

# RED-HERRING 2



**\$1.25**

**The ARTISTS' UNION, N.Y....Artists meeting to build socialism...Demonstration against the Shah of Iran...Speech by Langston Hughes at the AMERICAN WRITERS' CONGRESS (1935)...Art in the trade union movement...Petty bourgeoisie meets revolution..."Democratic rights" in capitalist society**

**Red-Herring Box 557 Canal St Sta N.Y., N.Y. 10013**

## EDITORIAL

In the early 30's, when Communists and the working class were fighting side by side, when blacks and whites were fighting side by side, and the unorganized were being organized, waging strike after strike against capitalism--in the early 30's, class struggle raised "proletarian culture" as an important issue for artists and writers in the U.S. There were constant debates about culture, and about the meaning of proletarian culture in particular. Predictably, a number of artists and writers rejected it out of hand. In their eyes, proletarian culture was mere "propaganda", aesthetically rigid and unimaginative, and artists who produced proletarian culture little more than "artists in uniform". Even those who showed a passing fancy for proletarian culture, James T. Farrell for instance, would generally insist that the criteria of "art" were essentially separate from those of "politics". But people like Mike Gold and Langston Hughes made it clear that *all* art was propaganda, all art political, and that if it wasn't serving the interests of the proletariat, it was only serving the interests of the bourgeoisie. They also showed that, at its best, proletarian culture could embody a vividness and power, a political and aesthetic optimism, that was completely alien to bourgeois culture. Gradually artists and writers were forced to take sides in the class struggle, and as long as the debates raged clear lines of demarcation could be drawn between those who sided with the proletariat and those who sided with the bourgeoisie.

The line on proletarian culture came out of the Soviet Union, and at its heart was the class struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie. But in 1935 the Soviet Union began to modify its line, calling for a united front against fascism, playing down the class struggle between the U.S. working class and bourgeoisie in favor of the worldwide class struggle against fascism. At the same time, proletarian culture was no longer pushed so strongly, giving way to "anti-Fascist" and "people's" culture. Without this strong political focus on the proletariat, not only artists and writers sympathetic to the Communist movement, but the Communist movement itself, began to lose sight of revolutionary culture. Under the "leadership" of Earl Browder, the Communist Party USA started to use the United Front to liquidate all class struggle against the bourgeoisie--pulling out of the CIO, pulling out of the Sharecroppers' Union in the Deep South, and out of radical cultural groups. In addition, the CPUSA had generally allowed too many petty bourgeois artists and writers to remain "fellow travelers", instead of educating and transforming them into Communists. Because of these incorrect policies the CPUSA didn't involve enough petty bourgeois artists and writers in the day-to-day struggles of the masses, or make them understand the truly *revolutionary* character of both the United Front and the Hitler-Stalin Pact (1939). At the same time, though, there was a lot of "red"-baiting and repression by reactionary forces, the state especially. And when push came to shove--when artists and writers were threatened with losing their federally supported jobs, for instance--they usually sided with the reactionary forces. So as the 30's wore on, many artists and writers began to drift away from mass organizations like the Artists' Union and American Artists' Congress in order to make individual careers for themselves; while a smaller number of artists and writers who still sided with the revolution were actually expelled from these organizations.

Of far more impact, though, was the expansion of U.S. capitalism during WWII and the more or less complete degeneration of the CPUSA under Browder. When the Soviet Union called for the united front against fascism, they recognized it as a temporary alliance between mortal enemies--where "unity" with the bourgeoisie was never intended to liquidate struggle against the bourgeoisie. Yet Browder began to argue that U.S. capitalism was still a young and progressive capitalism, and that the working class could not only form an alliance with the bourgeoisie, but actually begin to collaborate with them. Once the CPUSA consolidated around this line in the early 40's, their so-called struggle for "socialism" began to be reformist instead of an organized struggle for political power. And proletarian culture suffered the same fate, not only in the Communist movement, but in the anti-imperialist and union movements as well. Both socialism and proletarian culture were dropped from the political agenda, except in the form of empty phrases and outright lies.

But now a genuine Communist movement is beginning to fill the void left by the bankrupt CPUSA, and though a single, anti-revisionist Party has not been formed yet, there is a new motion to build this Party. At the same time, genuine Communists are beginning to lead the anti-imperialist and union movements again, lead the struggle against national and sexual oppression and all other forms of class exploitation. All of these developments have begun to make proletarian culture an important issue and again, too. Not only is this reflected in the growing number of revolutionary cultural groups, and the rising importance of cultural work in both the Communist and anti-imperialist movements, it is also reflected in recent petty bourgeois publications.

The editors of *Red-Herring* would like to express our solidarity with this motion to build class struggle, and with proletarian culture as a specific weapon of class struggle. Indeed, we are planning to devote most of *Red-Herring* 33 to the subject of proletarian culture, and we would like anyone who is interested to send us theoretical articles on proletarian culture, historical articles, proletarian prose, poetry and visual art. We don't want to limit these contributions to proletarian culture, since all anti-imperialist culture helps to move the revolutionary movement forward; but we want to focus on proletarian culture, and especially on socialist realism, as the highest expression of proletarian culture. Artists and writers need to re-open the debate about proletarian culture, need to find out what proletarian culture means in the U.S. today. Too many anti-imperialist artists and writers are content to mimic the culture of the Soviet Union and China, particularly China, never learning from the working class here, from the rich and often revolutionary culture of the U.S.--Appalachian culture, immigrant culture, the culture of the oppressed nationalities. Even worse, a number of petty bourgeois artists and writers have been taking a very opportunist relationship to socialism and class struggle--and without clear lines of demarcation, they have been getting away with it, unexposed.

Revolutionary cultural work can't afford to be either dogmatic or opportunist--proletarian culture, least of all. When it is correctly understood and practiced, proletarian culture not only arises from the struggle for socialism, but helps to build this struggle as well. Although there is clearly an aesthetic dimension to proletarian culture, it isn't an abstract dimension, but concretely tied to the struggles of the multi-national working class against capitalism.

But we are raising the issue of proletarian culture not simply to express our solidarity with it, or to put out a call for our next issue. Proletarian culture also helps to explain the political direction, and political inadequacies, of this issue. We have gained a lot of practical experience lately, and most of all we've learned how limited it is to make culture "in the interests of the working class" unless we are also organized in the interests of the working class, that is, in working class organizations. As long as petty bourgeois artists and writers remain aloof from the masses, we will never be able to uphold the political line of *learning* from the masses. Ultimately, this will only result in another form of opportunism.

When the first issue of *Red-Herring* was published last year, most of us had just become involved in the anti-imperialist movement in this country. Although we posted numerous warnings about the danger of "made-in-New York" magazines, and chose our name according to this so-called contradiction, we understood very little about the class basis of combatting art world imperialism--or any other features of imperialism, for that matter.

The problem with the first issue wasn't that it came from New York. So does this one. The problem was that our practice was still organized by the New York *art world*--and however much our changing world view demanded that we separate ourselves from it, we ended up talking almost exclusively to the audience of the New York art world. To adventuristically proclaim that we were "openly working for socialism", while remaining a small, isolated petty bourgeois group of artists, was to relegate class struggle to the realm of ideas. We didn't fully grasp, then, that it wasn't enough to talk about "the interests of the working class" if we weren't integrated with the masses and taking up mass issues in both theory and practice.

Although we have decided to keep the name "*Red-Herring*", we have to reject the cynical attitude with which this name was originally chosen. We feel our attitude at that time was characteristic of a phase of petty bourgeois development--oh so fervently rejecting the values of the bourgeois art world on the one hand, but unable to fully commit ourselves to class struggle and the interests of the working class on the other. And while an analysis of state support for the arts helps to reveal the expanding role of the state in class struggle, it is not, strictly speaking, a "burning issue" for the masses at the moment. Unlike the struggle against national and sexual oppression, against the Bakke decision, the Shah of Iran, no-strike clauses.

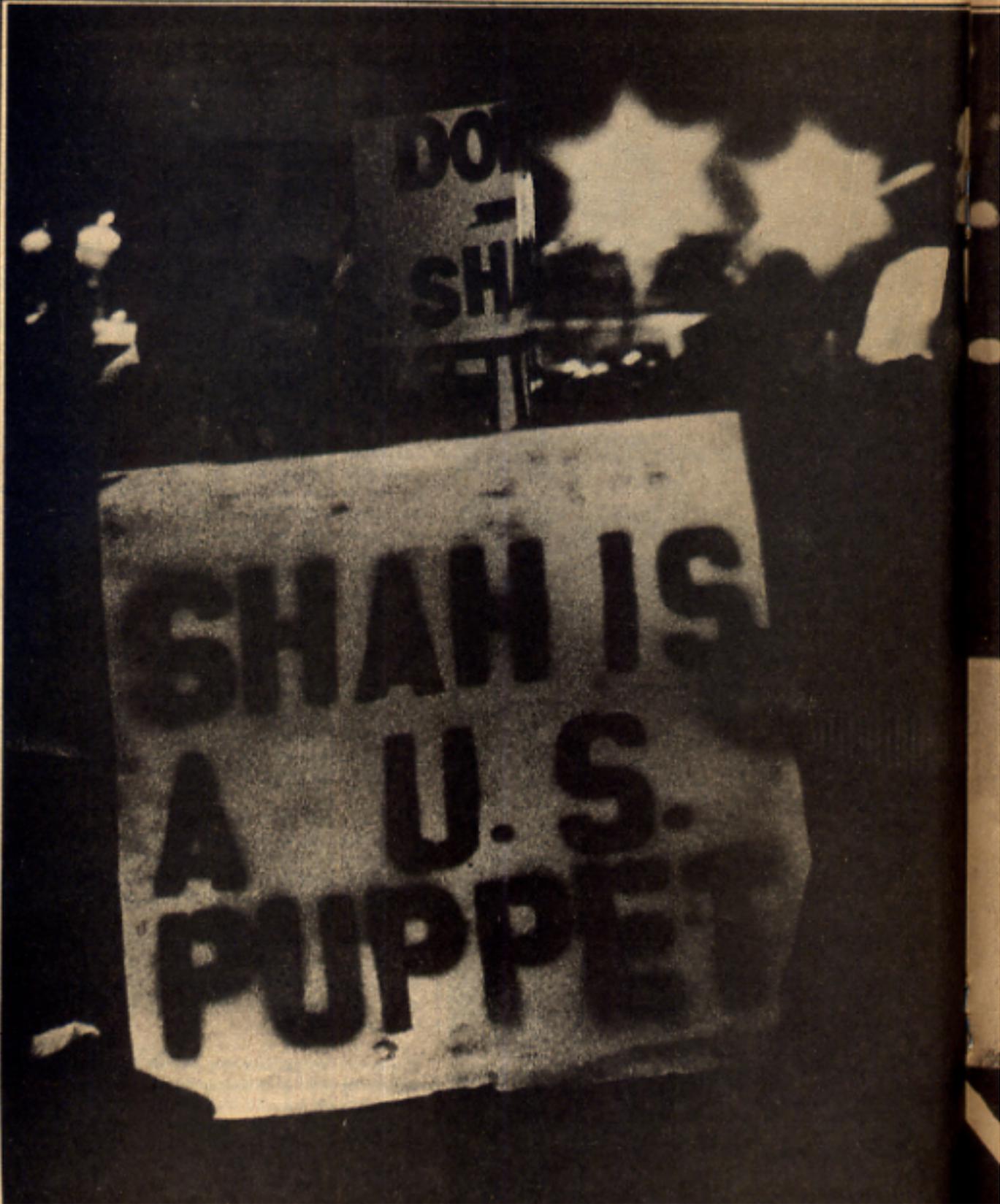
Since then, we have become much more committed to the anti-imperialist movement. The genuine needs of the working class have gradually begun to replace the narrow art world "militancy" of our work, as we move from being anti-bourgeois to being pro-socialist. Our transformation has really just begun, however. We are still independently organized politically, with a still undefined relationship to the anti-imperialist movement. And the anti-imperialist organizations we are associated with in New York are themselves mostly petty bourgeois at the moment. At best, we have taken only the first step towards fusion with the masses. Without this fusion, our support for the working class remains largely theoretical.

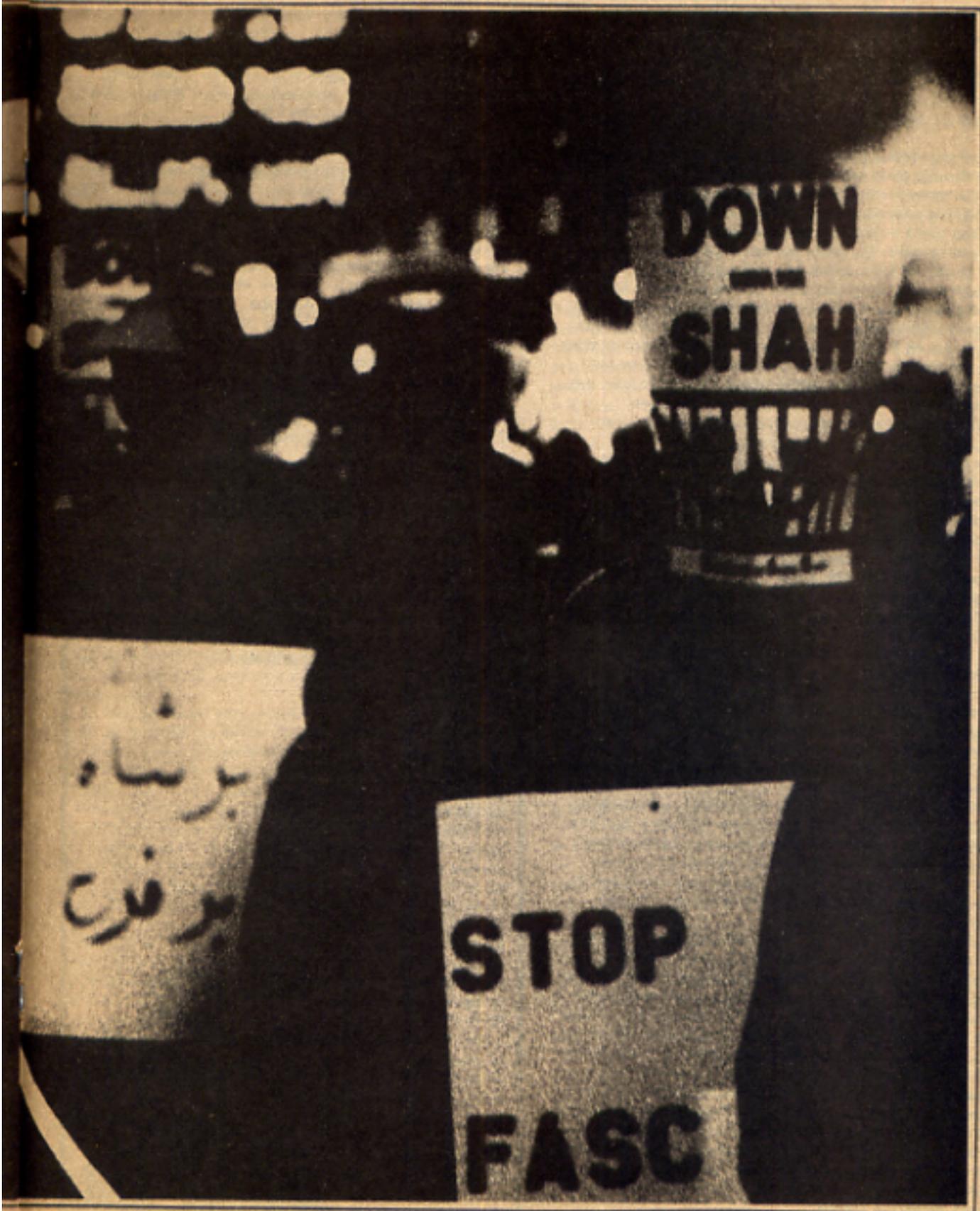
So more than anything else, this issue of *Red-Herring* reflects a number of the struggles we've gone through in the past two years. Its theme, if it can be said to have a single them, is basically this process of political and personal change--this struggle against the "self", as the Chinese might say. What this means, in part, is that we've taken our contradictions as artists and tried to generalize them into the contradictions of the petty bourgeoisie as a class, and then tried to analyse these general contradictions in relation to the working class and anti-imperialist struggles for liberation.

But if this issue of *Red-Herring* is largely a reflection of the struggles we've gone through in the past two years, it is also an indication of the struggles we are still going through. Beginning to emerge is a disagreement over the political line our work should embody and the way *Red-Herring* is organized. At present, many of the individuals who edit *Red-Herring* are involved in anti-imperialist organizations. Yet we realize that the political base of *Red-Herring*, as a magazine, is both narrow and weak, and that it is not enough for the individuals in *Red-Herring* to be organized by the anti-imperialist movement, if the magazine itself is not. So what we're struggling over is the relationship *Red-Herring* will have to the anti-imperialist movement--recognising that the anti-imperialist movement also has many petty bourgeois contradictions at the moment. Some of the questions which have come up are: What does it mean to "merge with" or become "affiliated with" an anti-imperialist organization? Is it more important to unify anti-imperialist forces at the moment, or to win new forces to the anti-imperialist movement? Is it possible to be an independent organization and not be sectarian, or aloof from the masses? What is the role of culture in the anti-imperialist movement--how does it arise from concrete struggles against imperialism and help to build those struggles? Should our principal audience be petty bourgeois or working class? What is the difference between *Red-Herring* and other "anti-imperialist" publications--that is, is *Red-Herring* a sectarian magazine? At the moment none of us are clear on these questions. But they are crucial questions, not only for ourselves but for the entire anti-imperialist movement. And they are inseparable from the issue of proletarian culture, especially that of socialist realism.

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# ART AND UNIONS IN THE U.S.

**NOTE:** The editors do not endorse everything in this article --notably its unsubstantiated assessments of Marxist-Leninists, its history of unions which almost never mentions the role of culture in that history, and the way in which working outside official, bureaucratic channels is so undervalued. The last point is especially important, since many of the "difficulties" of working in the labor movement disappear if artists work through contacts with rank and file members, instead of through official channels. Nevertheless, this article clearly supports the idea of artists taking a progressive role in the labor movement, and this is something we all need to understand.

It is always easier to write an article if there is a more or less specific audience in mind, and one knows it well. I find that this has been a difficult piece to write, partly because I am not very sure who is on the receiving end. That is, there seem to be several possible audiences, each with its own requirements. The cultural left in this country is a rather diverse population--ranging from Marxist-Leninist artists, in one of several pre-Party or Party formations, to left liberal artists without any organizational commitments at all. In fact, there are a number of problems with the cultural left, aside from its ideological diversity, and I think I can more clearly just list some of the problems I see:

1. Although everyone recognizes that there are contradictions between these ideologies, there is almost no way to discuss the contradictions--much less resolve them. People are either in isolation or too sectarian to talk with "outsiders".
2. Theory and practice are not well united. This is my strongest complaint about Marxist-Leninists, but it is something which we are all equally guilty of. As a consequence, "theory" tends to be academic and "practice" tends to be spontaneous.
3. As long as theory and practice are not united, there will be strategies without tactics and tactics without strategies. For theory and practice determine our strategies and tactics, while the effectiveness of our strategy and tactics helps to inform theory and practice.
4. The relation between political action and cultural action is not very developed. For example, a visual display or a film-showing at a union are often not in tandem with major issues before the union at the time.
5. The role of art in the revolutionary process is not agreed upon. Some of us tend to regard art as something which is liberating in and of itself--the only problem being that the working class needs more exposure to it. Others (and I include myself) tend toward a more didactic art.
6. There is not an adequate analysis of capital and labor in the U.S. today. Successful strategies and tactics depend upon a correct class analysis--upon building the right model of capitalism's strengths and weaknesses, both domestically and internationally.

Of course this list doesn't contain all the things a left cultural movement needs to correct, but these are some of the most significant ones.

I want to make it clear, then, that I am not writing as one of the politically "advanced" or "vanguard" artists, addressing a similarly "advanced" or "vanguard" audience. First

of all, I don't consider myself one of the "advanced". But I am not convinced that those who do consider themselves "advanced" have proven it in words and deeds. In my experience, the M-L groups, and the artists within those groups, do not have any significant base yet in the U.S. working class.

On the otherhand, I think there are quite a few artists who may be less "advanced", but who are nevertheless coming to a critical stand against both the political and economic status quo, and against whatever art community they may belong to (production, consumption, distribution). This is a significant development, I think, because the only way artists are going to move to a higher level of theory and practice is if they transform their present theory and practice--that is, begin from their present position. A high artist and a commercial artist may get to the same political level, but they will get there in somewhat different ways. So, as a high artist and art teacher, it is this nascent process of radicalization which I feel closest to and which, in general, I want to address. More specifically, though, I am writing for those artists who are interested in advancing both their own political level, and the level of class struggle in the U.S., by doing art within or for labor unions.

Progressive artists should work within or for unions for the same reason other progressives should--for without the masses of workers there will never be a left political and cultural revolution. Of course, unions are not the only aspect of a strategy for revolution. But the reason they are attractive, although less than one-fourth of the workforce is unionized and despite the stagnation of unions, is that they are a pre-existing organization of workers and are located at the nationally vital centers of production. If this organization could be expanded and transformed, it could have a decisive political role to play. Leaving it as it is only retards revolution. I see cultural activity, then, as a way to push unions in a more progressive direction--to make them more responsive to the needs of the rank-and-file, instead of the bureaucracy.

So, the introduction to this paper is a call to thought, action and communication among those of us who are honestly moving towards social change. I think in spite of the differences we have, the conditions that limit what we can really do allow for far more unity in action than presently exists. We have to work against our present isolationism and sectarianism. We can't take refuge in being "advanced", and preach anti-sectarianism while practicing the opposite. This only reinforces our separation from each other and the working class. Finally, if you detect a certain restraint and tentativeness in my writing, it is deliberate. I really am not sure what kind of art practice will ultimately prove correct. In fact, for the audience I have in mind, I have more to say about preparation for union work, and questions of affiliation, than I do about actual art-making.

It is not news to anyone that the trade union movement in the U.S. is not in revolutionary opposition to capitalism. It is basically reformist, at best tending something towards the left wing of the Democratic Party on domestic issues and to the right on foreign policy. Most of the unions, and especially the AFL-CIO, are officially and staunchly anti-commu-



managers and workers set the stage for careerism and anti-communist attitudes.

With the merger of the CIO and the AFL, and the expulsion of the socialists and communists during the early Cold War period, the trend toward business unionism that really began with WWII and the unions' commitment to high war productivity, was consolidated. Even in Gompers' time, "enlightened capitalists" and "enlightened labor leaders" understood that they could each offer something to the other, provided revolution was dropped from the agenda. And with this merger (it was more like a take-over by the AFL), and the "reds" out and underground, the basis was laid for labor-management harmony—"partners in production" it was called in the 50's. If it has not always looked like a partnership it is because the leaders of both sides could only maintain credibility with their own constituency by a regular bellicose stance. But if you were to study how often union officers sold out the strikes of their members, you would get some sense of the official compliance of unions with "industrial peace". Capital took advantage of this period to enact crippling laws, like the Taft-Hartley Act and the Smith Act, to further weaken labor.

Now I am not going to even try to describe or account for the success of business unionism beyond this brief sketch. We would have to work deeply through the history of the left and of labor in the U.S. Suffice it to say here that the errors of the left were grave, as was its repression, and the growth of U.S. capital phenomenal. But the result of this was that organized labor became a vast, feudal-like system, by and large, with power jealously guarded by officials at each level and post. There were basically two related bodies which formed the following structures, and which still exist today:

<i>Trade or Industrial Union</i>	<i>Federation</i>
International Union	AFL-CIO
Regional Offices	
State Organization	State Federation
District Council or Lodge	
Local	County Labor Council

If the "international" (a euphemism justified only by the existence of locals in Canada and/or Puerto Rico) was affiliated with the federation, a local had the option of joining (paying per capita) the labor council and/or state federation. Most locals did, in fact, affiliate up the line. On the otherhand, there are now independent unions, such as United Electrical (a CIO union thrown out of the AFL-CIO for failure to join the red purges in the 50's) or the United Auto Workers whose then-President opposed George Meany and left. The function of the federation, however, was more like a confederation in that it didn't really weld the unions into a strong, united political and economic force. Rather, it tended to mediate between the internal affairs of the international unions and the external affairs of their lobbying and public relations efforts.

The most important levels of a union were, and are, the top and bottom. It was in the internationals and the locals

that real resources and control were generally marshalled, and this remains true today. In some cases the locals operated and maintained a high degree of autonomy from the national office, but, also, many were completely controlled from above. The important thing was that the membership was located in the locals. Then, as now, much of what was progressive was happening at the local level.

In the union hall and on the shop floor, most workers knew what was happening and to this day there has been widespread resistance to the control of unions from above by sell-out misleadership. U.S. workers are among the most militant in the world, as measured by the number and length of wild-cat strikes (strikes not sanctioned by the official union). But the odds were too great for an effective resurgence of left or even militant official unionism. Careerism and/or outright corruption were—and remain—cancers in the tissue of most unions, at all levels. The destruction of working class communities and the containment of ethnic communities left unions with two less means of support. The lack of believable social programs narrowed workers' demands, at least the leadership's demands—confining them to a game of financial catch-up. And a halt on organizing again provided gains for the organized at the expense of the unorganized. Also racism and sexism helped to keep a lid on things, as white males headed unions that began to fill with ethnic minorities and women. At work, most of these new members started and stayed at the bottom jobs and pay scales.

But there was a carrot dangled in front of the working class, too. The postwar period was a time of enormous capital expansion for the U.S. Because of the devastation of the rest of the capitalist world during the war, the U.S. had many opportunities to expand its investment in armaments and empire throughout the "free world". Not that the business cycle levelled out, but that it did not dip so deep for so long as before. With the Great Depression and WWII as a backdrop, things for many looked good, and for the rest there was hope. In addition, the mass media stepped up its ideological assault, proclaiming the American Century. Using every possible social institution, middle class values were pumped into every corner of the country and abroad—instilling materialism, individualism and political cynicism. This assault was resisted by many, but without organization and a coherent opposing world view, the official line seemed almost "natural". The pushing of consumerist ideology, of course, went hand in hand with the completely economist (reduction of program to economic items like wages, hours, and benefits) demands of unions, as negotiated by the misleadership.

The turning point came with the Vietnam War. Demand stimulated by the war economy not only brought the U.S. workforce near full employment (either in jobs or the armed services) but stimulated the economies of Europe and Japan, bringing their workers and products into more full competition with ours. These countries helped to keep Americans' morale up for the war by expanding the supply of "butter" (T.V.s, cars, appliances, etc.), while our own industry turned out "guns". But this economic demand was artificial, overheating investment and production which produced not only a balance-of-payments deficit for the first time in this century, but run-away inflation. At the same time certain key sectors, like the oil industry, had been operating too long with marginal profit rates. As soon as the war was

over, two major attacks were made on the standard of living of the workforce. First came rising prices and high interest rates, and then unemployment. In short, a recession was created to cool down the economy. The consequences of this were supposed to be reduced inflation, weeding out of weak and small businesses (the expansion of oligopoly and monopoly) and the *disciplining of workers*. Full employment almost always raises collective expectations, demands and struggles for a greater share of an expanding pie. Unemployment lowers expectations and demands, and creates a greater reserve army of potential *scabs*. Union-busting becomes more prevalent and open.

The loss of the Vietnam War, then, along with the loss of international markets in general, produced a crisis for U.S. capitalism. The bosses began an open offensive against its working class. For the first time, recently, a Democratic administration began to follow the lead of the Republicans in making few concessions to labor and in rolling back social services and welfare. The "belt-tightening" forced upon U.S. multi-national corporations and banks by the workers and peasants of the Third World began to come home to us as increased repression.

In the context of this class war, a major weapon of the working class—its unions—are constantly being exposed for their long-term failure to promote the interests of the majority of workers. The contradictions between what is expected of unions and what they can deliver has become much sharper. In fact, along with the civil rights movement, Watergate, feminism and other cracks in the liberal facade, the economic crisis has had a fairly profound effect on the trade unions. The seemingly unmovable obstacles to change are giving a little, and many workers and even a few of the officials and staff of unions are beginning to break the hold of the conservative leadership. One manifestation of this rarely gets press coverage (especially not in the labor press), and that is the rank-and-file challenges at the local level. A growing number of challenges are successful across the country, and sell-out and corrupt misleaders are

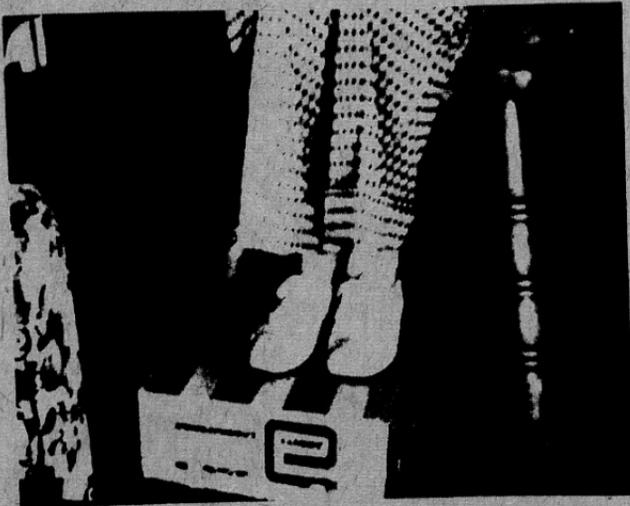
being given the sack. By no means does this mean that a socialist agenda is once more part of the labor movement; but it does mean that union democracy is out of the bag as a major issue. Where, for over three decades, workers have fought for control of their unions and locals, the difference now is that more battles are being won.

It is in this relatively open and changing new period in unions that I see an emerging role for progressive artists and progressive art. That role is to serve the return of culture to the labor movement, to undo its surgical removal by business unionism. And by culture I do not mean elite or high culture, but one that once again comes from the working class community itself. In our socialist past, the union (and the Party) was often the center of a whole range of social and cultural activities which, for the most part, meshed with the political and economic program. Although I do not think we can mechanically go back to those times, I think we can begin to help unions move into a more central place in the lives of workers. An indication of just how serious the problems of non-involvement can become is the extent to which many locals do not encourage any participation by their members in union affairs—except for the paying of dues or, perhaps, during a strike. Too often they are discouraged from even attending union meetings. By not dealing with cultural affairs we are only leaving ourselves to the mass media, which is to say that we are abandoning ourselves to the manipulations of the enemy. The idea is to reverse this trend by working as artists within unions to produce art that:

1. speaks from a working class point of view;
2. brings the rank-and-file membership together;
3. broadens the issues of rank-and-file concern, relating political issues to the economic ones;
4. aids in legitimate struggles for democratic rights.

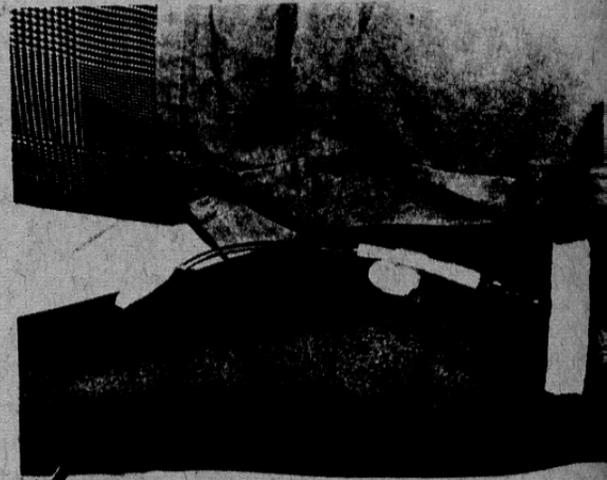
How, then, can an artist or group of artists work within the given union structure? The following are what I think are the major contingencies around which strategies and tactics need to be worked out. Of course, none of these are

## WAITRESS'S BACK



"He said he had known other comp. attorneys in the past that would work for the workers and really get in there and get for them what they deserved. Then the first thing you know they'd be becoming more pro-company, pro-company because it's easier."

## LEAD WORKER'S BLOOD



"I think they try to fool the people about doing the right thing. Just like if they have the government send out a man to inspect the plant, well they get the information early . . . so we clean up all the week. We got it made because we don't do nothing because they're coming. We can't make no dust, we can't do this, 'til they leave. Then it goes back to normal."

completely either/or choices. A lot depends on what kind of art is made, where one is located or can travel, who one knows in unions, the level of the union's political development, etc.

The most important question is that of union membership. While it is not absolutely necessary to be in a union, I think one can work best in organized labor if one is organized, too. First of all, rank-and-file members, and especially officers, tend to be suspicious of people on the "outside" who come around with an interest in organization. On the one hand, you could be a company spy prying into the local's strengths, weaknesses and plans; on the otherhand, a "radical agitator" there to subvert the labor movement.<sup>1</sup> If you belong to a union, you belong to the union's business. Also, other unions and union federations will be more open to members.

But just as important as ground-floor acceptance is the experience of union membership. It is an important part of labor education to see for yourself how a union works and what is on the minds of workers. A sense of what is possible to do (or not possible) is gotten from direct participation and conversation. It is a good idea to become involved in the day-to-day affairs of the union, in addition to art-making or art-related activities.

There are, of course, difficulties for many of us to become union, in that artists (especially "high artists") are rarely organized as such. It is as "something else" that we belong to unions. Related to art-making, though, is art teaching—which is the number one support for artists in the U.S., as opposed to sales in the art market or grants. As teachers, we can belong to one of the public employee or teacher unions. I am a member of a small AFT local in my university. But other artists are working at many other jobs such as carpentry, cab-driving, waitressing, office work, etc. that are, or could be, union. Where there is not a union yet, we can help to initiate or join an organizing drive. In the 30's there were unions of the unemployed, and there are attempts to build these anew.

But work can be done, and is being done, without formal

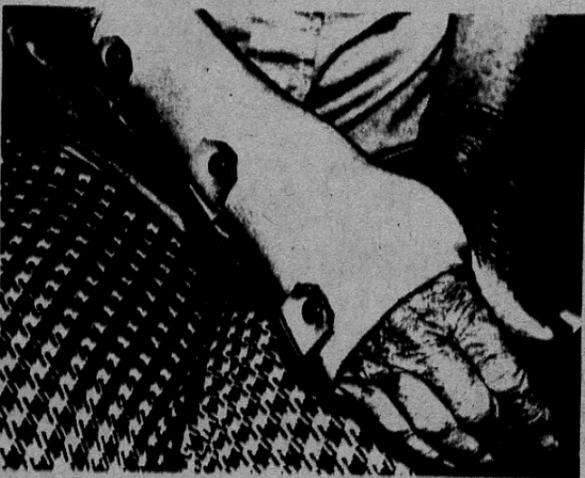
affiliation. This is usually most viable where a fairly active scene already exists which an artist or collective can hook into in some way. The S.F. Bay area provides the contacts and union-requests for a certain amount of work by independent artists, as does New York, and I am sure other cities as well. Often artists work closely with those who belong to a union. Certainly, if and when your work becomes known and valued, requests will come all the time from labor for work.

Finally—with or without membership—it is important to seek contact with progressives inside the labor movement. For it is they who will be close to, and who can help to open up, many of the opportunities to do work. We need a network of people from whom to learn, to get criticism, and to lead us to places to make art.

It is at the level of locals that there are the most opportunities for doing revolutionary cultural work. And I would argue (in spite of my own past practice) that locals are thus the best place to work. The question here is what kind of work to do and how to get it shown to the membership. The first thing is that a reasoned proposal will have to be made by whatever procedures the union has for acceptance or rejection. If this is the first time the form you are using has been proposed (say, a series of photo/text panels), then it should also be explained where and how it will work in the hall or space where it will be shown. That is, the details should be worked out. But this should be the last step, after the work has been discussed with contacts in the local, and some are prepared to endorse the work to the rest of the membership. Sometimes the executive board and president has to be approached and won over first. Some unions have an education committee that certainly should be enlisted for interest and support.

If financial backing, or other uses of union resources are sought, it would probably be best to start out with work that addresses the specific problems of a given union and industry. If it is well-received, it could be shown to other locals of the same union in other towns. With experience gained

## EGG PACKER'S ARM



"I told the foreman, 'It's too dangerous. I can't hurry'. So, sure enough, I got real busy and was having to hurry and was running. The next thing I knew I was on the floor. And from that minute on I have had those real dizzy spells. Just any little thing. I get dizzy. I can't walk straight. If I try to go to upstairs, I don't know. I just wobble around. And I was in a cast for over two years off and on. Then they put me in this brace."

## SHIPYARD WORKER'S HAND



"I think they ought to change the law—instead of the MINIMUM efforts expended to repair and replace it ought to be the MAXIMUM made mandatory."

from this, work might be done for entirely different unions until the artist or group becomes locally known. Perhaps, then, something could be done that could be shown to several or many unions in the area. This would be valuable in getting their memberships together around some issue or problem. At some point, I would encourage pieces produced with the help of non-artist union members.

Another way of working (which is what I have done) is to produce an art work on your own and then approach various locals or the labor council for space to show. Or if you're able to get local museum or gallery shows, the work could be announced through labor channels. A lot depends on whether union members are really likely to go out of their

## OIL WORKER'S BURNS



"When it really comes down to the nitty-gritty it's the employees themselves who won't really make a stand on safety. When it comes down to a bread-and-butter issue, if you make a strike issue over a safety matter, it's going to take a lot more education, in my opinion."

way to conventional art spaces. At any rate, one of the possible advantages to this is that the unions are not as officially accountable for the work as they would be if it were in some way sponsored by a local. The trade-off might be that the work would speak without official authority but, perhaps, with a more advanced political position. Those in the union who support a controversial piece will be able to say that it is the artist who is responsible for the point of view. Of course, this is only possible where labor leaders are not afraid of controversy, and the position is not so far left that it ignores the realities of the situation.

Certainly if a base of interest is built up in one or more unions of an area the central labor council should be approached for support. Sometimes they have halls and space that locals do not and publicity through their paper reaches many locals.

It will be much harder to approach the state or national level of a union with an independently produced art work without the enthusiastic support of one or more locals. There are really only two things you can ask of the higher structures officially. Money can be gotten to produce the work or fund its distribution. And publicity can get it into their locals regionally or nationally. Of course, informally staff or officers may provide contacts with other possible unions or institutions for interest and support.

The above tactics apply to relatively independent art works authored by one or a few people. The virtue of this kind of work is that with careful assessment of audience, conditions, etc., it can broaden the range of issues acceptable within trade unions. But there are other types of work which already have been in existence for some time. There are the films, slide-shows and posters that are more or less commissioned by locals and internationals. Of course the issues are pre-chosen and specific, and formal realization is subject to approval. But for those of us that have the skills it is an already available mode of union work. And the degree to which the artist can improve the political perspective may vary greatly from union to union. Moreover, it is possible that the limited viewpoint of some of this work is as much due to the views of the artists as to the officials who commissioned it. Perhaps the issues could have been given a better context and still have been acceptable in work like the OCAW's slide-show on asbestos or the J.P. Stevens' strike support film, "Testimony".

An important kind of work should also be given consideration by all of us who have the skills, and that is the less "glamorous" tasks of designing leaflets, doing posters, newspaper layouts, etc. at the local level. Such practical work is immediately appreciated and can offer real service in specific struggles.

Another issue of importance is the internal politics of unions. Where there is a more progressive rank-and-file movement to win control of a local or a move by one or more locals against a conservative or corrupt international, there is a need for various kinds of material to explain the issues and rally support. In these cases, backing for work and places to show will not come from official sources, unless at least a local is part of the movement for union democracy. Instead, the resources of the "insurgents" and those of the artists will have to be relied upon. Community spaces, for example, are often used--churches, community centers and schools. Films or slide-works can even be shown in bars. Posters can go many places, leaflets everywhere (especially into the workplace).

So, what kinds of art works will be appropriate for union showing? On the one hand this is a question of what medium will be best suited for the place an art work has to go, and the audience that will see it. On the otherhand, it's a question of what issues an art work should deal with. Let me answer these questions in that order.

There are advantages and disadvantages for every form and medium, and of course there are skills and "talents" which push all of us in one direction or another. My bias toward media and graphics--for the comparative speed and ease with which language and image can be coordinated, as well as for their portability. Also, they tend to reverberate with less elitism than, say, painting.

Consider the trade-offs between a wall piece--a photo/ta work, for example--and a film. The wall piece will require a suitable wall space where workers congregate or pass regularly. A projector, a darkened room, screen and devoted audience are needed for film. The wall piece stays one place for whatever time it is up, but allows for as many readings as anyone has time and interest for. Films are usually shown and gone, and cannot be really studied. Wall pieces allow for more discussion during viewing than film while the latter bring a body of people together where the film's impact can be better measured. Many times, thou

unions show slides and films with no discussion. Both of the modes do allow for a relatively full representation of issues and positions--unlike a poster, for example, which is more limited.

But I hope nothing here is taken to imply that I think that only the forms already used in unions can be worked with. Most of the forms now used by union bureaucracies are merely conventions from elite culture or the mass media. An example of this is the Teamster and Garment Workers billboards and magazine ads. Obviously new ground must be broken. New forms are needed to give a fresh and concise shape to contemporary conditions (though the left art of the past and from abroad has much to offer, and should be studied for what it can add to our struggles in the U.S. today). Even new formats, like mixed-media, should be tried, where appropriate to the issues involved and the space to be used.

Still, the question of what form an art work should take is secondary to what issues it should be dealing with. Only a complex answer would cover all the possible reasons why art works can play a revolutionary role in organized labor or why a union member will go out of the way to see a "piece". But the main thing is that art works must address issues which need attention and which significantly involve the interests of workers. This does not just mean those issues currently on everyone's minds. It may take convincing to have something raised as a labor issue. Generally, though, there is practically no issue that cannot be treated if given its proper weight in the context of other issues. Below are some possible issues:

1. Fundamental to the debates within labor and the need for change is the question of history. Many of today's workers and labor leaders are only vaguely aware of the specific debates and struggles of the past. Much has been forgotten and much rewritten. Official accounts are usually monuments to certain officials, certain organizations, and certain moments. There is no intention of raising difficult questions which could embarrass the incumbents or grant the rank-and-file membership some independence of thought and, eventually, action. There is an extensive literature to contradict labor myth, and the stories of those who lived through various times can begin to educate us as to *why* things turned out the way they have. The arguments that justify the status quo need to be met with historical rebuttal.
2. One of the major exclusions is the history of the left and its essential presence in the growth of organized labor in the U.S. To be retold is the story of this country's deep roots in radicalism. The successes, failures and ultimate expulsion of the left from the center of the labor movement needs explanation and criticism. If it is ever to have a future that transcends the past, then a viable, believable case has to be made for the rebirth of the left. This is particularly important, now that management and the state are becoming more repressive.
3. Another source of left experience is from abroad. Care must be taken here neither to idealize nor play down foreign struggles. But Cold War-ism has given quite a taint to "foreign" ideas. America's ruling class has expended tremendous resources in bolstering its ideological position at home and abroad. An antidote is to expose and describe the international spread of capitalism and the rising struggles against it. Moreover, attempts could be made to use the experiences of socialist countries in order to inspire and

educate workers here. Until workers here have some contact with the left labor movements and Parties abroad, it will be hard to make the entire tangle of issues meaningful and important. This is also a case where U.S. labor federations have played a big role in mysticizing and distorting history.

4. The history of capitalist development in the U.S. is an even more obscure topic today. The success of the Cold War brought on the near-total ascendancy of bourgeois values, producing new generations who accept as natural and inevitable the relationship between business and labor. They have not been given a real alternative by any authoritative sources. But without this corrected history of business,

## MACHINIST'S LUNG



"Well, it's money in their pockets. They don't have to pay the people. They kill 'em but they don't have to pay for it. That's EXACTLY what I think."

the rank-and-file will never be able to comprehend its adversary or clarify its own objectives.

The above are not the only concerns to be addressing, but they are central to the re-creation of a powerful revolutionary left labor movement and left cultural movement in the U.S. There are also other issues that inevitably lead to a broader perspective if reformers will not settle for half a loaf. The demands for change within labor are, in fact, many of the same things being fought for in other political arenas. The labor movement is inseparable from imperialism, and is in part racist, sexist, corrupt, elitist, authoritarian, anti-intellectual and deceitful--with a powerful effect on the rest of society. Even health and safety is as much a battle within the house of labor as that of business. Art works that deal with these matters, but go further and put them into an historical and political perspective can be a powerful tool against the conservative know-nothingness of the Cold War period.

Finally, there is a special role for art in periods of crisis, since art can solidify, encourage and educate people during negotiations and strikes. Times are tough, and business after business has been balking at the close and easy rapport with unions that the post WWII "partners in production" saw for three decades. Whatever position workers and leaders take within unions, a unified stand must be made against



DRAWING BY WILLIAM GROPPER

#### THE GREAT AMERICAN MELODRAMA

**CAPITALIST:** I love you, sweetheart. Your lips are sweet as an injunction; your beautiful blue eyes remind me of arbitration.

**LABOR FAKER:** And I love you, my wonderful one. You are as strong and handsome as a set of brass knuckles. You'll always be good to me, won't you, darling?

**AMERICAN LABOR (underneath):** My God, it sounds like we've won another strike!

no-strike clauses, lay-offs, speed-ups, cut-backs, wage-freezes that are the normal state of affairs today. Beaten unions are not good places to start social change from.

I hope I have not given the impression that I think anyone is on top of all the above in the U.S. Nor do I hope to intimidate anyone with the enormity of the job. Each of us will have to begin where we are and do what we can to get an art practice going in U.S. unions. Obviously, a correct theory and practice, and thus a correct strategy and tactics, will not be the property of any one of us, but will evolve out of the collective successes and failures of us all. But I hope I have demonstrated the need for deliberate study of our situation, as well as practice. Study is very important now, it is something we must all engage in. Although being part of political and economic struggles of workers is where we most profoundly learn the lessons of class struggle, we must also bring to these struggles the history and theory to be found in revolutionary literature. What I suggest is that artists either join study groups which already exist, or start their own. I have been in several of these groups and they have been crucial to my own development. Moreover, while I do not feel committed to any of the existing political formations myself, I would recommend that artists begin to check out these groups for themselves. The point is, political perspective is primary to art practice and political affiliation and organization are necessary to successful struggle. Bear in mind that the way things are going, it may take a long time to reach our revolutionary goals. But one of the biggest problems we have to contend with, and must make a high priority to overcome, is the wall of anti-communism in this country—built with the help of labor's misleadership.

#### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>A big question to decide is whether, or rather when, to be completely open with socialist views. There are strong arguments on both sides. To be open is to face the red-baiting of the right and almost automatic disassociation by union officers (even the "leftists"! ). Needless to say, one hopes to turn this scorn of conservatism to advantage in the long run, when the mettle of oneself and the movement are proven. In the short run, anyone advocating socialism or communism is denied almost all the channels of communication within the union's control at the local and upper levels. Though still a member, this leaves the artist communicating from the outside into the union. It is not necessarily all that ironclad, as mentioned before, since many a member has only nominal contact with the local, anyway—leaving other ground (bars, clubs, churches, schools, etc.). But if there is a move toward political repression by the government, all leftists could be red-baited, driven out, or hurt. Working more discreetly generally will earn a more discreet repudiation of one's possible political persuasion. The problem here is the deception forced on oneself and others. It is awkward to couch arguments in liberal terms or drop the conclusion from a thorough critique. Reformism will never get past the threshold to more fundamental change. So which way to go should not be a matter of what is comfortable or preferable. To be open or closed can be decided only by a thorough assessment of the conditions, both locally and nationally and internationally.

#### Bibliography:

Most political formations that publish a journal will have articles on U.S. labor and its history. But for a few basic texts I suggest the following: Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises*; United Electrical, *Them and Us*; Ronald Radosh, *U.S. Foreign Policy and American Labor*; Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the U.S.* (Vols. 2, 3, 4).

# JUMP CUT

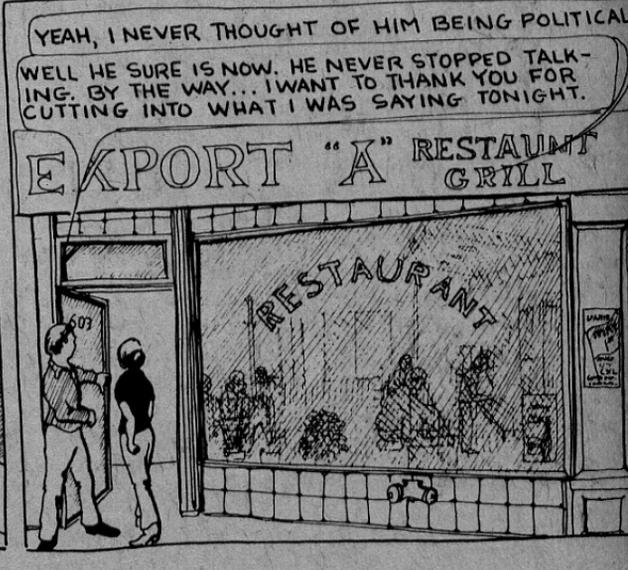
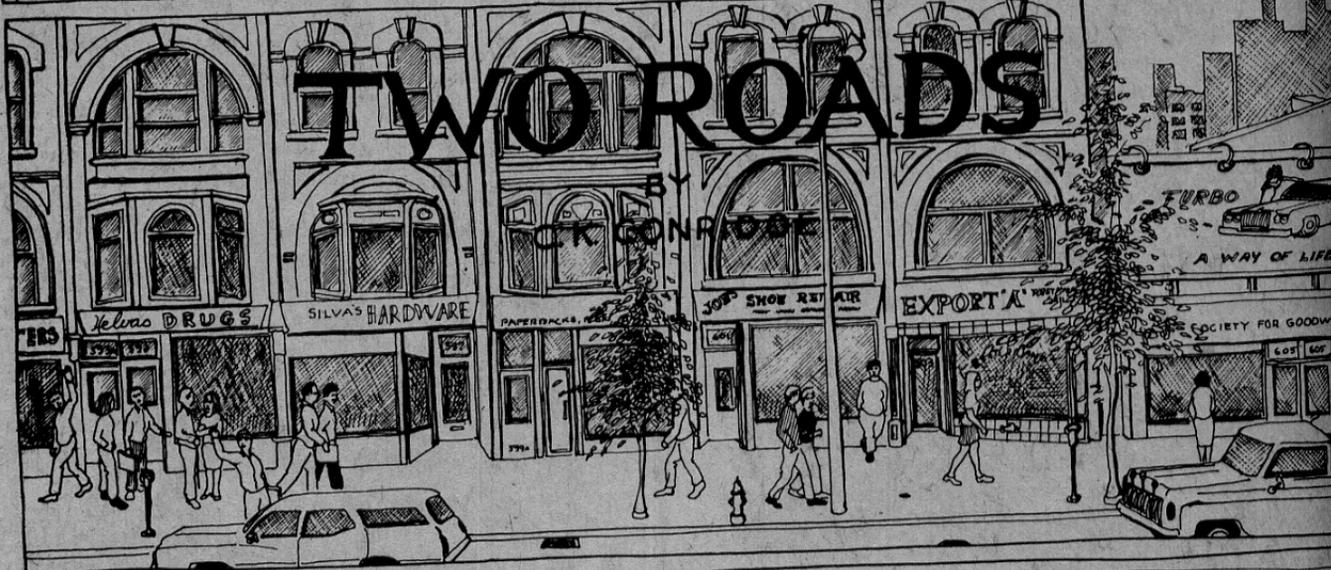
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THE FOLLOWING IS AN EDITED EXCERPT FROM A WORK IN PROGRESS, WHICH MAY ACCOUNT FOR SOME LOOSE ENDS THAT EXIST. THE STORY CENTERS ON FRED AND ALICE, A COUPLE IN THEIR MID-THIRTIES WHO HAVE TWO CHILDREN. ALICE IS A SCHOOL TEACHER AND FRED WRITES COPY FOR A LIVING. FROM ALL OUTWARD APPEARANCES THEY ARE A TYPICAL PROFESSIONAL COUPLE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ACCOUNT FOR THEIR PARTICULAR POLITICIZATION FOR IT DOES NOT ARISE DIRECTLY FROM ANY ONE CIRCUMSTANCE, BUT FROM A COMBINATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS, INVOLVEMENT IN PROTEST MOVEMENTS, POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND SO ON. MIKE IS AN OLD FRIEND OF ALICE'S WHO JUST ARRIVED FROM VANCOUVER. DAVE AND LAURIE HAVE BEEN FRIENDS SINCE COLLEGE. A.I.A.C. IS A MASS ORGANIZATION INVOLVED WITH ANTI-IMPERIALIST WORK IN WHICH FRED AND ALICE HAVE PARTICIPATED FOR ABOUT A YEAR. OUR STORY BEGINS AT THE END OF AN A.I.A.C. WEEKLY MEETING.

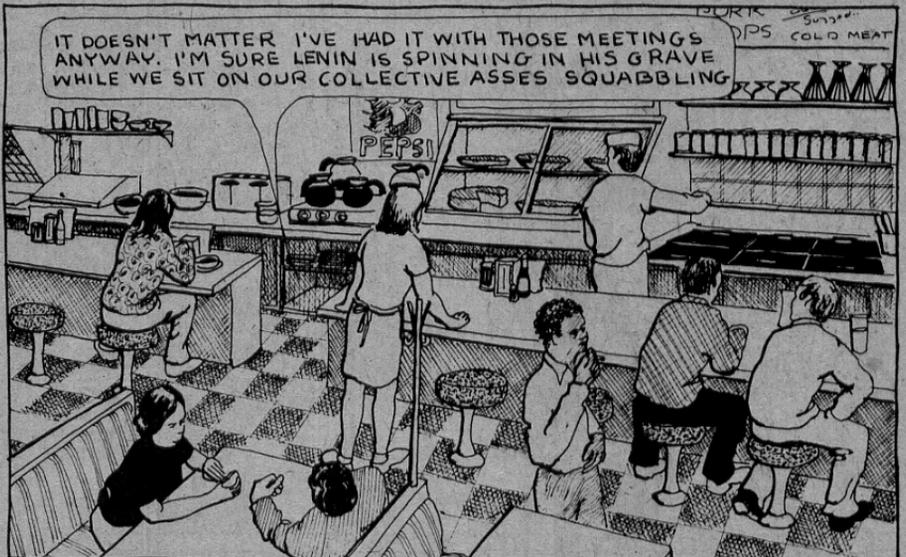




I'M SORRY, BUT I FELT THAT YOU WERE INCORRECT.



TWO COFFEES  
A DONUT, AN A  
DANISH, PLEASE.



IT DOESN'T MATTER I'VE HAD IT WITH THOSE MEETINGS  
ANYWAY. I'M SURE LENIN IS SPINNING IN HIS GRAVE  
WHILE WE SIT ON OUR COLLECTIVE ASSES SQUABBLING

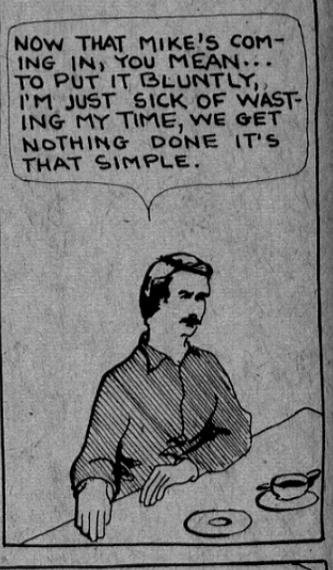


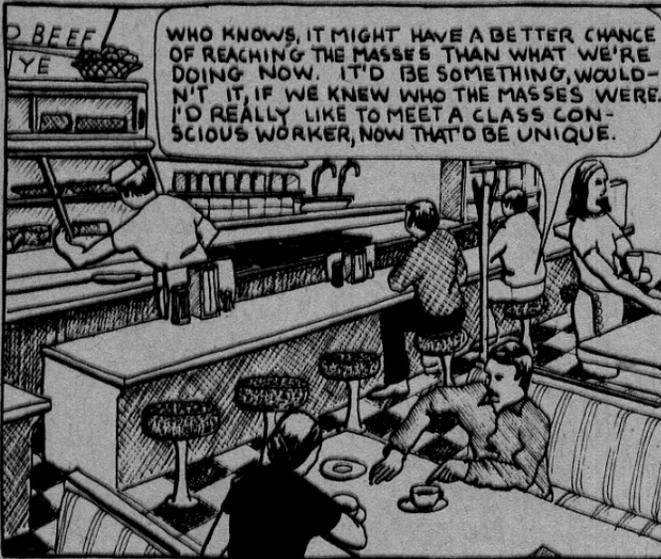
OH GEEZ, SORRY, HAD A ROUGH DAY. THE OTHER  
GIRL WAS LET GO. BOSS SAYS HE CAN'T AFFORD  
NEW HELP..... BLOODY HELL HE CAN'T.



IT'S OKAY, PLEASE DON'T  
WORRY ABOUT IT.

SOUNDS LIKE YOUR  
TYPICAL PETTY CAPITALIST.





WHO KNOWS, IT MIGHT HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF REACHING THE MASSES THAN WHAT WE'RE DOING NOW. IT'D BE SOMETHING, WOULDN'T IT, IF WE KNEW WHO THE MASSES WERE. I'D REALLY LIKE TO MEET A CLASS CONSCIOUS WORKER, NOW THAT'D BE UNIQUE.

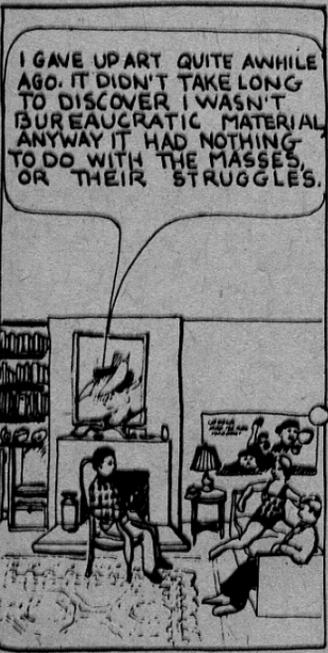


WELL ONE FINE MORNING AS YOU'RE CONTEMPLATING THE TRUE MEANING OF REVOLUTIONARY PRAXIS THEY'LL COME STORMING THROUGH OUR LIVING ROOM... I'M TIRED, BY THE WAY MIKE SAID HE'D DROP AROUND TOMORROW MORNING.

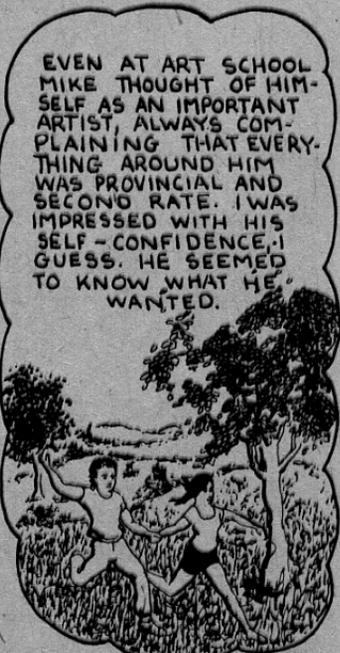
MIKE, SHIT, THAT'S ALL I NEED - AN OTHER MEETING.



SO TELL US WHAT YOU'VE BEEN UP TO. GOD WHAT'S IT BEEN 10 YEARS SINCE I LAST HEARD FROM YOU.



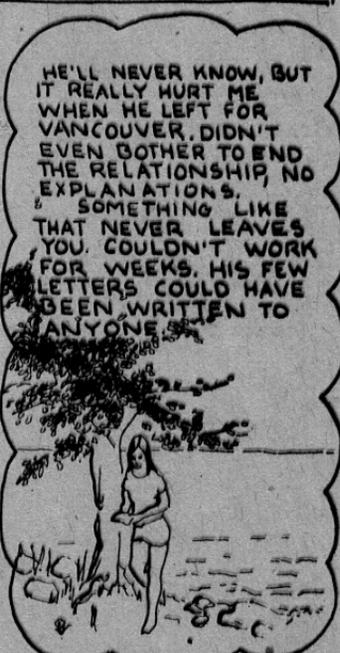
I GAVE UP ART QUITE AWHILE AGO. IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG TO DISCOVER I WASN'T BUREAUCRATIC MATERIAL ANYWAY IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE MASSES, OR THEIR STRUGGLES.



EVEN AT ART SCHOOL MIKE THOUGHT OF HIMSELF AS AN IMPORTANT ARTIST, ALWAYS COMPLAINING THAT EVERYTHING AROUND HIM WAS PROVINCIAL AND SECOND RATE. I WAS IMPRESSED WITH HIS SELF-CONFIDENCE, I GUESS. HE SEEMED TO KNOW WHAT HE WANTED.



WHEN ALL THE EXCITEMENT OF THE 60'S DIED DOWN, A NUMBER OF US FORMED A MARXIST STUDY CIRCLE, 'THE RED COLLECTIVE' IT WAS THEN THAT I REALLY CAME TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CLASSICS.



HE'LL NEVER HURT ME, BUT IT REALLY HURT ME WHEN HE LEFT FOR VANCOUVER. DIDN'T EVEN BOTHER TO END THE RELATIONSHIP, NO EXPLANATIONS. SOMETHING LIKE THAT NEVER LEAVES YOU. YOU COULDN'T WORK FOR WEEKS. HIS FEW LETTERS COULD HAVE BEEN WRITTEN TO ANYONE.

THE STRUGGLES WITH-  
IN THE GROUP INTEN-  
SIFIED AND A NUM-  
BER OF COMRADES  
LEFT. THERE WAS A-  
LOT OF OPPORTUNISM  
ON THE QUESTIONS  
OF UNITY AND PARTY  
BUILDING. BUT THE  
ANGOLAN QUESTION  
REALLY ADDED FUEL  
TO THE DEBATE.



FRED REMINDS ME  
OF MIKE. FRED KNEW  
WHAT HE WANTED TO  
DO WHEN I MET HIM.  
NOW HIS CONSTANT  
COMPLAINING MAKES  
ME NERVOUS. EVEN WHEN  
IT ISN'T ABOUT ME,  
I THINK IT IS.



THE STUDY CIRCLE FIN-  
ALLY SPLIT OVER THE  
ISSUE OF THE THREE  
WORLDS THESIS. OUR  
FACTION SOON RALL-  
IED TO C.X.L. NOW  
I'M ORGANIZING  
FACTORY CELLS.  
THE WORKERS ARE  
AMAZING, THEY  
KNOW WHAT'S GOING  
ON. ANYWAY I WAS  
SENT HERE BE-  
CAUSE I KNOW THE  
CITY WELL.

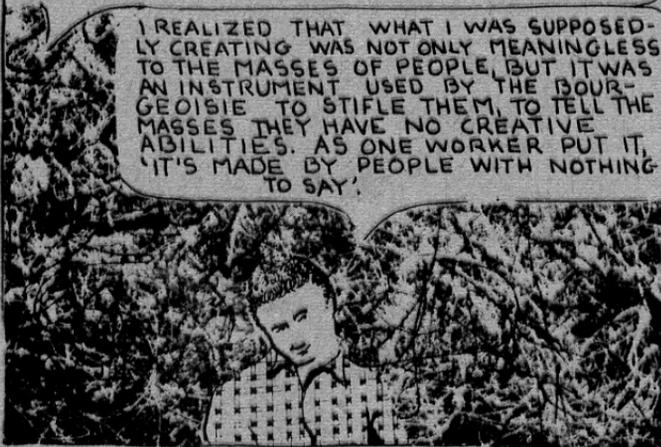


I WONDER IF FRED  
WILL EVER COME TO  
TERMS WITH HIS  
AMBITION. HE COM-  
PETES FOR EVERY-  
THING, EVEN AROUND  
THE HOUSE. IT CON-  
STANTLY PUTS ME  
ON THE DEFENSIVE;  
IT TAKES ALL I HAVE  
TO SURVIVE, LET A-  
LONE DETERMINE  
WHAT I WANT.



WHAT I'M CURIOUS ABOUT IS WHAT CHANGED YOU,  
I MEAN WHAT STOPPED YOU MAKING ART?

I REALIZED THAT WHAT I WAS SUPPOSED-  
LY CREATING WAS NOT ONLY MEANINGLESS  
TO THE MASSES OF PEOPLE, BUT IT WAS  
AN INSTRUMENT USED BY THE BOUR-  
GEOISIE TO STIFLE THEM, TO TELL THE  
MASSES THEY HAVE NO CREATIVE  
ABILITIES. AS ONE WORKER PUT IT,  
'IT'S MADE BY PEOPLE WITH NOTHING  
TO SAY.'



BUT SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU?

CERTAINLY, I WENT THROUGH SOME ROUGH  
TIMES, BUT THEY'RE NOT IMPORTANT.



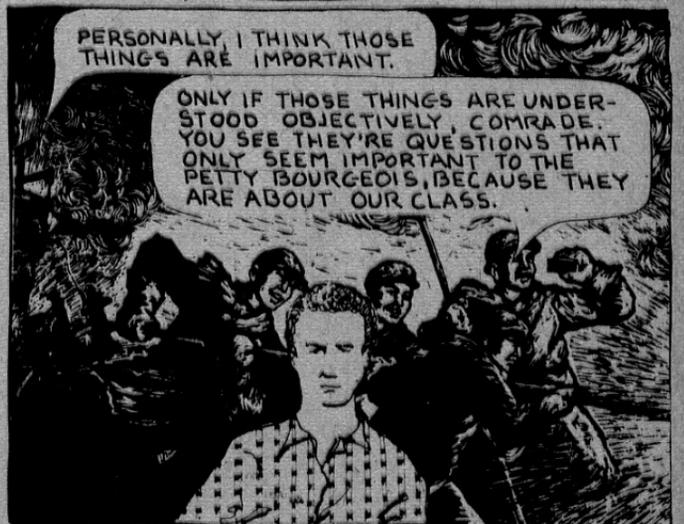
WHY'S THAT?

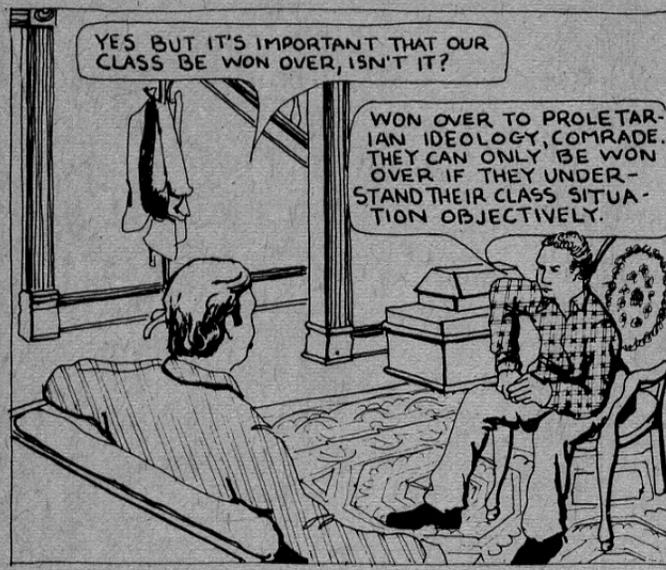
THEY WERE SUBJECTIVE STRUGGLES,  
MY OWN STRUGGLES WITH PETTY  
BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY, OF NO REAL  
CONSEQUENCE TO ANYONE.



PERSONALLY, I THINK THOSE  
THINGS ARE IMPORTANT.

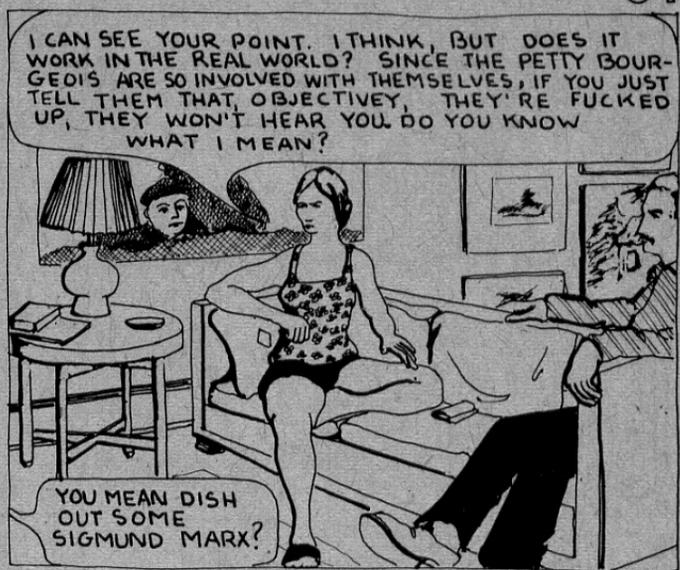
ONLY IF THOSE THINGS ARE UNDER-  
STOOD OBJECTIVELY, COMRADE.  
YOU SEE THEY'RE QUESTIONS THAT  
ONLY SEEM IMPORTANT TO THE  
PETTY BOURGEOIS, BECAUSE THEY  
ARE ABOUT OUR CLASS.





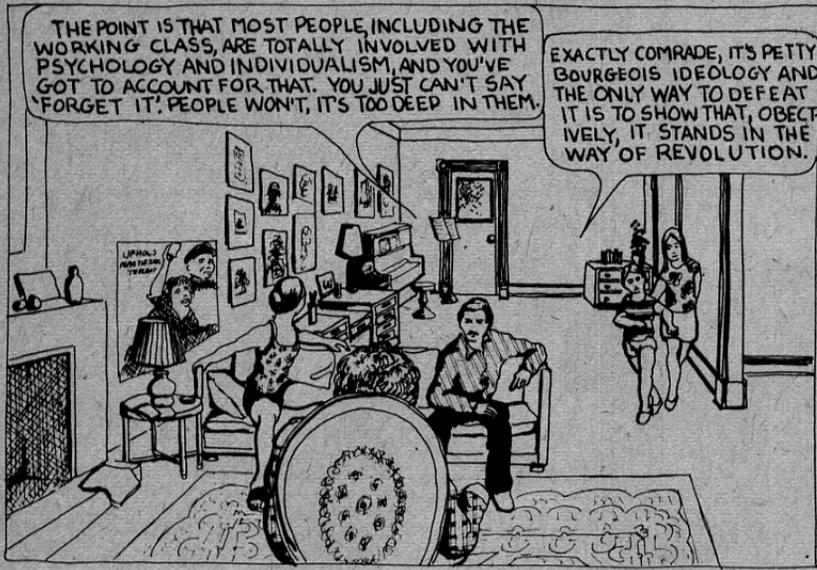
YES BUT IT'S IMPORTANT THAT OUR CLASS BE WON OVER, ISN'T IT?

WON OVER TO PROLETARIAN IDEOLOGY, COMRADE. THEY CAN ONLY BE WON OVER IF THEY UNDERSTAND THEIR CLASS SITUATION OBJECTIVELY.



I CAN SEE YOUR POINT. I THINK, BUT DOES IT WORK IN THE REAL WORLD? SINCE THE PETTY BOURGEOIS ARE SO INVOLVED WITH THEMSELVES, IF YOU JUST TELL THEM THAT OBJECTIVELY, THEY'RE FUCKED UP, THEY WON'T HEAR YOU. DO YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

YOU MEAN DISH OUT SOME SIGMUND MARX?



THE POINT IS THAT MOST PEOPLE, INCLUDING THE WORKING CLASS, ARE TOTALLY INVOLVED WITH PSYCHOLOGY AND INDIVIDUALISM, AND YOU'VE GOT TO ACCOUNT FOR THAT. YOU JUST CAN'T SAY 'FORGET IT'. PEOPLE WON'T, IT'S TOO DEEP IN THEM.

EXACTLY COMRADE, IT'S PETTY BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY AND THE ONLY WAY TO DEFEAT IT IS TO SHOW THAT, OBJECTIVELY, IT STANDS IN THE WAY OF REVOLUTION.



I'M HUNGRY!

IT'S LUNCH TIME, YOU'RE RIGHT. DO YOU LIKE TOMATO SOUP MIKE?

SOUNDS FINE



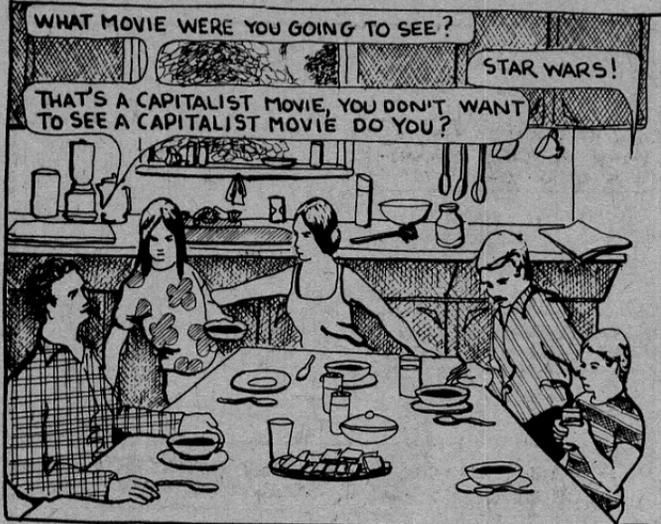
MOM WHAT ABOUT OUR MOVIE THIS AFTERNOON, YOU PROMISED?

OH CHRIST, I COMPLETELY FORGOT, SHIT! MIKE'S COME OVER TO VISIT, AND WE CAN'T VERY WELL LEAVE.



IT'S NOT FAIR, WE WERE GOING TO THE MOVIE FIRST.

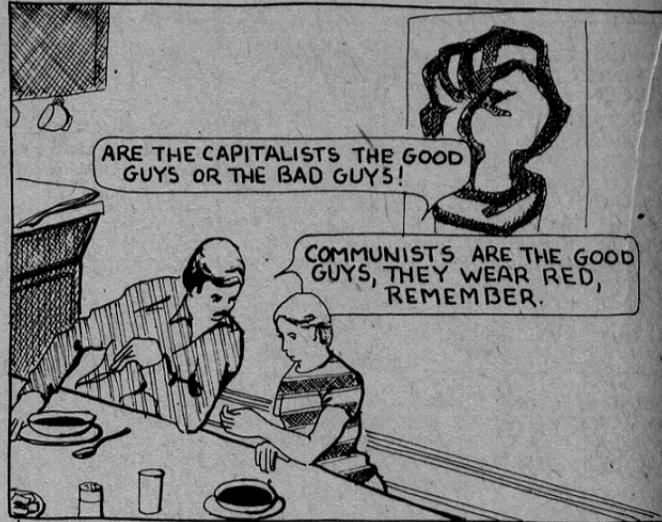
I KNOW IT ISN'T FAIR, ERIC, BUT WHAT CAN WE DO? YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO GO ON YOUR OWN.



WHAT MOVIE WERE YOU GOING TO SEE?

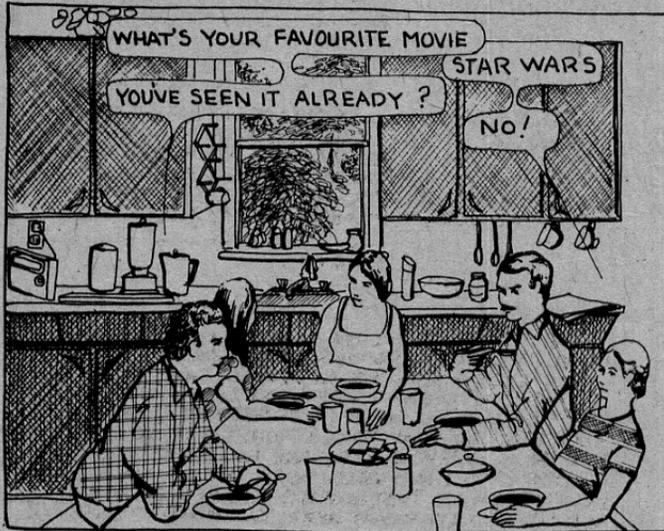
STAR WARS!

THAT'S A CAPITALIST MOVIE, YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE A CAPITALIST MOVIE DO YOU?



ARE THE CAPITALISTS THE GOOD GUYS OR THE BAD GUYS!

COMMUNISTS ARE THE GOOD GUYS, THEY WEAR RED, REMEMBER.

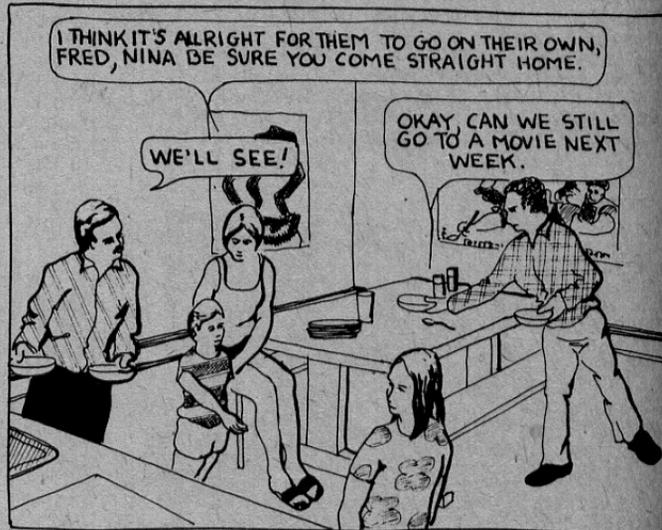


WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE MOVIE

STAR WARS

YOU'VE SEEN IT ALREADY?

NO!



I THINK IT'S ALLRIGHT FOR THEM TO GO ON THEIR OWN, FRED, NINA BE SURE YOU COME STRAIGHT HOME.

WE'LL SEE!

OKAY CAN WE STILL GO TO A MOVIE NEXT WEEK.



DON'T YOU TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT POLITICS?

THEY ONLY COMPLAIN ABOUT HOW MANY MEETINGS WE GO TO.



OF COURSE WE TALK TO THEM BUT POLITICS IS AN ABSTRACTION. IT'S LIKE TELLING SOMEONE THEY'RE MARCHING OUT OF STEP WHEN THEY'RE JUST LEARNING TO WALK.

THEY NEVER LISTEN TO US ANYWAY. PARENTS ARE PARENTS, KIDS GOT OTHER THINGS ON THEIR MIND.

IT'S NOT QUITE THAT BAD, WHEN OUR KIDS ARE HAVING A ROUGH TIME, OR ARE IN TROUBLE, WE ALWAYS PULL TOGETHER.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE QUESTION OF SOVIET SOCIAL IMPERIALISM HASN'T BEEN RESOLVED IN A.I.C.

IT'S NOT SO MUCH A QUESTION OF SOVIET SOCIAL IMPERIALISM, BUT WHETHER A MASS ORGANIZATION SHOULD HAVE A LINE ON IT.

RIGHT, THAT'S THE LINE I COULDN'T FOLLOW. HOW CAN A.I.C. DO ANTI-IMPERIALIST WORK WITHOUT A CLEAR LINE ON SOVIET SOCIAL IMPERIALISM.

BECAUSE THERE'S A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO DO VALUABLE WORK AND DON'T ACCEPT THAT IDEA.

BUT IF WE DON'T TAKE A CORRECT LINE WE'LL MISLEAD THE PEOPLE. IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAT A.I.C. PUT OUT THE CORRECT WORK AND WIN COMRADES OVER, THAN HAVE LOTS OF 'VALUABLE' MEMBERS.

THAT COULD LEAD TO A NARROW NATIONALIST VIEWPOINT, OF COURSE THE U.S. DOMINATES CANADA, BUT YOU HAVE TO KEEP AN INTERNATIONALIST VIEWPOINT, AND INTERNATIONALLY THE SOVIETS ARE THE MAIN THREAT TO WAR. IT'S NOT AN IDEAL THEORY COMRADE, IT'S STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT.

LOOK WE HAVE TO BE CLEAR, COMRADE, SURE IT'S DIFFICULT. IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR, THE UNITED FRONT INCLUDED ENGLAND RUSSIA FRANCE AND THE U.S.. OF COURSE THE DAY TO DAY STRUGGLE IS AGAINST U.S. IMPERIALISM ONLY AN OPPORTUNIST WOULD CLAIM THAT SOVIET SOCIAL IMPERIALISM DOMINATES CANADA, BUT IN TERMS OF INTERNATIONALISM, AND THE WORLD UNITED FRONT, WE HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THE SOVIET THREAT.

I THINK IT'S MORE THAT WE WANT TO DO A CERTAIN KIND OF WORK. AS I SEE IT, THE U.S. IS OUR MAIN ENEMY.

WAIT A MINUTE. I DON'T DISAGREE, WELL I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'M TALKING ABOUT OUR WORK. HOW ARE YOU GOING TO CONVINCE PEOPLE OF THAT WITH THE U.S. STARING THEM IN THE FACE, UNLESS YOU CAN CONVINCE THEM THAT A FEW FISHING BOATS OFF THE COAST OF NOVA SCOTIA ARE A THREAT.

WHAT I OBJECT TO IS THE BLOODY EMPHASIS, SURE YOU ADMIT THAT THE U.S. DOMINATES CANADA, BUT YOU GO ON ABOUT THE SOVIETS. YOU'RE SAYING THAT IN THE EVENT OF WAR, YOU MIGHT FORM A UNITED FRONT WITH THE U.S. AGAINST THE SOVIETS. IT SEEMS THE CHINESE ARE THINKING THAT WAY. WELL I THINK THAT'S NUTS. REMEMBER BOTH SUPERPOWERS ARE THE MAIN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD. SURE THE U.S. MIGHT BE IN DECLINE AND ALL THAT, BUT IT'S STILL BLOODY POWERFUL AND IT'S PROVED RIGHT HERE, THAT'S WHAT GETS ME.

LOOK COMRADE, THE SOVIETS ARE MORE AGGRESSIVE BECAUSE IT'S A FASCIST STATE, HUNGRY FOR COLONIES, RAW MATERIALS...

WAIT A MINUTE COMRADE I WAS SPEAKING....

I KNOW THAT...

I DON'T DISAGREE... IT'S THE...

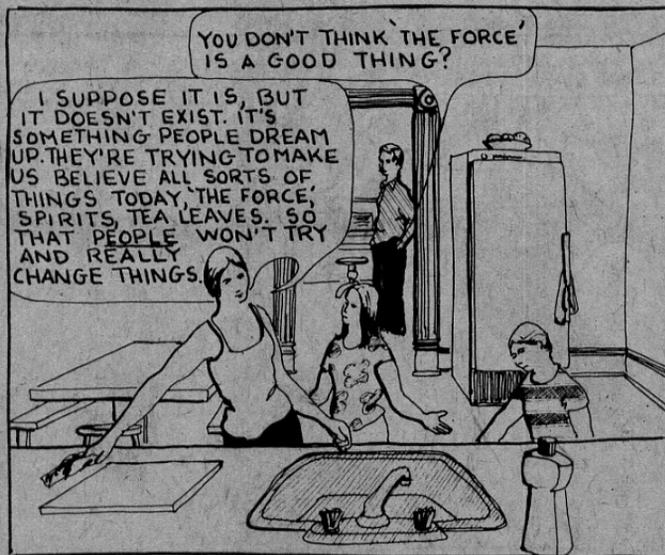
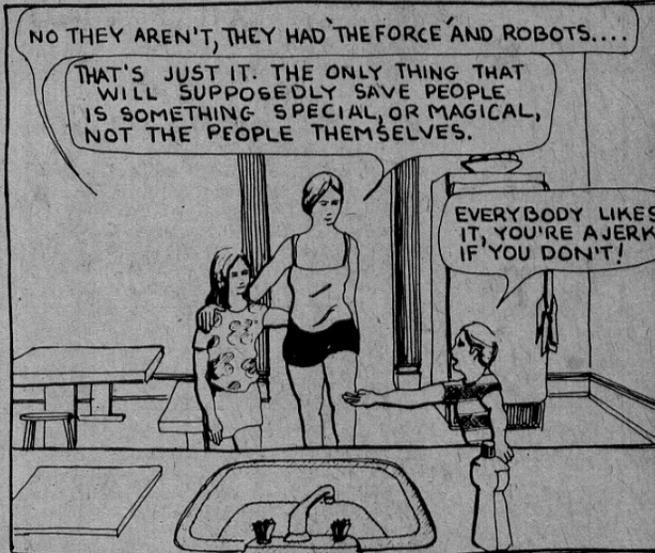
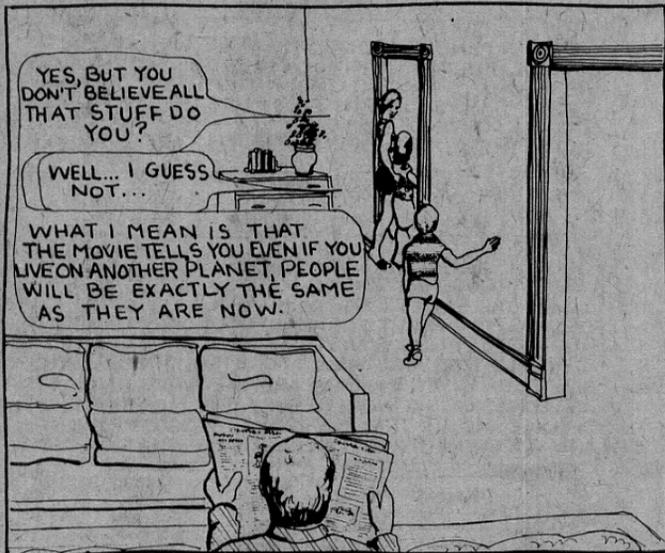
HOLD ON... FRED... WHAT I THINK YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY IS THAT YOU AGREE IN THEORY, BUT NOT IN THE WAY IT'S PRACTICED. DOES THAT MAKE SENSE?

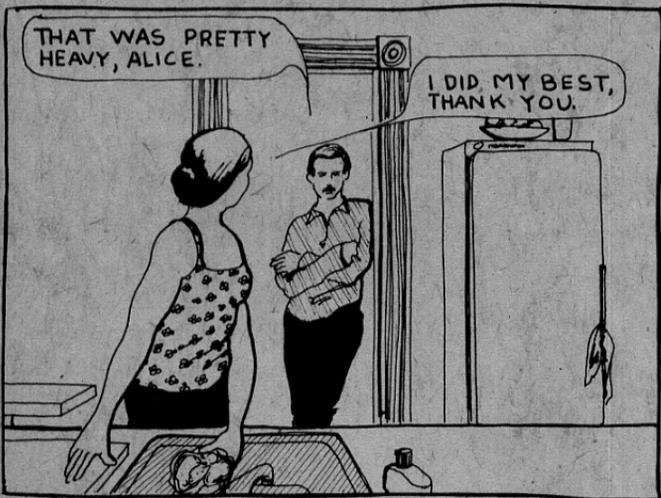
I CAN UNITE WITH THAT, IN PRINCIPLE ANYWAY IT WOULD BE DOGMATIC TO CLAIM THAT WE DON'T MAKE MISTAKES.

YEAH... I CAN UNITE WITH THAT.

UPHOLD MAO-TSE THOUGHT

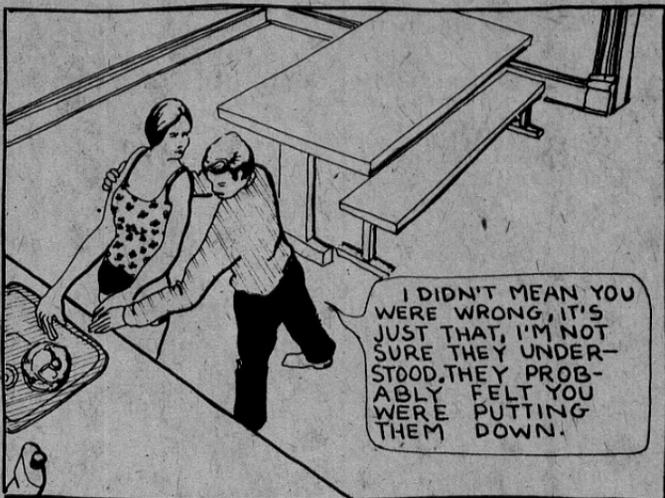






THAT WAS PRETTY HEAVY, ALICE.

I DID MY BEST, THANK YOU.



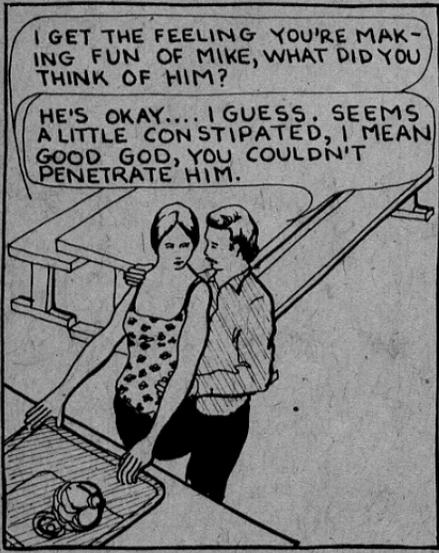
I DIDN'T MEAN YOU WERE WRONG, IT'S JUST THAT, I'M NOT SURE THEY UNDERSTOOD, THEY PROBABLY FELT YOU WERE PUTTING THEM DOWN.



SO WHAT WOULD YOU SAY THEN, GIVE THEM A GOOD M.L. ANALYSIS?

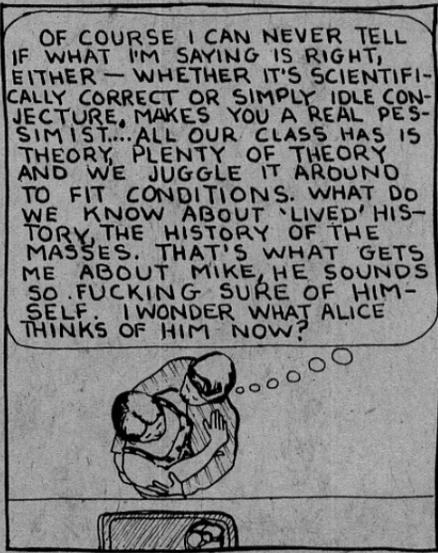
SURE I CAN HEAR IT NOW. COMRADE KIDS. IMPERIALISTS DON'T HESITATE TO LEACH OFF THE BLOOD AND SWEAT OF THE WORKERS. THE BOURGEOIS LACKEYS OF THE PRESS, THE MEDIA, THE MOVIES WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO FEED US LIES. 'STAR WARS' IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF DEGENERATE BOURGEOIS SPECTACLE. WHAT IS IT BUT A REHEARSAL FOR THE GREAT IMPERIALIST WAR IN WHICH THOUSANDS OF WORKERS WILL GET SLAUGHTERED. BUT THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE BOURGEOISIE DOESN'T STOP THERE. NO, THEY ENLIST REVISIONIST SCUM; WRITERS, ACTORS, UNION MISLEADERS, TRAITORS, PHONIES TO DO THEIR DIRTY WORK, TO SELL OUT THE WORKERS. IT IS OUR TASK, THE TASK OF AN ANTI-REVISIONIST COMMUNIST PARTY, WHICH WE MUST BUILD TO EXPOSE THE BOURGEOIS BEASTS AND BUILD A NEW SOCIETY, THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT, ON THE SMOULDERING RUINS OF CAPITALISM.

DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM!  
 WORKERS UNITE!  
 DOWN WITH STAR WARS!  
 HOW'D YOU LIKE IT?



I GET THE FEELING YOU'RE MAKING FUN OF MIKE, WHAT DID YOU THINK OF HIM?

HE'S OKAY... I GUESS. SEEMS A LITTLE CONSTIPATED, I MEAN GOOD GOD, YOU COULDN'T PENETRATE HIM.

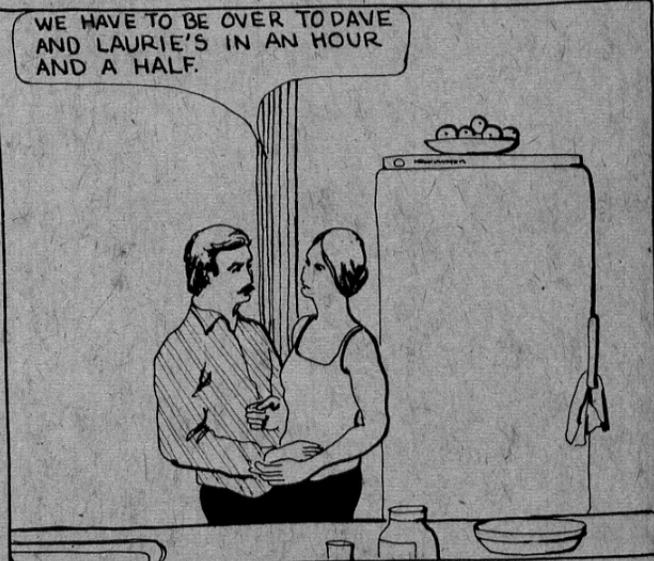
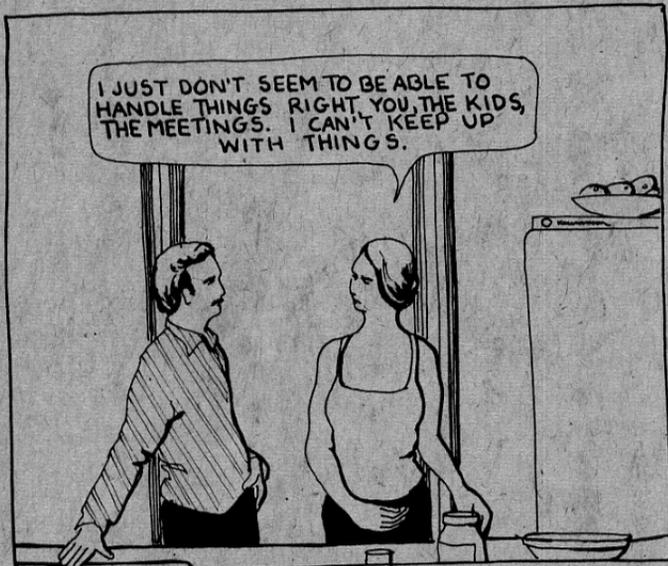
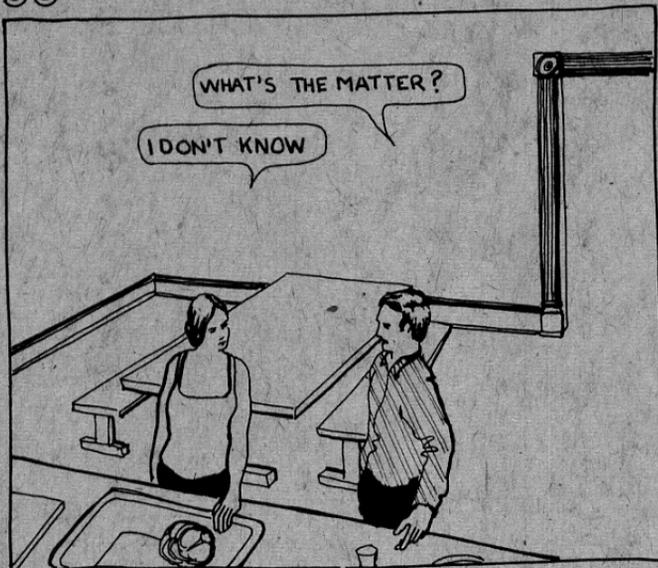


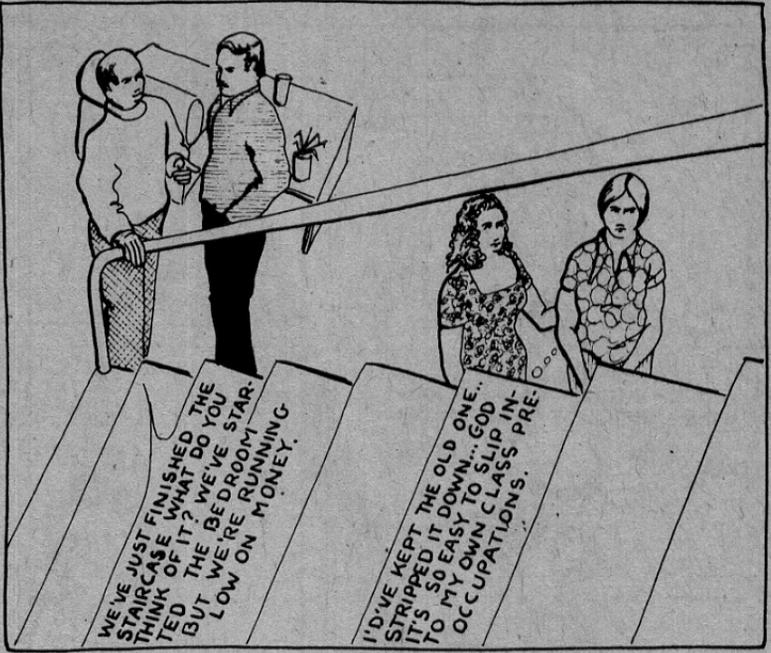
OF COURSE I CAN NEVER TELL IF WHAT I'M SAYING IS RIGHT, EITHER - WHETHER IT'S SCIENTIFICALLY CORRECT OR SIMPLY IDLE CONJECTURE, MAKES YOU A REAL PESSIMIST... ALL OUR CLASS HAS IS THEORY, PLENTY OF THEORY AND WE JUGGLE IT AROUND TO FIT CONDITIONS. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT 'LIVED' HISTORY, THE HISTORY OF THE MASSES. THAT'S WHAT GETS ME ABOUT MIKE, HE SOUNDS SO FUCKING SURE OF HIMSELF. I WONDER WHAT ALICE THINKS OF HIM NOW?



HE SEEMS TO HAVE SOMETHING'S SORTED OUT AT LEAST. WHICH IS A LOT MORE THAN US. I CERTAINLY WISH I COULD SEE THINGS MORE CLEARLY.

SURE AND BECOME ANOTHER CONVERT!





WE'VE JUST FINISHED THE STAIRCASE. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT? WE'VE STARTED THE BEDROOM BUT WE'RE RUNNING LOW ON MONEY.

I'D'VE KEPT THE OLD ONE... STRIPPED IT DOWN... GOD... IT'S SO EASY TO SLIP INTO MY OWN CLASS' PRE- OCCUPATIONS.

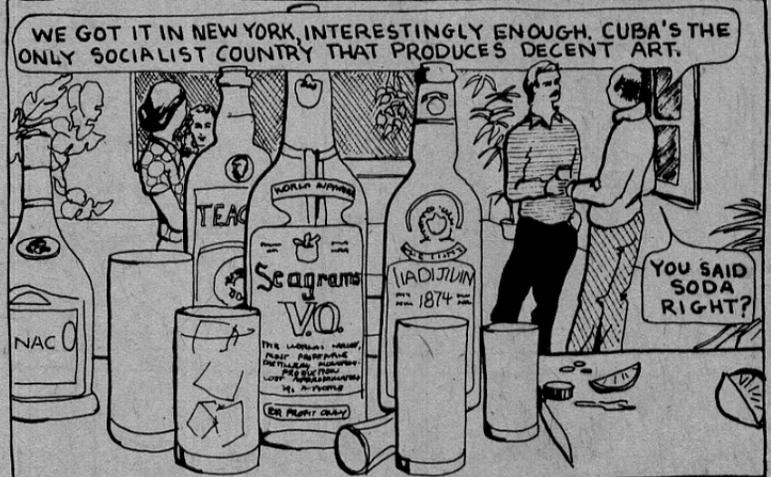


IT'S INCREDIBLE WHAT THEY'RE GETTING FOR HOUSES THESE DAYS.

YOU WERE LUCKY YOU GOT YOURS BEFORE THE SLUMS BECAME FASHIONABLE.

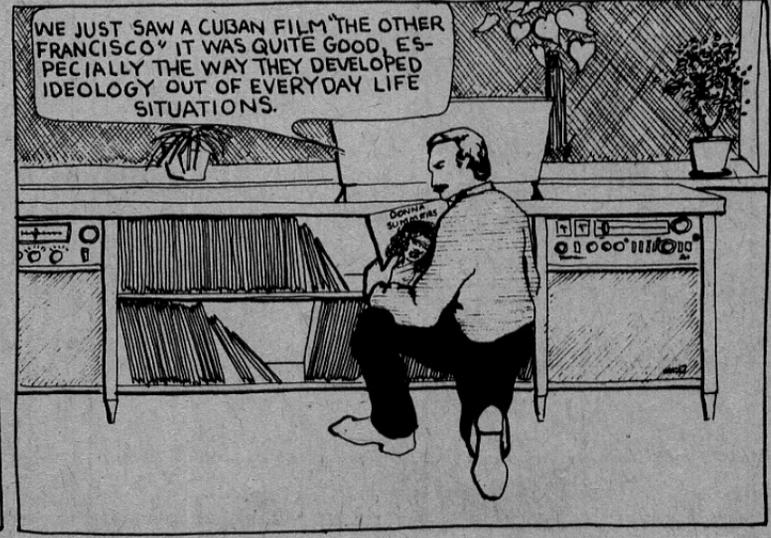


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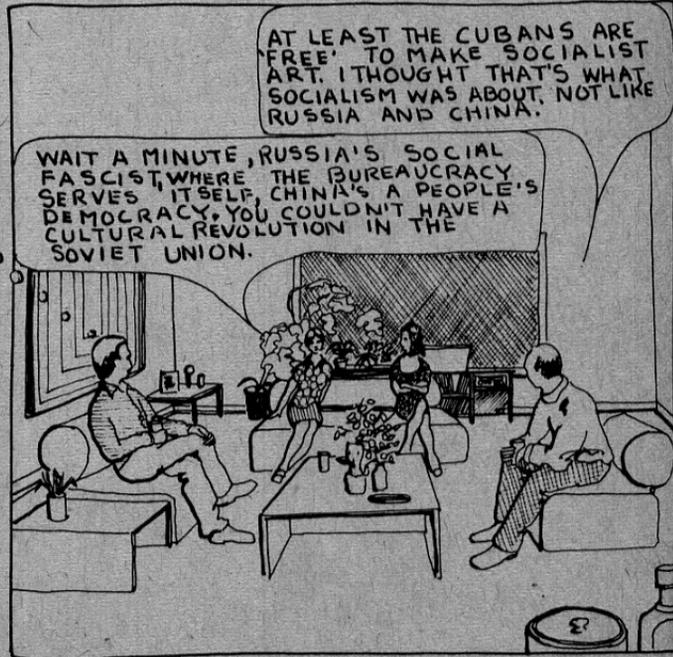
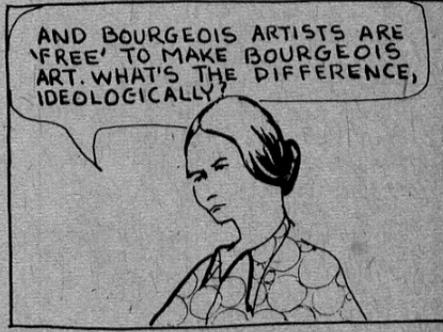
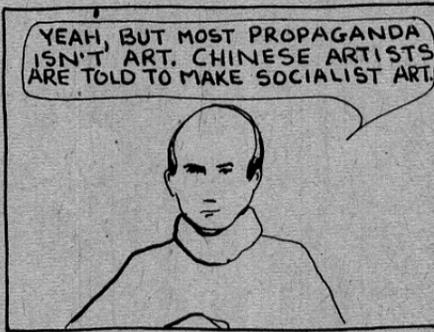
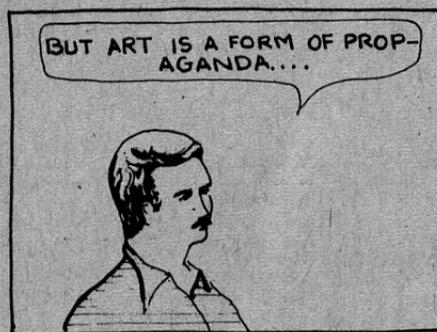
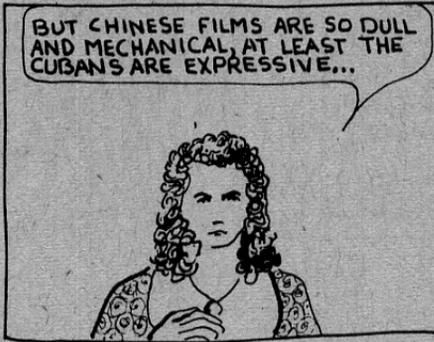
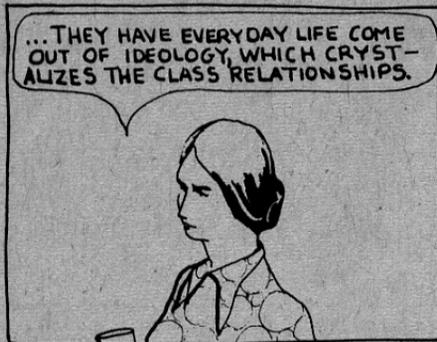
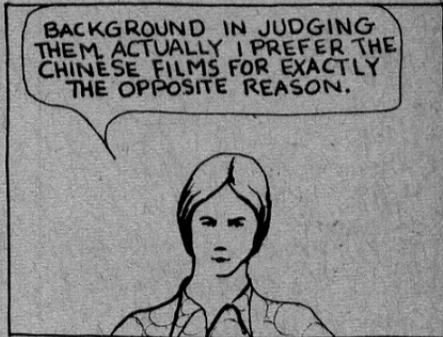
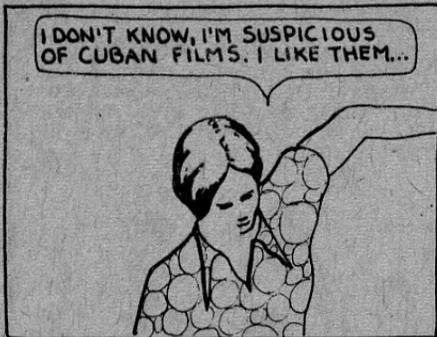


WE GOT IT IN NEW YORK, INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH. CUBA'S THE ONLY SOCIALIST COUNTRY THAT PRODUCES DECENT ART.

YOU SAID SODA RIGHT?



WE JUST SAW A CUBAN FILM 'THE OTHER FRANCISCO' IT WAS QUITE GOOD, ESPECIALLY THE WAY THEY DEVELOPED IDEOLOGY OUT OF EVERYDAY LIFE SITUATIONS.



WHAT HAPPENED IN RUSSIA WILL HAPPEN IN CHINA, AUTHORITARIANISM INEVITABLY LEADS TO TOTALITARIANISM.

SURE AND SELF-INTEREST LEADS TO AUTHORITY AND SO ON. THE POINT IS, IS CHINA AUTHORITARIAN! IT'S LIKE ALICE SAID, IN WHOSE INTERESTS IS LEADERSHIP EXERCISED, RIGHT? ANYWAY WHAT GETS ME IS YOUR INTEREST IN CUBA. BY YOUR DEFINITION IT'S CERTAINLY AUTHORITARIAN. I MEAN, OLD FIDEL...

IT'S BETTER THAN ANYWHERE ELSE. THEY HAVE PROBLEMS, OF COURSE, BUT THEY HAVE FREEDOM, EQUALITY AND THEY SEEM TO RESPECT THE CREATIVITY OF INDIVIDUALS...



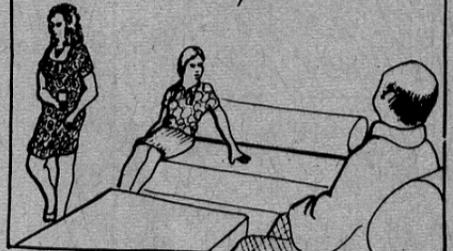
I REALLY CAN'T DEAL WITH THAT ANYMORE. I HATE TO REMIND YOU, BUT YOU SUPPORTED THE M.P.L.A. YOURSELVES NOT TOO LONG AGO I STILL SUPPORT THEM, SO WHAT CAN WE SAY.



AND FRONT FOR THE SOVIET UNION IN ANGOLA AND THE REST OF AFRICA.



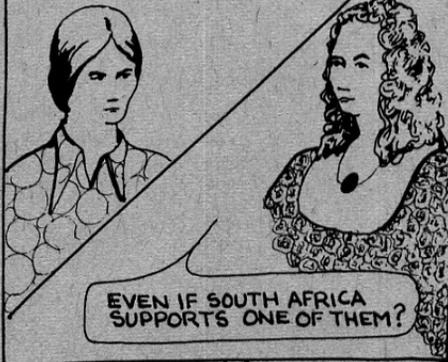
WELL THEN, TELL ME WHAT THE SOVIETS ARE DOING THERE?



ALICE YOU SOUND LIKE JOHN FOSTER DULLES. WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE?



ALL THE LIBERATION FORCES SHOULD HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED TO KEEP THE SOVIETS OUT.



EVEN IF SOUTH AFRICA SUPPORTS ONE OF THEM?

LOOK, IF THERE HAD BEEN A UNITED FRONT AGAINST BOTH SUPERPOWERS. THE THREE LIBERATION GROUPS WOULD HAVE HAD TO SETTLE THEIR DIFFERENCES AMONG THEIR OWN PEOPLE TO CARRY ON THE STRUGGLE. AS IT IS NOW, PEOPLE STILL HAVE TO FIGHT AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND NEO-COLONIALISM. WHAT'S EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND IS THAT THE SOVIETS ARE A MUCH WORSE ENEMY THAN SOUTH AFRICA. PEOPLE KNOW WHAT SOUTH AFRICA IS, BUT THEY DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE SOVIET UNION. THE SOVIETS PRETEND THEY'RE SOCIALIST TO DECEIVE AND APPROPRIATE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, LIKE THE M.P.L.A., IN ORDER TO EXPLOIT AND OPPRESS THE PEOPLE.

WELL....



1967



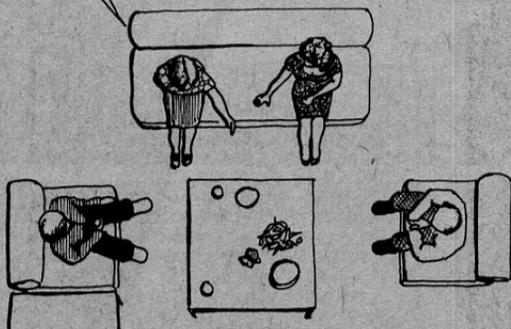
THAT'S JUST CRAP, THE M.P.L.A.... OH CHRIST.... ANYWAY, IT'S MORE THAN JUST THAT. WE DISAGREE ON A LOT OF FUNDAMENTALS, MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T TALK POLITICS. GOD KNOWS WE NEED CHANGE, BUT UNLESS PEOPLE ARE PERSONALLY TRANSFORMED, THAT IS LEARN TO CO-OPERATE INSTEAD OF TELLING EACH OTHER WHAT TO DO AND THINK, YOU CAN'T HAVE ANY REAL SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION.

SURE, TALK TO PEOPLE NICELY AND EVERYTHING WILL WORK OUT... COME ON DAVE, I SUPPOSE E.P TAYLOR WILL SIMPLY GIVE EVERYTHING UP 'HERE FOLKS TAKE MY CORPORATIONS, I'VE SEEN THE LIGHT', FUCKING HELL. PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION, AS YOU PUT IT, CAN ONLY TAKE PLACE AFTER ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS CHANGE. THERE'S NO WAY 'ROUND IT.



SURE ONE DICTATORSHIP FOR ANOTHER.. GREAT DEAL!

WHAT DO YOU WANT? THROW A REVOLUTION THEN SIT DOWN FOR A DRINK AND CONTEMPLATE HOW WONDERFUL IT ALL IS. ARMED REVOLUTION IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. ACTUALLY IT'S A CRITICAL POINT IN A HISTORICAL PROCESS. IT'S GOING ON NOW AND CONTINUES AFTER. AT DIFFERENT POINTS DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF IT BECOME MORE IMPORTANT. PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION IS AT A LATER STAGE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS, THATS ALL.



GOD, I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW MUCH WE'VE DRIFTED APART.

I KNOW, LAURIE GETS MORE AND MORE ON MY NERVES. I CAN'T DEAL WITH PEOPLE LIKE THAT ANY MORE.



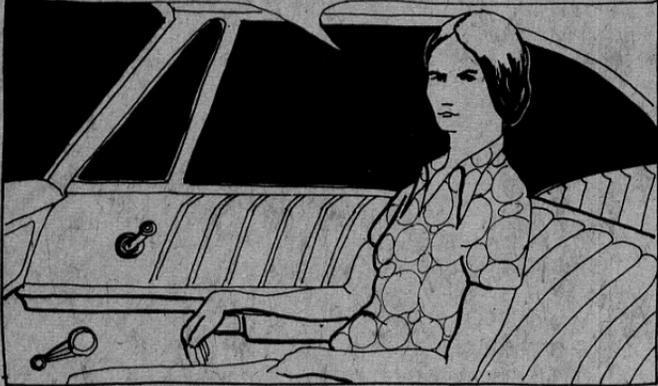
HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH PEOPLE LIKE THAT? DO WE ISOLATE OURSELVES? IT'S REALLY INSANE. I REALLY LIKE DAVE AND WE'VE KNOWN HIM FOR A LONG TIME MUCH MORE THAN, SAY, MIKE, BUT MIKE'S MORE POLITICALLY ADVANCED, WHAT'A YOU DO? IT'S CURIOUS I FOUND MYSELF TALKING LIKE MIKE TONIGHT. WELL, IF NOTHING ELSE, I UNDERSTAND HIS DOGMATISM A LITTLE BETTER.



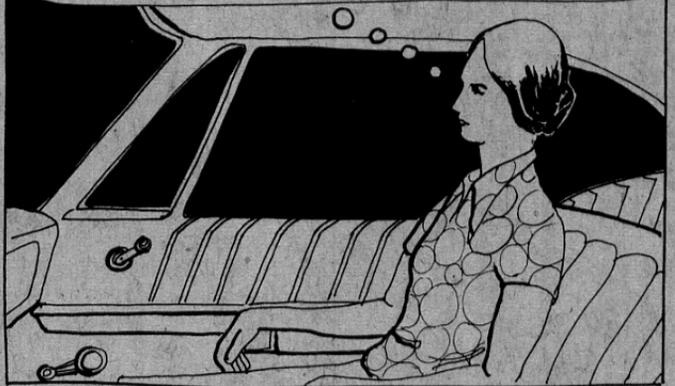
IT'S LIKE I THINK LAURIE'S OFF THE WALL, BUT I GET OFF ON HER. IT'S STUPID, RATHER THAN FACE MY PROBLEMS WITH ALICE, I FANTASIZE ABOUT LAURIE. I KNOW SHE'S JUST THE OBJECT OF MY FRUSTRATION. IT'D BE NICE IF I COULD TELL ALICE THAT. BUT IT GIVES ME A CUSHION AGAINST REALITY.



WE'RE ALL SO BLOODY IMPATIENT, IT'S THE PLAGUE OF OUR CLASS - THE INGLORIOUS PETTY BOURGEOIS IMPATIENCE HIDES OUR INDIVIDUALISM AND LACK OF CONFIDENCE. IDEALISM TURNS US INTO DOGMATISTS. SECRETLY, I WISH WE COULD JUST ERASE OUR CLASS ILLUSIONS AND PETTY CONCERNS WHICH IS PART OF THE PROBLEM, I SUPPOSE.



EVEN THOUGH IT PISSES ME OFF I CAN UNDERSTAND DAVE AND LAURIE. WHY RISK ANYTHING? WE DO IT OURSELVES. FRED AND I HIDE FROM EACH OTHER, OTHERWISE WE'D BE TOO VULNERABLE. HE'S AFRAID TO TELL ME WHAT REALLY BOTHERS HIM; BUT THEN I PROBABLY DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT.



AS THEY SAY, 'LIFE'S A STRUGGLE.'



YES BUT IT HAS TO BE SEEN AS A POSITIVE STRUGGLE. WORKING IN OUR FUTURE INTERESTS, NOT OUR PRESENT ONES.





Belfast, Ireland (1977)