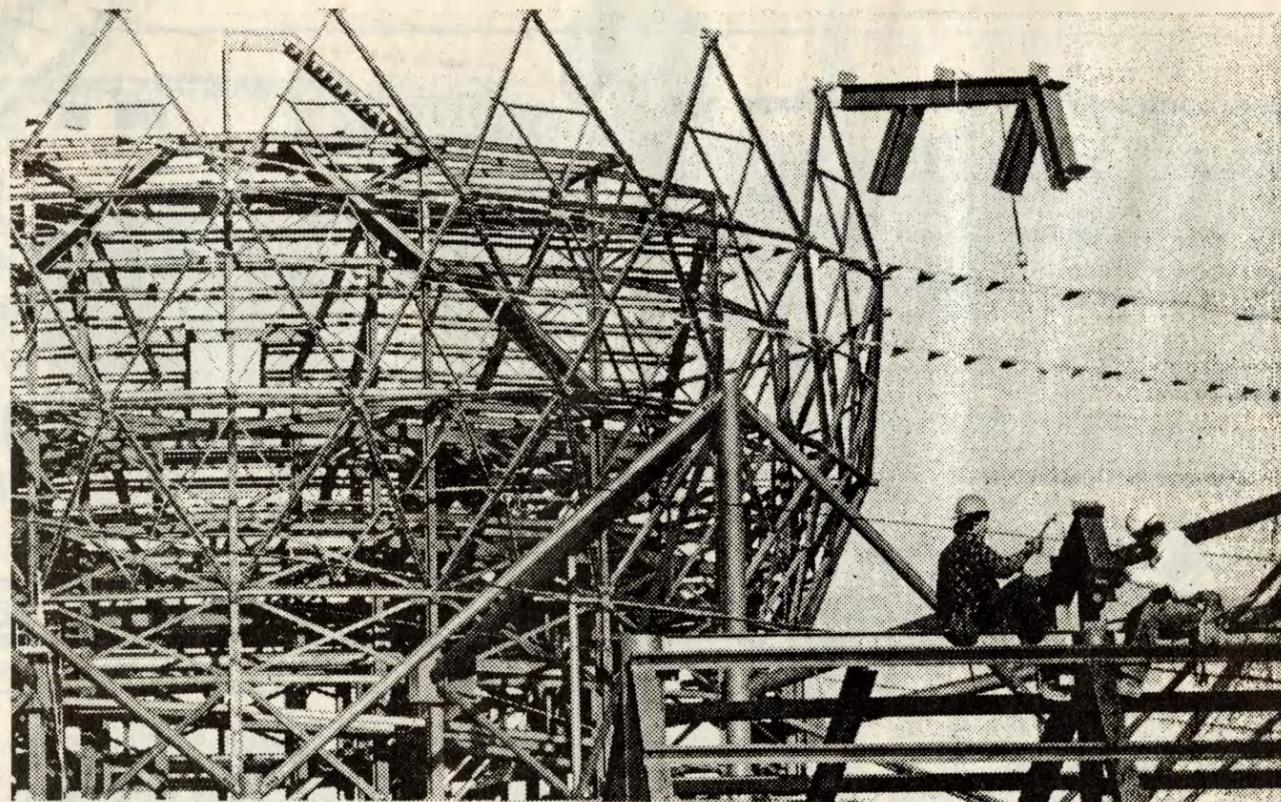
There is little respite in view for trade unions in B.C. Despite the resistance by busdrivers and construction tradespeople, the unwillingness of

the union brass to organize one consolidated fightback sets the way for future losses, as union after union goes down in isolated defeat.

Cutbacks

If any single group is victimized most by the province's government, it is children and youth. The SocCredits, ever Machievellian in its allocation of goodies; realizes that its voting base does not lie amongst those with school age children. Public education is being drastically cut and at the same time, restructured. B.C. is currently number ten of all provinces in terms of university participation and the amount of provincial wealth spent on education. The government is returning the public school system to Dickensian times. The recent white paper on education proposes streaming the public schools into three areas: arts and sciences; applied arts and science; and career participation. The core curriculum will require heavy doses of maths and sciences in all streams; arts, especially fine and performing arts, will be chopped out of existence.

The government introduced ill-prepared and badly administered Grade Twelve provincial exams last summer. Students are still awaiting their results in some cases, and hundreds have been unable to enter univer-



Brian Kent

Non-union workers at EXPO 86 site

sity this fall because their results were not yet tabulated.

The student/teacher ratio in some schools is up to one-to-forty. There are moves afoot to contract out libraries and testing. District budgets are tied to a rigid centrally computer-determined formula and are slated to decline in the next four years, despite rising costs. Children in northern schools may freeze this winter, as budgets cannot cover heating costs, transportation and teaching salaries. While public education is cut to the bone, millions are pouring into the private school system from a government that believes that the best "products" come out of these elitist schools. Cuts in social services intensify the cuts in education spending. As of this fall, there are no childcare workers (guidance counsellors) in the Vancouver system. Principals, overworked teachers and students have already protested the loss as children with problems at home and at school are thrown into direct confrontation in the classroom and corridors, instead of having the support and mediation of counsellors.

Post-secondary education is becoming inaccessible to most residents of B.C., at the same time as its quality

erodes. Universities are becoming "silicone valleys" as industrial parks are built at each campus, funnelling industrial dollars into contract work. The university will soon specialize in business training and "applied sciences". Campus administrations are wildly eliminating curriculum areas in line with provincial curriculum and development priorities. Arts faculties and fine arts are the targets. Last year's closure of the David Thompson University Centre in Nelson, one of Canada's best art schools, has been followed by a recent cut to Simon Fraser University's Centre to the Arts which amounts to one third of its \$1.5 million operating budget. Also to go are Latin American and African studies, Canadian Studies, language programmes and recreation training. In their place, millions of dollars are to be diverted into a new applied sciences department that will contain computing science, microtech communications, and engineering.

While tuition fees skyrocketed by 116%, the government completely eliminated grants to students, now only loans are available. The provincially funded summer student job programme has also been vaporized.

B.C. pays only twenty percent of the costs of post-secondary education, with the feds picking up eighty percent. The province can allocate these dollars as it sees fit and has cut back on its contribution as federal monies have increased.

Wage levels of teaching staff fall as course loads rise. SFU faculty felt compelled to accept a four per cent cut in wages; other faculties have accepted wage freezes. At Okanagan College, the administration locked out teaching staff to try to force instructors to accept a twenty-five percent increase in teaching time and course loads, without any increase in pay. With the potential removal of tenure through Bill Three, falling wages and a lack of campus resources, many educators have either already fled eastwards or are contemplating the possibility in the near future.

Service cuts continue unabated. In the summer of 1983 the occupation of the Tranquille long-term care facility by its staff made the national news. They were protesting the sudden and imminent decision to close the institution this fall, rather than to phase it out as had been previously planned by the Ministry of Human Resources. In the

original plan, patients were to move into community-based care.

Now the crisis has come. Tranquille's residents are being scattered throughout the province, away from family support networks and into already overtaxed institutions. This decision was implemented by MHR without any consultation with parents, many of whom had arranged for their children to move into residential homes in the Kamloops area. As one mother said, "They got Russy. Can you believe that, they didn't even tell me, I didn't even get to say goodbye!" Depressed residents wept as the administration spirited them out the back door, avoiding the many picketing parents and disabled people in front. The protesters carried signs reading, "Homes not hospitals".

In desperation, families called on the provincial ombudsman to mediate. Based on assessments from the skilled medical staff at the institution, he castigated the government. His findings indicated that all but one patient could function outside of a hospital setting.

When the SoCreds Speak They Mean Business

These attacks on human dignity, union rights and education are fed by a growing ultraright clamour. Brian Smith, the province's Attorney-General and chief strategist/"hero" of the campaign to remove prostitutes from Vancouver's West End, recently attacked the right to political protest. He pointed to a growing "dramatic and political defiance of the law," in his mind caused by the media's coverage of lawless conduct; the breakdown of standards of public morality, the rise of "fanatical causes" groups (such as environmentalists), for whom "disobedience is a religious cult" and the pre-occupation of legislators and government with legal process and not with the content of a crime. In particular, he attacked the labour movement, a "special interest group" for its lawlessness in picketing schools and courts. Smith cited lawyers who were willing to defend the trade union movement as one of the province's problems and ended with a fervent vow to destroy groups such as the Squamish Five.

Meanwhile, the SoCreds are busily preparing policy proposals for the NOV '84 - JAN '85



Tribune

A demonstration of rejection against military service

Mulroney steamroller. Their programme includes a freeze on federal hiring, a review of spending priorities, the dismantling of crown corporations and the cutting of "desirable but not essential federal services", as well as the entrenchment of property rights within the constitution.

This summer birthed a new strategy from the Employers' Council of B.C. to deal with the province's staggering unemployment rates. They suggest that Canada implement compulsory military service (the draft) so that young men on the dole can be bussed off to army camps and make-work projects, to instill discipline and keep them off the streets.

Resistance

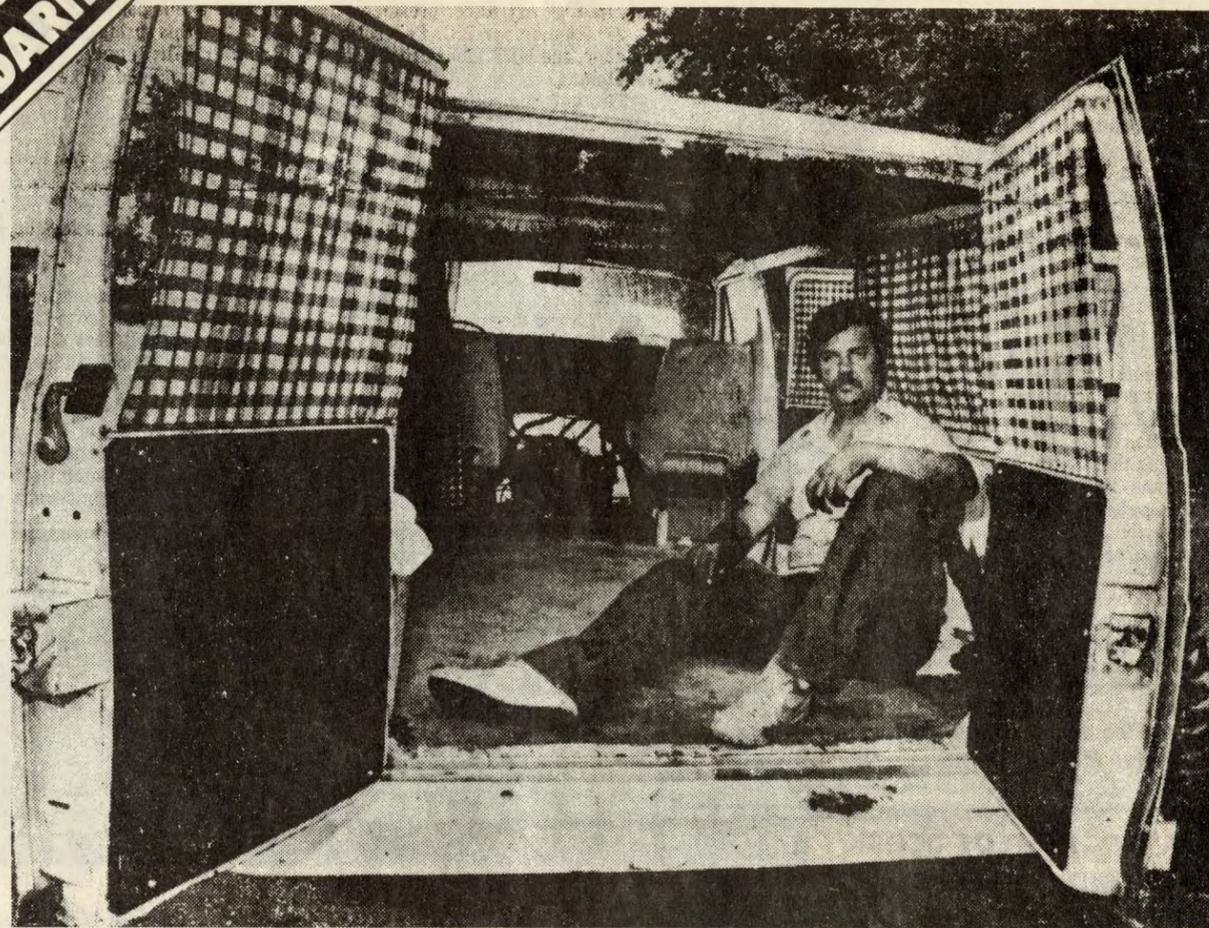
Solidarity is over a year old in B.C. The annual July picnic brought out about five hundred. Amidst the myriad of speeches the highlight of the event was the highpowered DOA with their strong *General Strike*. The Operation Solidarity conference in June was lively, with over four hun-

dred delegates, many of whom were still smarting from the November strike sellout by the BC Fed leadership. Delegates pledged a budget of \$800,000 to continue the fight against the government. Papers at the conference proposed a variety of low key activities, such as the monitoring of labour code use and abuse and support for unions that defied the government. No mention of coordinated trade union action was made by the leadership. In the floor debate, delegates urged immediate action, a coordinated strategy and economic retaliation against employers who violated workers' rights.

The International Woodworkers of America is being torn by a wave of internal strife. At its current convention, Willie Fleming, a first aid man from the Zeballos mill on the island is challenging Jack Munro for the leadership of the union. Fleming felt inspired to run against Munro because of the leadership's unwillingness to fight the over 20,000 layoffs in the wood industry over the past few years. (Current cut-backs in forestry management by the province beckon to a continued down-

B.C. SOLIDARITY

B.C.
SOLIDARITY



Peter Battilioni

The NEW REALITY ... bus drivers home will be a 1974 van

swing in the future. The government has reduced treeplanting and maintenance funds by thirty-two percent, research by forty-five percent and pest control by sixty percent.)

Munro defends the non-combative stance of the IWA, stating that a fight-back would only bring defeat in the current context of international recession. The companies, he believes, simply cannot grant concessions. "There is no pot of gold that a fresh burst of militancy could open." Fleming, on the other hand calls for a fight for a thirty-two hour week with no loss in pay, voluntary early retirement, redirecting forestry investment to create jobs, organizing the unorganized, assistance for the unemployed and organizing towards a merger of the current three wood industry unions. Munro, under fire for his sellout of Solidarity, has stated that he was only the "messenger" of the BC Fed desire to end the strike, but that "governments are overthrown by general elections, not by strikes." Fleming is estimated to have the support of at least thirty per-

cent of the union's membership. The leadership will be decided by a ballot of all of the membership; if Fleming wins it will usher in a new era in industrial unionism in this province.

The NDP has kept a low profile since their leadership election, but recently offered an "olive branch" to the provincial government. The opposition proposed that the two parties meet to discuss ways of making the B.C. economy work better for the jobless. Bob Skelly, the new leader, suggested in his appeal that the time for confrontation was over and that the trade union movement needed to learn some new, less militant tactics. This was a leadership that was elected on its supposed willingness to lead an extra-parliamentary and militant fight by the party.

While there is little activity on the part of the Solidarity Coalition, its component groups continue to slog along. Women Against the Budget is planning another round of its popular Budget University for the spring. Speak Out Productions, an offshoot of

Woman Against the Budget, has just finished its first videotape, *Fight Back: Vancouver Transition House*, about the privatization of women's services in B.C. The ninety-six day occupation of the David Thompson University Centre by Nelson residents won them the centre's library, which the government had planned to dismantle.

Still, as the rain starts to fall the outlook is pretty bleak. Government cuts continue unabated, while many B.C.ers have not yet recovered from the defeat of Solidarity. Optimistic calls by some left forces to reorganize the Solidarity Coalition are not realistic in the face of massive disillusionment. B.C. residents anticipate yet another round of struggles as the federal government reneges on the once secure commitment to education, medicare and social services. The B.C. fightback will prove to be an important lesson in a battle that will soon have national dimensions.

Sara Diamond

Tale of two cities\$

METRO TORONTO FUNDING

RIC AMIS

MUNICIPAL POLITICIANS FEEL THAT THEY (UNLIKE THEIR FEDERAL AND provincial counterparts) are at the grassroots of the democratic process. With this misunderstanding, some believe their mandate to be a nearly single-handed control of the moral, ethical and economic issues in their small communities.

In October of 1982 three organisations were informed that their Metro Toronto funding had been withdrawn because of information that had nothing to do with their applications. The Toronto arts community was outraged to find just how vulnerable they were to the political grandstanding of Metro politicians.

Misinformation had been provided by just one metro politician - Gayle Christie (then mayor of North York). Christie raised false questions regarding the artistic merit of works which she attributed to artists associated with these organisations. She also raised objections to what she termed "grant welfare." (For further details, see "Christie Crisis", *FUSE* Nov/Dec 1982.) Council rejected the applications and there was no appeal process in which the decisions could be reviewed. Although, the following year, funding to all three organisations was reinstated, there was no compensation for the previous and unwarranted cuts.

The cultural community, including other arts organisations and individual artists, saw the incident as a dangerous

precedent. Since October '82, there has been an attempt by these groups to address the obvious inadequacies of cultural funding policies in Metro Toronto. Lobbying and letters of complaint to Metro officials (both elected and administrative) have been ongoing tasks of the three organisations who were defunded, as well as of an independent organisation which was formed in the wake of the crisis - Citizens for the Arts.

Recently this pressure from varied sources has met with some welcome and positive changes in the Metro funding process. There is now clear, written information available to arts organisations, stating the criteria and eligibility of applicants, as well as a definition of purpose for each of the three available types of grants. Perhaps more importantly, the application process has been clearly defined and described:

Application deadlines have been set. Once submitted, each organisation's application is evaluated/reviewed by the Cultural Affairs staff and an Advisory Committee. Each applicant

receives notification regarding the recommendations of these two groups. The application is then sent to the Budget Sub-committee and Executive Committee. And finally, it goes to Metro Council for approval.

Despite these steps towards clarification there are still problems. First, it is unclear how the Advisory Committee is selected and who serves on it. In addition, the understaffing of the Cultural Affairs Department (1 1/2 people to deal with a \$4.4 million grants budget) does not allow for a thorough understanding of the over two hundred applicants which must be processed annually.

The Rich Stay Richer

Metro Cultural grants are broken into two categories. The first, General Arts Grants, consists of three types of grants - sustaining grants, project and one-time or special grants. The category covers five disciplines - dance, music, theatre, visual/media arts and miscellaneous. The second category is Cultural Grants to the Ma-

Major Four. The "Major Four" are: The Art Gallery of Ontario, the Canadian Opera Company, the National Ballet of Canada and the Toronto Symphony.

The budgets of these two programmes are almost equal. General Arts Grants receives \$2,100,000 and Cultural Grants to the Major Four receive \$2,375,000. The difference is in the number of applicants in each programme - 176 compared to 4.

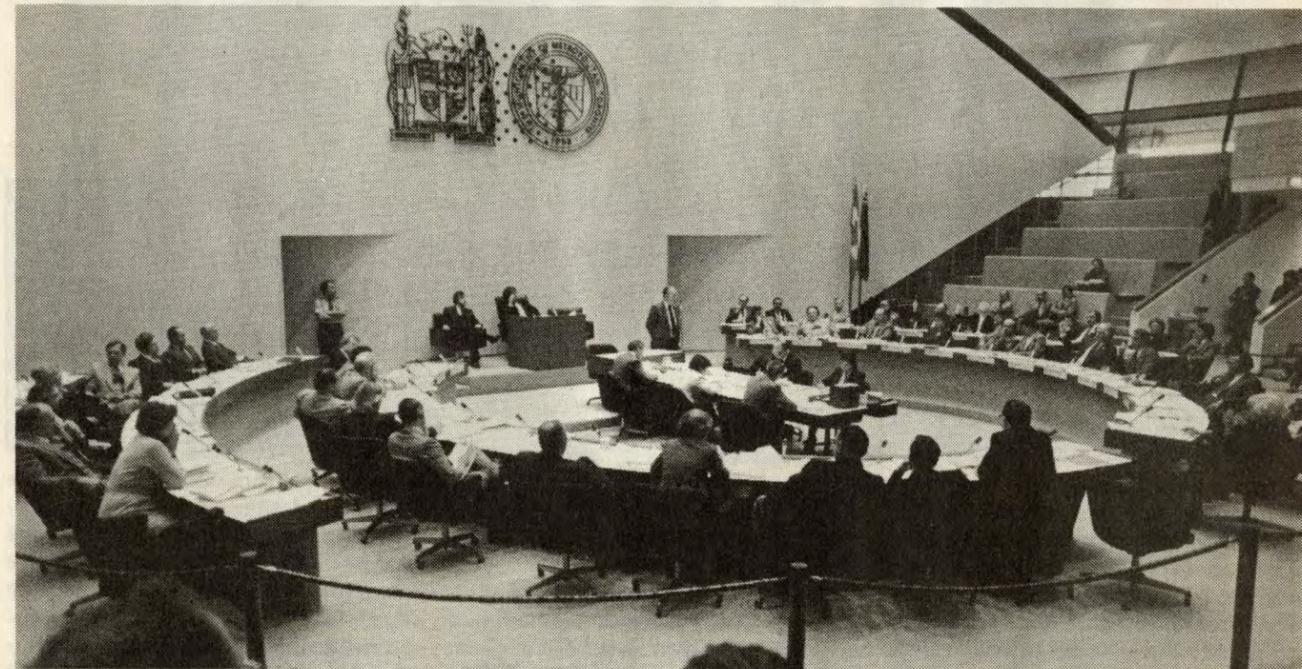
Such a strong imbalance of support towards high status, traditional arts organisations is of course not unique to civic funding systems. Imbalances are

made to consider the concerns of the artists, arts organisations, audiences and public. The Toronto Arts Council, for example, is presently circulating a questionnaire amongst its clients and other Toronto arts organisations. But from the looks of the questionnaire (26 pages) they will be hard-pressed to receive an accurate impression. Most of the questions are appropriate only to performing arts groups. The rest of us will have to do a lot of reinterpretation to make the questions suitable. This attempt to garner a response from the arts community, in fact, reflects more about the questioners' preconceptions

concerns regarding cultural funding and of the full range of social/cultural benefits which such funding provides in order that new policies will be fair, accessible and accountable to both the public and the arts community.

Issues that need to be dealt with realistically, in the development of new cultural policies, would include:

- a living wage for cultural producers
- recognition and encouragement of the existing diversity of cultures within the city
- recognition of the so-called non (or semi) professionals, to the cultural



Metro Toronto Council Chamber - The people that decide.

also found at provincial and federal levels of funding. Such budget priorities are in line with a common government 'rationalization' for arts funding - "It stimulates tourism." In this context, localized or community benefits usually go unnoticed and art which is non-threatening, entertaining and 'uplifting' (rather than uprising) will always be the preferred ornamentation for the halls of power.

At this time, all Metro area civic funding agencies* are either investigating, evaluating or re-evaluating their policies. Attempts are being

of what the arts community is. A decided performing arts bias is evident ... it is unlikely that this is accidental. (Certainly theatrical events are often cited as major tourist attractions. In at least two Ontario towns entire economies have been built upon theatres. But what of the rest of us?)

While changes in cultural activity may be determined by artists themselves and the communities in which they live, cultural policies are set by the political system. Metro politicians will continue to want control over how cultural funds are to be spent. Public visibility, support and accountability are likely to remain major factors in municipal funding decisions. And so, the arts community must make the politicians aware of our demands and

life of their communities (In fact, the basis for distinction between professional and amateur needs to be fundamentally questioned.) and finally,

- a need for the disruption of the often-unquestioned value judgements inherent in such distinctions as: fine vs. popular art; U.S./Euro-centrism vs. the rest of the world; official (corporate/government) vs. indigenous cultures; ... the list goes on.

We must continue to fight politically so that the cultural life of Toronto will not be determined by city hall's idea of showing tourists a good time, but rather by the ideas of those who live and produce here.

Ric Amis

Tale of two cities\$

HALIFAX FUNDING

GARY CONWAY

IN 1976 EYE LEVEL, AN ARTIST-RUN GALLERY IN HALIFAX, APPLIED TO the City of Halifax for financial assistance. The application was turned down. This year, 1984, The Centre for Art Tapes, an artist-run video production centre applied for funding to the City of Halifax. The application was turned down. The general feeling of other artist-run organizations in the community is that applying to the city for financial support is not worth the time it takes to prepare the application. This feeling has been reinforced by the city's reluctance to support the arts community, particularly in the area of non-traditional arts. As well, the amount of money available to culture in the city's budget is totally inadequate to provide any form of substantial or responsible support to the community.

THE CITY OF HALIFAX HAS A programme of Tax Concessions and Grants which handles requests from three main areas - recreation, social services and culture. The programme is administered by a committee of three alderpersons. This committee also uses three employees of city departments as references. The prime function of these employees is to advise on budgetary matters and to ascertain that applicants' programmes do not overlap with programmes already sponsored through the city's regular services.

It is within the programme's structure and reviewing process that serious blocks to responsive action to the arts by the municipal government exist. The programme is built on a process which insures that new organizations (that is, new to the committee) have no means of making their organizations "known". In theory the application form serves this purpose. In reality an application form only provides a format for comparing similar information. The "knowledge" of what an organization is or does can only come from first hand experience and/or

direct contact.

The reception of applications from Eye Level Gallery and the Centre for Art Tapes illustrate a common problem. The organizations were presenting new and unfamiliar information to the committee. Therefore the committee had no reference point on which to base their decision. Within the application process the applicant had the opportunity to make a 10 to 15 minute presentation to the committee. This practice does take a step toward bringing first hand knowledge to the committee. Unfortunately, it is a very small step in communicating the nature of the organizations to the committee.

As the process now stands the success of any application is dependent on the knowledge that the individual committee member brings with them. This statement is born out by looking at the committee's past record. Last year the committee recommended that over 85% of all money allocated to culture be given to two organizations: Neptune Theatre and Symphony Nova Scotia. This left six thousand dollars for all other applicants under the

cultural programme. Repeatedly the committee has given grants to organizations that have a strong traditional base and have the highest potential audience counts. This will not change until the structure of the grants programme is redefined.

One of the difficulties that the art community has had in dealing with the Tax Concession and Grants programme is the miniscule budget allocated to culture. In the City of Halifax's 1983 budget year the total amount given to culture was \$34,800. Since \$28,500 of this was given to two organizations there is hardly enough left to make the application process worth the time. The remaining money was allotted in amounts of \$450.00 to \$1,000.00. When taking into account the cost of time and energy needed to make the application, the potential amount of money available would hardly cover the cost of preparing the application. Last year the Chairman for the Tax Concessions and grants committee had stated that the amount of money the City of Halifax makes available to culture is not in line with

other cities across the country. Unfortunately, this knowledge has not yet been translated into any action. The budget and structure this year are the same.

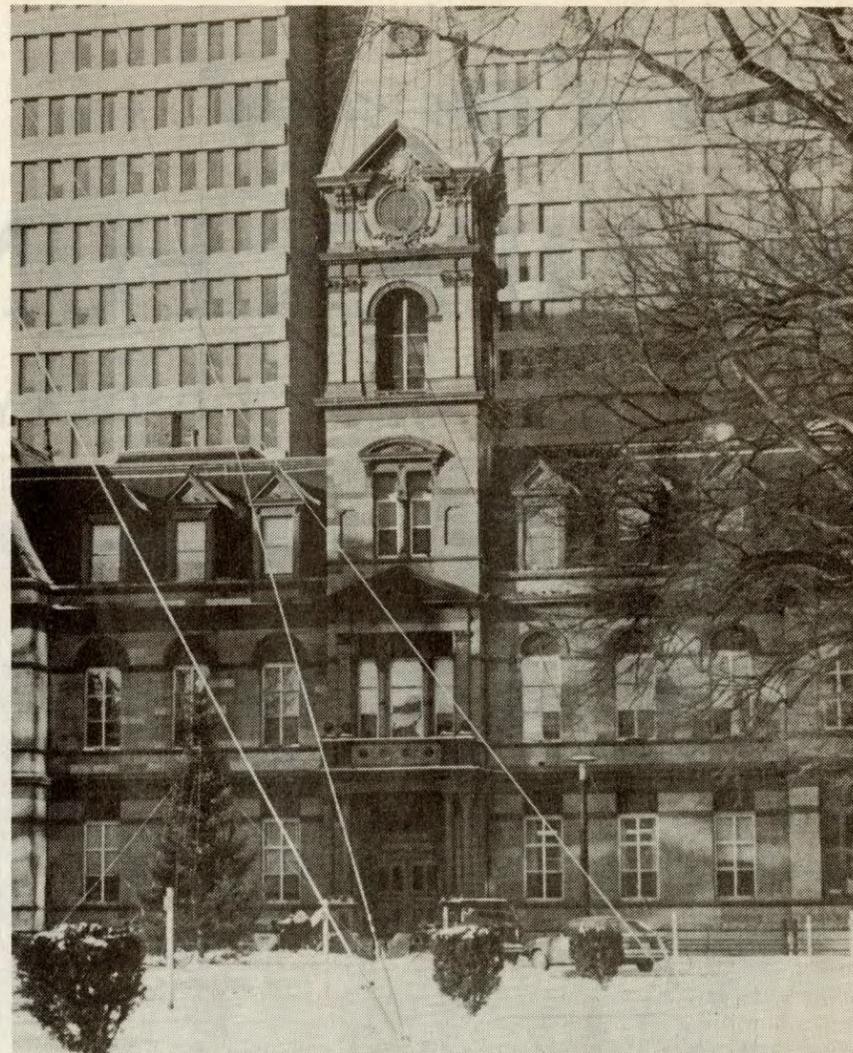
As there has been so little money at stake, the arts community has not taken any concrete steps to lobby or even inform the city of the inadequacy of their programme. It is undoubtedly the responsibility of the council to insure it is meeting the needs of the constituents. However, the arts community could, no doubt, do more to make its voice heard, especially when poor communication between the city and the community is so apparent.

Making It Worth Our While

In order for the city's grant programme to be of value a number of changes are essential. First, consultation between the city and the arts community is essential. It is not enough to have a programme of grants to culture. An effective programme must reflect the community it serves both in structure and in what it offers. A first step would be to hire an individual from within the arts community who would research the existing needs through direct contact with the organizations, as well as public forums. With this knowledge, followed by analysis, the process of designing a new programme could begin.

When analyzing needs and possible means of support it would be important to make the assessment on broader grounds than money. Some of the communities' needs may be met through services the city already offers or has at its disposal. One current programme is that of tax concessions. This programme waves the charges of the business reality tax to some non-profit organizations. But the City is also in possession of certain properties and buildings. It may be more feasible to offer free rent to organizations, than to actually provide funds to pay for rent. The city and the arts community may in fact both gain through a combined programme of funding and use of city services or commodities.

A brief look at other government cultural programmes, shows an inherent difficulty with administration from the top down. Most elected officials are not well versed in cultural



Halifax City Hall – Where the money comes from

matters, especially not in the non-traditional arts. A programme that is administered from within the limitations of a city council is unlikely to meet the needs of a diverse community. If a support programme is going to work it must have a mechanism that will allow a flow of information back and forth. The most obvious and proven method of providing government assistance to the arts is through a body that can operate at "Arms-Length". This enables the elected representatives to work more effectively where they are needed and provides a vehicle to the arts community that can be responsible at the same time.

It would be beneficial at this time for the Tax Concessions and Grants Committee to take the initiative to go out and visit the organizations that have been applying for funds. As a short term measure, for this coming year, it

would also be helpful for City Council to pass a resolution which would allocate more funds to the cultural section of the grants programme. The above are two obvious steps in the process of a more responsive attitude by local government.

In the past, the cultural sector in Nova Scotia has not been able to gain substantial support from the City or the Province. The organizations here, particularly artist-run cooperatives, have received most of their funding from federal sources. But the Provincial Government is beginning to take a more active role in supporting the arts community. It is now time for the municipal governments in the province to play their part.

Gary Conway is a multi-media artist and board member of Eye Level Gallery and Centre for Art Tapes.

Gary Conway

Underdevelopment & the Progressive Press in South Africa

KEYAN TOMASELLI & DON PINNOCK

IN HIS ARTICLE "ADAPT OR DIE: MILITARIZATION & THE SOUTH AFRICAN Media" (FUSE February 1984) Keyan Tomaselli outlined and analyzed the influences of state policy in the mainstream media of South Africa. Here he joins with Don Pinnock in introducing us to the development and implications of the progressive press in South Africa and its context.

THE PROGRESSIVE PRESS IN SOUTH AFRICA - THAT flurry of little newspapers which appeared on the scene from about 1980 - is fast becoming a respectable quarry for academic research. Articles, long papers and theses have been appearing, extending the debate from grassroots issues like housing and sewers to the broader context of class struggle and alternatives to the commercial media.

Most debates at this level have focused on the democratic newsgathering processes of the 'alternative' press and its role in community organisation. In this article we wish to widen the frame even further.

In 1916 Lenin wrote a pamphlet called *Imperialism, the highest stage of Capitalism* in which he traced the change from merchant capital to monopoly capital and the subsequent scramble by the industrial nations for territory in the Third World. In 1876 only 10% of Africa belonged to the European colonial powers. Twenty-four years later, in 1900, this ownership had jumped to 90.4%.

Lenin attributed this change to the growth of finance capital and its control of industry in the European states. This control by 'bank' capital led to a rationalization of production to the point of overproduction and to a massive increase in profits. This superabundance of 'over-ripe' capital, linked to an increasingly glutted home market, caused the rate of profit to fall. The scramble for territory in the Third World, said Lenin, was to provide capital with a terrain for investments where labour was abundant, capital was scarce and profits were high.

Lenin's argument in not without some problems, but its essential understanding remains sound. The only major error Lenin made was to see in imperialism the final phase of capitalism, the last kick of the dying beast. Monopoly capital was to prove more resilient than Lenin realised.

Its refusal to die - in fact its gains in strength - led to a new line of theorization by writers on the left. The wave of independence celebrations in Africa during the 1960s did not lead to the birth of socialism, but to that far more shadowy creature, neo-colonialism. Attempts to understand this by writers such as Frank, Laclau, Leys, Amin, Kay

and Banaji were to produce the concept of underdevelopment which could be used as a verb: to underdevelop.

Crudely summarised, the argument locates in the neo-colonial state a 'comprador' bourgeoisie (often military) which maintains the machinery of control while opening the door to international capital in the form of multinational companies (MNCs). These companies, while ensuring the wealth and power of their local representatives, squeeze massive profits and/or raw material from their Third World hosts. In their drive for super-profits and a world market, the MNCs and cartels represented a new imperialist offensive against the working classes of the Third World. Of course this debate was far more complex than this brief description implies. States like South Africa and Brazil clearly represented areas of independent industrialization. And as we shall see, these 'sub-metropolises' were to play a part in what came to be called secondary imperialism.

The full development of the MNCs took place after the Second World War with the ascendancy of the United States in the arena of international finance and trade. This ascendancy paralleled increasing US demands for an internationally free flow of information. Just as 'development' was to become a semantic cover-up for US dollar-imperialism, so 'free press' was to veil the massive worldwide penetration of US free market ideology. With the increasingly sophisticated technology used in the dissemination of information - from tape recorders, television and wire agencies to direct satellite links - press freedom simply meant the freedom of those with wealth, power and property to flood the media market.

The Americanization of the world was about to begin. But this battle was not won without a fight. The main information networks after the war were the wire agencies. Until the 1950s the world had been carved up by the European agencies of Reuters, Havas and Wolff. After the war the American agency Associated Press (AP) set out to challenge this. The 'free flow' of information ideal - a commercial goal expressed as an ethical imperative - was designed by none other than AP executive manager, Kent Cooper. This was sold to Congress, and in 1945 AP and United Press Interna-

tional delegates visited 22 major cities around the world – travelling in military aircraft – to sell their idea to the world.

When the United Nations was formed, the free-flow doctrine was embedded in its constitution and the development of this idea was given to the US-dominated UNESCO. At the time Guyana's Prime Minister objected to the doctrine. "A nation," he said, "whose mass media is dominated from the outside is not a nation," and he pleaded for an emphasis of quality of news rather than quantity. His lone voice was ignored, buried in the post-war idealism and the desire of the US media to act as the moral conscience of the world. But the line between information and control is a thin one.

The Wars of Liberation

It is curious that the US was quite unprepared ideologically for the wars of national liberation which began in the 1950s. One can only assume it was putting out more information than it was getting in – one way media traffic. Another possible explanation could be the WHO, WHERE, WHEN, WHAT, WHY formula of information gathering. This formula reflects an atomized understanding of events and fragments the press into an assemblage of stereotyped genres and formats.

The molecular movement of guerilla strategies simply didn't show up in the formula. Then on May 7, 1954 French troops surrendered at Dien Bien Phu to forces that had confronted the most sophisticated techniques of traditional warfare with the improvisational, flexible, age-old tactics of guerilla warfare. A new phenomenon had re-emerged onto the stage of war. It appeared that the best armed professional armies could be defeated by poorly fed forces lacking substantial logistic support, as long as they were inspired by the spirit and values of national liberation. The revolutionary wars of the Third World nations had been born.

In 1959 Cuba followed suit, and then Algeria. But the US Generals and foreign advisors were to learn fast. The French surrender in Vietnam was followed by US-aided *coups d'etat* in Iran and Guatemala. The US Defense Department was soon recommending that officers read guerilla war classics as well as Mao, Lenin and Trotsky. Their handbook, though, was the counter-revolutionary 'classic' by a French colonel, Trinquier, called *La Guerre Moderne*. Based on the French experience in Vietnam and Algeria, it characterised the new type of enemy thus:

In modern war, the enemy is especially difficult to define. There is no physical frontier separating the two camps. The line between friends and enemies is drawn within the same nation, within the same village, and sometimes within the same family. It is often an ideological, immaterial frontier, but one which must necessarily be established if we are to be sure of overtaking and vanquishing our adversary.

The masses were there for the taking – by psychological action, akin to the Nazi concept of psychological warfare. This ideological battlefield, said Trinquier, would reduce the enemy's will and ability to work and fight, creating new attitudes which would destroy his morale. Trinquier's ideas are known to have strongly influenced Henry Kissinger and General Douglas McArthur, and were included in US Army instruction manuals. The underlying thrust of these ideas was the formation of the military state with tactics relying heavily on ideological manipulation.

But while US General Staff and academics approved the principle, they preferred a smoother transition towards militarization of the state. The interventionist battle strategy that evolved was designed to take place in both political and civil society – community development plus the ever-present threat of tough action. This strategy during the 1960s and 1970s was made possible through the US National Security Council and the CIA – both bodies which were beyond the surveillance of Congress. The testing ground for the new directives was South America, and the war of fixed position,



to use Gramsci's term, was to be waged ideologically. The crucible for this strategy was to be the South American military academies.

The Academies

Before World War II most right-wing Latin American States had their armies trained by Prussian and then Nazi advisors. The defeat of Germany created a vacuum in those areas which the US was happy to fill. US-staffed military academies were set up in the Panama Canal Zone as well as in Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile, Equador and Bolivia, and thousands of Latin America's top military personnel were trained there. One of these graduates, General Golberý de Couto e Silva, trained at the Brazilian Staff College, was to become the architect of the new strategies:

From a strictly military conception: [he wrote in 1967] war has now been converted into *total war*, a war that is economic, financial, political, psychological and scientific, as well as being a war of armies, naval forces and aviation; from total war to *global war*, and from global war to indivisible war, and why not admit it, permanent war.

It is total war because it does away with the previous distinction made between civilian and military categories. All of society has become a battlefield and every individual is in the camp of the combatants, either for or against. It is total war because the battlefields and the arms used pertain to all levels of individual and community

life, and because this war does not allow the very slightest space to escape from the gravitational pull of the conflict.

The arms are very diverse in nature: political, economic, psychological and military. They also include diplomatic negotiations, alliances and counter-alliances, agreements or treaties with public or secret clauses, commercial sanctions, loans, capital investment, embargoes, boycotts and dumping, as well as propaganda and counter-propaganda, suggestive slogans for internal or external use, means of persuasion, blackmail, threats and even terrorism. . . At the very summit of these objectives, merging with the concept of *total strategy*, one finds the policy of *national security*.

These ideas were the ground rules of the military Junta in Brazil. Coming from *behind* the process of popular democracy, the National Security Doctrine was to preside over the breakup of the democratic and republican state, reversing the balance of power and securing the hegemony of the military-police machinery within the entire state apparatus.

In line with this strategy, Brazil is now ruled by a National Security Council which has become the model for all Latin-American military states. The Council has jurisdiction over every aspect of political and civil life, and provides the President of the Republic "with information on every aspect of daily life that is necessary for planning, development and national security." The Junta is staunchly pro-Christian and sees itself as a bastion between Christianity and Communism. It also allows the highest level of US multinational penetration in South America.

The African Connection

US involvement in the formation of Third World military bureaucracies raises some questions. We must ask to what extent the last decade of recession in the West represents a crisis of long duration for capital – a crisis of liquidity, a falling rate of profit and the imperatives for a new *form* of imperialism. We must also ask in what way this may have intersected with South Africa's own crisis of control during the same period, and about attempts by its ruling class to maintain its position amid spiralling inflation, unemployment and poverty. Since the 1940s this country has seen an unprecedented development of monopolies and cartels. On the Johannesburg Stock Exchange 73% of all registered companies are owned by only three giant MNCs. The greatest proportion of mining and industry has US links – being either MNC owned or serviced, or having a foreign multinational as their main customer. But since the 1950s, the SA state has also been facing a growing challenge from the working classes. Massive worker organisation took place in the 1940s and 1950s, culminating in the state crackdown after Sharpeville in 1960. Repression and the economic boom of that decade served to quieten resistance, but the recession of the mid-1970s found the state in a new crisis of hegemony.

However, the critical shift of balance which followed the 1976 uprising went almost unnoticed in the flurry of the Information Scandal* (was it suppressed by the media?). In a bloodless coup by the Army, the anti-imperialist old-guard of Vorster, Mulder and van den Bergh were replaced by the former Minister of Defence, P.W. Botha, backed by General

* 'Information Scandal' refers to the exposé in the English language press of an attempt by a general of State Security, the Minister of Information and Secretary of Information, to capture power within the government. Headlines and articles about this internal cabinet power struggle dominated the mainstream press at the time. In the end, Botha, previously Minister of Defense, captured power.

Magnus Malan. In the process, the all-powerful State Security council was strengthened and its committees filled out with military personnel.

Terms like 'total strategy', 'total war' and 'national security' became household words in a massive propaganda campaign which followed the takeover. In February 1977 General Malan told the *Sunday Times* in an interview that:

all my answers must be seen within the framework of the concept of total war. In this I refer to the Mao Tse-tung interpretation which has become the essential character of revolutionary strategy since the end of World War II. It implies that every activity of the state must be seen and understood as a function of total war. There are, of course, two characteristic snags with which we are constantly confronted: The conflicting requirements of a total strategy and a democratic system of government.

Central to this new strategy was the co-operation of commerce and industry, and businessmen were first introduced to their new role in the strategy of national defence at the much-published 1979 Carlton Conference with P.W. Botha. However the need to ensure co-operation was to lessen in the next four years amid a boom in monopoly takeovers.

In a radio programme on monopolies Robin McGregor, the editor of *Who Owns Whom*, pointed out that in 1979 the Prime Minister needed to hire the Carlton Centre to talk to the leaders of industry. In April 1983 he could have conducted the conference around his diningroom table, and he could now (August 1983) almost manage around a card table.

South Africa has anti-monopoly laws, but the token board set up to police these giants consists of only *one* full-time member and is ignored by both state and industry alike. The industrial giants are being assured a free hand, cheap labour parcelled away in the Bantustans, a strong military state bureaucracy and a high rate of profit.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the State Security Council (S.S.C.) thinktank was instrumental in the break up of parliament into three internally-neutralising racially-based Houses under a Presidential strong-man. It is also by no mere quirk of personalities that the Reagan administration has moved into a more supportive position with regards to the Botha government. Data at this level of state is hard to obtain, but the parallels between the Brazilian experience (where massive US involvement is well known) and South Africa's trajectory must raise some serious questions.

Equally disturbing is the massive power which has been vested in the State Security Council. In 1977 its brief covered the investigation of:

- political action
- Military/paramilitary action
- Economic action
- Psychological action
- Scientific and technological action
- Religious-cultural action
- Manpower services
- Intelligence services
- Security services
- National supplies, resources and production services
- Transport and distribution services
- Financial services
- Community services
- Communication services

readers, listen to their responses, and find out what they would like to see in the paper. A relationship of trust is thus built up between publishers and readers.

Organization, not only of the community, but of the newspaper itself is fundamental to the success of alternative media ventures. Ironically, the skeleton of such organization has been provided by the skills obtained by black journalists writing for white-owned newspapers. Organizational skills are provided by black trade unionists, particularly the Media Workers Association, Church groups, white English-language university graduates and lecturers, and students involved with the student press. Despite the fact that the white media workers are irrevocably part of the dominant classes, they have sought to deploy their skill and knowledge for the benefit of the working class.

An increasing number of journalism, film and video graduates are resisting co-optation by industry and are forcing a space within which an alternative media can operate. Not only are they helping to organise and produce papers, but a number of organisations aimed at teaching literacy, writing, editing, design and layout have begun to service community newspapers on a national scale. They in turn are supported by a number of media resource centres located at English language universities, the South African Council of Churches and a couple of independent bodies. Their existence remains tenuous, however, as they are self-financed and staffed by voluntary workers who receive minimal remuneration.

Collective production processes lead to a spread of skills which involves individuals in many different operations in the production and distribution of the publication. Since conscientising the working class to the conditions and mechanisms of their exploitation requires education, it makes no sense to fragment knowledge of the communication process. This is the tactic adopted by the commercial media which not only divides up the world into discreet categories and events, but also divides up skills through the division of labour. This in turn prevents a worker gaining an overall view of the production-distribution process. Alternative community media thus require a return to cottage industry where individual workers are not separated from their product. They know, not only where they fit into the community, but also the newspaper itself, and how it fits into the community and the struggle as a whole.

The holistic orientation of this medium thus helps the individual to identify structures and deeper, underlying historical conditions which are responsible for the present arrangement of society. Through this process of discovery, both the media workers and readers come to see that their conditions of existence are not of their own making and that their destiny's cannot easily be altered through hard work, diligence and education. While these papers debunk the myth of the ladder, they simultaneously work to identify alternatives - not only on the macro-level, but at the level of the community on a long term basis. The emphasis is on community-based solutions to solve present-day problems.

Rectifying the Balance

The progressive press has been responsible for opening out debate on the state and alternative social formations. Its function is largely organisational, its editorial practices

democratic, and its focus is on issues rather than on events. The development of these media cannot be seen in isolation from the meeting of 400 organisations to form the United Democratic Front - perhaps the most significant working class organisation since the Congress Movement.

The progressive press in this country, however, has a wider context within which it should ultimately be assessed. In 1972 UNESCO, by then numerically dominated by Third World nations, seriously questioned the idea of an international free flow of information. The policy was proving to be no more than the right of the strongest and richest to flood the media networks. At the 1973 conference of non-aligned nations in Algeria the term 'cultural imperialism' was first used. UNESCO reported that about 90% of the world news disseminated by the press, radio and TV in Asia, Africa and Latin America emanated from centres in Paris, London and New York.

Through UNESCO, the non-aligned countries began working to rectify the balance - amid howls of protest from the Nixon administration. In 1976 UNESCO established the commission for the study of communications problems under Sean MacBride. This found, among other things, that only one fifth of the correspondents of the four major news agencies were in the Third World, which contained two thirds of the planet's population. In 1980 UNESCO approved the McBride Report which provided the basis for what came to be called the New International Information Order. Its aim was to achieve a balance in the north/south informational flow.

The 'leaders of free journalism' responded with a bitter attack during a conference at Talloires, France, accusing UNESCO of advocating 'censorship, on the Russian model'.

The UNESCO response was that news was a social function - one of the fundamental human rights - not merchandise. Nations had a right to choose their information sources. 'Freedom of the press' had been converted into a conduit for US multinationals to plunder the Third World by virtue of their superior technology and wealth.

At the Belgrade Conference UNESCO, Resolution 4/19 was adopted, formalising the stand of The New World Information and Communication Order. The unwritten force of its rejection was against US media imperialism, the cutting edge of multinational penetration into the Third World.

The progressive press in South Africa is thus part of a global struggle to free workers from the grip of MNCs and their national militia. Hopefully this press is the embryo of a new national informational system based on the principles tabled at the Belgrade conference.

How long this press will survive in the present political climate depends on its organisational base in the vanguard of a working class movement, but history shows that even in the most oppressive conditions people have never stopped mimeographing leaflets or painting walls at the risk of their lives. A sophisticated Third World newsroom, a South African grassroots newsletter and the humble wall newspaper in a Mozambican village are now tightly bound by the common goal of kicking the fox out of the chicken coop. The progressive press is not alone anymore.

Keyan Tomaselli and Don Pinnock are writers and educators in Grahamstown, South Africa.

Unearthing Labour's Cultural History in B.C.

Sara Diamond

I say with all seriousness that a cultured workers' movement is a workers' movement strengthened a thousand fold. And a workers' movement cannot become cultured if it is taught to distrust and sneer at any art that does not come out of its own class. Workers need to feel the impact of all of the art energy that has every been generated.

THIS QUOTE DERIVES NOT FROM THE DEBATES OF the intellectual left of the 1960s to 80s but rather from the pages of the B.C. Worker of 1935, the Communist Party of Canada's Western newspaper. Its author is Guy Glover, the then co-director of the Vancouver Progressive Arts Players' production of Waiting for Lefty, which would go on to win the provincial round of the Dominion Drama Festival and prize for best English play in the Ottawa finals.

It is relevant here on two levels. First, it was part of a sudden flurry of cultural activity and discussion within the ranks of the left, an activity that was to continue for some three years, wane and then re-emerge in altered form during the latter war years. Second, it represented one of two quite polarized positions on the development of a cultural political consciousness, positions which to this day co-exist. Glover's opponents saw the value of art production only if it was in direct service to the revolution, with the proletariat as the revolutionary class. Art was simply one form of ideological expression, the artist's allegiance defined irrevocably by the hand that fed her or him. Bourgeois culture, in both form and consciousness was moribund. It was possible, through conscious effort to develop art which was proletarian in its character, untouched by bourgeois ideology. A considered critique of form as well as content was a waste of time.

The other position idealized creativity, tending to strip it from its material location, but placed a positive emphasis on cultural experience as freeing and pleasurable as well as instructive, an experience that questions critically as much as it answered. An art that was subordinated to the political line and immediate needs of any class was "a caged eagle: a stinking unnatural object." The working class did not need protection from bourgeois culture, but rather the right to draw from it to build its own cultural expression. Artists must choose "sociologically" where they would place their

class allegiance.

The weakness with both of these positions was that they ignored the existence of indigenous, fragmented, often locally-based expressions of working class cultural experience, expressions from the daily experience of working class people where they are located, in communities and workplaces, and which, although not coalesced into a self-conscious cultural practice, represent a real and important rupture from the dominant ideology. Both rely instead on "others", whether the party, or the intelligencia, for the creation of, on one hand "working class culture" and on the other, "good art." While I believe that the contribution of left-leaning artists was an important one in creating one stream of a "culture of resistance" in British Columbia, I believe equally that we must include the expressions that working class people themselves organized if we are to truly understand the dynamics of class consciousness and cultural experience.

Defining Terms and Contexts

A working definition of a "culture of resistance" would be useful at this point. Once given, I'll examine its application to three areas of B.C.'s cultural history: that of a small logging community in Lake Cowichan in the years 1935-45 and particularly the role of the I.W.A. Women's Auxiliary in developing a cultural life; then, the experience of workers in a fruit canning operation in the Okanagan in the early 1950s and finally, the cultural activities associated with the B.C. Communist party in Vancouver in the years 1935-45.

A culture of resistance is rooted in the specific conditions which its members experience: geographic, economic and cultural; these conditions may be shared with other groups and this awareness can be part of the cultural expression, or the expression can be insular. But it will be specific. A culture of resistance is activating and empowering rather than passively consumed. It is critical of existing social relations, either consciously or objectively. It has a collective quality to its practice. Lastly, I believe that as a partial rupture from the dominant ideology, it will reflect the continued dominance of aspects of that ideology, either in form or content.

Lake Cowichan

What is interesting about the Lake Cowichan Women's Auxiliary is that it played the major role in forming both a formal and informal cultural life within its community - one administered, fought for and partially defined by the women in question. The 1930s was the first period in which a stable workforce developed for the wood industry in B.C. High levels of unemployment encouraged men to settle near the expanding logging operations to insure that they would be called back after shutdowns. Companies found this accessible, as yet non-union, skilled labour force an amenable development, assuming that loyalties to wife and family would discourage unionization in a hard economic period. The opposite occurred: a community meant that men were committed to staying with one company, therefore improvements in conditions were worth fighting for. And on top of this, there was an unforeseen dynamic: women who settled in the Lake Cowichan area experienced the direct effects of their husbands dangerous and exploited conditions in the woods, as well as the total lack of amenities. They quickly became a powerful and organized force fighting for safety, decent housing, electricity, schools, roads, communications, and a community which would support the development of the unionism required to achieve these goals. This is what women reacted to when they moved to The Lake in the 1930s:

CONDITIONS:

Lil Godfrey: There was no indoor plumbing, no electric light, no running water. We had a well. Then a fellow installed a small water system; you couldn't waste water and you didn't have hot water, just cold water on the back porch. At first we had gas lamps or coal, up 'til 1937. There was no power. Period. No washing machines or electric irons. The first electricity we had was run on a big diesel engine down on the corner, hooked up to a water system just for lights and one at a time. Lights would go out at one o'clock in the morning, and you had to have all your work done by then. If you got up on early shift, which the

loggers had to do in those days, you wouldn't have any light. In the summer, when the water got low, it would just be a little yellow flicker up there.

Laurie Belign: They used to log quite close; you could hear the whistles from the wood. So many whistles would be a death, so many whistles an accident. All the women would gather and wait; it was seven whistles was a death. They used to be terrified for that next whistle. Whenever the ambulance went by, you went down, just to see whether it was your one or who it was. It was someone you knew, always. It was a closely knit community. One of the first projects of the auxiliary was to demand a better road from Lake Cowichan to Duncan because the hospital was in Duncan.

June Olsen: You didn't have any guarantee of working. If the boss didn't like the colour of your eyes he could fire you. A lot of the men had to go out of the woods by speeder and they worked six days a week. They'd come down to their families Wednesday for two hours and then they'd have to go back to camp. Then they'd come out Saturday night and have to be back in camp Sunday night. There really was no family life ... You were just a grass widow. All you saw was women and children.

The Auxiliary was organized by local union men and a committed woman, Edna Brown. It provided an essential social network for isolated women, but one that was oriented towards achieving specific goals. Even the reluctant joined, as this testimony from Eva Wilson suggests:

"We arrived after Fred got fired for organizing the miners. The scow that went from Number One to Protection was called the WE TOO so he edited this paper and it came out for a long, long time; it was called the WE TOO, but it was 'WE TOO WANT A SQUARE DEAL'. When they found out who was editing the paper, out he went. We were married in '33, I didn't know anything about it until after we were married.

"We came to Youbou on the 24th of May for a week-end and I been here ever since. It was '34 when the loggers

walked over the back of the mountain and came to pull the mill out. Fred was workin' on the loading deck. He was the only one that came out in sympathy with the loggers. Fred 'worked' for a week and a half and never let me know; I put up his lunch every morning. I was never so mad in my life because he had promised me he would never organize again. But that was a laugh! He was on the picket line. When I found out, God was I mad! Jesus! Well you would have been too, making his lunch for a whole week and a half. What could I do; married with one baby. You couldn't leave your husband in those days, with a family. No car, no money, or anywhere to go. You had to stick it out.

"To keep peace in the family I joined the auxiliary. I was taking a real good active part in it because Fred and Archie and Hjalmar were travelling by boat, sometimes they had to swim too, to get to Camp 6. They were trying to organize the camp. They'd come home 3 - 4 o'clock in the morning. I would have a big pot of stew ready for them; they'd be frozen. They stayed a lot at my place."

The women initiated countless dances at the picket camp, an outpost created for the 1936 strike in the woods industry. Dances and social gatherings drew the community together as a unit, but they also served as a cover for signing up new union members. During the strike the Auxiliary pooled food from hunting, gardens, and local farmers, insuring that none would go hungry. The women campaigned for and won a new road to Duncan, the route that ambulances carrying wounded loggers would travel. It also enforced a morality based on male responsibility to women and children:

Eva Wilson: We'd go so we'd get the money off them. That's why the women walked in a body across to meet the men. Otherwise the floozies from the Red Light District would meet them first ... Then we'd walk to the speeder on Sunday night and then, of course the women would get together and sit and knit until three o'clock in the morning.

As the community expanded with the lessening of the Depression, new women were urged to join. Most inhabitants of the village were engaged

in logging related activities. Outside of the auxiliary's events there was little to do, other than provide for the necessities of life. There was no radio, for example, due to the mountainous terrain and the underdevelopment of B.C.'s airwaves. There were no movies.

With the outset of the war the auxiliary expanded to over 50 members as logging boomed and sign-up continued in the industry. The priority was no longer industrial action, but the fight against fascism and the development of activities to support the war effort. Logging was an essential industry, so many of the area's men remained on the job. The women met weekly to conduct social, educational, business

tickets), took over the local Parent Teachers Assoc., making it an active force in the area, and in 1942 organized the United Organizations, a co-ordinating committee of all of the existing women's groups which had developed since the war. On top of this were regular bazaars, card games, bake sales, concerts, parties, dances and, at the end of the war, a local theatre group. As well, Scandinavian members helped to initiate a Scandinavian Club, to hold folkloric events. They adopted positions to argue in the United Auxiliaries of the union and sent delegates, many of whom had never been outside of the small radius of Vancouver Island, to Oregon conventions. Their events drew up to 500

tal, political voice in their community and beyond, access to new skills and a definite respect at the Lake. Second, the auxiliary was above all staunchly pro-union and functioned as an instrument to increase working class identification and organization. Where, then, did it fail to rupture from the dominant culture?

Many of the members did not see themselves as challenging traditional female roles, although they would have fought against restrictions on their auxiliary involvement. Also, the auxiliaries' political and fundraising priorities were defined by the union (albeit with discussion) and these, in turn, were defined by an increasingly centralized Communist Party leadership cadre. Support for the war effort meant a reiteration of patriotism and a de-emphasis on class struggle. And finally, the cultural forms and actual content did not directly challenge bourgeoisie culture, although the context of their use did.

Oliver, B.C.

The second experience is that of members of the Fruit and Vegetable Workers Union in the Aylmer's cannery in Oliver, B.C. Alma Faulds had led an unsuccessful strike against the cannery which was lost when fruit growers' wives crossed the picket line made up of other working women. The union remained in the plant and was able to win improvements in conditions and wages, but it opted for gradual reform rather than strike action. The workforce encompassed many German immigrants, Doukours and Anglo-Saxon workers.

Alma used cultural activities to develop a strong sense of workplace community, pleasure in the work process (which was tedious and heavy) to unite diverse national groups and to wrest occasional concessions from her employers. Other union members participated in the almost daily pranks: sticking tails on the rumps of unsuspecting co-workers, gluing a prankster's sandwich together, exchanging amusing gifts, spinning yarns. Workers collaborated on regular theatre events which re-enacted amusing incidents and humbled harsh foremen. Alma and others provided a running commentary of doggerel on the bulletin board, cartoons and art displays.



Children in Sports Day Parade 1945

and political planning. They rotated chairing and speaking skills, and attended union meetings to argue for policies which they supported. They initiated a Red Cross Club, swimming instruction for children, knitting clubs, taught knitting, sewing, tatting at the schools, made jam for the T.B. solarium, lobbied for milk for school children, fought for a high school, secured medical facilities in the village, set up cooperative playgroups for local kids, organized mountaineering hikes for children, brought in speakers from outside the community on current political and women's issues, established a loggers' sports day, children's parade, Lady of the Lake contest (the winner was she who sold the most

residents from the area around the Lake.

There is no question that these activities were rooted in local conditions, that there was a collective quality to the experience. In the absence of formal cultural institutions, they represented a self-created cultural life. The Auxiliary reflected a critical consciousness in two important ways. First, as women, its members would otherwise have been restricted to a traditional isolation within their own domestic units. The auxiliary, although based on the traditional division of labour in the family and associated with traditional women's social and cultural activities, also provided the women with an instrumen-

Management tolerated, and at times encouraged, this activity. It served as an outlet for tensions on the shop floor, perhaps regulated supervisory personnel who got too big for their boots and provided a means of settling local grievances, while solidifying a positive attitude towards work.

In the following examples, Alma and her co-workers confront a foreman; deal with an incident of sexual harassment and force the company to live up to a promise to let them off early:

One year my sister-in-law came along and said, "Why don't you do

Venables white lumberman's socks and put blue ribbons on them, and I made a baby bonnet with ruffles and a white flanelette night gown and we borrowed a pink lady's bedjacket. I made a rattle out of a big tin of apple juice and I covered it with blue paper and put sand in it so it rattled and my husband made a handle for it. We had a wine bottle for the baby bottle, and I didn't know but Morris [the actor] filled it halfway with liquor so that he could stand this whole thing. And when we pulled the curtain there he lay in the crib and was kicking his stupid feet and Freda Hutton was singing, "Hush-a-bye baby..." I don't know whether it

all of the girls. So I did a little story on that. I asked management if we could decorate the bulletin board. George Elliot said, "I'm very suspicious of what you're going to do, but I'm also very curious, so go ahead." So this guy (the inspector) was propositioning my younger sister, who was 19 years younger than I am and expecting her second baby. And all the women were wearing button-up shirts to protect themselves from him, and little scarves. He was real macho and he was dirty and this was before the days of women talking about being harrassed. So I decided this was not quite right.

So I drew a take-off of him and signed it Chief Lung Inspector. So one of the foremen came out to say, "What do you mean Chief Lung Inspector?" And I said, "Don't you read Readers' Digest? The little boy came home and his mother wanted to buy him a V-necked sweater and he got upset and said: 'I don't want a V-necked sweater because the other day my teacher wore one and one of her lungs fell out.'" It took about two minutes for that story to get to the back to the fruit inspector and he was furious, he was embarrassed and he didn't talk to me for two years.

One Halloween, we had been promised that we would get off; we were working nine hours a day, six days a week, from early September and by the end of October, a lot of the packers were flaked out. When management came along and said, "On Saturday we're only working half a day," it meant a great deal to us. In the meantime, B.C. Fruit Trees decided that they needed to fill another order and management came along and said, "You're not going to get a half day off." Although we were happy to work and get the wages, after two months you became very tired working 54 hours a week. So after the manager came round, the manager's wife said to me: "Alma, we've got to do something, we have to have a half day off on Saturday." The manager didn't know.

We decided to decorate the bulletin board. I said, "I'll go home and get my kids to cut out a whole bunch of cats sitting on a black fence, and we'll have a moon. She says, "I'll bring a skeleton and you write some of your poetry." So what do I put:

"The Swiss still yodel, the Swiss still yell, but all of our plans are shot to

Hell. We want it off, we've had a shock, we have to work til 5 o'clock! We now implore the powers that be, perhaps they'll let us off at 3."

That was from the workers. Then I did one for management:

"Now do your work and don't lament, So much time off won't pay your rent."

We decorated the stupid bulletin board with all these things; the manager's wife and I came in early in the morning. Before the ten o'clock recess the foreman came round and said, "I think you should look at the bulletin board Alma." And by this time Charlie Morgan, the manager, had got busy and written a doggerel verse, "O-W-E-D to the workers: you'll be through at 12".

Again, these cultural expressions are specific to a concrete working class experience; they occur within the confines of a plant, but reflect the attitudes of a fairly conservative group of workers who lived in a tightly knit, single-industry community. Theatre, verse and art are used to confront working conditions, to allow a collective identity which helped to sustain union organization. There is a collective quality to both the execution and content of events. Although critical of immediate workplace conditions and hierarchies, this activity is limited to an acceptance of ongoing work in the plant under the same, if slightly improved social relations. While an acceptance of different cultural groups resulted from this atmosphere, verses and parodies also reflect stereotyping. Sexism was a definite element of both pranks and theatre: Alma uses a sexist joke to challenge an inspector who sexually harrasses.

Vancouver

Alongside these indiginous expressions, a far more self-conscious cultural movement had emerged, as both adjunct and direct expression of the B.C. Communist Party. Developing in the 1930s in the urban context of Vancouver, workers' theatre, arts and publications sought to challenge the surrounding bourgeois culture that denied the reality of working class life and reinforced a reliance on bourgeois political solutions.

This cultural movement emerged in a period of political crisis. Vancouver was a closed middle class W.A.S.P.

community, one that was experiencing an "invasion" of the nation's unemployed, out-of-work "bindlestiffs" from the province's resource industries and immigrant workers. Throughout the 1930s, Vancouver abounded with militant unemployed organizing, Communist-led sit-down strikes, a vibrant women's movement, violent police repression of the 1935 Longshoremen's strike and of actions by unemployed. A growing working-class political life was divided primarily between the blossoming Communist Party and the social-democratic Cooperative Commonwealth Federation.

At the same time, a stultified middle class tuned in to primitive radio stations, attended the downtown cinema and local theatre, desperately denying that they too might end up on a bread-line. Working class cultural life centred on the street and in local gathering places. Here political debate occurred, and music and humour abounded. There was second run movies, long-standing minority community activities and sports.

The city was polarized along class lines. Given this context, it is not surprising that progressive intellectuals such as Guy Glover and Garfield King, a local civil rights lawyer, decided to organize a popular theatre, one that would show up moribund and romantic bourgeois culture, and provide a vital political alternative. They hoped that the *Progressive Arts Players* would "draw its support from the people itself", while convincing them that they must act to change reality in a global sense.

In early 1936, less than a year after they had begun, the *PAP* won the regional competition of the Dominion Drama Festival with their production of *Waiting for Lefty*. The police censors had attempted to close the play, then settled with the removal of two words, "fruit" and "Sonovabitch", from the script. (The threat of censorship plagued political organizations and progressive arts throughout the Thirties: everything from Tim Buck's speeches on the radio, to Chinese revolutionary movies were cut and theatre licences were revoked.) Packed houses meant that the *PAP* was not closed down altogether. In B.C., the left theatre presented plays by local writers such as Hal Griffin rejecting a

total Americanization of content.

Moving to a mobile format in 1937, the *PAP* toured its one-act plays such as *Hostage*, *And the Answer Is* and *Bury the Dead* to anti-fascist groups, unemployed and youth organizations. It favoured unemployed workers as actors and drew from communities such as the Eastern European, with existing living theatre traditions, for its personnel. The *PAP's* relationship to the Communist Party was apparently symbiotic - party-led events and organizations created performance venues: the politics and cultural stance of the party influenced the content of plays and the resulting cultural milieu allowed for a holistic view of politics. The *PAP* inspired other left-wing troupes and in 1937, the CCF began a theatre group in Vancouver; a *PAP* existed in Victoria and small theatres sprang up elsewhere.

The Communist Party also developed a dynamic workers' press during the Depression. It is here that the greatest leeway is given to immediate working class expression, with the development of worker-correspondents from 1935-37, at *The B.C. Worker* (later *The People's Advocate*). These correspondents contributed news, analytical articles, poetry, prose, reviews, cartoons, woodcuts and humour pieces. Dialogues or mini-plays were often used to explicate political predicaments. Prose always had a political moral behind it; for example, in the story, *Her Wedding Night* (October 4, 1935), a man who has rejected marriage in the spirit of "free love" realizes that his girlfriend is right: Communists do support the working class family and legal marriage. Poetry rejoices in "A Workers Press": "...the melting pot/into which we pour/the fiery liquid/and seething passions/long smouldering 'neath injustice," or calls to office workers to rise up: "Look to steel!/Look to coal!/ Look to lumber!/Everywhere the answer is the same./To be free..." The paper coached its lay writers to help them to express the party line in their articles.

As Popular Front policies became more current in the province, the party's attitude to cultural activity seems also to have changed. In the early 1930's the Party condemned bourgeois cultural as expressed through high art, theatre and the mass culture of Hollywood; favouring instead the creation



Trcedero Strike 1930's

something about Bob Venables?" Bob Venables was the show-off foreman, the big trap. I decided that we would do the life of Bob Venables. It turned out that the night he was born, his father had got very drunk and couldn't stay in the house and went out to sleep in the hay loft. We managed to get the baby carriage that had been Bob Venables' original baby carriage. We talked one of the men into being Bob Venables as a baby, one woman was Bob Venables' mother: I had a skirt my mother wore in 1913, it was felt green ... Management was terrific, they always cooperated. I would have fits: is this going to go over; have I got the right to do this; can I make fun of the packinghouse? I got the baby

was revengeful; I think there was a need to make fun of the things that happened. We did the whole life of Bob Venables: he nearly died. It went on and on. The manager went to school with him and he had a year book. He wouldn't let me see the whole year book, just that parts that pertained to Bob Venables, "just in case some day, Alma, you might decide to do a take-off on me." And the whole family came forth with gossip. And in the end we all sang songs like *The Packers Lament*: "You come to work each morning..."

We did a take-off on the fruit inspectors. They, ordinary, very common people, became part of management. We had a fruit inspector and he would stare down the front of the blouses of

of new cultural forms based on the struggle for socialism.

By 1937 the party press points in a new direction, towards a fascination with Hollywood and mainstream sports; a rediscovery of bourgeois art and an internationalization of cultural reportage. Film columns that had recently denounced the industry's decadence now provided updates on gossip, as well as progress reports on the organization of the studios, reviews of films such as *Juarez* where, "Hollywood Pays Its Tribute to Liberty", and news of stardom's growing support for the Spanish Republic.

The message is confusing: the reputation of the stars and their support for radical politics on one hand is used to legitimize the left; on the other hand, the function of and ideology within mass culture is not examined.

International sports comprises one of the major features of the paper, and international coverage such as reviews of Jean Renoir's new films or Italian Marinette shows, book reviews from the American Communist press, the filming of *Spanish Earth* by Ivans and descriptions of Soviet and Chinese films become a regular feature.

In part, these changes represent the growing working class access to the mass media as much as the party's shift to a more liberal stance. At the same time however, Canadian cultural events slid into the back pages and then out of print. There is no reportage of local minority cultural activity, whether Eastern or Northern European, Native, Japanese, Chinese or East Indian, despite the existence of active and radical expressions in these communities. The turn to mass culture is not theorized except for a single article on the *Vancouver Theatre of Action* that called for an interactive theatre that comes to its audience, capable of constructing a relationship with the viewer, one that will challenge the growing appeal of mass culture.

The war brought rapid cultural advances to Vancouver as well as thousands of prairie migrants; new industrial and service jobs and a booming trade union movement. Radio became widespread and varied, movie houses, concert and dance halls catered to working class audiences who could afford leisure activity for the first time.

The Communist Party's position on the war underwent a number of dram-

atic changes, from an anti-war stance, to support for the Hitler-Stalin Pact to all out support for the war effort after the invasion of the Soviet Union. Apparently, conflicts and confusion about shifts in the Party line vis à vis the war resulted in the dissolution of the workers' theatre movement.

By 1943, a left-wing cultural movement, the Labour Arts Guild re-emerged. It was led by John Goss and comprised of intellectuals in and around the Labour Progressive Party (CPC). It was "a community effort on the part of workers in industry and the various arts, designed to foster closer cooperation between organized labour and those engaged in advancing the progress of music, fine arts, literature and drama." It encouraged unions to introduce cultural events into workplaces where they had jurisdiction, in order to assist the war effort. Films, dances and concerts could be held at noon hours and shift changes.

Its most notable achievement was the "B.C. At Work Exhibition", a tribute to industrial workers in B.C. and worker-artists. The trade union movement contributed \$600 in prizes for the contestants. The exhibition ran from November to December at the Vancouver Art Gallery, then moved to the more accessible Boilermakers' Hall. Majorie Robertson, a Boeings Aircraft worker won first prize for her sculpture of a rivetter at work on a plane. Other images included foundry workers, prospectors, millworkers, dairymen; an extensive painting by cartoonist Fraser Wilson, detailed the efforts to organize the West Coast shipyards. The federal government perceived the exhibit as an effective boost to the war effort; and produced a pamphlet, *The People Paint*, in the hope of stimulating similar efforts in other cities.

The Guild reintroduced a workers' theatre, producing *Six Men of Dorset*, about Communist political prisoners, with a cast of trade unionists. Yet despite numerous concerts and events during the war years, the Guild seems to have disappeared by 1945.

Through the 1930s and '40s, the cultural movement associated with the Communist Party played an important, if limited, role in developing an alternate culture. While indiginous cultures of resistance tended to work from the bottom up - that is, finding the drama, humour and at times the

political lesson in concrete daily situations - the urban cultural left tended to adjust theatre, literature, music and art to express a political purpose. Specific cultural forms were endorsed or rejected in part because they corresponded to a particular stance - be it militant or populist. The B.C. party was fairly autonomous, with a strong working class base; cultural activities reflected this in choosing work by local authors, playwrights and artists. While instigators of the cultural movement were usually from outside the class that was represented on stage or canvas, they effectively incorporated workers and unemployed into events, and inspired some local initiatives, such as a shipyard workers' review.

Ultimately, the progressive cultural movement came up against the growing hegemony of mass culture and the breakdown of community and workplace-based audiences. While the wartime leftwing culture had provided a proud and positive image of working class people and an outlet for working class artists and writers, this expression occurred within the strict constraints of the party's all out support for the war effort. The idealized imagery masked the conflict within working class experience although it depicted working class contexts. While L.P.P. union leaders used the radio to argue pro-union politics and the right of women to continue to work, there was no attempt to critically deal with the growing domination of mass culture over previously semi-autonomous forms of working class expression. If anything, party cartoons and movie reviews regurgitated the dominant culture. In the post-war period, the increasing separation of artists from working class experience, the continued subordination of culture to party policies and blindness to the dynamics of working class cultural expression meant that left-wing cultural activity would grow nostalgic and marginalized in the face of a growing reaction. Attempts to create a working class cultural alternative would lie dormant until the radicalization of the late sixties and early seventies. The Solidarity movement of 1983 would see the first incorporation of cultural workers into trade union and popular mobilizations on a mass scale in almost forty years.

Sara Diamond

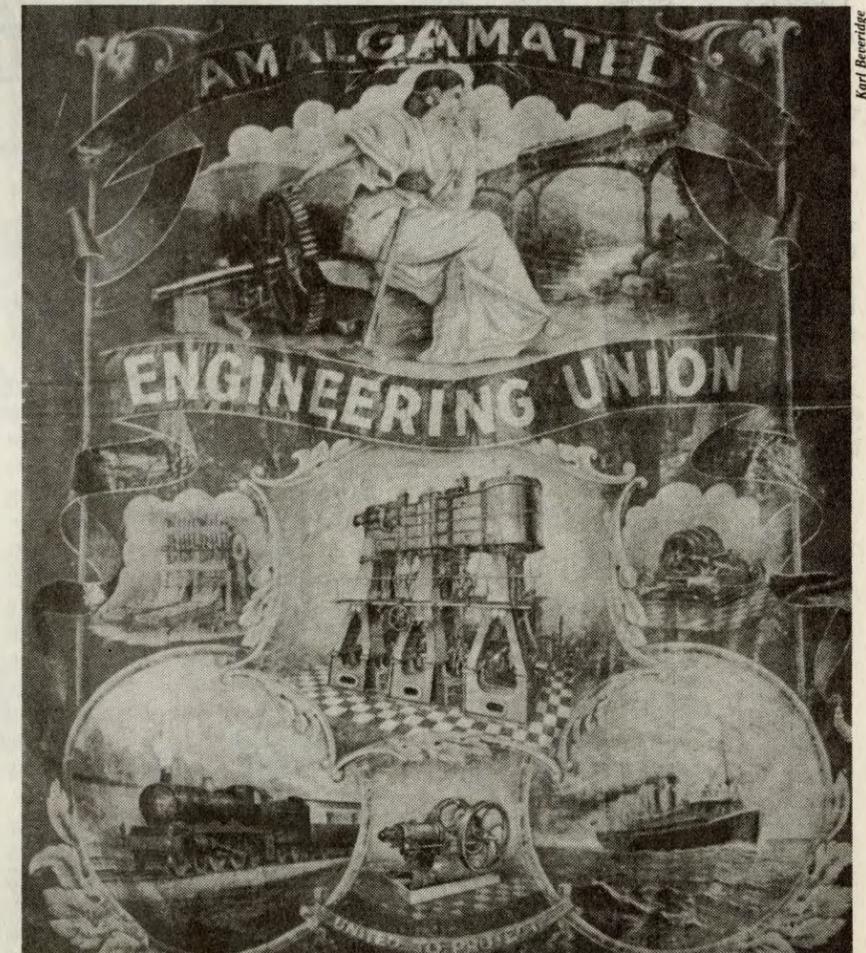
Australian Art and Working Life

BARBARA WALSH

A UNIQUE FEATURE OF THE AUSTRALIAN SCENE IS THE STRENGTH AND cultural impact of the labour movement. Australians won the 8 hour day in 1854 and today 52% of workers are unionized. Strong unions emerged as a cohesive social force in 1890's, and throughout the 20's to 40's, socially committed artists worked with the union movement on projects from union banners and workplace murals to union communications.

UNION BANNERS HAVE A SPECIAL place in Australian labour history. Large scale and ornate, the banners follow a tradition which can be traced to the trade guilds of Britain. During the 1850's union banners were also to be found in Canada but their use died out here with the Americanization of the labour movement. In Australia, they came to represent the pride and identity of not only the major unions but of individual locals. Banners were paraded through the streets at May Day rallies and other demonstrations. Special banners were commissioned during the 30's to commemorate Australian unionists going off to fight against the fascists in the Spanish Civil War.

After WWII, banner making and other union cultural activities were dampened down by the wave of anti-communism which swept the west. Previously strong communist part involvement in the unions, particularly in the visible areas of union leadership and cultural organising, was suppressed as the influence of American McCarthyism found its manifestations in Australia and other western nations. A measure of the strength of labour and left traditions in Australia, however, can be found in the failure of government's attempts to outlaw the





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Communist Party. The rejection by the voters of this proposed legislation also took place during the fifties.

In the 60's, Australian anti-Vietnam war activism renewed labour interest in cultural programs. With worldwide recession beginning in the mid-70's, layoffs and anti-union backlash have forced Australian unions to find creative ways to inform and mobilize their membership. In 1982, pressured by artists and the trade union movement, the Australian Arts Council introduced the Art and Working Life program, in cooperation with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (Australia's equivalent to the Canadian Labour Congress). This new program aims to build on the tradition of working class culture and to identify and finance arts and cultural projects in cooperation with unions.

In July of this year, the Community Arts program at A Space hosted an evening with two Australian artists, Gregor Cullen and Michael Callaghan, co-founders of Redback Grafix, a poster workshop known throughout Australia for its excellent work on issues of concern to working people. Redback's founders had broken new

ground in 1980 by becoming the first artists funded by the Australian Arts Council to work with the union movement. They were thus forerunners of the 1982 Art and Working Life program. The Toronto audience was inspired by Redback's work and struck as much by the similarities as by the differences in the Canadian and Australian cultural scenes.

Both Cullen and Callaghan grew up in Wollongong, a coal and steel town, (population 300,000), 50 miles from the state capital of Sydney. Both left Wollongong to pursue their art education, thanks to a 1972 program introduced by a labour government, providing grants for post secondary education. Returning in 1979, they found Wollongong was suffering severely from the de-industrialization of Western 'developed' nations. As prices rose, international competition escalated and multinationals pulled out their machinery and put their money elsewhere.

Unemployment in Wollongong this summer was 18 percent or, if you are female and/or under 25, 30 percent. Government strategy to meet the crisis has been to encourage tourism, hoping

to transform workers in heavy industries into waiters, waitresses, cooks and chauffeurs. The tourist transformation has however not yet happened and the town continues to stagger beneath the recession. In this context of economic upheaval Cullen and Callaghan have no shortage of work. Posters are needed for striking workers, women's groups, immigrants (Wollongong has 75 different language groups, due to immigration in the post WWII boom years), unemployed youth, aboriginal activists and the host of other groups. In fact, there is undoubtedly more work than can be handled by the workshop facilities.

Obtaining funds for the workshop is a continual headache. When Cullen and Callaghan first started working in Wollongong, they had no capital to invest in equipment and had to travel 50 miles to Sydney to have work printed. When, in 1980, they received funding from the Arts Council as artists in residence with the local trades and labour council, it covered two salaries and contributed \$6,000 for equipment. Under pressure from the trades and labour council, the town council rented Redback a workshop space for

nominal rent. This year, job creation programs have enabled them to hire 4 more artists on a 9 month contract, but there is no guarantee that these contracts will be renewed by the federal government. Cullen and Callaghan's grants from the Arts Council must also be renewed yearly; so grant applications take up a large part of their time.

Cullen and Callaghan would like Redback to become as self-supporting as possible, but they acknowledge they will always need some form of state support. They certainly don't believe that state funding agencies should be let off the hook, since most state funds already go to support elite art forms such as symphony orchestras and the opera. Callaghan and Cullen consider Redback's work equally valid. To subsidize their work with the community organisations, they would like to capture a share of the market which is able to pay commercial rates, but have not yet had the time to aggressively pursue this. They have however made some headway in this direction.

Commercial clients have included the town council of Wollongong, the local university, an art gallery and a

theatre group. Redback has also produced some election posters. Another possible revenue-generator is the production of their own poster series on various issues of concern, such as nuclear energy.

Despite financial difficulties, Redback has become known throughout Australia for the excellence and professionalism of their work. The phone has been ringing for 4 years and clients quite often have to be turned away.

Redback's money blues are all too familiar to Canadian artists working with community and labour organisations, as is the feeling that the rug may be pulled out from under such projects as the recession deepens and conservative governments cut back art budgets. And while a country (even a continent) may be an island, the reach of conservative governments span oceans of apparent political autonomy.

The 1975 CIA dirty tricks operation that toppled the Australian Labour government is a case in point. In March 1984, *Mother Jones*, a San Francisco-based magazine, ran a piece by Australian journalist Phillip Frazer which detailed how, for apparently

the first time, the US meddled in the electoral politics of its major allies in the industrialized world. The Labour government angered the US by pulling out Australian troops from Vietnam. In addition, a Labour economic policy of buying back Australian land and resources from foreign hands caused multinational investments to plummet. Labour's reluctance to cooperate with the massive US satellite spy operation which had been built in central Australia with the blessing of the conservatives further angered the CIA. In the end, a CIA/Conservative coalition won and Labour went down to 7 1/2 years of defeat and disarray. The present labour government, elected in 1983, has abandoned its grand vision of nationalizing the country's resources, and is a lot more cautious about criticizing US foreign policy and the CIA. Canadians, accustomed to casting a rueful eye at the 'shenanigans' of our giant neighbour to the south will appreciate the delicacy of Australia's US problem.

Redback's style is eclectic. They draw on images from labour culture,



Red Back Graphics



Detail from a street mural in Sydney produced by Carol Rouff, Helen Sky, Nora Bindle, Marie McMahon, Jan Mackay and Barbary O'Brien in 1982.

in Australia and elsewhere, to emphasize the continuity of working people's history. Thus their images can be derived from the Russian heroic worker tradition, and from labour struggles in the thirties. One striking image reminiscent of the 30's is of two business men on a hill, overlooking a steel mill. The men on the hill are giants, making decisions for all the 'little people' below.

Images from the daily press are also recycled, and contemporary trends are reflected, such as the punk trend. A fluorescent promo for a co-op/community radio station depicts two punk announcers/d.j.'s and is captioned, "Radio Red All Over: don't be left without it." One of the most arresting images in the Redback show was a poster based on a photograph of children playing in front of their house, 150 yards from the steel mill - with all the noise and pollution that that implies. The mill is visually so imposing that those unfamiliar with the area have assumed that it uses photo montage. Yet the government advertisements for the area show the beach and happy tourists and waiters. Not a smokestack in sight.

The salient feature about Redback posters is their boldness of colour and design. They use fluorescent paints for two reasons: they are cheap, and they give better colour overlays - so that four colours overlaid look like nine colours. The posters are designed for the streets, and can be read quickly by passers-by. Redback hasn't made a conscious effort to develop a particular style, but because of their use of im-

agery of working people, their fluorescent colours and bold design, Redback work does have a unique and powerful impact.

In almost every case these posters accomplish what they set out to do: they are read; they announce a benefit dance, bring attention to injustices in the workplace and to those against women and immigrants, advertise a strike, etc. However, three of the posters in the Redback show received criticism from a member of the A Space audience regarding what she saw as stereotyped images of aboriginal people and of women. Callaghan explained that one of the posters (a promo for an aboriginal radio station) was commissioned over the phone, and that the clients were happy with the result. He also noted that they attempt to avoid racist and sexist stereotypes, though he admitted that it was possible that they had failed. Part of the problem may in fact arise from the conventions of mainstream advertising, where the norms have already been set by the dominant media, and deviation from these norms seem incongruous or second class.

Another poster depicted an aboriginal woman on a beach. It was reproduced in *FUSE*, May/June 1982. This poster had been designed/produced by Dianne MacMahon in cooperation with an aboriginal land rights group. The image was taken from a photograph. Not having the photograph to refer to, it is impossible to decide whether the poster did justice to it. However, Cullen noted that there was a cultural bias in the caption. The cap-

tion reads "Pay the Rent: you are on aboriginal land." Ownership or payment regarding land is a concept which is a cultural import to aboriginal people in Australia who, like North American Indian peoples, regard the land as a living being who is violated by activities such as buying, selling and uranium mining. However, given Australia's dominant (Anglo-Saxon) cultural history, and the need for political support for Aboriginal claims, it would, it seems, be difficult to succinctly and effectively put their case for a fair settlement of long-standing land rights issues.

The debate raises the issue about whether the only legitimate imagist for any disadvantaged sector of the community is a member of that community who has an intimate appreciation of the struggles and cultural norms of the disadvantaged group.

Cullen and Callaghan visited Toronto after finishing an exhibition of Australian art which was held at the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art. The work from Redback Graphix was the only 'working class art' included in the programming. While in L.A. they were able to produce 2 posters with the UFW and the East Los Angeles Chicano Self-Help Print Workshop.

Cullen and Callaghan's visit to Toronto prompted many local artists to draw a comparison regarding conditions here. Certainly there are parallels in the economic conditions of de-industrialisation. "The conditions exist for something very similar in places like Sudbury and Hamilton," said Karl Beveridge, who organized the A Space event with Carol Conde, and introduced Cullen and Callaghan's work with slides and a discussion of their trip to Australia to research the Art and Working Life program. "The difference in Canada is you are dealing with much more conservative agencies and much more conservative political climate. That is what is preventing such a development. There are similar productive conditions in Canada to those that gave rise to the Art and Working Life program in Australia. However, the political climate needs to be dealt with - by developing lobby groups from trade unions, community groups, and from the artists community."

Barbara Walsh is a freelance editor and writer, born and raised in southern Ireland; she has been living in Toronto since 1974.

New World Voices

An Interview With Ann Wallace

MARLENE PHILIP

IN 1978 LIZ CROMWELL, JEFF POLLARD AND ANN WALLACE STARTED A small publishing house called *Wacacrow Production*. They published one book of poetry by Vibert Cambridge. The following year, Jeff and Ann decided to go into publishing full time. They changed the name of the company to *Williams-Wallace* and incorporated it.

For the last five years *Williams-Wallace* has produced 40 titles including poetry, fiction and non-fiction by minority, Caribbean and Third World writers. In this interview with Marlene Philip, Ann Wallace discusses the history, problems and peculiarities of publishing minority writers in Canada.

MARLENE: What led you and Jeff Pollard to become involved in publishing?

ANN: Jeff is a cancer research scientist who has great love or affection for literature and art. He's also a radio script writer. I studied social sciences and also consider myself a poet. This was really the basis of our particular interests, in that because I was a poet, because Jeff was interested in film and script-writing, we decided to join forces. Neither of us though had any background in publishing at all, until we learned by trial and error.

When Liz and I came to Toronto we discovered that there were no books by black authors nor were there any black writers except for Austin Clark. We were coming out of New York where it was bustling, and where blacks were involved in theatre, in writing of course, music and dance. We decided at that point that we would do something. It was that kind of energy we are talking about - the two of us coming out of a particular situation and realizing there were people in Toronto but that nothing was happening. We decided then to do something about it. Had we known what we know today though, we might have considered it a little more carefully.

The publishing of minority work is inevitable for us. One can hardly not do it because (a) we are minorities in the dominant society and (b) we are writers ourselves and we can very strongly let our voices be heard. So it was inevitable that that would be the



Ann Wallace

way to go. Also, in the Canadian market we felt it would have been very difficult to do anything else. At least we felt at that time, and still do, that there is a market out there that we can tap into.

MARLENE: And how have you found it? Has the market been responsive?

ANN: Well, we carved out a market that was non-existent. When you are a pioneer in anything it means that almost the whole way you're backing a dead horse. We find the market place not necessarily receptive to our books. We find that book stores, except for the independent book stores, are not interested in our books. Distributors are not interested in us because we do not have the turnover that they like to see. We find unfortunately that the very community which we hoped would be interested in our works, really isn't. So it's really a very difficult thing to do because we don't have easy access

seem to get into unless we do French literature. There is Vancouver which is still small, and there is overwhelmingly large Ontario, and for us, our market really is Toronto. To think anything else is foolish. We can sell in Halifax probably and to some degree in Montreal. But that's it.

MARLENE: What has been the response of the community to your books?

ANN: Books are one of the most important ingredients in anybody's lives. You use them in schools; you use them for luxury reading; you use them for information - they're important. The Black community is fairly large in Toronto but of course people's background and personal reading tastes differ - we understand that very much. But do not tell me that when we do a thousand books written by a West Indian writer that we should take four years to sell it. I can hardly believe that that's true anywhere else. I can

We have had to understand that for many people coming from the Caribbean, a bookstore and buying of books are unfamiliar things. For them a textbook is their reality. They don't see literature in any other way than maybe a luxury. In fact that's not true. We also have to understand that here they are living in the suburbs where Coles bookstore is probably the only bookstore.

MARLENE: Do you consider the U.S. market at all?

ANN: We discovered on our trip to the American Booksellers Association in June 1983 that our books of course should be Stateside. We have a natural market there. There is a natural market for Spanish writers, and for this particular reason we have opened up an office in Niagara Falls, New York, to ship and mail to American libraries, universities and booksellers. We really feel that this is going to be what keeps us going - simply because of numbers,

EVERY PEOPLE ON THE FACE OF THIS EARTH HAS HAD AN ORAL LITERATURE

really - anywhere.

We have *made* access and created access but it has been difficult. We don't hear anyone saying - either Teachers or Librarians - saying it's important to have books written by local people - maybe Black or third world writers - on their curriculum or as companion aids. Nothing. We don't necessarily have that demand for our work. I find this a peculiarity, however, which I really don't understand because in the American situation we would never have had that difficulty. We would not necessarily have had it easy, but we certainly would have had a support system backing us for what we are trying to do. Seems that in Canada - there's a split - everybody's so new, everybody's fighting to get a little economic ground.

Because we find the market place very hard to penetrate it means that our publishing programme is stymied. I don't have the luxury of working full-time as a publisher. That's not to say that other people don't have difficulties, because marketing in Canada is almost impossible and the logistics are that the country is large and empty. You have really three main markets and one of them, Quebec, we can't

only believe it's unique to Canada.

It has been said that ours is an oral culture and that possibly explains it. But every generation, every people on the face of this earth has had an oral literature. China had oral literature, the Japanese had it, the Europeans had it. We are now living in a technological world and one that uses the written word.

I cannot quite understand why it is so difficult to sell books to the Black community here, but that is what we are confronted with. If we were faint of heart we would not have continued. It's only because we know the potential. We know that somewhere along the line it's going to happen if we persistently stay in the market place, and continue to publish works by visible minorities.

But it's easy not to. We get more manuscripts from all kinds of people - French writers, Ukrainian writers, Czech writers. I don't have to publish minorities. It's not necessarily to my financial advantage to do so. But, from a political and emotional interest I cannot do those writers in the majority. I have to do writers like myself whose writing reflects some of my own existence. But it has been a disappointment.

sheer numbers. It has nothing to do with the fact that Blacks buy more or less of something. It is just that there are many, many more Blacks in the United States.

MARLENE: How do you define 'minority writer'?

ANN: A minority writer to me - a visible minority writer - is one who is a non-caucasian. One who's from India for instance or Japan and of course from the Caribbean (there's no qualification for that). As well there are linguistic minorities. For example, a Spanish writer qualifies as a minority writer because those are the areas that will never get published in the new Canadian society. You must keep in mind that Canada's scene is very new, and Canada will always publish her people first. As immigrants we are concerned about the immigrant having a voice. So that is what we are interested in. We are also interested in women from those areas. That does not mean that we won't do women of dominant areas (the Anglo-French situation) but that's certainly not a priority for us. So when we say minority it can span two things - language or race. And we are certainly very concerned about people from what we call 'our

part of the world' which is Central and South America.

MARLENE: With respect to that part of the world, are there any criteria? Would you for instance, consider a white Jamaican as constituting a part of that minority for your purposes?

ANN: Yes, because in environmental situations the Jamaican or West Indian white is white only physically, but actions and reactions will be that of a Caribbean person. I have a book in fact which is written by what we would call a white Jamaican and it talks about pain and alienation and she should, because of her colour, be able to just slip into a Canadian society or British society or American society with the greatest of ease, except that she misses the mangoes, and she misses the little country town, and she misses the warmth and the friendliness and so on. She's from the Caribbean. I don't think her works would be grabbed by the Canadian publisher who would say almost right off the bat, there was no market for it here because it is located in the Caribbean. She has that problem too. Caribbean born is all that matters, that is the criterion. If the stuff is good by anybody else, sure. I'm not silly, I'm going to do it - Caribbean person or Latin-American, Caucasian or

woman is gorgeous and blonde. We also find that Caribbean men portray women very badly. If such a portrayal is taking us - the readers - somewhere, that's fine, but if she remains one dimensional - which is pregnant and barefoot and constantly whining and so on - we're not interested. People always send us books that portray economic situations only - very little family life. One has to wonder how many of us survive because we all have families, and yet nobody seems to write about them - though the grandmother is always written about. She has been stereotyped to death.

MARLENE: What is the attitude and response of the media to your publications?

ANN: We have difficulty in getting reviewed. One thing that they will always tell you is that they don't have anybody to review your type of books. Your type of books means that they don't have a Black person to review literature or to review books period. So, when a black person does a book locally, the author has to hope that somebody will be interested enough to review it. We are also told that people have accents so that they can't go on the radio. If they don't have anyone to review, if we all have accents, if the in-

reviews for that reason. One of the things that amused us but was very sad was the issue of food in the Caribbean context and how it was dealt with in the reviews. In the book a big Sunday morning breakfast was described. The reviewers said that this was tourist like. They completely missed the point of the universal function of food in the welcoming of relatives. It's a celebration of family love. So it is not just a matter of having food so a tourist can learn about akee and fish and green bananas, and it has nothing to do with tourism. So you see that's our problem. We are talking about something that, when you're a Ukranian or a Czech or an English person who had returned home after many years and relatives had prepared trifle or lamb or dumplings, would not be regarded as activity geared for the tourist.

You just laugh at things like that. But it gives you some idea of what you're up against. So I would say the media has been difficult. The few reviews we've had have come grudgingly. We have decided not to run after anybody anymore. We used to do a lot of that. We kept sending out so many books that I think all the profit just went into sending out books.

Where we have done very well though

AS IMMIGRANTS WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMMIGRANT HAVING A VOICE

otherwise.

MARLENE: What is your approach to the issue of stereotyping?

ANN: We do get a lot of manuscripts that stereotype. Quite often if a Canadian writes about the Caribbean - which we get quite often - there are some built-in stereotypes that are truly extraordinary. When a white woman falls in love with a man who is a Caribbean man he has aquiline features. He's of course always far left in politics, and preferably of course, living in squalor. This Canadian middle class University of Toronto graduate will go into the forest to live with him. But she, of course, will never take him back to Canada. Keep that very clearly in mind.

We also find that women are stereotyped very badly. For instance, this particular book that I'm thinking of, the woman that is the Caribbean woman is ugly and bad. The Canadian

terest is not there then why should they bother?

Interestingly, we have been reviewed in London. We have been reviewed in New York. We have been reviewed in Germany and there was no question about who we were or what we were. It was a book, people liked it or people didn't like it, as the case may be, and they reviewed it. In Canada though, we don't have that kind of response. We have to go into these little gameplays. This is not to say we have not been reviewed in Canada, but people prefer to review our socially-oriented books rather than our literature.

One of our books about an immigrant family with Canadian born children, who went back to the Caribbean for a visit, was criticised in a review as not reflecting reality because the children should have been poor or they should have been speaking dialect. The book was given very bad

is on radio, surprisingly. Though again we have accents and that is always a problem for them, but the radio is a bit more receptive. With the new multicultural emphasis on communications we hope to see some improvement in that area.

MARLENE: On the issue of multiculturalism, do you find that your books are in demand by schools?

ANN: No, we don't find that our books are in demand. We find that certain boroughs, yes, North York is one of them, have been buying steadily from us. But we find that the books are not in demand. In fact we have a book called *Detecting Prejudice* which everybody should read and we can't sell it. I have been told that the reason for that is that people get affronted by the name. People would prefer to have a softer sounding theme; they feel that content is a little bit harsh, as if to say prejudice in any form is a mild situa-

tion.

I think that eventually yes, they will have to come to us. After all, if we say we are living in a multicultural society, and if we say that we are part of that society and that we are writers and maybe artists or whatever then that society is going to have to understand us. In the same way that I can read Atwood and understand Canada, I don't see why they can't read our books to understand some of our realities.

But all this takes time. When you consider that in 4 years Williams-Wallace has put out 28 books, with about 23 by black writers and Spanish writers, this has never happened in the history of Canada before. Probably it is asking too much of the people to change attitudes. But they will change it because that is also reality.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT THEY ARE CANADIAN WRITERS

MARLENE: What are some of the problems you experience as a publisher of works by Third World or minority writers?

ANN: As a minority publisher in a country in which publishing is very new, we are not that unique. The oldest indigenous publishing house in Canada is about 20 years old. As a minority publisher in Canada we are in the right province - Ontario. I don't think we could have survived anywhere else as an English-speaking outfit. I know in Quebec there is a Haitian publisher who could not survive in English-speaking Canada but survives very well in Quebec.

We feel that we came on the scene at the right time. I am not quite sure if one could have done it anywhere else to be honest. We had very little money, lots of hopes, lots of good people and we are still at the stage where our friends count a great deal because without them we could not have survived. There's no getting around that.

In terms of our market - it never existed, but we have to develop it. I hope that in my lifetime other people will come up and do other things and that the market will become somewhat established. Then they won't necessarily have to go through the hassles that we have had to go through. We haven't done as well as we would have liked

perhaps, but given the main focus of our publishing policies, that is, Third World writers, minority writers - we have sold fairly well. Our market is unique because it takes a while for people to see that we are a Canadian publishing house. Our writers are Canadian writers - they may be what are called hyphenated Canadian writers, but the bottom line is that they are Canadian writers and we are a Canadian publishing house. Our distribution is a problem but we continue to distribute in areas we can handle - Ontario, parts of the Atlantic provinces and a little part of British Columbia.

MARLENE: Do you have problems with distribution?

ANN: Who hasn't? Lots of problems! We now believe that a distributor wants to know that when he

takes your books he can sell nationally - that is right across the country. In our case he can't. So we are not lucrative to them. So in fact what we have to do is be our own distributors. What we have decided to do though, is to distribute works by other Black publishing houses, because nobody will ever see their works either. We hope that eventually, a distributor will see us as a potential and viable company - will see the merit of having us - see the economic potential for them. On the other hand I would like to add that many Canadian publishers don't have distribution. We are a very unique country because of the small numbers of people and many who do not speak English as a first language. The market has been divided and subdivided many times over. Canadian publishers don't have the luxury either to say, "ah, we are going to make it". The biggest publishing house here is having a hard time.

MARLENE: Without a distributor, how do you sell your books?

ANN: We move them through mailings and libraries: we put ads in relevant newspapers and journals, but mostly through mailings to libraries, booksellers and as many people as we can. We try to have gatherings, readings, get-togethers, anything, that will allow for the sale of books. That's

not the normal way to do it but for us we can't use the normal channels. Books are also sold by the writers. Half the writers probably sell better than anybody else.

So for us we have had to find different ways of marketing our books. Because we found that, for instance, if we have a gathering or a couple of parties - people buy books. They won't go to a bookstore and buy them. But to do that sort of thing one must have time and I don't have that kind of time. So it's a catch-22.

We're also trying to put together a newsletter that will not only say what we're doing as a publishing house, but what other people in the Black community are doing. Our writers are beginning to do readings at Toronto's Harbourfront where there is a literary grant to do readings by international, national and local people. We're also trying to get our writers into the universities and schools to do readings. We are trying to get them to be invited to festivals like everybody else and so on.

On one hand, we are a small cottage industry which is acting like a large established firm. But we have to do that, because we feel that if we don't show that side of us then they aren't going to take us seriously. In fact, the industry probably is taking us seriously for the first time. Nobody thought we would be around for this long. So, we go to book fairs which normally, a person like myself, who is a small house with a small list, should not be doing. But it's necessary. I should also say that without the help of the Canadian Government I couldn't attend. It's always a difficult situation, and we have to be continually turning up new strategies.

MARLENE: How do you survive?
ANN: Because I work at another job, and because I get grants from the Canada Council and from the Secretary of State. I could not survive on publishing. Without the Secretary of State we could never have survived. The Secretary of State, Multicultural Department, has been our greatest, largest supporter, financially and otherwise. That's how we have survived. I think one cannot rely on that forever because that would be expecting a lot. We hope that eventually we will be able to survive financially without assistance. □

End Of Marriage Of Heaven And Hell

Make The Rich Pay

HIMANI BANNERJI

Gold Earrings:

The Selected Poetry of Sharon Stevenson

Introduction by Robin Endres
Pulp Press, Vancouver. 1984.
\$7.95

The Arctic explorers who died in their efforts defined the territory to be explored for those who followed and found it. Not to try is failure. To die trying is to show others how and how not to go. The ones who didn't come back perhaps went out too early, but if they hadn't gone at all, their successors would not be able to come back either.

(Introduction, Robin Endres)

IT IS PROBABLY DIFFICULT TO avoid the temptation of reading back into a work from what is seen by the reader as the highest or definitive moment of the author's life. Suicides, in particular, seem to provide the scope for a type of reading which is both locked in an event and highly projective at the same time. It is not surprising to find therefore that in the introduction to *Gold Earrings*, Sharon Stevenson, like Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath and others, was subjected to this kind of reading. With her, as with them, one is encouraged to read retrospectively, with an eye to decoding how this decision, this so-called logic of neurosis, gradually shaped up like a great novel/poem, which was enacted rather than written: "although she never lost her brilliant use of the poetic line, there is unquestionably a neurotic element." Looking at most contemporary writing, where is this "neurotic element" not at work? Yet most writers are still here, and many who never wrote thus have killed themselves. And what does being 'neurotic' mean anyway? With the particulars of the



Bryan Wert

Obviously, no one proofed the copy, or minded the fact that two or three untitled poems were laid out on the same page with very little space separating them, or that the first lines of an untitled poem began at the bottom of the page. But these things bother the reader and might have offended the writer as well.

Information on Stevenson's mother on the biographical page, that "her mother was a secretary and teacher" contradicts that given in the introduction by Robin Endres, where we are told that she "worked in factories and restaurants". Both might be true, but how are we to make these links? These are relevant points to Robin Endres' case for Sharon Stevenson as a working class poet.

As for the self-projective nature of the introduction, the first few lines should suffice as an example:

I met Sharon Stevenson in Vancouver, in 1971. It was the summer of the Gastown Riot, the event which, perhaps for the last time, united all the elements of the New Left - students, Marxists, hippies, anti-war activists, feminists, Black Power advocates, Third Worldists. It was the summer which began for me with an appendicitis attack, and ended with a camping trip to Galiano Island with, among others, Sharon. It was the summer I got married, for better or for worse, to two conflicting ideologies: Marxism and feminism.

We breathed politics - marched, fought, arced theories over our lives like rainbows. I was a neophyte, listened profligately to everyone ...

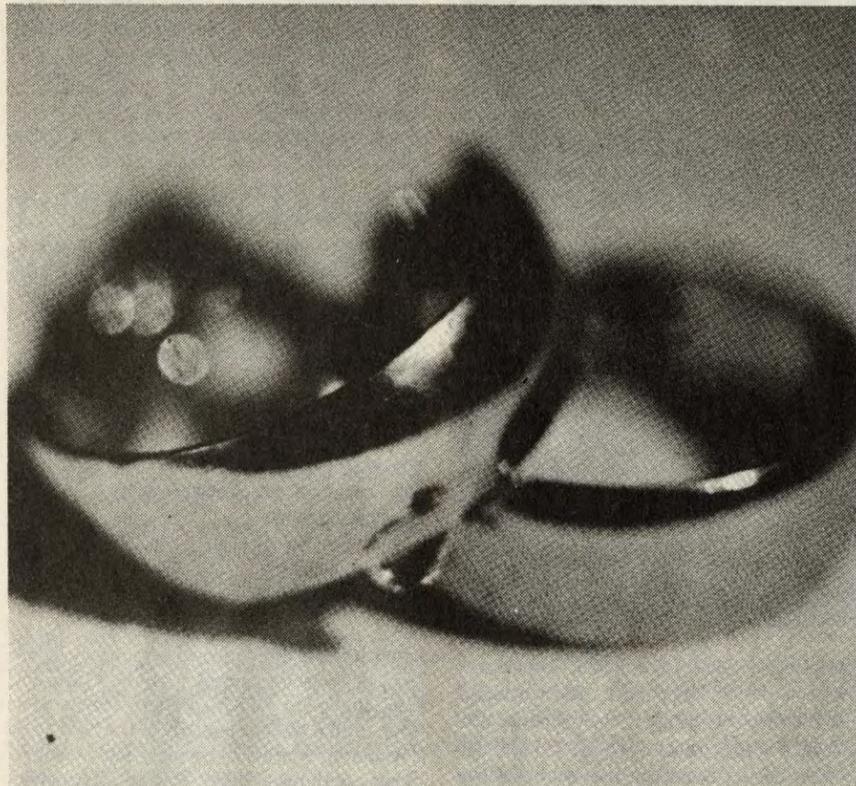
It is regrettable and indicative of the state of the Canadian publishing scene, mainstream and alternative, that the poetry of this powerful poet reached us posthumously, and through such careless editing and such a self-projective introduction. The biographical page, the first page in the book, provides the first example:

Within the publishing-reading poetic world of Toronto (or Canada) where Sharon Stevenson lived as recently as 1978, practically nothing was known of her as a poet. The 'why not' of this can not be answered without a broad-

ranging discussion of the politics of alternative culture in this city. Simply blaming the League of Canadian Poets (who are they anyway?) and alluding to the sad status of the "token left-wing feminist" just won't do. Even for Endres, now the editor of her poems, all contact with Sharon Stevenson ceased after that fateful trip to Galiano Island. Between 1971 and Stevenson's suicide in 1978, Endres and her friends, residents of the same city, often "saw" her "standing on the corner of Bloor and Bathurst selling her Party's

dissolves many contradictions - 'reconciled among the stars' - and now it is possible to take the risk of publishing a fuller, one-shot volume of poems by this author. At earlier stages of her writing there was published a slim volume of 28 poems called *Stone* - unheard of, unread. But this volume may have a different fate - drifting along a breeze of gossip, rumours and memory, this edition will probably sell.

In the meanwhile, reading her poetry, I am struck by the vitality and



From backcover photo: a seemingly small ornament by which to hang so much.

newspaper." The news of suicide, on the other hand, created a plethora of self-identifications and projections. Differences could now be eliminated. And so, "At the end of one of the many long, agonizing conversations after her death [why are they agonizing if they hardly know her?], a friend said, 'Her slate got written on a little too early, that's all.'"

What are we to make of all this? If Sharon Stevenson was known at all, she was known not as a poet, but as that woman who made the Great Transfer from the Communist Party of Canada to the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist). Death

the continuously developing, questioning nature of her work. Her questions about life and politics, poetry and politics - though not necessarily all her answers - rivet you to the poems. She wrote a kind of poetry that is quite literally in-formed by the complex dynamics of the personal and the political. What has been seen by Endres as a steady self-denigration/denial and a "gradual excursion into an emptiness and abstraction" seems to me to be more an attempt to find a political-aesthetic stand which would contain as well as transcend the personal. The transparency of the two are displayed in lines of her early work such as these,

and numerous other poems:

Of course violence broods
against us - organic
between us only a reflection
a wavering symbol
of Chicago &
poisoned fish

an imperfect mirror
as our violence extends
only in small shatters

We kill only flowers
batter only at love

We also see here a writer for whom the word 'class', the hackneyed expression 'class struggle', had moved beyond sociological abstraction to a lived experience, to both a hatred against the enemy and a hope for a communist/socialist revolution to be achieved on this soil. Class becomes concrete in poems such as "WHAT SLAG IS MADE OF":

learning slag
my friend's father
died
when the dump car
overtaken
on him
& his flesh burnt
one with the slag

& slag became
hill
red
thick air
black rocks
dead father
giants in the night
a bumped word
n c o
i

And how could we avoid connecting to this other poems apparently written quite some time after, untitled:

nourish class hate
close to the shoulder
& under the ribs

if nothing to eat
but self, otherwise
then nourish self
on hate
& nourished rise

do not sing
gentle, gentle are their eyes
as they crash down
saws upon our hands

no, rather nourish self
on class hate
& clearly see
& clearly rise

(from *Fire in the Sun*)

However one may feel about her political choices and answers, it seems to me that Stevenson's poetic success or failure has to be understood in the context of the vacuum that exists in the Canadian political world in the area of 'organized' left politics. For a large number of people this vacuum is filled with the cult of personal improvement or civil rights activism, but some continue to be haunted by the need for an effective politics. Sharon Stevenson was obviously one of them. From the first stage of her work we find a refusal to see freedom in the sphere of consumption alone (sexuality included).

It is, however, difficult to assess Sharon Stevenson's poetic and political development from this collection which offers little rationale by the way of editorial principles (except the personal taste of the editor or her advisors). For example, 20 poems out of the volume *Stone* (containing 28) have been reprinted, while only 2 out of 50 poems from a later unpublished manuscript, *Smash the Old*, have been included. The sampling is never clearly numerically identified, although the overall principle of editing becomes clear from the following lines:

I want to discuss Sharon's poetry as a series of formal experiments she conducted in her attempt to achieve a Marxist poetic. There can be no doubt that her extraordinary, natural gift was for the lyric, the poem of short lines. When I first read all of her poetry, I thought that the earliest lyrics were the best, that there was a gradual but obvious decline in her ability, and that the fifty poems in the last manuscript, 'Smash the Old' were the weakest, perhaps not worth publishing. Yet Sharon herself rejected the lyric and what it could do for her. (Endres: Introduction)

Now, an editor like any other reader is entitled to her own likes and dislikes, but as an editor of what is likely to be the only posthumous collection of work by this poet, she should follow the convention to provide as full or representative a version as possible. This would give other readers a chance to view the over-all range of the writer

without making a trip to some archive.

But even as it stands the book offers a sense of the later development, and Endres' introduction discusses extensively the important topics of a new marxist aesthetic and a poetry of and for the working class. We are informed that Sharon Stevenson wrote her B.A. (Honours English) thesis on what she called 'the petite-bourgeois aesthetic', analyzing her own work and appending two sets of poems with it - "Fire in the Sun" and "Among the Petite-

practices in the free-market of culture? This seems to be the case pretty generally, and often makes it difficult for us to see the concreteness of our own political demands/desires.

Of course the quest for forms is a very important one. A poet must turn every which way until she finds the most adequate way of speaking. But 'how' she is going to speak is not determined only by 'what' she is going to say, but to 'whom' as well. The question, "how does the lyric poet deal with



From a flyer advertising the book launching of *Gold Earrings*

bourgeoisie". This need not be appraised as an exercise in "clinical masochism" (Endres) but could actually be seen as an attempt at self/political renewal. After all, neither working class nor bourgeois, the intelligentsia is bound up both politically and aesthetically in a petite-bourgeois mode. If, as Endres suggests, Stevenson should have been an 'independent theoretician' of Marxism, would she not, nevertheless, need to avoid the pit-falls of its entrepreneurial individualism. Could it not be that much of the time what is hidden behind the stance of independence is the vending of ideas and

epic material?" can also be shifted from one of form to one of social relations. It could be conceived as a way of re-organizing one's relationship as a writer both to one's material and to one's readership. Looking at Sharon Stevenson's poetry I feel that her progress consisted of offering a challenge to a privatized convention of reading and writing - a convention that is indissolubly bound up with the general development of privatization in capitalism. It seems that she was trying to re-define both the writing and reading of poetry, from being the private production of private feelings of a private

individual to be privately consumed by an individual reader, into a social political act or event. It is in this sense that her poetry changes from the early to the later stage. Compare for instance the two following passages:

There have been too many
new rooms
& as my hand
touches the wall
& fumbles for a still
unknown light
I pause, lost in the darkness
beyond a full bright
moon outside

(Changeling)

and these lines from the second last poem in the book:

how hard these days
giant sweep of the sickle begun, long since
& slowly, slowly as time sways
our years towards us
hearts calcified in stone, shimmer.
sun's long rays crack earth's night.
see, dark stony side, it lifts to light?
so will come an end to winter

...
yes, there must come an end to winter
northern tide of birches budding
will harvest in glowing & surge
of revolution.

man, & woman's, history can begin.

(Weeding)

The tone of the musing personal recapitulation of the first poem contrasts strongly with that of the political and even prophetic tone of the second. This deserves some thought in terms of poetic practice of the present time.



What Endres calls the lyric form is a common form of contemporary poetry by which we are often made to feel that we had a direct and unmediated access to the poet's innermost, personal self. We are often left with the feeling of over-hearing a private discourse, or at times of down-right voyeurism. (Sometimes the poet, in the name of sharing experiences, invites us to this.) Often the empowering force behind the aesthetic experience is identification with the writer, resulting often in the loss of criticality, distance, or even of appreciation, while gaining in terms of emotionality. In any case, the reader is being summoned in her capacity as a 'private' person, as an 'individual', rather than in her capacity as a social, political, 'collective' person.

The kind of poem that Sharon Stevenson attempts to write in her later stage involves the reader in the second sense - the social, political, collective being. Even the project of her poem, as a poem, is not otherwise apparent. Unless such a new relation between reader and writer is admitted and accepted, it is propaganda, slogan or what have you, but not what we would call 'poetry'. The reader of later poems, such as "Learn from teachers by negative example", can not even be constituted as a reader except in as much as she is a practitioner of class struggle. Lines such as these will not yield their sense to us otherwise:

we must have our history before us
we need history a weapon to fight
we must know our future unfolding
struggle provides a sharp light
you can serve to arm or disarm us
you can choose to assist to close down
night
for poetry too has a class nature
fellow poets, take up the fight!

(Poetry too has a class nature)

In politicizing her reader Sharon Stevenson further politicizes her poetry, that is, also her relationship with the world. It is obvious that she is not content to write poetry that is - like shedding tears or oozing blood - a by-product of life. But it also appears, and judging by her own canons outlined in later poetry, that it was a new project and a matter of a great deal of struggle for her. She was at a beginning stage of conveying her project con-

cretely to her reader, finding a language that would speak, in a graspable way, of the 'world-historical' by re-working poetic/political influence of such revolutionary, prophetic poets as William Blake with the political wisdom of Marx or Mao. (My comparison is not simply inspired by the facile echo of one of her titles "End of marriage of heaven and hell/Make the rich pay".) But the exhortations to the world-historical action, the words of Mao, often take on an opacity, a density, and empty out her poetry of detail, time and history. The abstraction does not take on the required mythic proportion that would hold together such a vast project.

Sharon Stevenson's inability at times to construct a poetry that would both contain and transcend the personal is a reflection perhaps of the state of affairs in political organizing in Canada, not just of an individual's success or failure. Could it be that a political terrain that continually throws up false contradictions, such as between feminism and socialism, grassroots and organized politics, cultural and political work, does not provide a writer with a base from which to reconceptualize poetry or politics? Is it not also the case that political/cultural projects are in a continual danger of being reduced to such limited notions as the search for a new form instead of a new political process? Is there not a process of trivialization at work? How, one wonders, would Sharon Stevenson feel at the reduction of her life's project into the rather cute title of her only sizable book of poems - *Gold Earrings*? It is possible that at some stage she said something about wearing gold earrings when she was writing poetry, but it does seem to be too small and ornamental a thing to hang so much by. A small poem by her, however, does capture very well what she wanted from poetry, of her own and of others. It should speak for her:

There are no individual solutions
& at last this strong hand of mine
reaches you
a newspaper
a newspaper
as well as a poem

(on the party)

Himani Bannerji

A Call For Change Placing The Artists In The Position Of Activist

INGRID KOENIG

Performance as Resistance A Series of issue-oriented performances

Curated by Marusia Bociurkiw
Presented by the Centre for Art Tapes,
Performers: De Dub Poets - Lillian Allan
& Clifton Joseph; Four the Moment; Robin
Endres; Never Again Affinity Group;
Sheila Gostick; Bruce Barber; Marusia
Bociurkiw; and a "Cabaret Upfront."
Halifax, Nova Scotia
June 8 - 23, 1984

THE TITLE OF THIS SERIES DENOTES an organisation of cultural activity based on considerations of analysis and action. Performance as resistance questions and criticises social relations/structures, exposes oppression and calls for change. It justifies agitation, organisation and action. This is performance that is issue-oriented, which can move into public, community and specifically non-art spaces, which can work with activist organisations. The organising principle of the series, from the title, would place the artist in the position of activist.

What does it mean when artists function as political activists? For one thing, it implies a conviction that there is power in action and that public action is not futile. This conviction is itself interesting when so often "sophistication" is thought to imply a knowledge of contradictions which justifies inaction. In an article on activist performance art, Lucy Lippard wrote:

The delusion of cultural powerlessness keeps artists angry adolescents in a patriarchal world.... In order to combat the prevailing cynicism, pessimism, and defeatism, it seems to me one simply has to believe the message one is trying to convey and believe it passionately enough not to be embarrassed by the necessity to convey it. At the same time, obviously, the believed material has to be authentic, based in shared experience, complex and moving.

I asked performance artist Marusia Bociurkiw, who curated the "Performance as Resistance" series, how she saw issue-oriented performance functioning in terms of social change. She

emphasised the historical precedents for politicized performance in the early 20th century, especially the post-revolutionary agit-prop performance in Russia and German theatre in the twenties. A public performance can change the framework through which people see things. It stimulates discussion and it can mobilize support linked with political organization.

Bociurkiw said a common reaction to political art is that it speaks to the converted. Yet according to her, "Artists are one of the most apolitical groups around." In the curating process Bociurkiw said, "Every effort was made to make it obvious to the public that this series was dealing with political issues." This is cultural work "built around struggle, change and intervention." She put an emphasis on community-based groups, including the black community, community theatre and feminist performance. Unhappily for the Halifax community this was yet another cultural import primarily from Toronto. However it also brought fresh ideas and inspira-



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tion to the audience here. Perhaps, in a pinch, one could call it a form of cultural outreach from Toronto to Halifax.

In Bociurkiw's lecture during the series she discussed performance work from Toronto, professing that the most important work was coming out of the feminist community. She noted that the history and traditions of feminist performance remain hidden due to the absence of historical documentation. Bociurkiw reiterated the need for a theoretically engaged feminist art. In her promotion of performance as resistance she showed documentation of work by the *Clichettes*, *Nightwood Theatre*, the *Red Berets*, the *Hummer Sisters*, the *Anna Project Collective*, the *Regent Park Soul Support Group*, Tanya Mars, and one of her own pieces, "Not your cow for milking," performed on the street in front of the Toronto abortion clinic after it had been raided.

One of the most moving events of the series was its opening performances by *De Dub Poets* - Toronto's Lillian Allen and Clifton Joseph, and Halifax's a capella quartet - *Four the Moment*.

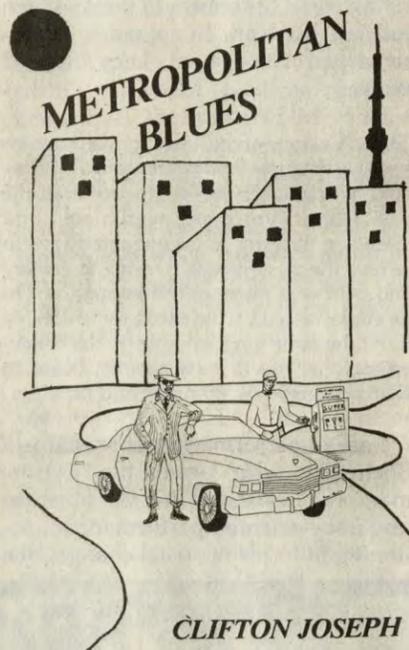
Four the Moment has modelled their work on *Sweet Honey in the Rock*, using blues and gospel traditions to sing out against political repression and human rights violations. While they sing about oppression in South Africa and Chile, their songs also document black history and struggle within Nova Scotia. Two of these songs had lyrics written by Nova Scotian writer George Elliott Clarke. "Lydia Jackson" related a story of the oppression of a slave woman who came to West Hants County, two hundred years ago. Another song called "West Hants County" documented the struggles of black gypsum miners. One of the group's members said, "We never hear about black labour militancy in Nova Scotia - this is one situation where it did exist."

It is unfortunate that there was a conspicuous absence of Halifax's very large black population at this event. The community outreach intentions of the Centre for Art Tapes remain largely unrealized.

Introducing one of his poems, Clifton Joseph said, "It's dumb to ass kiss for freedom - fight for it." You cannot afford to remain blind - radicalize,

organize. Clifton Joseph's "Chuckie Prophecy" relates the Jamaican immigrant's entry into Canada, where on weekends he takes on the trappings of affluence - "flashy, flashy, flashy", while working weekdays at dead end jobs under conditions and frustrations which will gradually politicize him. As frustrations build, so must the riots. The last verse, says Joseph, is a call to arms. "Time will come around when Chuckie's disgruntled frowns will send skyscrapers/on/fire tumbling down down down..."

"Personally I think it's time to revolt ... in my personal life, in my work ... I am about social change." (Lillian Allen) It is difficult to speak unemotionally about the power of Lillian Allen's poetry. The beauty of it is also in



CLIFTON JOSEPH
Cover-Metropolitan Blues-Clifton Joseph its complete and perfect logic. "There will be no peace, peace, peace, until there are equal rights and justice."

Her writing speaks about her experiences in Canada as a Jamaican immigrant, as a black woman. At a workshop led by Lillian Allen, in a community library, her statements conveyed clearly what was meant by social criticism and change. During the workshop, the political analysis and the cultural production were clearly one on one. Allen points out, although people are oppressed at different levels, none of us can be satisfied with the power struc-

ture and distribution of wealth as it is. The existing structure needs opposition on all fronts, at whatever level one is capable of. "We are submerged in a culture of capitalism. It's not just a system, but a culture ... that enters into every crevice of your life." Clifton Joseph pointed out their concern to build a relationship with the audience, "Our content is dramatizing the conditions we live under, and the situations we deal with, using the language that most appropriately expresses that."

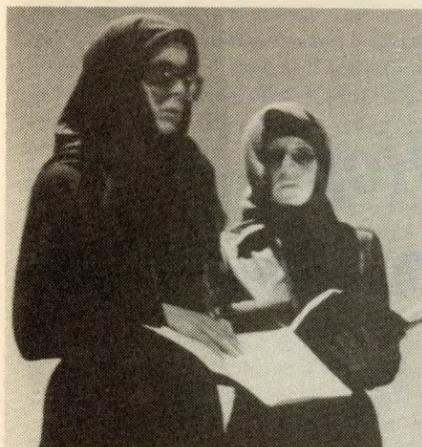
Robin Endres, director of *Pelican Players*, a community-based popular theatre group run by women, gave a presentation on their activities and spoke of the contradictions and problems the group has in pursuing their goals. During the discussion following her presentation, many important points were raised which relate to the entire series.

Endres prefers to call *Pelican Players'* work "performance as transformation" rather than "as resistance", claiming that, "It is not enough to resist." An important political transformation which is made possible in community or 'popular' theatre is that members of the community are involved in creating/producing the work. This shifts a previously passive, or consumer role vis à vis culture into an active one. It can be an empowering experience.

Endres sees her role as facilitator for the neighbourhood people to express themselves. Her neighbourhood is a mix of upwardly mobile and urban working-class environments. All of the scenes in the play are derived from situations common to the neighbourhood. Audiences recognize their local Woolworth's lunch counter, the pizza parlour, the reggae record store. The ever-changing group of non-professional players perform in schools, community centres, parks, etc. One particularly traumatic experience of playing to a high school was a reception of racist heckling from the young white audience. Thus the group decided their next play would deal with racism. They then performed for many schools with great success. The authorities of the school which originally "inspired" the play would not allow the play on racism to be performed there, stating that their school had no problems with racism.

The *Never Again Affinity Group*

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N.A.A.G. performance

(N.A.A.G.) is a Halifax-based group of eight women; Bonnie Bobryk, Liz Archibald Calder, Nancy Colpitts, Karin Fairless, Pat Kipping, Wilma Needham, Donna Smyth, and Gillian Thomas. They organize and perform cultural protests against militarism and specifically against nuclear technology. They performed excerpts and presented video/slide documentation from their street theatre works of the past year. They explained the formation of this group as a way of dealing with their fears about nuclear technology. The performances range from the satirical to the emotionally demanding. By personalising the issues, the performers/protesters attempt to bring themselves into direct relationship with the audience.

The evening produced a wide range of emotional responses.

The goal of the N.A.A.G.'s street theatre/activism is to function as a consciousness-raiser. Their first action, written by Donna Smyth, was performed on Hiroshima Day, August 6, 1983. They held a public memorial service, visualized like a Greek tragedy, to express the grief and rage at nuclear warfare. Each performer represented a nuclear victim, reciting from actual accounts, and carrying large pictures from the bombing of Nagasaki. The group had "outriders" dressed in white with black armbands who gave out fact pamphlets and answered audience questions. This was staged at various public locations during the course of the day.

One of the group's most successful events, the "Mason-jar project" or the "Continuity of People Program" was accorded extensive media coverage.

Militarism is a difficult subject to deal with in isolation as it is integral to the

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economic system as a whole. Halifax has a long military history. It is in fact a NATO town and a major employer is the Department of Defence. People do not hesitate to heckle peace marchers. In such a pro-military context it can be very intimidating to speak out against that structure. As they express their personal views through street theatre, N.A.A.G. hopes to encourage others to do the same. Their actions break a taboo against such public protest.

Another forum for public action towards social change, is in the classroom. Bruce Barber, Halifax artist, writer and teacher, gave a performance/discussion in a community library on the relationships between corporate advertising and propaganda,



Social criticism that makes you laugh

entitled "Who's Afraid of Advocacy Advertising?" He was assisted by Elizabeth May, a lawyer with Ecology Action, who has been very active in the Nova Scotia forestry spraying controversy.

Barber began by giving the historical context of advocacy advertising and scientific management. Illustrating his discussion with slides, he analyzed some of these ads in detail. Finally Barber presented the audience with advocacy ads called "Forest Facts" sponsored by Nova Scotia's Forestry Products and Scott Maritimes, corporations involved in the herbicidal spraying of Nova Scotian forests. Elizabeth May led an intense discussion following this presentation on a close-to-home issue. The presentation/discussion would be useful in schools and com-

FUSE

munity centres (not to mention on the C.B.C.).

Toronto comic Sheila Gostick brought the house down in her stand-up comedy show "Social Criticism that Makes You Laugh." After spending a day in Halifax, she had gleaned all of the locally relevant news from the "Chronically Horrid."* I found Gostick's imagery and dry wit inspiring. Her follow-up workshop "The News is a Joke" placed emphasis on her source material in the media.

The Performance series ended with "Cabaret Upfront", an open night of performance in a Dartmouth tavern with local artists, musicians, and writers. One of these performances was both comical and insightful - a work by Dan

Lander, "Don't Tell Me I'm a Man", Lander sang a pop-style composition which dealt with men's struggle with sexual stereotyping, while he struggled to get into a jacket plastered with such labels as macho, aggressive, strong, detached, etc. When he finally got the tight-fitting jacket on his back, he was rendered distorted and crippled.

The *Performance as Resistance* series provided models for art activism where artists collaborate and work in a self-conscious and critical manner. Although it's Toronto-centrism could be criticised, the series provided a venue for politically engaged work, thus providing a context and encouragement for many local artists.

* The Halifax Chronicle Herald

Ingrid Koenig is a feminist artist and writer living in Halifax.

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The Slack Cord Of Hope

Tearing and Joining The Ties That Bind

MARLENE NOURBESE PHILIP

Binding Twine

By Penny Kemp
Ragweed Press
Toronto, 1984. \$8.95

THE SUPREME AND "LOVELY irony" of this collection of poetry lies in the fact that Penny Kemp "pledged if I lost the case/I would write like mad./If I won, I would not./When I lost I could not."

The case was the custody of her two children, Amanda and Jake of whom she had care and control ever since separation from her husband in 1974. For six years Penny Kemp raised her children alone: "When the kids were small/he and his support were gone./ Seven years I raised them." In December 1980 she lost custody of her children to her ex-husband and his wife, after a seven day trial (over a period of three months), during which the court heard evidence on her 'unconventional' lifestyle ("The will to be different/from them. To effect/change.") and childraising practices:

The red snowsuit Amanda adored
I let her wear with ripped knee.
'The kids were left to wander late.'
'The kids were kept in after supper.'
(Appointed)

or,

Your boy abuses my daughter.
You call it my carelessness:
At two she could have said no.
(Witness Stands)

It has taken Penny Kemp three years to develop the emotional strength and objectivity necessary to write about this experience - an experience in



courtesy Penny Kemp

has been too great? Only she could answer that, but in asking the question we are struck by the "lovely irony" mentioned earlier, that probably for the first time in her writing life Penny Kemp has unlimited time, free of the cares and demands of raising children, (especially as a single parent) - those huge chunks of time that we all long for - to write, to think ideas through, to develop thought and follow through on work already begun. But not this way, surely not this way:

All along something, sometimes
in the chaos of diapers or box
lunches, wanted out. Now that
same restlessness It wants back...

It forgets the lovely irony:
Yes, you can have everything
you need. But not necessarily
at the same time. Nor when
You decide you want it.

which she could very easily have lost herself in self pity, been set awry by bitterness, or flounder and flail in anger at a legal system which encourages and fosters the sort of manipulation of evidence that she was victim of. That none of these things has happened, is a consequence of Penny Kemp's skill in being able to control and sustain at length, sensitive and emotionally explosive material. Each poem leaves, like a surely shot arrow, the taut bow of experienced emotion or event, arches through the air, and trembling still with the effort, comes to rest at the heart of the issue. The risk of failure was great; her success commensurate with it. Ought we to ask whether the price paid for this work

In *Of Woman Born*, Adrienne Rich writes, "The physical and psychic weight of responsibility on the woman with children is by far the heaviest of social burdens. It cannot be compared with slavery or sweated labour because the *emotional bonds* between a woman and her children make her *vulnerable* in ways which the forced laborer does not know ... the woman with children is a prey to far more complicated, subversive feelings." As *Binding Twine* reveals and records, this vulnerability remains even after the primary responsibility for their care has been placed with someone else.

The issue is a complex one, and one about which most women who are mothers or caregivers have ambivalent feelings. For the female artist, the result

of familial encroachments has often been, as Tillie Olsen's life and writings attest to, silence - long and sometimes permanent silences. Yet Käthe Kollwitz suggests that there are some benefits in these demands: "I am gradually approaching the period in my life when work comes first. When both the boys were away for Easter, I hardly did anything but work. Worked, slept, ate, and went for short walks. But above all I worked. And yet I wonder whether the "blessing" is not missing from such work. No longer diverted by other emotions, I work the way a cow grazes ... Perhaps in reality I accomplish a little more. The hands work and work and the head imagines it is producing God knows what, and yet formerly, in my so wretchedly limited working time, I was more productive, because I was more sensual; I lived as a human being must live, passionately interested in everything ... Potency, potency is diminishing." (from *Diaries and Letters of Käthe Kollwitz*)

What it was like.
I'd never lived by myself.
I'd never slept in a house alone.

(Strings)

She doesn't:

know why I should feel
guilty, I feel guilty.
Free to do as I like like this.
I didn't expect it to be this
hard, now that I am free,
only to be free.

(Words on a Page)

In "After Loose Ends" the ambivalence seems to resolve into being:

free to grieve, knowing
the house is waiting

...
For the mothers who bide
the time suddenly theirs
when all is in order. All.

This order, the unwanted yet craved progeny of the emotional chaos and disorder that permeated Penny Kemp's life during her struggle for custody of her children has given us *Binding Twine*, a work of great majesty and depth.

If they were with me these three years. I would not have written this book. Might not have written period.

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She takes us through events and experiences which were essentially destructive for her, but which, three years later, were able to provide her and us with insight and wisdom about the intricate patterning of needs, dependencies, love, despair and friendship that make up the fabric of feeling between parents and children. If this were all she had done it would have been enough, but she picks up the everyday refrains, complaints, fears and needs of women that have been resonant in her experiences, and uses them to produce a work of epic proportion and tone.

Each of the thirteen parts of *Binding Twine* deals with a particular aspect of Penny Kemp's awe-ful journey which begins with "The First Seven Years", in which "Left bereft, The children/sweet lights go out" and ends in "Well" with the awareness that "We are jars that love/has filled emptied/and fills again."

In between these signposts Penny Kemp takes us through landscapes that all of us are familiar with (sometimes too familiar): the legacies between mothers and daughters:

Our daughters cry out to us
as if we were mothers. Our
mothers cry out to us as if
we were daughters and mothers.

(The Great Mother)

or,

I push, push away the mothers'
voice inside my head ...
My daughter's voice has not yet changed.
Maybe she will suprise us.

(Nonetheless)

the myths of child raising as in
"Mis/Take" where she reveals that:

"A boy needs a father," they said
I believed, When he asked, I thought it
Only fair, It seemed right.

She

... assumed a mother was not enough for
a boy to grow into a man, as surveys
of single women raising sons showed.
I thought wrong.

(About Face)

The themes are classic: The "Second of February" where the loss and return of the eternal daughter is recalled, "the day a mother/may reclaim her daughter/lost to the underworld", or contemporary flight from the Furies (Ex

FUSE

Parte); biblical: "what seems to be our undoing/is the binding of the son/in sacrifice (Isaac's Story); mythical: "The Great Mother"; folkloric: "The Law of Sevens"; psychological: the need to sacrifice the son, "The bond is the boy's/release. The cutting/of the bond is ours", or in the rejection of parents - "The Facial"; political: "The river water ran typhoid/but was delivered by truck/and most mothers bottle fed/encouraged by plump ads" (The Mothers of Peru); and often simultaneously mundane and archetypal as in the jealousy and hatred of women, "Shadows and projections we've/woven round each other." (To Each Her Own)

Underpinning the whole work is the loss of children - prematurely in Penny Kemp's case - a theme which could very easily have remained subjective in scope, but one which she has widened to a universality that encompasses those mothers "whose children disappeared/under the sea, in earthquakes/in prison camps and uprisings" (Mothers of Peru); others who "loosen the cord that/binds us tight in knots/of nots, lots of loss .../I am binding twine" (How It Was), and those who acquire the peace that comes when they:

...
surrender what we hold
hold most dear. For the love
that cleaves us to do
what we must and when. As

the word 'cleave' means
split apart/cling together.
The pun speaks its layers.

And always the language is taut, the lines filled with a tensile force that never degenerates into verbal or emotional slackness as in "Appointed" where:

...
The judge was old and wanted peace.
He slept through the proceedings.
He knew their lawyer well and mine
was on his first case, out of town.

and in "The Whole Truth" she does:

not tell the whole truth
on my lawyer's advice, for fear
of jeopardizing my position.

The pelvis I split when pregnant
kept me periodically flat
on my back. I couldn't carry.

So much for the impartiality of the judicial system.

Words explode into separate images, reform and transform into new realities: "For those mothers who remain/ashore and shoring," (Make it Glow) or "Mother daughter mother-daughter/mother ought." Or, as in "Out/Come":

The rage. Tend. Tender.
Enrage, Outrage, Wrath.
Wrong. Wrap. Wild. While.
Time flies, Kill time.
Watch. End the night. Wait.

Weight. Whine. Want. Out.
Better me out. Butter me up...

Kemp is playing with language: puns, double entendres, ambiguities, repetition all occur frequently: "My laundry is less white/than white though I too use/Tide. I guess I swim against", but this is play in earnest and the stakes are high.
Vengeance:

I am happy as rage
uttering these curses
between clenched teeth, ...
...I wouldn't want
that. I wouldn't want
vengeance on such a
nice day...

(Blood Ties)

Hatred:

The mothers still curse me with
sharp insatiable teeth, hissing through
gaps.
His mother. Hers. Her. And likely yours.
(In Place of Persephone)

Evil:

Evil, evil, evil, I mutter
wild at the sight of the teeth
she clasps her cloak by:
white plastic rows between red
grinning lips. A buckled lip.

(The Dogs)

Jealousy:

Do you love her more
than your own mother?

(In My Mind)

The children claim
we're about the same
weight and height.
Laughing, I multiply
Inches, between.

(At Odds)

Woman pitted against woman:

The mothers are hounding me.
Bitches, they drag my scent
to earth and buy me deodorant.

(The Charge)

This is the dark side of *Binding Twine*, where words simultaneously pare away excesses and cauterize, leaving the experience standing clear of its detritus. This is achieved by a spareness of diction, unrelieved for the most part by similes or metaphors - even adjectives are sparsely used - against which is counterpoised the richly textured, swirling, murky depths of feeling. This spareness combines with the predominantly monosyllabic words in "The Gift" to produce a severe horror:

So you want to suck my marrow
and strew my bones about
the neighbourhood...

I shed a skin for you,
the one I grew out of.

In these poems words 'grapple', 'fight', 'cleave', 'weave', 'pant to articulate', 'bind', 'dance', 'evolve', 'recur', 'dig', 'stiffen', 'freeze', 'chase to create', palpable movement and a sinewed poetry that binds the reader and poet in a pact rich with possibilities for insight and wisdom, as Kemp pulls us through this nether world where women hate each other and themselves, through the "ritual rape of daughters that mothers perpetuate", through the darkness of the long birth to that place in the cycle of birth and death where fear is uppermost:

It's taking too long.
One or both of us will die.

Her fear is mine.
I breach, I panic, I
turn around right
in the dark red passage.

This is the terror
we pass on to
our children
who lie shivering
forever.

(Transmission)

The dilemma is clearly stated in "At Odds". "How do we confront/what we cannot see/hidden in ourselves?/She is everything/I am not. I am/what she can't be." Mother and daughter, daughter and mother, woman and woman, confronting, looking at themselves, at each other, forwards and backwards - the leitmotif of "heads spin(ning) on their pivots."

But there is a progression and movement through the "dark red passage" at once held together, yet separated by "the cord that fed me". These "cords that bind" which become at times "the slack cord of hope" also connect, and in "The Link" that cord tightens into, "I look like my dad/on the outside/but on the inside,/my mind's like yours" and tightens even further into:

Mother, I take your hand
and thank you, whom I so
long resisted, running
backward in a panic to
be more, other than an
ordinary mother. Just
as you taught me.

(The Facial)

It strengthens to:

Weave the common thread
wide and strong. Make it hold.

Make it glow like that
first cord we almost
remember, the one they
cut off too soon.

(Make It Glow)

Almost every poem in *Binding Twine* is memorable, and apart from the fact that the position of some of the poems in their respective sections is interchangeable, it is difficult to find any criticism of a work so unified in substance and form. In *Binding Twine* Penny Kemp has more than succeeded at the task she set herself as described in the Introduction: "to transmute my personal experience into something larger, more accessible; to make my truth available, so that a correspondence is set up with the reader." She has signified what for her has been a profound experience and allowed us, not merely to be witness to it, but to enter our own experience of loss, future, present and past.

Marlene Nourbese Philip

NOV '84 - JAN '85



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So much for the impartiality of the judicial system.

Words explode into separate images, reform and transform into new realities: "For those mothers who remain/ashore and shoring," (Make it Glow) or "Mother daughter mother-daughter/mother ought." Or, as in "Out/Come":

The rage. Tend. Tender.
Enrage. Outrage. Wrath.
Wrong. Wrap. Wild. While.
Time flies, Kill time.
Watch. End the night. Wait.

Weight. Whine. Want. Out.
Better me out. Butter me up...

Kemp is playing with language: puns, double entendres, ambiguities, repetition all occur frequently: "My laundry is less white/than white though I too use/Tide. I guess I swim against", but this is p the stakes are high. Vengeance:

I am happy as rage
uttering these curses
between clenched teeth
...I wouldn't want
that. I wouldn't want
vengeance on such a
nice day...

Hatred:

The mothers still curse
sharp insatiable teeth,
gaps.
His mother. Hers. Her
(In I

Evil:

Evil, evil, evil, I mutter
wild at the sight of the
she clasps her cloak by
white plastic rows betw
grinning lips. A buckle

Jealousy:

Do you love her more
than your own mother?

(In My Mind)

The children claim
we're about the same
weight and height.
Laughing, I multiply
Inches, between.

(At Odds)

Woman pitted against woman:

The mothers are hounding me.
Bitches, they drag my scent
to earth and buy me deodorant.

(The Charge)

This is the dark side of *Binding Twine*, where words simultaneously pare away excesses and cauterize, leaving the experience standing clear of its detritus. This is achieved by a spareness of diction, unrelieved for the most part by similes or metaphors - even adjectives are sparsely used - against which is counterpoised the richly textured, swirling, murky depths of feeling. This spareness combines with the predominantly monosyllabic words in "The Gift" to produce a severe horror:

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Mother, I take your hand

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One or both of us will die.

Her fear is mine.
I breach, I panic, I
turn around right
in the dark red passage.

(In My Mind)

This is the terror
we pass on to
our children
who lie shivering
forever.

(At Odds)

(Transmission)

in the Introduction: "to transmute my personal experience into something larger, more accessible: to make my truth available, so that a correspondence is set up with the reader." She has signified what for her has been a profound experience and allowed us, not merely to be witness to it, but to enter our own experience of loss, future, present and past.

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