

THE CULTURAL NEWS MAGAZINE • FEBRUARY 1983 • \$2.00

FUSE

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80
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FREEDOM SEX & POWER

INTERVIEWS WITH
Charlotte Bunch, George Smith,
Chris Bearchell, Gary Kinsman,
Susan Cole, and Varda Burstyn

PLUS

LISTENING TO AFRICAN VOICES + AFRO BLUE by Norman 'Otis' Richmond, SCAPEGOATING by Jeff House, RECLAIMING CULTURE by Ross Kidd, IMAGE AND LANGUAGE by Geoff Miles, MEDIA FRAMES by George Smith, THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY by Jeffrey Escoffier, CHANTAL AKERMAN by Joyce Mason, INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS Part One by Bruce Ferguson, TENSIONS IN THE TITLE by Craig Bromberg, POLITICS AND THE REFUGEE by Brent Knazan, ON CENSORSHIP by Jill Abson



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Charlie Lane

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FUSE

VOL 6 NO 5

INFORMATION / DIFFUSION
ARTEXTE



Charlie Lane

Indigenous People's Theatre Celebration

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Letters

The Struggle is Real

We would just like to commend FUSE Magazine on the excellent article "Status of Women in Canadian Theatre" by Rina Fraticelli. Her statistical analysis has given the "hard facts" of a situation that we have been dealing with for some time.

The coming year — 1983 — will mark the 10th anniversary of Black Theatre Canada as one of the few on-going, cultural institutions of its kind in this country. Throughout its ten year history BTC has been guided by the energy and enthusiasm of its founder, Vera Cudjoe. As a Black woman and a theatre artist, she has experienced the struggle and hardship that Rina Fraticelli defined so articulately.

We agree wholeheartedly with the recommendations made at the end of the article, that "the Canadian government must recognize the existence of sexism and its detrimental effect on the culture of our society . . . and begin the long task of reversing the patterns of systematic discrimination against women in Canadian society. Such an action can begin in earnest only with the introduction of affirmative action and equal opportunity programs empowered to effect significant

change at every level of the theatre industry."

Robin Breon
Black Theatre Canada (Toronto)

"Popular Issues"

Though, perhaps, I should not respond out of silent gratitude for being included in Jody Berland's article, "Musical Pictures" (FUSE, December 1982) I am, among other things, disturbed by inaccuracies in the description of my record "Popular Songs". As the credits on the cover and sleeve deny, it was not "conceived and rendered by Robertson alone in his home recording studio". I was directly assisted by Linda Robitaille (saxophone) and Michael Brook (percussion and engineering), and indirectly by many others whom I acknowledged.

Though I won't quibble with the unevenness of the critical comments throughout her article, (what is FUSE doing giving Eno the green flag?) I did feel that Jody is further mystifying if not misrepresenting what is happening. She says my music, "evokes the dilemma of the artist seeking to articu-

late commitments in an uncommitted time". There's no dilemma — unemployment and concern over police malpractices have noticeably become "popular issues". Neither is there any "pressure" ("these works point to the pressures felt by artists seeking to enter into a recording "space" in order to reach beyond it") involved, nor for that matter, any "seeking". Records, like magazines, are presumably made because they are a convenient and accepted form of conveyance.

Rather than dwell on the formal characteristics of where art and music rather weakly meet (isn't 'deconstruction' a mimetic post-modernist affectation?) wouldn't it be livelier to ask where is the musical continuation of our own youth culture? Why, when we pass the age of opening our own first bank account, are we content to bathe in nostalgia, or worse, pretend that each regularly changing youth manifestation will, if we try hard, do as a replacement for our own quite different needs? I know that, despite the industry, "genuine popular musics" is being re-made all of the time as a function of adolescent opposition. I want more music that functions to complement our own debates (and arthritis).

Clive Robertson, Toronto

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during office hours.

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TO START JANUARY 31, 1983.

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responsibilities: all information management, filing, preparation of newsletter, publicity and information sheets; office procedures; assistance to general manager in co-ordinating all aspects of the organization; handling all correspondence; bookkeeping and banking.

requires: excellent typing; and organizational skills; interest in media arts useful.

TO START JANUARY 31, 1983.

Editorial

Video/Video on the wall . . .

This fall that peculiarly Ontario form of institutionalized censorship had a bit of a dress rehearsal. The occasion: Video/Video, the tape screening which has for the last two years taken place during Toronto's Festival of Festivals. The characters: an ever-pliant but oh-so-exuberant programmer, Marien Lewis; the "we're-not-dead-we're-only-sleeping" Board of Censors; and bringing up the rear, the Artists (or independent producers depending upon which circles you travel in these days) playing the part of supernumeraries, walking on — and walking out — on cue. The issue: whether or not video would submit to that curious rite of passage known in Ontario as Going Before the Board (the Censor Board that is).

But first, some history. Videotapes were shown in the 1981 Festival of Festivals under the aegis of the Trade Forum, which that year was devoted to the marketplace supposedly being created by pay-TV. With this sponsorship, the tapes were presented in four evenings of "private screenings"* and thus none of them had to be approved by the Board of Censors. (For those not familiar with the vagaries of Ontario's censorship system, a "private screening" means neither a curtain-covered booth nor a door-to-door projectionist, but is simply a by-invitation-only presentation of films or videotapes. How those invitations are distributed is left rather unclear in the Theatres Act, the legislation which governs the showing of tapes and films. However, if the material to be screened "privately" has already been banned in the province — as have *Not A Love Story*, *A Message From Our Sponsor* and several other films in the last few years — organizers are some-

what more careful, fearing harassment, arrest, court cases and fines. It is worth noting that at the present time, no independently-produced videotapes have been banned in the province of Ontario, primarily due to the fact that video is not submitted to the Censor Board. After this year's actions at Video/Video, this could well change in the near future.)

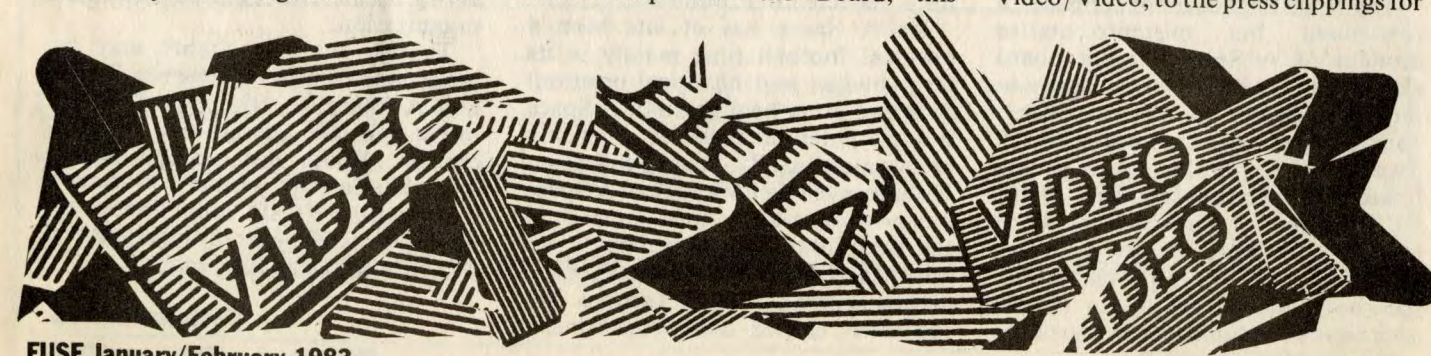
So back to the 1981 Video/Video screening. These "private" events draw a few hundred viewers each night and at the time were seen to be somewhat successful. In the midst of the 1982 Video/Video fiasco, however, last year's history was conveniently rewritten by programmer Lewis (who had also organized the 1981 event along with video artist Randy Gledhill). Last year's audience became "just a lot of familiar faces", while this year the promise of "real people" was dangled hopefully before hungry artists' noses. Some bit enthusiastically. Others were simply worn down by Lewis' pot pourri-style of reasoning which relentlessly pushed Video/Video '82 to fruition.

This year's model —

For those of us involved only as producers in this event, the chronology was unnecessarily confusing and crisis-oriented. Only a few days before the scheduled screenings, those local tape producers whose work was to be screened were summoned to an early morning meeting in the Festival offices. The subject: an 'unforeseen' complication. It seemed that 'quite unexpectedly' the tapes would have to be cleared by the Censor Board. Because of the Festival's special relationship with the Board, this

would 'only' involve the submission of forms (Examination by Documentation) on behalf of each tape. Well this, of course, is precisely what many video producers in the province have been trying not to do for the last two years — we have been avoiding the Censor Board where possible, challenging when necessary and always denying the jurisdiction of the Theatres Act over our work. Why did this problem 'suddenly' arise? Because Lewis had chosen to screen the video works in a licensed movie theatre. Which brings me back to the unnecessary confusion of the meetings, discussions and arguments which surrounded this year's Video/Video. The issue is simple: as producers we do not want our work to be subject to prior censorship; nor do we want the venues which are available to us to show in subject to control by the Theatres Branch of the Ontario government. It is not simply an ethical issue; it is also an economic one. Control by the Theatres Branch would spell financial ruin for many existing showing spaces.

When presented with a solution to the problem of Censor Board intervention at this first meeting, Lewis refused to entertain the idea of moving the video screenings out of the movie theatre. She also refused to allow for any action of solidarity which would address the issue as a whole. She always maintained that no matter what decision "the Canadians" made, she would go ahead with screening the American tapes in the theatre which would, by definition, include interaction with the Censor Board. Lest this distinction go unnoticed, I would refer the readers, including those video producers whose work was shown in Video/Video, to the press clippings for



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this year. There, nestled comfortably amongst Lewis' four-wheel-drive publicist claims for her own role, are her assertions to the effect that video is "almost as good as film" now. Thanks Marien, we needed that. Just to remind us of your true ambition — that video join the glitzy, snobby world of film festivals *at any expense*. Thus, the Censor Board — if it's good enough for film, it's good enough for video. This "the-show-must-go-on" attitude continued, with Lewis busily telephoning local tape producers immediately after this first meeting saying that she had "four hours to fill" on her programme. (Those of us who objected to complying with the Censor Board, it was assumed would quietly withdraw.) She obviously had no intention of even considering an alternative to her own notion of "high-profile" presentation. In the end,

despite an offer from the Festival organizers to provide a "private screening" for those producers who did not wish to go through the Censor Board, 8 tapes were withdrawn from Video/Video.

If there is any lesson to be learned from this mess, it is that video producers would be wise to draw up exhibition contracts for their work. Those who don't want involvement with the Censor Board can include this in any contract and thus cut down on the "surprise" element which was present in this event.

Whether or not the Censor Board involvement at this year's Video/Video was really a surprise is conjecture at this point. But, interestingly, the only tape producer who, to my knowledge, put her objection in writing before the fact was Vera Frenkel, who did so because she was

out of the country when approached to be included in Video/Video and had to reply by letter. Although requested early, Frenkel's tape was never included in any lists of tapes to be shown.

In closing, video producers would be wise to consider German filmmaker Lothar Lambert's cheerful reply to a question which came up during a forum on censorship after the seemingly dormant Censor Board was roused from its torpor to demand cuts in Lambert's film *Berlin/Harlem*. The Festival and Lambert refused and the film was not shown, replaced with a forum. And what would Lambert do in Ontario? "I probably wouldn't show here." Film is up to its ears in the Censor Board. Soon video may well be also.

Lisa Steele

Publisher's Note The A Space "takeover"

Though I don't write a weekly column for *Maclean's* magazine it is with some resignation that in retrospect, I have to admit that my past 'journalistic' editorials for FUSE gather more moss than any other 'serious writing'. Such was the case with the last editorial for FUSE titled "A Letter From Toronto". My re-newed criticism of the growth within formerly artist-run organizations of a new self-appointed breed of non-artist/producer administrators, critics and curators (lumped together as 'cultural managers') suggested for some people an unwarranted polarity. The key-phrase is 'self-appointed' to which could be added irresponsible (responsible to no-one in particular). As an artist who for some twelve years now has remained committed to various phases of artist self-determination, I can only add if the cultural manager shoe fits wear it!

The "FUSE takeover of A Space", a convenient but misrepresentative account of A Space's recent board election, is connected to the above in that A Space now has a board which is composed entirely of practising artists. Two members of that seven person board are currently members of the FUSE editorial collective, a third (myself) continues to act as a co-publisher of FUSE. In the past FUSE has been prominent in its critical appraisal of organizational marriages

of convenience, or linkages, or incestuousness, or whatever term you might wish to apply. It is therefore ironic that FUSE itself has been accused of seeking a monopoly. In the past certain individuals connected with the magazine — in particular myself and Lisa Steele — have simultaneously been involved in video distribution, video curation, print publishing, audio publishing, etc.. Like many other producers with "time on their hands" and "vacuums to fill", we have out-paced the lackadaisical efforts of those who consider themselves 'professionals'. While we have no illusions of our popularity (or lack of it), we are aware of the influence FUSE has had through looking for, collating and articulating many forms of artistic and cultural production which have shown oppositional, reformist and in some cases socialist intent. Some of A Space's past programming has, willy-nilly, reflected that influence.

As A Space has of late been a political football (due mainly to its large budget and historical position) each and every new board of A Space has the potential shelf-life of exactly twelve months. FUSE as a publication has interests much wider than A Space has now or is likely to encompass in the near future and it remains to be seen exactly where the interests of the artistic communities in Toronto and the newly elected board functionally

intersect. By definition the board is directly answerable to the membership. In comparison FUSE's editorial collective are answerable to themselves and to some extent the historical precedents of the magazine.

The current board of A Space is Jane Wright, who ran as an 'independent', and the slate of Tanya Mars, Kim Tomczak, Lisa Steele, Norman 'Otis' Richmond, Carole Conde and Clive Robertson. Contrary to rumour, the decision to form the slate occurred exactly forty-eight hours prior to the meeting. The objectives were 1) to secure a strong directional voice for Toronto's feminist artists, 2) to block the impending return of at least one previous A Space administration, and 3) to regain control of A Space from a small group of 'independent curators' and place the organization not only back into the hands of the white artist community (which unsurprisingly controls all of Toronto's artist organizations) but also to ensure that other artistic and cultural communities in Toronto would be given the opportunity and encouragement to participate in the future programming and direction of the organization.

Though there inevitably may be more shared interests between FUSE and A Space, the two by definition, intent and mandate are two separate entities. While not wishing to be immobilized by present or future worrywarts, FUSE fully intends to maintain its distance of interest from A Space in the coming months.

Clive Robertson

FUSE January/February 1983

News & Reports

Labour, Arts and Media Committee

TORONTO — On November 15 the Swedish Embassy in Canada sponsored a symposium on the distribution of culture entitled 'Cultural Outreach', with the support of the Canadian Labour Congress and the Ontario Arts Council. Among the speakers were various heads of Swedish cultural organizations including Bengt Goransson, Minister of Culture. The Canadian side also included various government agency types including Timothy Porteous of the Canada Council as well as Jeffrey Holmes of the Canadian Conference on the Arts. Jim MacDonald spoke for the Canadian Labour Congress.

Normally such a line up would give little cause for excitement. However, the inclusion of the Canadian Labour Congress proved intriguing, especially since their involvement in cultural affairs has not been notable.

The morning's speeches were informative about the organization of cultural activity in Sweden, which is based on what they term 'popular' organizations which include labour unions, temperance and church groups. Given the situation of government funding in Canada, there are certainly aspects of Swedish cultural policy that are interesting; a minimum wage for recognized artists, the participation of labour and communities in cultural production and distribution, etc.

The speeches by the Canadians, with the exception of Jim MacDonald of the C.L.C., were notable for their absolute ignorance of popular culture. The high point was reached by

Timothy Porteous of the Canada Council who after a few jokes simply dismissed all popular organizations, including labour, as essentially insignificant, both politically and culturally. I cite this as the high point, as it was Porteous' speech that sparked many of the labour representatives and cultural producers present into a counter-offensive in the afternoon.

The afternoon consisted of a series of workshops based on the various disciplines (visual arts, performing arts, communications, etc.) in which a frank exchange with the Swedes, and more importantly, a networking of the labour reps and cultural producers resulted in an overwhelming endorsement of the need for labour and cultural producers to form a concrete working relationship.

The symposium itself raised other questions. Why was the Swedish Embassy sponsoring the event, or, more importantly, what do the Canadian cultural agencies particularly the Ontario Arts Council, hope to achieve with this? Clearly the Swedes provide a political buffer — the O.A.C. can claim they were simply the hosts and avoid any responsibility, but it still leaves the question as to what they hope to learn from it. The connection between the Swedes and the C.L.C. is more obvious as both endorse social democratic policies.

The most significant result, however, and the reason for writing this, came immediately after the symposium. A number of the labour reps and cultural producers called a meeting, got together over beer and hammered out the basis for an initially informal liaison committee between labour and the arts community. It noted that, ironically, it took the Swedes to get the Canadians together,

but only in the sense that such an opportunity had never physically existed before. The need for such a committee was already understood. But it was also noted that it has only been in the last few years that the attitudes of the two groups have changed enough that such a liaison could be set-up. There was no illusion about the problems such a committee confronts; the general reluctance on the part of labour to support cultural activity (although this was explained, in part, by the generally defensive position labour is forced to take in Canada) and the art community's overwhelming self-interest, to name the most obvious. But, it was also, in part, because of this that the need for such a committee was not only recognized but seen as essential. As the Swedish delegation moved on to New York to hold another symposium, the labour-arts liaison committee began to lay the basis for a national committee and program. On December 10th, the group met formally for the first time, as the Labour, Arts and Media Committee, and plans to seek an official okay from the Canadian Labour Congress. The two main themes that came out of this meeting were the need for the C.L.C. to develop a policy on the arts, particularly in the face of the recent Applebaum-Hebert Report recommendations and to initiate specific projects involving cultural producers with labour.

People interested in finding out more about this Committee and its activities should contact Catherine Macleod, Guild of Canadian Playwrights, 24 Ryerson St., Toronto. □

Karl Beveridge

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Deejay offends the Black Community

TORONTO — All is not well in the Great White North. Toronto's 200,000 strong Black community are enraged over a racist remark made by a Caucasian deejay over the air.

About 100 people demonstrated outside the offices of radio station CKFM on October 30, protesting the station's decision to continue using broadcaster Phil MacKellar to do the jazz program "All That Jazz."

The demonstration was organized by the recently formed Committee Against Racism Within the Media after MacKellar said he wouldn't join a friend downtown because there were "four million dancing niggers" on the street. It was Caribana weekend. MacKellar was having a private conversation and didn't know his voice was heard by horrified listeners and station staff.

It took MacKellar almost three weeks to apologize and it was approximately three months before the station's management decided to apologize to the Black community.

Following the demonstration at CKFM the demonstrators marched to the Park Plaza on Avenue Road where a conference was sponsored by Multiculturalism Minister Jim Fleming who was the keynote speaker at the opening session.

On Wednesday November 3, five days after the demonstration, MacKellar, 58, who has been a jazz commentator since 1955, was given an opportunity by the Toronto Sun, the little rag that grows worse, to give his side of the story.

According to the Sun, "On Saturday, July 24, MacKellar finished hosting "Toronto Alive" about 6:30 p.m. at the Sheraton Centre Hotel. He was to emcee the Chuck Mangione show at Ontario Place at 8:30 p.m. and went straight there.

"About 7:15 p.m., he had a drink at an Ontario Place bar where he met a Black New Yorker who told him he couldn't believe such a great city as Toronto would allow the Caribana parade.

"I was amazed. I mean why would a Black not like Caribana?" MacKellar said. 'It's four million niggers jumping up and down', the New Yorker said, according to MacKellar.

"The next Saturday, during a phone

conversation MacKellar repeated the comment after accidentally turning the mike on."

There is something fishy about all this. Either MacKellar is telling a little



Errol Taylor

Committee Against Racism Within the Media

"white" lie, or the so-called Black New Yorker doesn't know his own home. Every Labor Day in New York City more Black people take to the streets for Brooklyn's Eastern Parkway Carnival than Toronto's Caribana. This event was started by West Indians living in New York City and has occurred since 1947.

MacKellar's statement sounds like the age-old divide and conquer tactic to pit North American Blacks against those who were born in the Caribbean.

Norman Richmond

The Fire Brigade Strikes Back

VANCOUVER — The Wimmin's Fire Brigade has added firebombings to the range of tactics aimed at eliminating the profits of Red Hot Video. B.C. feminists have taken on 13 franchises which sell video images of women chained from the ceiling, beaten, raped and gang raped.

Groups within the B.C. Federation of Women including Rape Relief, Women in Focus and Press Gang recognize Red Hot Video as a forerunner of a whole new level of encouragement toward violence against women.

The videos available at the franchise outlets rent for \$5 a weekend and, though many are slickly produced, others have a rough, 'home-made' quality of realism not present in film. These videos can be easily copied, and, if the viewer owns a video camera, even produced at home.

In the early morning hours of November 22, 1982, the Wimmin's Fire Brigade hit 3 of the 13 Red Hot Video outlets. One was completely destroyed by fire, a second was extensively damaged, and in a third outlet an unexploded incendiary bomb was found. Within an hour, the W.F.B. had claimed responsibility for all three actions, saying they were acts of self defense. No one was injured in any of the actions.

After these actions took place, grassroots organizers within women's groups were surprised by the level of support expressed by women at large, who often said: "I don't condone violence, but this is different."

Immediately following November 22, the B.C. Federation of Women organized press conferences, pickets (including a province-wide picket which mobilized 700 demonstrators at short notice) and a 'by invitation only' screening of some of the tapes distributed by Red Hot Video. These events have kept the issue 'high profile' since the action.

Men have been noticeable supporters on the picket lines and, responsibly, have not challenged the leadership of the women.

The B.C.F.W. has taken the position that no new censorship laws are needed. It is simply that the existing laws are not being enforced. The federal Criminal Code prohibits the circulation of material which depicts sex with violence, humiliation and horror — the stock and trade of Red Hot Video.

Most involved in this struggle see it as an economic fight which can be won with direct action tactics. The B.C.F.W. has announced that they will shut down all Red Hot Video operations in the province within twelve months. While there are no Red Hot Video stores outside B.C. yet, the franchise does a thriving mail order business. (The Globe & Mail has carried ads for the sale of these tapes in its business section.) While feminists continue to point out the racism and abuse of children present in this kind of pornography, the overall emphasis has been focused on exposing these videos as anti-woman propaganda. □

Lee Lakeman
Rape Relief, Van.

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Cruise Missile Conversion Project

TORONTO — If you have lived your life in any major North American or Russian city, you have been living with a nuclear missile aimed squarely at you. Until recently, most Canadians have felt an almost smug lack of responsibility to this horrific situation. But this attitude seems to be changing and the nexus point for this change is the cruise missile, the latest addition to the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

Briefly, the cruise missile is a 20 ft. long pilotless airplane that is equipped with an on-board computer that enables it to fly very fast at very low altitudes. The crucial part of the long range cruise missile technology is the guidance system. The onboard computer has a picture of the terrain over which it has to fly; at present intervals it takes an electronic look around and makes any course changes or corrections. Its programmed course can make use of hills and mountains in order to go undetected by radar, or simply to deceive the enemy by indirectness. It can carry a 200 kiliton bomb to within 30 ft. of its target, making it ideal for knocking out a

A SPACE

is an artist-run organization structure/facility in Toronto designed to assist in the production and presentation of works and activities in the various disciplines and media related to contemporary art. A Space seeks a

Coordinator

to share administrative responsibilities with one other staff person. The successful applicant will have a thorough knowledge of and commitment to contemporary art and media, with arts administration experience. Also desirable is the applicant's interest in broad cultural representation, and a commitment to working in close cooperation with the board of directors and an active membership.

The coordinators will be responsible for implementing and coordinating programmes, for office management, publicity and public relations, liaison with funding agencies, and budgetary planning and control.

Salary: \$19,800/per annum

Applications, addressed to Search Committee, should be received in writing no later than January 15, 1983.

A Space, 299 Queen St. W., Toronto M5V 1Z9

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missile silo. As it has been pointed out before, you don't need accuracy for a deterrent, you just need big bombs. The U.S. has about 37,000 "big bombs" and is building more, and so are the Russians. The Cruise is definitely not a defensive weapon, but a first strike weapon that takes us past the "Mutual Assured Destruction" aspect



of the cold war we have experienced over the last three decades, and into the position of one super power having the perceived ability to win a nuclear exchange with the added danger of the other side being perfectly aware of this eventuality.

The Cruise Missile Conversion Project is a Toronto based group committed to the conversion to peaceful production at Litton Systems, a factory near Toronto International Airport which produces the guidance system for the Cruise. The group says its tools are: authentic dialogue, boycotts, leaflets, public education, and civil disobedience. In their own words, "We choose, as Ghandi and others have, to seek the goodness in the hearts of others. For example, our leafletting campaign with the workers at Litton strives to speak to them as human beings who want a future as we do. It is not just individuals who must change, but it is through individuals that necessary social change can begin. By fermenting that change we seek to implant a non-violent radicalism and develop its truly revolutionary potential." The group's activities are centered on mass demonstrations and civil disobedience actions at the Litton plant in Rexdale. The C.D. techniques range from

blocking the driveway of the plant and passively resisting removal by police; pouring blood on Litton property; planting white crosses on Litton lawns and painting green doves on Litton walls. All of this is, of course, in addition to the weekly leafletting of the workers at the plant and public education work in schools, community groups and churches.

The CMCP is committed to a decentralized, non-hierarchical internal group process. Its 50-odd members consist of radical catholics, quakers, artists and traditional anti-war activists who range in age from 15 to 80. They work in collectives, with each group handling specialized activities such as education, legal work, media, design, the planning of the civil disobedience actions, and the problem of the conversation to peaceful production at Litton Systems. There is also a central coordinating collective made up of six men and four women. It has been decided that no new members will be added to this core group until there is an equal number of women. This is indicative of the groups philosophy as described in its Vision Paper: "As a collective we make our decisions by consensus. By struggling with this method, we are saying that every person should actively take part in formulating group decisions. We are striving for a non-hierarchical group process whereby no individual or small group dominates the whole; all participate equally in forming decisions; tasks and responsibilities are rotated."

The bombing that took place recently at Litton, if nothing else, succeeded in drawing the public's attention to what Litton is actually making out there at their innocuous looking factory. The CMCP, while disassociating itself from the bombing, reaffirmed its commitment to non-violent resistance and do not plan to stop their resistance to the cruise because of the bombing.

Pat Jeffries, a spokesperson for the group, pointed out the irony implicit in the statement of Carles Pittman, Litton spokesman, who said that "Bombing is madness". "We also believe that bombing is madness, that is why we are against the production and testing of the Cruise in Canada. If a cruise missile had exploded at Litton on October 14th, half the people in Toronto would have been instantly killed and the rest slowly dying of radiation poisoning and burns. The arms industry is terrorism on a global scale and we are all hostages." □

Richard Skinulis

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FREEDOM, SEX & POWER

Interviews with Charlotte Bunch, George Smith, Chris Bearchell, Gary Kinsman, Susan Cole, and Varda Burstyn.

Against a background of highly vocal and visible declarations of self-identity, the late '60s and the entire decade which followed saw movements for gay liberation, women's liberation and feminism rise up, gain strength and move into the public arena. As these movements found political voice through addressing political needs — employment, discrimination and representation — much common ground amongst them became evident. But running parallel to this sense of political cooperation and agreement were a series of questions where no agreement seemed possible. These were, of course, questions of sexuality and sexual practices.

This is ironic. For, as the 1980s dawned, replete with ailing and often failing economic directions and the often-commented-upon rise of conservative right-wing power blocs which have permeated all levels of society, individuals within these movements who had come together around issues of political and social change found themselves engaged — sometimes to an alarming extent — in debates over sex.

Pornography and violence and the attendant issues of censorship and control — age of consent laws which have given rise to uncomfortable discussions of incest and non-consensual sex — s/m with its questions of power on a personal scale against a background of real domination — all of these areas have come under close scrutiny as publications from the feminist, the gay and the lesbian communities as well as from the Left have opened their pages to the inter- and often intra-community debates.

In the spirit not of resolving these debates but investigating some of the history and theoretical reasoning which has so far informed them, **FUSE** presents this series of interviews. The interviews are a result of a public discussion and panel hosted by the Toronto-based feminist newspaper **Broadside** on October 22, 1982.

Under the title "Sex, Freedom and Violence", American feminist and lesbian activist Charlotte Bunch opened her lecture with a comment that the word "power" should be included in any of these discussions currently taking place. Bunch, speaking from her own background of active participation in many groups and movements, was conciliatory rather than confrontational. She spoke about the continuing necessity for locating some common ground — even in the midst of arguments. After her presentation, the panel (which included Chris Bearchell, Gary Kinsman, George Smith, myself and Mariana Valverde) delivered brief statements from various perspectives and questions from the audience followed, moderated by Broadside-collective member Susan G. Cole. Although the evening, in total, could not be described as definitive (which is perhaps more a failing of panel discussions in general than a criticism of this particular one), it did at least begin to indicate some of the parameters of the debates. (Readers might look at the upcoming February 1982 issue of **Broadside** for an article by Eve Zaremba, the main organizer of this event, for her views regarding the relative value of panels as public forums.)

FREEDOM SEX & POWER

CHARLOTTE BUNCH

Charlotte Bunch is a lesbian and feminist activist and writer who has been active in gay liberation feminist and civil rights movements. She is currently serving on the Gay Task Force in the U.S. Charlotte was interviewed by Varda Burstyn, Lynne Fernie and Lisa Steele during her visit to Toronto in October.

LS: What is the background to the divisions which have occurred recently within the lesbian feminist, the feminist and gay communities over sexuality issues such as pornography, violence and sexual practices? I understand that at this point you are more of an observer and only somewhat of a participant but I would like to hear your perceptions of how, historically, these issues have come to be so divisive.

CB: I come into the discussion of all of these issues as a person who has primarily identified myself as a feminist. Feminism is at the root of my personal identity and my politics and so the feminist movement is the arena in which I identify my sense of direction. I also come into it as a lesbian who has worked very hard to bring lesbian feminist sensibility and understanding into the feminist movement.

A feminist and a lesbian identity

I feel strongly that if the feminist movement does not include lesbian feminism, it will not only short-circuit itself but it will fail on some very fundamental levels to see the full dimension of what feminism is all about. So I also come with a very strong lesbian identity, which has led me to acknowledge and work with the gay liberation movement as the manifestation of a lot of that lesbian identity. This means that I'm always looking at all three of those

movements and seeing how they are affected by what's going on, because they are all three a part of who I am.

Feminism confronts pornography

My observation of what has been happening is that the initial discussion and the evolution of analysing pornography as an issue was a logical 'next step' for feminism, when it began five or six years ago. At that point feminism was involved in two things which pornography brought together — one was the whole question of violence against women and the other was the question of the media. Some of the very first feminist actions were around the images and depiction of women in the media. We have always acknowledged that the media has a very important impact on women and on women's oppression. So the connection between the two was inevitable. To make that connection around the issue of pornography was simple — almost too simple. We saw this as an area where violence and media came together and were having an enormous impact on the basic reality of our lives — sexual terrorism in the streets, in the home, and the fears which go with this. Because even if it doesn't actually happen to you, there is an atmosphere of sexual terrorism created all around us as women. When I first participated in anti-pornography work, going to some of the marches and demonstrations, I had a very good feeling about that direction. And one of the things that I thought was important about the issue was precisely the fact that you couldn't organize a social service to alleviate the problem; that was not possible. Instead you *had* to look at the political construction. It was not an area where we could be side-tracked into just trying to solve the problem individually. That was, I think, the direction which many of us involved in the beginnings of the anti-pornography movement and the anti-violence-against-women campaign identified with. The second important thing about the issue was that it did tap women's rage. The first place where I saw younger women getting very active again was within the anti-pornography movement.

LS: When did the critique of women-against-pornography begin to happen? It seemed to come from within many groups, progressive groups, which had previously been very allied with the feminist movement as a whole.

People's action vs. state action

CB: I can only tell you my experience around this — it's not the whole picture. The first critique of the anti-pornography movement which I heard came not from lesbians or the gay liberation movement but from socialist feminists. They were very uneasy about the whole question of potential state censorship and freedom of expression and they felt that the anti-pornography movement was gliding over those questions. For example, when **Quest** published an article on the Snuff films,* the major debates we had around that article were raised by women with a socialist feminist perspective. These debates were constructive and centered around issues of how do we deal with conflicting needs for freedom of expression and the violation of some members of the society which that often entails, and how do we deal with censorship. But while some constructive debates on those issues were taking place, meanwhile, out there in the world, some of the old conflicts between socialist feminists and radical feminists emerged in a much less constructive fashion. There were attacks on the anti-pornography movement and individuals within it for advocating censorship, even though from my experience of the anti-pornography movement up until that time, it was not calling for censorship. Rather, it was demanding community boycotts, saying we're not going to do this — demanding direct action, people's action, not state action.

LS: But there have been changes in that original direction. It seems to me that two to three years ago there began to be a feeling within the anti-pornography movement that the state *should* protect women against pornography. How did this change in direction — which could be seen as acknowledging the potential for censorship — come about?

CB: I think what happened was that the anti-pornography and the anti-violence-against-women campaigns began to get major support from mainstream feminists. Many of these women were much less sympathetic than the earlier radical feminist organizers had been to any of the arguments from the Left about the role of the state. They did not share an

*"Snuffing Sexual Violence" by Deb Freidman and Lois Vankowski, **Quest** (Vol. 3 #2, Fall 1976).



Charlotte Bunch

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Quest: a feminist quarterly is a journal of feminist theory and analysis available from P.O. Box 9086, Washington, D.C. 20003. \$9 year.

Broadside is published 10 times a year by Broadside Communications Ltd., P.O. Box 494, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2T1. \$10 year.

The Body Politic is published 10 times a year by Pink Triangle Press, P.O. Box 7289, Station A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1X9. \$12 year.

GLARE has published a pamphlet, "Gay Men and Feminism" which is available from GLARE, P.O. Box 793, Station Q, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2N7. \$2.

Sapphic Touch: a journal of lesbian erotica is published by Pamir Productions, P.O. Box 40218, San Francisco, CA 94140. \$7 per issue.

Graphic Details: Lesbian erotica and humor is published by Starr Publications, P.O. Box 5586, Phoenix, AZ 85010.

A Woman's Touch: An anthology of lesbian eroticism and sensuality for women only is published by Womanshare Books, (Amazon Reality) P.O. Box 95, Eugene, Oregon 97440.

analysis that saw censorship as a serious problem, either because they did not share the traditional socialist concern about the role of the state or the lesbian and gay concern about censorship being used against us. So the anti-pornography movement became very different from its radical feminist origins, getting a lot of

support from mainstream feminists to the extent that it was really taken over by them. This could happen because often they had the access to define the issues in their terms within the media, where radical feminists did not. So as the media began to pick up on the issues of the anti-pornography movement, it was not in terms of the original radical feminist stance — the outrage, the energy, the people's action notion of it.

Feeding the media

LS: But I don't think that's an accident. There are really two reasons why the shift within the anti-pornography movement itself allowed the media to become involved. First because those involved were introducing the issue of censorship — and as we know the media will go bananas even over a *discussion* of the possibility, let alone advocating it. Just look at the press reaction to the U.N. resolution about Third world news monitoring and control. They went wild, often completely misrepresenting the original aims of the resolution. And second, it was an issue which allowed a label of anti-sex to be applied to the women involved.

CB: Yes, that's a good parallel with the reaction to the New International Information Order resolution, because there, as here, the original purpose behind the proposal was lost in the debate over what was or wasn't censorship. Further, this played into the media's desire to portray feminists as puritanical.

LS: But in many cases, the gay liberation movement has reacted to feminism along those same lines, using that same model. As you said in your lecture last night, "I'm not a prude, nor am I a pervert." There is of course this misconception of feminists with the mainstream media, but I think there is the same misconception within each of our alternative media, who often take positions regarding the other liberation movements which are based on the 'outside' reading and interpretation.

CB: One of the ironies of this is that everybody who is within any movement for change ought to understand that our images of each other shouldn't come from the mainstream media. But in fact they do. Too often, movements have 'bought' each other's images from the mainstream media. We should see that if "that's not an accurate image of me", then it's probably not an accurate image of the other either.

"My god, what a mess!"

The pornography issue played into this because there were a number of unresolved conflicts between groups to start with. And it's a very volatile issue — which doesn't mean we shouldn't have taken it on. But it requires a level of political sophistication and control over the issue which we did not have, that radical feminists certainly didn't have. We lost control over the definition of the issue of pornography and the anti-pornography movement to two or three different forces — to the mainstream feminist women, to the media portrayal and to the reaction of other groups. Further, if any group had any objection to radical feminists, they could jump on the issue of pornography and use it to say that radical feminists were off the wall. As a result, the issue was gutted of its direct action potential. It has become very interesting, intellectually, to sort out what the issue means and why everybody has attached so much significance to it. But in the meantime, for me, the very purpose of the issue, a lot of which was its action potential, has really been destroyed. Instead it has become divisive. So I feel, in some senses, my god what a mess. (laughter). And I think that this carries over into what's happening in other issues of sexuality. We have proven that we don't have the sophistication or the control over the media or the trust with each other to handle them in ways which are very productive. That's why so many of the sexuality issues are producing a sense of 'what a mess'. On an intellectual level, I can say that each one of these issues can provide very valuable territory for us to explore, but my feeling is that that's not what's happening with them.

LS: Isn't some of the divisiveness of this issue because of the "alliance with the Right" which has been seen as a threat by some groups. I know that has been thrown out as a possibility . . .

CB: Thrown at, I think you mean. (laughter)

LS: Do you think that could at least be partially responsible, for example, for socialist feminists' critique of the anti-pornography movement?

CB: I presume it is because that is what I hear. But I feel like that is primarily rhetorical. It's not my experience. I have never seen the anti-pornography movement aligning with the Right, even when aligning with the mainstream . . . I mean Ms. magazine is not

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the right wing. I see it as a rhetorical attack and not a real reflection of what has been happening.

Right-baiting

LS: But that critique does represent a defense against the issues of sexual politics which the feminist movement has brought up — issues which are still as potentially divisive as they ever were. And individually, within each of our groupings, we have not resolved those questions. Sometimes we have hardly even begun the discussion. And occurring at the same time within the last few years you have the rise of the



Body Politic

Take Back the Night demonstration, Toronto May 6, 1980

Right and the Moral Majority who are also raising issues of sexual politics — right to life, the Family Protection Act. It isn't hard to see how discussion of any issues of sexuality becomes identified with part of this backlash, just because of the common vocabulary which is often used. So I think you get some groups having a kind of knee-jerk reaction and saying we should not be engaging in these kinds of issues now. And you can get a kind of 'right-baiting' also used against anyone involved in such analysis.

CB: "Right-baiting" is a very good term. At this point, as feminists, we should be confident enough of our own analysis not to be totally unable to cope with the fact that there might be an idea or two that the right wing has made comments about where we would agree that there is a problem. It

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is also a matter of not taking the right wing as some kind of monolithic powerful evil that has nothing decent to say in the world, that has no human values.

Lynne Fernie: As completely 'other'.

CB: I mean the right wing has a set of human values and visions. I just don't agree with them and I think it's important to disagree with them but I don't see them as devil incarnate. We do have a responsibility not to play into their hands on the pornography issue or on any of these other issues. But we don't have to abandon our own vision just because we have hit on a problem which they also recognize.

began to insist that we consider the issue of sexual practice from their perspective, how do we respond without playing into the hands of the mass media?

What kind of sex is "politically correct"?

CB: To me, it isn't that we shouldn't discuss issues such as this, but I do think that we need to talk about how to deal with the response of mainstream people to issues like lesbian s/m. We have to acknowledge that this poses problems since there are different levels of working politically.

Because we have a very different view of how to go about changing or altering that situation than the Right does.

Varda Burstyn: The Right's rise is based in the same kind of crisis which has produced feminism. They are raising a series of problems. So are we. **CB:** Feminists, in that sense, are being baited, whether it's from gay men or the socialist feminists or whomever. We have to be able to stand up and say that's just rhetorical and not the issue. In this case, the issue is pornography and what it means in society.

LF: What happens when feminists begin to attract media attention around an issue of sexual politics which we have not resolved in our own media? I'm thinking particularly about sexual practices. So that when a group of gay-identified lesbian s/m women

But it's not a question of stopping the discussion — in fact I never did like the idea of trying to 'sell' lesbian issues on the basis of the "good, clean" image. Part of what is important to assert is that nobody has to have a "good, clean" image to have human rights. In that way I agree with what the s/m lesbians are saying, even though in other ways I am quite uncomfortable with their assertions about feminism. I wish we could discuss these issues without having to discuss who's the 'vanguard', who's got the most 'politically-correct' view. If we could begin to discuss s/m, why it exists, what needs does it meet, do we feel good or bad about those needs being met in certain ways, how do we meet needs which we all have that we might not feel good about because we think they are conditioned by society, etc. We need that kind of

N.O.W. RESOLUTION

"Whereas, The National Organization for Women's commitment to equality, freedom, justice, and dignity for all women is singularly affirmed in NOW's advocacy of Lesbian rights; and

Whereas, NOW defines Lesbian rights issues to be those in which the issue is discrimination based on affectional/sexual preference/orientation; and

Whereas, There are other issues (i.e., pederasty, pornography, sadomasochism and public sex) which have been mistakenly correlated with Lesbian/Gay rights by some gay organizations and by opponents of Lesbian/Gay rights who seek to confuse the issue, and

Whereas, Pederasty is an issue of exploitation or violence, not affectional/sexual preference/orientation; and

Whereas, Pornography is an issue of exploitation and violence, not affectional/sexual preference/orientation; and

Whereas, Sadomasochism is an issue of violence, not affectional/sexual preference/orientation; and

Whereas, Public sex, when practiced by heterosexuals or homosexuals, is an issue of violation of the privacy rights of non-participants, not an issue of affectional/sexual preference/orientation; and

Whereas, NOW does not support the inclusion of pederasty, pornography, sadomasochism and public sex as Lesbian rights issues, since to do so would violate the feminist principles upon which this organization was founded; now therefore

Be it resolved, That the National Organization for Women adopt the preceding delineation of Lesbian rights issues and non-Lesbian rights issues as the official position of NOW; and

Be it further resolved that NOW disseminate this resolution and the resolution concept paper on Lesbian rights issues 1980 attached hereto throughout the National, State, and Local levels of the organization; and

Be it further resolved that NOW will work in cooperation with groups and organizations which advocate Lesbian Rights as issues as defined above."

discussion, rather than the present polarization which makes it impossible to pose some of these questions without being declared "the enemy" instantly from one side or the other. But that's the nature of 'camps', I guess, and therefore very much like what's happened around the pornography issue. I've heard people defending things which I know they don't believe in, just because they feel they've been cornered.

LF: Well your 'camp' is your community.

Grafting strategies is ineffective

LS: But also different issues require different organizing strategies. So the issue of pornography, which is a *representation* of violence against women, and the issue of the actual violence which women experience are two different things.

CB: That's true. You can't just take the strategy which you used on the last issue and apply it to the issue of pornography because it won't work. The same for the s/m issue. You can't just use the 'oppressed minority' construct as a way to deal with lesbian s/m. In doing that, we're being very unimaginative in our conceptualization of what issues really are. In fact, debating and thinking through an issue and organizing around an issue are not the same task. We need guidelines, ethics and tools for all those tasks. For example, at this moment as an organizer, I think that it is not at all helpful that these very problematic issues around sexuality are coming up right now, but as a long term movement theorist, I know that we have to go through them.

LF: All of these debates end up being sandwiched together under "sexuality" in one way or another — s/m, pornography, representation, actual violence.

CB: As a lesbian, I object to this because when these become "sexuality issues", it's as if they automatically become issues of gay and lesbian lifestyles. That's nonsense. Every one of these things which we are discussing around pornography, s/m, age of consent is every bit as much a heterosexual issue as it is a lesbian or gay issue. And yet because the community which is organized around sexuality issues is the gay and lesbian community, it perpetuates the stereotype that these are only things which happen there. Whatever we think of those practices, we have to look at

them in relation to the gay and the straight world. That's why the N.O.W. resolution (see insert) has made me so upset. First of all I think it was unnecessary and unhelpful to pass a resolution on the issues at this point. Secondly, if they were going to write such a resolution, it should never have been done in the context of gay rights. It should have been done "what do you think about s/m, age of consent and pornography in society generally" not "what do you think about these in relation to the gay movement". But it is instructive to see once again how these issues get lumped together.

VB: What kinds of things do you think that feminism has to address in terms of the crisis of sexuality, the breakdown of the old rules, and considering peoples' clear lack of happiness. What kinds of issues can feminism take up in order to fill the vision that was begun to be put forward in the 60s?

CB: I think that what feminism has to do in that area is to assert two different levels of discussion. One is the way in which the sexuality issue comes under a central question of control of our bodies and the way to do this is to make clear to people what it means to have control over one's own body. Since reproduction and sexuality are so crucial to self-determination, control of your body sexually and control of reproduction are not separated from having a sense of control over your whole life and having a sense of your own autonomy. That's particularly true for women since most men have taken having control over their bodies for granted. Further, men have understood that violence and the denial of that control to women is a very powerful act.

The other area for me is to begin to talk about a feminist ethic of sexuality which would define not the old morality, which indicated very clear cut lines of what was right and what was wrong, but would begin to talk about what it means to have ethical relationships to other people. It's an area where feminism has been both very strong and very weak. I think that the core of feminism is an ethical set of values and principles yet because the moralism surrounding sexuality in our society has been used against us, to control our sexuality, we have not been able to produce our own set of ethics around sexuality. I would like to see us begin to talk about that in terms of human interaction. What are the kinds of values that we care about in relation to how people act with each other. I think one reason why there is

so much fear around sexuality is that if you don't accept all the old ethics you may find yourself simply awash in the world, having no idea what counts. I think a lot of the reaction to feminism has been a sense of 'I can't cope with that much uncertainty. I need some sense, if not of rules, at least of guiding principles. One of the reasons why we are now having such enormous debates within the feminist community is because we are in the process of trying to figure out an ethics of sexuality that we would call feminist, and how can we have an ethics that is also not repressive and controlling. This is an area which is very important to developing a feminist vision. □

FREEDOM SEX & POWER

GEORGE SMITH

George Smith is the former chairperson of the Right To Privacy Committee in Toronto.

LS: From your experience, could you locate when some of the splits happened between the gay community and the feminist community?

GS: The place to begin would be back in 1969, when the Stonewall riots occurred, when gay liberation in its most modern form came into existence. At that point the people involved in gay liberation had borrowed all of their theory; they borrowed from feminists and from left thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse, Wilhelm Reich, etc. . . . They saw that the question of gay liberation was somehow a question of gender. On the basis of this question there was a unity with feminists. It was discussed in terms of "the withering away of gender". It was supposed that masculine and feminine (as separate categories) would disappear. Instead there would be androgyny; bisexuality was seen as a thing which people should aim toward, etc. By doing away with gender, the oppression of women

would also disappear. I think that was the basis of unity and how it was organized.

The central flaw in this was that the early gay liberationists failed to understand the position of gay men and lesbians as being perverts, as being people outside of the social order. Homosexuals are men who are not really men, and women who are not really women, but something else. In a way, I guess this was understood because this problem was seen to go away if you removed gender. But of course, gender has not gone away. What has happened instead is that, on the one side, gay men have attempted to move the boundary of what is masculine to include themselves. So they have become more masculine. The effeminate man is no longer the 'in' thing. Men who go around calling each other "dearie" are seen to be doing a stylistically-incorrect thing; it's more a social or style question.

LS: If gay men moved the boundary to include themselves as men, doesn't that imply some kind of analysis or deliberation?

GS: It was much more accidental than that. When a gay man came out publicly he was saying "I'm not a pervert": that was the way in which the boundary was supposed to be moved. As this happened, gay men who had not seen themselves to be 'real' men could now increasingly see themselves as men — like other men. Or if not exactly like other men, they were also not the weirdos and perverts of the previous generation. That was centered around the politics of coming out. But it was more like style, such as whether you wear Adidas running shoes and LaCoste shirts . . . It was picked up in the gay media and promoted. It wasn't like the way in which people think about being 'politically correct'. People were not put down for being politically-incorrect if they camped it up. It simply was ignored. They were seen to be kind of 'out of it'.

But gender did not wither away

On the other side, the feminist movement has taken up lesbians as women-identified-women, thus also moving the boundary so that dykes were no longer seen as perverts but could almost be seen as the purest form of women. So that instead of gender withering away, it has been reinforced on both sides. For women the notion of "feminine" — which doesn't have to mean frilly, etc. — has been rein-

forced. Think, for example, of feminine in relation to organizations. These would be non-hierarchical. That is how feminists would define "feminine" as opposed to "masculine". On the other side you have gay men who are presenting more masculine images, more muscles, a love affair with working class drag . . . So instead of these two groups melding in any way, you see masculine and feminine as being *more* produced, but produced separately.

Also, much of the politics of early gay liberation came out of applying a feminist analysis. The problem with that is that feminist analysis is located in the experience of women; it doesn't arise out of the experience of gay men. So it was like a foreign importation — that is, a purely ideological move. Concepts are taken and applied to people's lives without looking at how their lives are put together. Instead, what gay men should have done, and lesbians as well, was to begin to look at how gay life is put together. Feminists have done that for women — there is the study of gender, the study of housework, the study of women in employment, in the arts, etc. There has been a lot of work, particularly in women's studies courses — whole book shelves full — and this work hasn't been done in gay liberation. There is not much work and there are no central theoreticians. Thus the importation of feminist analysis has produced an ideological account and a politics which is separated from the masses of gay people — especially men — who have instead moved on their own. Gay activists have quite often found themselves isolated from the 'rank and file', as it were, the bar people, the baths people.

LS: Once the study of gay life, which you said hasn't occurred yet, is undertaken, do you think it'll be necessary to produce a kind of gay liberationist analysis, in the way you were speaking of feminist analysis?

GS: Certainly. If a political movement is to occur, what you need to have is a science, an understanding and account of the society which it comes out of. That was the problem in 1969. There wasn't an account of gay life. Politics was spinning. So when an ideology is imported, it is imported as a kind of discourse, something that people can talk about. The thing which most commonly arises from that is not political actions, but publications. So one of the things which has been very significant about the gay liberation movement is its publications. People talk and convince themselves with the

talk; it's taking up the world as a form of discourse. Gay liberationists are often simply 'talking heads'.

LS: In view of what you are saying, the debates and divergences of opinion over issues of sexuality and sexual practices — pornography, age of consent, etc. — which are occurring between the gay liberation movement and the feminist movement would appear to be natural at this time.

GS: Another problem arises with what I would call feminist ideology. When a discourse or conceptual apparatus is

often based on power and a kind of hierarchy . . .

The production of ideology

GS: And for gay men that is not the way in which it is produced.

LS: It's very frustrating to see groups which had had alliances splitting over these issues. Are you saying that at this time we may not even have a way of beginning discussions?

GS: Certainly we have a way of beginning them. We know how to go

the concept of violence and use it to pick out the pieces which fit that concept, without embedding those pieces in how things are lived, it doesn't work.

LS: Does your work, such as in the Right To Privacy Committee, point to a need for coalitions of groups around some issues? Or do you think that some issues are best left within the groups which they most directly affect?

Political work is coalition

GS: Every piece of political work is a piece of coalition politics. I was in San Francisco when the ERA was defeated, and something which I had known before really became clear to me. Seeing how women were divided over the ERA, it became evident that feminism is a very progressive movement and the people who are going to support it are going to be progressive people. It's not going to be won by all the women voting on one side and all the men voting on the other. It's going to be won by women and men who are progressive working together. That's going to be true for a number of issues, such as the nuclear annihilation issue, racism, social class. These are the problems on the agenda for the last part of the twentieth century and they can only be taken up as coalitions.

What has happened with Reagan coming to power is a new formulation of coalition politics. One of the problems is that it's easy for people to see what their immediate political needs are, such as gay people seeing the police as a problem. But what political leadership has to do is to show people the necessity of coalition. One of the jobs of leadership is to frame things, and many issues now must be framed in this way so that they can be taken up in this way. So for example within the R.T.P.C. there has been a long history of working with minority groups almost since the beginning, particularly with ethnic and racial minorities. There was the Working Group on Police/Minority Relations which became C.I.R.P.A. (Citizens Independent Review of Police Actions). Gay men have seen the importance of cooperating when events such as the murder of Albert Johnson happen. (Johnson, a West Indian immigrant, was killed by Toronto police officers in his home.) And then Johnson's widow appeared at the rally and demonstration after the bath raids.

LS: Do you see places where the gay

liberation movement and the feminist movement could be particularly effective in working together?

GS: Well there's the issue of gender, but I wouldn't know how that will take place. It's posed as the doing away with masculinity and the maintenance of femininity but that doesn't seem to be how it's going to work somehow. On a more practical level, there are many areas. For instance, around police activities, we could begin to deal with the way in which police handle rape victims, or lesbians, or how the assault of a wife by her husband is not considered to be a crime . . . All kinds of programs could begin. There are police programs such as Neighborhood Watch to protect private property but no similar program to protect women against rape.

Again, it's about framing the question correctly. It needs to be pointed out to gay men, "Look how much money is being spent entrapping gays in washrooms and how little is spent on rape or domestic violence." That means that every time a gay man has to make those kinds of arguments, he has to 'do' feminism. If the frame is set properly, gay men can become sensitized to the position of women. But coalition politics does not just mean having a larger group on your side. It also will allow cross-fertilization and exchange.

Homosexuals won't be liberated only through their own actions. Or only up to a point. It won't happen without the cooperation of a lot of straight people. I don't think any progressive groups are going to win their own demands on their own. They have to band together. That's how it should be organized and it's the responsibility of the leadership to do that. In Toronto, it's happened to a certain extent. For instance within C.I.R.P.A. there are a lot of people from ethnic minorities who, while not all that enthused about homosexuality, have come to know people in the gay community and understand what their problems with the police are all about and vice versa. The police raids have, among other things, made a lot of gay men sensitive to racism and police harassment.

So I think it's quite possible to build coalitions and to have gay men become more aware of issues within the feminist movement. But if feminist leadership simply begins to attack gay male sexuality, in a blind way, without actually looking at how that sexuality is put together, then that makes the work of gay leadership much harder in forming coalitions. □

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FREEDOM SEX & POWER

CHRIS BEARCHELL

Chris Bearchell is a gay journalist and activist and a member of the Body Politic collective in Toronto.

LS: What is your background in the gay liberation movement? How have the divisions between the gay liberation movement and the feminist movement come about?

CB: Well, maybe to clarify things, let me go back to the chronology which I've been through. I first came to feminism as a 15 year old high school student. At that time, the struggle for sexual self-definition had some very practical issues to deal with. Young women were subject to a very discriminatory law — they couldn't be legally independent of their parents until they were 18, while young men could leave at 16. Also, women — young women especially — did not have birth control information, let alone access to abortion. There was a very heady atmosphere with all these women getting together to tackle practical problems head-on. There were high-school-age women, university women, working class women. It was something which we could all agree on; outrageous laws that we could all direct our fury at, building bridges between ourselves in the process. It seemed to me that the feminist movement had so much potential then. We weren't just talking about abortion as a civil right. We were instead talking about the sexual double standard and how that affected women, how the lack of reproductive rights enforced that double standard. We could go out and talk to women about how reproduction was the penalty for women if they engaged in the same kind of sexual activity that men took for granted. We were saying that we have those rights too: the right to our bodies, the right to our lives and the right to sexual pleasure. Those were very powerful sentiments, especially to me at that time in my life.

A couple of years later when I was trying to come out, other things became more evident. Although intellectually we knew that we wanted sexual freedom and that there were things that had to be done to get it and that we could use that need to bring ourselves together to fight for that freedom — but underneath all this there was a lot of turmoil. A lot of women were upset about the relationships they were in; they wanted the relationships, but wanted them to be better yet they felt that they were up against a wall because they felt that the problem was "socialization" — of



Demonstration Commemorating the Bath Raids, February 6, 1982

not rooted in the world which it is referring to, again there is no science. So a concept is applied and political action supposedly flows from this but in fact the whole construct is divorced from how lives are lived. Before we can deal with questions of sexuality, questions of pornography, etc., it is necessary to begin to develop a scientific understanding of these phenomena. Political actions would be based on this scientific account. It seems to me, at this point we don't have that scientific account of pornography, of sexual practices. While I'm not suggesting that we put off discussions indefinitely, we are at a point now where people are rushing in with definitions; everything is suddenly "crystal clear". For instance, at this time you can find feminists saying things about gay life and gay sexual practices; and gay men saying "that's not how my life is".

That's because women are organizing their account from their own discourse and not from an account of how gay life is actually produced. The result is that gay men begin to think that what feminists are really against is sex. This results in the stereotyping of the women's movement as anti-sexual because how else can we explain why they would be against what gay men engage in. Feminism as a political theory, remember, arises out of the lives of women.

LS: When women are discussing sexuality and offering a critique it is

about doing the investigation. We can begin to show the social construction, the social organization of sexual practices. Take for example, the **Body Politic's** current trial for publishing the article on fisting. Now if you take the concept of violence and then you apply it to the experience of fisting you see several things. First, there are fists used. That looks violent. Then you see that one man is on the top and the other is on the bottom and that looks violent. And if you were there in person you would hear a lot of moaning and groaning and that certainly sounds violent. You could work up an account of this event as a form of violence. Though if you consider for a moment, what the lower colon looks like physiologically — it's incredibly delicate. If there were a lot of violence going on, it would take only seconds to rupture it . . .

LS: You mean people would be dying frequently . . .

GS: The best way to think about fisting is as a kind of gentle massage of the lower colon. And although there is one man on top and one man on the bottom, the man on the bottom is actually in control and that's primarily what most of the groaning is all about. It's an intimate kind of communication because he must guide the man on the top. So if you look at what actually happens, it is not a violent act, as, for example, wife assault is. It is a very different thing. But if you just apply



After the Human Rights Code defeat, demonstrators chained themselves in the Ont. Legislature

themselves or the men they were involved with, or both. Most of the women I was working with then were heterosexual, and although they weren't going to throw me out on my ear for coming out as a lesbian, they were not comfortable with it. It was at this time that I began to turn more toward gay liberation. I didn't stop being a feminist; I just couldn't find all the answers I was looking for within feminism at that time.

I realized that that initial struggle for the liberation of sexuality was fraught with difficulties and complications especially by the mid '70s. So many personal lives had been torn apart; there was so much pain and frustration and so many expectations raised by the initial impulse of feminism that couldn't be realized. This meant a lot of women were

James Nebbes, Red Star Media Group

looking around and asking: "Is this really worth it?" We had a lot of different answers. Some of us turned away from sexuality altogether; some of us turned away from the struggle, still believing intellectually in sexual freedom but having really oppressive relationships in our personal lives. Others accepted the struggle as being painful. Some of us were lesbians who came out and in the process of defining lesbianism rejected men, seeing this as easier than embracing sex with women as a definition of lesbianism.

By the mid-70s, part of the movement, radical feminism — a school of thought that traced the oppression of women to men and that saw women as an oppressed class — had begun to attract many lesbians. Radical feminism, which also included some straight women, brought together a lot of women on the basis of being anti-male, implicitly anti-heterosexual and sometimes anti-sex.

Unresolved questions of sexual freedom

Since I had begun working in gay liberation, I began to feel hostility from radical feminists at that time; hostility because I was working with men. It seemed that it was terribly politically incorrect to sleep with men, but it was just as 'p.i.' to work with them politically. An outcome of all this, of course, is that one of the initial impulses of feminism — the drive for sexual freedom — began to take a back seat. The abortion laws, of course, have not been repealed. Birth control is not handed out in high schools. It's not like we won and therefore could go on to other things. It's just that the issue of sexual freedom opened up so many unresolved and uncomfortable questions that we decided — perhaps not consciously and certainly not collectively — to go on to other things.

This was about the time that the media declared the feminist movement dead. What feminism was doing was taking on manageable projects, where headway could be made; working with people we knew we could trust, to give us a sense of progress. And gains were made. We established women's bookstores, we established rape crisis centres, we established shelters for women.

Parallel with these developments, the gay liberation movement chugged along, organizing for equal rights, organizing for sexual orientation protection within human rights codes.

This is where many women got their impression of the gay liberation movement. They saw it as simply a movement for equality — believing that gay men just wanted to be equal to straight men so they could oppress women too. "Just because they don't fuck with them, doesn't mean that they don't fuck them over".

But those organizing the gay liberation movement took into account that human rights codes had been amended to include women, and that it hadn't made a damn bit of difference to most women's lives. They didn't have any expectation that it would make much difference in gay lives either. But they also knew that gay people were in the closet; that organizing them politically would be impossible without a move for gay people to legitimize themselves. Organizing for gay rights was seen as the tool to do this. It was assumed that gay people would come up against the state around these issues and they would see that the struggle was going to be very difficult. They would see that rights in and of themselves were not the issue and wouldn't make much difference — and they would be radicalized.

Well that's a nice theory. And to a certain extent it worked. So in 1972 when the strategy was launched, there were 7 organizations in the province of Ontario that were discreetly lobbying for human rights code changes, changes in union contracts, etc., and now there are about 40. We have had a decade during which we have been able to use the issue of *rights* as a tool to educate, radicalize and mobilize gay people around the province. And while we may not have accomplished everything that we would like to have, we probably wouldn't have had nearly as much success with any other struggle.

The Right moves in

By the late '70s, as feminist projects were gathering steam and radical feminists and lesbians were dismissing gay liberation as a boring, go-nowhere, do-nothing equal rights movement, the right wing became a force to be reckoned with. Especially in the form of Anita Bryant, the Right began attacking gay liberation and the gains that we had made in North America on the basis of the gay rights strategy. What did Anita Bryant attack in Dade County? A gay rights ordinance. Why did she attack it? Because those homosexuals were getting too uppity. But *how* did she attack it? Not on the grounds that

these homosexuals don't deserve their rights. It wasn't that at all. She attacked on the basis that these homos were *sexually dangerous*.

So now the strategy which gay rights had employed had given birth to a community, and that community was now being attacked on the basis of its sexual practice, attacked because its sexuality was a danger — and that threw the gay rights activists for a loop. Anita Bryant won in Dade County because the gay rights activists there *believed* in gay rights — unlike the gay liberationists in Canada who knew it was a strategy to mobilize and politicize people. Some lessons were learned there: You couldn't go around touting a constitution and blind justice as a way of defending your rights when your sexuality was being attacked. If you wanted to defend yourself, it was your sexuality you had to defend. So gay liberation in the late '70s was faced with having to defend and define gay sexuality, at a time when feminism had put the struggle for sexual freedom on the back burner.

Ironically, lesbians and radical feminists found themselves equally the target of Anita Bryant *et al* and pressure from the Right forced them into coalitions with gay men. Many of these women were now happy to talk about "gay rights" because they were nervous talking about gay sexuality. So you can see why any coalitions made recently between radical feminism and gay liberation are uneasy, to say the least. These are the same women who attacked gay liberation 4 or 5 years ago, saying that it was basically a reformist movement concerned with rights, now attacking gay liberation for being concerned with sexual liberation and obsessed with sex.

Gay liberation didn't immediately learn the lesson of Dade County. It didn't immediately go out on a crusade to liberate the sexuality of children or of homosexuals of every stripe. In fact, for the first couple of years after the Dade County defeat, gay liberation worked to strengthen the strategy of gay rights, working on coalitions with minority groups or labour groups whose rights were also under attack by the Right, and also for coalitions with feminists and radical feminists. Some of those coalitions have worked. But the more the attack continued, the more obvious it became that the attack was aimed at the fringes of gay liberation and at those who are most vulnerable within the community. It's easy to split these people off from gay people as a whole; they are not even

understood by the mainstream gays, women and men. Since all gay rights activists are not gay liberationists, they don't necessarily agree with the need to defend our perimeters. Many would just as soon throw the leather-clad types, the porn freaks, the drag queens and the pedophiles to the wolves as a way of buying time, of buying space for themselves, and above all, as a way of buying respectability. The unfortunate thing is that radical feminists are putting pressure on the gay movement as a whole to do just that. To sacrifice the sexual minorities within the gay community to the right wing in the hopes of being seen to be respectable and thus make bigger coalitions. It's an attempt to appease the radical Right, to say: "We're not so bad. We're not a danger to your

for abortion rights and contraception, it wasn't because we wanted to go out and take on the might of the state; it was because that was where women's needs were, that was where the right wing was denying us control of our bodies, that was the battleground we were being attacked on; that was where we had to fight. Those of us who want to change society have never chosen the battlegrounds.

LS: Are you saying that we should proceed on these issues of sexuality which have come up now?

CB: Definitely. Where radical feminists would say that the oppression of women by men is the primary form of oppression in all of society and therefore the most important political project that women can be involved in, gay liberation has never been able to

homosexual, being different, special. That was useful in order to make connections with other minority groups. The parallels were clear. But I don't think that gay liberation theory, especially in Europe where it's better developed, ever gave that much credence to that approach. In fact, the radical impulse within gay liberation has been seen as its ability to touch everyone because of its ability to touch sexuality.

LS: You've said that feminists are increasingly associating sex with violence. What do you mean by that?

CB: Well, there's some history to what I'm talking about. Spiritualist feminism — that yearning after the golden matriarchal past that is so fashionable in some circles — arose out of lesbian separatism, which was a



Cross Canada Gay Conference in Edmonton, 1980

children and we don't do these terrible awful things to each other in the dark."

Putting sexuality back on the agenda

Which brings us up to date. The necessity for coalition is there. But gay liberationists increasingly understand that it's our sexuality that's under attack and feminism is increasingly adopting the radical feminist approach of associating sexuality with violence. The more feminism tries to bring women together around the issue of violence, the more it seems unwilling to talk about sexuality *per se*, to put sexual issues on the agenda. The point is that we don't choose the battleground. When we were fighting

claim that the oppression of homosexuality is primary and therefore something everyone in the world should be concerned about. We've always had to see it as our particular struggle, not unlike the particular struggle of other people who are oppressed by the same system. We are always in search of allies; we've never had any illusions that we could make the revolution ourselves. Early on, one of the ways seen to make those allies was to consider gay liberation as integral to the liberation of sexuality. We can't liberate sexuality without liberating homosexuality within every person — and it exists whether or not every person would choose to act on it. In the gay rights period we focussed on ourselves as a minority, defining homosexuality as being exclusively

refusal to have anything to do with straight men, gay men or straight women and which, as a political strategy or approach to feminism, is now so low-profile that it doesn't exist anymore. However, many of the women who took that approach are still around, having channelled themselves into other activities. They have been largely responsible for lesbian feminist culture and a very positive contribution has been made, in music especially. But it was no time to be isolated during the rise of the Right in the late '70s, and so making peace with other radical feminists became necessary for lesbian separatists. In order to do this they have had to redefine what they were about and in so doing, they had to redefine lesbianism. In reconstituting themselves as spiritu-

alist lesbians or feminists, they had to deal with sexuality. In the process, they've defined lesbianism so broadly that it no longer has an explicitly sexual meaning. Lesbian comes to mean women who care about and identify with other women, rather than women who want to fuck each other.

Looking for common ground in the '80s.

This accompanying attempt to find the "essence of female sexuality" — a kind of palatable, diffuse, sensual pastime — has been very convenient and useful in uniting other radical feminists including the spiritualists in the struggle against violence against women. This, I think, is the 1980's attempt to find a common issue that we can all unite around. Obviously it's a very good bet because it's of concern to every woman of every race, class, etc. But it's an issue which keeps bumping up against the sexual politics of gay liberation and keeps bumping up against the sexuality and sexual politics of individual women.

LS: In what way?

CB: First, there's a lot of confusion about what violence against women is. Radical feminists especially have defined violence very broadly, so that the definition includes violent or even just sexually explicit images. They have defined it in a way that the law makers of a century ago could have happily agreed with. For example, sex with anyone below a certain age is assault, no matter how willing they are. How do radical lesbian feminists who define violence this way deal with women whose partners are below the legal age, women whose sexuality includes the use of sexual imagery of women whose sexual practice includes theatrical, consensual behaviour that hurts? Those women can't be a part of this new coalition — they are defined out of it. If the issue of violence against women is supposed to be one around which all women can unite, and if there are women, or groups of women, who do not agree with the definitions being used to construct this struggle, one very effective way to keep them from disrupting the coalition is to define them out of the constituency, that is to define them as male or male-identified.

LS: This also truncates discussions about sexuality at this time, because many of these issues which are controversial now involve the activation of personal sexuality. The discussions are moved from the category of sexuality into the category of violence, because,

as you have said, violence has been defined so broadly.

CB: How that happens is that within this coalition there are women who know that violence means non-consenting acts which are perpetrated either randomly or deliberately against women by their husbands/lovers/boyfriends/co-workers/acquaintances or by men who are complete strangers. But there is another group that reduces all of the oppression women face within our society to the concept of violence. Sometimes these women have quite hostile attitudes toward sex and sexuality. Basically they define sex, especially straight sex, as violence. They are often the women who are most inclined to re-define lesbianism as non-sexual. They are the same women who a few years ago would have said that heterosexual women couldn't be feminists because they were sleeping with the enemy.

LS: But the movement against violence against women is not confined to lesbian groups.

CB: I'm definitely talking about an extreme point of view within that coalition. But the coalition has constituted itself in such a way that those views can be incorporated along side of the views of heterosexual women, whose experience may be contradictory to those views. You don't have to agree with the lesbian separatist or feminist spiritualist analysis of what sex is or what violence is if you are uniting around the lowest common denominator of opposition to violence against women.

LS: The anti-pornography movement also says of itself that it speaks to all women, young, old, black, white, all classes, etc. It claims to be just an issue to unite all women.

CB: I think it's the anti-violence-against-women movement which is this kind of a movement. Pornography is a little bit different. It's one thing to tap women's fear of violence in order to draw them into political action; it's another thing to tap into their fear of sex. And I think that's what the anti-pornography movement does.

Promoting an anti-sex femininity

One of the first things that feminism identified as a problem was the fact that women were socialized into certain forms of behaviour, specifically with regards to their sexuality, their own needs. The feminist movement has quit dealing publicly with these sexual issues. The danger is that

not only are these issues being ignored, but it's now possible for something like the anti-pornography movement to actually exploit these unresolved problems. One of the most disturbing things about spiritual feminism is that it promotes a slightly different form of femininity — one that is every bit as narrow, oppressive and anti-sex as the passive 'close-your-eyes-and-think-of-England' variety. To see that sentiment endorsed and channelled into a movement that claims to be working for the liberation of women is a nightmare.

I think that the anti-pornography movement makes several mistakes. First, they take the most sensational and violent forms of porn and make generalizations about the whole genre from these extreme examples. And second, it takes women, a section of the society who have been denied sex and access to our own sexuality and who have been forced into anti-sexual positions because of this denial, and channels this repression into political activity. Both of these things are irresponsible; and to combine the two is even more irresponsible, especially at a time when the state is exhibiting its control through censorship and control over what we can say to one another. Once more power is given to the state and the police there is no way of controlling how they use it. I know it's tacky to make generalizations about class, but the saddest thing about middle class people is that they trust the police. They trust the police more than they trust their own sexuality. I don't.

LS: It's up to those of us who are actively involved in publishing or producing cultural work to continue to state the obvious: we are still invisible, as women, as gays, as Blacks, etc. We haven't been accorded any real representation of our lives. We are still almost totally absent in the production of imagery, sound, print, celluloid — the whole thing. It's not a civil libertarian issue for me to be opposed to censorship. My main feeling now is that it's premature at this point. I am basically opposed to censorship, but even if someone could convince me that it might at some point be necessary, I feel it's premature until we could claim some kind of equality of representation in what it is we're talking about wanting to control because we could cut off our very sense of ourselves through our own media, our art, culture, etc. before it has a chance to start. That's my fear.

CB: A good example of what you're talking about is the stuff that proports

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to represent lesbianism in *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, etc. It's really insulting — most of all because it's fake. Any dyke can tell you that it's fake, that those women are not really having sex. It's simulated. It's not arousing, not because it's meant for men, but because it's not about real sex. It doesn't have any of the dynamism of lesbian sex in it that could potentially make it a turn-on. I was relieved to find that there were women who are producing their own erotic images. Publications like *Sapphic Touch*, *Sapphisty*, *A Woman's Touch*, *Graphic Details* are doing a good job in starting to make up for that difference, that absence. However, you can get *Playboy* or *Penthouse* complete with lesbian spreads in every corner milk store once a month, but the gay bookstore in Toronto doesn't carry these alternate publications because they are afraid of what the police would do to them for carrying erotica which shows real sex.

LS: It's a joke to call our society 'permissive'. It's too repressive. There are such extreme examples of the depiction of 'sexuality' which is allowed, being in fact anti-sex.

CB: We can't expect the boys from Project "P" to make distinctions. Probably what you or I would call erotica would be the first thing they would call pornographic; whereas you and I might agree on something being pornographic which they wouldn't give a second thought to. So little work has been done on the issue of pornography that to attempt to turn it into a political catalyst is really dangerous. I haven't seen any cross-cultural work done on the role and use of erotic imagery in other cultures. I haven't seen much serious work done on the relationship of imagery and behaviour; between the making of the image and the viewing and use of the image. Until we have more to base our opinions on, pornography is just being used as a political hobby-horse capable of moving people through a gut fear.

Divisions within feminism

I think it's important to be clear: it's not a split between gay liberation and feminism over sex issues; but it's a split within feminism. Those women who were seen by radical feminists as being male-dominated because they worked in gay liberation have begun to say, "Hey, wait a minute" You can't define us out of feminism." Here in Toronto,

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Broadside has said we are the enemy, we're just a bunch of s/m dykes. I think that the real reason that groups such as the *Broadside* collective are upset with groups such as *Samois*, the lesbian s/m group in San Francisco, is not because these women practice s/m, but because they have the gall to call themselves feminists. They're breaking with the consensus of what female sexuality is supposed to be. S/m lesbians are seen to be destroying the possibility of unity for all women, so they must be excluded from feminism. But I don't think that there is ever going to be a single issue around which all women can unite. I don't think all women are equally oppressed nor is all women's oppression identical. Black women are more oppressed than white women; lesbians are more oppressed than straights. Black women are going to have to organize around their own issues, just as lesbians are going to have to organize as gays. While a woman of the ruling class may be more oppressed than her male counterpart, I'm not going to lose any sleep over her oppression.

While we shouldn't reduce our entire movement to one issue, we do have to unite around single issues, and not just around feminist issues either. There's a huge coalition building around disarmament; there is unity between working class men and women around labour issues such as the right to organize, the right to strike. These people are all under attack by the same movement which is attacking feminism and gay liberation.

Lesbians, as lesbians, have to be organized and radical feminism — lesbian dominated as it is — is not doing that. It is appealing to already politicized lesbians and drawing them into a pre-existing analysis of what lesbianism means. That analysis doesn't have much meaning for your average dyke in your average dyke bar or on your average baseball team. No one is reaching out to those women, speaking to their oppression, helping them define or meet their needs. The women of the Lesbian Phone-Line collective are doing the very best they can. There are women putting ads in the paper inviting lonely or unconnected lesbians to get together for pot luck dinners; these projects do a lot by just meeting some very basic social needs for gay women. But the overall needs of lesbians are so much greater than that. Every weekend there are hundreds of lesbians in the bars; many of these women are facing alcoholism, they are facing their kids

coming home from school with their heads filled with homophobic garbage; they are working women whose paychecks barely meet their basic needs. They are ripe for politicization, and they are going to be politicized as lesbians just as Black women are going to be politicized around their concerns as Black women. Radical feminism is not going to do this. Until these women's needs are being met, to even talk about a 'lesbian movement' is almost a joke.

LS: You're saying that feminism itself is a coalition already.

CB: Yes. It's a body of theory that encompasses many analyses, some of which are mutually exclusive and contradictory. Feminism has to remain this in order to survive. That effort to reduce feminism to a single-issue struggle has only served to alienate many women. Feminism has presented an orthodox, monolithic face to them and they reject it. That's not what women need. We need a movement which will speak to our own individual needs, given where we are coming from. □

FREEDOM SEX & POWER

GARY KINSMAN

Gary Kinsman is a member of Gay Liberation Against the Right Everywhere (GLARE), the Fight the Right network and other groups. He has been involved in the Left and gay liberation for the last decade. He is a student at OISE presently working on a thesis on homosexual resistance and heterosexual hegemony.

LS: How did the divisions around issues of sexual practice come about between the feminist community and the gay liberation community?

GK: In my experience in the early days of gay liberation, feminism and gay liberation were seen as almost 'flip-sides' of the same struggle, whereas now some people question any kind of connection between the two. This has occurred because of the diverging

histories of the two movements, and the different issues they have been confronting. Feminism has begun to deal with the oppression and violence against women that takes a sexual form in this society. Gay liberation has been dealing with the defence of gay men's sexual lives and sexual practices which have been under attack by the police and the right-wing. The main points of rupture recently between feminists and gay men have been over issues of sexuality — pornography, s/m, age of consent laws, man/boy love, etc. Some gay men, utilizing media stereotypes have begun to dismiss feminism in general as being anti-sex. One cover of a gay magazine

is socially organized and what some of the problems are around power within these relationships. It's not hard to see how holders of this position can view parts of the feminist movement as grand repressors of erotic desire.

Meanwhile, the feminist movement has developed a broader more social vision that integrates many different dimensions of change. The campaigns against violence against women have focused the anger of many women against patriarchy. Unfortunately some Women-Against-Pornography-type groups in the U.S. have fallen into the opposite extreme from sexual libertarianism — they have begun to participate in the stigmatizing of

polarity and move beyond it. We have to develop a sex-positive politics which can confront the connections between sexuality and power. This politics can't simply be reduced to a liberation of existing forms of sexual desire — but must include a fundamental challenging of the very ways in which sexuality is defined, categorized and regulated in this society, redefining the erotic and sexual for ourselves.

Beyond a politics of sexology

It has, also to be more than a politics which is defined by sexology. Homosexuality has been placed by sexologists and the ruling institutions in this society at the bottom of a sexual hierarchy. In terms of our oppression, we have taken up this category, shifted it, and made it into a terrain of resistance to oppression, resistance to heterosexual hegemony, resistance to how sexuality is defined. However, the sexological category of homosexuality can also serve to confine our struggles, limiting our forms of opposition to a narrowly defined sexual realm. We have to go beyond the limitations of this framework and begin to talk about how institutions of gender and masculinity, and questions of class, age and race effect the gay community. For example, the institution of masculinity denies men access to nurturing skills, and limits our abilities to take care of each other. We have to take the politics of gay liberation and, while retaining the sex-positive aspect which is fundamental, we have to begin talking about transforming men. Obviously gay liberation is about loving men, but it's also about transforming what we are as men. It's possible for us to consider this because of our position — we're outside one of the main institutions of the society — compulsory heterosexuality. We're in a very useful place to begin to explore those questions.

LS: What you are talking about does share territory with some feminist concerns, particularly the redefinition of gender and the elimination of sex-role stereotyping. Feminism has worked on that from the position of women's liberation.

GK: The presence of an out-and-public gay community or ghetto is both the basis of our resistance to our oppression and it can also accommodate us to the oppression which we face. By that I mean it can separate us off from society in general and it can

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transform gays from being an oppressed sexuality, which is a potential in everyone, to becoming a 'community' which is more or less like an ethnic minority. Now that has some positive features but a lot of negative ones as well. A negative feature which I have certainly experienced in my life is this: If it's defined as an adult community, if it is no longer so central to talk about concerns such as how do people come out and particularly how do young people come out; if we don't talk about the educational system, don't talk about socialization, don't talk about child-rearing — which we haven't been doing that much of lately in the gay liberation movement — we begin to fit into one of the patterns of society which would like to regulate the gay population and say: "You can have this limited social space. We're going to patrol it and make sure you don't go outside that space. Don't dare go near children, don't dare challenge the hegemony of the family on a social level." I think there are some people within gay liberation who buy into these patterns of regulations and control by either saying that we should be as respectable as everyone else or attempting to define gay liberation as simply being about sexual practices. These positions feed into the processes of social regulation I'm talking about.

Child rearing

I know many gay men who would like to include as part of their life contact with children and child rearing. Many gay men work with children as a job. This is a taboo area of discussion though. As are the age of consent laws. But the discussion of homosexuality and young people, child rearing, education is vital. It's also vital to feminism. Because if we can't begin to consider ways to change early socialization or sexual formation or identity formation we'll never be able to radically transform society. We might have a bigger ghetto but it's still going to be a ghetto. And of course right now the ghetto is under attack by the right wing and the police. The image of gays as child molesters is very powerful; it's the basis for denying gay men access to jobs and parenting roles with children.

This area is fundamental because I think both gay liberation and feminism are moving toward a different definition of society — one which would not be organized around private profit, domination and competition but instead around human needs, nurturance, pleasure and communication. Child rearing is a

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primary place to begin re-organizing the society in a non-sexist, non-heterosexual way. This must become a social priority. Child rearing would begin to be much less an individual responsibility and would become much more a social and collective responsibility. Gay men, given our different place in the society from straight men, could have very useful things to say about this.

LS: The collectivization of child rearing has come up in other places. It was part of the basis of the day care movement a few years ago. At the beginning, many men were involved in day care, but I think that's not as true anymore. Of course child rearing is

conceive of establishing a system in which children could grow up without internalizing or taking into themselves the concept of heterosexuality as a primary organizing principle of society.

Working toward radical transformation

There are long term effects too. In gay liberation lately, we've had to put most of our energies into fighting off attacks, such as on the **Body Politic** or the baths raids or the raid on Glad Day Bookstore. And while those are important now and have been effective



Falwell demonstration, October 24, 1982

had a picture of a Victorian-era woman and the headline was "Feminists — the new puritans". On the other side, some feminists express an intolerance and lack of understanding of the sexual lives of gay men. They don't recognize why gay male liberation must defend all the consensual sexual practices among gay men.

Gay men's politics are often now formulated in a sexual libertarian perspective: our sexuality is seen to be natural and in-born and the struggle for liberation is seen to be simply against puritanical morality and repressive laws. The struggle is between the individual sexual desire of a gay man and the repressive forces of the state: liberation is reduced to the freeing of already existing sexual desire from constraint. This libertarian perspective obscures how sexuality

certain forms of consensual sexual practices. This is a point of conflict with gay liberation.

The problem is that we have been drawn into a polarization around sexuality, a terrain which has not been defined by us, but by the state and the agencies of regulation of our sexual lives. On the one side some gay men with a libertarian perspective are tending to ignore problems of violence and power. On the other, some feminists have been drawn into attacking certain types of sexual practices using categories of deviancy defined by sexology, the police, and the state. The unfortunate thing is that both sides of this "libertarian/repressive" polarity are formed as part of the ruling discourses that imprison all of our sexual lives. We have to begin to disengage ourselves from this sexual



Jerry Falwell (left) TV Evangelist, Rev. Ken Campbell of Renaissance International

still not seen as a 'valuable' job or skill. It's low paid work which may be why men are no longer seeking jobs in this field. Yet I'm sure that there would be tremendous resistance to gay men becoming openly involved in day care or child rearing. This whole area seems one where there should be co-operation between feminism and gay liberation. Most feminist analysis says that we will not be able to make any fundamental change to the society without changing the way in which children are raised, without making it possible for children to be exposed to loving, supportive relationships at a very early age with both men and women. Any other work we do will be repair work, in a sense, without that kind of change.

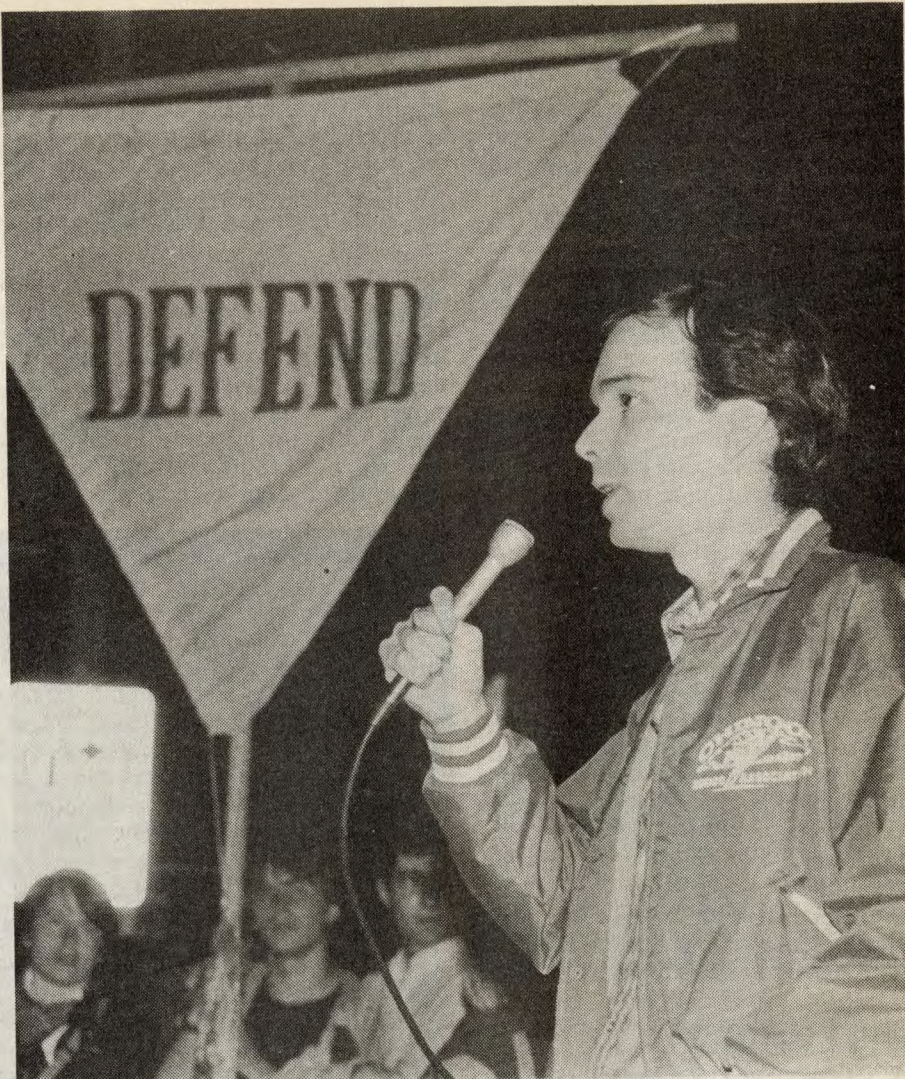
GK: It poses a lot of very radical questions. Such as: How can we

for mobilizing large numbers of people, in the long term it may not only be around issues such as repeal of the bawdy house laws that the kind of social changes which would lead to gay liberation will be made. It may also be around feminist proposals such as childcare in a radically altered context, or others, that these transformations will occur. Sometimes these issues may not appear to be directly connected to our lives as gay men. But I think they are since they are aimed at what Gayle Rubin has called the "sex/gender system" (in her "The Traffic In Women: Notes On the 'Political Economy' Of Sex") which is how sexuality and gender are socially organized together, how power relations are developed and transmitted through a system of kinship networks, families, and state policies.

The institution of heterosexuality is a central aspect of this sex/gender system which we need to undermine and transform through struggles on many fronts. Fighting against the state's regulation of gay men's sexual lives, and fighting for new forms of child rearing are both parts of this struggle.

LS: What particular areas of co-operation would you see as possible between gay liberation and feminism at this time?

GK: Given that these are not monolithic movements, there will be alliances possible around particular political projects between different currents within each of these movements. There are four major areas where unity could be developed. First, there's the question of the police in this city. The feminist movement has already shown support to the gay community around the bath raids. Accountability and community control of the police is quite important and I think it's important for women to examine the role of the police in their oppression. A second area is violence, as it's being experienced by women and by gay men in the form of queer bashing. Gay men need to understand that violence is not just a women's issue. I was involved in setting up the first gay men's self defense courses in Toronto. We drew on the theory and practice of women's self-defense which was set up by groups within the women's movement, transforming it to fit the experiences of gay men. However, we have not yet taken the issue of violence against gay men into the public arena which is something that the feminist movement has done, with Take Back the Night demonstrations, the establishment of rape crisis centres, etc. Gay liberation could learn a lot from feminists here but also a lot of interaction is possible. The third area, which is where I am most active, is building solidarity in fighting the right wing. In some of that work, such as organizing against the Ku Klux Klan in the city, or organizing the Fight The Right Festival last May, it's interesting to me to see that it's often feminists and gay liberationists who come together and defend each other's issues and rights to exist in these coalitions. Many other parts of the Left, and some other liberation movements would prefer it if we simply went away. Particularly, issues of reproductive rights, abortion and lesbian and gay rights are the most delicate in terms of coalition politics. There has already been a good deal of cooperation — such as during the



Todd Harris/Clarion

Rally after Glad Day Books bust, Toronto, May 15, 1982

recent demonstration against Jerry Falwell — between gay liberationists who want to fight the Right and are interested in coalition politics, and the lesbian feminist and feminist communities. I hope that there will be a lot of gay male support for the attempt to establish abortion clinics.

Fourthly, I think there needs to be a kind of strategic alliance between feminists, lesbian-feminists and gay liberationists in opposing institutionalized heterosexuality, which lies at the roots of all our oppressions. We have to contest the way heterosexuality is enforced as a social norm — from the laws, to the ways the media portrays us, to housing policy, to the educational system — we have to propose alternatives to the kinds of power relations which presently confine and define our sexualities, and we have to insist on our right to determine and control our own sexualities.

I think gay liberation and feminism share much common ground. For

instance, there's an interest in grass-roots democracy, an interest in control over our own bodies and an interest in defining for ourselves what sexuality is, what does love mean in our lives and other questions. Addressing these is vital in order to begin to turn back the right wing which, after all, builds and maintains itself by exploiting peoples' concerns about the breakdown of the family or sexuality being in crisis. We must not only build our lives within the gay community; we must develop a perspective to take outside — a perspective which says: "Yes, it's possible to live as men in this society outside institutionalized heterosexuality and have a lot of fun and joy; it's possible to have a supportive, nurturing community among men." If we began to look at how lesbians and gay men live, we could begin to see how society could be reorganized; that wouldn't be a total vision — other experiences must be looked at as well — but it could be a start. □

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FREEDOM SEX & POWER

SUSAN G. COLE

Susan Cole is a member of the Broad-side publishing collective and is currently working on a book on pornography.

LS: How did WAVAW (Women Against Violence Against Women) get started?

SC: In 1977 the Rape Crisis Centre sponsored an anti-rape march. At the same time the infamous *Snuff* movie was being shown in Toronto. By the time the film came to Toronto, it was revealed that a woman had in fact not been killed and mutilated in the making of the film; that this was some

kind of hideous boast. But for those of us who had responded in the first place to the idea of a woman being killed for the delectation of men, it didn't really matter if the death had taken place. The fact that you could advertise and build *Snuff* into the consumer culture was, to us, a statement of the direction the patriarchy was going. It was death for profit, not only in war, but now in the war against women. We decided that we would protest *Snuff* in Toronto after the rape demonstration.

This action seemed to strike a chord with a lot of women, regardless of their political sophistication, or any history in the women's movement. Before *Snuff*, the debate about pornography was framed completely in male terms. You had the consumers of pornography, men, being denied their individual rights to purchase and do what they wanted to in private. You had the real heroes, the pornographers themselves, fighting for freedom and sexual liberation. And you had the male representatives of the church and 'decent' folks who were fighting against the rights of both of these two groups to either purchase or purvey pornography. There wasn't a word about women there. Oh, occasionally you would have a

representative of the church talking about the degradation of women, but essentially what they wanted to do was eliminate pornography because it was a threat to the nuclear family. It's clear to me how a feminist approach to pornography would differ greatly from a right wing point of view.

LS: Did the group which became WAVAW come out of any previous group? Had radical feminists or lesbians been getting together having discussions which brought up the issue of pornography and this action was planned from that?

SC: Not at all. The women's movement in Toronto was quite fragmented at that time. There were the service groups, and the IWDC (International Women's Day Committee) was just beginning. There weren't any formal discussions. We didn't sit down with socialist feminists; in fact just the opposite. We hardly planned a thing. We wanted it to be spontaneous and it was. Two hundred women protested *Snuff*, and the protest also engaged women on the street.

After the demonstration WAVAW remained a group of about 40 women who met weekly and continued to do actions around cultural and corporate

WAVAW demonstration against SNUFF, Toronto



G. Dunn/Clarion

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manifestations of violence against women on an ad hoc basis.

State control or community action?

In Canada, the anti-pornography movement has been closely linked to the Women Against Violence Against Women. We're not as inclined to take single issues such as pornography and go after them. We were involved from the beginning in analysing pornography and violence together.

LS: What position was WAVAW taking at this time (in the late '70s) around censorship, particularly in the media? Were you advocating state control or community action?

SC: I can't really answer that question. At the time, it seemed like we were not saying the state should censor, but when I look at some of the things we were doing, I think that is what we were saying. The thing about "community action" or "community control" — that sounds seriously close to what the courts are calling "community standards". Anyway, I can give you my personal view on censorship...

LS: What I'm talking about is somewhat different. Let me give you a parallel example. Women who have been working with battered women, for instance, have made suggestions that assault of a wife by a husband be handled like any other assault — that the police lay the assault charge rather than having the onus on the woman to charge her husband, which is how it is now. Strategies are developed internally and taken outside the various groups to whatever legislative bodies seem appropriate. And there have been many other suggestions coming from the workers in the field of wife assault. It has been an educational process, internally as well as in the media. I have seen the "issue" of wife assault change in the media over the last 8 to 9 years. It is coming to be recognized as a broader problem than originally assumed. And workers in the field don't just lobby for change in laws, they also work for more shelters and then other services which are needed and finally changes in legislation which will make the problem less individualized for all women. What I'm asking is did WAVAW or anyone else at the time of the original actions against pornography make any specific recommendations for what could be done?

SC: No, actually, except that we sat in on City Council and tried to convince Council to get **Snuff** out of Cinema 2000. I'm working on specific policy

suggestions now. I think it's important for us to be aware of just how censorship and control works. There are many different reasons why we don't get to see material: the Theatres Act is one form of censorship; Customs officials also control what comes in the country. We need to find out about these institutions and then determine what role we want to play within them. Do we want to support and participate in their actions or do we want to shut them down. I don't think any of the discussions or actions of either anti-pornography groups or anti-censorship groups are involved in that analysis. I wish they were.

LS: Let's get back to WAVAW. What happened after the first action against **Snuff**?

SC: We continued to do our own actions and then we had this yearly battle with the socialist feminists in the IWDC. It was very tense for awhile, and perhaps we were all a little silly but there was real conflict. Things seem to have worked out at this point. There have been other splits. While we were arguing with the socialist feminists over whether or not there should be men on the International Women's Day march, for example, inside our own group we were having the usual lesbian/heterosexual split.

Broadside is born

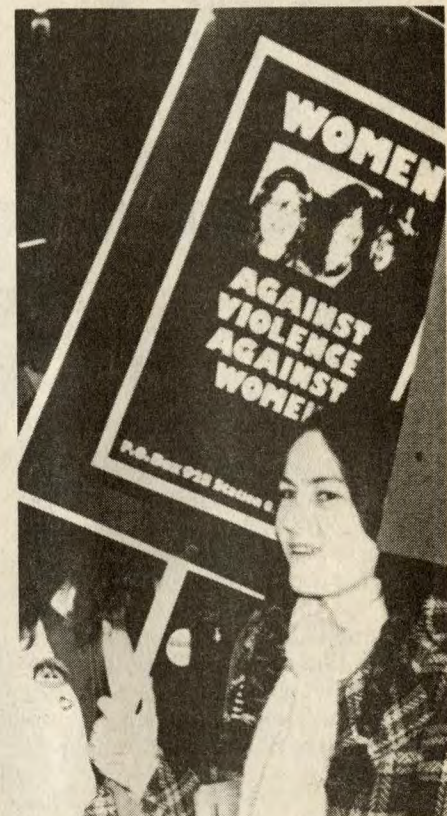
One of the things which came out of WAVAW was **Broadside**. Twelve of us began discussions about the lack of a feminist press in the city. It went on for months before **Broadside** finally appeared in 1978. That's been a lasting effect.

LS: How were the splits and divisions such as those with the **Body Politic** or with IWDC dealt with by WAVAW? Were there discussions?

SC: I don't like to emphasize the arguments with IWDC but for awhile they were on-going. Eve Zaremba wrote a critical column about IWDC in the first issue of **Broadside** which didn't heal any wounds. However, we realized that IWDC would continue doing what they were doing and we would put out the newspaper. They had particular skills in organizing which we recognized and respected; and of course **Broadside** has its own use as an organizing tool which IWDC recognized. So we continued, in spite of differences, to develop a relationship which would allow co-existence of each group working for social change.

The same can not be said about our relationship with the **Body Politic** and

the gay liberation movement. The pornography issue has brought this to the surface. But you have to remember that the **Body Politic** published Andrea Dworkin's first works on this.



Carl Stieren/Clarion

WAVAW demonstration

It was a time when the **Body Politic** was recognizing gay liberation's roots in feminism and was trying to make connections between the two. But I think that has changed. The **Body Politic** which I see as a weather-vane of the gay liberation movement, decided it wasn't that interested in developing a politic which acknowledged its feminist roots and were much more interested in sexual liberation.

LS: But Lorna Wier and Eve Zaremba's recent article in **Broadside** does credit the BP for printing lesbian news.

SC: Lesbian news is not necessarily feminist. If they are telling us what lesbians are doing, that's still part of the gay movement and not specifically feminist. Yes, the **BP** is the only newspaper which puts lesbians in contact with what others are doing, as lesbians, and as such that's valuable. But there have been a number of issues where we have begun to diverge. The pornography issue arose as a difference only because a lot of gays were interpreting the feminist opposition as being potentially threatening to gay consumers of pornography. They've got a point and they don't

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Body Politic

International Women's Day Committee in the 1982 march, Toronto

have a point there. They don't in that we were always talking about heterosexual use of pornography specifically; and they do in that the gay community has been unmercifully harassed here, often because of their choice of reading material.

I can tell you about my own disaffection from the gay liberation movement concerning sexual issues, but I don't think I necessarily speak for all feminists. First around pornography, shortly after this first WAVAW demonstration against **Snuff**, the **Body Politic** published a commentary about the federal hearings which were then taking place around obscenity and the criminal code. Lorene Clarke and Deborah Lewis made a very strong presentation against pornography to the hearings. Gerald Hannon, writing in the **BP**, criticized their presentation, saying that it was dangerous to take a stand against pornography because gays were consuming pornography and any anti-porn laws could be used against them. Eve Zaremba and I responded to that in print. We thought he had misinterpreted the central issue which Clarke and Lewis brought up — that

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violence within pornography was what was being discussed.

Anita Bryant

The second thing came up when Anita Bryant came to Toronto. To gay men, it seemed that Anita Bryant was a figure-head, called cunt. A lot of us were brought up short on the march because of things said by gay men. The misogyny was rampant. We said to them "We're here protesting against the presence of Anita Bryant in Toronto and what she is doing with orange juice down in Florida, because we understand that she represents a particular group fighting against the rights of gays. If you don't understand that she's manipulated by right wing forces and by the church; if you don't understand the role that Bob Green, her husband, plays in her life, then you're not really understanding how the world works. And we will not sit with you and listen to this misogynist bullshit." I've recently heard male artists make similar anti-women statements about Ontario head censor, Mary Brown. They claim they're

talking about censorship, but when a figure-head happens to be a woman, it allows their misogyny to come out and still be 'politically correct' — well, it's not to me.

The third issue was around the 1978 **Body Politic** article "Men Loving Boys Loving Men". Now I agree with George Smith who said that the media 'framed' that issue as a pedophilia issue rather than a freedom of speech issue. Nevertheless it was becoming plain that gay liberation was taking a position on the age of consent. And I think this highlights the tendency among gay men to forget that power exists; that there is a particular power relationship between men and women. So what may work for gays may end up being really oppressive for women.

The age of consent issues brings up some very important points. We understand that the elimination of the age of consent laws will leave a lot of younger women vulnerable to men. I think there's an answer in lowering the age of consent and at the same time making sexual activity among peers enshrined and perfectly acceptable. I think the gay liberation point of view seems hard and fast — perhaps it's not

really that way but at times it seems that way. I think we have to think more clearly about what we are recommending and consider its effect on other groups — not just on ourselves.

LS: What are the roots in feminism which you see for gay liberation?

SC: Earlier, gay liberation was questioning the gender role. Given the struggle within the women's movement to redefine our roles and understand how the male/female dynamic reproduces itself in the economy and in political structures, etc., it's clear that changing the gender role would make for social change. So gay men, who were absent from the heterosexual dynamic, could be seen to be among those making social change. But that has changed. Now gay men do not seem to be challenging their roles as men; in fact just the opposite. They are reinforcing it with leather and the celebration of macho man.

Is censorship protection?

LS: I would like to come back to the question of censorship. I agree with you in that there have been misunderstandings and misrepresentations about who is or isn't calling for censorship. I would like to know when you are talking about violent pornography or actual violence against women, what kind of strategy you would recommend? In an earlier interview you asked, rhetorically I think, "All these other 'rights' are protected, why can't I as a woman be protected against violence expressed at me through pornography." What do you think is necessary in order to provide that kind of 'protection'?

SC: First, it's important to remember that the WAVAW actions themselves were not meant to be acts of censorship. They were meant to show that we were angry. They were visible representations of anger and an attempt to show women that they were not alone in their fear. The film *Not A Love Story* was accused of promoting censorship whereas it never actually did so.

But I understand how people get confused. I think it's irresponsible to be critical of the pornography industry without presenting some sense of what to do about it. I have said that to the women who made that film: "That movie is screaming 'Shut the fuckers down' even though you as filmmakers may not have wanted to say that. The

material says it for you."

With that in mind, my personal view is that we have to understand pornography as not only symptomatic of a malaise in our culture but as something which plays an active force in our lives the way any images do. Pornography is a weapon used against women. I am not going to worry about the civil rights of pornographers when they don't seem to worry about mine. I am not thrilled with the idea of prior censorship but I believe that one can make a consistent and principled argument for prior censorship given the degree to which pornography attacks us. All of the suggestions being put forward for dismantling the pornography industry are varying forms of censorship. I think one of the ways to clarify things is to get away from the word "censorship" except when it directly refers to prior censorship and talk instead about regulation. It's very Canadian anyway, regulation. So we can say to the boys at the border that we don't think that the image of a woman being put through a meat grinder (a cover on *Hustler*) should be on the newsstands in every corner store in Canada. We believe that *Hustler's* cover is an action taken against all women and we can do without it in Canada. That's what we did and I don't think it's a loss that that issue didn't appear here. We can start to explain to judges what we think our community standards are.

LS: Do you see this as launching a form of class-action suit on behalf of women, saying to a publisher or distributor or producer "This promotes sex hatred"?

Advertising which says "kill women"

SC: There are a few ways to go about this. Around *Snuff*, I wanted to take the *Toronto Star* to court for its ad. When I saw the ad I knew that this was no underground phenomenon. It was an ad which said quite directly "Kill women". That's advocacy of genocide which, according to hate literature legislation, is illegal. I was thinking of going after the *Star* for printing hate literature.

There's a way of curtailing the display of pornography so that it is more difficult to get pornography than it is to get a condom. It's the other way around now. I still like the idea of applying a huge tax on pornography because you can put pornography into a vice category and make people pay a lot for it if they really want it. This is

totally consistent with the way in which the Canadian government has worked in the past around what are considered vices. There are all kinds of options open in terms of curtailing the industry's profits. Taxing would begin to take the profits out of pornography. That's one of the problems with prior censorship. Cutting sections out of films does little to the profits of the producers. It will only speak to the issue of lessening the number of times the image is available to be viewed but it won't make pornography unprofitable.

In terms of setting our own community standards, I think that street actions are some start to that. That's a way of letting judges know that you're pissed off. I think saying that we should eliminate all of our obscenity laws is an irresponsible position to take. It's usually the position taken by white male artists. They are usually the ones who complain about the loss of their civil rights when they can't see 8 seconds of *The Tin Drum* or when they can't put anything up on the wall and call it art. If that is the extent of the violation of their civil rights and they wish to compare this violation to the violation of women who are raped and battered then I think it's not a very useful comparison. That's why we're not having a very good debate over these issues. When we're talking about censorship, the questions which women are asking often get left out.

LS: I have always been a defender and an admirer of Andrea Dworkin. I think she has said some very important things about pornography. My criticism of Dworkin is that she is a poet not a strategist. We must listen to her — and I think many women are — because she is speaking about the feeling of violence which is in pornography and its effect on women. But we cannot build a strategy on her writings because she makes leaps in logic for effect. She links violence, actual violence, with violent imagery. And the two must be addressed differently, it seems to me.

We, as critics of imagery, need to make suggestions for action on all fronts — not just express our rage. If we don't, the state will step into this vacuum with solutions of its own and we — both of us are involved in the production of alternate media — may be subject to even more control. We can't let the state interpret our protests as a call for their action without prescribing some action that we wish to have taken on our behalf. And it's got to be specific. We can't be so cynical as to say that they will never

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listen to us anyway so there's no point in suggesting anything. We'll just be vigilante groups in that case.

I think what is necessary at this point is a working paper on how to deal locally, provincially and federally with the issue of pornography without precipitating the control of our own media.

SC: I'm not sure I've got time to prepare a White Paper . . . (laughter)

LS: Well, in addition to a lot of arguing there has also been a lot of discussion. We just need to go further.

SC: I don't think laws as such are the problem. Laws can be misused when the state thinks it's necessary. The harassment of the *Body Politic* is a good example of this, or the bath raids. Even though most of the charges against the found ins are dismissed when they get into court, the judges will not dismiss the remaining charges. Instead our money is being used to continue the legal actions. The *Body Politic* is not being harassed because of the obscenity laws. It is being harassed because someone in the Attorney General's office — perhaps the Attorney General himself — has decided that they are going after the *BP*. With that in mind, I think it's time we, as women, made our presence known in the legal system. All the laws so far have been made by the church or by the state and neither is representative of women. □

FREEDOM SEX & POWER

VARDA BURSTYN

Varda Burstyn is a socialist feminist activist and writer who has been concerned with issues of sexuality for a number of years. She is currently working on a series of radio interviews "The Women's Movement in the Political Arena" (U.S., Canada, Britain) and also a book on politics and sexuality. She is a member of the FUSE editorial collective. The following piece was produced from recorded conversations between Varda Burstyn and Lisa Steele.

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Is there a relationship between what, in the past, you have referred to as "erotic representation of women" to pornography?

In the past I have used the phrase 'erotic or sexual representation' of women rather than pornography in an attempt to be both more precise and to try to avoid the difficult and messy debates which have tried to make distinctions between the notion of 'erotic' and the notion of 'pornographic'. The kinds of issues which are now being discussed under the rubric of 'pornography' cover a wide area and mean different things to different people. However, I think that it's important not to fudge one's positions on the issues as people are debating them,



courtesy GLARE

even if at times one wishes that they had been defined or constituted differently. For me, it's crucial to say that almost all of the sexual representation of women in our society combines sexuality either with violence or with less blatant but still meaningful signifiers of female degradation, and that this stuff has a social function above and beyond the orgasms which it helps to set off. That social function is not only the coercion of women, but also of men, even if it is done by other men.

What I have tried to do is to clarify some of the components which together make up what is usually called pornography, to attempt to argue that the problem is not sex *per se*, to help build the anti-puritanical case for the critique of most of our

sexual representations. So I've talked about the fact that I don't think all erotic representation has to be negative, that all stances of activity and passivity are not equivalent to or even reflect real domination and weakness, that it is possible to have fantasy and play without those necessarily partaking or reinforcing dynamics of oppression, and that some of the readily-available pornography is, image by image or narrative by narrative, more or less benign. But by saying all of this I don't want to deny the power which sexual representation of violence or female submission have in terms of large-scale social control.

Now, the specific gender relations which most of this stuff reinforces are

those of male dominance or patriarchy if you prefer. But the material is more than just gender propaganda. It is also a social regulator for capitalist social, economic and political relations, and consequently acts, in the final analysis, as a controller of men, as well as women, although its appearance at one level seems to give men 'what they want'. There is one main problem with the discussions of pornography so far, and this expands as the discussion becomes more extended. The problem is that what little analysis there is of late capitalist sexuality is stuck in the framework of gender analysis and the political vocabulary of individual rights, civil rights, "libertarianism", without making reference to class analysis and understanding how gender or sexual politics have been

mobilized and exploited, in the truest sense of that term, by capitalism.

Capitalism has created a vast and intricate sex industry, which sends its tentacles into the most private and intimate spaces of our lives, and thus of our society, with very negative consequences. Just as late capitalism replaces food prepared more or less on a daily and seasonal basis with food prepared in huge factories and frozen to be consumed no matter what season, it tends to replace erotic interactions and games — or to mask the terrible lack of them — with standardized acts and sequences. The producers of industrialized sex always argue that their products are meant to augment sexual relations, or offer temporary relief. Probably some of them really believe what they are saying and on given occasions that may be the case. That is neither here nor there. The important thing is that sexuality — a quality which inheres in all of us and potentially between all of us — is undergoing commodity fetishism, that sinisterly kinky process Marx described as characteristic of capitalist society.

Love objects and object love

Commodity fetishism is not simply the worship of objects, although that's one part of it. It is what Marx called the process through which relations between people *appear* as relations between things on one side of the coin; on the other through which relationships between things *appear* as relationships between people. Thus sexuality is increasingly commodified and commodities increasingly sexualized. In the sense that Freud talked about it, sexuality is a driving life force in every human being, a very powerful animating agency: a pair of jeans on a wire hanger don't by themselves have the *allure* of a pair of jeans stretched over the body of a young model who has, underneath the jeans, opened up her sexuality to the imagination of the viewer. If a given capitalist enterprise can con its people or its market into believing that that sexuality will go into action for them if they wear those jeans or hang out with others who wear those jeans, that particular capitalist enterprise has it made. This is advertising's seductive face. Its equally hypnotic, intimidating face also works on sexuality, but this time by mobilizing anxiety instead of desire. (If you don't wear these jeans, drive this car, wear this bra, buy this beer, etc. you won't have any sex.)

In any case, charged sexual images proliferation in our whole environment, and as a result contribute in extremely significant ways to the formation of our own desires and anxieties. And the process works both ways: not only are we anxious if we don't have the commodities that go with certain standardized representations of our sexuality, but if our sexuality doesn't fit in with those representations, or the social relations they reflect, we feel anxious as well. Sexual charisma becomes attached to commodities — but the process also works in reverse. And of course, anxiety and its causes are often experienced unconsciously.

Is there a difference between the anxiety experienced by men and women as a result of the commodified proliferation of sexual images.

Speaking in general terms, most women, whether or not they experience sexual arousal when confronting sexual representations, find the signifiers of 'feminine' sexuality to be prescriptive, that is to say, to contain a lot of messages and rules about what is and is not considered sexy for women. Insofar as what is considered sexy at any given time is both extremely narrow in terms of body type and extremely unrepresentative in terms of possible physical stances, every woman lives with a constant sense of fear and anxiety that her body and sexuality are not attractive, acceptable, right. Many women experience that layer of anxiety as a kind of schizoid counterpart to a layer of fantasy and desire in which they experience the postures and wear the clothes and insignias of what the dominant ideology has deemed 'feminine' sexuality. The result is that many women feel torn between a desire to be loved as they are and wanting to be able to live out the experience of 'femininity' with which their young libidos became imprinted, and don't know how to reconcile the two. Not only do these false, ideological constructions sell billions of dollars worth of cosmetics, underwear, high heels Vic Tanny memberships and *Vogue* magazines. They also create anxiety and energy that is used in dealing with the feeling they provoke, thus actively preventing women from understanding the system which oppresses them and from fighting it. Directly sexual representation — in the context of repressions and exploitation — also works a bit like a drug, since some women do enjoy it, and find that it helps them to feel turned on.

Alienated work makes for alienated sex

Let's say, it's Friday night and you're home after yet another week at the keypunch. You are suffering from all the stress symptoms that have been so well documented: your mind is racing, your body aches, you feel overwhelmed with anger and feelings of frustration. Let's say that your lover didn't do any shopping, that you had to organize dinner, tidy up your house so you could feel minimally at home, and you're upset, and now he or she wants to make love. You don't feel very sexy, but you don't want to have a fight. Or let's say you are alone, exhausted, empty and you want to have a sexual experience by yourself. Life in the work world is so profoundly alienating that at this point your sexuality is about as accessible to you as a big salary or a meaningful job. You're about as capable of relating lovingly and passionately to another human being, or generating your own erotic experience, as you are of flying to the moon unaided. First you have a drink, or maybe a joint, and then, like magic, pornography comes to the rescue. Whether you use it directly or recall it, when employed this way, pornography allows you to deny or skip over problems in your life and relationships. And although some sort of release is possible in a very real sense, you are accommodated to this reality.

One of the key differences between standardized, mass produced porn and personal artisanal creation of erotic representation lies in this area. The former expresses a completely depersonalized, socially truncated set of actions geared to make millions of dollars and to act as a social narcotic. The second expresses the feelings of a given human being who feels connected to or isolated from other human beings, and is in one way or another making a social gesture of communication towards other human beings. The gesture may be full of ambivalence, hostility or anger but it is meaningful in human terms, and helps others to understand their own sexualities better. Thus to me a crude scrawl of genitals on a toilet stall is far more positive than the carefully waxed and air-brushed split beavers of the porn magazines.

You said that the experience of anxiety was different for each gender. What about what men feel and how porn works for them?

Well, of course porn works on a social scale in many of the same ways for

both sexes, indeed what makes it so effective as a force for social control is that it hooks in so very well with the energies, desires and fears of both sexes, which it manipulates, and thereby distorts. But I think that the difference in the way that it operates for heterosexual men — and many others have pointed this out before me — lies in the promise of the reward for the successful repression of anxiety. This reward is the promise that they may act out and own with a woman that which they have repressed in themselves. Last year at Canadian Images, we screened Paule Baillargeon's *Anastasia O Ma Cherie*, a film during which two cops come to arrest a woman because she has deserted her husband. Before taking her away, they remove her night-shirt and dress her in lace underclothes, a red frilly dress, high heels, make-up — all signs of feminine passivity. Baillargeon said that these cops were doing to the woman what they wanted to do themselves. To a lot of women, these clothes, which we were taught were 'beautiful', now bring very ambivalent feelings, since we can associate them with female bondage. But for men, as a gender, these things represent all that they must repress in their life, all the so-called feminine qualities which men are not allowed to *live* in an on-going way. Why are they not allowed to live

them? Because men must toil in alienated labour and they must kill and in the most fundamental terms, the living integration of softness, receptivity, the desire to give and receive sustenance are incompatible with toil and murder.

Repressing the feminine

And it does not mean that most violent sexual representations are 'the same as' the actions they depict, a point which I think is used very demagogically



courtesy GLARE

cally most of the time. Those violent sexual representations, while not 'the same as', are made with real people in the case of film, video and photography, usually acting out in real terms what then appears to the viewer as a 'fantasy'. And those representations of feminine accessibility are made very much in the same way. It's not credible to talk about 'theatre' and 'free choice' and 'fantasy' when women in this society are so impoverished, both economically and at times psychologically, that they have only their sexuality to sell. As I have said before, this is not free love, nor the positive eroticization of daily, public life. The fantasy of tens of nubile young girls available to every man for the price of a *Playboy* is not translatable in terms

of reality. But it helps boys and men to think that this is what they should want and the way it should be and what they will get if only they can become "the kind of man that reads *Playboy*". It shapes their relations to women, to each other, and to their own psyches — places in which they attempt to split off those qualities which won't fit the *Playboy* image. (Shaking with fear, crying with joy, moved passionately with deep love for a woman or man. One wouldn't think of these experiences as fitting on the Penthouse wall.) So while men are convinced that they benefit from their collective subordination of women and repression of 'the feminine', they lose their own desires and capacities for real self-determination, for the making of a world in which they would not have to toil, in which they could really work in the positive sense of that term, in which they would not have to kill, in which they could be as open and receptive as women, and in which both sexes could feel the qualities of the greatest human dignity attached to the conditions of being open and receptive, conditions now associated with 'weakness'.

In view of our discussion, what do you think about the splits occurring between the gay liberation and feminist and lesbian communities over issues such as pornography? It seems to me to be a very critical time right now. If the sexual liberation project of the '60s has to be reactivated because of attacks from the Right, then we better find ways of communicating about our differences, those of us who share many definitions of social change.

The Third International expelled Wilhelm Reich in 1934 because they claimed that the analysis of sexuality had no place in the communist movement, that it would blow the Left wide open. In the seventies, when feminists and gay men raised many of these questions within revolutionary organizations, we were told the same thing. Well, now we can understand why, because these are explosive issues and threaten to be primary causes of disunity. People feel so intensely about sexuality that it's difficult for them to step back and make distinctions between their own feelings and experiences and something called 'the way it should be'. When people try to talk about the differences between their jobs today, the social services in their communities, say, and the way that they would like these things to be ideally, it's easier to step back and

ON CENSORSHIP

make a distinction between what is, and how to make the best of it, and what could be and should be. But even there it's hard. It's hard for people to envision what life would really look and feel like if they controlled their own lives, at work and at home. But it is still easier for most of us to go through that process, step back from our own situations and say: "Yes, workers' control is a good thing". When it comes to questions of sexuality though, people have a really hard time.

Why is it so different?

Because people's sense of identity, of our feelings of basic loveableness or hatefulness are so closely wrapped up with our sexualities. Through sexual relations we experience love and physical pleasure (or their absence as the case might be) and these in turn confirm in us our sense of worth. I don't think it's an accident that social doctrines which advocate sexual repression always also express the view that humans are basically nasty. In any case, because of this, when a person hears the statement: "This particular sexual practice is a bad thing and the sign of a neurotic, regressive sexuality", the person panics, interpreting the statement as meaning that she or he is a horrible and unloveable person.

'Sexually formed by capitalist patriarchy'

Clearly, this is an impossible way to proceed in the discussion, because so many people are rendered incapable of thinking clearly when these feelings dominate. This in turn has negative political consequences. I think we need another way, a shared way, of approaching these issues, one which will allow us to feel as comfortable as we can about our intimate relationships and feelings, and which at the same time allows us to say that some aspects — not all, some — of those bear the stamp of the oppressive society in which we have grown up and presently exist. Freud said that every ego is stamped 'made in Germany' or 'made in France'. Surely we can also say that every ego also proclaims 'sexually formed by capitalist patriarchy', and from there decide two things: first, to allow ourselves the pleasure of consensual sexual play which enhances our present pleasure so long as it does not hurt others or violate our own sense of self. And second, start talking about the fact

that the sexuality of a socialist, non-sexist and non-racist world would indeed be very different from the sexuality of ours, in certain key respects. If our own sexualities are causing us difficulty in the interpersonal or intra-psychic realm, we should tackle the difficulties with lovers or friends or therapists. But if they become political issues, as a series of sexual practices have become recently — from kiddie porn to sado-masochism to so-called public sexuality — let us inform our discussions of how we want to struggle around these separate and distinguish between our sexualities as they are now and where we as a society want to go in our gender and erotic relations.

If this means that all of us must support not only gay rights but the idea of gay liberation as the liberation of the repressed human potential in all of us in the long run; if we must explain to people new to the idea or afraid of it that compulsory heterosexuality is a socially constructed institution with many deep and harmful effects; if we must fight for sex education that truly incorporates our understanding of the importance of physical, immediate love between all human beings, despite the fact that most of us are not practising bi-sexuals; the gay movement calls on feminists to fight for these things, then it is also possible for us to approach other questions in the same light.

I very much understand the desire and need of gay people to stop being seen as 'perverted' and marginal as the other, as the sexual threat from without. I understand their desire to have their sexuality legitimated in this society, and I think that gay sexuality and a gay sexual orientation are just as 'good', or if you prefer just as 'healthy' as straight. But, in the terms I am talking about, they are also just as disturbed. Heterosexual feminists have put heterosexual practice under the analytic microscope and found it wanting in a whole number of ways. It has been, and still is, a major struggle for heterosexual women to find a balance between the desire to evolve a sexuality which reflects and reinforces our sense of strength and worth and at the same time allows us enough pleasure in playful regression and primitive passion. We struggle along. But we don't proclaim the rituals of our playful regressions, if they are imbued with patriarchal social relations, as acts of sexual liberation on a social scale, even if they are pleasing and freeing to us individually, or even as a generation. Those people

who define the discourse on gay sexuality and the practices of so-called sexual minorities would do well to learn from this method. I think it would allow us to work better politically, in the general service of what Garr Kinsman calls a "sex-positive" direction, and avoid ludicrous and finally provocative statements like that of Dennis Altman in his article in *Socialist Review*, in which he says something like: "I would rather expose a young child to the most hardcore of s/m bars than to a New York subway station at night." As if those are — or should be — the poles of the discussion!

I think that all of these considerations have their practical implications. So for example I think that feminist direct action is useful against pornography, but I think that sex education is the most important thing and we don't fight for it in our communities nearly enough. Unlike many others, I did not think that the picket at the Zanzibar* was such a terrible thing. I think it's useful for there to be public manifestations of anger against the buying and selling of women's sexuality. But my priority in terms of action is to fight for better jobs and pay for all women, and specifically to address the needs of sex workers for real social assistance. I am very angry at the patriarchal content of pornography — mass produced sexual representation — but I am even more frightened by its capitalist form, and by its use to control both men and women in the service of the death-machine. If the currently constituted libertarian discourse and values regarding sexuality and sexual practices wins the day, we will not be able to understand, let alone effectively act against the ways in which sexuality is mobilized socially. If a puritanical strain which promotes sexual repression and 'correct-lineism' wins out, we will also be in trouble. We are in a long recession which is on the very brink of all-out, world-wide depression. The last depression ended in fascism and war, and it was out of that experience that the anti-capitalist critique of sexuality first arose. I very much hope that the new feminist and gay critiques incorporate what was essential from that body of work, extend it and forge it into an even more effective tool for fighting patriarchal capitalism and paving the road to socialist feminism.

*Early in the fall of 1982, a small group of women set up a picket line in front of the Zanzibar Tavern, a Toronto strip club, to protest the sexual objectification of women.

Jill Abson, curator of the Arts Against Repression, lives in Peterborough and has been involved with Artspace, a parallel gallery, in various capacities.

At the opening of the Arts Against Repression show in Peterborough in March 1982, we scheduled an evening of "banned movies". Michelle White, one of the new rotating members of the Ontario Censor Board, just happened to be in Peterborough visiting friends during the Canadian Images Film Festival, where organizers had been charged the previous year with showing Al Razutis's film *A Message From Our Sponsor* without the censor's approval. She repeatedly called the afternoon before the screening and assured us the films could not be shown. Though we refused to tell her what films we were going to show, we repeatedly assured her that there would be no problems. She arrived that evening looking fashionable and nervous and sat through *Normetal* — a labour union film which had been cut by the National Film Board, *Warrendale*, Allan King's documentary on a group home, and Bruce Elder's award-winning experimental film *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, from which the Censor Board had demanded cuts of a masturbation sequence. Over half of the audience had left by this time, (it was, after all, already over 3 hours of programming) but Michelle White stayed for the announcement of our surprise feature presentation (rumour had it, it would be *Pretty Baby* — uncut). Much to her disappointment and the remaining audience's enjoyment, it turned out to be Ingmar Bergman's 1956 comedy *Smiles of a Summer Night* which was once banned in Alberta. We were trying to make a point: What was censored 26 years ago is not the same as what is censored now. All censorship becomes ridiculous in hindsight. But Michelle White did not stay for the lesson or the film.

Arts Against Repression was mounted initially as a practical and even propagandistic defense of the

action taken by David Bierk, Susan Ditta, Ian McLachlan and Al Razutis in showing *A Message From Our Sponsor* the year before. But more importantly, it was also intended to provide the framework for a comprehensive study of the etiology, occurrence and implications of censorship. Whether we were concerned with the way in which censorship may reflect the "paranoias" of a dominant culture, or alternatively, with the interaction between pornography and sexuality at the centre of a number of current feminist debates, we found ourselves returning to the recognition that a resistance to censorship could not take place adequately on an aesthetic plane alone. To be opposed to censorship because it distorts or thwarts individual or collective creative expression was valid, but not enough. We were constantly being forced out into a broader political and social context. People wanted to talk about censorship in relation to psychological, political, and sexual implications.

As these issues became focused, the connecting element again and again was the factor of mistrust — it's "the other guy" whose personal tastes are liable to be converted into dangerous social behaviour. In an interesting and influential survey, a large group of people in North America were asked if they were affected negatively by exposure to erotica; 99 per cent responded that they were not. However, when asked whether someone else might be affected in a socially undesirable manner, 56 per cent responded "yes". Presumably, individuals feel that their own moral filters are enough to control their actions, but that those who do not follow similar codes cannot possibly afford the same kind of predictability and therefore must be "regulated" by external means.

But there's another question that takes us a step further: To what extent can individual responses ever be brought within the realm of control? In one study, a number of convicted sex offenders, particularly those charged with crimes against children,

were found to generate sexual arousal from apparently non-erotic material. Many of them state that the Copper-tone ad featuring a dog exposing a little girl's bathing suit line was one of the most erotic stimuli they had encountered. Similar responses were noted when the offenders were viewing pictures of children walking dogs, playing etc.

In the context of such unpredictability, official rulings about "obscenity" and community standards tend to become disarmingly vague in an attempt to cover all bases and encourage exaggeratedly defensive responses on the part of cultural organizations. The Canadian Radio and Television Commission definition of what is and is not acceptable, states: . . . (b) no station shall broadcast (a) anything contrary to law . . . (b) any obscene or indecent language." In reference to (b) I was told that what constitutes "obscene" must be determined by law. And the federal ruling on "obscenity" is equally ambiguous.

Last year I interviewed the station managers of two "alternative" radio stations. Interestingly enough, they represented the two extremes of the spectrum in their interpretation of the CRTC's expectations. CKCU, a university-run station in Ottawa cut all contentious words because they had no idea as to when, where or why the axe would fall and didn't want in any way to entice it down. By way of justification, they assured me that this censoring was performed in as artistic a way as possible — a gunshot, laughter, or a growl, were inserted. They didn't want to simply not play the songs. They were, after all, an alternative radio station and much of new music deals with "difficult" topics. The CRTC had become for them a nebulous but all-hearing and all-powerful presence that could snatch away their existence unchallenged at any moment. On the other hand, CFNY FM, a Montreal-owned, Brampton (Ont.)-based radio station, assumed that the standard of an alternative radio public was one that could indeed tolerate four-letter words and uncomfortable subject-matter



David Bierk

"The Incurable Romantic" Mark Prent

("Johnny are you queer?") and that the ruling was so ambiguous that there was a good chance of emerging within the law if an official complaint was ever lodged. After five years of unfettered programming, they were challenged in the form of an unsuspecting gentleman who, while trying to find another station on his car radio, landed on CFNY just at the moment when the Australian new rock group "Magazine" was expressing their desire to "fuck you on the perma frost". The gentleman was on his way to church. He laid a complaint; but the case was eventually dismissed precisely because of the vagueness of both CRTC and government rulings on obscenity. But, in spite of that example CKCU presumably goes on

shooting guns and growling, feeling that the restrictions on its programming are much greater than they actually are.

Responding to censorship

It is not only formalized boards of censors that exert pressure, real or anticipated, on individual expression. The work of Ottawa photographer Jennifer Dickson has been the object of complaints and censorship on several occasions, and she has always fought against such interference in a completely committed way. However, she believes that these specific events begin, in their turn, to establish the

spectre of an anonymous viewer who will be shocked by her choice of subject matter. In response, she finds that, instead of toning down the images in her work, she may on occasion make them deliberately more explicit. What, she wonders, are the implications of such a situation for the validity of those particular statements? Self-censorship, it seems, is not the only way in which an individual artist can respond to the idea of a censoring public. She may also find herself being driven into an extreme position which is justified by its controversial gestures rather than by its intrinsic qualities.

At this point, one begins to see how censorship frequently provokes and ultimately endorses the splitting-off of

art from non-art. Instead of being central to a society's self-analysis, art is driven into a separate, self-defensive category that is familiar only to an elite subgroup. Everything that is "not art" can then be dismissed or devalued. But on what *actual* grounds? Most members of the cultured and artistic community will readily agree that censorship of art is intolerable. The explicitness of an image is of peripheral concern if we have decided the context is art. Does the image then, become harmful in a different context? Is it the *context* that transforms an image from valid to suspect? Is a penis more dangerous in a local variety store than it is in an experimental film theatre? To take this one step further, let's use the example of *A Message From Our Sponsor*. If, say, an individual viewer did not catch the ironic contextualization of the sexually explicit images that Razutis pulled directly from pornographic film footage, would they thereby be subject to its purported harmful effects? Or, alternatively, if they did appreciate the context, would they then be saved from the undesirable ramifications? The example is extreme, but deliberately so, in an attempt to illustrate the weakness in the logic that underwrites the concept of "selective censorship" — the art (innocuous/beneficial) stays, but the pornography (harmful) goes. Goes where? Does it disappear entirely if we expose it for what it is? But what is it? Is it an actual attempt to reinforce the sexual subjugation of women, or is it a symptom of a society that has failed to come to terms with its own sexuality and emotionality (and the equal frustration of unsuccessful attempts to distinguish between *and* connect them)? Pornography does allow you sexual gratification without getting involved. Further, what people are often "involuntarily" turned on by in "dirty movies" is not necessarily what they enact in their own sex/love lives.

But presumably some people think I'm talking about erotica, not pornography. But, can we really differentiate between the erotic and the pornographic? Apparently, to those who believe they have found a line of demarcation between the two, the erotic is a valid form of self-expression while the pornographic is gratuitous and destructive. Although lacking in strict narrative rules (an almost requisite feature of deliberately "pornographic" materials), Barbara Hammer's experimental film *Multiple Orgasm* is not likely to strike my grandmother, who is nevertheless a

thoughtful woman, as a valid form of self-expression. Nor, for that matter, would it be so for my mother. Mistrust again. A certain amount of this relativity represents our propensity for accepting what has become familiar and for converting what is not into a threat. Elaborate arguments are often constructed to rationalize our distrust of the unknown, the unpredictable, and these tend to change entirely from one age to another. *Smiles of a Summer Night*, while somehow threatening in 1956, could be used in 1982 to make a satirical point that almost everyone can understand. To say that one person's or period's erotica is another's pornography is trite, but nonetheless a fact.

Does fantasy translate into action?

That which is produced for titillation only is generally mediocre, commercial, reductionist, banal, distorting, but is it the stuff that anti-social behaviour is made of? Do fantasies translate into actions? If we are to rely on the only systematic studies applied to this question, the answer is probably yes. But not the kind that sexual coercion or violence is made up of. The results from studies conducted twenty years ago to the present in North America, England, Denmark, France and Sweden, find that the only action that can be directly tied to exposure to erotica is not sexual coercion or violence but masturbation — a product of and for sexual fantasies. While clinical psychology says that a continual acting out of or giving free reign in daily living to one's personal fantasies is an indication of a psycho-pathology, does it follow that the greater proportion of the population should be regulated to control what could be, as I mentioned earlier, an "uncontrollable" element? Of course, for some people, masturbation alone is justification for censorship. But for most of us, it is viewed as an unobtrusive and highly idiosyncratic pastime that we would not want more than one hand in regulating.

Not A Love Story has been omnipresent lately as an example of either committed, pro-social activism, or manipulative, simplistic reaction, depending on which magazines you are reading or what forums you have been attending. After having seen it on a number of occasions, I still feel that the attitudes expressed in the film are similar to those of the Women's Temperance Movement platform. In

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both, the notion that invalidating, restricting or even prohibiting the production or consumption of the 'offending material' — whether alcohol or pornography — is viewed as cause rather than as symptom. And in both, "confessions" from "reformed sinners" are employed as rhetorical devices. But to extend the comparison it should be remembered that prohibition of alcohol gave us bootlegging, and bootlegging gave us a particularly vicious type of organized crime. The demand for alcohol did not disappear during Prohibition. What leads us to believe that the obvious deficiencies in this symptomatic treatment will not equally apply to pornography? And while it's always attractive to seek causal relationships, is there any basis

journal changes and that satiation, a presumed positive consequence of repeated exposure to sexually explicit images, is in fact detrimental when it is a result of a response to violent images. This leads to desensitization, the argument continues, and therefore to calloused attitudes. When I asked Dr. Donnerstein how his finding of negative behavioural changes could be reconciled with the vast body of research that stated the opposite, he assured me that the results of the earlier studies were still very reliable. But he was addressing something slightly different. This had been explained in the initial filming of the sequence for *Not A Love Story*, but it did not appear in the completed film, and in that manner he perhaps seemed

violent and dominating images, they became potent. However, he claimed he was entirely opposed to censorship. The "pornography" he was referring to was the element of sexual violence, and for him the "erotic" was the non-violent, sexually explicit (yet another distinction between porn and erotica). How, one might ask, could one be certain that a given image had been totally divorced from dominating and violent implications? If a pedophile can be turned on by a sun-tan lotion ad, what might not imply dominance for some particular individuals? And surely, if one is going to argue that one set of images is insidious and harmful while another is not, one's definition should be very clear indeed.

Referring to so-called calloused attitudes, I asked Dr. Donnerstein if there wasn't a beneficial and adaptive corollary to the negative implications that he found in desensitization. After all, one would assume that doctors, ambulance attendants, policemen, and funeral directors do not fall apart even though they are repeatedly faced with the results of violence — accidental or deliberate — in their line of work. Does this mean that they are desensitized? To some degree, yes, and necessarily so. Going through the "shock process" anew, every time, would be psychologically destructive to say the least and counter-productive in a world where people die. But does this desensitization have to imply either a lack of compassion or a tendency to violence in a wider social context? Dr. Donnerstein could not supply adequate examples or explanations of the transition he was seeking to establish from exposure to images of violence to calloused attitudes or, beyond that, to the acting out of violence itself.

He went on to re-emphasize his anti-censorship position. But was Dr. Donnerstein adapting to what he thought was my "liberalism" (anti-censorship; pro-gun-control), just as he may have been adapting to the makers of *Not A Love Story* and their particular argument (censorship in the right places; pro-gun-control)? This was, after all, the Dr. Donnerstein whose work has been quoted in a number of popular magazine articles (in *Mademoiselle* and *Homemakers* among others) that linked pornography to sexual violence, and who had recently delivered a lecture at Brock University in St. Catharines entitled "The Psychological Grounds For Censorship". Dr. Donnerstein seems to be in a more authoritative position than the ambivalent interpre-

tations generated by his research might warrant. However much I may like the idea of psychologists (currently not noted for their cultural input) moving into wider social and political discussions, I would rather it wasn't one who allowed himself to be snatched up and assimilated with a minimum of protest into such a large number of opposing positions. (If I had taken him as seriously as he would have liked, I might have asked him to come to Peterboro to speak on the "psychological grounds for opposing censorship.")

Trying to make distinctions

It would be comforting if we could resolve the confusing relativity of actual situations by erecting convenient barriers between easily accepted distinctions — the erotic and the pornographic, the artistic and the commercial, the democratic and the dominant — accommodating some and excluding others. The fundamental problem, however, remains, because the distinctions don't seem to clarify, nor do they free us from our anxieties about the unfamiliar, the unpredictable.

Further, these distinctions stand in the way of any real attempt to analyse the underlying reasons for the representativeness that is an accepted characteristic of our culture. And in the process, they reinforce the politically faulty premises on which the arguments for

selective censorship are based. Somehow or another, the disinhibition produced by eroticism is supposed to lead to tenderness and compassion, while the disinhibition produced by pornography leads to moral indifference and social erosion. And while art of course is sacrosanct, many of its most strident supporters refuse to extend their anti-censorship principles into the area of 'non-art'. The artistic expression of sexuality is daringly bourgeois; its non-artistic expression is tacky and exploitative. As these distinctions proliferate, it becomes increasingly difficult to see the total picture with any degree of consistency. In consequence, the political connections between one symptom of repression and another are erased or ignored.

When I talked to Al Razutis about *A Message From Our Sponsor*, I was primarily concerned about the apparent contradictions in his position. How is it that a film which started out from an implicitly pro-censorship stance should end up as a cause celebre for those who were fighting the Censor Board? He replied: "Well, allow me to clarify. It wasn't really a pro-censorship stance as much as it was a very personal, non-political indignation about sexist practises in the media. I became totally anti-censorship as a result of something — as naive as it may sound — that I could only term "political awareness". My initial personal attitude towards manipulation in the media I find analogous to some of the anti-pornography, pro-

censorship feminists. The implications of such a stance weren't well thought out. But in Peterborough, my political awareness came together around the pragmatic discussion about whether or not we should go ahead and show *Message*. There was a faction who were warning against taking this action. They stated that eventually art galleries would have "special exemptions" if the negotiations that were taking place with Mary Brown continued. Showing the film would jeopardize these negotiations. To me, "special exemption" is synonymous with "privilege" and that, so far as I'm concerned, is all part of an elitist stance and therefore unacceptable. The people who wanted to defy the Censor Board and eventually did were putting an ideological principle into practice. An activist, anti-censorship movement, I believe, plays a major role in a socialization process. It extends the social, political and cultural discourse beyond the limits of the Censor Board or any other government-appointed body and into the public arena. Who could have predicted at the time what the results of our action could be?" □

*Arts Against Repression is an exhibition of 12 pieces, each one of which has been censored for sexual, aesthetic or political reasons. The examples have been drawn from the visual arts, film, literature and, to some extent, television and music. Created by Jill Abson, Ian McLachlan and David Bierk at Artspace, in Peterborough, the show opened in March, 1981. Since then it has been exhibited in Hamilton and St. Catharines, and it is next bound for Calgary, followed by Victoria and Kingston, and the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art has expressed an interest in the show. A book documenting the show, called *Art in a Plain Brown Wrapper* will be published in March, 1983.



From a series by Richard Nigro entitled "The Intimate Silence"

to this assumption concerning the relationship between pornography and violence against women?

My path crossed recently with that of the psychologist featured in *Not A Love Story*, and he agreed to answer some of my questions. Dr. Donnerstein is a University of Wisconsin social psychologist who has been actively courted lately by a number of feminist groups to speak on a number of feminist positions, particularly surrounding the anti-porn movement.

In *Not A Love Story* and in his published research he states that exposure to erotica can effect behav-

to have been taken out of context. Since I am not a fan of this film, he was saying exactly what I wanted to hear, but instead of providing me with debunking ammunition, his explanations merely pointed to the major inconsistencies in his own position, as exemplified in *Not A Love Story*, our interview and his research paper.

Does pornography cause violence?

Even the most sexually explicit images, he stated, were not harmful on their own, but when linked with

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SCAPEGOATING

When the economy's down, somebody's got to pay

Migration within a country, or within an economic bloc, proceeds from hinterland to metropolis, from poorer to richer areas. The rate of such migration is primarily determined by the level of economic inequality permitted to exist, and not by the legality or illegality ascribed to the migration by the receiving state. The legality or illegality of a given migration may be conditioned by such factors as racism, but in the final analysis an alien worker's presence is welcomed in times of boom in the metropolitan state, and publicly discouraged during times of economic crisis.

In fact, one of capitalism's most persistent contradictions involves the fact that the need to escape the hinterland grows desperate at just the time when the willingness and ability of the metropolis to accept such people lessens.

Canada's Minister of Employment and Immigration, Lloyd Axworthy stepped directly into the logic of his position recently when he announced a reduction in projected immigration to Canada for 1983 on the basis of economic considerations. The gloomy unemployment picture, he said, was the "primary factor" in determining annual immigration and refugee quotas. In the press release provided to waiting media, Axworthy was quoted as saying: "My government is committed to protecting jobs for Canadians, and I believe that restricting the admission of selected workers will accomplish this goal."

This linking, not only of immigration, but also of refugee intake, to economic conditions should be noted. In fact, a decrease in refugee intake from 12,000 to 10,000 is planned, despite the fact that refugee intake is supposed to be a flexible instrument, one which would respond to crisis spots in the world, and save lives of those with a well-founded fear of persecution. Yet 2000 such people will be rejected because of the state of Canada's economy. Just as serious is the insistence that reduced immigra-

tion "will accomplish this goal" of protecting jobs of Canadians, threatened as they have not been since the 1930s. Surely Axworthy himself does not think that his measure alone will save our economy. But his exaggeration, which made its way into most of the nation's newspapers, as it was meant to, no doubt will do its bit to reinforce Canadians' belief that the presence of foreigners means lost jobs. Yet the argument that immigrants "take" Canadians jobs, which Axworthy used to justify his programme, rests upon an abstraction. An alien "takes" a job, but is also a consumer who "takes" Canadian beef, furniture, clothing, appliances, services and other products. The employment created by the immigrant's consumption, when divided among the many goods and services used, is real enough.

Few new immigrants allowed in 1983

Nevertheless, it serves propagandistic purposes for Axworthy to stress the negative aspect, and his November 1, Report to Parliament did just that. In fact, it is now projected that Canada will be admitting virtually no new independent applicants as immigrants in 1983. Instead, those admitted will be from the narrowing "Family Class", basically spouses, aged parents, and minor children of Canadian residents, most of whom do not participate in the labour force. While the Minister uses the total projected immigration figure (105,000) in response to those who criticize him for being too restrictive, he does not state that much of this total depends on factors outside his legal authority; as a general proposition, for example, a Canadian who marries a resident of a foreign country has a right to bring that spouse to Canada, in the absence of infectious diseases, or a substantial criminal record.

The absurdity of blaming immigrants for the unemployment

situation can be seen in an examination of net immigration figures over the last six years; according to data developed by Statistics Canada, and included in Axworthy's Report to Parliament, average immigration to Canada has been 122,413 since 1976; average emigration 73,325. Net immigration, then, was 49,088 per year. Since only 44 per cent of the approval immigrants intend to work at all, immigration brought a sum total of 21,560 new workers per year into Canada over the last six years.

"Operation Jobs"

In the United States, the administration has decided that it is illegal immigrants who must be spotlighted as culprits in the unemployment situation. As a strict new immigration law wound its way through Congress, and as a midterm election drew near, the American administration launched "Operation Jobs" — perhaps the most cynical bit of flimflam perpetrated on the American people since the doctrine of executive privilege.

Operation Jobs began, significantly enough, with a press briefing by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). There, government public relations officers explained to the press that massive raids of factories believed to employ illegal aliens would be made, in order to "free up high-paying jobs for American citizens." Soon after, special INS teams, backed up by caravans of paddy wagons, and closely followed by helicopter-born, camera-wielding Eyewitness News teams, swooped down on factories in nine target cities, supposedly chosen for 1) high unemployment rates, and 2) high levels of undocumented aliens.

The usual procedure involved surrounding a factory, entering and questioning suspect workers, and then marching those without documents out of the factories, hands behind head and into the paddy wagons, all done before the news cameras. Media coverage the next day was expected to

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stress, and usually did, the newly-available jobs thus created. In Los Angeles, for example, 1000 job-seekers appeared at the doors of the Price Pfister Company, the first in the nation to be hit... where 87 employees had been arrested the day before. Later, public response was not so great, as some of the seams in the operation began to show. For example, the B.P. John Company, which had 100 workers forcibly removed, received only 50 applications for the open positions. At one company, newspaper stories had stressed the fact that high-paying truck driver positions were now available; people looking for work the next day found that the report had been a "mistake". While the company did

employ truck-drivers, the undocumented aliens had all been employed cleaning fish. Similarly, applicants for eighteen "food preparation" jobs in Petaluma, California were displeased to discover that the jobs were for chicken-pluckers; of the eighteen new employees who braved this disappointment, fourteen had quit within a week.

Some of the "illegals" were legal residents

In its briefings of the press, the INS had claimed to be concentrating on high unemployment areas; however, of the nine cities chosen for Operation Jobs, only Detroit had an unemployment rate significantly above the

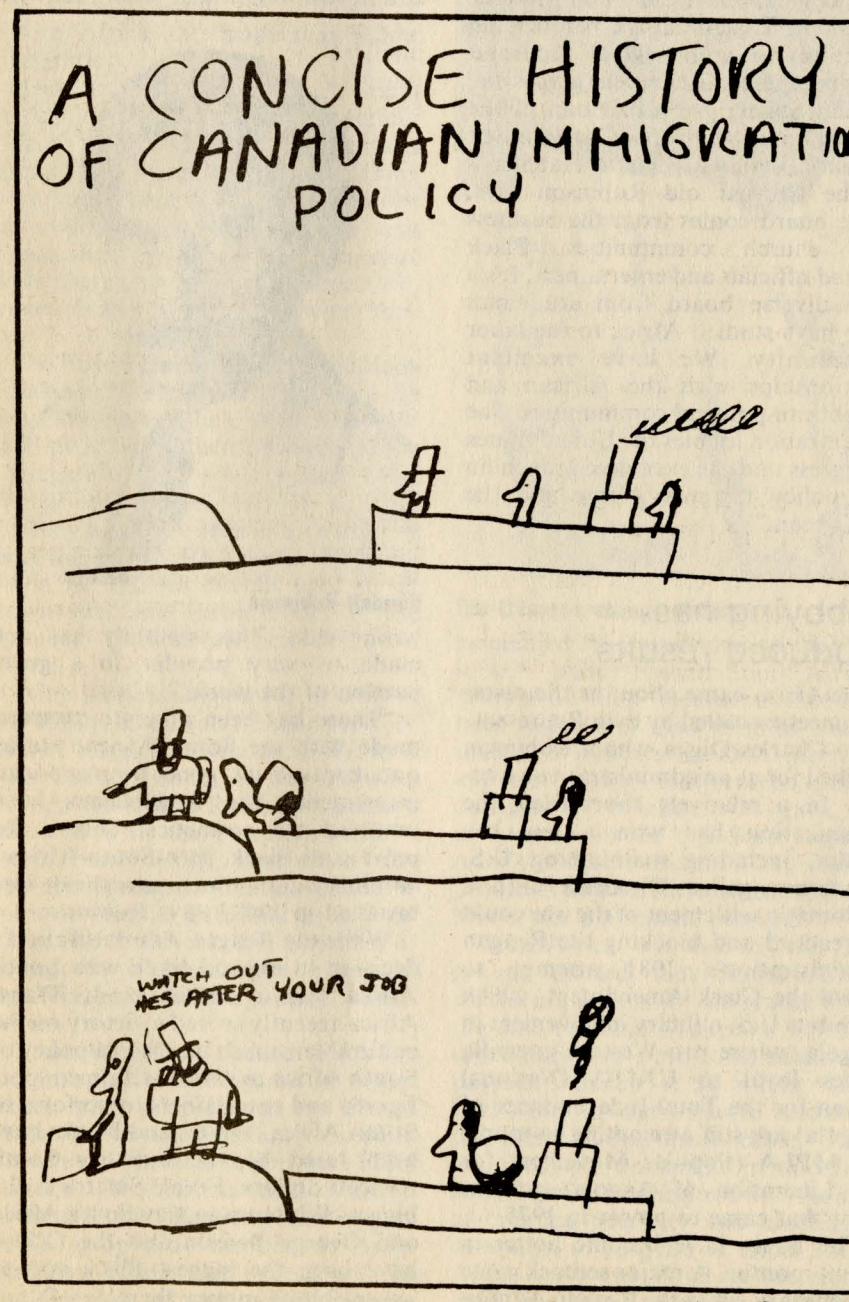
national average. There, forty sweeps by INS task forces resulted in the arrest of 107 persons. Unfortunately, 73 of these were lawful residents of the U.S. who had been illegally carted away past the television cameras. Most of these lawful residents were apparently Mexican or Puerto Rican by birth, and therefore subject to suspicion.

Of the other eight cities blitzed in Operation Jobs, only one city, Chicago, had an unemployment rate (9.3 per cent) above the then national average (9.2 per cent). The other seven target cities had rates significantly below the national average. Indeed, had Operation Jobs been anything other than a propaganda ploy, it might have been aborted from the start; a 1981 study by the United States Chamber of Commerce revealed that cities and states with the highest unemployment had the lowest concentrations of undocumented workers. While the Reagan government has been quick to accept Chamber studies as gospel on other matters, this particular finding had to be ignored if the administration was to scapegoat illegals.

According to administration sources, Operation Jobs netted 5,635 illegal immigrants in a one-week period. The average wage of those captured was \$4.81 per hour. On July 15, 1982, in the case of *ILGWU v. Sureck*, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held that an earlier Operation Jobs factory raid was a violation of the Fourth Amendment, as the surrounding of a factory was an involuntary detention of all persons inside, and because the INS was unable to show the required reasonable belief that all those so detained were in violation of U.S. law.

As the U.S. unemployment rate increased from 9.2 per cent to 10.2 per cent — from 10 to 11.4 million unemployed — in the months since Operation Jobs ended, the government's action has been less than successful. But as a media campaign, Operation Jobs has no doubt had some effect in keeping alive the notion that foreigners "hurt" the economy. And Americans could be left with the impression that their government is "doing something" about unemployment.

Before jumping to similar conclusions here in Canada, we should consider the following: Our current unemployed number is 1.5 million; this figure is approximately equal to the net immigration figure for the whole of the last 25 years. □



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UAS-8-77

LISTENING TO AFRICAN VOICES an interview with Randall Robinson

One myth that has been circulated throughout the international community is that New Africans (African-Americans) have no historical involvement in commenting on the foreign policy of the United States. Shortly after Andrew Young was forced to resign from his post as Ambassador to the United Nations, a series of articles appeared in the American press purporting to prove that African-Americans were parochial in their political outlook.

"That's quite simply untrue," asserts a slightly perturbed Randall Robinson, the executive director of TransAfrica, the Black American lobby for Africa and the Caribbean. "While TransAfrica may be a new vehicle for the expression of Black peoples' views on foreign policy, Black people have been speaking out since before emancipation (1865) in this country." It may be that the White press in the U.S. has not focused on and covered these issues, but the voices have always been there."

Robinson, who is the younger brother of ABC anchorman Max Robinson, claims that African-Americans' concern for their counterparts in Africa and the Caribbean is a deeply rooted tradition. "One can recall people like Martin Delaney who as long ago as the 1850s had much to say about U.S. policy towards Africa. He even travelled there. Frederick Douglas (a contemporary of Delaney) had nearly as much to say about U.S. policy towards Liberia and Haiti as he did about slavery."

"When one looks at the history of Black involvement in public affairs in the U.S., the work of Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. DuBois and people like James Weldon Johnson of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in the 1920s had much to say about U.S. policy towards Africa and the Caribbean."

For five years the Washington, D.C. based TransAfrica has been calling for

a more progressive U.S. stand on issues such as support for majority rule in Southern Africa (South Africa and Namibia) and the normalization of relations with the present governments of Fidel Castro in Cuba and Maurice Bishop in Grenada. It is a membership organization with several thousand members and 12 chapters across the United States. The Chairman of the elected board of directors is the mayor of Gary, Indiana, Richard Hatcher.

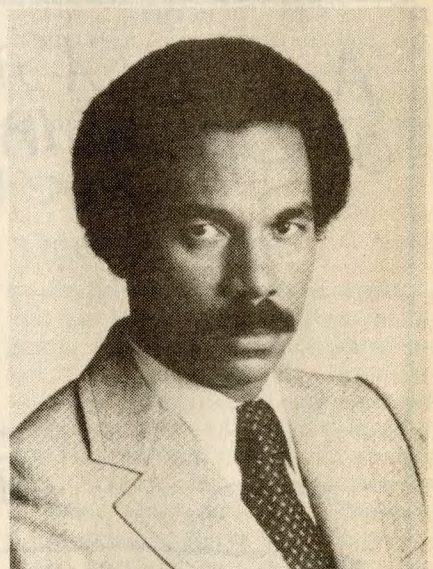
The 40 year old Robinson says, "The board comes from the business and church communities, Black elected officials and entertainers. It's a very diverse board from academics who have studied Africa to the labor community. We have excellent relationships with the African and Caribbean political communities. The organization lobbies the United States Congress and the executive branch on the policy towards Africa and the Caribbean."

Lobbying has produced results

TransAfrica came about as the result of a meeting called by then Representative Charles Diggs, whom Robinson worked for as an administrative assistant. In a relatively short time, the organization has won a few key battles, including maintaining U.S. sanctions against Rhodesia until a diplomatic settlement of the war could be reached and blocking the Reagan administration's 1981 attempt to repeal the Clark Amendment, which prohibits U.S. military involvement in Angola, where pro-Western guerrilla forces loyal to UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) are still attempting to topple the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) government that came to power in 1975.

The issues have become hotter in recent months. A major setback came in February, when the Reagan Admin-

istration announced it would expand trade with South Africa. "U.S. foreign policy is not only shameful, it is counter-productive. Wherever people struggle for a more humane life, this administration finds itself on the



Randall Robinson

wrong side. This certainly has not made us very popular in a good portion of the world."

"There has been a very cozy truce made with the South African status quo because it's good for American investment. The Republicans have removed the cosmetics. This is the most anti-Black, pro-South-African administration since apartheid was installed in 1948," says Robinson.

While the Reagan Administration's decision to expand trade with South Africa was a serious blow, TransAfrica recently scored a victory on the cultural terrain. It has been a policy of South Africa to entice acclaimed sport figures and entertainers to perform in South Africa. Whites and Blacks have been lured by the lucrative South African dollars. Frank Sinatra is the biggest White act to play South Africa and George Benson and the O'Jays have been the biggest Black acts to accept blood money there.

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O'Jays apologize for South African visit

Recently, the O'Jays, who performed for 80,000 South Africans in 1981, had a change of heart about playing there. They publicly apologized for going, said they wouldn't return until apartheid was uprooted and vowed to urge others not to make the trek to racist South Africa. They said in the future they'd consult with TransAfrica on the South African question. What was TransAfrica's role in the O'Jays about face?

"A member of our board of directors in Los Angeles, Howard Manning, is a consultant to the O'Jays and works very closely with them. And it was not surprising that the O'Jays felt strongly about the situation in South Africa and made that public declaration."

Did the O'Jays see things in South Africa that they weren't expecting? "That's hard to say. I think you should speak to them on that. But one thing about apartheid — either on paper or in reality — it's provocative and persuasive. I'm sure that when they were there they were very depressed, angered and enraged by what they saw."

Robinson grew up under conditions similar to those in South Africa in the Southern part of the United States. He feels he is "very much a product of the segregation and poverty that beset Deep South Blacks." His first political act may well have been as a young boy growing up in Richmond, Virginia, when he and his friends used to go downtown and throw rocks at the statue of Confederate hero Jefferson Davis.

After a brief stint in the U.S. army in the 1960s, Robinson finished Norfolk State College and went on to Harvard Law School, where he and his wife, Brenda Randolph Robinson, became involved with the Southern African Relief Fund, which raised money for liberation groups. After law school, he spent a year in Tanzania as a Ford fellow, he then worked in a number of community and civil rights groups in the Northeast before joining TransAfrica.

TransAfrica has opened doors for Robinson. He is welcome in places where other people from the United States are not. For example, earlier this year in Havana he met with Fidel Castro. Robinson and Castro discussed the Reagan Administration's proposed Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) that excludes Cuba and Grenada, as well as the normali-

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zation of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, and the role of Cuba in the Angolan situation.

Called "reprehensible" and "dangerous"

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) has allowed Robinson to attend many of their functions. To his political opponents on the Right, this is wrong. Reagan officials were particularly burned when, immediately before a 1981 meeting of the OAU, Robinson released State Department documents that tipped off the



The O'Jays: a change of heart

assembled African leaders to the shift in U.S. policy toward South Africa. "Robinson took documents that had been stolen and used them to undermine U.S. policy at the OAU meeting, and we consider that reprehensible," comments Michael Mygant, a spokesman for the U.S. State Department's African Bureau. "It causes problems and embarrassment and can hinder the diplomatic process."

TransAfrica was one of the first groups alerted that South Africa would request major assistance from the International Monetary Fund in order to relieve a projected balance of payments deficit of \$4 billion. They found out through a leaked confidential State Department cable. They obtained the document in mid-July and released it to the press with the aim of creating publicity and kindling a campaign to suspend or expel South Africa from the Fund at the recent IMF Board of Governors meeting in

Toronto, Canada. Needless to say this didn't set too well in the corners of reaction; and in spite of TransAfrica's efforts, South Africa was granted the loan as requested.

Robinson and TransAfrica have also been lambasted in the pages of right-wing publications across the United States. Many of the criticisms have been aimed personally at Robinson. He has been called "dangerous" and accused of "aiding Soviet expansionism," undercutting U.S. foreign policy and having an "in" with the media because of his brother. But Robinson is undaunted by his political opponents. He continues to

agitate and organize around questions concerning Africa and the Caribbean. His philosophy can be summed up in a speech that he delivered early in 1980.

Says Robinson, "I urge our new national leadership, for the good of America, Africa and the world to listen closely to African voices that tell us where Africa must and will go. Those who counsel that Angola will fall are wrong. Angola will neither fall nor be compromised. Those who counsel that South Africa can hold out in Namibia and at home are wrong. Namibia will achieve an unqualified independence in the near future and South Africa will be transformed in my lifetime."

"Listen to African voices that tell us where Africa must and will go. They ask: 'Are you with us or against us?' I urge our new leadership to answer rightly. It is the only basis for any future American friendship with Africa."

Philadelphia International Records

RECLAIMING CULTURE

Indigenous Performers Take Back Their Show

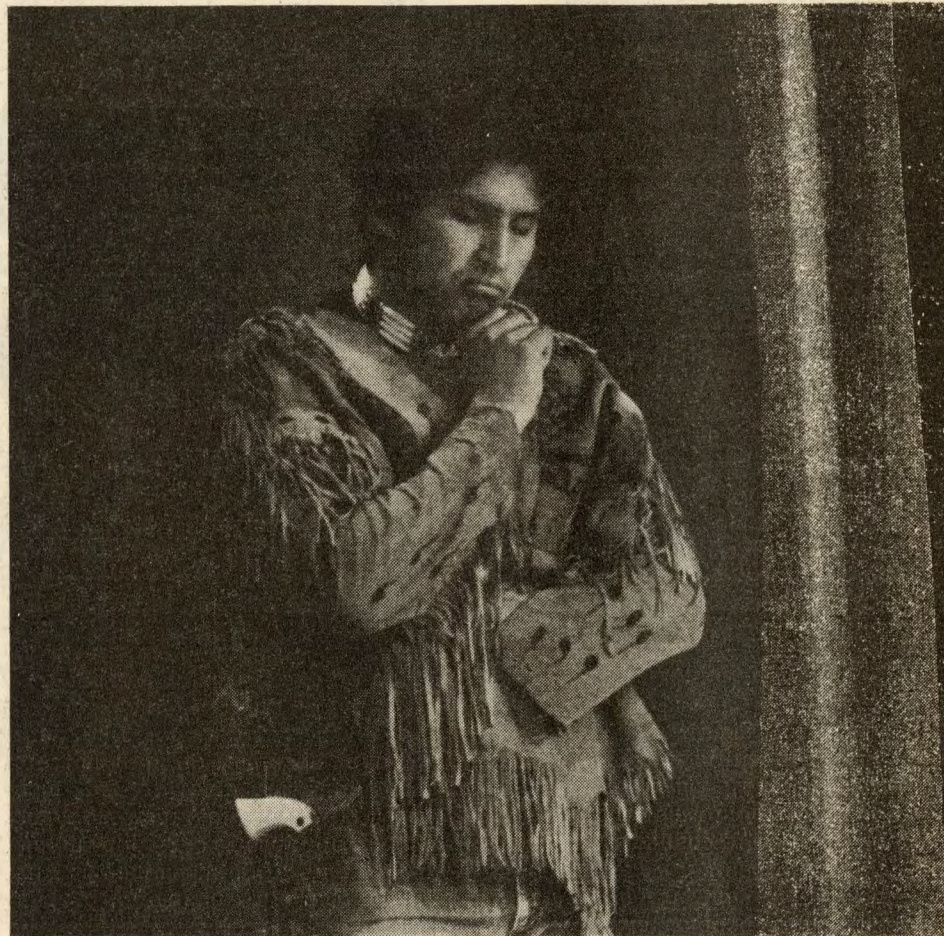
This is a personalized and biased account of the Indigenous People's Theatre Celebration which was held in Peterborough, Ontario in the first week of August 1982.

The Peterborough celebration was the second of what is hoped to be a continuing tradition of indigenous people's theatre celebrations. The first was held in Toronto in 1980. Its inspiration came from Jim Buller,¹ the director of the Association of Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts (ANDPVA) — a Toronto-based Native organization which supports the training of Native actors, the recruitment of Native actors for TV and film, and the promotion of Native cultural activity. Buller was turned off by the eurocentrism and the racism he experienced at an International Amateur Theatre festival and decided as a result that indigenous people needed their own.

The 1980 celebration in Toronto was an ambitious start. It brought together 17 groups from 10 countries and provided the basis for on-going contact among groups. Its major drawback, however, was its location in a huge metropolitan area and its emphasis on public performances largely catering to non-Native audiences — which tended to reify it as a tourist commodity, a showpiece of exotic talent.

The 1982 celebration tried to overcome these limitations. It took the event out of Toronto and located it in an area with the heaviest concentration of Native reserves in Ontario, trying to make it more accessible to Native people. It played down the public performances and went back to the original idea of providing an occasion for Native people to celebrate their culture — to come together, to share their skills, experiences, concerns and aspirations, to explore

1. Jim Buller died two weeks before this year's Celebration. His absence left a huge vacuum and partially accounted for the lack of strong native leadership in the running of the event.



"Foghorn", Indian Time Theatre Satire on white stereotypes of Native people

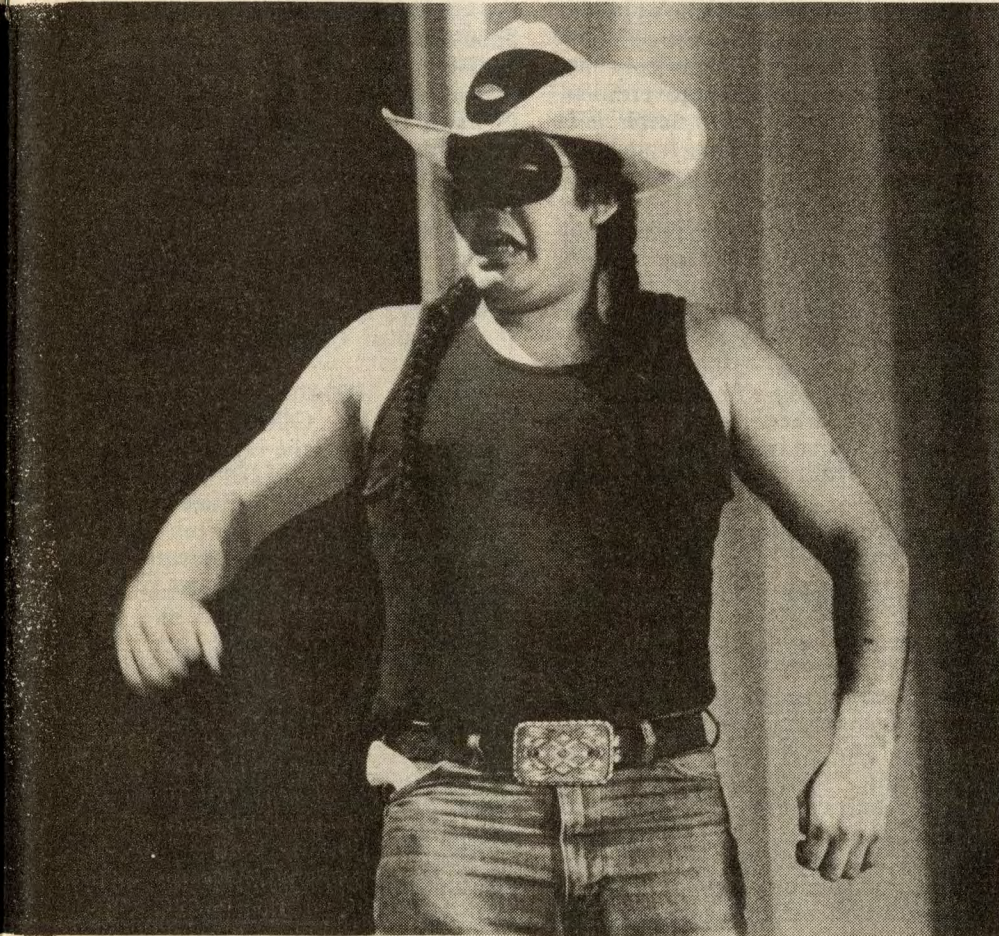
ways of supporting one another (on a long-term basis) and to perform for each other. Public performances remained as part of the programme but they were no longer the central focus.

ANDPVA again hosted the event, putting in over a year of hard work in preparing for the event, much of it done by volunteers organized into task committees (programme, logistics, publicity, etc.) and a dedicated group of Native people hired for the 6 months prior to the celebration. Over \$200,000 was raised for the event, covering not only the running costs (food, accommodation, local transport, etc.) but also air fares for

some participants and the production of a 60-minute colour film.

Invitations were sent to groups all over the world. Instead of going through official government channels — as had been done in the first celebration — the organizers contacted groups directly, thus assuring the participation of groups which, due to their involvement in Native political movements, would never be on the official list of government-sponsored folkloric showpieces. The organizers raised funds to bring some of these groups to the celebration — a group representing the Shuar movement from Ecuador, an organizer of the Native movement in Bolivia, a group

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Charlie Lane

representing MECATE from Nicaragua, and a Carib group from Dominica. Other participants, many of whom had access to government funding, had to raise their own air fare.

The Celebration took place soon after the World Assembly of First Nations which was held in Regina, Saskatchewan. This timing arrangement made it possible for a number of groups to attend both functions.

A participatory opening

The Celebration opened on the shores of beautiful Curve Lake (10 miles north of Peterborough) as part of a much larger celebration among Native

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people in the area — their annual 2-day pow wow.

This was the high point of the week — art as celebration and participation with no artificial division between performer and audience. As the Ainu from Japan put it, "Festivals are not something you look at. You participate, you get involved, you dance, you enjoy life." Everyone took part in the opening circle dance — both conference participants and pow wow celebrants. It set the tone for the rest of the day in which short performances by conference participants alternated with pow wow dances in which everyone joined in.

Once the pow wow was over and the

Celebration shifted to the ultra-modern concrete corridors of Trent University (Peterborough) some of this communal spirit evaporated. The labyrinths of modern architecture and the formality of the meeting rooms put up barriers to communication which only the evening sessions at the bar seemed to overcome.

But one can't blame the architecture. There were very real differences among the participants and it is to their credit that instead of burying them and preserving an artificial and unproductive consensus, they brought into the open and debated their varying positions — towards culture, the definition of indigenous peoples, the role of indigenous people's theatre, etc.

A quick look at the list of participants and their diverse backgrounds and activities would show how difficult it was for them to find some common ground —

Latin America and the Caribbean

- from Ecuador — a cultural group of Shuar Indians whose performances were closely linked to the Shuar struggles against land-grabbing and colonization of the Amazon region.
- from Bolivia — Luis Rojas, one of the organizers of a movement of Quechua Indians in the highlands of Bolivia.
- from Nicaragua — 4 peasant organizers representing the Nicaraguan campesino theatre movement, MECATE.
- from Dominica — Carifuna, a cultural organization of young Caribs who function as the cultural arm of a Carib political movement.

Asia and Africa

- from Bangladesh — Mamunur Rashid, a member of an urban theatre group which has recently started organized drama among landless agricultural workers in rural Bangladesh.

- from India — two folk drama groups from the state of Maharashtra.
- from Nigeria — two Arts Council officers and the Minister of Culture for Benue State, one of whom presented a paper on indigenous puppetry (Kwagh-hir).

The Pacific

- from Australia — an aboriginal dance, drama, and musical group (which includes country music in its repertoire) and Bob Maza, the founder of the first aboriginal theatre group in Australia.
- from New Zealand — Tim Karetu, a Maori studies professor and cultural organizer.
- from Japan — a musical group of the Ainu, a small indigenous minority group on the northern island of Hokkaido.

North America

- from the U.S.A. — Spiderwoman, a professional women's theatre group from New York who develop pieces from their own urban-based lives; Indian Time Theatre, a group from Niagara Falls who tour Native reserves with politicized plays; a traditional dance-drama group from the Eight Pueblos of New Mexico.
- from Canada — four "amateur" community theatre groups and students of ANDPVA's summer theatre school.

Europe

- from Denmark — Tukak, an Inuit professional theatre company and theatre school concerned with the development of Inuit actors for theatre work in Greenland.
- from Norway — a cultural group representing the Sami (an indigenous minority group in Scandinavia and the USSR).
- from Wales — a nationalist musical drama group.

How to bridge these differences?

As one participant put it, "We may all be indigenous people but we are so different." The surface differences were the first to be noticed. Some participants, for example, couldn't understand why white-skinned performers from Wales and Samiland (northern Scandinavia) had been invited to an "indigenous people's" event. The instinctive feeling was that "indigenous peoples" were people of

non-European racial background. The Welsh and the Sami defended themselves not through argument but through their own performances which testified to their history of colonial domination and cultural oppression and their struggles to preserve their own unique identity in the face of a homogenizing cultural offensive by the nation-states into which they had been absorbed. Once this had been shown the barriers went down and they were treated as full participants.

Other differences became apparent much later. Some groups are officially sponsored by their governments; others operate without government funding or support and in some cases are faced with repression from their governments. Some groups have rigid theatre hierarchies; others are collectively run. Some are just getting started; others have a long history. Some make their living out of theatre doing it on a full-time basis; others do their theatre in their spare time. Some live largely within the mainstream culture (e.g., Spiderwoman in New York); others operate in both worlds — Native and mainstream; and still others live on the margins of the dominant society (e.g., the Shuar in Ecuador) and are trying to contain its influences. Some have high levels of formal education and long involvement in western institutions; others have grown up largely within the Native culture, learning their skills and awarenesses through informal means and indigenous institutions.

Some are performers; others are amateurs, involved in organizing cultural participation by others; and still others (e.g., Ayni Ruway of Bolivia) do theatre as a communal, highly participatory activity with no specialization in performance. Some perform largely for mainstream audiences; others perform exclusively for the Native community. Some do theatre as a means of building up Native identity; others do theatre to animate specific forms of social action.

In spite of all these differences there was an attempt to find some common ground, to listen to each other, to discover what was shared in common and to explore ways of working together as a "movement" and supporting one another.

The structure

The Celebration was organized around four types of activity — performances, critique sessions (colloques), workshops, and discus-

sion groups. All participants attended the evening performances which were held in a public auditorium, with three or four groups performing each evening. In addition groups took turns giving performances during the day in the downtown mall and in a public park.

The performances included traditional dances and songs and ritualistic ceremonies, newly created works incorporating indigenous myths and traditional performance elements, "non-traditional" pieces dealing with the problems of urban Natives, and docu-dramas on the struggles of Native people. The themes of colonial invasion and resistance were the focus of many of the plays, both folkloric and non-traditional.

Critical sessions (colloques) were held every morning in plenary during which the previous evening's performances were critiqued. Two theatre professors, Anatol Schlosser of York University and Jerry Thurston of the University of Calgary, chaired these sessions.

Theatre workshops took place throughout the Celebration in the afternoon and in the early mornings, with a number of workshops running concurrently. These included mask making, theatre games, movement exercises, etc. largely concentrating on the technical aspects of theatre. While some felt this was old hat they did provide an opportunity for skill sharing between the experienced and the newcomers. One of the more exciting workshops was a collaborative event organized by the Native Theatre School and Carifuna with the latter providing the drumming for movement exercises.

Discussion groups were planned for the first three afternoons of the Celebration. The idea was to give participants a chance to meet and get to know one another in small groups, to talk and share experiences in a less pressured setting than the large assembly room (where the colloques were held). This informal exchange of experiences, approaches, ideas, and concerns was meant to break down the barriers and overcome the parochialism, to encourage people to learn from each other and to search for common ground. It was hoped that these discussions would produce an input into the final congress (of the Indigenous People's Theatre Association) — a more democratic way of planning the development of IPTA than leaving it to the theatre directors (as it had been done at the first Celebration).

It was not to be. It represented too

much independence for some of the theatre directors and through some effective lobbying after the first session they got the remaining two sessions cancelled. One said categorically: "My actors don't have much to say. They just want to perform."

While it's true that for some participants the group discussions didn't work — they were too formal or dominated by the more articulate — their scrapping and replacement with theatre workshops left only the colloques in the mornings to bring out the social and political aspects of theatre. In effect it left no occasion for talking about the ideas, the *content* of theatre — the situation of the participants in their home countries, their struggles to defend themselves, and their use of theatre in relation to these struggles. It also meant that the preliminary thinking for the IPTA Congress was again delegated to a committee composed of the theatre directors. For different reasons, the colloques also drew fire. Some participants resented having their performance critiqued by two non-Native theatre professors — a contradiction

participatory theatre activity of the Bangladeshis, Bolivians, Equadorians, and Nicaraguans whose theatre is not mere performance but part of a broader process of community interaction. But that's getting ahead of the story.

The definition of indigenous people

The search for an agreed definition of "indigenous people" started in the first session of the group discussions and continued on in the steering committee meetings and the Congress. There were a host of contradictions and contradictory views, and in the end the participants accepted a don't-shake-the-boat-cause-we're-all-in-it-together pluralism.

In the first discussion the idea of "indigenous people" being anyone who could claim to being "indigenous to a certain part of the world" was ruled out. It was felt that *oppression* had to be part of the definition: "indigenous people" are people who have had an experience of colonial invasion, occupation, exploitation,

Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, but it excluded, for example, the whole continent of Africa (where "indigenous peoples" have had political but not economic control for the last two decades) and the newly independent islands of the South Pacific.

This contradiction left the definitional task in the air and people then turned to what seemed a more useful exercise — to discover what they had in common.

A common history

The pre-colonial life of indigenous peoples was highly integrated. "Theatre," for example, was an organic part of the life of a community rather than an "aesthetic commodity" separate from other social activities. It was education, celebration, therapy, religion — a means of socializing the young, affirming identity, building communal solidarity, recording the community's history, healing the sick, communing with the propitiating gods. Theatre was life and life theatre. There were no playwrights, directors,

"Defending our cultural heritage is directly linked to defending our land. Culture and politics are inseparable."

The Shuar (Ecuador)

to the idea of Native control. The irony was that the focus of much of the professors' criticism was two groups (Tukak and the Native Theatre School) which were led by non-Native directors and whose pieces, according to the professors, were heavily influenced by western theatre conventions.

This controversy, over what represented indigenous people's theatre, fixed the polarities in terms of stylized syncretic drama vs. untainted folkloric performances, both within a "culturalist" perspective. This obscured the focus and ignored the richness and variety of the Third World groups, many of whom were not "performance-oriented" and for whom these standards were totally inappropriate.

It limited discussion to the *forms* of performance and pushed aside the more important issues of the context, role, and process of theatre. In effect it represented the monopolistic hold that the European theatre traditions have over people's consciousness, over their understanding of what theatre can be. It ruled out the whole universe of

and cultural oppression.

People then thought the definition was too passive: it should include the notion of *resistance*, of indigenous people fighting back to defend their own culture, to resist economic exploitation, and to regain control over their land, their economy, and all aspects of their lives.

Some people then wanted to push the definition further — in order to distinguish this concept from that of Third World peoples. According to this group, indigenous people are those who a) are the original inhabitants of the land and b) remain without political control over the political-economic system in which they are living. (This is the notion of the Fourth World — people who have experienced colonial invasion and remain a political minority in their own land.)

This definition clearly identified the Native or indigenous peoples of the Americas (i.e., the pre-Colombian inhabitants) and the "tribal" or "aboriginal" groups of, for example, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Philippines,

theatre buildings or formal rules; theatre was created collectively, a direct expression of the people who created it.

Colonialism attempted to smash this integrated and collective approach to life and to replace it with the system of North Atlantic capitalism. Its object was to invade and dominate the indigenous peoples, taking over their land and economic resources and securing their labour.

This invasion was resisted. The Native peoples of North and South America, for example, put up a stiff resistance, but were eventually beaten down. The Caribs in the West Indies fought back fiercely and delayed colonial control over Dominica by two centuries. According to Carifuna, it was during this period of on-going guerrilla war that the Caribs lost much of their traditional performance culture. There just wasn't time to keep it going and the tradition died with each Carib killed.

The Ainu explained that colonial invasion wasn't only a European phenomenon. They, as the original

inhabitants of Japan, described how their land had been occupied by Chinese and Korean peoples from the Asian mainland and later invaded a second time on Hokkaido where they retreated after the first invasion. In this second invasion their own mode of production (fishing and hunting) was smashed and supplanted by the colonizers' plantation agriculture.

Each colonizing power not only destroyed the economic base of the indigenous peoples but attempted to destroy the possibilities of counter-ideological resistance. They denied the colonized the means to express themselves, suppressing cultural expression which challenged the colonial system or served as a rallying point for anti-colonial struggle. For example, in both Latin America and Samiland drums and other musical instruments were destroyed and offenders were punished with fines and flogging. In the case of Samiland this resulted in the total elimination of drumming and dancing.

ting economic surplus.

The indigenous peoples' language was also suppressed and replaced with the colonizers' language. This was equally true in the experiences of the Welsh, the North Americans, the Latin Americans, the Sami, and the Ainu. All talked about experiences of being punished for speaking their own language in school. The Ainu language was almost eliminated (only about 100 people still speak the language) and the Carib language was exterminated.

The object in all cases was to break the spirit of the indigenous peoples, forcing them to accept a subservient role, to "know their place" in the colonial racial hierarchy so that economic surplus could be extracted with the minimum of resistance. Economic exploitation and political repression had to be reinforced with cultural and spiritual genocide. They were taught that their own culture was "primitive folklore"; the colonizers' was "art."

This dynamic, however, was not

theatre "movement" today.

Cultural theatre vs. engaged theatre

Participants seemed to agree on some of the broad goals for indigenous people's theatre — to rescue it from extermination or external manipulation, to revive it as a source of identity, to use it as a tool of protest against oppression. They saw their work as recovering, reviving, validating, and advancing the indigenous people's culture and history as part of the larger struggle by indigenous peoples for land, freedom from exploitation, control over their own institutions and lives, etc.

Where they differed was in tactics. Some found themselves trying to revive indigenous themes, symbols, and performance forms within a western definition of theatre — theatre as commodity, as something separate from the rest of life, with specializa-

"Our traditional dances were totally obliterated by 400 years of fighting for survival . . . That's why we've got to reconstruct, to recreate our culture . . ."

the Carfuna (Dominica)

The church worked hand in hand with the colonial authorities. Their objective may have been cultural or ideological, i.e., to extend Christianity to the "heathen," but it served a clear economic interest, i.e., to destroy those forms of culture which could be used in organizing resistance against the new forms of production (slavery, forced labour, cash crop production, etc.) introduced under colonialism. Through these efforts religious practices which had been expressed through these "performances" were undermined and the churches' own forms of worship and cultural practices were put in their place.

The suppression of the indigenous peoples' "performance" culture not only undermined the spiritual basis of these societies but also their communitarian structure.² This was true for example in the banning of the Potlatch ceremonies of the Nootka and Kwakiatl Indians, which undermined their key socio-economic institution — the Potlatch, the mechanism for raising production and redistribu-

2. This was not universal; while the church tried to undermine or appropriate the dance-drama of the Quechua, they were unsuccessful in destroying the key communitarian institution of the Quechua — the *ayllu*.

one-sided. The indigenous peoples continued to fight back — to defend their land, their livelihood, their culture. While some succumbed to the genocidal or assimilation pressures, others continued to resist, and cultural expression played an important role in reviving identity and rallying support for struggle. The Ghost Dance of the 1890s, for example, provided a powerful revitalizing and unifying ideology for the Sioux in trying to overcome their spiritual debasement and oppression. In the peasant communities of Bolivia and Ecuador the drama *Inca Re* (which tells the story of the Spanish overthrow of the Incas) keeps the spirit of resistance alive.

For indigenous peoples the situation today remains largely the same. Their culture remains an object of denigration, official censorship, anthropological study, or tourist consumption. Their cultural, linguistic, and spiritual heritage is increasingly threatened under the assimilation pressures of the dominant society. However, there still resides within the seeds of resistance. How this resistance is expressed and organized is the major question facing the indigenous peoples

tion, hierarchical structures, individualized expression and a separation between performers and audience. Others, like Ayni Ruway of Bolivia, were trying to develop theatre from within their own culture; to revive theatre as part of communal life, as something organically related to the struggles of the community, with active participation, collective expression, and little separation between actors and audience.

The former looked at theatre as a finalized *product* developed for the indigenous community; the latter viewed their theatre as an on-going *process* controlled by the indigenous community in which the whole community were involved in the production process, in the production of meaning. The first saw its job done with the end of its performance; the second viewed their work as beginning long before the performance began and continuing on after it was over.

The first saw their theatre as universal pieces which could be performed anywhere, for any audience; the second viewed their work as meaningful primarily within the context in which it was created. For example the

first piece prepared by *Frente Sur*, a campesino theatre group in Nicaragua, was developed in response to the victimization of one of their fellow workers who had been fired by the patron for taking a little bit of milk. The show inspired the campesinos to confront the patron. While the play could have been performed in other places, its primary meaning was for the people of that particular community.

While in general there were two camps — those who saw their work as essentially "cultural" and those who saw their work more closely linked to the larger political struggle — the differences and the variations between them were much richer than a simple dualism would portray. There were several polarities rather than a single culturalist-engaged or product-process set of oppositions. There were even more perspectives from which to view indigenous people's theatre than the suggested categories set out in the background documents for the Celebration (ritual, means of preserving tradition, source of identity and awareness, a tool of protest or social action.)³ The following paragraphs attempt to set out the spectrum.

The roles of theatre

For all of the groups theatre is a source of *identity* — a means of strengthening the spirit as a pre-condition for survival and self-defense. Their cultural heritage and cultural creativity are asserted as a way of overcoming the colonial conditioning and negative stereotypes and gaining the self-respect and self-confidence needed to confront oppression and the pressures of assimilation. It is a defence against the inroads being made into people's consciousness by the schools, the media, the church, etc.

Some groups express this identity *on behalf* of other indigenous people. Other groups, however, organize their theatre in a highly participatory way so that people are expressing themselves, are *asserting their own voice* and identity. For these groups the growth in self-confidence and identity is not something that other people can do for you. It only comes from acting, from being the subject of the transformation rather than the object of someone else's action. These groups attempt to maximize participation in

3. As I explained earlier this is what didn't on the whole come out during the public sessions at the Celebration. This comparative description and analysis of participants' varying experiences, with an emphasis on the Third Worlders' experiences, is based largely on interviews.

drama and to overcome the western notion of theatre as a monopoly, to break down the separation between actors and audiences.

This latter position represents an assertion or validation of people's culture which has, under colonialism, been denigrated as "folklore." It says that peasants and workers can make culture, can transform the world — not just the dominant class. In some cases — as in Nicaragua and Bangladesh — it is a reappropriation of what had been stolen from them by the dominant class.

Some groups see their theatre primarily as a means of *preserving or reviving their culture* — as a way of

values it expresses. They maintained that the heritage should be treated selectively, building on those aspects which advance the popular classes and rejecting those aspects which are against the people's interest.

Some groups are engaged in *theatre as ritual* — communal celebrations of the beginning or culmination of distinct periods of life (e.g., harvest), rituals of therapy, etc. One such ritual was demonstrated during the Celebration by the Shuar group from Ecuador. One of their members had not been able to come to the Celebration because of being bitten by a snake just before departure. Participants were invited to take part in a ritual of



Northern Delights Theatre Group from Sioux Lookout, Ontario

resisting the pressures of assimilation. Their object is not only to keep alive what has been salvaged from the experience of colonialism but also to renew it, revive it, and develop a sense of ethnic consciousness through it. The Ainu for example are attempting to rescue their language, stories, songs, etc. which were almost exterminated and to use them as a means of teaching their young about their heritage. The use of indigenous languages is a common feature of these groups. Other groups, while sharing this objective, feel that on its own this objective is insufficient, leaving itself ripe for reification as a "museum culture" and failing to recognize the dynamic nature of culture.

Others pointed out the danger of "cultural nationalism," of accepting tradition uncritically no matter what

healing conducted by the Shuar.

Luis Rojas also explained that the rituals and historical dramas (e.g., *Inca Re*) continued to be performed by the Native peoples, after the colonization of Latin America, not only for their efficacy and as a means of preserving their history, but also as a form of defiance against the conquistadores and their descendants — a means of showing their resistance. The rituals are neither entertainment nor folkloric exhibition — they are an expression of communal solidarity against oppression and a means of evoking the power of the gods in support of their respective communities.

The Eight Pueblos group from New Mexico, who had given a stunning performance of traditional buffalo dances, warned participants about the potential of ritual being commodified

and exploited:

"Our culture is strong: we went into hiding because we didn't want non-Indians learning our ways, which is the source of our strength. We want respect: we don't allow filming of some dances. We have a troubled history — of invasion, brutal extermination, elimination of our leadership. We're here to share some of our things but we had to get permission from the elders."

In one case (Ayni Ruway) theatre is totally *functional*, totally integrated into the life of the community. There is no specialization in performing — everyone takes part and there are no pre-arranged occasions for performance — it happens spontaneously in various social situations as the need arises. This form of participatory drama reinforces the sense of community, helps in "breaking the ice" when two communities come together, serves as a means of expressing what's on people's minds, focuses discussion, etc. It is neither scripted, rehearsed, nor pre-planned. This is a theatre of participation, rather than consumption. The performers and the audience are the same people:

"The space between the performers and the 'audience' is very tenuous; it is constantly invaded. People walk into the scene, without being prompted."

Luis Rojas makes it clear that this kind of theatre is not an outside group bringing theatre to the people; nor is it a form of "conscientization" trying to persuade the peasants to think in a certain way:

"The Ayni Ruway theatre grows organically out of the community rather than being imposed from the outside... There is no need for a central group to 'conscientize' or 'politicize' the peasants."

Luis Rojas (Bolivia)

"The Ayni Ruway theatre grows organically out of the community rather than being imposed from outside; it is an expression of the peasants' own concerns, hopes, joys, and fears and is created for their own purposes... There is no need for a central group to 'conscientize' or 'politicize' the peasants. They are already politically aware and provide a fierce resistance to repression from the authorities. They won't let the authorities penetrate into certain areas. The culture of resistance is very strong."

Some of the groups, e.g. Tukak, look at theatre as a vehicle for building

pride and a sense of achievement among Native people through the discipline and concentration of *high-quality, highly skilled theatre*. Through showing that Native people can excel at theatre they hope to break down the negative stereotypes about indigenous people's capacity, building self-esteem within the Native community and winning respect and recognition from the dominant society. One risk of course is that through dealing with mainstream theatre the group will be forced to accept the standards and values of mainstream theatre. Tukak, for example, has adopted Grotowski and Brook presentational styles — which, some critics say, limits its power as a voice for the Native community.

For a few groups (Tukak, Spiderwoman, Indian Time Theatre) theatre is a full or part-time *income-earning activity* — albeit a precarious one. The majority of the groups, however, are "amateur"; the performers work in other jobs during the day and do their rehearsals and performances in the evenings and weekends.

For many of these groups theatre is a highly *mobile activity*. Plays are toured to Native communities which are normally excluded from mainstream or popular theatre circuits. (In other cases — e.g., Nicaragua, Bangladesh, Bolivia — theatre is a mass activity with groups based in all parts of the country and there is less need for touring.)

For Third World groups theatre is *participation* — peasants, slum-

Among the Third World groups theatre is also used as a means of *raising issues* and a forum for *community discussion*. The performance brings the community together and the theatre group uses the occasion to get people to talk about the issues raised in the performance. It is also a *process of analysis*. It raises questions and makes people think in fresh ways about their situation (rather than convincing them about something they already agree with). It expresses the reality of class conflict, reflecting the structures which shape social situations and revealing contradictions. It is a demystifying theatre, making the unconscious conscious, challenging the ruling class myths of peasant incapacity and the immutability of the world, showing whose interests are being served, etc.

In post-revolutionary Nicaragua theatre has also played an important role in *mobilizing action*, both at the community and national level. It helps to integrate discussion and action, inspiring people not only to talk about issues but to do something about them. One of the MECATE animators gave an example:

"When the literacy campaign just started, counter-revolutionaries spread lots of false rumours about the young people — the brigadistas — who were being sent to the rural areas to teach the peasants. 'They'll take your wives.' 'They'll steal your livestock.' Many lies. Because these people had influence in the community (many were large landowners)

many peasants listened to them. We decided to do something about it. We made a play about a patron who, when he heard the brigadistas were coming, gave his farm worker a donkey as a present. He insisted that the donkey be called 'Ignorance.' The brigadistas arrived and came to talk to the peasant, saying they had come to 'kill ignorance'. This provoked a huge conflict but in the end it was sorted out and the peasant attended the literacy classes. Once he was literate, he went to the patron, returned the donkey, and demanded back wages of 2,000 cordobas which he had been cheated

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out of. When we put on this play in our community 25 peasants who had been undecided, agreed to join the class."

A key difference between the Third World and First World groups is *organization*. The Third World groups are closely linked to or part of popular organizations: It is this organizational base which makes it possible to extend the range of theatre:

- Carifuna — Carib Liberation Movement
- Nicaraguan campesino groups — local committees for education, production, defence

"They (the white society) have got to come to us. We perform for ourselves."

the Maori (New Zealand)

- Bolivian and Ecuadorean groups — Amerindian movements
- Bangladesh village groups — landless labourers' movement.

In Bolivia and Ecuador, Ayni Ruway and the Shuar have recognized that their fundamental weapon is the organization. However, instead of creating a new organization, they are revitalizing the traditional organization (*ayllu*) which served historically as the rallying point for anti-colonial resistance. It is the unifying factor in their struggles against land invasion, manipulation by middlemen and bureaucrats, victimization, and cultural genocide.

In the Bangladesh case Aranyak has used theatre as a *process for group formation*. Workshops organized at the village level bring landless labourers together and the drama-making experience provides an activity through which landless labourers develop greater confidence in themselves, trust in each other, deeper awareness of their problems, and the need for organization and the beginnings of an organization.

Many of the groups use theatre as *protest*, exposing and confronting incidents of victimization, exploitation, corruption, etc. For the Quechua peasants in Ayni Ruway theatre is a means of challenging bureaucrats or middlemen who are trying to manipulate, cheat, harass, or humiliate them. For the landless labourers in Bangladesh theatre is a means of exposing landlords who underpay them, beat them, or rip off the funds of the village council.

Theatre is also a supportive means for *struggle*. In Ayni Ruway theatre is

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the way through which peasants express their opposition to incursions into their community by bureaucrats, traders, military officials, missionaries, anthropologists. It is their way of saying: "Stay away. You're not welcome here." In Nigeria in the 60s Kwagh-hir performances continued the Tiv struggle against domination and victimization by the Northern People's Congress, after their mass actions had been repressed. In Nicaragua campesino theatre provides one means through which the farm workers' unions struggle for better

working conditions. In Bangladesh the mere threat of "putting the landlords on the stage" in some cases is enough to force them to reconsider their actions.

In the course of waging struggles theatre is a great source of *boosting morale*. On the picket lines or on the boundaries of occupied land, improvised drama helps to build up the confidence and unity of the strikers or squatters. During the nationalist struggle in West Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in the '50s and the Tiv struggle in Nigeria in the 60s, the performers who were jailed continued to put on their performances right in jail. (The same thing happened in the concentration camps of Chile after the coup.)

Of course theatre cannot make revolution — it can only be a form of *support for revolution*. In Bangladesh (1971) and Nicaragua (1975-78) theatre workers in the end had to stop "acting" the revolution and to start doing it — to take up arms and join the freedom-fighters.

There is not only the means of struggle, it is also the *battleground of struggle* — to see who controls it. In Bangladesh the landlords try to stop the rehearsals and performances, sending *goondas* (thugs) to beat up the performers and preventing the groups from using public facilities for performing. Once the amateurs leave they attempt to take the theatre activity over, paying the landless to perform on the landlords' issues. In Nicaragua before the Revolution, campesino theatre groups were the object of repression: for example Los Alpes had to burn all their props in

order to avoid arrest by the National Guard. In the First World control is more subtle: Native theatre groups who are militant lose their funding.

For some of the Third World groups theatre is *animation* and *movement*. The Bangladesh and Nicaraguan participants talked about the importance of developing mass movements of people's theatre. Instead of one group serving a vast population through mobile performances, they've developed an animation approach in which a nucleus of experienced people help form, train and motivate locally

based theatre groups all over the country. The animation role is a "back-seat" job — one of inspiring, encouraging, supporting other people's involvement in performance. In the Bangladesh case the animation team at present is a middle-class theatre group (Aranyak) who have largely abandoned their role as performers. (In the long-term, however, they're committed to creating a cadre of landless animators.)

This animation-and-movement contrasts with a) the work of, say, Tukak — who are putting all their resources into the development of one highly trained theatre company, or b) the situation in many countries such as Canada where there are only a few Native theatre groups scattered across the country with no links between them and no festivals or events on a regular basis to bring them together.

Culture vs. politics

This polarity between the "culturalists" and the "politicos" was also reflected in different positions towards the Celebration programme. The "culturalists" seemed more interested in practical workshops with an emphasis on theatre techniques. As one put it: "We've got lots of other organizations to do the politics. We're here to do culture."

The "engaged theatre" camp, made up largely of Third Worlders, resented this idea of "leaving politics to the politicians." For them politics is not politics of political leaders — it is the politics of movement, of participation, in which everyone, not just the leaders,

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understands the issues and the tactics. One of them said: "It's not enough to discuss our common history and traditions. We've also got to talk about the current political and economic situation. In Latin America hundreds of Native people are being killed every day. Why isn't this on the agenda?"

Or as the Shuar group commented: "Defending our cultural heritage is directly linked to defending our land. Culture and politics are inseparable."

Of course this polarity reflected the different situations that each group was coming from. The Third Worlders

"In Latin America the repression is more violent — people need to take up guns to defend themselves. Here it's more subtle, yet it's still going on. . . . We can no longer run to the hills and fight a guerrilla war . . . The repression is too strong. We've got to find a much stronger way of dealing with the oppression. Through theatre we can fight back in a different way. Through building our own identity and spirit, and through challenging the way of life imposed on us, we can build up a more effective resistance — one they won't be able to stop. But if we pick up guns they'll wipe us out."

influences, taken control over their institutions (e.g., education, health, cultural production) and developed theatre out of their own traditions.

Unity in diversity

But this polarity was never clearly identified or labelled as such during the Celebration. While there were clear political differences between participants, there was an over-riding concern to maintain unity. People didn't evade their differences — they were presented and debated — but on the whole there was no attempt to

sharply defined focus on political action. The Celebration avoided, for example, formalizing ties with the World Council of Indigenous Peoples which takes a much more militant approach.

It was recognized that simply performing is "political." For example in the case of Carifuna they put on their plays in the face of opposition from both the Carib community and the Dominican government. By simply performing they are saying that Caribs are still alive, they have a voice, and won't succumb to further dilution of their culture without a fight.

If there was any political action, it was the resistance against the view put forward by Reidar Nilsson (the director of Tukak) that only highly trained, professional groups should be invited to the Celebration. This view was countered in the discussions, but the strongest response came on the stage, starting with a spectacular performance on the opening night by the Native Theatre School (a group of young Native people from across Canada who produced in three weeks a stunning, collective piece) and finishing on the last night with a lively, improvised, show-stealing play by Shuar peasants. These groups and other "amateur" groups demonstrated that the professional-amateur distinction was meaningless in terms of performance quality.

What is indigenous people's theatre?

The other dogmatic position that was resisted was that of the two colloque leaders who seemed to be interpreting "indigenous people's theatre" narrowly as "indigenous theatre." They argued that the Celebration should be about indigenous or traditional pieces only and tended to dismiss groups such as Spiderwoman who used mainstream theatre techniques and dealt with the urban experience of Native people. They also talked about the corrupting influence of western theatre on indigenous creativity.

The colloque leaders' critique was useful in pointing out the dangers of adapting western techniques, of depending too much on mainstream theatre advice (i.e., white directors), and of losing the authenticity in slick, westernized stylizations of indigenous performance elements.

However, the participants felt that the focus of the colloque leaders was too narrow and that they should be

free to draw on the theatre ideas of all traditions, not only their own. They argued:

"As citizens of western society we should have access to the highest technical achievements of western theatre without being totally seduced by this tradition. We should have the freedom to create our own theatre tradition, drawing on ideas from both within and outside our own culture. If groups such as Spiderwoman choose to work in western forms and to talk about Native experiences in mainstream society, all more power to them. While this should not be the

contemporary — something that would really connect with the people. So we chose a play by a Native playwright about Native struggles, starting with the occupation of Alcatraz and ending with Wounded Knee."

Other participants added that culture was not static, it was always evolving, taking on new accretions and transforming itself. As Dickson Mwansa, a Zambian who helped plan the Celebration put it:

"Showing only stylized ritual drama tends to reinforce in the minds of the spectators the Africa of David Livingstone. It makes out that Africa is still



Australian aboriginal group playing the didgeridoo

had direct experiences of violent repression, of organizing for their rights, and in one case (Nicaragua) of taking part in a successful revolution — and so they tended to be more political. The First Worlders had also faced victimization and discrimination and some had participated in Native struggles but their experience was in many ways qualitatively different.

As one North American participant, whose formative experience was being told by the FBI to stay away from Wounded Knee, explained it:

The polarity also reflected the differing pressures from the dominant culture. In the First World the Native theatre groups are under tremendous pressure to conform to the western theatre conventions. In the Third World peasant and barrio theatre groups have developed their theatre values independent of — in fact in opposition to — the bourgeois theatre traditions. For example, in the Bolivian highlands the Quechua movement Ayni Ruway has systematically shut out many external

impose a single unified perspective. People were willing to live with pluralism — unity in diversity.

The exceptions tended to be the more educated participants, in both camps, who insisted on one and only one way of doing theatre.

However, the dominant politics was that of pluralism, of unity around a commonly agreed struggle against cultural genocide. If there was a common denominator it was the "theatre of identity," not the theatre of struggle. Participants resisted a

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Carifuna perform at Peterborough Square Mall

major orientation of indigenous people's theatre work, they're still Native people, they're still welcome at the Celebration."

While they saw the importance of reviving and revitalizing indigenous themes and performance forms, they didn't want to be limited to this exercise alone. As an Indian Time Theatre member put it:

"We decided we didn't want to do legends. They're already done on many reserves and they're not done very well. We wanted to do something

as it was: the place of the idyllic noble savage. Is indigenous people's theatre only okay if it shows us dancing naked in the bush?"

Garnet Joseph of Carifuna said they had no choice but to create a new theatre tradition, drawing on other traditions:

"Our traditional dances were totally obliterated by 400 years of fighting for survival. There was too much turmoil — running from island to island, fighting to keep the white away, our people getting killed — there was no

time to teach the young our traditions. That's why we've got to reconstruct, to recreate our culture, borrowing on traditions from other groups in the islands."

Ross Moore of the aboriginal group from Australia explained they were faced with a similar situation:

"Our own traditions had been wiped out so we've had to appropriate western culture. We find country music a good means of expressing ourselves because it comes from the heart. What's wrong with that?"

Darrel Wildcat of the Native Theatre School made a similar point about the base for Native people's theatre in Canada:

"All we had were a few scripts by sympathetic white playwrights such as George Ryga's *Rita Joe*. But in our case we also had the dances, the story-telling tradition, etc. and we chose to combine them with what we saw as the strengths in western theatre. But we're doing this on a collective basis, developing our pieces to say what we want, rather than relying on someone else's script."

for improvement.

Participants: The issue of professional vs. amateur was laid to rest by the '82 Celebration. Participants agreed that there was room for both — each can draw strength from each other. (This has been the experience of the Chicano theatre movement in which full time groups like Teatro Campesino provide lots of support and encouragement for the amateur groups.)

In order to maximize the value of an expensive event like an international Celebration the issue of representation needs consideration. The campesino theatre workers from Nicaragua represented both their communities and their movement (MECATE) so they had a constituency with whom to report and share what they had learned on returning to their country. Groups such as those from North America, on the other hand, came as individual groups representing themselves. They alone derived the benefit from the Celebration because there is no structure at present for sharing their experience with other Native theatre

Maori representative at the Celebration) put it: "They (the white society) have got to come to us. We perform for ourselves."

The '82 Celebration moved much more in this direction by taking the event out of Toronto, holding it in an area in which there are many Native reserves, and opening the event on a Native reserve as part of an annual pow wow. However, it still seemed a bit schizophrenic, unclear about its audience. While Native people from the Peterborough area did come to see the performances in the town auditorium, and while performances were also organized in a park and the town mall to make the Celebration more accessible, it was still primarily a white audience.

David Campbell, one of the key Native performers behind the Celebration, suggested that the performances might have been toured around the reserves in the Peterborough area. (The Pacific representatives spoke of a similar approach at the Pacific Festival of the Arts in Papua New Guinea in 1981: in addition to

"We decided we didn't want to do legends. They're already done on many reserves and they're not done very well. We wanted to do something contemporary."

Indian Time Theatre (USA)

The most divisive event of the whole Celebration was perhaps the final election in which Jean Buller, Jim Buller's wife, was elected President of the new governing board of IPTA. Since she is a non-Native person her selection was bitterly resented by many participants. It seemed a retreat after the assertion of Native control over the event in the middle of the week. However, the selection was balanced by the election of an able and well-balanced group of Native Board members — including a strong representation from the Third World.

A critique of Celebration

The 1982 Celebration was the second in what is hoped will be a continuing tradition of indigenous performers coming together to share their ideas, concerns, skills, and performances, to celebrate and work together, to develop ways of supporting one another. It was a great advance on the 1980 Celebration but there is still room

workers.

While a movement can't be created overnight, IPTA should consider ways of encouraging and supporting the development of indigenous people's theatre movements. (This might, for example, bring groups together on a regular basis for workshops, festivals, etc.) This could for example facilitate the process of selecting participating groups, the decision left to each national movement.

Another way of dealing with the cost factor might be to invite a few individuals to represent a country rather than a movement. While this might make it more difficult for these representative units to come with finished pieces, it would suit a modified Celebration programme in which participants worked together during the Celebration to produce a collaborative piece — an approach which has been tried in other gatherings of theatre workers.

"Audience" and Site: Maori arts festivals in New Zealand are held in Maori areas and are aimed at the Maori population. As Tim Karetu (the

giving performances in the capital city, performers were taken to a number of villages and smaller towns.) While there were insufficient resources to do this at the '82 Celebration this idea might be considered for the future.

Another possibility might be to use the pow-wow setting, again aiming the event unequivocally at the Native community. This would reduce the cost, increase the participation of Native performers and audiences, and provide a better setting for the range of performances and the range of ways of relating to the audience than the proscenium arch and rigid performer-audience divisions of the Peterborough auditorium. (The auditorium setting was challenged by the Native Theatre School, who insisted on performing out of doors, engaged the audience in discussion as part of their performance, and involved the audience in the final joyous dance.)

A pow-wow setting would put the theatre work back in context. It would help to overcome the "performance" or "consumer" orientation — making the event no longer an "exotic show-

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Tukak (Greenland) Masked Dance

piece for Native talent" but a forum for Native people to celebrate, perform, talk, and work together.

The pow-wow environment might help to overcome the apparent gap between the traditional, highly participatory and celebratory culture and the new "performance" tradition. It would help Native performers to clarify their relationship with their traditional heritage. Native audiences might feel more comfortable in that setting (than in a city auditorium) and might find it easier to understand the new "theatre" tradition.

Programme: Other ways of organizing interaction among the participants might be considered. For example as an alternative or option to each group reporting on their own experience, giving their own performance, etc., participants might work together in groups on collective productions around common themes. Working collaboratively on a piece would be another way of sharing concerns, analysis, performance skills and traditions. It would meet the culturalists' need for a more practical, participatory approach, making it much less academic. It would also better suit the "politicos": performance skills would

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be shared and learned not in the abstract but in relation to specific issues facing indigenous peoples. In addition it would overcome the competitiveness between groups and create more unity. This format would help to overcome what turned into an unfortunate and elitist division of labour at the '82 Celebration: the theatre directors did the talking, thinking and strategizing "on behalf of their groups"; the performers did the singing and dancing.

The "colloque" idea needs changing, starting by calling it something simpler — such as "critical discussion." It is generally agreed that this kind of session is needed: people need and want feedback on their performances. Participants opposed the colloques not because they resented criticism but because of the structure which tended to reinforce the idea of authority and standards being set outside the Native cultural movement. One alternative might be the more democratic approach of the Chicano theatre festivals in which participants take turns serving on critical panels.

The Nicaraguans and the New Zealand delegate suggested the event might be broadened to include the

other arts, breaking down the artificial division between "theatre" and the other arts.

Beyond the Celebration

The Indigenous People's Theatre movement is off to a good start. International festivals however can't be held every year — they're just too expensive. What seems to be needed is an additional form of interaction at the regional and national levels.

The solid performances by the four Native theatre groups from Ontario and Quebec, the imaginative work of the Native Theatre School, and the enthusiastic reaction by Native audiences demonstrated the tremendous potential for a "movement" of Native theatre groups in Canada.

How that movement will take shape (and how ANDPVA and the Native Theatre School might help to animate it) is up to Native people. But it is clear from the excitement generated by the Celebration among Native people in Canada that theatre could become as powerful a resource for the Native movement here as it has for the Chicano movement. □

Charlie Lane

NORMAN 'OTIS' RICHMOND

AFRO-BLUE

In this issue of **FUSE**, Norman (Otis) Richmond initiates a new column — **Afro-Blue** — which takes its name from a Black classical (jazz) composition of the same title which was written by the great Afro-Cuban percussionist Mongo Santamaria and the provocative New African (African-American) personality Oscar Brown Jr. In each edition of *Afro-Blue*, Richmond will review films, books and records that are relevant to the struggles of African people in North America and everywhere they are scattered in the world. While the column will primarily focus on world affairs as they relate to African peoples, Richmond will from time-to-time comment on "Third World" concerns.

XICA
Director, Carlos Diegues
Producer, Jarbos Barbosa
Unifilm/Embrafilme

Richard Pryor once remarked, "I don't like movies that don't have any Black people in them." I share Pryor's sentiments on this subject. So when I heard that Toronto's Festival Of Festivals would be screening 18 films from Brazil I jumped at the opportunity to see as many of them as possible. (Brazil has been ignored by the Pan-African world despite the fact that it has the largest concentration of African people outside the African continent itself with a population of 70 million Afro-Brazilians. Only Nigeria has more Africans with approximately 100 million.)

One of these Brazilian films, **Xica da Silva**, directed by Carlos Diegues of **Bye Bye Brazil** fame, was recently released commercially in Toronto. The first thing that struck me funny was that the film was billed as "An exotic Brazilian comedy." But the pre-publicity also stated that the film dealt with slavery and I, being a descendent of slaves, can find absolutely nothing humorous about the slave trade, the middle passage, picking cotton,

cutting cane, rape and lynching.

Set in 18th century Brazil, a mesmerizing Black slave named Xica da Silva (ZeZe Motta) copulates her way to freedom and "power". When the new diamond contractor, Joao Fernandes (Walmor Chagas) is sent by the Portuguese king to the Brazilian province where Xica lives, he becomes intoxicated by her beauty, and after a

18th century tax man) to investigate the juicy scandal that is now a *cause célèbre* throughout the Portuguese empire. Xica is reduced to her "rightful place" but not however, before she is reunited with her former slave master's son, for whom she performs another one of her acclaimed "sexual healings". What more can a slave gal want than to satisfy her man?



Pan Canadian

Xica: reinforcing a twisted projection of Black women

"sexual healing" from Xica, falls head over heels over this "exotic dish" and "gives her her freedom." He purchases Xica from her reluctant master, an old geezer who unknowingly shares Xica with his lascivious son.

The contractor wigs out and showers Xica with diamonds, pearls, white wigs and her own palace. But palaces are not enough for Xica — she wants the sea, the thrills of navigation. So the contractor orders a vast lake and a luxurious galley built, so that Xica can sail about with the attendants, in front of the humiliated Whites who stand on the banks and watch.

But after a 13-year orgy, the party is over when the word leaks out about the African Queen in Brazil with the champagne tastes. The endless love comes to a screeching halt when the King's court sends an inspector (an

In many respects **Xica** can't stand up to the high standards set by the current films from Brazil. And while **Xica** might be forgiven for its soft and cheap looking cinematography, poor acting and directing, since it was released in 1978 at the beginning of this new era of Brazilian cinema, one aspect is unforgivable: **Xica** exploits the myth that Black women are insatiable sex creatures who can only use their bodies to get what they want. For North American audiences, Xica embodies and reinforces this twisted projection of Black women. (After all Mick Jagger did sing, "Black girls just want to fuck all night long!") And it is amazing that most white critics — from Toronto to New York City — have followed the lead of the commercial distributors in writing about Brazilian cinema as if it's just one big erotic freakshow.

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AFRO-BLUE

AFRICAN SOCIALISM OR SOCIALIST AFRICA?

Abdul Rahman Mohamed Babu
Zed Press. 174 p. \$9.95

A.M. Babu is best known in the West for his visits to Harlem to speak at the late Malcolm X's, Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) meetings and his postscript to the late Walter Rodney's illuminating volume **How Europe Underdeveloped Africa**.

Babu's volume **African Socialism or Socialist Africa?** could well be titled "How To Put Africa Back Together Again" and should be read along with Rodney's groundbreaking work on Africa's underdevelopment.

The bulk of Babu's work was written in an East African prison in the early '70s as a result of discussions among detainees and some prisoners who took an active interest in what was going on in Africa. These discussions took place before the collapse of the Portuguese empire which led to the independence of Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. But the main theme of the volume is the political and economic dilemma of independent African states.

In the book, Babu, a leading Zanzibari nationalist and later Minister of Economic Development in Tanzania produces a comprehensive socialist program for Africa. An avowed socialist, Babu sets out the key political questions which will confront the mineral-rich African continent for the rest of the 20th century.

Dependent capitalism under petty-bourgeois leadership, Babu argues, has proved itself unable to deliver rapidly rising standards of living for the mass of the African working class and peasantry. Babu claims that African socialism — in all its variations — is but an ideological smokescreen that perpetuates the realities of Africa's economic dependence on Western capitalism; he shows that there is no "Third Path", no "African Way".

The international bourgeoisie, based in the west, is now too strong to allow competition from new and small national bourgeoisies in "Third World" states. There is no capitalist path open to Africa of the kind that brought Western Europe and North America such prosperity at the end of the last century.

The only historically possible option is socialism. That means a revolutionary political movement

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dominated by the African working class, and its peasant and progressive intellectual allies. Its aim must be to take power, and rapidly to increase material output and so solve the central problems of poverty of the masses. Nothing short of this will do.

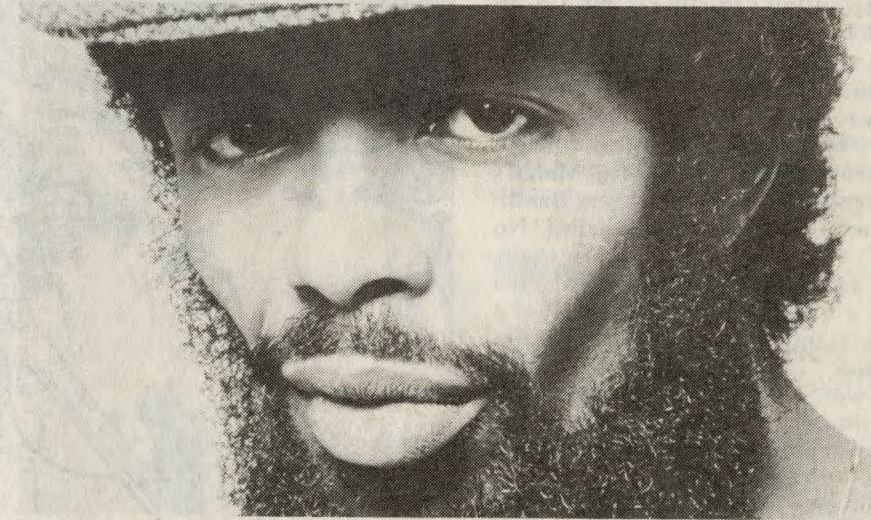
Babu is a man who believes in the "real deal"; he's not moved by bombastic sesquipedalian etymology. His words are precise and clear. Says Babu, "The task of this book will be to focus the reader's attention on some of these problems; to view them from the angle of scientific socialism; to show the futility of most of our social and economic experiments; and to investigate the possibility of applying the development strategy of scientific socialism to concrete African condi-

AFRO-BLUE

GIL SCOTT-HERON Reflections (Arista) Moving Target (Arista)

He's been called the Black Bob Dylan — Dick Gregory with a band — but the name is Gil Scott-Heron (GSH). For the past decade GSH has been the most consistent U.S. social commentator about the Black/world situation. His anti-nuke song "Barnwell (South Carolina)" came out in 1975, years before the issue became a mass concern. He sang the song "Johannesburg" a year before the rebellion occurred in Soweto.

GSH's album **Reflections**, which was released late in 1981, contained the sizzling track, "B Movie". In "B



Arista Records

Gil Scott-Heron: a younger and broader audience

tions. This is not an attempt at high-level abstract analysis. It is a protagonist's statement and a down-to-earth political manifesto intended to arouse the interest of the emerging workers and youth in the real problems which face them in their daily lives. If it succeeds in provoking discussion among them, and especially among young workers, the effort will be well rewarded."

After reading Babu's work I came away with several questions: How does he see Africans in the Diaspora? Does he view Pan-Africanism as a continental or global concept? Since Babu is based in the United States where he teaches economics the answers to these questions are not beyond reach.

African Socialism or Socialist Africa? is available in Toronto at Third World Books and Crafts, 942 Bathurst St.

Movie" GSH verbally assaults U.S. President Ronald (the Ray-Gun) and his whole administration, maintaining that Ray-Gun is being kept together by the magician Doug Henning, Grecian Formula and Crazy Glue. **Reflections** is GSH at his "bitter" best. Give a listen to his re-worked rendition of Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues" — as classic as Gaye's original offering.

Surprisingly, "B Movie" was a turntable hit on CFNY, Toronto's eclectic rock station and even garnered a few honorable mentions in Toronto's predictable mainstream daily press. An even greater surprise came when GSH's record company PolyGram failed to release even an EP from the **Reflections** album.

It appears that PolyGram will once again leave the Canadian record public out in the cold by failing to release GSH's latest offering **Moving Target**. While **Moving Target** is not as

biting as **Reflections** it still reflects a sense of urgency which is lacking from most popular music that manages to hit the safe airwaves.

There is nothing as striking as "B Movie" on **Moving Target**. The closest GSH comes is on the nine minute poem/song "Black History/The World" where GSH puts Africa in its proper perspective in world history. I know wherever W.E.B. DuBois is he's smiling about this song.

Says GSH, "We believe that the diverse backgrounds and experiences of our people demand a presentation where reggae, salsa, poetry, blues and just plain funk come together with innovation." The band lives up to this idea on **Moving Target**.

GSH provides us with two reggae tracks on the new album. "Ready or Not" celebrates the reggae rhythm and pays tribute to its place of birth — Jamaica. The song was co-written by the newest member of GSH's band, Larry McDonald, a Jamaican who is a former member of the **Taj Mahal's Intergalactic Soul Messengers Band**.

The other reggae piece is called "No Exit". The song title comes from the play by Jean-Paul Sartre augmented with a quote from Joe Louis. It is a truly transcontinental cultural concoction. "I couldn't think of anything that would be more of an ironic combination than Jean-Paul Sartre, Joe Louis, reggae music and the Midnight Band horns."

Moving Target is GSH's third outing with the current line up of the **Midnight Band**. While I must confess I was disappointed to see Brian Jackson, Barnett Williams and Bilal Sunni Ali exit from the band, I now feel more confident with the new members of the group. The new members are more rooted in popular forms of Black music which has helped bring GSH's message to a younger and broader audience.

Reflections and **Moving Target** are available at the Record Peddler, 115 Queen St. East, Toronto.

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK Good News (Flying Fish)

Sweet Honey in the Rock are the best kept secret in African-American music. Sweet Honey is a vocal quartet of Black women whose music is based on the Black unaccompanied choral tradition. They take their name from a refrain in a traditional Black spiritual that refers to a land so sweet honey

flows from the rocks.

There is a clear political message in Sweet Honey's music and they make no apologies for it. They sing about the struggles of Blacks, women and all oppressed people. The group's founder, Bernice Reagon says, "We're very serious about being Black people, women people and singing people and reflecting that in our work."

Sweet Honey's latest album **Good News**, their seventh anniversary concert recorded live November 7, 1980 in the All Souls Church Unitarian, in Washington, D.C., is a reflection of the group's concerns as



Sweet Honey in the Rock: music as a weapon of social change

Blacks, women and artists, and is one of the finest albums of the decade.

Good News deals with the situation (a Peter Tosh coined term) on a global basis. For example, one track "Chile Your Waters Runs Red Through Soweto" links the murder of Chile's Allende with the Soweto massacre which is again linked to the killing of Steve Mitchell, a 17 year old student leader who was killed in a struggle in Wilmington, North Carolina.

"Chile" is one of two Reagon compositions that deals with South African affairs. A second song "Biko" about the slain South African Black consciousness movement leader is equally as forceful and challenging.

The music of Sweet Honey challenges listeners to ask themselves: "What am I doing to improve the condition of humanity?" For instance, the song "If You Had Lived" says, "if

you had lived during the days of Paul Robeson would you live his life?"

Founded in Washington D.C. by Reagon, Sweet Honey's avowed purpose is to use music as a weapon of social change. Their stance complements their friend and neighbor Gil Scott-Heron and U.K. reggae poet Linton Kwesi Johnson.

Sweet Honey's lack of mass exposure highlights the sad state of commercial radio in North America. Their music is too Black for "Black" radio stations in the United States (they'd rather play Mike McDonald) and far too progressive for "progres-

Between the Lines

Eleanor MacLean

Black Rose Books (Montreal) 1982, 296 pp. \$12.95.

Between the Lines (BTLs) is, as its cover says, a manual on "how to detect bias and propaganda in news and everyday life." It is a book that is designed to raise its readers' awareness of bias in news reporting, and more generally in the media. What it provides is a set of procedures for crap detecting.

The book, as well, concentrates on Third World issues. The last two chapters, in fact, are specifically designed to teach readers how to read between the lines of reports on the under-developed world, including parts of Canada. What it proposes as a technique is a left-wing interpretive frame. But more of that later.

First, funding for this project was provided by CUSO in the Atlantic Region and CUSO Development Education nationally, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, the International Education Centre, OXFAM and the United Church of Canada.

The fundamental problem in writing about ideology, propaganda, and bias is that such accounts are reflexive. They refer to themselves. A central tenant of **BTLs** is that, "In human communication, *all* the messages we receive will be the product of one of three types: someone's propaganda campaign, their presentation of information; or simply their point of view." (Italics in the original) (p. 147) Presumably, the material and the analysis presented in **BTLs** is merely a point of view.

The argument in **BTLs**, however, is not presented merely as a point of view. Reading between the lines is described as an activity essential to understanding and controlling our lives. (p.3) It also has to do with determining "when something is

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MEDIA FRAMES

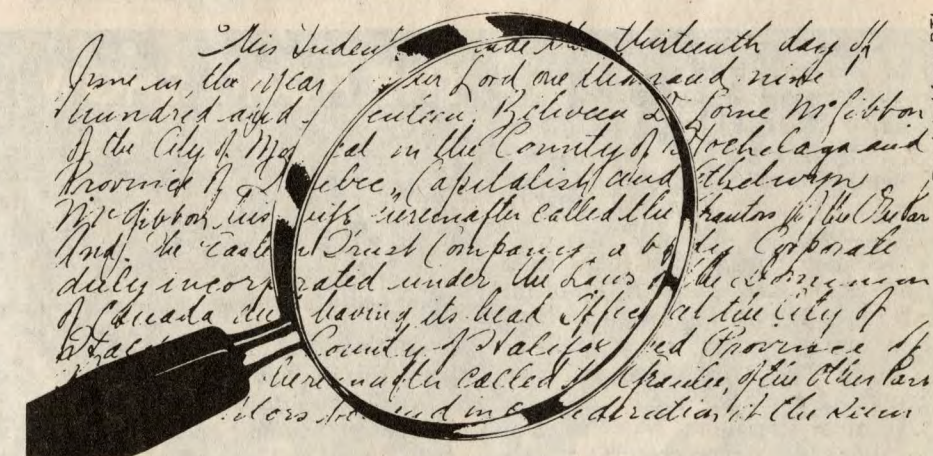
How accounts are produced and read

heresay, innuendo, or when it is fact" (p.8) and with "distinguishing between error and truth." (p.9) In chapter one, it is likened to applying the scientific method to the reading of news. But how is it possible for an account to be, on the one hand, merely a point of view; and on the other, scientific, factual, and accurate? Surely science is intended to go beyond mere opinion, even politically correct opinion.

The failure of **BTLs** to deal with this issue is central to what is wrong with the book. The result is that it provides

reality. It selects what is to be looked at and how it is to be arranged in the account/report. In the process, people and events are abstracted from the actual social organization of life and given a new contextual relevance — one that meets the organizational and administrative needs of a ruling apparatus. (This is also true of vanguard political movements on the Left.)

Ideology, on this account, does not reflect an individual's point of view. Instead, individuals come to see the



an ideological method for reading the news. I am not using 'ideology' here the way Eleanor MacLean defines it, as a kind of world view, but rather as a set of procedures and practices that are part of a much larger form of organized activity, usually found in a bureaucracy.

Ruling ideology

The fundamental feature of ideology is that it begins with a concept. (See Figure 1) This conceptual frame, or set of conceptual practices, attends to the work at hand, to one or another administrative or bureaucratic problem. The existence of the concept provides the criteria for encoding

world the way they do, come to have a particular viewpoint, because as in this case, their news reporting activities are part of a much larger, interrelated form of social organization. This includes the work of news gathering organizations, social scientists, government bureaucracies, politicians, advertising and public relations firms, the police, and so forth and so on. Together, these forms of work and the many practices they comprise are integrated into a particular form of organization; in this case, a ruling apparatus. This is social class conceived, not as a categorization of people and events, but as a living, breathing metabolism, a form of social

Reprinted from BTL

organization. The ideas, concepts, and interpretive frames/practices of this metabolism arise out of its work of ruling and administering people's lives. Under these circumstances, ideological practices and the practices of ruling are identical.

This, by the way, is exactly how the interpretive practices advocated in **BTLs** arises out of the work of CUSO. Because this work is located on the Left, its conceptual frames are typical of the analysis and the organizational work of the Left. **BTLs** starts not with how the news is organized in the practices of people, but with Left concepts. Its account, consequently, is ideologically produced. As a result, **BTLs**, in spite of all its efforts at being scientific reads like a Left conspiracy, detached, as only ideological work can be, from the world it attempts to describe. Apart from those prepared to adopt its moral stance, the analysis in **BTLs** will no doubt leave the Left unable, as usual, to win over the "masses" to its "point of view." (Parenthetically, this is exactly the same position a part of the women's movement finds itself in over the issue of pornography, and for exactly the same reasons.)

In chapter one, under the heading "Method of Analysis", **BTLs** produces a version of the scientific method which, when applied to social life, ends up producing a series of categories, or interpretive frames as a method of analysis. Of necessity, these categories, whether they be the rate of unemployment, I.Q., the psychological conception of stimulus-response, social role, the gross national product, occupation, ethnicity, social values, and so on, attend to the work of ruling and administering society. The social science thus produced is positivist and ideological. What this form of science fails to understand is that social phenomena — and news, ideas, images, etc. are precisely this — are socially generated out of the activities of people, activities that have a particular social form sometimes framed as a social relation.

Real people

If this is how the society is actually put together, then any science of society if it is going to be scientific must be concerned with describing how social phenomena, including the media, are socially produced. The first premises

of such a science would look like this. "They are the real individuals, their activity, and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way." (Marx and Engels, **The German Ideology**). What such a science would produce would be an account of people's practices and their form of organization (i.e., social relation). A good example would be Marx's treatment of the commodity in the first chapter of **Capital**.

When it comes to media, there are two primary forms of activity people engage in. The first can be described as the social organization of the production of the account; the second, the social organization of its reading. These activities do not stand alone. Rather, they are integral to a much larger form of social organization, the social relation of class. Together, however, they constitute the social phenomenon called media. They bring media into existence.

While **BTLs** is primarily concerned with the social organization of the reading/viewing of the media, chapter three, entitled "This Message is

Brought to You By", deals with how news is put together. The second paragraph of the introduction sets the frame. "If the old saying is true, 'He who pays the piper calls the tune,' we will have to find out who owns and controls the mass media in order to know what interests they might represent, and therefore, what point of view they are likely to reflect." (p.115) The purpose of this frame is not to find out how the media works, but to organize people against the "ruling class". Science, in the process, is abandoned.

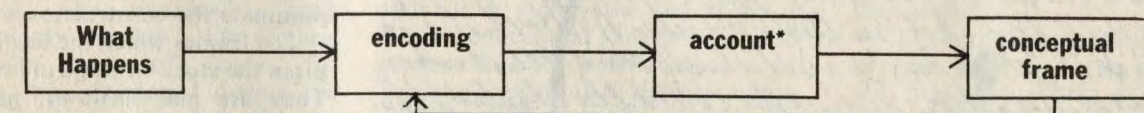
The point of view of the media, according to this account, reflects the owners' interests. Ownership translates directly into control. At worst, this conjures up images of Lord Thompson of Fleet, for example,

production. But its owners can. Thus, the media through their owners get enough points to be included in the "ruling class". What this interpretive frame, or set of procedures, requires is selecting out certain features of the media — ownership and control — abstracting them from the actual work of producing the news, and then using them to give an account of media content. On close inspection, the mediations in this account, as Marx would describe them, turn out to be "mystical connections". Again, if we actually went and looked at how news is produced, it wouldn't look like this.

The view of class and of ruling in **BTLs** is much more at home in the mid-nineteenth century than it is in the latter half of this century. It probably describes quite accurately William

have a point of view. It is constructed so as to look straight on, describing the world simply as it is. These practices are absolutely essential to establishing and maintaining the credibility, and thereby the power of the media as a feature of a ruling apparatus.

For example, in the aftermath of the Toronto bath raids, the reportage in the Toronto **Sun** was every bit as objective as the stories filed by reporters with the **Toronto Star** and the **Globe and Mail**, even though the editorial views of the **Sun** had up to that time been incredibly homophobic. Reporters, no matter who they work for, know how to put together an objective account. For most of them to do otherwise would be unprofessional. Objectivity is thus the unique feature of modern reporting.



The Social Organization of an Ideological Account

*The account intends the frame in that it is organized so as to be relevant to the bureaucratic work at hand.

Figure 1

sitting all day with galley proofs for the many hundreds of newspapers he owns before him, blue pencil in hand, personally shaping the news. At best, we see him sitting at a super editor's desk with a complete grasp of news events, dictating memoranda to local editors detailing the interpretive frames they are to use to report on the news as it breaks around the world. Now, while it is true that some owners of the media take some interest in how the news is shaped — Henry Luce of **Time** magazine is a good example — if we actually went and looked at how news is produced it would look quite different from this account.

What is class?

What has gone wrong? The problem, and remember that **BTLs** is a left-wing book, is how to develop a class analysis of the media. But what is class? **BTLs** treats class as a category with a check list. If a person, event, or thing can score enough points, it can be lumped into the category "ruling class". What are the criteria on the list? Among others, "ownership of the means of production" figures prominently. So, how then is the media seen to be part of the ruling class? It can't itself be said to own the means of

Lyon MacKenzie's relation to the Upper Canada **Colonial Advocate** in the 1820s, the lack of a connection to the ruling class notwithstanding. What it fails to grasp is how in our society ruling is a feature of bureaucracy. What is important to keep in mind is that news is produced by mammoth news organizations with huge budgets, organized by professional newspaper men/women, and T.V. producers.

BTLs also fails to see, in this respect, that the fundamental feature of this form of ruling is its objective, rational character. The class character of the present ruling apparatus is not to be found in bias and propaganda, but like all bureaucracies, in its objectivity and rationality. This is true not only for the media, but for labour relations hearings, psychological testing in schools, and job promotion procedures within the public service, to name but a few of many thousands of similar practices.

If we went to the CBC news department or to the editorial offices of the **Globe and Mail**, we would be able to see the practices involved in objective reporting. We would also find that they were ubiquitous and thought to be the mark of good journalism. An objective report is first and foremost a factual one. It is not biased; nor does it

Its production is what nowadays separates editorial comment and the work of columnists from the news.

The objective frame

The production of objectivity, however, is an ideological practice. This is because it operates as an interpretive frame selecting out certain features of an event and ordering them so as to produce an objective account. In the process, the actual social organization of life is obscured. This can be done in a number of ways. Here are two examples of how the practices of objectivity first select and then order the features of a news event.

One way of producing objectivity is to generate the facts of a story out of information provided by other organizational components of the ruling apparatus. Thus, police reports, court records, government statistics, scholarly studies, and so forth are taken to be factual and thus objective. Of course, in reality this information itself is produced ideologically. Think of how a bureaucratic form or a survey questionnaire selects and organizes an account of a lived reality. What is crucial here is how the organizational imperatives of the police, the government, and, for example, academic

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Even when dealing with ethnic minorities, working people, and the Women's Movement, for example, the media is only interested in talking to "the leadership". The label "community leader" guarantees credibility. This practice also means that the leadership of labour organizations, and of women's and minority groups some-

This Indenture made the Thirteenth day
 of June in the year of our Lord one thousand nine
 hundred and ~~eight~~ ^{and} ~~eighty~~ ^{eight} Between D^o some W^o of
 the City of Montreal in the County of Hochelaga
 Province of Quebec, (a Capitalist) and other W^o of
 the City of Montreal, hereinafter called the Grantors of the
 one part and the Eastern Trust Company, a body corporate
 duly incorporated under the laws of the Province
 of Quebec, having its head office at the City
 of Montreal in the County of Hochelaga and Province
 of Quebec, hereinafter called the Grantee, of the other
 part.

the 'Solidarity frame'. The resulting newspaper and T.V. reports which concentrated on these frames were not concerned in any scientific way with giving an account of the Falwell visit. Rather, their "balanced reports" were concerned with protecting the objectivity and hence the credibility of the media. These were, consequently, grounded in the organizational imperatives of the media itself instead of in the social organization of that feature of everyday life being reported on. The various accounts, as a result, remained ideologically bound, divorced from the real world of the practices and activities of people.

The practices and procedures for constructing the objectivity of media reports also provide instructions to the reader for the reading of the account. Think of the difference between reading fictional and non-fictional stories. What would happen if news stories began, "Once upon a time . . .", or the story of Little Red Riding Hood

The frames which the media use are often the stock-in-trade of journalists. They are not, however, necessarily developed by journalists themselves. More often than not, frames are produced by other parts of the ruling apparatus, like the police, and are essentially concerned with taking up the relevancies of the work of ruling. Here is a recent example. In the last couple of months, the media in their reportage of the growing economic depression have begun to file stories on "exhaustees" and their families. At first glance, the people they are talking about might seem to be exhausted from looking for work in a jobless world. But this is not the case. An exhaustee is someone looking for work who has exhausted her/his unemployment insurance benefits. Thus the way these people are framed up is not in terms of the social organization of their lives, but instead, in terms of the relevancies of a bureaucratic apparatus with which they have become enmeshed.

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Frames, like metaphors, once produced can develop a life of their own. The "terrorist" frame, for example, was developed during the French Revolution to deal with the Jacobins. It has been used ever since on revolutionaries. Most news frames are used in the construction of reports and accounts. Some, however, are used to frame a complete paper. The Toronto **Sun**, for example, is often organized in terms of the "violence" frame. In the November 1, 1982 edition, for example, of the thirteen stories covered in the first nine pages, ten were about violence.

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Here is just one brief example of how this works. In its analysis of "The Bloody Road to Zimbabwe" **BTLs** says that, "The story ends with the author returning to the hotel." But in point of fact, this is not how the story ends. It is merely the end as far as **BTLs'** conceptual analysis is concerned. When the author returns to his hotel he finds it full of the international press corps who he describes as effete globe trotters, looking for "hard news", or the latest "incident" to report on without the least concern for the actual social conditions existing in the countries they visit. The social condition they overlook in Rhodesia is terrorism. The story, however, begins with the author himself, flying into Salisbury. Thus, the way in which he divorces himself from the international press indicates that the social organization of the article is located elsewhere. But where?

In the second section, the author states that "Mugabe has the backing of Prime Minister James Callaghan of Britain. He is also supported by U.S. President Jimmy Carter and United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young. He is supplied with arms by Russia." The article then goes on to undermine the basis of this multinational support. For example, "He has American support," the author says, "because America always chooses the wrong side." What is confirmed here is that this story is not organized from outside the country, but from within it. Not surprisingly, however, the contents are not organized from the standpoint of blacks. Two paragraphs later the criticism of "white liberals in other countries who call for majority rule" helps to locate the social organization of the article in the Smith regime. This is further supported by

The alternative account put forward here has not, of course, been worked out in detail. There is simply not enough space; nor is this the work of a book review. All that has been attempted is to sketch in a rough way the difference between an ideological and a scientific analysis.

Readers interested in the scientific account of news analysis put forward here might read D.E. Smith "The Ideological Practice of Sociology" **Catalyst** (1974), "The Social Construction of Documentary Reality" **Sociological Inquiry** (1974), and "On Sociological Description: A Method from Marx." **Human Studies** (1978) Also, Rubenstein, **Marx and Wittgenstein: Social Praxis and Social Explanation** (1981) □

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IMAGE AND LANGUAGE

Thinking Photography
Victor Burgin, ed.
MacMillan Press Ltd. 1982

"By experiencing his solidarity with the proletariat, the author as producer experiences, directly and simultaneously, his solidarity with certain other producers who, until then, meant little to him." Walter Benjamin

When I was studying at the Polytechnic of Central London, a major theme in the lectures of Victor Burgin was the notion of the 'photographer as producer'. Moving us away from the rarified atmosphere of 'Modernist Art Criticism' and into the realms of a 'materialist' analysis, Victor's classes in the Theories of Art and Communication investigated the role of the photographer as a 'social agent'. Stressing the ubiquitous nature of the photograph as a product socially consumed across a wide range of distinct but relatively connected apparatuses, we quickly learned that the photographer too, is embedded in a range of social institutions and practices. The photographer is not only a social producer but also a social product. The significance of this statement is grasped in the realization that the photographer, apart from existing as a social being, also exists as a 'political' being. This by-no-means instant recognition, eventually led us to ask the question, "How do we understand our presence within this 'political economy' of photographic production?" To guide us through this terrain, help was enlisted from a number of disciplines: marxism, psycho-analysis, semiotics and cultural theory. If such an approach seems overburdened, its justification lies in the production of an alternative and radicalized understanding of the role and function of photography as an instrument for social struggle. True, it does suffer in many ways from those faults listed in Terry Lovell's re-evaluation of the 'Structuralist' methodology.² In many ways we did

gasp for air as we came up for the third time, trying to breathe a mixture of Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss or de Saussure. And if our understanding of these disciplines was only fragmentary we at least learned that work, far from being its own reward, is after all bloody hard work. To understand photography as both a product of, and a producer of social values, we needed at least to engage with some of the past and current debates about the nature and function of capitalist society.

This rather long opening paragraph might serve well as a way of stating that to write about these disciplines is in itself bloody hard work. However, a book has recently been published which for photographers can serve as a lucid entry into these debates. Theory, in general, is often difficult to find in North America. Theory which is specific to photography is even more difficult to locate. The eight essays in Victor Burgin's book **Thinking Photography** seek to inform the reader of 'alternative approaches to history and criticism'. Fundamentally pedagogical, the book aims to "provide the student with a wide range of facts, and a number of critical tools, in the interests of developing an informed capacity for independent thought." (p.3 Introduction)

Thinking structuralism

Perhaps a brief word needs to be said about the general area of 'Structuralism'. Transported as a term from predominately French writers in and around those areas of study already mentioned, structuralism seeks out those features of its object (generally within a linguistic framework) which occur and re-occur systematically and regularly. Yet this somewhat vulgar and loose description of structuralism perhaps gives a false impression. Structuralism is not one distinct discipline but rather a number of disciplines coming together by using,

within limits, the same methodological space. We can perhaps use John Tagg's arguments around realism in a similar way for structuralism. Far from being a timeless model or thing, structuralism can be looked at as a "practical mode of transformation which is constituted at a particular historical moment and is subject to definite historical transformations." (p.134) Thus when Burgin uses these terms, it is to mark out general regions for study and not specific locations. One finds too often in the history of the capitalist appropriation of classifying terms either the naive sense that the term is outmoded or out of vogue (particularly when they present radical alternatives) or meanings, assertions and associations are tagged ideologically to these terms. But as Burgin suggests, photographers need to begin confronting these disciplines and the ideological associations attached to them.

If in Canada we have avoided the issue of a concrete and materialist theory of photography we have no excuses for not being able to either find or produce one. An escape from the romanticism of North American art discourse might be possible if we look to some of the recent work produced in England since the mid-'70s. Victor Burgin's book is not an isolated instance but rather just one of a large number of works produced by meeting the challenges of structuralism head on. But if the disciplines of marxism, semiotics etc., have proved fruitful, so too have the re-investigated works of the Russian Futurists in general and the groups OPOYEZ and Lef in particular. Yet perhaps the most fundamentally useful and determining factor for the arrival of **Thinking Photography** is that it is born out of a response to the general frenzied atmosphere of intellectual endeavours and works produced by the British publications **Screen, Ideology and Consciousness**, and the **Working Papers** of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies,

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Birmingham. The very fact that these publications worked in similar areas, often with opposing views but with a shared commitment to the analysis of contemporary British culture, fostered a healthy intellectual antagonism which had, at its base, a will to see all of them succeed.

Reading the signs

The term 'representation' consistently appears in this book. In fact representation is the common concern of all the contributors. Walter Benjamin, Victor Burgin, Umberto Eco, Allan Sekula, John Tagg and Simon Watney pay tribute to the importance of understanding photography as a field of representation but just as important is their reliance on the linguistic concept of the 'sign'. If representation consists of seeing the world represented across a myriad of institutions, practices and rituals, the sign can be seen as the vehicle which carries those representations. The photograph as a medium of exchange in the world of signs and representations becomes the space across which meanings traverse. Through its material fabric, signs are distributed, circulated and exchanged; they are given symbolic value; they connote and they represent the world according to the laws of representation produced by a given society at a particular historical conjuncture. Because of the ubiquitous nature of the photograph, photographic signs are prime producers of social meaning. And because we all learn to read photographs in similar ways, through education at home, at school, through the press and in the street, part of the intent of **Thinking Photography** is to make the photographic sign as Volosinov suggests of the sign in general, "an area of the class struggle".

Although Burgin's understanding of class is less rigid than Volosinov's, the notion of class struggle and struggle in general, is the pedagogical crux of this book. Burgin notes in his introduction that with the coming of Cubism, an understanding of the art object as a place where meaning occurs is split into two distinct and separate practices. On the one hand we find the modernist discourse of Clement Greenberg, Clive Bell and Roger Fry through whom the art work has become "a totally autonomous *object* which made no gesture to anything beyond its own boundaries; the surface itself — its colour, its consistency, its edge — was to become the only content of the work." (p.11

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Introduction) On the other hand and in opposition to this, Burgin poses the structuralist discourse of the sign. Thus the fundamental role of **Thinking Photography** becomes a matter of trying to replace the modernist preoccupation with the material's surface with the structuralist analysis of the material sign; from

of this book I must point out that the brief synopsis which follow hardly do justice to the essays.

The writer as operative

The book's first article, "The Author As Producer" by Walter Benjamin,



N. Maximov

For **Thinking Photography** it is neither a question of content . . .

autonomous visual perception — the art of photographic seeing — to social representation — the production of photographic signs within a determinant set of social institutions, practices and rituals and regulated within a social network of consumption, distribution and exchange; a political economy of the photographic image and not the poverty of photographic seeing.

Out of fairness to the contributors

sets the tempo for the struggle over representation already mentioned. Written in 1934 against the backdrop of rising fascism, Benjamin offers us Sergey Tretyakov's 'operative' writer whose "mission is not to report but to fight; not to assume the spectator's role but to intervene actively". (p.18) Rather than merely being an agent of capital, with little autonomy, such an author actively attempts to understand her/his position within the

productive relations of society at a particular historical conjuncture. Through this understanding s/he works actively for change with whatever means are available. Thus s/he becomes a producer. Although Benjamin makes no direct reference to the concept of sign, the sign as the site of struggle is definitely a part of his essay. Effectively, the job of the author as producer is to re-present the dominant social representations in a new and radical form; to track down and reveal the contradictions inherent in capitalism. For photographers in

Burgin's "Photographic Practice and Art Theory". Eco's paper describes ten codes operating in conjunction with the photographic image. Whereas Roland Barthes sees the photograph as a 'message without a code', Eco shows us that the photograph exists as a complex series of intermixing codes. The actual context for the argument cannot be discussed here but its results clear some territory of a theoretical nature, thus enabling the reader to enter and engage Burgin's "Photographic Practice and Art Theory". Eco establishes a wide range of codes

similar to language but with certain fundamental characteristic differences all its own. However, what we find in the advertising shot is that the linguistic message influences dramatically our reading of the visual message. Where no actual linguistic text can be found, as in the case of the art photograph, other texts in the form of visual rhetoric, metaphor, simile, metonymy etc. fill in the gaps between the verbal and the visual. Often these operate under conditions similar to those of poetics.

Art and documentary — a false distinction

Two essays, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning", by Allan Sekula and "The Currency of the Photograph", by John Tagg, cover similar historical and theoretical terrain. In Sekula's essay is an analysis of *emergent photographic discourse* through the work of Lewis Hine and Alfred Stieglitz. Respectively, their work constitutes the traditional dividing line between documentary and art photography. Through a careful historical and semiotic analysis of their work (chiefly "Immigrants Going Down Gangplank" — Hine 1905 and "The Steerage" — Stieglitz 1907) Sekula points out that this supposed 'real' distinction between their two practices is, in fact, a myth. Photography as 'realism' and photography as 'expression of the artist' are shown to be, if not wholly arbitrary distinctions, at least ideological distinctions. Both practices inhabit each others' space (often the same institutional space), fostering a political discourse which allows, on the one hand, areas of social concern to be aestheticized and humanized (made palatable for consumption) while on the other, areas of subjective expression are made to take the place of real material social relations.

John Tagg's "The Currency of the Photograph" covers three main areas; "the currency of the photograph, the regime of truth and the conditions of realism". Situating this work within the history of the Farm Security Administration, particularly the period 1938-41, Tagg stresses "the absolute continuity of the photographs' ideological existence with their existence as material objects whose 'currency' and 'value' arise in a certain distinct and historical social practice and are ultimately a function of the State." (p.122) By showing the relationship between these photo-

graphs at a particular historical point and the institutions into which they were embedded, primarily government institutions, Tagg shows their currency as being maintained within a 'regime of truth' dependent upon a certain 'regime of sense'. That is to say; the meaning of these documentary photographs gained their credence by being part of a number of ideological apparatuses: government departments, the press and later, museums and public archives. Surrounding these, the 'regime of sense', *realism*, determines how these photographs will be read.

"Making Strange"

Perhaps the most lucid article, and I believe for those photographers still operating under the mandate of formalist photography, the most important, is Simon Watney's "Making Strange — The Shattered Mirror". Watney's paper examines the historical relationship between the concept *Ostranenie* and photography. Originally a literary term used by Viktor Shklovsky, *Ostranenie* or making strange became a developmental idea of the Productivist journal *Lef*. 'Making strange', as a device, sought to reveal the ideological contradictions of society, revolutionize the artist and produce new ways of representing the world in the cause of socialism. Implicit, if not explicit, in the work of Alexandre Rodchenko, 'making strange' eventually found its way into the West via Dada and Surrealism. (Moholy Nagy corresponded and traded photographs with Rodchenko as well as being aware of the debates in *Lef*). Eventually

wrenched from its original political discourse by its transportation to the U.S., *Ostranenie* ironically became a part of Western modernist aesthetics. Doubly ironic: the use of 'making strange' in modernist aesthetics not only implies the use of a political device in a professed apolitical discipline but also hides the inherent contradiction by its continued use in an uncritical manner.

Two additional essays both by Victor Burgin are contained in this book, "Looking at Photographs" and "Photography — Phantasy — Function". The arguments contained within them expand on the earlier work in "Photographic Practice and Art Theory". To do them justice would take more space than I am allotted here. "Looking at Photographs", an obvious swipe at John Szarkowski, the Clement Greenberg of photography, examines the psychological space offered by the photograph. Inspired by the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and the film theory of Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", Burgin accounts for our fascination with photographs, the hold they have on our gaze and the apparent naturalness of the image through the investiture of a 'look' — both that of the camera and the double 'specularity' of the Mirror Phase (in psychoanalysis). The final essay in *Thinking Photography*, "Photography - Phantasy - Function" is perhaps the most difficult essay, requiring the reader to work hard on both a general and specific level of reading. Yet for all its complexity it is the most rewarding. In essence "Photography - Phantasy - Function" is the culmination of all of Burgin's theoretical work since the early '70s. To summarize it would

definitely mean to exclude essential information. The scope of this paper is both wide and coherent, broad and cohesive. Its debates encompass the arguments developed in *Lef*, the semiotic and psychoanalytic operations required to account for the structure of meaning in the photograph, and a cogent polemic against the Greenberg/Szarkowski modernist aesthetic. The final paragraph serves as a fitting end to *Thinking Photography*. Referring back to Benjamin's "Author As Producer", we are urged to reject the 'surface' and encouraged to engage critically with the 'sign'; to be involved as producers in producing concrete works. Thinking about the way representations are formed in Canada, we might do well to follow the arguments of this book. We *should* become active producers in our own culture rather than merely the agents of Capital (in most cases foreign) in a system of production which gives us little control. Modernist aesthetics won't help us. Thinking photography will. □

Geoff Miles is a photographer and writer whose main interests are critical theory and practice, history of photography and Canadian cultural studies.

1. "The Author As Producer", Walter Benjamin, *Thinking Photography*, p.24.
2. "Pictures of Reality", *Aesthetics, Politics, Pleasure*. Terry Lovell. (B.F.I. Publishing 1980) p.5.
3. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. V.N. Volosinov, (Volosinov was a literary critic and linguist who was one of the first Soviet writers to engage with Ferdinand de Saussure's "Cours de Linguistique Generale") (Seminar Press 1973) p.23.
4. "The Rhetoric of the Image", *Image Music Text*, Roland Barthes. (Fontana/Collins 1977) p.36.



... nor of form alone but rather their placement within a politically strategic frame of reference.

particular this essay is extremely important. Benjamin even points out directions to be taken. Having noted the powerful relationships between the words and images of John Heartfield's montages, Benjamin urges the photographer to take up the sign "to give his picture the caption that wrenches it from modish commerce and gives it a revolutionary useful value." (p.24) Pre-empting Barthes classic essay "The Rhetoric of the Image", Benjamin recognized the 'polysemic' character of the 'unanchored' photograph. In other words, Benjamin saw that polysemy (the ability of a photograph to produce almost as many meanings as there are reading subjects, thus hindering communication as a collective act) could be politically overcome by anchoring meanings to the photographs with the use of carefully written texts. (We see such 'anchorage' in advertising every day.)

Umberto Eco's essay, "Critique of the Image", acts as a forward to

which we interpret across the photograph from those codes occurring at the pre-photographic level, to those within the structure of the photograph and finally to those codes occurring as cultural inter/codal relationships between the viewer, society and the photograph.

Bridging the gap between visual and non-visual communication, Burgin's "Photographic Practice and Art Theory" shows the relationships between the production of meaning in the photograph and the production of meaning in language, explaining that photographs, far from existing as 'purely visual' statements, rely on similar procedures and operations as those of language. Using both the art photograph and the advertising shot, Burgin reveals the photograph as a complex text which we have learned to read. In the advertising shot two systems predominate: language proper and the photograph as a language system — an object that operates

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THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

The Homosexualization of America, The Americanization of the Homosexual
Dennis Altman
(New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982)
\$13.95

In some ways this is a very readable book if also quite disappointing. This book is Dennis Altman's assessment of the state of gay liberation ten years after he published **Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation**, virtually the first book of gay political theory and still the best. In this new book, Altman offers intelligent and shrewd, if sometimes glib, evaluations on the most significant developments in lesbian and gay life, touching on the triumph of gay male consumerism, the splits in gay politics, the flowering of lesbian and gay culture and that most explosive leitmotiv of gay life — the meaning of sexual freedom.

Altman's intelligence struggles against his deep and unresolved ambivalence towards the "American" view of homosexual identity and the politics that follow from that view. The evolution of the lesbian and gay movements in North America has been predicated on the creation and the protection of the lesbian or gay identity. Yet Altman is quite critical of the theory of "identity" because it leaves out the complicated and "unexpected" dimension of most people's sexuality. Altman instead believes that everyone is polymorphous or bisexual. The politics of "identity" creates a minority society that is intolerant of sexual diversity and that ultimately can be seen as emotionally stifling. Moreover, the politics of "polymorphous" sexuality (close to radical Freudian thinkers like Herbert Marcuse) offers a way to politicize everyone about sexuality and limits the possibility of isolating the gay minority from mainstream social life.

It almost seems as if the long and awkward title of Altman's book combines two contradictory views of the homosexual. "Americanization" being the social processes that lead to the

creation of a gay minority — rooted in an identity, a "life-style" that is easily reproduced and exported to homosexuals in other cultures. But Altman's intellectual loyalty is really to the process named by the first half of his title — the homosexualization of America, which represents everyone's recognition of their "homosexuality" and of homosexuality as a cultural model.

The European vs. the American model

Altman's treatment of most topics is caught in the crossfire between his commitment to the "European" perspective on bisexuality and the very successful "American" process of creating an identity and minority culture. Altman's ambivalence seems genuine and many of his discussions balance delicately between these two viewpoints. Altman always responds to the genuine gains that the politics of identity have achieved. Yet his criticisms are usually aimed at the undesirable side-effects of the "identity" process. For instance, in his chapter on "Sex and the Triumph of Consumer Capitalism" he concludes with serious reservations:

"In some ways this development is inevitable; the creation of community requires the erection of boundaries, however difficult this may be for individuals. Yet because the new homosexual identity is promoted so assiduously through the gay media and gay marketing, many people who accept a homosexual identity feel pressured to adopt outward signs and mannerisms with which they feel uncomfortable. Nonhomosexuals may feel equally excluded from styles that appeal to them.

"The greatest restrictions of the new homosexual identity are felt by those whose sexuality is genuinely fluid and who do not wish to be identified as homosexual, not because they see it as something of which to be ashamed . . . but because they do not feel the term accurately describes them." (p.103)

Altman's analysis of lesbian and gay

politics (in "The Movement and its Enemies") is again a shrewd and insightful discussion of many developments over the last decade — among them lesbian separatism, the gay left, and the fairy movement — but he sees this diversity as evidence that "one's homosexuality cannot be a total identity" (p. 114). Similarly, in his examination of the "Birth of Gay Culture," the very important role of the lesbian or gay identity is acknowledged along with its limitations. But he concludes by noting that "given the universality of homosexuality, if not of a gay identity, it would be a great pity if the larger culture were able to dismiss the products of the new gay writers, filmmakers and artists as relevant only for those who already see themselves as part of that culture." (p.168) Altman's ambivalence about the emergence of the gay identity becomes for him "the paradox of homosexualization" — as homosexuals set themselves apart and emphasize their differences, their new visibility reveals their relevance to the general culture. While Altman's dual perspective is portrayed as a paradox because it looks at recent lesbian and gay history from two opposing theoretical viewpoints, it also reveals a historical turning point in the history of homosexuality. The "Americanization" of homosexuality results not only from a political emphasis on identity (itself rooted in the process of "coming out") but also a long term pattern in U.S. history which segregates "minority" cultures. The past ten years of the lesbian and gay movements in North America have established the visible homosexual identity as the anchor for the "homosexualization of America."

Conflicts of sexual freedom

No subject covered by Altman reveals that historical shift more sharply than the exploration of "Sexual Freedom and the End of Romance." Altman's account of the various debates on sexuality — s/m, man-boy love, the

conflicts between commitment and promiscuity — reveal that sexuality is, among homosexuals and everyone else, increasingly problematic, often resulting in making homosexuals both scapegoats and models. Very little of Altman's discussion of sexuality is in terms of the identity perspective, but his intellectual ambivalence seems to have hindered him from exploring the issue of sexuality to point up the inadequacy of the idea of a gay identity against the rich perversity of sexuality. A sexual politics based on homosexual identity leads quite directly to a restricted sexual practice. The most pertinent example available is the lesbian-feminist norm which rules out butch-femme roles, s/m and any lesbian sexuality that is organized around differences of role or power. The deeply felt controversy in the lesbian community around butch-femme or s/m reveals the political limitations of an "identity" perspective on sexuality. Here Altman's "polymorphous" perspective is not only more tolerant of sexual diversity, it offers some explanations (along Freudian lines) as well.

The limitations of the politics of sexual identity that Altman frequently

outlines are also being increasingly experienced by active gay men and lesbians. Thus, for example, there are more and more lesbians or gay men who are engaging in heterosexual activity without forfeiting their gay identities. Openly gay activists are participating in political activities outside the gay movement — in the anti-nuclear and peace movements, in the left, and in mainstream political institutions like the Democratic party in the U.S.

The lesbians and gay men who participate in political, cultural and social activities outside the lesbian and gay communities are important "cross-over" people who link different communities and offer the potential for political coalitions.

The ability of lesbians and gay men to enter these outside movements and communities is rooted in the establishment of lesbian and gay identities, protected and nourished by their communities. But as Altman points out several times, the gay identity cannot be a total identity. So lesbians and gay men must reach outward — socially, politically and even sexually.

By not making his theoretical ambivalence more explicit, Altman

sinks into a much too delicately balanced account of many controversial issues, in which his glibness and at times superficiality betrays his intelligence. One factor that I suspect inhibited Altman's presentation of the radical Freudian view is that it offers even less of a strategic value than the politics of identity (for instance see Mario Mieli's **Homosexuality and Liberation** for a full elaboration of that view.) Nowhere in this book are the issues laid out in this review explicitly discussed. **The Homosexualization of America** moves entirely on the surface of gay life with only a few storm warnings of the turbulence below. It has many useful and intelligent things to say. It is informative but Altman's ambivalence has muddled an important opportunity to assess the homosexual question and unfortunately left us with an incoherent account of important historical changes. □

Jeffrey Escoffier has been active in the U.S. gay movement since 1970; he is a member of the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project and is the executive editor of *Socialist Review*, published in Oakland, CA.

BRENT KNAZAN

POLITICS AND THE REFUGEE

None Is Too Many
Irving Abella and Harold Troper
Lester, Orpen and Dennys (Toronto)
1982.

Section Three of Canada's Immigration Act states that a major objective of immigration policy is "to uphold Canada's humanitarian tradition with respect to the displaced and the persecuted." Ironically, historians Irving Abella and Harold Troper were already researching their book as the current Immigration Act was being proclaimed law in 1978. And their study reveals that Canada's "tradition" has been not "humanitarian", but cruel, racist and anti-human.

The result of the research, **None is Too Many**, deals with Canada's immigration policy with respect to one time period — 1933-1945 — and one persecuted group — the Jewish victims of Nazism. Much of the story is not

unique to either the group or the time. However, some of it is almost topical: The restrictive legislation, control of policy by powerful bureaucrats; the misuse of discretion by Immigration officers; the deceit shown to refugee groups; politicians pandering to the xenophobia of the voters and disguising racism in false economic arguments. All of these pre-dated and (though the authors disagree in the preface) continued after the refusal to admit the Jewish refugees.

But these hallmarks of Canadian immigration policy had a special significance in relation to the Nazis because the policies of the Western allies, including Canada, complimented the policies of the Nazis. Troper and Abella establish this in the introductory chapter and return to it in the conclusion. The policy of extermination was not the Nazis' declared position either when they came to power in Germany in 1933 or as they began to overrun Europe in 1938 and

1939. Their policy was to rid Nazi-occupied territories of Jews and, if other countries would accept them the Jews were free to go. But nobody would accept them. "As the world turned its back, the Nazis understood that they had a free hand to dispense with the Jews as they wished."

How this could have happened and the valiant, but futile, attempts of some to oppose it is the subject of **None is Too Many**. The authors conclude it happened because the Canadian public was anti-semitic. "In the dark recesses of the public mind there may even have lurked the suspicion that the Nazis were not wrong in pin-pointing the Jews as a particular problem — they were just carrying their anti-semitism much too far." This serious indictment is amply proven in page after page of anecdote and reproduced memoranda.

Three different periods are analysed by the authors: 1933-40, when the Nazis dispossessed, denaturalized,

CRAIG BROMBERG

TENSIONS IN THE TITLE

When politics are grafted onto cultural conventions

**Manifesto! New Investigations
In Political Performance**
Presented by Dance Theatre
Workshop (New York)

Start with the title. Not because the title is the interpretive key to a performance, but because it serves a specific function. As writing or as text it is *affixed or supplemental* to the act of performing. But it does more. It functions as the preface to a text. It indicates and identifies, points to certain "overdeterminations" in the body of the text. Why "overdeterminations"? Because the title not only establishes the performance as a text, but goes *over* and beyond that. The title is a representation of tensions that undermine the text (in this case a series of performances).

Now take a specific title, "DTW Presents: Manifesto! New Investigations In Political Performance". It's the title of a series of dance and theatre performances at a place called DTW in New York City. DTW is Dance Theater Workshop, one of New York's most widely regarded and best funded production spaces for dance. Never committed to only avant-garde work — the **Village Voice** once called it the downtown "grooming center" for a giant modern dance venue uptown — DTW has always had a populist streak in its programming. Its director, David White, has a good eye for what's about to break in the alternative New York arts scene. Under his direction DTW sponsors a wide range of performance events. It specializes in promoting the work of the "emerging artist", the young avant-terribles with pop appeal.

White's programming may not be to everyone's liking but he has stuck his neck out many more times than one would expect, producing talented, if sometimes conventional artists who wouldn't get a break elsewhere. DTW also gave space this year to Dances for Disarmament. So DTW Presents isn't just hype but a pledge of support for explicitly political work — work often marginalized by organizations with

the same corporate funding and mode of production as DTW.

Advertising (!) in search of the audience

This brings us to **Manifesto!**, a call for action: radical politics among the status quo. But notice the exclamation point, summoning grammatic credibility to DTW's newly found political interests. It's a call to arms (!) even to a notion of art as political intervention (!) But it is also superfluous, more the measure of advertisement than of surprise (!) or vehemence (!) This is borne out by the remainder of the subtitle, tagged on to the word manifesto (and its exclamation point) as both explanation and apology, as promise of both political consciousness-raising and innovative artistry. "New" suggests a different kind of political performance, while "investigations" leaves room for formal manoeuvring by the artists. Yet the title also tells us not to get too far afield of this promise of innovation. These investigations will be *limited* to a genre of performance different from all others. Limited because they will be specifically political performances.

The title informs us then, of a conflict beginning with the curatorial concept unifying the series. It tells us that ideological suasion and artistic innovation are in competition with each other for the audience's energies. And yet, it is this very competition which the title cannot resolve by itself. It is an advertisement, out looking for audiences. Instead we are left with a question: What room can there be for performance when there is an already constituted agenda for the political in performance? As a correlary we might ask: Why bother performing if what you really want to do is go out and organize?

In the case of the New York Street Theatre Caravan one was assured by both the tone and content of their performance that that was precisely what the Caravan really wanted to do (and probably thought they were doing). The Caravan is "old-style"

agit-prop. Formed out of the ashes of '60s guerrilla theater this collective takes it for granted that audiences don't need to be persuaded — only shown — what's bad for them. Their "Street Theater Cabaret" was simply an alternative means of political organizing.

In one skit, Frank Purdue (an American poultry manufacturer whose commercials litter American airwaves) battles the three little pigs: two of them wandering and unemployed, ready to be co-opted right into Frank's Factory. Luckily, the third little pig is a committed socialist and the pigs organize and throw Purdue out of his prison/factory. Organizing (even union organizing) is the invincible house of bricks. After their victory the pigs break out in gleeful song: "Pigs Everywhere/You must organize/You must do more than just sympathize/To every pig according to his need/that must be every little piggy's creed." Such antics may raise an audience's ire about the greed of corporate capital but there's really no choice but to laugh when confronted with a simple parable between slapstick "evil" and cartoonish "good". The Caravan uses comedy as a political cure-all. Yet such comic conventions not only leave our assumptions intact but allow us to maintain our belief in the narrative structure being used to critique corporate power.

Reproducing clichés

Other skits have the same problem. A housewife goes crazy from her TV's contradictory commercials; a woman harassed by construction workers on the street turns the situation around so that a group of women harass an innocent man in a bank. ("Is that a dollar in your pocket or are you just glad to see me?"). Theater is engaged but never held in doubt, except as parody. If language is a virus, the Caravan seems never to have caught cold. Or if they have, the only remedy they've stumbled on is the cliché economic determinism of doctrinaire

Marxism.

Audiences may be moved by such comic Leninist politics (or is it Groucho Marxism?) but their rousing ovations for the Caravan only suggested to me a certain collusion between performers and audience. The collusion occurs in the unthinking acceptance of popular forms of conventional theatrical representation. No one can be swayed by a performance in which there is neither argument, persuasion nor contradiction. Organization cannot happen where the audience is not critically engaged. No matter how warmly one embraces

presents characterizations of newly arrived immigrants to the U.S. who found the life of factory work far different than the streets-paved-with-gold imagined in the Old World. Dramatic monologues are punctuated with music and movement solos tied to the narrative. Underlying it all, however, is yet another union message — organizing, one guesses, being tantamount to class consciousness. If this message is dated, Wallflower nevertheless present it strikingly. Their works go beyond socialist bonhomie to touch us through the most common tragedies of personal experience.

of some transhistorical 'human essence'. In socialist rhetoric we are told this essence is violated in capitalist life and championed in class conflict. But the humanist ideology is just as much a part of bourgeois idealism as it is a part of socialist utopianism. There's a fatal optimism here that allows dance conventions to stand while imbuing them with the gloss of radical politics. Wallflower's conventionalism is disturbing because it signals a contentment with (or resignation to) the very sign system of Western culture which must be placed under attack if capitalist ideology is to



Susan Wilson

Wallflower Order

left ideology, domination and repressive power still enter into one's critical language. "To speak, and, with even greater reason, to utter a discourse is not, as is too often repeated, to communicate, it is to subjugate."*

A similar problem arises in the work of another collective, Wallflower Order, from Northampton, Mass. They too begin in the storehouse of conventional representation, but their work never escapes from the clichés of classical theatrical illusionism and modern dance. Sometimes this results in shocking incongruities. In "New World", a dance about Marcus Garvey, the five (white) women, dressed in petticoats with parasols, primp and preen *en pointe* to Mozart — until an angry gospel song, "New World Coming", rudely interrupts their promenade. "Immigration"

* Roland Barthes. Inaugural Lecture to Chair of Semiology. College de France, Paris.

Unfortunately, these tragedies are always seen through the lens of the popular theatre, a theatre that masks collective identity for the purpose of escape. In the traditional theatre we are asked to believe in the unique individuality of the characters onstage before us. In Wallflower's dances the emphasis is put on the personalized story of a radical awakening. This has two purposes. One is to appeal to the widest popular audiences. And judging from audience reactions, Wallflower certainly succeed in doing this. Another is to show the supposed flexibility of a strictly Marxist politics, as if to say "we stay close to the party line but we can recognize individual differences too."

The flaws of humanism

While this humanism gives their performance presence it also denies much of its radical potentiality. Humanism is an ideology too. One inextricably bound to our conception

be effectively critiqued. This is one reason, I think, much of Wallflower's critiques of sexism and racism were moving but empty.

It is on this very point that United Mime Workers, a collective from Illinois, were able to make a lasting impression. The starting point for their work is a reconstitution of the forms of making meaning in contemporary capitalism. They use the standard rhetoric of left liberals everywhere (we-have-met-the-enemy-and-he-is-us) but their focus is on the way daily actions are assigned specific meanings through the structuring of time and daily routine. In one skit, "he" picks up a newspaper at the breakfast table and begins to read in silence. Printed on the back, in large letters, is IT'S LATE. "She", with a look of charmed exasperation, turns a tea-kettle to face the audience. It says: YEP. "He": THEY'LL NEVER STOP KILLING PEOPLE. "She": HONEY, YOU CAN'T CHANGE HUMAN

NATURE. After more play with similar texts, they reverse the whole thing.

In the second half of the program (followed by an exemplary Q & A period) the four performers enact everyday scenes on a stage full of household appliances prompting their actions and/or spoken lines. Actions and phrases are repeated, reversed, or otherwise thrown out of sequence — improvised within a structure. It's a technological world slightly off kilter. But the results are somewhat dated, like watching an old *I Love Lucy* late at night when you're stoned. It's no wonder that this gives us a sense of déjà-vu: we repeat this very recombination of television every time we turn on the tube: sit-coms and soap operas blur together in one associative stream of consciousness. This is mimicry of pop culture at its very best. Yet the formal play ends up stifling ideological inquiry and critique because the collective has chosen to stay within the economy of their texts: **Better Homes & Gardens** and TV reruns. (Is this simply part of mid-western culture?) No attempt is made to break the code or even to identify that there is one, just to reconstitute it.

The control of ideology

Martha Rosler's "Watchwords Of The 80's" tells us that it is the forms as well as the content of popular representation that drive the engine of what used to be called false consciousness. If New York Street Theatre Caravan represent what's left of the old-left (economic determinism and all), Rosler views the control of ideology as the principal threat today. And while I'd agree with the analysis, it's no fun watching someone skip across a stage kicking around a cardboard "ghetto blaster" in front of a giant screen displaying slides of Reagan, Nancy's latest fashions, clippings on the war in Salvador and our stinking economy. Perhaps Rosler thinks that scribbling catchwords such as QUALITY/ELEGANCE/CUTBACK/RECESSIONS and then changing them to EQUALITY/TAKEBACK/DEPRESSIONS is a way of exposing the domination and biases inherent in our critical language. I was offended by Rosler's arrogant and woefully inadequate presentation. There's a tremendous hubris that goes into such righteous indignation; doesn't the woman see that she's not nearly as critically effective as she is patronizing to the very street kids she's ripped off to make her pseudo-rap songs?

Obviously the audience recognizes this for what it is. Many walked out the night I saw Rosler.

The second half of this "performance" was Rosler's videotape "Domination and the Everyday", images of the Chilean dictator Pinochet and scenes from Rosler's daily life accompanied by a soundtrack of a dinner-time talk between Rosler and her child. Watching the repeating tape I felt I was being deliberately neglected. What's finally discouraging about Rosler's work is this deliberate off-putting. It's alienation effects *ad extremis*. If the aim of such strategies is to produce for an audience a discourse which must entail their own collaboration in the production of meaning surely the first step must be to gain the audience's attention. Performance artists must find a new position for the audience, not a *non* position. But Rosler's brand of didactic post-structuralism isn't willing to take the audience into account. More important, the cliché radicalism of her performance isn't able to account for the strangulating effect of a specifically didactic political discourse when applied directly to performance itself.

Self-defined marginalization

It might be said, however, that Rosler's condescending attitude to the aesthetics of performance is only the extreme manifestation of a dangerous imbalance in the genre of political performance. The enterprise of political performance, taken as a specific genre of performance art in general, seems to be a process of marginalization. When politics is ascendent, performance is set to the side. For performance, more than any other art form, is a ritualized collection of moments, each carrying traces of other times, other people and situations. These are the traces or absences that give performance the presence that draws us to the form in the first place.

In the traditional theatre presence manifests itself through striking execution and daring feats of acting. When we say that an actor has presence, we mean that there is a certain confidence and assurance in her/his performance that goes beyond mere execution. Presence is power: the power of a performer to make a character come alive for us. In the bourgeois theatre however, this means only that presence catalyzes a text and

lends power to the authorial voice behind it.

The avant-garde performance proposes a radical activity. Its purpose is not to create substitutions or escapes from the world outside the theatre but among other things, to expose the domination and repression in that world. By condensing and displacing the negative energies that surround us, the avant garde places critique ahead of pleasure. Presence is no longer the magnetic aura of a charismatic personality but the potent reminder of something missing in what we are seeing. Instead of theatrical captivation — entertainment — we are promised personal and social liberation. No longer the tool of an author's hand in search of some abstract pleasure, the performer now addresses his presence to the historical, concrete world of power and of codified human relations. These are the performative details of any performance that recognizes its position in the political world.

Politics is not something that is called into play only when it is explicitly critiqued. It circumscribes and positions us, and is an obvious force in daily life. But when ideology overwhelms performative detail, politics and performance cancel each other out. In the same way that titles overwhelm texts, the text disappearing under the symbolic poignancy of the title's reduction of the text into a few words, politics can supplant performance — until presence finally recedes from view. It is finally this supplemental relation of politics to performance that must be called into question.

This is not meant to deny a place for politics in performance. One wants to praise those who dedicate their lives to a vision of art as a kind of intervention, as a political weapon. But when political performance means grafting politics onto cultural conventions, or insinuating political motives on top of traditional narrative structures, artistic innovation is stymied at the level of the signifier, at the level of an artist's power to manipulate the material structures of his or her own form. To displace our concern for the signifier while simply attaching symbolic importance to political content cannot be a solution to the politics of performance. An exclamatory manifesto will simply not do. □

Craig Bromberg is a New York based critic writing primarily about dance and performance.

FUSE January/February 1983

JOYCE MASON

CHANTAL AKERMAN

Looking at passions and the figures of romance

This year's Festival of Festivals (Toronto, September 9-18, 1982) reflected once again the contradictions and eclecticism by which this 10-day viewing extravaganza has now become well-known. Boasting its claim to being the largest publicly attended international film festival in the world, festival organizers have managed over the years to develop and maintain relationships with some strange bedfellows (independent filmmakers, hollywood studios, political and experimental filmmakers, multinational corporations and even the occasional video artist in the last two years).

Since the opening year (1976), when Barbara Martineau programmed a major series of films entitled Woman-scene, films by women have not had a visible profile at the Festival. This could be due, in part, to the presence (or absence) of women programmers. While the total number of programmers rose from 3 in 1976 to 10 in 1980, the number of women involved in selecting films remained fixed at one per year. This year's festival marked a breakthrough for women programmers. There were three: Kay Armatage programmed two series; Zuzanna Pick, in conjunction with Piers Handling, programmed the Brazilian series; Kathleen Carroll took over Buried Treasures. Representation of women in programming decisions has, in 1982, reclaimed its 1976 foothold of 33.3 per cent.

Kay Armatage's programming included the works of 12 women filmmakers. In her series New Directors/New Directions, she found an umbrella title that allowed for the inclusion of women, who though neither particularly new to their profession nor to the directions which they pursue, remain new to Canadian audiences in as much as they have been largely ignored by commercial distribution/exhibition systems. (In Canada, many have no distribution at all.) Among these was Chantal

Akerman, who was present for the North American premiere screening of her latest feature length film *Toute une Nuit*. The film was unlike anything else that I saw in the festival and judging from conversations I have had, seemed to elicit varied responses. This may be due to its structure and its intent. In an interview/conversation* with Akerman, the day after the screening, she said, there was much of the film that she could not explain in conscious terms, she believed that intellectual control over the subject diminishes the power of a film and that a direct involvement of the unconscious makes the film better. She spoke in somewhat contradictory terms of the intent and possible reception of *Toute une Nuit*:

"We have shown it two or three times to audiences and they like it. They react very well and finally in the end it is not such a difficult film because it is very immediate. It's direct and it's physical. It's easier (than *Jeanne Dielman*)."

"It's a film about bodies."

"... about a night in which people do what they would not ordinarily do."

"You can understand the movie on different levels, but it's really at the first level that it's obvious. ... It's a question of the whole world, of thinking, of economics. Everything is in regression, repression. And we, the people who were fighting in the '60's, are a little bit tired."

"It's a strenuous film."

These comments and their apparent contradictions do reflect upon the qualities of the film. While the film is visually pleasing, aurally evocative and emotionally resonant (the vignettes portray situations of poignance, tenderness, humour, loneliness and passion), it is, nevertheless, difficult — in much the same way that emotions themselves prove difficult.

* On September 15, 1982, Kay Armatage, Chantal Akerman, Kerri Kwinter and myself met for an extended conversation/interview from which quotations cited in this article have been drawn.

Emotion assigned to women

Toute Une Nuit operates at both the literal and unconscious levels. Work in theoretical fields which attempts to make the unconscious accessible is therefore helpful in interpretation. Feminist psychoanalytic theory has examined and discussed the effects of the segregation of the emotional to the realm of women, and its exclusion/repression within the world of business, government, the military etc. In this respect emotion has been defined as female and as contrary (if not directly dangerous) to the existing patriarchal structures.

While emotion does exist in all areas of our lives, the kinds of expression which are considered acceptable, appropriate or effective are limited in certain realms. For example, the identification of emotionality as 'feminine', as negative, as a weakness, or as 'unprofessional', limits the individual's willingness to find the source of problems/conflicts through open discussion and analysis with others who may have similar experiences (caused by the same social structures).

Home, sports, sex, art and other 'non-work' activities provide the safe conduits for a large range of emotional expression. In these contexts there is little disruption to the existing order and in fact, an external support structure which can allow for the maintenance of the status quo is produced. However, outside of these situations or activities, which are the allowed realms of emotional expression, emotion and feelings continue to exist and power is correctly perceived as the lever necessary for some degree of satisfaction or freedom of expression.

When unevenly distributed, power becomes defined in terms of power over others. But, the process of sublimating basic emotional energy into the

desire for power itself necessarily limits the kinds of emotional expressions possible to those which are consistent with our notions about power. For example, one cannot maintain power (over others) while directly expressing vulnerability or insecurity or fear, or the wish for others to take control of their own lives.

This relationship between emotional expression, the pursuit of power, the structures of society, and shows of force can be seen as a subtext in rationales which are offered for many of the supposed aberrations which are

she has no specifically political intent in mind when making a film, "... it becomes political because it is what I have to express, but it is not my goal.", her work does deal with genuine problems of human emotion and with the alienation of emotion which is produced by and reflected in society in general. While her emphasis on the importance of the subconscious in filmmaking foregrounds the personal, it reminds us that the personal is in fact political. Films that are not constructed for passive consumption, that demand audience engagement in the

intensity, tensions and undercurrents of emotion.

Someone descends a set of steps... a bus passes... a car moves towards us along an expressway. Finally, as the car comes closer, we distinguish two women cuddled together...

A woman paces, agitated. She watches out of her window. She takes up the telephone and dials: "Je t'aime" is the total and anxious message that she delivers. These words are the first and one of the few phrases spoken in the film.

The lack of words and the dialogue

which movies or literature have told us are appropriate). Thus the viewer's experience of recognition is combined with cynicism and surfaces because of the fragmentation of the stories — the lack of continuity in the narrative. Without the usual convention of characters whom we follow throughout (and around whom the action is defined), the normal film viewing process of suspended disbelief is interrupted, leaving us face to face with the images themselves, in relationship to us, the viewer.

The dream of love

In Akerman's previous feature film, *Les Rendezvous d'Anna*, the central character moved through a series of fragmented encounters and relationships:

"And during the course of the film a crisis is outlined. The economic crisis that everyone talks about, though most still have enough to eat. A crisis that shifts people in such a way that some people escape from it, some perish, while others live off it, and maybe on a deeper level yet is the moral crisis which is probably related to it.

"And what remains in one's self when one no longer believes in neither power, nor money, nor political systems by which one is deceived and betrayed? What remains is the dream of love. The one we never really believe but still..." (quote from publicity material for *Les Rendezvous d'Anna*).

Toute Une Nuit is an exploration of that dream: the dream of love. The discontinuity of emotion which has been portrayed in previous films is extended in this film beyond the individual to include, in general, the inhabitants of a city. The setting of *Toute Une Nuit* is a city at night; it is hot, a storm is brewing.

The setting of the film is an evocative construct: Night as the realm of emotion, and the threatening storm as the possibility of its expression.

For those whose work is carried out during the day, the night offers the possibility of suspending time. Fantasy merges with the possible; primitive emotions, like dreams, can be enacted. But, as in dreams, these are not isolated from, but defined by, the world in which we live. This world is the same world of economic opportunism, alienated labour and struggles for power which was alluded to in *Les Rendezvous d'Anna*.

While *Toute une Nuit* presents moments of tenderness as well as intensity, the frustration of discontin-

uity and the sense that something is about to break (though, on the human scale, it never does), leaves the film open-ended and gives the sense that resolution is impossible. Akerman does not offer us any answers. The film gives no happy endings — underscoring the disjointed transience of the events portrayed.

Images from popular fiction

The escape or retreat to the dream of love does not offer resolution of the moral dilemmas that the world faces. However, like dreams, it can foreground some of the trouble spots, the conflicts which consciousness may avoid. There are many images in *Toute une Nuit* which are troubling, which have resonance with images to be found in popular fiction (films, novels, television, pop music lyrics): Women wait.

A woman, resisting, is pulled into the back seat of a car which then speeds away.

A woman, in a red sheath (dress) and high heels, walks along a street at night past men whose eyes follow her movement... She escapes the gaze by hailing a taxi.

In these scenes the viewer confronts situations and feelings of vulnerability, fear and of body- (self) consciousness. High heels and dresses which accentuate the body are recurring images in the film. In some contexts, these gender-specific fashions seem emblematic of these feelings of fear because they locate 'femaleness' in a context of vulnerability. The discomforting emotional response is gender-specific. The echo of high heels (in hallways, stairways and in the street) which recurs throughout the film evokes a sense of the tightrope which has been strung and upon which we balance. And yet, in other contexts, when there is no immediate threat, these cultural representations of 'female seductiveness' can be considered in less threatening terms — in terms of texture, colours and movement. They are evocative of more pleasurable sensations.

These conflicting emotional responses make the film difficult, even problematic, for many (including myself). The discontinuity of the various moments depicted is unsettling. We want some clarity, some interpretation and ordering from the film. But what is clarified here is discontinuity itself; desire seems to be unfulfillable. It is simultaneously attractive

and threatening. This sense of the threat which pleasure offers has arisen in an earlier Akerman film. Akerman has said about the title character of *Jeanne Dielman, 23 rue de commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*: "Not to have pleasure is her only protection". Jeanne is unable to continue her daily routine of mechanised existence once she has experienced sexual pleasure. She finally murders one of her 'sexual customers', in her attempt, one might assume, to restore her life to its previous numbness. The threat of the emotional and of pleasure to the world of commerce (Jean Dielman, after all, lives on la rue de Commerce.), and to the world of daily routines remains in *Toute une Nuit*, at the level of subtext or context. The world of business, the activities of the 'real world' are separated from our emotional (sometimes called primitive) sensibilities. But the force of these repressed feelings gives rise to conflicts and distortions.

Repression and conflict

At the end of *Toute une Nuit*, as dawn approaches, a couple dances in a trance-like embrace. They move within the confined space of an apartment hallway. She murmurs words

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'She takes up the telephone and dials; "Je t'aime" is the total and anxious message'

reported in the media. For example, in reports of the investigation of the christian philangists' raid and massacre of Palestinian refugee camps, the responsibility is side-stepped by an Israeli commander, who says that the forces were admitted to the camps because they are "not a band of hotheads, but a centrally controlled patriarchal organization" (*Globe & Mail*, October 26, 1982). Could we expect a centrally controlled patriarchal organization to exhibit compassion, or sympathy?

Questions of power, restrictive forms of emotional expression and politics are inextricably intertwined.

Although Akerman has said that

'reading' of the film are, as Annette Kohn in her new book *Women's Pictures: Feminism & Cinema* points out, a challenge to dominant cinema and dominant ideology.

Intensity, tensions and undercurrents

Toute Une Nuit opens with a view from a hill in Brussels. A quiet city street; the contours of the buildings are brought into high relief by the city's light. In retrospect, the remembered image is of shimmering, trembling lights and this is no doubt due to the fact that the film is a study of the

that we cannot quite hear (due to the purposeful mix of the soundtrack which distorts and muddies the words), are important to the audience's reading of the film. We are forced to provide our own context for the varied scenes, our own scenarios for what came before and what will follow. A wide range of emotional moments are represented through the course of the film, including the romantic crescendos of commercialised storylines, tense meetings, tentative and passionate embraces. These depictions move between the sincere (that which is personally expressed) and the learned (that which is expressed in terms of the clichés

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ALTERNATIVE IMAGES 83

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- | | |
|-------------|--|
| January 20 | <i>Children of Sandino</i>
<i>The Uprising</i> |
| February 3 | * <i>Daughter Right</i>
* <i>Les Fleurs Sauvages</i> |
| February 10 | <i>To Live in Freedom</i>
* <i>Paratroopers</i> |
| February 24 | <i>The Mondragon Experiment</i>
<i>For Jonah, Who Will be 25 in the Year 2000</i> |
| March 3 | <i>On the Line</i>
* <i>Killer of Sheep</i> |
| March 10 | <i>A Time to Rise</i>
<i>Ankur</i> |
| March 17 | <i>The Lament of Arthur O'Leary</i>
* <i>The Patriot Game</i> |
| March 31 | <i>Resurgence</i>
<i>Knife in the Head</i> |
| April 7 | * <i>South Africa Belongs to Us</i>
<i>Zambizanga</i> |
| April 14 | * <i>DONNA</i>
<i>A Brief Vacation</i>

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courtesy Paradise Films

-- returning to telephones and the daily routines.

into his ear, which we cannot make out. (There are no clues for what to say... no models of behaviour which lead to fulfillment.) A telephone rings. The dance ends. The man follows the woman into a bedroom where she sits to answer the telephone. He lounges on the bed, behind her with an attitude of one who considers himself extraneous. She talks into the receiver. The sound of the traffic from the street below overwhelms the space of the room... leaving the question of how these feelings — this escape into the dream of love — relates to the 'real world' of telephones, delivery trucks and our daily routine.

The way in which our lives are structured causes, and is reflected in, the dissociation of emotion from 'reality', at all levels. *Toute une Nuit*, highly emotionally charged, presents one side of the process of alienation and dissociation — the force of emotion itself and the desire to find its expression. Although the storm breaks at the end of the film, the people do not seem to achieve any resolution of the tensions or desires which have been portrayed. But finally, the emotional and the pull of eros is less something that we would hope to "resolve" and thus dismiss from our realm of concern, than something that should inform it. The alienation or compartmentalisation of this aspect of life is, in part, the product of and the sustenance for the continued alienation of feeling from work, of labour from pleasure and of sexuality from politics. In offering no conclusions, in returning by the end of the film to the sounds of the world of daily routines, we are faced with the current irresolvability of the erotic and

the instinctual in our lives.

To ascribe meaning or relative value to the series of disjointed and sometimes juxtaposed events or stories which comprise *Toute une Nuit* is to attempt to explain emotional experience itself in a cultural context — in terms of one's own emotional responses and of the world out of which the film is produced.

I have used written material and conversations with others about this film and about Akerman's previous work in formulating this interpretation of the film. I recognize that because this is not an 'immediate response' to the work that it may be seen as too much 'reading in'. It is, however, important to acknowledge that it was my very strong and mixed feelings about the film that motivated me to make this exploration. The scenes I have referred to in the film are troubling precisely because they are without comment and one therefore fears that they may be seen or interpreted as 'acceptable', but I have argued earlier that the open-ended structure of the film demands engagement, not acceptance.

Toute une Nuit invites us to look at our passions and at the figures of romance which both inform and distort them. It is, in this effort, both moving and astute, engaging and challenging. In this way, Akerman has attempted "to translate what she has learned about perception (and of the world) into a language which can appeal to and interact with what ordinary people have learned about reality." (As Varda Burstyn has suggested is necessary for radical/experimental filmmakers in her article in *FUSE* Vol.6 #3, September 1982.) □

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BRUCE FERGUSON

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS Part One

FUSE is presenting this extended discussion of three recent international exhibitions in two parts. This issue, Bruce Ferguson focuses on the **XL International Biennale Exhibition** in Venice (June 6 - December 9, 1982). In the next issue Ferguson's piece looks at **documenta 7**, Kassel, West Germany (June 19 - September 28, 1982) and **The 4th Biennale of Sydney**, Sydney, Australia (April 7 - May 23, 1982).

Does there exist any system of objects of any dimension that can do without articulated language? Is not the word the fatal relay of the signifying order?

Roland Barthes

Artists are justifiably suspicious of art institutions and their representatives, the curators and critics who serve the unsavory ends rather than the palatable means of artists, those who speak the pitiable languages of bureaucracy, academia and even commerce (although this is rarely admitted by any party). These languages are claimed by all to be foreign to the artists' "visions". The last fifteen years seemed again to fully unmask the myth of "vision", stripping it of its naivety. The divestment was delayed due to the long-held superstition of some artists that the work could "speak for itself", although no reading of a successful work could ever confirm such a tradition. This was a delay most convenient to the status quo and its institutions whose interest are most readily served by such mystification. But artist's own efforts through theoretical texts and critical practices, including artists'-run spaces and publications, plus those of some critics and even an occasional curator, exposed art again as a symbolic act which requires and deserves interpretation. It was again seen as an activity of communication caught in its historical context, motivated by ideologies and interpreted by ideologies, none neutral, many hidden, and few controlled by artists. Critical questions were reopened. In literature, the question became not which word to choose, but which world. So, too, in art, the question became to what extent are cultural values also life values, or to use Victor Burgin's words, to what extent does art "open" rather than "close" a society? The animism of work 'speaking for itself' was replaced by an analysis of

what voice is speaking and whose interests are being served by such a voice. Artists' suspicions of institutions became again a right, and for some, an obligation.

The focal point of social inter-action for much contemporary art is the exhibition. It is the social convention which most often validates the activity of art for its possible communication. If a work of art can "mean" something, it is often a meaning already inherent in the type of exhibition (whether historical, thematic, or personal phenomenology etc.) or in its place of address (in the museum or gallery, public and commercial) sub-categorized by transnational, national or personal interests etc. and in combinations of these types. The exhibition determines the way in which work is seen and thus structures the way in which it is understood, the way a gilt frame confirms the admirability of an old master but makes a contemporary work ironic. Thus, the exhibition itself is a meta-language in which works of art are encased. Works become the grammar of the extended language, the exhibition. The colour is provided by the architectural frame. A museum is different from an art institute from a Kunsthalle or a gallery in its expression of the language. Artworks, as props or supports, can be used in any kind of scenario, from one of consequence to one of conformity, although the latter is the most common. Incongruously, because it acts as a conspicuous criticism, one of the introductory texts to *documenta 7*, in Volume 2 of the catalogue, written by Germano Celant analyzes the "art installation" and offers a more recent conjecture. "There has been a role inversion, and instead of revealing and clarifying spaces and images, thereby acting as tools of mediation with reality, art and architecture now seek to be depicted and thus 'seen'. They

concentrate all attention on their appearance and superficiality and are translated into a cultural phenomenon whose reality remains hidden behind the 'theatrical', the end result being art and architecture as backdrop and facade." Celant goes on to elaborate the 'discipline of exhibiting' as a meta-language, outlines its modern history in art archetypes and points to the disturbing reassertion of the ahistorical, museological approach adopted and embraced wholeheartedly everywhere recently, and particularly evident at *documenta 7*.

One could go on to say how the exhibition per se is one of the grammars or object languages in an even larger meta-language of cultural production, revealing how each language is possibly appropriated by another meta-language, like Russian dolls opening to expose yet another concentrated version of the same theme. An exhibition, like *documenta 7*, for example, or fall showings of women's 'feminine' fashions as another, could be seen within the larger context of mannerist cultural reissues. Anne Murray's hit single "Everything Old is New Again" is the perfect descriptive accompaniment for the re-issue mentality, expressed in the 'new' Hollywood films reaffirming the values of an earlier Depression and

¹ Celant, Germano, *documenta 7*, Kassel, Volume 2, p. XIII, D and V Paul Dierichs GmbH & Co., Kassel, West Germany, 1982, 385 pp. Celant is evidently referring, among other things, to the defense of Trans-AvantGardism as put forward by Bonita Oliva, a defense of the image which is meaningless in terms of iconography, associated with the "New Italian Painters". It might be pointed out here that Celant's free-lance status as a uninstitutionalized curator/critic is probably the reason for allowing him the important liberty to be so critical within the context of an exhibition that he assisted in organizing. Even Coosje van Bruggen, in another introductory text to the same volume, makes a polite stab at the same kind of phenomenon when she says of the Neue Wilden in Berlin and New York's New Wave, "They have concocted an anti-style which they market as innovative though it is a mere pastiche to past attempts at radical art." Ibid. p. LX

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"Critics who are announcing the death of painting would have a ready-made argument here and those who oppose subjectivism could use this place as proof of its non-existence."

pre-war America, ie. Rockies 1, 2, and 3, Superman 1, 2, and . . . or Annie 1 . . . or the literal re-makes like Zorro, the Lone Ranger, the Postman Always Rings Twice (for the third time), etc., ad infinitum.² But this article will concern itself with the exhibition, the language of the art institution, a language of power and of formal sanction.

Some activities, like art, which operate outside or escape from the walls of Nietzsche's "prison-house" of language, are returned there for resentencing. This is not because all thinking is done within the walls of language, as Nietzsche asserted and with which most artists would find disagreement, but, is due to the inescapable logic that all thinking about thinking is done within the framework of a language. In this case, the thinking about art is done by the exhibition, a language of authority, and in the case of the three international exhibitions addressed here, an official language.

VENICE

Don't worry about the Apocalypse. Someday, the whole world will be crushed by the weight of stretcher bars.

William Wiley

Venice plays host to the oldest of the international Biennales, a fact befitting a city whose decline historians argue as beginning from the end of the War of the League of Cambrai in 1513 with the subsequent Italianization of policies or as late as the seventeenth century when its economic hold on maritime trade was lessened. Regardless, there is a book by Lawrence Alloway called **the Venice Biennale 1895 - 1969: from**

². This phenomena has to be seen within the larger relationship of Hollywood to Washington, a relationship that seems to verge on conspiracy, however conscious. The coincidence of "special effects" films, in this case technological, like *Tron*, *Poltergeist*, *E.T.* to the 1930's "special effects" films of Busby Berkeley and the like, in their 'pure' escapism parallels Reaganomics relationship to 1930's economic desires too closely to not be an index of social values being redetermined through popular culture formats. Pop Music's recent trends to muzaking 1960's songs and other trends in the music industry are part of the same tendencies of a political/commercial interaction which determines artistic practices.

salon to goldfish bowl, which traces the history of concern here.

By the end of the nineteenth century when Venice was well-recognized as a living-museum, a 'museum without walls' and poor plumbing, in no small part due to the idealistic aesthetics of Ruskin, acting inadvertently as tourist promoter, the Biennale was established within the tradition of the Great Exposition, a World Fair of Culture, complete with palm fronds, in which the latest advancements at a national level are compared with those at an international one. No colonies or third world countries need apply, please. A complacent bourgeoisie alternatively chose the sisters, Science and Art on which to lay laurel wreaths of its own accomplishments. Venice, naturally was of the latter persuasion. By 1964, when Rauschenberg was awarded a prize, it had become an increasing embarrassment that the prestige and honour originally intended had been reduced to power politics by commercial interests acting in concert with national interests. The protests of 1968, echoing the radical practices throughout Europe that spring, ruptured completely whatever continuity was left and further reduced the exhibition to a series of national showcases.³ A country's choice of artist(s), then, means more to the politics of art in the country of origin than to any international community. Although there are exceptions, this international venue does not encourage the kinds of international exchange that it is theoretically intended to do, and in fact, now contributes to further isolating the cultural production of minor first-world countries and second world countries represented. That is to say, that rather than acting as an international debut for the work, it tends to act as a death knell, as it is, in many cases, the single opportunity

³. Of Molinari, one of Canada's artists in 1968 in Venice, who refused to shut the pavilion (the other was Ulysse Comtois), Barry Lord has written, "The boycott was a success. The Venice exhibition was widely exposed as the racket it is, and it has never been as powerful since. But the directors of the Biennale showed that they appreciated Molinari's loyalty in 1968 for precisely what it was worth. They awarded him a minor prize." Lord, Barry, *The History of Painting in Canada - Towards A People's Art*, NC Press, Toronto, Ontario, 1974, p. 167.

for international exposure. Works return to the national obscurity from which they were momentarily liberated, its makers forever able to write in their biographies that they have 'international reputations'.

This seems due to many factors. One is obviously that all work in the national pavillions in Venice is completely decontextualized. The work is even more isolated, elite and autonomous than it would be in a museum setting. It is vulnerable to easy dismissal on morphological grounds i.e. it looks like something else and therefore can be understood without reference to its context of production, which isn't available even if someone were curious. It is easier to avoid work by assigning it to the category of 'derivative' than to work at understanding its discourse in the light of more known or familiar examples.

There is also the very factor of a national context to begin with, the true kiss of death in international art circles. There is a need to be perceived to be 'international' in nature to be taken seriously, although at a less visible level the international art community now seems like nothing more than certain national chauvinisms vying for power and warring for markets. Nevertheless, the facade must be maintained and national representation is considered a default status. True, particularly in Venice, the bevy of government bureaucrats and diplomatic officials associated with many of the pavilions make obvious the impression that the work is there to serve a country's image of itself. As Venice is still treated as though it had the full standing of a city-state, many countries maintain consulates or embassies there (The Peggy Guggenheim Foundation Museum acts unofficially in this capacity for the United States of America). The diplomatic level takes the opportunity of the occasion of the Biennale to serve its own priorities and its public-relations efforts are aimed at goals on multi-levels, often to the detriment of the nature of the work exhibited. It is an eminent case in which the social space of the exhibition entirely affects readings of the

work, sometimes subverting it to contradictory designs. Decontextualization couldn't be more complete if it had been planned.

This condition is less true of the countries represented which are members of the European Economic Community. The context of Western Europe as a physical and economic entity with a shared history is provided and the cultural exchanges between and among the Western European nations has an ongoing tradition which is even more encouraged by growing anti-Americanism and increased continental jingoism. The museum system in Europe is highly competitive, both for funding and aesthetic positions, but it is reliant on transnational cooperation to forward large projects. Thus, there is a system of continual exchange and the consequent development of a context for work by art information systems and sheer repetition of exhibitions. The academic and curatorial research for exhibitions has a high standard and has provided analysis of a depth to offer even a critical context for the reception of the work. The non-commercial nature of most radio and television in Europe aids in the creation of an informed cultural audience by emphasizing cultural production and even providing venues for it. European work, then, is somewhat contextualized in Venice, although there remain differences which correctly reflect political power. The information about Belgian artists in relation to West German artists, for instance, is a measurement of the relativity of the system.

What might provide a framework for all pavillions in Venice is the theme established by the international committee and sub-committees prior to all Biennales. If such a theme were articulated clearly, it could be the contextual link to the national choices. But the makeup of the larger committee mitigates against clarity. Some countries are represented by their curators, some by diplomats or cultural attachés, some by government agencies and some not at all. Combined with the large Italian delegations representing the nature of Italian bureaucracy (the shortest distance between two points is an arabesque), the theme is often established AFTER many of the countries have determined their participation or it is stated in such general and ambiguous terms that it can be interpreted so broadly as to be virtually meaningless. Or has been the case most often with some countries, like

Canada, the curator has chosen to ignore the theme, even when it was known well in advance. There is no recourse in such cases as every country is understood to have to obey its local pressures rather than to cooperate with the thematic intentions. Pierre Théberge, Canada's commissioner in 1978, when the theme was "Nature into Art and Art into Nature", chose to show two artists in the abstract mode as a deliberate defiance. Eastern Block countries tend to follow this direction of obeying priorities outside the framework established in deference to local politics and demands, sometimes to the point of not opening the doors to their pavilion as happened with the Soviet Union for the past decade. Many countries, then, interpret the exhibition as an opportunity to propagandize a national position or to launch the individual careers of their local artists. As countries use various methods to determine their selector(s) in the first place, these local considerations will continue to work against the possibility of a consistency of purpose. Some curators (or commissioners) are appointed on a regular rotation as is West Germany, some are permanent cultural attachés who choose all works for all international shows; in the United States of America, there is a competition juried by the International Communications Agency, whereas in England the British Council (not the British Arts Council) appoints the selector. This diverse combination of government, bureaucratic and personal interests insures that even a diluted theme may never carry the consistency necessary to make comparative analysis or appraisal possible.

The central, or theme, pavilion itself, where such articulation should be found, has represented internal Italian critical polarities, often directly linked to formal Italian politics, or is the result of yet another international committee unable to cohere, reminiscent of the aphorism "a camel is a race horse designed by a committee". The planning becomes an exercise in international compromise and what is left of the initial energy of the theme is emptied further by national interests at this stage and by the logistics of organizing a major exhibition in a less-than-modern city (Venice does not have an airport). The details of these enormous administrative problems burdened with an unwieldy bureaucracy overwhelm any intellectual enterprise and reduce the installation to artificial or pragmatic concerns only. It is within this labyrinth, this

place to lose oneself, of contradictory aims that the Biennale of Venice is to be seen and understood.

"At the beginning of the century, it was the painters who wished to be most modern, which means most committed to the future, who rummaged most furiously in the past."

André Malraux

Venice, then is the voices of Babel. Each voice is distinct and occasionally, even articulate, but this does not exclude the parable of Babel. The problem remains that no one can understand the other and the tower that is built by such linguistic alienation is askew, non-functional, unfinished and a source of constant frustration for anyone involved. The general inclination by most countries was to offer a conservative and cautious reconsideration of one of their country's overlooked artists, a kind of tribute to a persistent behaviour or even an unfashionable style. The caution allowed for a careful consideration of non-risk, but responsible, development of artists who by definition are not young. In one case, the American, the caution was so extreme as to be the retrospective per se, "Robert Smithson: A Retrospective View", a smaller version of a show which had already been seen in Minneapolis, Chicago, La Jolla, Austin and New York. Organized by Robert Hobbs of Cornell University, the exhibition will subsequently travel in Europe. The nature of the small pavilion 'displaced' Smithson's efforts, emphasizing the formalist object nature of his work, their museumability over their conceptuality, although the catalogue argues persuasively for just the opposite. The tribute to Smithson's influence in creating new spaces for sculpture — the 'nonsites', and his acceptance and use of post-industrial implications for artists were unfortunately submitted to an historicization which included so many earlier works (the mirror and glass pieces) and drawings as to physically undermine the sense of his contribution. The earth works were easily overlooked, being represented only by a slide show in a tiny vestibule. This is, perhaps, the weakness of the traditional retrospective, which feels the need to catalogue as well as to analyze. The art historian's professional tendency to catalogue provides for an equalizing of the objects, as in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. Smithson's own sense of the museum as a place for documenting the work, rather than making

"The protests of 1968, echoing the radical practices throughout Europe that spring, ruptured completely whatever continuity was left and further reduced the exhibition to a series of national showcases."

it autonomous, was negated by the crowded installation and inclusion of so many earlier works, rather like proving that an 'abstract' painter can draw representationally, as well.

The British chose to exhibit the work of Barry Flanagan, a mini-retrospective, complete with a photographic and written chronology in the catalogue, with Venice as one of the sites of the exhibition which will also be shown in London and Krefeld. The use of Venice as a stop-over on a museum tour is becoming more frequent and points to economic determinations of government-sponsored art exhibitions. Flanagan is a kind of doodler sculptor, an avowed iconoclast who seemingly reacted against the more well-known tradition of British sculpture represented by Anthony Caro. This localized argument, which some would call a dialectic, has its parallel in many cultural situations. (For example, the funk ceramic sculpture by Regina artists was a direct reaction to the modernist 'abstract' sculpture and painting perpetuated by Saskatoon artists who had come under the full sway of the Emma Lake School.) Flanagan's bronzed hares are becoming his signature. His break-away to casual uses of carved stone, pinch pots in clay, soft installations and the more recent hares posited a new expectation for other younger British sculptors. The animals act as a surrogate vehicle for the artist's imaginative life, dancing, boxing, doing acrobatics etc. The gentle humour of the small objects and the humanized animals is eminently likeable, unless you're a die-hard cynic, but the so-called spontaneity of the pieces is completely denied, particularly by the bronze. The deliberate grey carpeting of the floor in the pavilion together with the pedestals for the works denies any slim possibility of interpreting this activity as mockery. What initially seems to be irreverent is actually a reverence for art in the extreme, as commodity, with humanizing abilities and non-contextual character. Flanagan, himself, does not encourage any symbolic interpretation saying,

"sculpture is without audience, message, communication, comfort, diversion, or good or bad looks, nor does it fall into a time pattern of history — convenient for the articulation thereof". He confirms the suspicion that these are merely subjective meanderings, whimsical speculations which have the pretension of seriousness. Flanagan, very much a part of his time, is a 'born-again' to the traditional mediums of stone (Italian marble) and bronze after avoiding conventional materials and practices for some time. His works are not a reaction against nor a contribution to the tenets of modernism then, but are mere echoes of them in a figurative guise, remaining commodity speculation in which the subjectivity of the artist is important for reasons of 'vision' once again. One if left wondering why, if the British were committed to showing a representational sculptor, they didn't choose to show the works of Tony Cragg or Bill Woodrow, works of recycled materials, which represent a truly engaged consideration of sculptural traditions rather than the reconfirmation of banal values. Both these exhibitions, American and British, seem like good examples of the 'favorite son' motif that Venice compels in its national exhibitors.

Two other national pavillions were conservative by nature, but more provocative in their implications, being less adulatory and more analytical. The Dutch pavillion, curated by Jan Debbaut, is a selection of works from 1960 to 1982 by Stanley Broun or Stanley Broun, as he is seen in print. It is a serious look at this conceptualist who has spent these twenty years carefully documenting aspects of his own daily life, activities like walking through a city, in relation to other people's lives, the environment, and measuring devices. Using simple strategies of operation, Broun categorized these activities by arbitrary prerequisites and thus, produced a remarkable body of work in which his activities can be organized and set against measuring devices like the number of footsteps in a walk, or the distance of footsteps taken, etc. and

catalogued the results. His conversion of distance to measurement and vice versa provides a "ready-made" activity for the artist. In the absence of belief systems, this framework of documentation provides an aesthetic by-product rather than an intentional product, even more spare than the day-paintings of On Kawara. Albert Speer's imaginary walk around the world, conducted daily in the courtyard at Spandau, or Hamish Fulton's ordinary photographs of one point in a walk are evoked by the minimalist, but expansive acts of Broun. His preoccupation allows him an open-ended artistic practice, never completed and in turn provides a meaning originating from an objective status to a subjective one without preconceived values. The arbitrary nature of subjective meaning is revealed, an apt theme and choice of artist at a time when subjectivity is making a full recovery in so much painting. The catalogue does not make claims for the work, instead Debbaut describes it thoroughly allowing the modest intentions to be exposed and appreciated. The show, significantly, allowed Broun to make a work based on the measurements of one wall of the pavillion, a testament to the work's potency for ongoing relevancy, as well as its everyday nature.

In the Swiss pavillion, Dieter Rot took the occasion of the Biennale to document a year's activities leading to the installation seen there. Like Marthe Wéry in the Belgian pavillion, who used the occasion to explore a series of colour paintings constructed in relation to the architectural scale of the spaces, Rot used the occasion to make a daily diary of his comings and goings, thoughts, experiences and friends. The results are pages, usually with at least one polaroid, together with notes for the days. More evidently personal than Broun because of the autobiographical content, the work nevertheless becomes a kind of sociological overview of an artist's behaviour, the relationship to travel and other countries, seasons, kinds of roads, landscapes and architecture encountered, the interior decoration of friend's and his homes, the busy-

ness and business of being an artist who is going to have an exhibition in Venice. Another informal document was the installation of twenty-four Super 8mm silent projectors (12 projecting to one wall, 12 on the opposite, running simultaneously), showing casual footage shot on each day in which new information was provided as well as information which reinforced by repetition the notes and photos in the other space. By using Venice as the focus for his investigations, Rot succeeds in providing a context for understanding in a more direct and specific way than other exhibitions in Venice usually do. Without being systemic, other than chronological, Rot realized this project by the accumulation of random events recorded, maintaining an actuality by directing his concerns, his 'performance' of a year, to the space and time in which the viewer was also to be found. These, then, Holland and Switzerland, are examples of national pavillions within the European context that geared their exhibitions to concerns already understood. That is, in one case, the reassessment of a conceptual artist in relation to painting's resurgence on the market and a piece made specifically for Venice by an artist whose work and collage practices are well-known in Europe.

Canada's case is the example of an exhibition which has, with few exceptions, always been dominated by the architecture of its pavillion. It is a small building, constructed in 1958, designed by an Italian architect. In what he thought must have been appropriate for a country he was ignorant of, the architect developed a floor plan based on the motif of the maple leaf. We should probably consider ourselves lucky that the thistle or the shamrock are not our organic leitmotifs. The subsequent angles coupled with the inclusion of a living tree in the building make the pavillion seem like a much-needed tea house at the top of the hill hidden back between the imposing structures of the British and German pavillions. Why it wasn't stuck between Britain and France in recognition of our colonial history is never explained. At best, then, it looks like a west coast guest cottage with no view, its glass walls facing a high wall rather than the sea just behind. Works of art have never sat comfortably on its many walls on the one side with the glaring reflections from the glass on the other side. Jessica Bradley, of the National Gallery of Canada who have the

mandate for this exhibition, chose to exhibit the works of Paterson Ewen and tried to best represent his output with nine paintings. The choice fits the conservative tenor of the Biennale and is a tribute to an artist who, after gaining a considerable national reputation as an 'abstract' painter, turned to representational images as subject ten years ago. He 'reproduces' images, usually diagrams, with a strong materiality, and as such, is an interesting touchstone for discussions of "post-modernism". The two paintings of human figures are atypical and unnecessary as they provide an idea of 'range' in subject matter which is untrue and further crowd an already crowded space. Happily, the sunlight enhances rather than obscures this particular exhibition. It must be hoped that in the future artists will work to the space, or even that an architect might use the pavillion as an occasion to renovate the space to make it a more empathetic and functional exhibition space, one which does not discourage other mediums than painting. It must be mentioned here that it is still better than a temporary pavillion which is accorded to some countries, like Australia, as they are not necessarily completed at the time of the opening, a statement which attests to the host country's organizational abilities and priorities. It should also be stated that the National Gallery of Canada has retained its policy of producing the most overdesigned catalogues of any nation with illustrations numbered twice and which makes Bradley's readable text a chore. These few examples show, I think, some of the variance in national concerns represented by the nature of how the choices are made, and how a vague theme interpreted very differently according to national, critical or personal interests and how the architecture may influence the exhibition directly also. Other national pavillions would also serve to explain the conundrum of the Venice Biennale as an 'exhibition'.

The theme pavillion is a hodge podge par excellence. Based on the title "Arte Comme Arte", subtitled "Art and the Persistence of the Art Work", it seems to mean artists who have gone their own way regardless of fashion, critical analysis or markets, and is a large display of a few works each by many artists, all European. A central room shows works by Brancusi, Cobielle and Matisse to vaguely justify the position historically, although they are all weakly

represented (photographs of Brancusi's major works and only two Matisse paintings). Each room has one or two artists emphasizing their individuality, I suppose, in room after room after room, a manner which owes much to art fairs, the now famous WestKunst and Bonwit Teller's store windows. Most of the work is painting, but not just painting, it is easel painting by artists who are traditionalists in the worst sense of academic practice. It it was good enough for Vermeer, it's good enough for me variety. Christ, still-lives, and landscapes abound. The works range from the 'magic realism' of Ferrone to the surreal pain of Gritzke to the watercolours of Martial Raysse and the plaster relief landscapes of Raymond Masson. If so much individuality is highly valued, why are the works so much like other works one finds in any country in any commercial gallery? Perhaps our culture has become so homogenous that subjectivity is now a common property, at least within the schools that train such artists. Or perhaps, and more likely, this is simply the kind of work that plays on the authority of the history of art for its own authority and that kind of provincialism is universally available. One is reminded of student work which looks only to coffee-table books on the moderns and masters for its inspiration. And it is easy to immediately recognize a national equivalent for the work shown. Persistence really means tradition for its own sake in this pavillion and its reactionary implications are lamentable. Critics who are announcing the death of painting here and those who oppose subjectivism could use this place as proof of its non-existence.

In the three salt cellars of the Zattere and the Cantieri Navali on the Guidecca, younger artists are shown in **Aperto '82** curated by Tomaso Trini, a well-known Italian critic. In fairness to Trini, it must be noted that he accepted to organize this addendum at very short notice and its results may be due to that in most part. The three brick spaces of the cellars were lit with coloured florescent lighting success-

4. Or public galleries, for that matter. The recent **Monumenta** exhibition organized by three Toronto types and held simultaneously at Y.Y.Z. Mercer Union, A Space and Gallery '76 seems a mirror image of this tendency. Without mentioning the few exceptions, one could see in those four galleries the same painting based on **Artforum** reproductions or perhaps, even the Venice catalogue. This kind of 'reproduction' is regressive and not of the order or spirit of which Paul Taylor speaks. It speaks of a 'ready-made' in terms of the acceptance of a kind of thinking rather than the 'ready-made' as a cultural image.

ively in blue, yellow and red. (Yes, it was like a Flavin or a discotheque). This produced dark atmospheres which rendered the works coldly impotent. Each artist had a wall divided from the next by open screening which resulted in a single-file aisle, denying serious attention to the work. Although some of the works were capable of sustaining interest, and some were definitely not of the sort of painting described above, it was impossible to have any other reaction than hoping to see works by these artists at another time under favourable conditions.

On the Guidecca, in a hard-to-find building, more young artists were to be found. Here, the installation was a series of temporary "booths", low

walls within a very high-ceilinged building originally used for building boats. If the salt cellars gave the impression of a closed-in vegetable market, this installation was more like an agricultural fair each artist in a stall. There were some examples of the American artists, like Salle and Schnoebel, who are trying to recapture the painting market that the new Italian painters threatened to wrest away in New York and some other artists from Europe less well-known. Jean Luc Vilmouth, the one artist to be included in all three exhibitions being discussed here made two effective installations, as articulate and ironic as ever. Tim Head, the only artist to commandeer a space which was

distinct, did a projected image floating in a very black space, a convincing argument for working in mediums not as easily appropriated. The Guidecca show was a bit of fresh air, on the whole, not being as reactionary as the theme pavillion nor quite as oppressive as the salt cellar installations. But, the lack of overall coherent theme in Venice, the many administrative and political intricacies of the exhibition's organization and the national interests being served make it, as an 'exhibition', an unruly and chaotic statement. Venice merely "persists" at this time. □

Bruce Ferguson is a Montreal-based critic and curator.

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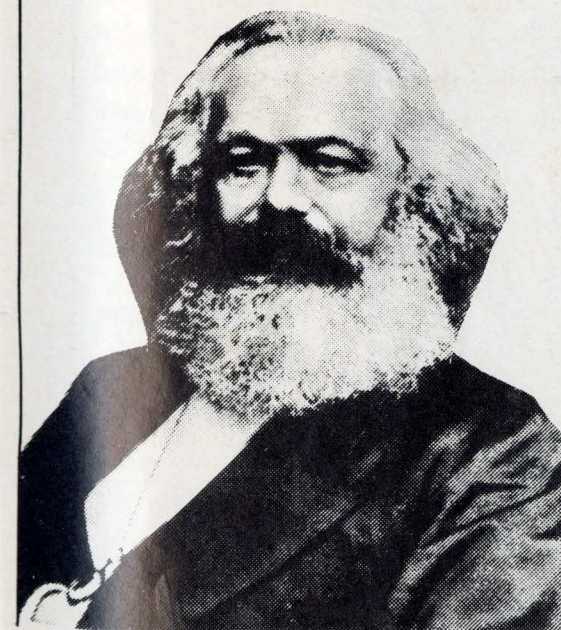
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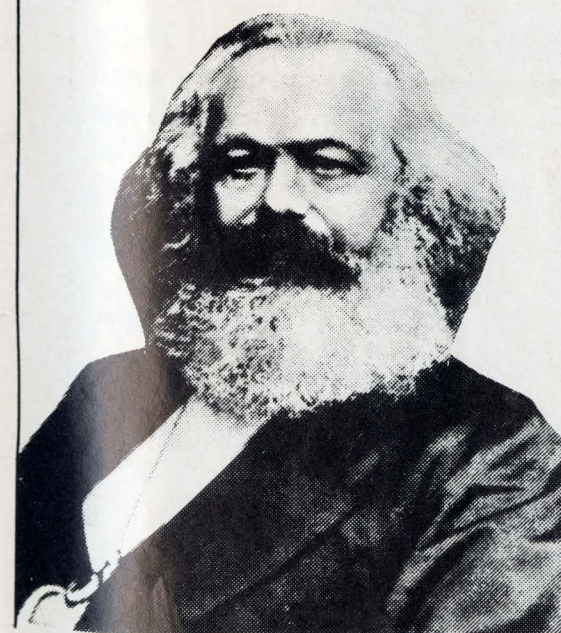
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