
commonground

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ART FOR OUR SAKE:



TOWARD A CULTURE OF COOPERATIVE ACTION

Community Arts in the Twin Cities · 8 Pages of Original
Songs, Drawings, & Poetry · China Photos · Taxes for Art?
Artful Gardens in NE Mpls · Populist Culture 1860-1930
PLUS: Why Local Unemployment? · Reviews & More!

artists in this issue:

NANCY ARHELGER: Nancy has lived in the Twin Cities for a short time. Her illustrations have been published not only in Common Ground, but also in The Minnesota Leader.

JIM DOCHNIAK: Jim has lived in the Wedge neighborhood for the past four years and is now spending his time painting houses "to stay alive." He says, "my work should come out of my own experience and that experience should be connected up with other people."

SYD FOSSUM: Syd has lived in The Twin Cities for many years now. "I want to use [my art] to...sound off....I want...to communicate specific attitudes....I've [painted man] under the terrifying threat of our atomic age....This is a theme to which I am propelled."

BECKY LAMOTHE: Becky is a resident of the Powderhorn Park neighborhood and is a worker at People's Bakery Company. She's illustrated for the Minnesota Daily, North Country Anvil, and Preview magazine.

WALTER LIEF: "I came to Minneapolis in 1937. I make a living as a display builder. I feel that the Native American struggle for self-determination is by far the most difficult and hard fought battle of all. It deserves all the support we can give it."

CHUCK LOGAN: "A product of experimental education and a graduate of the better auto factories in Detroit, I now retouch engravings for an obscure 19th century publication."

GEORGE POLLEY: Asked how he became a poet, George laughs and shows his poem, POEM IN GRATITUDE TO MY TYPEWRITER which begins, "Well, you know, you funky old machine,/ if your N hadn't broken off,/ I probably never would have/ started writing poetry." The two poems printed here are published in his book WE PLAY EACH OTHER LIKE JAZZ MUSICIANS by Tangent Design and Publications.

SARA PORTER: Sara works at Our Daily Bread and Selby Food Co-op. She has created artwork for numerous community organizations including the two above, the Leonard Hill Defense Fund and the United Farm Workers in California.

ELIZABETH SANFORD: A native Minnesotan, Elizabeth has written poetry and sung songs all her life. She is now unemployed and is involved with Chrysalis.

COVER PHOTO: Three members of the Alive and Trucking Theater Company perform in a clown show for this summer's picnic of the Postal Worker's and Carrier's Union. See page 11 for Meri Golden's article on this local political theatre group. Photo by Ken Meter.

Common Ground is a publication of the New Vocations Project, part of Crossroads Resource Center, an independent non-profit organization. New Vocations Project also publishes resource publications (The Vocational Skills Training Directory), organizes community businesses and acts as a resource group for people seeking better vocations. This issue costs \$1.00, or \$1.25 if mailed in the U.S.A.

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contents

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.....	2
ON THE STREET WHERE WE LIVE (a song).....	3
ART FOR OUR SAKE: CREATING A CULTURE OF COOPERATIVE ACTION	
PUBLICLY SUPPORTED ART: ART FOR WHOSE SAKE? / Rachel Kranz.....	4
<i>Rachel looks at the push for public funding and raises some important questions about the responsiveness of major arts institutions to the public.</i>	
RESISTANCE AND RENEWAL: ALIVE AND TRUCKING THEATRE CO. / Meri Golden.....	8
<i>How is political theatre different from traditional or community theatre? Meri describes how A & T operates collectively and involves the community in creating A & T's plays.</i>	
CHINA TOUR: CULTURE SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE / Jan Mandell.....	11
<i>A photo essay excerpted from Jan's slide show, which you can see in October.</i>	
SUPPORTING OUR ART: COMPAS, AFRO AMERICAN CENTER, ARTS VOUCHERS, STREET ARTIST GUILD.....	14
<i>Four arts programs that work toward building a sense of community.</i>	
THE SONG OF A DOLLAR (poetry) / Jim Dochniak. Illustrated by Becky Lamothe.....	18
LAY OFF TIME: WHY UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUES / Bruce Johnson.....	20
<i>What do national and local unemployment figures mean? Why are there so many layoffs? And what are people in the Twin Cities doing about it? Bruce gives us some fresh answers to these critical questions.</i>	
RETURN PAHA SAPA! (centerfold poster) / Walter Lief.....	24
GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM: POPULIST CULTURE 1860's-1930's / Steve Trimble.....	26
<i>Songs, poetry, plays, speeches and music—art and cultural forms used by Populists to spread the message of anti-monopoly and cooperation.</i>	
FRUSTRATION AND COOPERATION: TALKING WORKING CLASS CULTURE / Jeff Johnson.....	31
<i>A pressman, Jeff Johnson, talks candidly with Lynn Hinkle about art, high culture, t.v., sexuality, frustration and cooperation in his workplace.</i>	
LOVE NOTES, SOMETIMES YOU ARE SO EXHAUSTED, SEX AS VIOLENCE (poetry).....	35
<i>George Polley and Elizabeth Sanford. Illustrated by Sara Porter.</i>	
ARTWORK WITH ROOTS / Jeannette May and Ken Meter.....	36
<i>Jeanette and Ken explore how gardens in Northeast have become a craft that has contributed to the stability of the neighborhood.</i>	
CRITICISM/SELF-CRITICISM: YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS / Sandra Pappas.....	38
<i>Sandra describes how we can overcome feeling attacked every time we are criticized and work more effectively in groups by using C/SC.</i>	
COMMUNITY BUILDING/REVIEWS	
WALKER COMMUNITY VIDEO / Bob Albee and Merille Glover.....	42
LINDEN HILLS SLIDE SHOW / Genevieve Ryan.....	43
WOMEN'S UNION FILM FESTIVAL / Helen Rosenfeld and Mary Retsinas.....	44
THE HISTORY BOOK / Jim Stengel.....	45
BLUEGRASS / James Tordoff.....	46
FOOD COOPS—WASHINGTON, D.C. / Mark Looney.....	48

letters to the editors

To the Editor of Common Ground :

I picked up a copy of your Summer issue during the Twin City tours of various neighborhoods.

In the Lynnhurst section, on the East side of Lake Harriet, you err. The true Lynnhurst boundaries from the Rose Garden (42nd Street) South to 48th Street and from Dupont to Lake Harriet Boulevard or Minnehaha Parkway at Southwest end. This section was developed by the David C. Bell real estate firm. It is the only area in Minneapolis where a house must be on at least two lots.

--Tom D. Crocker

P.S. This endeavor demonstrates a lot of research on the various areas.

Mr. Crocker: For the Parade Section, each neighborhood submitted its own definition of geographical boundaries. We were aware that there might be differences of opinion, but felt it best to let each neighborhood have its say. We can put you in touch with the writer from Lynnhurst if you want--thanks for your letter. By the way, what does your research cover?

--Common Ground

Dear Common Grounders:

Your Parade of Neighborhoods issue absolutely blew my mind. I am so proud of what you young Twin Citians (and some oldsters, too)

are doing to make my hometown a leader in humanity--in living in these troubled times. I've been in alot of cities, known people from all over, but Twin Cities has got the best, and you're the best it's got, the way I see it. Keep up the good work and may God bless all of you.

--Gladys Spratt
Lakemont, Georgia

To Common Ground:

Thank you for your excellent magazine. The articles are well researched and well written. I have encouraged several friends to subscribe. Good luck!

--Margaret A. O'Keefe

Common Ground:

Enclosed is my subscription. As a folklorist and as a member of the Minneapolis Arts Commission, I believe your publication is invaluable.

--Ellen J. Stekert

To all of you: Thanks for your support--it's much appreciated!

--Common Ground

We need your responses in order to better understand and serve our audience. We are doing some different things in terms of format and content in this issue and look forward to receiving your comments and criticisms. Please address them to Common Ground, 2314 Elliot Avenue South, Mpls, Mn 55404.

On The Street Where We Live

(To the tune of "On The Street Where You Live" from "My Fair Lady")

I have often walked down this street before
But there was never so much pavement and concrete before;
All at once am I several stories high,
Looking down on the street where I live!

Are there hi-rises in the heart of town?
Can you hear such traffic roar in any other part of town?
Do the shoppers pour out of every door?
No--it's just on the street where we live!

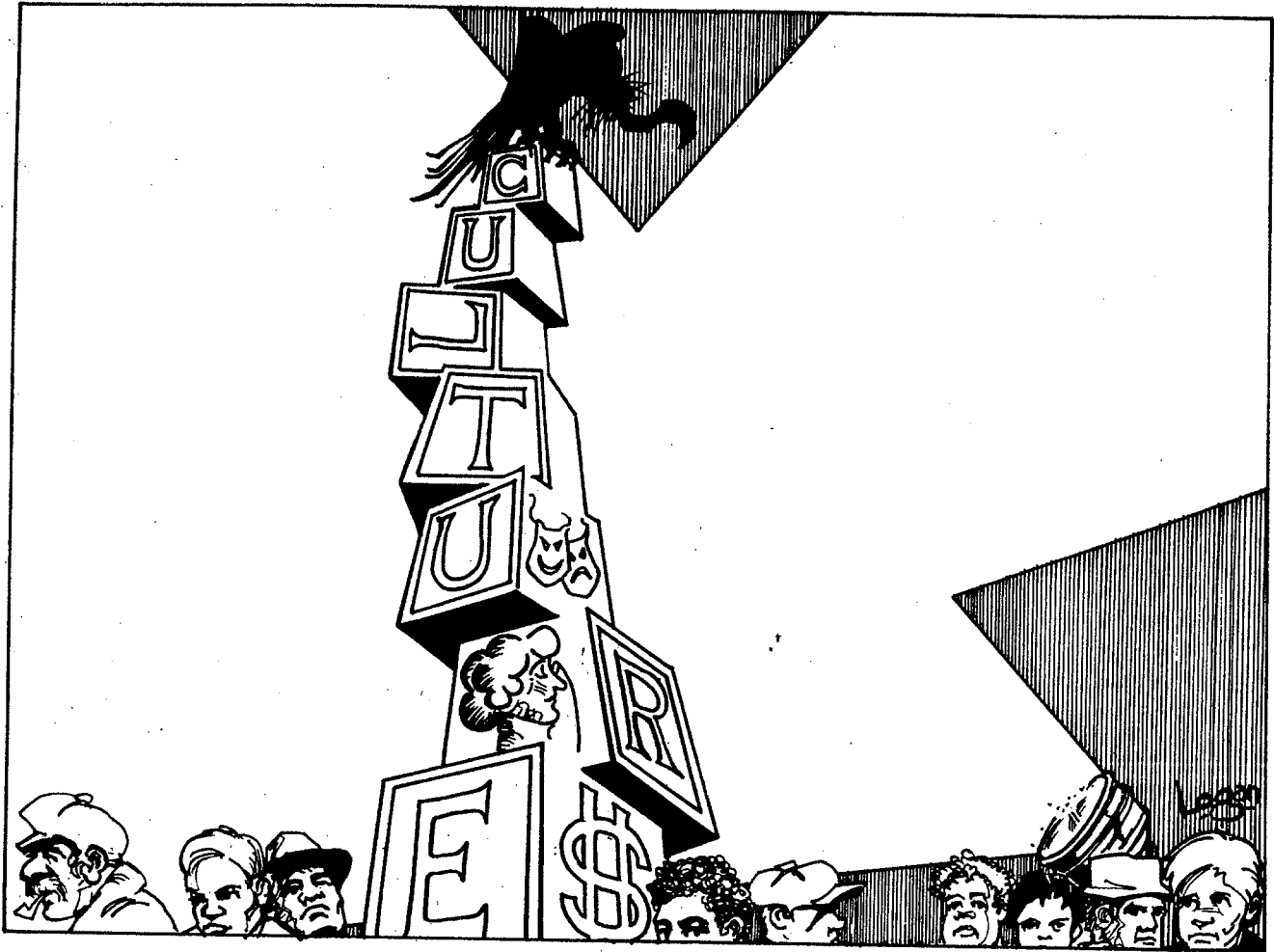
And oh--that towering feeling--
Just to know, somehow they are near--
That overpowering feeling--
That any second your home too may disappear!

People stop and stare--
And that bothers me!
For there's nowhere else on earth that I would rather be.
But if time goes by--it'll be too late to try--
To stay here--on the street--where we live!!



This song was written by residents of the Powderhorn Park neighborhood as part of a skit called "My Fair City" expressing opposition to plans for a Chicago/Lake shopping center. The skit was performed throughout the community. These pictures were taken during a performance of the skit at a Minneapolis City Council hearing concerning the proposed shopping center. Photos by Ken Meter.

Publicly Supported Art: Art For Whose Sake?



by Rachel Kranz

The new trend in the Twin Cities art world is to bring people to the arts. Ticket subsidy programs, culture buses, arts in education grants, and statewide tours are all means of enticing the art-indifferent public into the major arts institutions. And they're all being hailed as one small step for the institutions, one giant step for democracy in the arts.

Can it be that this new offer of friendship has an ulterior motive? Can it be that the imploring, outstretched hand proffered by the Big Four and the other arts institutions is reaching out to take and not to give? The arts need support these days, and many administrators think the time has come to start getting public money. To get people to pay the taxes, you have to sell them on the product.

But is "more exposure" going to turn the trick? Are people avoiding these institutions only because they aren't used to going to them? A recent Guthrie audience survey found that a key issue for people not going to the theatre is fear. They're afraid someone will ask them what they think of the show during intermission.

Why should people be afraid of their own opinions? Isn't the show supposed to be for them? Apparently people don't know what they think any more because, like everything else, culture has been given over to the experts. You don't go to the theatre (or any arts event) to cheer up, get angry, learn something new. Art is presented not as an ongoing process in which the audience participates, but as the final product--an object for the critics to judge. And if you haven't got the critic's training, you'd

"Can it be that the imploring, outstretched hand proffered by the Big Four and the other arts institutions is reaching out to take and not to give?"

better get one--or stay home.

I remember going to a play once that I thought was terribly funny. It was by a well-known playwright who was considered a "serious dramatist." But most of the dialogue was based on British music-hall comedy, a kind of humor that is not only very funny, but is supposed to be very simple and quickly understood. Every time I laughed at something I thought was funny, the couple in front of me turned around and stared indignantly, as though they couldn't imagine someone profaning the hallowed aura of the famous playwright in the serious atmosphere of the theatre by laughing.

What seemed saddest to me was that the couple couldn't even trust their own sense of humor enough to laugh at a truly funny joke because it was set in the middle of what they thought was supposed to be a serious play, a joke they might have enjoyed if they had been making their own decisions about what was going on in the play. Ironically, from reading about the playwright, I know that he means his work to be funny.

Whose fault was it? The couple's, for not trusting their own judgments? The theatre's, for building up such a sense of reverence about itself that many people don't even go for fear that their own judgment isn't good enough? Our general attitude towards culture, as an object to be appraised, rather than a process to be enjoyed?

I remember another performance I went to--a concert by Pete Seeger. A lot of the songs he was singing were familiar to the audience, some of them were new. Some of the time he asked the audience to sing with him, some of the time they just did anyway. Some of the time he even got the audience to sing in harmony. The concert played to a full house at Northrop Auditorium. There couldn't have been very many of us there who knew much about music or singing. But it didn't matter. He asked us to sing along and we did because we wanted to sing along. The songs were about things we were interested in, or they were songs we had grown up singing. Hearing Pete Seeger sing made us want to sing so much that we didn't have time to wonder if

we were singing off-key, or doing a bad job on the harmony. We didn't feel shut out, thinking, "Well, I'm not sure if this is the right place to applaud or not, maybe this song isn't very good, maybe I just think it's good, maybe I shouldn't sing too, maybe the person behind me is going to wonder why I don't know any better than to sing like that...." We felt included, we felt close to each other as well as to the man on stage, and we knew that besides him being the reason for us being there, we were the reason for him being there.

If people only went to the art events that were useful and comfortable to them, maybe it wouldn't matter if there were other kinds of art that made them feel left out. If there were enough chances to participate in art, to use it as a means of self-expression or discovery, to see it as the one area in your life where you can say what you want to say, maybe it wouldn't matter that other experiences made you feel as though what you thought didn't matter.

But we don't have the choice. In the first place, the more aware you are that experts have decided that your kind of art/culture is less valuable than their kind of art, the less meaningful your own art is going to be to you. People who speak a second language are often reluctant to teach it to their children because English is more fashionable. People who might have their own songs, or their own dances, or their own theatre are often reluctant to make a commitment to that kind of art, because they're afraid they'll come out looking ignorant. It's easier just to avoid any kind of art at all.

In the second place, those organizations that do try to create a community-based art have to compete for money with those organizations that are more removed. Shakespeare in the Streets, a group that tried to bring theatre into a more familiar setting and to show that classical theatre, too, is dependent on its audience, went out of business because of a \$40,000 deficit. The Guthrie received \$518,592 in contributions last year. The West Bank School of Music is set up to teach people about music and to support resident composers and musicians. Director Warren Park says that the school would be "set up for life" with a \$10,000 grant. The Minnesota Orchestra ran a \$397,350 deficit last year.

"The irony of these organizations' positions is that the more money they spend on art that is not responsive to the community, the more urgently they are forced to go to the community for money."

Even the private money that supports these institutions is, in a sense, public money. Most of the funding for arts organizations has come in the forms of tax deductible corporate gifts, personal gifts, or foundation grants. But now the institutions are asking for public money. Official legislators use words like "openness" and "accountability" as they mull over the new proposals for increased funds to the State Arts Council, the major source of public arts funding in Minnesota, and for other kinds of arts subsidies. The institutions seem to be trying to open up, if only by way of trying to open up new markets for their wares. "...I'm sure there were many occasions when (Clarence Chaney, former fundraiser for the Minnesota Orchestra) went to lunch at the Minneapolis Club with a \$10,000 deficit, and left with no deficit at all," recalls Orchestra managing director Richard Cisek. Those days are gone for good now. So the Art Institute, for example, engages in what some have called the "revolutionary move" of letting its members elect its Board of Trustees, rather than having the Board choose itself. True, there is a Board nominating committee that selects the candidates. But the irony of these organizations' positions is that the more money they spend on art that is not responsive to the larger community, the more urgently they are forced to go to the larger community for money. If a group of active Institute members made nominations from the floor, the Institute would have to weight the desire to preserve the old leadership against the desire to have contact with the new audience they need so badly.

Public funding by itself won't make the arts in the Twin Cities more democratic. Right now public money is handed out with many of the same attitudes as private money, and in much the same proportions. At a recent Arts Council Board meeting, for example, most theaters were awarded grants for less than \$10,000, usually for less than \$5,000. The Guthrie was awarded \$25,000 for ticket subsidies because, as one Board member put it, "I know we're supposed to be concerned about the smaller institutions and the outstate institutions. But we have a responsibility to our major institutions too." "They're the most successful theater in the United States and they're going to need all the help they can get," agreed another member.

People have been alienated by most existing art for so long, they may consider all art irrelevant. Because art that lets you express your own view of the world is so rare, people who have never experienced that kind of art may not know what they're missing. Now that the need for public money means we have a chance to influence the direction of the arts in this community, the danger is that too many people may not think that spending any money for art is worth the trouble.

We have four choices. We can ignore the situation and pay the taxes when they come, as they probably will. We can let the tax-free corporate money continue to be spent by the arts administrators and foundation executives who have distributed it in the past.

We can put pressure on the Legislature to deny any kind of public funding bill. For people who see all art as something that shuts them out and reminds them they don't even know enough to decide whether something's funny or not, that might seem the best alternative. Why should they pay for the high-priced entertainment of somebody else who has more money? Why should they pay to support something that devalues their opinions?

We can push for support only of groups like the West Bank School of Music, the Afro-American Cultural Arts Center, and the Alive and Trucking Theater, arts organizations that are trying to express the lives of the people in their communities. There are groups in the Twin Cities that recognize the importance of the audience to the art, that try to get people to make their own art, and we can try to see that public money goes only to them.

Or we can continue to push for increased support of community groups at the same time that we involve ourselves in the whole structure of arts funding in Minnesota. The State Arts Council is being reorganized in January, with new membership requirements, and a two-thirds increase in funds. Will there be community pressure for a member responsive to a community-based art? The Institute has begun to open up its internal procedures somewhat; the breaking off of the Children's Theatre from the Society of Fine Arts suggests that it might have to do the same if it's

"We can demand that in the meantime, organizations that already speak to our experience receive support. We can demand that organizations that already use our money try harder to speak to our experience."

going to get the kind of community support it needs to stay alive. The Guthrie sponsors several programs that are supposed to involve community people, and has recently begun development of a new theater for original works, Guthrie II. Will there be a campaign for community representatives within those institutions?

It isn't a question of substituting the word "democracy" for the word "aesthetics." It isn't a question of throwing out all the old standards in favor of no standards at all, or of demanding an art that requires no effort on our part to create. To completely ignore the larger institutions is both impractical and dangerous. We have to face the fact that for a while they are still likely to get the lion's share of the

money. We have to realize that we can't develop new artistic standards until we know enough about the old ones to know why we're throwing them out.

But we can demand that in the meantime, organizations that already speak to our experience receive support. We can demand that organizations that already use our money try harder to speak to our experience. And we can counter the old feelings of impotence in the face of alien art by creating a new kind of art that is born out of our own lives.

Rachel Kranz lives in the Selby-Dale neighborhood of St. Paul, reports and broadcasts on Minnesota Public Radio and has contributed to other community-oriented publications.

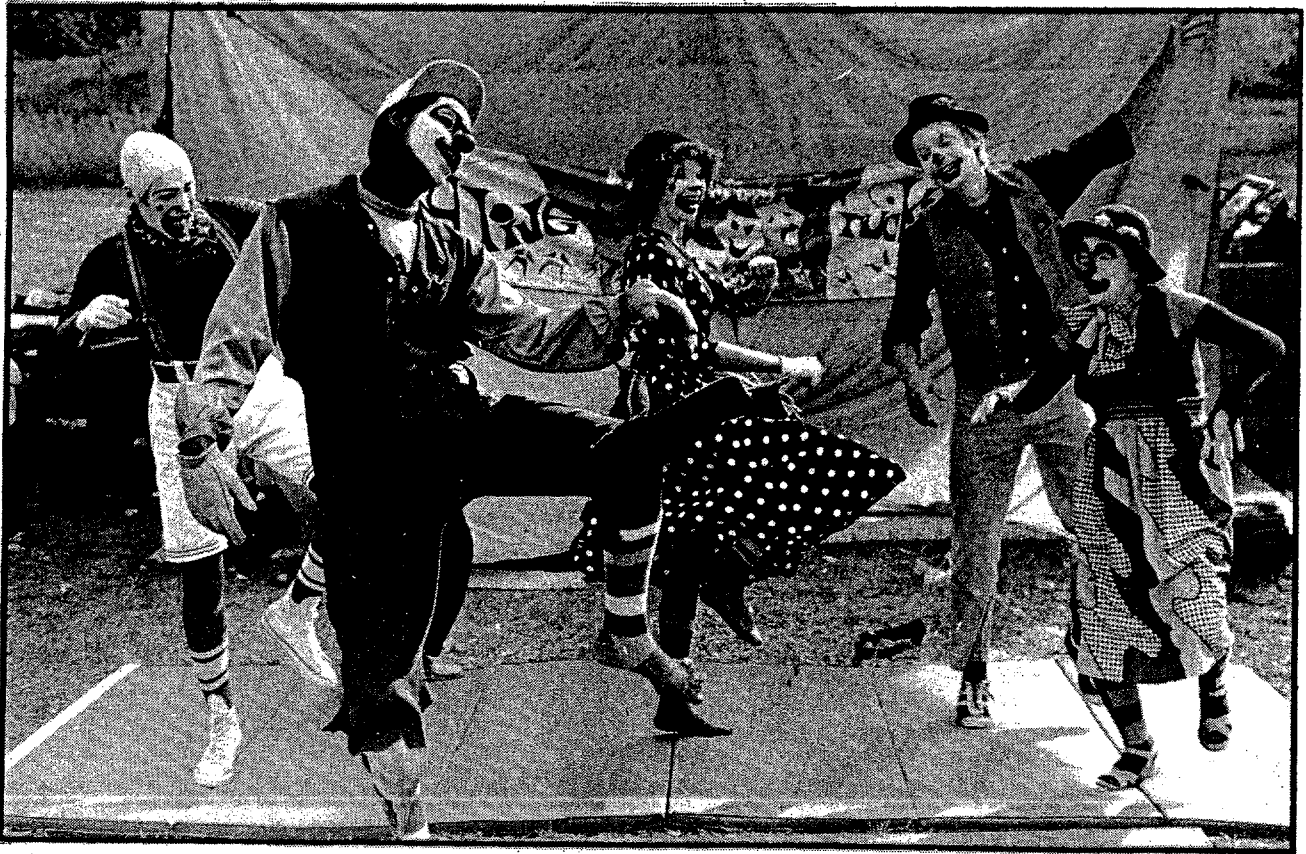


"Aficionados #2"

Serigraph, 1964

Syd Fossum

Resistance and Renewal: Alive & Trucking Theater Co.



A & T's "Clown Wanted," about job discrimination, performed at the Postal Worker & Carrier's Union Picnic. Photo: Ken Meter.

by Meri Golden

Alive and Trucking is a political community theatre over four years old. We perform plays and skits in neighborhood centers and parks around the Twin Cities. How does our theatre differ from the Guthrie or Children's Theatre? Or for that matter, how are we different from community theatres like Theatre in the Round or The Cricket? Our purpose is different. We see our theatre providing tools and spirit to both motivate resistance against an unjust system and build a new, more humane society. More specifically, the difference between those theatres and Alive and Trucking (A&T) can best be shown by detailing our use of content, form and "process" (how a play is created and how the audience is involved in that process).

Content: Strength in Unity

When people think of Alive and Trucking, and of "political theatre" in general, they usually think about the content of our plays--

and not without reason. Our plays are aimed at dealing with problems that most of us in communities throughout the Twin Cities face every day. We don't write about Kings or Queens or distant events which have no effect on our community. We write about us, our community, a real people's theatre talking about downzoning, discrimination, unemployment and our efforts to deal with these issues.

Occasionally, you will find even the Guthrie doing a play about "folk's" struggles. Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman is such a play. But the salesman's struggle ends in suicide. And we are left confused, depressed and feeling powerless to make any significant changes in our lives. "You can't fight City Hall," we say to ourselves, "see what happened to him?" The play shows the "system" as inevitable. It is this cynical spirit present in most theatre that we try to overcome. We think A&T's vision of reality is one which I think our community

"We see our theatre providing tools and spirit to both motivate resistance against an unjust system and build a new, more humane society."

is more familiar with: that individuals may make mistakes, but by acting together people are more likely to effect the changes they want and ultimately, feel strengthened and hopeful about their lives. We've experienced this in our own struggles in our community--the defeat of the proposed Domed Stadium for Downtown Minneapolis is a perfect example.

It is the concept of people working together that is present in the content of all of A&T's plays. The relationship of the "issue" and the concept of people working together in our plays is this: the issue becomes the context in which the dynamics of working together are explored and unfolded. In Battered Homes and Gardens (BH&G), for example, the issue was urban renewal. The dynamics explored (plot line) were those of a woman isolated in her home discovering that she had much to share with her husband, her daughters and her neighbors in their struggle fighting a hi-rise that would have torn down their home. We tried to keep the play from being over idealistic: the family saves their home from urban renewal, but does not prevent the hi-rise from being relocated to another part of the city. But the play does reflect the spirit of people learning to fight together.

Working together can be hard and we all need a sense of humor to help us in our struggles. But humor is used in traditional theatre mostly to help people escape the burden of their problems. Here, too, A&T differs from other theatres. We all need to laugh--especially in hard times. And we believe humor is the best way to deal with serious subjects, to raise our spirits so that we can move beyond our present condition with renewed energy. The Live Wire Tappers (our tapdancing team) dance along with the Grievettes (members of the Unemployed Workers Grievance Committee of the Workers' Rights Center) down at the unemployment line to the tune of "Has Anybody Seen My Gal"... "On the line, lay-off time, then comes speed up, what a crime, has ANYBODY SEEN MY JOB?" Our audience loves it, and what can be a more serious issue than unemployment?

Form: Lifting Spirits

The use of humor leads to discussing form. Much has been written about "radical" theatre rejecting old-style theatre forms and

creating new ones. We do believe that new forms of theatre are necessary to speak to needs not spoken to in traditional theatre. Musical comedy, for example, may be "old fashioned," but our audiences still enjoy it. So we take from the old in order to create the new. We use new content but maintain, for the most part, a popular style. Folk and ethnic singing and dancing, circus skills, juggling, tapdancing, gymnastics are all elements of this style. The People Are a River, for example, our full length play about women and workers' history, is based on stories, songs and dances of different ethnic groups throughout Minnesota history. A&T will be reviving it in the Twin Cities this winter.

Process: Empowering Audience and Actors

Process is a real key to what makes A&T different from most theatres. Internally we are run like many cooperative businesses written about in Common Ground. All of our work is done collectively: the technical aspects of production as well as the writing, directing and acting. This does not mean that everybody does everything. We have a committee system, wherein each group involves both skilled people and people who want to learn those particular skills. We feel it is important for us to recognize individuals' abilities within the collective and to support their developing the skills they already have.

Here is a brief description of the process of creating and producing our plays:

- 1) The idea for the topic of a play does not come out of thin air, nor is it based on decisions of "balancing a season." It is based on study and discussion of issues important to us as individuals and community members. Proposals for new play topics, written up by one or two people, are based on our discussion with individuals and organizations such as the Twin Cities Women's Union, the New American Movement, the Tenants' Union and others. Often, as with Battered Homes and Gardens, plays are written out of our own experience working in our communities, for example, trying to stop a school complex. We use criticism/self criticism in discussing the merits and drawbacks of a play topic (for a fuller discussion of criticism/self criticism see "You Can Teach An Old Dog New Tricks" in this issue).

"It is this element, including the audience in the creative process which gives the audience power, that distinguishes A&T from theatres that lean toward 'art for art's sake.' "

2) After the play topic is decided upon, a committee (once again, made up of people who are already skilled and those who want to learn the skills) then takes the idea and develops a political outline and a plot outline. The political outline clearly points out what we want to demonstrate in each scene. In one scene of BH&G for example, we wanted to show a) the spirit people felt after a community meeting, b) who stays at home (Mom) while Dad and the kids attend such a meeting, c) how a cynical neighbor almost convinces Dad to give up the fight and d) how mother and daughter (two generations) learn to respect each other's opinions.

3) The collective discusses this outline and we all talk with people in the community for input and feedback.

4) Our acting improvisations (improvs) begin and we invite people who have worked on the issues involved to help us in rehearsals, often getting them to join us in our improvs to make sure situations we portray are accurate. The next step is further improvisations aimed at developing characters. At this time we cast the show (5).

6) The plot outline is shaped by our improvs and then broken into "beats:" a) Dad & daughter enter, excited; b) Dad is talked down; c) Mom pulls back; d) girls lift her spirits. These actions words indicate movement. We use frozen poses or "tableux" to explore the scene's flow.

7) At this point, following continued improvisations, we work on music, songs, dances etc. A committee then takes the script and develops dialogue (8) and this is tried out in rehearsals and modified by our improvs until it is finally set (9).

10) From there we follow more traditional theatre patterns of technical duties (costumes, make up, lights) as well as business tasks including publicity and all important fundraising.

11) The play is rehearsed and polished with community members invited for criticism and is finally ready to open.

Our plays are constantly in progress. As we solicit community discussion of our performances, our theatre shows constantly change after they've opened. This on-going

dialogue is part of the criticism/self criticism process we employ to insure that our art is understandable and entertaining. It is this element, including the audience in the creative process which gives the audience power, that distinguishes A&T from theatres that lean toward "art for art's sake."

Accessibility is important to us, so we perform in parks, neighborhood centers and schools as much as possible. We also perform short pieces and hold workshops on specific topics for organizations or groups. You may have seen us in City Hall demonstrating on issues of rent control or downzoning.

Our collective production process may take more time than an individual whipping out a script or actors simply learning lines or blocking stage movements, but we all feel that the production process is a reflection of us as a collective as well as a reflection of our audience.

Our non-hierarchical, anti-star system is looked on by some as being non-professional. But again, our theatre reflects us, and rather than art being owned by any one person (a John Doe production or Joe Blow presents), it is cooperatively owned and run. We don't believe in having a director acting as boss, with actors being mere cogs in some master artiste's machine. We believe in having the collective workers control their own production.

We have grown together over the last four years--our collective is a close family. We feel that our collective process is one of the reasons that our work carries with it an energy that is lacking in traditional theatres. In all, A&T strives to be accessible and accountable to our audience--the community--by using popular forms to explore issues and ways of dealing with those issues which inspire spirited efforts, to give people a sense of their own power to build a new society.

For more information, stop by at A&T's office at 116 East 32nd Street, Mpls 55408 or call 823-1022.

Meri Golden, a resident of Powderhorn Park neighborhood, has been an active member of Alive and Trucking for almost 3 years.

China Tour

Culture Supporting the People

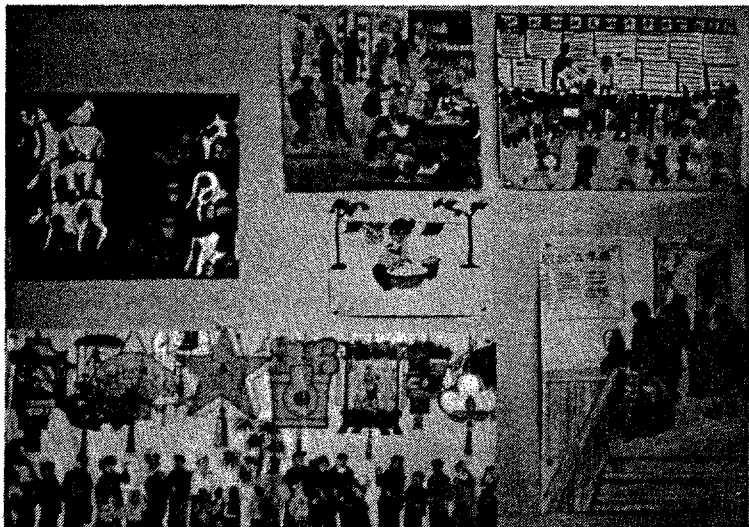
Photo essay by Jan Mandell excerpted from the slide show she will be presenting in October. For details, see end of article.

"Before liberation, everyday we had 3 worries. In the morning we worried about finding work. In the afternoon we worried about finding food. At night we worried about where we were going to sleep. Now all of that has changed."

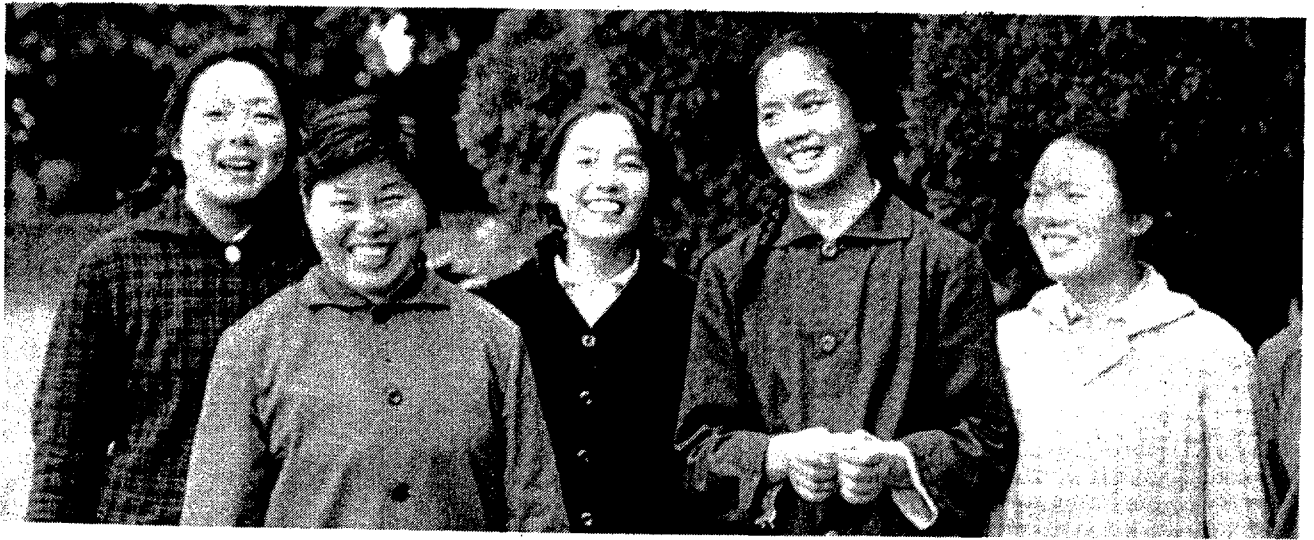
This dock worker at the Shanghai docks plays accordion for the docks' spare-time cultural center.



(above) singing and dancing are important in education
(below) drawings by 7-9 year olds in Shanghai



This woman is also a member of her factory's spare-time cultural group. She is a steel worker in Wuhan who performs in skits during break periods. Such skits attempt to bring the daily experiences of the factory workers into theatre.



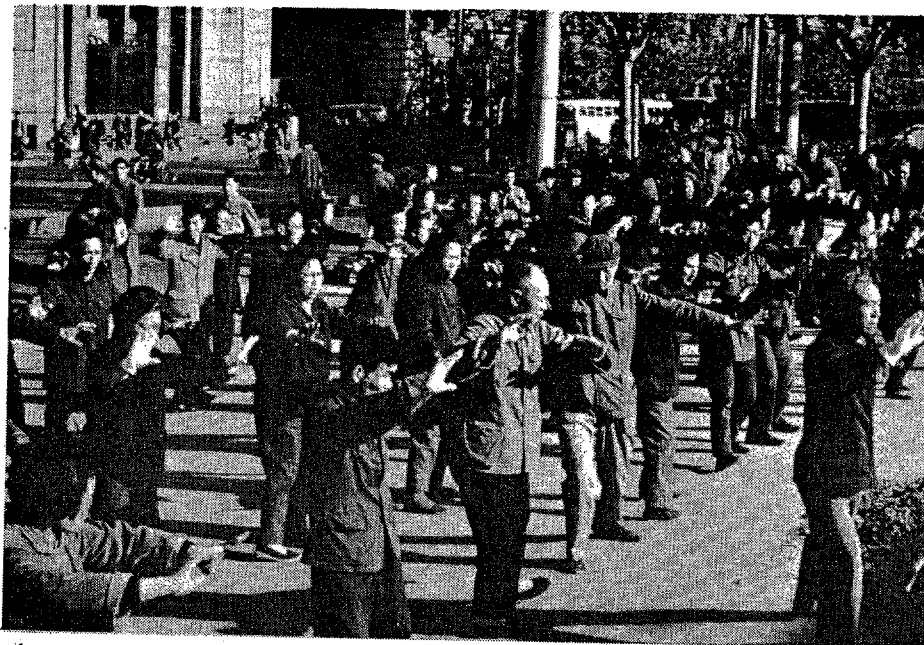
When I asked these english-speaking students and their teachers how they handled "depression," they didn't understand what the word meant. In their culture, they were unfamiliar with such immense sadness. They reported that someone who begins to feel badly about work or a friendship is surrounded by people who help them understand their sadness and move beyond it.



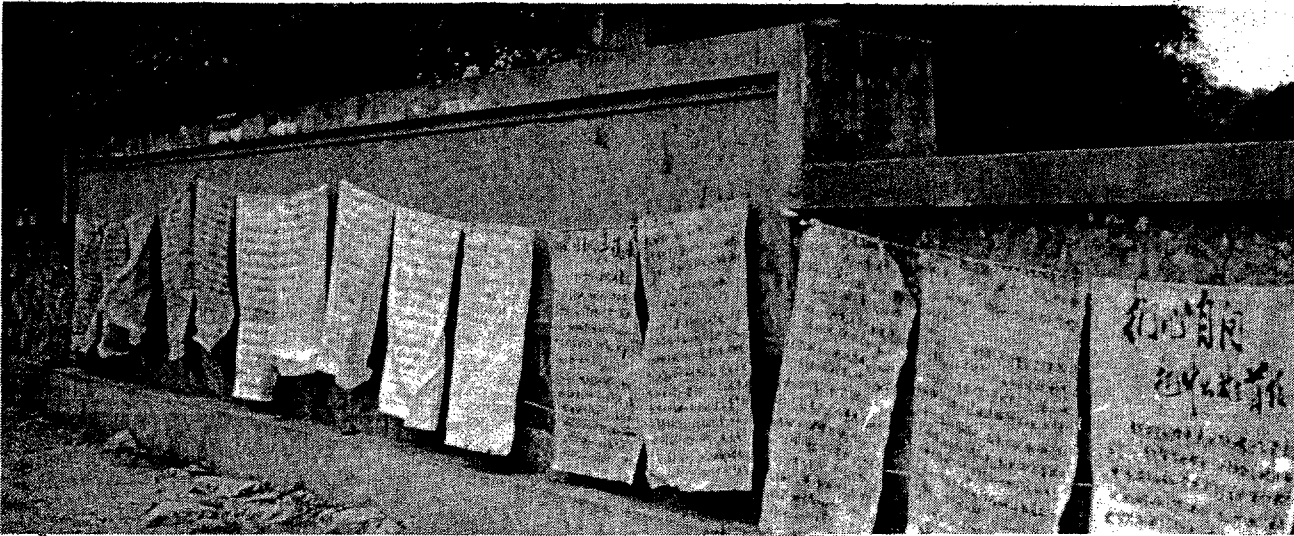
A farmer? No, she's an office worker, spending time at a May 7 Cadre School in Peking. People whose work involves primarily mental tasks, rather than hand labor, are required to attend such schools for 3 months every other year in order to evaluate their own work and to reacquaint themselves with the lives of manual laborers.



This worker is painting on his day off. His landscape is anything but a didactic political scene.



Morning in China greets you with a jamboree of bells and horns and people exercising together in the streets. This is a group of people doing t'ai chi, a set of exercises which promote physical grace and fitness. Anyone is free to join in.



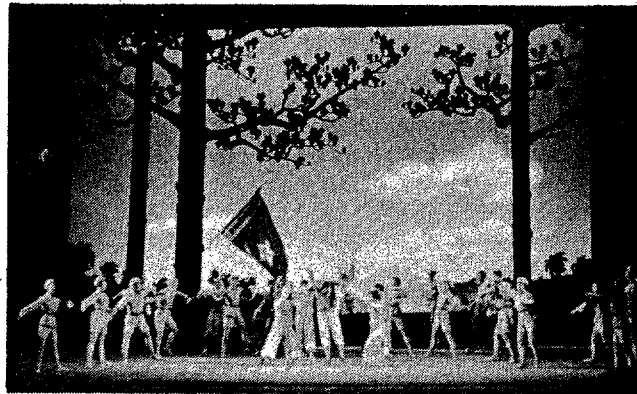
Public expressions are not limited to those of professionals. All people are encouraged to write and put up their own posters with new ideas, suggestions, criticisms, or inspirations. Such posters are hung in factories, schools, or on streets, and are read regularly and discussed openly. Often, such wall posters are the basis for lengthy policy discussions or disputes. (WUHAN UNIVERSITY)



Streets in China are huge museums filled with murals, posters, and photo displays. They're not trying to sell us milk or Hamm's Beer. Rather, they attempt to inspire people to work cooperatively, or to reflect the daily life and work of the people. In this mural is a reminder that everyone is an important part of the building of a new China--working people, women, and national minorities. (WUHAN)

The professional arts in China are not merely for entertainment or escape. Rather, in China, the arts are an "engagement in life." They reflect the daily lives, struggles, and history of the people. They are used for education, celebration, and to open ideas for discussion.

This is a ballet--"The Red Detachment of Women." It is a story of a young girl who escapes from slavery under a landlord and fights for the freedom of her country with the communist party.



Come to See Jan's Slide Show!

Common Ground is sponsoring two showings of Jan's slide show about Culture in China:

THURSDAY, OCT. 23

Oddfellows Hall, Raymond and Hampden, St. Paul 7:30 pm

FRIDAY, OCT. 24

Powderhorn Park Pavilion, 3415 15th Ave S, Mpls 7:30 pm

50¢ donation

Jan Mandell is a member of Alive and Trucking Theatre. She toured China with 21 other cultural workers from this country for three weeks this summer.

SUPPORTING OUR ART

Compas

by Hakim Ali

On April 1, 1974 COMPAS (Community Programs in the Arts and Sciences), a member agency of the St. Paul-Ramsey Arts and Science Council, launched the Neighborhood Arts Program. Its initial goals were to expand art beyond the confines of the walls of the Arts and Science Center, to give the community an opportunity to become involved in the creative process and to involve talented local artists, the catalytic agents who assisted the people in the creative programs, but still give them time to practice their crafts.

Art is traditionally thought of as a leisure time activity of students and elitists, and historically, as elitist, sexist and racist. The COMPAS staff and artists embarked on the road less travelled: they set out to bring acts of art at arms length to minorities, blue collar workers, teenagers, the elderly, etc., at diverse locations, central to residents of the St. Paul community.

Weekly workshops were held at Hallie Q Brown, Merriam Park, Capitol Community Services, Merrick, Oneida, and Neighborhood House centers. The activities included workshops in ceramics, mime, creative dramatics, drawing and painting, photography, film and poetry as well as outdoor summer free live festival performances at neighborhood centers on the St. Paul Department of Parks and Recreation showmobile, Art Ark II, a mural project, and a newsletter used as a documentation and communication vehicle, featuring the works and progress of artists and students.

Twin City professional artists who participated in the program emerged as the critical element that gave birth to the vision of the post-war phenomenon called community arts. Though backgrounds varied from established artists to artists one and two years out of art schools, to disenchanted artists--all share the commonality of a blend of creative intelligence, creative leadership, and a desire to work with people. These attributes enabled them to accomplish the task they were faced with--of placing people in touch with the creative process by sharing their talents.

Community arts is far from a social panacea, but obvious individual and socially significant reactions were apparent. The

tangible results varied from individual accomplishment like the women who sold a painting for \$100 after attending a painting workshop for two months to the sense of pride shown by residents at a dedication of a mural or at a neighborhood festival.

It is clear, even to the most casual observer, that arts programs share a common concern: survival. The Neighborhood Arts program is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Minnesota State Arts Council, the Davis Foundation, and the St. Paul Foundation. Additional support is needed from local foundations, neighborhood centers, and the business community if the work is to continue.

Although we have taken the road less travelled, community arts programs are here to stay as a vital part of the American scene. They will contribute in the effort to changing the role of art in human history.

Hakim Ali is the Director of COMPAS' Neighborhood Arts Program. For more information, call 227-8241.



Students and instructor work on a mosaic later dedicated to Hallie Q. Brown. Photo COMPAS.

Afro American Cultural Arts Center

by Seitu

Everyone has a creative sense--a creative feel for the world around them. The Afro American Cultural Arts Center was born to help people dig down and pull out that unexpressed creative artist and to help those already involved in the creative process develop it further.

The Afro American Center was originally part of Minneapolis Model Cities. We are now

receiving revenue sharing dollars.

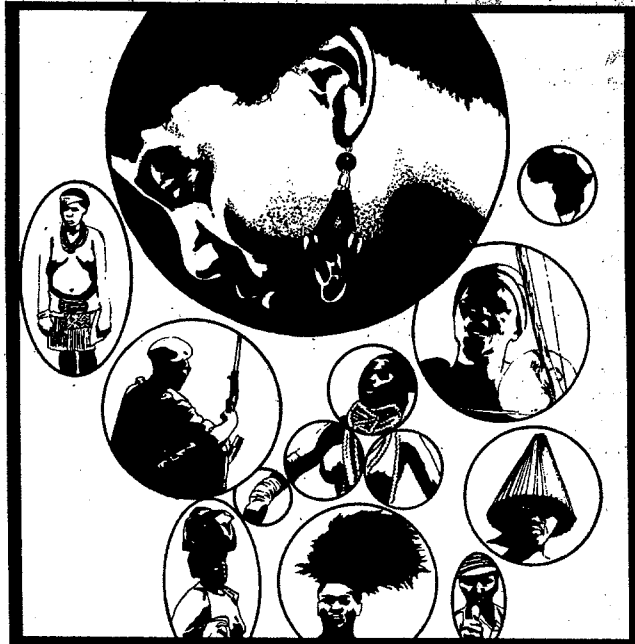
During the Center's existence, we have striven to make it a functional part of the immediate surroundings and of the larger community. We have brought the performing and visual arts to people who might not ordinarily have had access to them. And in a sense, this reflects our concept of art. We have begun to redefine what it has traditionally meant in the context of Western society, where the battle cry has been "art for art's sake." We feel that art should be functional. We believe that it should decorate and/or appeal to our aesthetics. We also believe that it should be part of our everyday life and that it should educate and inform. Hopefully, art can be a vehicle of expression that speaks of a people's joys, fears, hopes, sense of beauty. Hopefully, art can speak of a people's problems and offer some solution to these problems.

All of our classes are taught from this perspective. The Center offers instruction in brass, percussion, keyboard, woodwinds and guitar. We also offer classes in dance, photography and ceramics.



Graphics for Uchawi Dancers poster. By Seitu.

The Center houses three gallery spaces, all geared toward promoting and displaying art created by Black people which speaks to that experience. One gallery is reserved



"Been Such A Long Time Gone," for East African singer Aliza Ngona publicity. By Seitu.

specifically for photography. Another contains a permanent exhibit while the last space is for temporary exhibits that change every four to ten weeks. These temporary exhibits are all multi-media and reflect some aspect of the total Black experience. We are also in the process of designing a series of mobile exhibits that will be able to be loaned and rented to organizations that have the space to exhibit them.

Just as we hope to affect the community around us, that community affects us. Once again, we will have to move. The block that we are located on is slated for re-development. We are considering not only moving to another building but possibly building a new structure to house the Center. We will appreciate any input and donations that will help us make that move.

Seitu is the curator for the Center. He's lived in South Minneapolis for 12 years. For more information, call 827-5591.

Arts Vouchers

by Merille Glover

I rarely go to arts events. I used to--a few years ago, I used to go alot. I enjoyed them then. But I live a different experience now. And that experience--my personal growth and my community's efforts to create a different way of living--very little of that is reflected in most arts events around me. So there is a distance between us, an alienation from those events that is becoming more and more painful.

SUPPORTING OUR ART

I am not alone in this. Many people feel the way I do. Maybe not for the same reasons, but many of us are not attending arts events. Finally, though, something is going to be done about it. Recently, this past August, the Twin Cities Metropolitan Arts Alliance has initiated the voucher ticket system for performing arts events which will enable certain targetted audiences--some low income groups, labor union members, primary, secondary and vocational school teachers--to attend arts events at a lower cost. The mechanics of the system are relatively simple: if eligible, we can buy a set of 5 vouchers, good for 6 months, for \$5. Along with this, we'll receive a calendar of events and a list of all participating organizations. The participating organizations, including groups like the Afro American Cultural Arts Center, Alive and Trucking Theatre, and the Guthrie Theatre honor the vouchers as full or partial payment or as a contribution, and redeem them for \$2.50 a piece from the TCMAA. The program is funded by a major 3-year grant from the Bush Foundation as well as grants from the Minneapolis, Jerome, Ober and General Mills Foundations and The Minnesota State Arts Council.

The TCMAA recognizes that there are many reasons arts events aren't attended and has chosen to strategize the program around two major factors: one, that people can't afford to attend, and two, that many believe arts events are inaccessible to them. Accordingly, they have selected those two audiences as targets for the program.

The first factor is plain to all of us--we've all become very selective about spending any extra money we might have. The second is--intriguing.

Why don't we attend? One, we may not know about arts events we'd like to support (many of the smaller groups perform irregularly) or two, we may not go because they don't mean anything to us. For many of us, arts events deal with subjects that, although meaningful to some, aren't to others. They don't speak to our own experience and worse, are often couched in esoteric language and unfamiliar settings. We end up feeling alienated.

It's time Art became art: accessible, understood, enjoyed and supported by more than just a few well-monied, well-educated people. It's time to redefine art. It's time art came to include a fresh look at the world around us--at our own lives and the places we live in--in a way that moves us,

that strengthens us to deal with our lives in anger, in laughter, in joy.

We have the beginnings of such art. Alive and Trucking and many others are attempting to create an art born of the issues in our day to day lives (sexism, racism, unemployment, etc.). They, along with many community theatres, are attempting to bring art back to our communities.

Unfortunately, they may not receive much dollar support as a result of the program. Many of these community arts efforts are unable to get funding from major foundations. Consequently, they are not able to perform frequently or regularly. The deadline for the voucher calendar is before most of them know when or where they'll be performing. In the end, revenues from the program will likely be channeled to major arts organizations. And once again, the kind of art (read Art) offered by these organizations may continue to monopolize the art scene.

The TCMAA has a large task in front of it. Through the program, they're offering new ways we can attend arts events. Through follow-up surveys, they're continuing an effort to find out why we are or are not attending. However, armed though we be with vouchers and calendars, our patterns of attendance may still not change. Most will be alienating for us.

I hope the TCMAA deals with this alienation, that they join us in an effort to amplify the definition of art. We need more than art for art's sake. We need art for our sake.

For more information, contact Nancy Kothrade at the TCMAA office, 332-0471. Many thanks for Mary Kay Johnson who introduced me to the voucher system.

Street Artist Guild

by Rick Shope

A slow drizzle began casting doubts on the whole day. But it was still morning and the Sunday forecast had promised clear afternoon skies. Juggling balls were suspended mid-air, the trinkets in the cases, the puppets all quiet, and the mimefaces packed away in their various tins of make-up. Then the go ahead and the entourage formed a caravan to head out to Bunker Hills Park in Anoka for the Postal Clerks & Carriers Annual Picnic, an event that gathers three to five thousand postal workers and their families for food, beer, softball, hayrides--and this year, the Street Circus.

What is a Street Circus? Among other things, it is the most visible evidence that a Street Artist Guild has formed in the Twin Cities and is finding ways to survive. Formed in May by a handful of craft, visual, and performing artists, the guild has managed to assemble a framework to allow a diverse group of artists to find a common link. Now in its fledgling form, the Street Circus is an open theatrical event that seeks to focus on each artist's work, arranging relationships to bring out the best quality from everyone.

The Street Artist Guild has formed as a result of issues that had disturbed many artists, but primarily around that of supporting artists who live on low incomes over long periods of time, whose pride in quality and sense of social concern are the reasons they seek to survive as artists. The Street Guild is addressing three main problems faced by this group of people: 1) lack of artist control at art fairs, 2) lack of legal "sanction" permitting artists to sell their work or perform and pass the hat, except at "special events" (e.g., the Street Circus), and 3) the isolation of artists from one another.

The popularity of art fairs has begun to create an overwhelming assortment of events from hodge-podge displays to some



Rick Shope plays tug of war with kids at Postal Workers Picnic. Photo: Ken Meter.

fine juried exhibitions. Craft artists may spend all winter making wares to sell throughout the summer, making the circuit of fairs, arranged by promoters to gather people together to sell art for fun and for profit. Craft and visual artists in this medium are lost in the shuffle of a supermarket syndrome that in no way enhances an audience's ability to appreciate quality work. The street guild may function here as a cross between a union and a troupe, ready to act as an advocate for artists dealing with promoters or to provide an artist-controlled context as through the Street Circus.

From the time of early urban culture to the present, the street has been a focus of activity for musicians, mimes, and traveling troupes of one kind or another. Taking performance where people move throughout the day is in principle an attempt to stimulate an audience and create an impromptu atmosphere for communication. At present, audience response--applause--is the only legal tender. Passing the hat is taboo. The Street Artist Guild feels that a direct monetary exchange between artist and audience should be legalized through a licensing procedure to allow such artists to earn what small living can come of it, especially in such hard times. A licensing procedure would give the City a vehicle of regulation, making a distinction between street artistry and panhandling, while permitting artists to take advantage of their talent to entertain and earn direct sustenance as well as applause. This all requires working closely with the Minneapolis City Arts Commission, the City Council, the Downtown Councils of Minneapolis and St. Paul and other interested agencies.

Perhaps the most significant problem is that of artists' isolation from one another, even within the same city. It is only natural that this happens. The level of concentration and time needed to work alone absorbs tremendous energies, a problem faced both by individuals and collectives. This isolation keeps artists as a whole from competing well for scarce dollars and inhibits dialogue on quality, survival, mutual aid--everything. The Street Artist Guild is an attempt to articulate the needs and provide advocacy for developing artists, especially in dealing effectively with larger arts institutions and funding agencies. In Minnesota, arts support has never been better, and the mythology of the Twin Cities as a cultural center is perhaps slowly weaving its way into reality.

Rick Shope is a mime artist. He has been involved in coordinating the Street Artist Guild. This fall he will be touring out-state Minnesota with CHAMBER DREAMS.

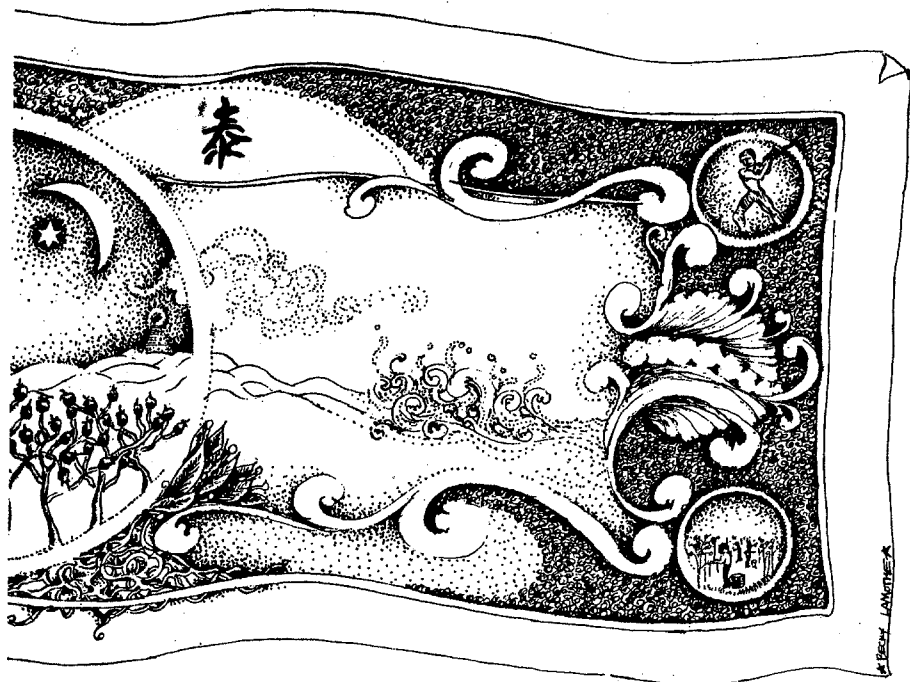


The Song Of A Dollar

you keep me in dark places
in vaults, in jars, in funny drawers that ring
when they open to warn you
i am coming
places that can be locked
as though i was dangerous

and through the endless variety
of things that make up your lives, i have come
to know you at brief glimpses as i passed
from pockets in your wallets made just for
me, from purses full of smells of kleenex,
makeup, pens, pencils, the toothed
keys that unlock your doors as i
passed from your hands into another's,
hands whose sweat has made me possible,
hands which hold the oils of sorrow
of relationships ended because i was gone,
tired and frustrated hands that have worked so
long and hard for me that you had nothing left
for lovin', hands which have held
the cheap wine of depression because there was no
work, the toxic smells of self-doubt,
powerlessness, and loss of confidence, the slow styleless
deaths that come when they have not held
me, hands that come alive when i return
as a lost key or a ticket

i am no longer 'legal' nor am i 'tender'
parents have given me like aspirin to their children
instead of love, because of me you have forgotten
so much, your dreams which harden like coral
under the muddy turbulent pool of balances,
interest, savings and mortgages which you have
become intimate with, because of me
there are products and consumers, the landlord
and the tenant, the slave master and the nigger,
the object and the subject, because of me
10 - 15 million Africans were kidnapped and sold
into slavery and between 20 and 200 million died
on the way, because of me the Sioux and other



nations were corralled into corners and massacred when gold, oil, and precious minerals were discovered on their lands. when i entered Saigon, carried by you like a disease, women there had to become whores to keep their children alive. even now in Brazil, natives are being exterminated as part of american 'corporate interests'

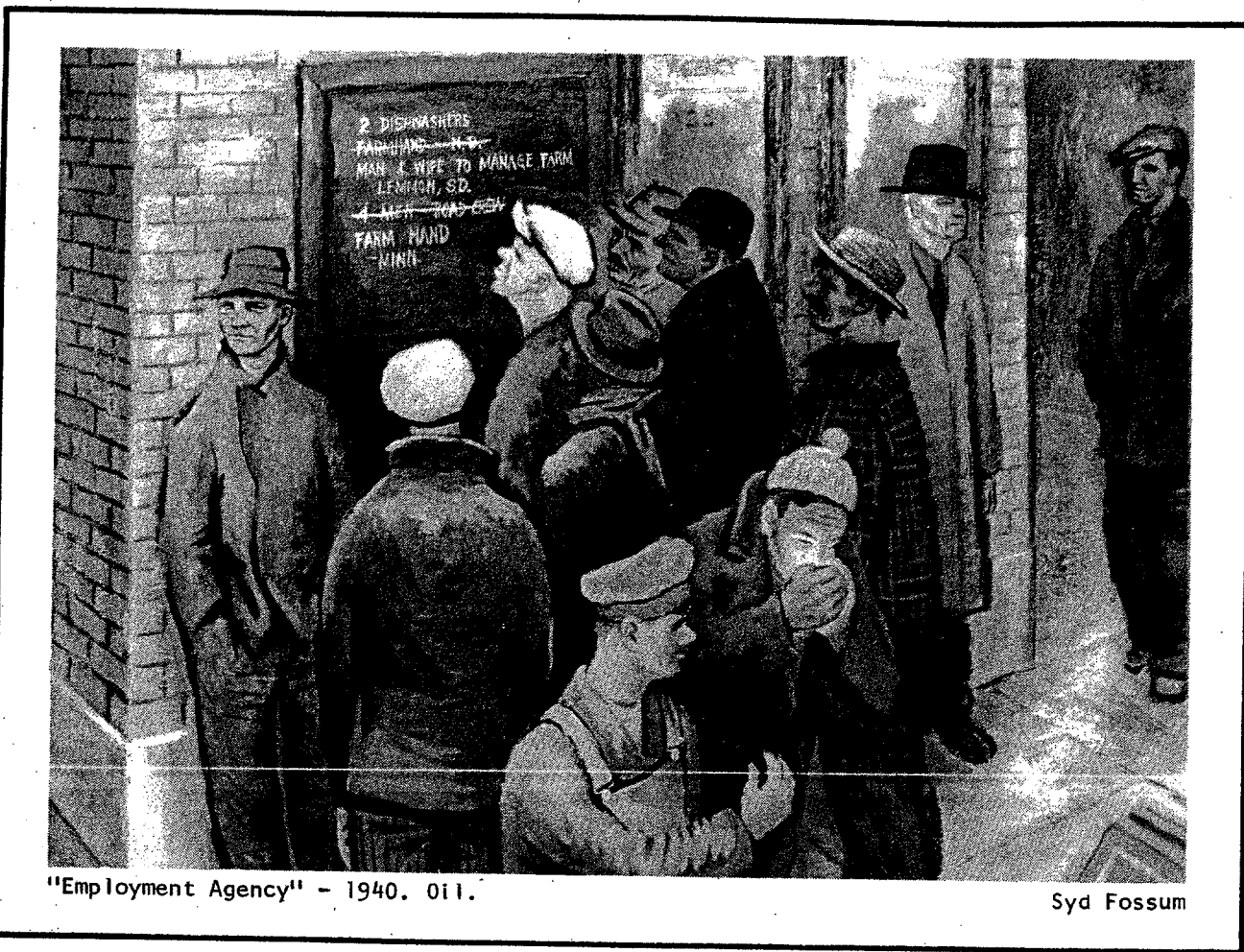
when i am alone i think about what it will be like when i have vanished and you have found a new way. i am looking for a time when i won't have to see so many broke, looking for a time when i won't have to be backed by a fort full of gold. when you rolled me up and snorted your snow through me, George got off and told me he wanted to be through with words like 'e pluribus unum', 'novus ordo seclorum', 'in god we trust'. i'm tired of the pyramid with the eye on top, i want to go back to my origins of wood and silk, i want the power to etch my own designs across the white space i am when all your printing has vanished. i want the power to determine my own value and rate of exchange i want a recess from the recession where i feel my worth growing less and less. let the eagle on my back drop your shield of bars, let its claws full of arrows and a branch let them fall, and let the eagle soar like it used to. i want to become so green you cannot tell me from the leaves of grass, cottonwood, or oak. i want another name besides 'money'.

i am the sweat in your hands that makes me possible
i am the energy you put into having me, spending me,
the energy which makes your lives fluid which you have
invested in me. i am the power you have given me to
determine your own future, to create your own
human images, the strength and the power that i have
felt in your hands

--Jim Dochniak

LAY OFF TIME: WHY UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUES

This is the first in a series of articles aimed at helping us understand political, economic and social issues like soaring food prices and busing from a national and local perspective.



"Employment Agency" - 1940. Oil.

Syd Fossum

by Bruce Johnson

In late fall 1972, two Black workers in Detroit's Jefferson Avenue Dodge Assembly Plant jumped into the power cage that provided power for the whole plant's assembly line and shut it off. A large group of other workers gathered around to keep supervisors and police away until the company met their demands: the firing of a racist foreman and an end to harrassment of assembly line workers.

Their action was a high point in a wave of strikes and wildcat work stoppages that swept the country following the end of Nixon's Phase One wage controls. Faced with increasing inflation and declining work conditions, more working people have been involved in strikes and other job actions in the last three years than at any other time since the end of World War II. In Minnesota, we've seen the strike at FMC last summer, the shut down by indepen-

dent truckers the winter before, and this summer's 1500 person wildcat occupation and strike by workers at the Minnitac Mine on the iron range.

At the same time, there is a quieter "hidden" revolt marked by growing absenteeism, occasional sabotage and individual and small group slowdowns that out into management's labor productivity figures and set sociologists to studying "worker alienation," "blue collar blues," and "white collar woes."

"We've got to get some discipline back into this country's labor force, and the only way to do it is to make the blokes damn grateful to have any sort of job at all."

--A London banker, Wall Street Journal, 11/18/74.

Both the open and hidden revolt of workers

"Accepting [the 8% unemployment figure] means accepting that 10 million people will be out of work indefinitely, and that depression level unemployment rates — 40% in Model Cities — will continue with no relief."

has now provoked a counter-attack from their bosses and the government. Fewer people dare take a day off work for fear that their job won't be there when they return. Chrysler has already laid off 2/3 of the workers at the Jefferson Avenue plant and is planning to permanently shut down the whole plant later this year. At the same time, Chrysler is thinking about building a new plant in Chile where, thanks to the newly installed military dictatorship, the labor force is "more disciplined." FMC currently has more than 500 workers laid off indefinitely. Typographers at the Star and Tribune were forced to sign a ten year no-strike contract to guarantee current top seniority workers a job while the company introduces new technology to eliminate future jobs.

The official national unemployment rate is now more than 8%. Fifty thousand workers in the Twin Cities metropolitan area are officially listed as out of work. Despite political reassurances from the White House that the recession is over, most economists concede that unemployment will remain at about 8% at least until 1980! Accepting that means accepting the fact that at least ten million people will be out of work indefinitely across the country, and that depression level unemployment rates--close to 40% in Model Cities by current estimates--will continue with no relief.

Official figures are really only the tip of the iceberg. People who haven't found work for more than four months in the last year, students and others new to the labor market, women who can't find adequate child-care, people forced to work part-time jobs while searching for full time work, and many others just aren't counted. Thus the real number of unemployed and underemployed in the metropolitan area is probably twice the official figure--that is, one hundred thousand workers.

Government figures for "inventory reductions" and new investment stimulated by tax breaks don't really give a good idea of how people are going to get back to work either. Many jobs--like those of the typographers at the Star and Tribune and those at the Jefferson Avenue plant in Detroit--are simply being eliminated. A good portion of the new investments stimulated by government tax breaks are going toward relocating workplaces and automation. Many new jobs that result are lower paying and more monotonous--jobs not presently

unionized and difficult to organize into traditional unions (computer operators, highly mechanized clerical, and a wide range of "service" jobs).

Locally, a good ground level view of the problem can be had driving by the Moline site--now a littered vacant lot where more than 1200 people used to work. At the unemployment office, reunited groups of workers from Honeywell, FMC, Univac, Control Data and most other large companies get together, swap stories and compare this period of unemployment to previous layoffs just a couple of years ago.

The statistical effect in the Twin Cities isn't as dramatic as in Detroit or other large industrial cities, but to some extent, a greater percentage of workers locally have already been reduced to a "marginal status." Many employers in this area rely on the large local population of students, young people coming off farms, Native Americans driven off reservations and "housewives" to fill dead-end jobs that no one would want to stay at for long. Many employers plan on a high turnover rate to protect against workers organizing on the job and against having to provide needed benefits like pensions, medical insurance, etc. Munitions makers in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis and companies like Univac and Whirlpool in St. Paul have kept many workers in a kind of revolving door employed/unemployed cycle for years. Honeywell has gotten rid of most minority workers hired in recent years in response to civil rights militancy by laying off most workers hired since 1968.

In these ways, the Twin Cities is a blueprint for what seems to be happening to jobs all over the country. More and more people are employed in low paying service and administrative jobs and in capital goods and military production. More and more jobs producing basic consumer goods are being moved out of the area and eventually, out of the country. The Moline plant is a clear example, but the fact that there are no longer any black and white televisions produced anywhere in this country shows us the real depth of the problem.

The Myth of Full Employment

With the passage of the Full Employment Act in 1946, the Federal government guaranteed a job to anyone willing to work. But "full employment" is now officially defined as having "only" 6% of the official labor

"To really achieve full employment . . . government investment would have to be directed away from military spending which, contrary to popular belief, creates relatively fewer jobs per dollar spent."

force--now about six million people--out of work! To really achieve full employment, the government would have to drastically change its role in the economy. Rather than granting tax breaks for new private investment and guaranteeing the profits of corporations in the hope that a few new jobs will "trickle down" to working people, the government would have to directly invest in the production of basic goods and services without deferring to private, profit-seeking corporations. Corporations that refused to operate their basic goods and services facilities at full capacity would have to be taken over and decisions made on the basis of human need, rather than on private profit. Even before that, government investment would have to be directed away from military spending which, contrary to popular belief, creates relatively fewer jobs per dollar spent. The Public Interest Research Group in Michigan calculated that the decision to spend tax monies on the military cost the country 844,000 jobs per year between 1968 and 1972. In Minnesota, they figured this "negative employment impact" at 47,000 jobs lost per year!

It's highly doubtful if the government will move toward this new role. More than likely, government policy will continue to cause scenes like the one in Atlanta last year where several thousand workers were trampled while trying to apply for a few hundred emergency public service jobs. For now, working people will have to rely on themselves and their own actions to win and keep jobs as well as improve working conditions and wages.

The Fight For Jobs

In Shiprock, NM this spring, Navaho workers staged an armed takeover of a Fairchild electronics factory on their reservation to stop the planned layoff of 350 workers. This summer, New York City sanitation workers staged a 100% effective wildcat strike to protest planned layoffs and demand the immediate rehiring of fellow workers already laid off. Fights like these are a critical first line of defense against layoffs. They demand the unity of all workers with those immediately faced with layoffs. They can win.

In Europe, where working class consciousness is stronger and less divided by a bitter history of racism and sexism, workers have won notable victories. In Turin, Italy--the Detroit of Europe--Fiat is now unable to make any major

layoffs because every time layoffs are announced, workers seize the plant and stop all production until everyone is rehired. In a watch factory in Lip, France, women workers, threatened by plans to close the plant, took over and continued production and distribution, paying themselves "wildcat wages" from the sale of watches they produced.

That level of struggle is now very rare in the U.S. But it shouldn't be forgotten that the right to any unemployment insurance at all was won just 40 years ago in this country by millions of unemployed workers organized to fight in their own unemployed organizations.

There are now local organizations of the unemployed in Milwaukee, Madison, Davenport, Waterloo, as well as in the Twin Cities. In Minneapolis, the largest organization is a part of the Workers Rights Center. Their Unemployed Workers' Grievance Committee began in late March when a group of musicians, singers, tape dancers and jugglers invaded the Minneapolis Unemployment office to sing old songs from the unemployed movements of the 20's and 30's and more contemporary songs.

from WE'RE OUT OF MONEY

*We're out of money, and it's not funny
Under this system there's no work if
there's no war.*

*We work our whole lives, and get laid off
each day.
Then stand in line for hours, up to the
window when we say:*

*We're out of money, we're out of money,
This system's pissed us off, and we know
who's to blame!!*

from HAS ANYBODY SEEN MY JOB?

*On the line, lay-off time
then comes speed-up, what a crime!
HAS ANYBODY SEEN MY JOB?*

*So if you run into our old jobs
way back there;
They weren't great: second rate,
We deserve a better fate,*

*So, take them back,
our old jobs,
(let's) storm those offices in mobs,
HAS ANYBODY SEEN MY JOB?*

--Courtesy Alive and Trucking

"Part of being an organization of the unemployed is creating a community of people that supports each other and fights for real solutions to the problems of unemployment."

"We want to break up the mood, get rid of the feeling that being out of work is a personal failure," explained a member of the Grievettes. "A guy walked out of the unemployment office one day and told me, 'This whole system's organized to humiliate you.' Well, we think that a first obstacle to unemployed people getting together is that feeling of being cut off from everybody, being a personal failure. Part of being an organization of the unemployed is creating a community of people that supports each other and fights for real solutions to the problems of unemployment."

Part of the work of the Unemployed Workers Grievance Committee has been helping individuals get full unemployment benefits and meet their other immediate survival needs. They've found that bosses often force people to quit or fire them with no reason to avoid paying full unemployment benefits. They've helped a number of workers through a confusing and biased appeals system to win full benefits against bosses' protests.

In May, members of the Unemployed Workers Grievance Committee did a survey of people waiting in the unemployment lines. They found that nearly 80% of the unemployed didn't know if they were eligible for food stamps or not. They raised a little hell



Workers on relief are no longer required to report to Day Labor offices like this one.

Photo: John Plano.

with the Hennepin County Welfare Board to get food stamp information distributed to everyone at the unemployed office on a regular basis.

Through individual grievance work and personal experience, they discovered that workers whose unemployment checks were held up for any reasons were being sent to Hennepin County Welfare, and from there, ordered to private, profit-making day labor agencies. In this way, the County subsidized companies that regularly provide scab labor, still rigidly divide jobs according to sex, regularly discriminate against minority workers, and rip-off nearly 50% of everyone's pay off the top. People were faced with a drawn out and humiliating process to qualify for General Assistance when their needs were most urgent. The Grievance Committee staged a confrontation with the Executive Director of the Welfare Department and go the County Board to throw out the requirement.

"Survival is a real issue now for a lot of people," says one member of the Grievance Committee, "and that's where we have to start." From information gathered in the survey, they've put together a list of "survival demands" like comprehensive medical insurance for all unemployed, food stamps and free public transportation for all, etc. They've also organized to stop evictions and repossessions.

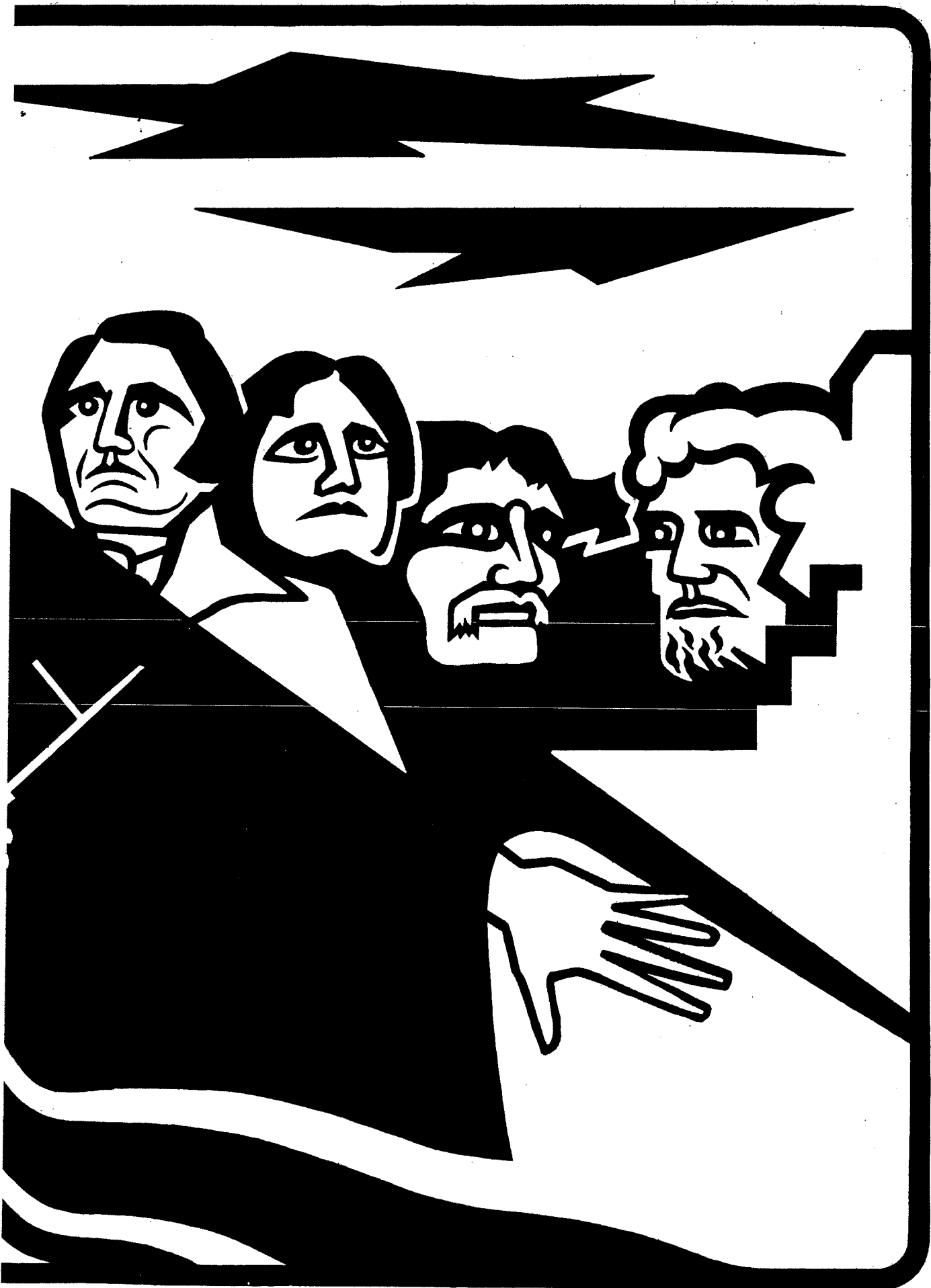
In the last months, the Workers Rights Center has grown to a mass membership of over a hundred and a core group of activists close to thirty. They're organizing on the job against discrimination and declining work conditions--issues closely related to unemployment. As their membership and base grows, they look forward to struggles against layoffs when they are first threatened, and to building a base for a long fight for real full employment. "It's already been a long time," said one unemployed worker, "if we stick together, we'll win."

Bruce Johnson is a long time resident of Minneapolis. Currently unemployed, he is active in the Unemployed Workers Grievance Committee's efforts to help the unemployed.

For more information, drop in at the Workers Rights Center on 6 East Lake Street or call 825-3533.



Bicentennial shrine of democracy? Carved into Paha Sapa's sacred stone, Mt. Rushmore is a bit



reminder to the Lakota Nation of the 1868 Treaty broken by the U.S. Return Paha Sapa!



GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM Populist Culture 1860's ~ 1930's

"Cockleburs migrated to the North Country in the wool of sheep. Dandelion was brought in women's aprons. Wheat came in the lining of a hat or the seam of a coat. Ideas also migrated in the hearts, gnarled and saddened by the growing brutality of the rising industrial cities." —Meridel LeSuer North Star Country.

by Steve Trimble

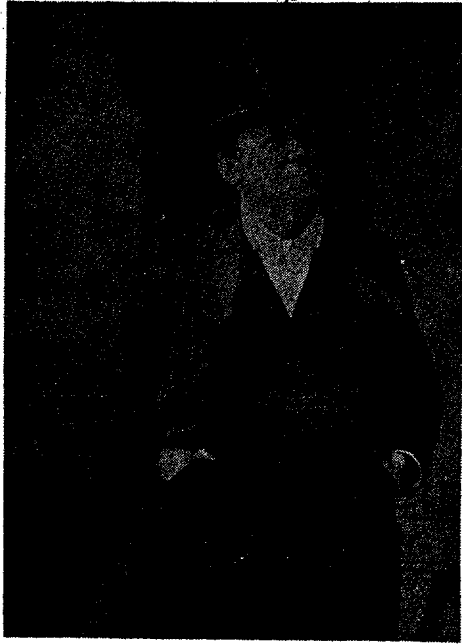
In the 1850's, the new immigrants flooded into the pines and prairies, rushing into what had once been Native American lands. They brought a rich cultural tradition--polkas, winter and midsummer festivals, forest lore, wedding customs, ethnic foods, songs, crafts--and attitudes toward life. All of these cultural traditions added to the rich heritage of the region. But very quickly, the newcomers--farmers in the plains and laborers in the cities, timber areas and mines of the North--were faced with the corrosive power of the new, increasingly industrial capitalist nation they had chosen as their new home. It was not so easy to make a living on the land when you were charged high interest, cheated on your grain grading and overcharged for freight by the railroads. Things didn't look as rosy once inside the mines or the steamy bunkhouses where wages were low and conditions dangerous. Out of these realities came the beginnings of a new cultural thrust--that of anti-monopoly and cooperation.

Grassroots Activism Begins

In the 1870's, the Patrons of Husbandry--known as the Grangers--were among the first

to actively organize an anti-monopoly campaign. Originally set up as a social order by Minnesotan Oliver Kelley, the economic conditions of the period moved them quickly into the arena of politics. For farmers who lived miles apart debating, giving short speeches, and reading essays such as Sister Hupp's "On Buttermaking" were ways to gain information, exchange ideas and discuss topics that related directly to their situation. Followed by a box supper and entertainment, it made for an enjoyable and fulfilling evening. Like so much of the protest movement that would follow, the leaders of the order were insistent that the membership read. They were provided with large numbers of tracts, folders and leaflets. Guides, handbooks and manuals of parliamentary procedures were handed out. Local groups subscribed to several newspapers and passed them around as preparations for the frequent debates. The more wealthy Grangers established libraries.

The Grangers also held literary and musical programs followed by games and socializing. Special patrons holidays or founders festivals brought neighboring groups together for a day of discussion, gameplaying, speeches and music provided by the members themselves. At



Populist orators, among them Ignatius Donnelly, were among the best this nation's ever heard. Their uplifting words raised oratory to a level rarely achieved since. Photos MHS.

LECTURE!
IGNATIUS
Donnelly

The Brilliant and Distinguished Scholar and Orator, will deliver a LECTURE, under the auspices of the Luthers High School.

At the Opera House, Albert Lea,

Saturday Eve.,
MARCH 23rd, 1889.

SUBJECT:

Wit and Humor!

THE GREAT THEATRE
Entertaining Lecture!

And has everywhere been received with High Encomiums

Music by Brundin's Orchestra!

Admission, 25 and 35 Cents. Doors Open at 7:30

first, meetings took place in any available schoolhouse, village hall or home. Soon, like the groups that followed them, the farmers started building Grange Halls especially designed to meet their needs. In these halls, men and women would work together to try to figure out what could be done to remedy their situation.

People commenced to think who had never thought before, and people talked who had seldom spoken. On mild days they gathered on the street corners, on cold days they congregated in shops and offices. Everyone was talking and everyone was thinking....--an observer quoted in North Star Country.

Members of the Populist Party which swept across the Midwest and South in the 1880's and 90's may well have read more than any other anti-monopoly group. Hungry for knowledge, farmers would read pamphlets and books as they rested their horses. Lecturers would carry material around with them so that isolated villages and townships would have access to the newest information. Ignatius Donnelly, one of the leaders of the Minnesota Populist Party, travelled around the state by buggy, by horse, and in trains giving long speeches that were listened to for hours by farmers eager for facts and theories. Local people would put broadsides up on their barns or fence posts along the road or in small town stores before his arrival.

The members of the Farmers Alliance, out of which the Populist Party emerged, laid the groundwork for an educated political body by emphasizing group learning. Each lodge

had an official lecturer. Local study groups were established and took up "the questions that were agitating the minds of the people and discussing them in an earnest manner," remembered an early participant. Like the Grangers, they had circulating libraries. In addition, an unheard of number of country level populist newspapers sprang up like dragon's teeth from the prairie soil. This period saw the novel used as a political tool, and Ignatius Donnelly's Caesar's Column sold millions of copies, putting forth visions of the co-operative commonwealth that would be established after capitalism destroyed itself. After one gathering, a man was overheard: "The meeting last night was good. Me and the wife went home ready to face the hard toil now, with enough to read all winter while we are snowed in."

The meetings which, like those of the Grangers before them, had originally been held in one room schoolhouses grew and grew "til no buildings could be found to house the crowds which drove for miles and miles to hear the orators....All day picnics were held and people came by the thousands, some of the crowds being reported as ten, twenty and twenty-five thousand....Everybody took part in these gatherings. The speaking was preceded by a parade with banners on which mottoes and legends were inscribed. There were characterizations, playlets, brass bands, songs and cheers. Songs were one of the characteristics of Populism. Everybody that wasn't an orator was a poet, and there was no dearth of musicians to adapt a tune or of women to sing. These songs were gathered into books of which tens of thousands were sold."

The Populist orators were among the best and they raised public speaking to an artistic level that has seldom been reached since. Listen to a few of the fiery words that brought people from miles around to gather ammunition for their own personal political artillery:

The great common people of this country are slaves, and monopoly is the mater.... We will stand by our homes and stay by our firesides by force if necessary, and we will not pay our debts to the loan-shark companies until the Government pays its debts to us. The people are at bay, let the bloodhounds of money who have dogged us thus far beware.

--Mary Ellen Lease

Populist Education

Like Southern Blacks with their Freedom Schools of the Civil Rights Era and the present day Survival Schools sponsored by The American Indian Movement, political people at the turn of the century realized the need for education. But not that being given in the regular public institutions which "Americanized" immigrants, teaching them upper class attitudes, instilling competitive values. It was on March 1, 1907 that forty Finnish students walked through the doors of the newly formed Tyovaen Opisto (Workers College) located in the West End of Duluth. "Its purpose," said an article in a 1925 issue of the Industrial Pioneer "is to give students knowledge of the structure, aims, methods, and philosophy of the I.W.W. and make them more powerful factors in the class struggle." Students could take courses in the social sciences, organizational work such as bookkeeping, and "elementary subjects" such as mathematics and English. Up to 159 students boarded in or lived in homes in the surrounding community learning, studying in the 2,000 volume library and working in the study halls or social and smoking rooms. Olga Fast, a 1914 student, summed up her experience, saying that "everyone who has had a chance of studying in the school...has felt the sincere joy of the poor people, that we, the scorned drudge of heavy work, have our very own school in which we rule, we workers: we learn, investigate, and sharpen our weapons to overthrow capitalism according to the spirits and aspirations of our own class."

Throughout the early decades of the 20th Century, on the Range, out of the mining and lumbering towns dotted across the rugged countryside, workers gathered together to build a culture in the new country. Many people, especially the Finnish immigrants, who were disillusioned with the low wages and terrible conditions on the job became advocates

of socialism. Men and women who had been denied formal education in their homeland struggled to remedy this situation. Socialist halls were constructed in Nashwauk, Virginia and other small communities. "I knew we could educate ourselves in those halls," one early socialist carpenter and coop supporter reminisced. "We could discuss. We studied everything. We got up debating...."

There were soon over 500 books in the library in Workers Hall in Nashwauk. The workers were able to read not only the socialist works in their native Finnish, but were sent translations of Mark Twain and other American classics so they were acquainted with the American literature of the period. These halls were the scene of physical fitness programs as well as intellectual stimulation. There were athletic clubs, women and children's groups as well in the athletic societies. Activities took place practically every night arranged by entertainment committees and among them were two dramatic productions each month.

The cooperative movement in Minnesota, which had strong support from the radicals on the Range and started developing in the early 1900's, was also filled with cultural forms designed to promote new social values. One of the more interesting ones was the Red Star Chorus, a group of mostly Finnish women who worked for the Co-operative Central Warehouse which distributed food



Crosby's Independent Band. The following have been identified: August Uvini, second in the back row; William Laine, fourth in back; Matti Suvanio, fifth; Arne Pello, first in middle row; Isaac Talvite, fifth in middle row; Frank Lehto, drummer; young boy is foster son of Frank Lehto; Eero Malara, center, director.

Crosby's Independent Band was only one of the musical groups that sprang up to carry the message of anti-monopoly and cooperation to the grassroots activists. From History of the Finns in Minnesota by Hans Wasastjerna.

throughout the midwest. They travelled around Northern Minnesota putting on programs, singing and dancing and spreading the gospel of co-operation and working class movement that they represented. They created dozens of plays which they presented during the 1920's and 30's. Almost all were in Finnish. One of them, "Gala Day at the

Urban Coops

Coops in the Twin Cities area also showed a strong cultural front, though their politics were not as radical as those on the Range. Franklin Co-op Creamery, considered to be "the showcase of urban cooperation," had



Presentation of the Moses Hahl play, "Israelin Mooses," by the Hibbing Workers Club dramatic group in 1914. Players: Heikki Lahti, unknown, Heikki Peterson, Matti Vuohela, Vick Tikkanen, John Nykänen, Matt Järvi, Yrjö Heino, Armas Duro, unknown, Kusti Aho, Jussi-Passoja.

From History of the Finns in Minnesota by
Hans Wasastjerna.

From GALA DAY AT THE CO-OP
by The Red Star Chorus

Salesman: By the way, I'd like to sell you some Red Star Corn Syrup.

Manager: I need some syrup, but I don't care for the Red Star Brand. It isn't any good.

Salesman: It isn't any good? I've sold Red Star Syrup for nine years and I've never had any complaints on it.

Manager: Well, I leave it to you. I have used three cans of it and it hasn't (holds up left foot) helped my feet any.

Salesman: (Registering annoyance.) Oh! By the way, how do Red Star Matches move?

Manager: Oh, I don't know. Everybody makes light of them. But say, are Red Star union matches?

Salesman: Well, they strike all the time.

originated in a truck drivers' strike in the early 20's and had grown large and successful. It had an eleven member educational committee which was considered to be one of the most important bodies of the Creamery. Under its direction in 1921, the Franklin Co-op Creamery Male Chorus was established. It was, in their words, not only a "good business getter," but a "disseminator of good will," and an instrument for the "spreading of co-operation wherever it appears." The group sang to at least three audiences a week at lodges, schools, churches and bazaars with audiences that sometimes reached 2,000. They appeared at all the frequent entertainments given by the educational committee. "Wherever we appear," one member said, "a mission of helpfulness has been achieved," and "its existence is a boost to the cooperative movement."

But Franklin Creamery didn't want people to be passive recipients of culture. One of its organizations--the Women's Co-op Guild of Minneapolis--encouraged its members to sing, and they put out a songbook that was recently discovered in an old garage. To make it easier to learn these co-operative anthems, the words were set to familiar tunes. During each meeting, time was set aside for group singing:

From THE COOPERATIVE WOMEN'S SONGBOOK
COME JOIN US
Tune of "Maryland, Maryland"

Consumers of this mighty land
Organize, oh organize
Give us your heart, give us your hand
organize, oh organize!
Come join the co-ops mighty throng
All o'er the world they come along
To build the movement big and strong,
all right the profit system wrong.

We're all for one, and one for all
Join the co-op, organize!
For brotherhood we stand or fall.
Join the co-op, organize!
Our Rainbow Flag the symbol bright
For peace, for justice, hope and light.
And people's universal rights
Come build a new world with your might.

The Franklin Co-op Creamery didn't rely only on the traditional cultural forms to educate and entertain their members. While they did have their leaflets and pamphlets, in 1925 their budget included several hundred dollars for a movie projector, screen and reels of film. "The members of the committee are enthusiastic about their new moving picture machine. They realize," said an annual report, "what an important role moving pic-

tures play in moulding the minds of people, and what great possibilities there are in carrying on education work by showing the subject on the screen."

Why do the workers have their own halls, their theatricals, their socials? For the same reason that they have their own newspapers, literature and even schools. For class-conscious education and recreation. Even recreation is partisan in a society that has classes, and even the average stage productions are infiltrated with capitalist propaganda. The workers' societies try to carry out counter-propaganda in all fields.

--W.M. Rein from Nuoriso, Oppi ja Tyo
(Youth, Learning and Labor)

Cooperative Recreation

The paths of the northern and Twin Cities cooperators might have crossed as they got together for recreation at one of the many co-op parks in Minnesota and Wisconsin. These parks, which had their beginnings in the twenties and thirties, were another extension of the working class struggles of the time and were the scene of many social and cultural activities. The story of Mesaba coop park, eight miles east of Hibbing, is typical. "The working class people in those days," said a member of the Park board of directors, "didn't have a place to take children to play on water or on a lakeside." Co-ops pooled their money and bought lake-shore property that is still in use today. \$5.00 memberships are open and park facilities can be used by "any organization that represents the working class." impact has diminished over its 46 year history, but the annual Finnish midsummer festival and other activities are still held there.

These parks were used for the important co-op youth camps that were held every summer in various locations. They gave children an inexpensive summer retreat where they were given recreation aimed at developing a spirit of cooperation, rather than the competitive and upper class values promoted by the public schools. The efforts made by these camps were carefully considered and a whole field of cooperative recreation was developed. Soon there was even a National Cooperative Recreation School which offered two week training courses every summer in the thirties. "This widespread recreation within the co-operative movement," said one of the directors of the school, "indicates a fundamental harmony of purpose. It has not happened accidentally. It has been understood

and planned...." In their minds, culture was both cause and effect of social patterns. "We are not entirely pleased with existing values as reflected in recreation and art expressions. We regard recreation as one tool that can be used to mold cooperative ones." There was an emphasis on folk music and dancing, handicrafts and dramatic activities. While many games were seen as destructive, they did recommend ones like "name Six" which helped break down barriers between people.

In this game the players sit in a circle while a ball or any other object is passed from hand to hand. One person either plays the piano or sings, and stops suddenly. Whoever has the ball at the moment is "it." Either the musician or another player previously selected says "Name six objects (they must be objects) beginning with D (or any other letter of the alphabet)." "It" then starts the ball around the circle which passes it as quickly as possible. Before the ball returns to him, "it" has to name six objects beginning with D. If you have played this game, or if you will try it, you will find that the fun comes from these factors: 1) the absurd words that pop into people's minds, 2) the realization, often verbal, that you can think of words when you're not "it," but you cannot when you are, and are hypnotized by the movement of the ball from hand to hand, 3) the delight on the part of the whole group whenever "it" gets his words out in time, often expressed in applause. They key to this is, of course, that players are beating a situation and not each other.

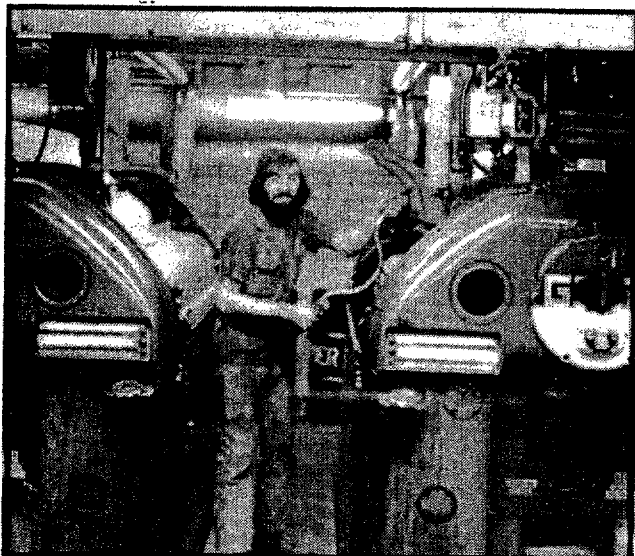
Culture for all the Populist Parties, including many not mentioned, was a powerful tool used to develop a new awareness. It sprang up from the people themselves, rather than from professional artists, and spoke to the needs of people struggling to maintain or develop a culture to combat the corrosive effects of the public schools or industrial capitalism. In the same way that many ethnic groups are rediscovering their ethnic heritages, the people engaged in political struggles today can learn from that culture of protest.

Steve Trimble has lived in the Twin Cities for six years and currently teaches history at Central High in St. Paul. This is the first of a two-part series on Grassroots Culture that Steve will be writing for Common Ground.

Frustration and Cooperation

Talking Working Class Culture

A pressman, Jeffrey Johnson, talks candidly with Lynn Hinkle about a wide range of topics from art, high culture, television, and sexuality to frustration and cooperation in his workplace.



Pressroom scene

Photo: J.J.



Pressroom scene.

Photo: J.J.

Lynn: Tell me a little about yourself.

Jeff: I'm 26 years old, an apprentice pressman on a big city newspaper and live in an old house on the southside of Minneapolis. I've been working in the printing industry for the last 5 years, ever since I dropped out of college. I've run my own print shop, done printing in sweat shop conditions, failed as a union organizer and ended up working as an apprentice pressman. I've already gone through the first six months to a year of the apprenticeship where you do the most utterly shitty work you could imagine, act as everybody's flunky, and don't actually begin learning the trade.

Lynn: What's your work like?

Jeff: Working on a newspaper is like working in any situation where you're producing day in and day out. The newspaper hits the streets every day. The workers have to be there every day to print it--Sunday, 4th of July, New Year's, Christmas. Your schedule, your personal life as a worker is totally dominated by your work, particularly among the young people without seniority who have no control over their schedule. You can't plan anything. You're on call 24 hours a day. Your work becomes the dominant experience in your life. Your world becomes bracketed by work and everything you do is either in resistance to work pressures or finding a way to forget those pressures.

Lynn: What effect does that have on your personal life, on your relationships with other people?

Jeff: It really screws it up. It might take 2 or 3 years, but eventually your whole set of relationships will be transferred down to work. This hits young workers hardest since it takes 10 to 15 years working nights to gain enough seniority to make day shift. These co-workers will be your friends, the people you hang around with because they have the same weird pressures that you do.

Lynn: Is that happening with you?

Jeff: Oh yeah, for sure. My best friends are now people I know from work. I happen to be working days now, as an apprentice with enough seniority. But I spent a year on nights that was a really heavy time for me. And in another year I'll be working nights as a journeyman and the process will begin again--saying goodbye to my lovers and my friends who I won't be seeing anymore. I think that's one of the reasons why the workers get so bitter about the job. It's a real intense hatred that grows out of the suffering you go through when you feel like a relationship with someone that you really love is being destroyed by pressures outside of you. That's pretty much what I went through for about a year and a half with the woman I lived with. We were working opposite shifts and were sleeping together on the average of once or twice a

"People joke and say, 'Management could probably bring in a bunch of trained monkeys to do this job, but in a couple of months they'd get smart and start calling in sick.' "

week--and that just ain't enough. You don't have the times in bed when you can just sit and talk with each other and go over the day's problems.

Lynn: Personal problems like this caused by people's working lives are not often discussed publicly. Considering this neglect, how do you feel about the portrayal of people's lives in the Guthrie and Children's Theatre or the programs of The Art Institute?

Jeff: Funny question. I remember when I first started working and I was at the corner bar getting drunk with about six guys after work (you get paid on Friday so you get real loose with your money). This one guy mentioned to somebody else that I had gone to college and he said, "Well, I just don't trust college boys exposed to high culture. I just don't trust them." Which made me feel kind of wierd, having gone to college. The whole attitude that working people have toward institutions like these is one of distance, of alienation, and suspicion. Something they realize is created and produced by a class other than themselves. These institutions create Art/Culture for someone who has either the privilege or the experience of a different kind of life. It's not that they're not curious about those kinds of things. Particularly the younger workers--they go to the Guthrie for a different kind of experience. My friends want to be involved in creating something, not looking at a rather confusing picture that resembles the waste products of a newspaper. People will joke about that at work. They'll hold up a piece of paper that's been bounced through rollers with inky, wierd designs on it and they'll say: "Hey, I should take this down and frame it and put it in the Walker. Probably get a million dollars!"

Lynn: Do people ever see themselves as artists at work?

Jeff: Sure. The thing about being a tradesman--a craftsman--in a trade like printing is that printing has the tradition of being an art. It's a visual art in the sense that the amount of skill that you put into your work influences the outcome. But if the object of your labor is a Dayton's ad, it's not what you'd call an aesthetic rush. And in alot of ways they're frustrated artists because of the demands of the job. It's the deadline that's always important, how fast the paper

comes out, not so much how it looks. "Why does this face look like it's floating off the page? Why is the color so much out of register on the news?" The answer isn't so much related to the workers, but to the management who don't allow us time because they're not interested in having a quality newspaper. After a few years of not being allowed to do quality work you no longer really give a shit. People joke and say, "Management could probably bring in a bunch of trained monkeys to do this job, but in a couple of months they'd get smart and start calling in sick."

But again, I think that the thing that comes closer to being "culture" for working people are the things that they're more a part of creating. There's 3 or 4 guys that I know who play in polka bands. They'll spend their weekends travelling around, playing at different small towns. They think of themselves as musicians. It's an important part of their lives. They feel like they're doing something that comes from a part of them that's frustrated by work.

Lynn: If most of the people you work with are suspicious of, or feel isolated from the institutions of high culture, what about mass media--what about exposure to the radio or TV? Is there any talk about that?



Friends in the pressroom.

Photo: J.J.

"Your sexuality is frustrated and becomes a real oppressive burden which gets vented in all these really ugly ways."

take a good job." Or say there's someone who really needs some time off. He can ask other people to move over on the schedule and let him have that time off. Now if the head pressman, the crew foreman, wants to get anything done, he doesn't give orders, he asks people to do something. Generally, people just go ahead and do it--they know what needs to be done. So it's just kind of admitting to the natural ability people have to organize their own work, like "Hey, foreman; hey, pressman, leave us alone; we can do it."

Lynn: What are some of the aspects of working in an all male environment?

Jeff: I think working down there is a lot like being in the army where you get 200 men locked up in the same room with no women. There's never even been a woman in the trade. Lynn: Do you see women at work?

Jeff: There's a large plate glass window over the pressroom where the women office workers walk by. Maybe 6 or 7 guys will rush up to the front of the room and sort of oogle. Or tourists, maybe 40 people at the same time, will stare through the window at us. You feel a little bit like monkeys with 40 people staring at us all dirty--looking and feeling like shit.

Lynn: How does your willingness to buy in or out of this male culture affect your ability to cooperate with the other men at work?

Jeff: It's still the thing that makes me feel most uptight. I feel like a lot of the shit that comes down results from people being deprived of meaningful sexual experience. Sexuality is a need that everyone has. And you express it in the ways that your culture allows you to express it. Sex often times becomes this thing that people use to escape the monotony of the job; it just intensifies their pain. Like they'll look at women outside of their experience all day, women they can never meet, and they'll go home feeling frustrated at the end of the day. They'll read porno books while they're working on the press and they'll be so horny that they'll spend forty bucks in a sauna parlor to get a blow job. Your sexuality is frustrated and becomes a real oppressive burden which gets vented in all these really ugly ways. They feel crummy about relationships--all

these divorced people are really looking for something that is solid and strong in their lives.

Lynn: How important are the issues of people coming together, the process of developing more cooperative forms of work in dealing with issues of noise in the shop, the speed of production, issues of pay, etc.?

Jeff: As an individual working person in this society, you're pretty powerless. The only way that you have any power over your situation is by coming together with other people--a common sensical kind of thing. But the ability of workers to come together is the key question to social change, I think. Cause even in my shop, which has a lot of comradeship, you still have these great gaps between whites and Blacks, freaks and rednecks, the young in general and the old in general. There are many different ways that people are set apart. I think in the next five to ten years, our trade's ability to maintain its power to improve our working conditions, to assert more control over our jobs, will be based on a lot of that informal stuff, a lot of the friendships, the kinds of things that are invisible but very real in people's lives. They're invisible when looked on from the outside, but in the inside they are really key--like who talks to show. And when it comes time to do a job action, this is not something that you stand up inside the union meeting and say let's vote on it or not. It's something that's based on informal patterns of work, friendship groups, those people who know each other and trust each other enough so that they can risk putting their jobs on the line. Our success at doing that will depend not on the union so much, but on the ability of the workers to trust one another by informally building cooperative action on the job.

Lynn: In other words cooperation, the informal ties that people develop on the job, couldn't be attributed to people's exposure to high culture or mass media.

Jeff: If anything, it's in resistance to it. High culture tells you as an individual that you're passive, that you're not a creator, an actor. The only thing that gives you the strength to act is your brotherhood, is your sisterhood, not that that's a pure thing at all, but it's also where the potential is.

"The emphasis isn't as much on your individual ability as a printer, although that's important, but [on] how well you can cooperate with the other men."

Jeff: Surprisingly, there's a lot of people that feel that TV is a lot of shit. They say, "I might watch sports or 2 or 3 other programs, but basically television is a waste of time." I think progressively more and more people feel that way.

Lynn: Why do they say that?

Jeff: I think it's because the time that's spent watching TV really is wasted time. TV has the same numbing effect as work. TV pacifies you. A lot of people I work with, young and old alike, are more interested in being in a softball league, tinkering with their racing cars or motorcycles, or just getting together with other friends from work.

Lynn: Could you talk some about how people relate to one another off the job, if they're not going to artistic events or watching TV?

Jeff: Partly because of our weird schedule, we're forced to see each other like family. If you need something done, advice on how to get something done (roofing your house, repairing your car), you usually go down to work and ask somebody that knows because it's a marketplace of ideas and skills. This is generally where people turn to get help with



Escape from the pressroom heat & noise. J.J.

their life outside work. But not everybody socializes with everybody else. Some people are drawn more to the American Legion bands in the suburbs while others are more likely to go to the Powderhorn Park May Day Festival. There are that many tendencies in my shop.

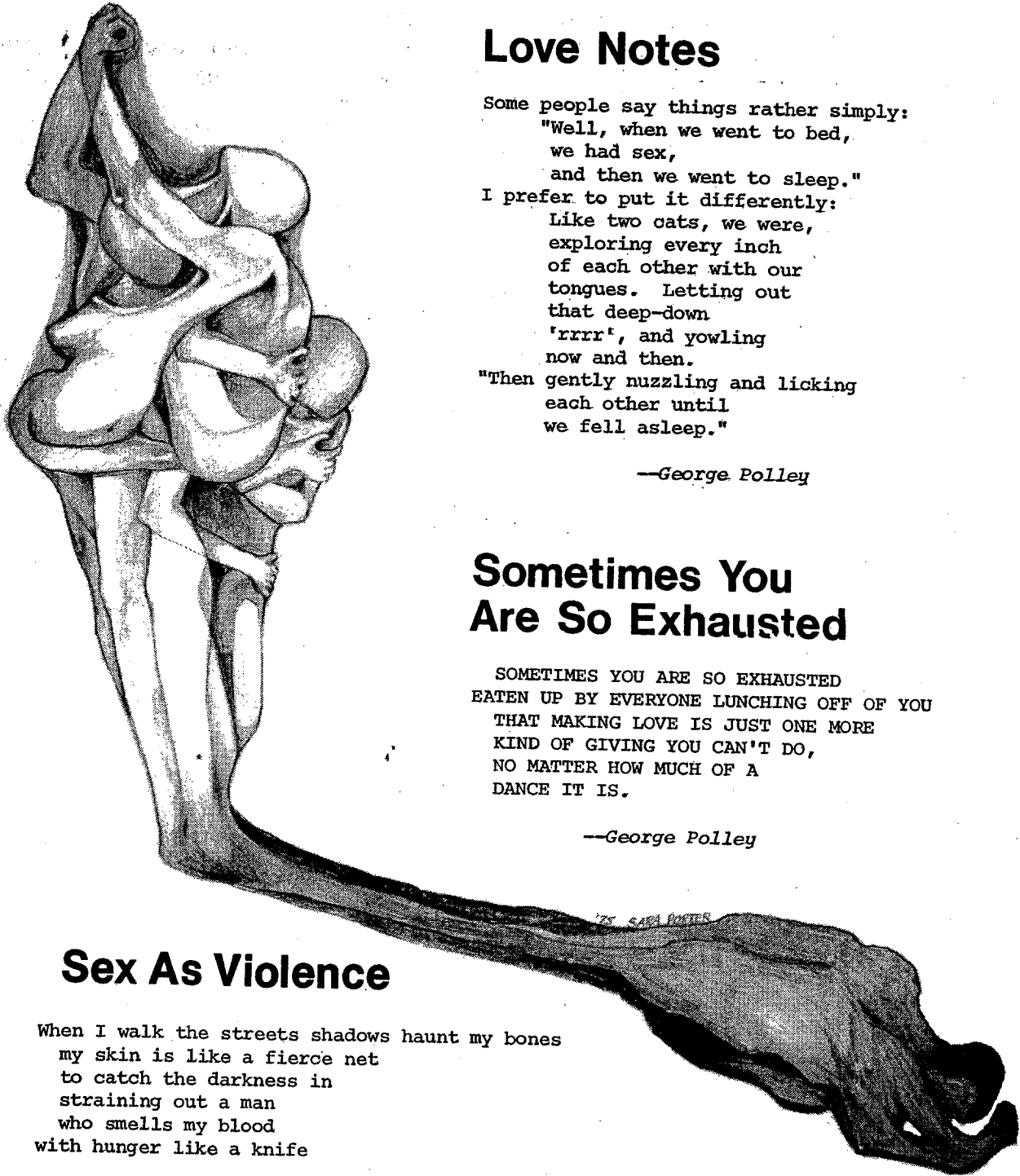
Lynn: What about on the job: how do people relate to one another? What kind of work culture exists in your shop?

Jeff: When the presses actually start running, the machines do most of the work so you don't need people there all the time. People cover for each other. People will do the other person's job while the other person goes and does something else, like sleep, go down to the bar and have a tequila, etc. These constant informal breaks that take place allow us to get out of the heat and the noise, which is sometimes 1000 times the legal limit.

Lynn: Are there some processes that go beyond this kind of survival on the job? Are people taking steps to change the quality of work through cooperation?

Jeff: At the shop where I work now everything is based on the crew system. You've got six gigantic presses, each three stories high and 100 yards long in the same building. Each press is run by a crew of about 20 people. So the emphasis isn't as much on your own individual ability as a printer, although that's important, but how well you can cooperate with the other men. The emphasis really becomes doing your job in relationship to other people, rather than competing with each other to show how good you are.

Having said that, I think there's an increasing tendency to question the hierarchical ways that work has been organized in the past, particularly by young workers who just don't see the need for hierarchy as much. Where I work there's a strict priority system where you get the good jobs or the bad jobs in the shop, the day shifts or the night shifts, according to your seniority. Within a certain group of workers, maybe a third of the shop, there's a slowly growing tendency to try to break down the process of one person giving another person orders according to priority, to decide work by a flip of coin rather than saying, "Well, I'm above you in priority so I'm going to



Love Notes

Some people say things rather simply:

"Well, when we went to bed,
we had sex,
and then we went to sleep."

I prefer to put it differently:

Like two cats, we were,
exploring every inch
of each other with our
tongues. Letting out
that deep-down
'rrrrr', and yowling
now and then.

"Then gently nuzzling and licking
each other until
we fell asleep."

—George Polley

Sometimes You Are So Exhausted

SOMETIMES YOU ARE SO EXHAUSTED
EATEN UP BY EVERYONE LUNCHING OFF OF YOU
THAT MAKING LOVE IS JUST ONE MORE
KIND OF GIVING YOU CAN'T DO,
NO MATTER HOW MUCH OF A
DANCE IT IS.

—George Polley

Sex As Violence

When I walk the streets shadows haunt my bones
my skin is like a fierce net
to catch the darkness in
straining out a man
who smells my blood
with hunger like a knife

I walk the streets and feel him hiding in my skin
through my eyes
I see myself as he sees me
No longer safe in houses
or with locked doors
For the man sex is like biting hard with the teeth
he leaves his mark

Now he lingers like smoke on the stairs
I smell his burning

—Elizabeth Sanford



VICTOR CHIODO: "I've been at this house since 1919. Started gardening over 30 years ago, long before I retired. I enjoy it. It keeps me busy, and it pays off the way prices are today." We asked him if the good gardens and good yards made people feel better about their neighborhood: "You don't see any 'For Rent' signs out there, do you?"

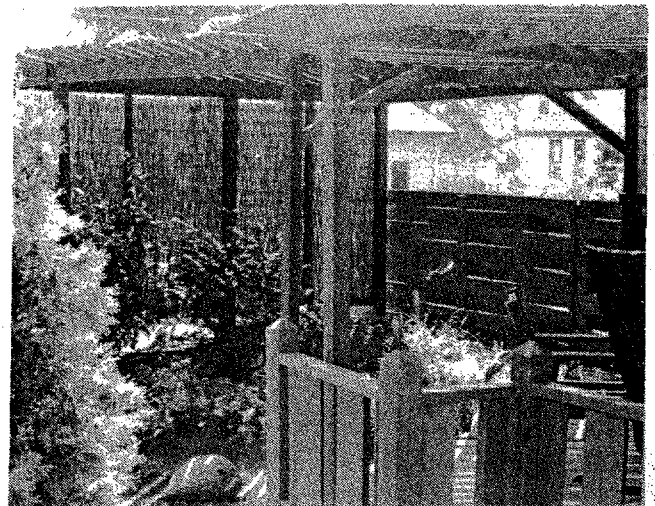
ARTWORK WITH ROOTS

by Jeanette May and Ken Meter

Adding Extra Beauty to Daily Life, Green Thumbs Nurture Both Artistic Gardens and a Stable Nordeast

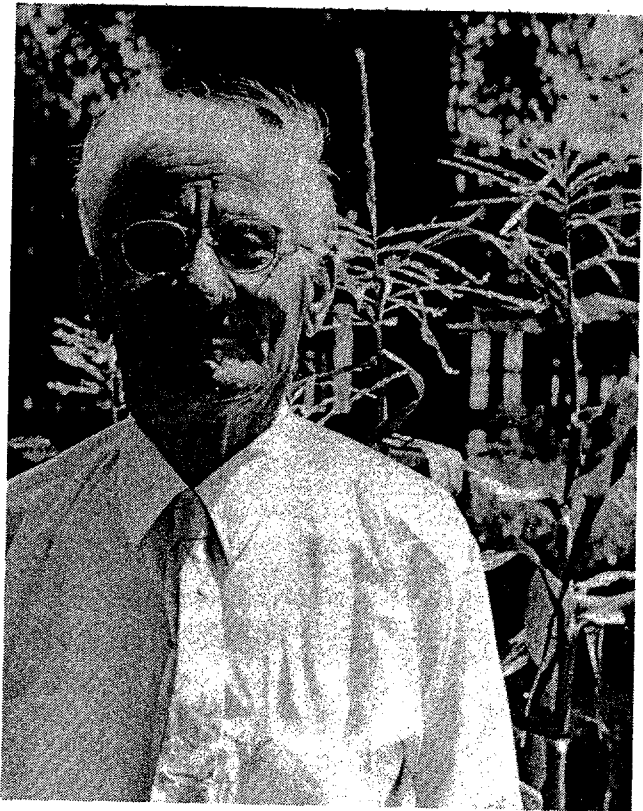
Jeanette May is a long-time activist in St. Anthony East who also has made her yard an oasis in the city. "It's my peaceful place. The yard is more my home than the house is—you can rebuild a house in three months but it takes years to make a yard into a garden."

JOE SIMON: "Took about a year to make the garden. Brought things from up north from my dad's cabin. After the noise and the kids settle down, it's just like being in the country. I was born in this house 33 years ago; bought it from my father 12 years ago. My daughter Terri wants it after I am done with it. She says, 'Dad, it has to stay in the family.'"



JOSEPH MANSOUR: "I have been 65 years in this house. Came from Lebanon at age 15, alone on the ship. I brought myself, my ticket, the suit of clothes I was wearing, and a chair to sit on while I was on the ship....I raise corn, tomatoes, and onions--to eat and to share with my friends."

MRS. SAM BLAIDO: "I don't consider the garden work--I could put in all day out here." Iris are her specialty.

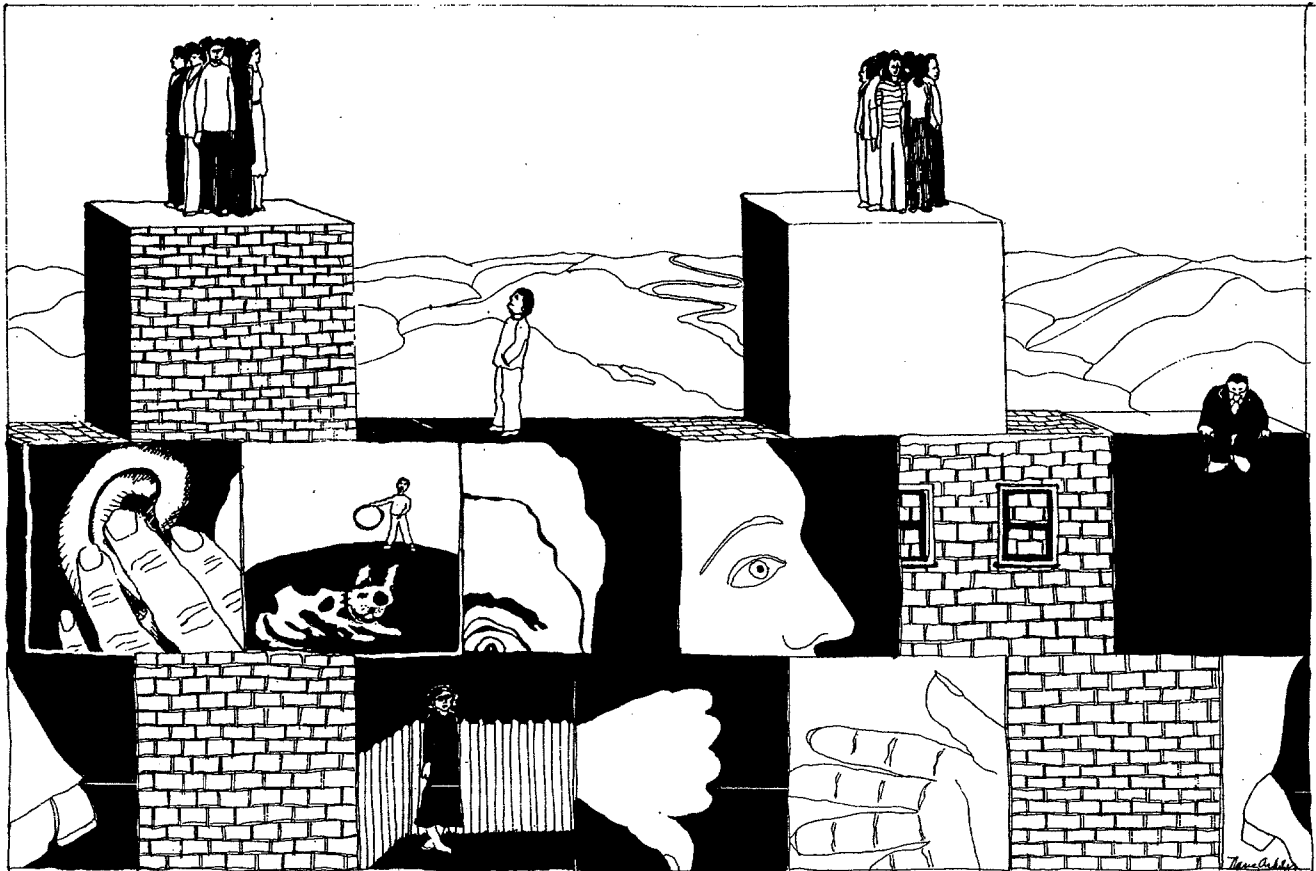


ALBERT HOFSTEDE: "I think it makes a better Minneapolis if people take a little interest in their yards. It makes the neighborhood more alive--more livable. People feel like they are working together when people try to keep up their homes. I think the home is the foundation of the city, really....We have lived in this house 36 years--all of my kids were born here." Mr. Hofstede is pictured here in front of his workshop and garage.



CRITICISM/SELF-CRITICISM: YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS

This is the first in a series of articles which will suggest ways to feel better about ourselves in our day to day lives and work more effectively in groups. Topic ideas are welcome.



by Sandra Pappas

A few years ago, a group I was in decided to have a special time at the end of every meeting to discuss our impressions of the meeting, what we'd learned, and any criticisms we had of ourselves and each other. The very first time we tried it, David turned to me and said he thought I had been "domineering and manipulative." I couldn't believe it--I was floored. I know I had talked quite a bit, but had it been more than anyone else? Was that domineering? And who was I trying to manipulate? Now I knew what he really thought of me.

More often than not, this example of destructive personal attack is what comes to mind when we think of criticism. David's words reinforced all my preconceived notions of what criticism was: "being trashed." I thought my basic personality--open and spontaneous--was being viciously attacked. It brought out all the anti-organizational feelings I'd had in the past. "If that's the way this group is going to treat me," I thought, "forget it."

In different groups we of the Women's Union have worked with--labor unions, PTAs, coops, work teams, neighborhood groups--and in one to one relationships, alot of us have had similar painful experiences. In David's case, the criticisms were not designed to help me grow or change my behavior in the group. He didn't specify a domineering thing or manipulative action he thought I'd done. His criticism made me feel worthless and incapable of change. He could have said, "Sandi, I agreed with alot of what you said, but (and I know I do this sometimes, too) when you interrupted Judy in the middle of her story, I got confused about who was saying what. I'd like you to try to let Judy finish her thought before you add to it." I could work with that criticism. In the heat of discussion, I often get excited and impatient to talk, and do interrupt other people. With that specific and non-blaming criticism, I could try to change my behavior so as not to oppress others. In that way everyone in the group would have an opportunity to contribute and we could all work together more effectively.

"C/SC is something we've all experienced with our closest friends, with those we rely on to 'be straight with us.'"

In interpersonal relationships and in group situations, problems and conflicts are unavoidable and necessary as we grow to know and trust one another. A helpful method of dealing with and learning from these conflicts is criticism/self criticism (C/SC). In this article I'll try to explain some of the reasons for using criticism/self criticism, what it is, and how to use it effectively.

Why Use Criticism/Self Criticism?

C/SC is something we've all experienced with our closest friends, with those we rely on to "be straight with us." It's an openness and honesty with both praise and criticism of ourselves and of others. But where does destructive criticism in our less personal relationships come from? It may have to do with the way we see the world around us.

There are several ways of looking at the world. One is to see the world as static, unchanging, or constantly repeating the same cycles over and over again. Only the appearance changes--not the content. People and things are classified into fixed pigeon-holes that are pre-ordained by some mystical fate. Things are one-sided and stagnant. The world around us often seems to bear out this way of looking at things. At this stage, we don't appear to have any control over events or any power to effect change in our society. Frustration with this powerlessness leads to cynicism. Cynicism, pessimism, inertia, and even complacency are part of this worldview and are typified in sayings like "you can't teach an old dog new tricks."

You can't fight City Hall.
Once a ----, always a ----.
It's like banging your head against
a brick wall.
Love it or leave it.
You can bring a horse to water, but
you can't make him drink.
Damned if you do, damned if you don't.
You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

Another way to see the world is "in process." Everything is a fluid, constantly changing qualitative development--a spiral ever growing and expanding. A constant

process of summing up experience and continuing to discover, invent, create and advance. This worldview nurtures the recognition that people have different and often contradictory ways of perceiving experiences and that these differences always move us toward a resolution--a synthesis. This awareness that people can and do change is grounded in our observations of real actions, of things people actually do, rather than on abstract generalities about people's "natures" ("he was born that way," "women are naturally weak"). These are aspects of the "dialectical materialist" worldview out of which C/SC grows. C/SC is a vital aid in concretely changing oneself, changing intergroup relations, and changing society. This attitude is reflected in the following statements:

One for all and all for one.
Cure the sickness to save the patient.
Blame not the speaker, but be warned
by her words.
Turn over a new leaf.
Learn from past mistakes to avoid
future ones.
Say all you know and say it without
reserve.
Dare to think, dare to speak, dare to act.

What is Criticism/Self Criticism?

C/SC is a way of analyzing what you and others do, why you do it, how you feel about it, what you don't like and what you think is destructive, and how to redirect a negative action in a positive direction. It was used during the Chinese revolution and especially during the Cultural Revolution of the late 60s. In literally all of China's popular institutions, people gathered in groups to fight against authoritarianism, bureaucracy and hierarchy which have a way of undermining democratic structures. Traditional relationships between manager and worker, teacher and student, bureaucrat and citizen, and to some extent between men and women, were criticized head on by the people themselves, right where those divisions were taking place, and a new way of working together was fashioned. The Chinese were saying that without change in the cultural sphere, the hard fought economic changes would be undermined.

"The first thing to remember about C/SC is that 'criticism' does not only mean negative criticism, but necessarily involves positive criticism."

But C/SC isn't an obscure practice of a far away country. It's an immediate way of changing the quality of group dynamics in everyday situations, right here in the Twin Cities.

How to Give Effective Criticism

The first thing to remember about C/SC is that "criticism" does not only mean negative criticism, but necessarily involves positive criticism. Effective criticism accounts for the whole person. It doesn't take much effort to say "Hey, I liked that article you wrote." Everyone needs positive criticism--it's a vital part of reacting to the whole person and giving us confidence in our ability to change.

There are three aspects in giving effective criticism. First is the initial attitude or spirit behind the criticism; second, what we criticize; and third, the form we use to criticize.

Here are some attitudinal characteristics to remember while giving and receiving criticism. Criticism/self criticism is-

- non-blaming;
- is optimistic about people's ability to change;
- emphasizes the active role of a person in his/her own change;
- welcomes change and controversy;
- approaches differences with a cooperative and problem solving attitude rather than in a spirit of blaming or punishing;
- believes that change comes from an internal and self-chosen commitment and is not imposed from the outside. It flows from an understanding of and agreement with the collective purpose behind the criticism.

One of the most important aspects about C/SC is that the "what" of criticism lies in pointing out what a person said or did that makes you feel good or bad, renders the group effective or ineffective. We don't criticize the person her/himself. We don't say "You are a bad facilitator," but rather, "I think (feel) your not directing the discussion held the meeting down," and then offer some suggestions how that might have been better done. It is the saying or doing--the experience--that is involved, not his/her personhood. In

this way we can avoid the pitfall of traditional criticism which often renders us inoperative and leads us away from wanting to--or believing in--change.

Now that we have the spirit behind the criticism, and know what we want to criticize, we can deal with the form the criticism takes. Here are some guidelines.

-When criticizing, be specific and avoid generalities.

-Make sure all the facts are straight. Don't base criticism on fantasies or inferences, or make them at random without reason.

-Check out the accuracy of what you perceive. There are often differences between our perceptions and the actual situation. Recently a co-worker returned from a vacation raving about how she had finally taken some time for herself and had done a lot of thinking and reading. I inferred that she thought our collective had been 'stunting her growth. I felt hurt and defensive, since I viewed our collective as one of the most growing experiences I'd ever had. But before making any more assumptions, I told her what I was feeling. She was quick to correct me. She had meant that she hadn't allowed herself to spend enough time alone. It was no reflection on the collective.

-When applicable, include self criticism. It often takes two to make a difficult situation. Everyone makes mistakes and learns from them. What you criticize someone for today, you may have done yesterday. Recently, an organization I work with got a large printing bill for a booklet we had made for a national conference. I was furious that another person on the planning committee had authorized that large an expenditure. When I confronted her with it, she told me she had thought I had checked out prices and knew about the expense. We had been unclear about whose responsibility it had been. And I was as much at fault as she was.

-As a way of protecting ourselves, we sometimes create situations or rules that exempt us from criticism. We often say, "Oh, that's just the way I am," or "It's just my conditioning." This attitude supposes that we can't go beyond or see through the cultural manipulations of our society and really change our behavior.

-Finally, persuasion through reason and debate is more effective than by coercion

"It [C/SC] will more effectively and dynamically show us how to interact with each other and our environment to create an atmosphere — a culture — of positive change."

and force. You can't ram change down people's throats.

A handy little formula which may at first seem artificial, but with a little practice becomes a comfortable and effective criticism method is as follows:

- a. Clarify your observation: "Everyone is talking while I'm trying to read this."
- b. Explain how you feel about it: "That makes me feel like no one considers this important or likes my writing."
- c. Say what you want: "I want us to decide whether or not we want me to go on reading."

In addition to verbal forms, negative and positive attitudes of criticism can be communicated to another person nonverbally. Tone of voice (accusatory, hurt, sarcastic), facial expression (rolling your eyes, looking pained), and body language (closed, stiff, turned away) can influence how effectively criticism is communicated and acted upon.

C/SC is not an easy method at first. A lot of us in the Twin Cities who are learning to use C/SC recognize that outside forces can influence how successful we are. Sometimes we have bad days--traffic jams make us late, the room is hot, etc. It takes practice and perseverance. C/SC is not a mechanical dogma. In the long run, it is an easier, more creative way of working together. It will more effectively and dynamically show us how to interact with each other and our environment to create an atmosphere--a culture--of positive change.

For more information on C/SC and for help incorporating C/SC into your group, contact Sandra Pappas. Also, the Women's School of The Twin Cities Women's Union will be offering classes for women in C/SC this fall (729-6200). Bibliography upon request.

Sandra Pappas works with Circle of the Witch, a Collective Feminist Theatre and is a member of the Twin Cities Women's Union.

Special thanks for Joyce Indelicato, Tom O'Connell and Lynn Hinkle for their criticism.



COMMUNITY BUILDING



Jeremy de Fiebre (Project member) and Waldo, WCV's portapak. Photo: Roger Kenealy.

Walker Community Video

How many times have we discovered that a decision crucial to our neighborhoods has been made and it's too late to do anything except come up with a post-mortem? And how many times have we come off a community event exulting in the pleasure of working and celebrating with others, only to find that not one moment of it has been captured for all of us to review and enjoy again? At some point or other, most of us have felt the need to be informed earlier about decisions affecting the life of our community and to document times when neighbors act cooperatively. We've all felt the need to create an effective, continual and open dialogue among ourselves and with others (e.g. city bureaucracies) so that we can act before it's too late.

We need vehicles to help us effect this dialogue. We've created some of these already: neighborhood associations, community newspapers and magazines are all working to strengthen communication and lead us to action. Now we've added another: video.

Video communication (cheaper and easier by far to use than film) is one of the most effective ways to document and distribute the kinds of information we need for community growth. Yet we've seen that television, the mass media, generally does not respond to smaller communities and is inaccessible to most of us.

Walker Community Video was created as an effort to change this, to make communications media accessible and responsive to our communities. We do this in two ways. First, we offer training workshops in video production (basic video technology, scripting, editing and on-camera work) to anyone in our community at no or low cost. Second, we produce, or help others produce, video programming.

As a community-based video project, we are interested in covering issues that have an impact on us—from housing to history, from personal liberation of peoples to community arts and other celebrations. And this becomes our criteria in selecting issues to cover. Ideally, we'd be in a position to work on a project, funded or not.

How do we go about working with groups who want to produce tapes on these issues? A person or group with a project in mind would meet with us to discuss the issue involved, the audience, places to show it, whether the group qualifies for free production or whether there'd be costs they'd have to bear, and deadlines. But one of the more important aspects of this process is the kind of relationship we set up for working together. Do they want to be trained to do the bulk of the work themselves and us as teachers and consultants? Or do they want us as producers of the project? We can do either. In short, our concern is that the group get its story told in the best way possible, that the story is made visible and accessible in the community, and that residents strengthen their own ability to bring issues to the whole community's attention.

The Project consists of a resident videographer and a board of directors made up of several people who have experience in different communications skills and, for those who are not already proficient, are willing to be trained. In the four months we've been together, we've worked on several projects including the May Day Tapes which recorded the all day May Day Celebration in Powderhorn Park, a Sound Barriers Tape which was created in response to the need for cutting down on sound pollution and a downzoning slide show for Powderhorn Residents Group's presentation at the downzoning hearing in late September-early October. We are also involved in monitoring the development of Cable TV and preparing for the time when it will come to this area.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

All this is just a beginning, of course. To really serve a community, we all have to learn more about articulating our needs and working together. It will take time, but our efforts are going toward creating another vehicle for the dialogue so that we can all feel powerful enough to control the way we live and the way our community grows.

—Bob Albee and Merille Glover. For more information, call Walker Church at 722-6612.

Linden Hills Slide Show

A group of us got together this spring to create a slide show about Linden Hills for the Parade of Neighborhoods. Most of us were amateurs, but we had some professional guidance. We planned, wrote, photographed, and edited the show ourselves. Because of the tremendous cooperation between professionals, amateurs, the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council (LHiNC) and local businesses, we were able to build a successful production with a small budget and limited time. Here is how we did it.

We had six weeks and a very small budget! However, we soon found three camera buffs who were enthused about the project. Later we met Anne Marie and Averill Kronick. Averill is a partner, producer-director in The Filmmakers, a Minneapolis motion picture production company.

At our first meeting we discussed the neighborhood and how to go about presenting it. We found that our feelings about the neighborhood were similar. All of us love living here. But we also know it will take hard work to keep the neighborhood cohesive. We need to keep the quality of housing high and to increase the already extensive parent participation in the schools. We strove for a slide show that would invite new residents to share our enthusiasm.

Averill made it clear that he would be happy to work on the project, but that he did not want his opinions to carry any more "clout" than the opinions of the others involved. He offered to share his expertise and whatever equipment might be needed. The result was that everyone felt at ease and on equal footing. I think it helped the group work well together.



Top, L-R: Molly Falk, Averill Kronick, Genevieve Ryan. Bottom, L-R: Carrie Bardwell, George Nelms, Colin Bardwell. Not shown: Anne Marie Kronick, Tom Braun, Patti Stillwell.

He suggested we write a script for a single narrator and after considering the various alternatives, we agreed to follow his suggestion. Three of us took on the task using an old Filmmakers' script as a model.

As the script was being written the photographers were busy shooting film donated by a generous film company, Brown Photo. Processing was donated by Brown, Pako and Kenesaw Drug, a neighborhood drugstore. We had divided the neighborhood into categories to be photographed. Each photographer chose his or her subject. This way we were guaranteed that we wouldn't have ten slides of the bandstand at Lake Harriet and none of kids playing baseball. It also helped in writing the script since we were almost assured of having the right slides.

A week before the Parade, the script was ready and the film processed. The script writers spent an evening with Averill at the studio. We chose what we felt were the best slides in each category and oddly enough there wasn't much argument. Then we put them in the order that corresponded to the script. A professional actor known to Averill donated his services as narrator and the next day Averill directed the narration and scoring (adding the music) at Harley Toberman's "Toby's Tunes." Part of the committee served as audience. Averill cued the slides to the taped score and narration. It was finished!

COMMUNITY BUILDING

The show was well received by visitors and neighborhood residents. A former resident, after seeing the show, commented that she wasn't quite sure why she had ever left!

Looking back, there are probably two reasons why the project was successful. First, we organized the effort well. Working backward from the date of the Parade, we schedule completion dates for photography, script writing, assembling, narration and scoring.

Secondly, the group worked well together. No one believed their personal opinion to be more valid than anyone else's. If anyone was the "leader," it was Averill, but only because most of us looked to him as "teacher."

We would like to share the presentation with other neighborhoods or groups. We're trying to put the show on film so that it can be projected with more easily accessible equipment. Anyone interested should contact Genevieve Ryan at 922-6423.

—Genevieve Ryan

Women's Union Film Festival

The image of women in film has deteriorated, not improved, with the advent of the Women's Movement. Although films portraying women's oppression are now being made, the oppression is usually seen as inevitable and insurmountable (e.g., *Straw Dogs*). These pessimistic films are better known than those that are more positive, than those offering a social analysis and perhaps pointing to a solution to the problem. As Socialist Feminists, we consider it our responsibility to air these positive films about women and, hopefully, those directed and produced by women.

The idea to hold a film series grew out of a film criticism class offered this Spring by the Women's School. We wanted to expose some ideas about women's exploitation and offer some possible solutions to a broader audience and felt that a film series would be an effective way to do this.

We wanted to air films that expressed some of the contradictions in our lives as women (passivity, sexuality, financial dependency, lesbianism, etc.). We wanted



Lucia in the 1960's is taught how to read and write during Cuba's literacy campaign and, as a newleywed, confronts her husband's macho attitudes. From Lucia.

films that were positive and encouraged growth. We especially wanted films portraying the situation of third world women. Finally, we placed a high priority on films directed by women. With these criteria in mind, we selected A Very Curious Girl by Nelly Kaplan, Sambizanga by Sarah Maldoror, The Emerging Woman by the U.S. Women's Film Project, Maedchen in Uniform by Leontine Sagan and Lucia by Humberto Solas. It was important to us that the series go beyond passive entertainment, so we held discussions after the shorter films.

Reactions to the films varied. Maedchen in Uniform was supported for its positive treatment of lesbianism as well as the anti-fascist sentiment of the 1932 German film. The Emerging Woman, a history film, was appreciated for its honest treatment of some of the co-optation of the early women's movement in its struggle to get the vote. A Very Curious Girl, dealing with a small town prostitute's acquiring financial freedom and getting the last laugh on her clients, got an ambivalent reaction, especially to its stereotypical lesbianism and its extreme brutality. However, the film also contained positive aspects, namely the very direct way it dealt with sexual and economic exploitation.

REVIEWS REVIEWS

At Lucia Pam Costain, a member of the work-group who recently returned from a tour of North Vietnam which included visits to the Women's Union there, gave a moving speech that paralleled the optimistic tone of the film. She pointed out that just as the struggle had been won against enormous odds in Cuba and in North Vietnam, it can be won here.

It's obvious to us that the planning and organization done in preparation for the series paid off. Two books were invaluable as resources: Women and Their Sexuality in the New Film by Joan Mellen and The Women's Film Coop Catalog. This last offers feminist synopses of films and also details suggestions for holding a film series. We highly recommend both books.

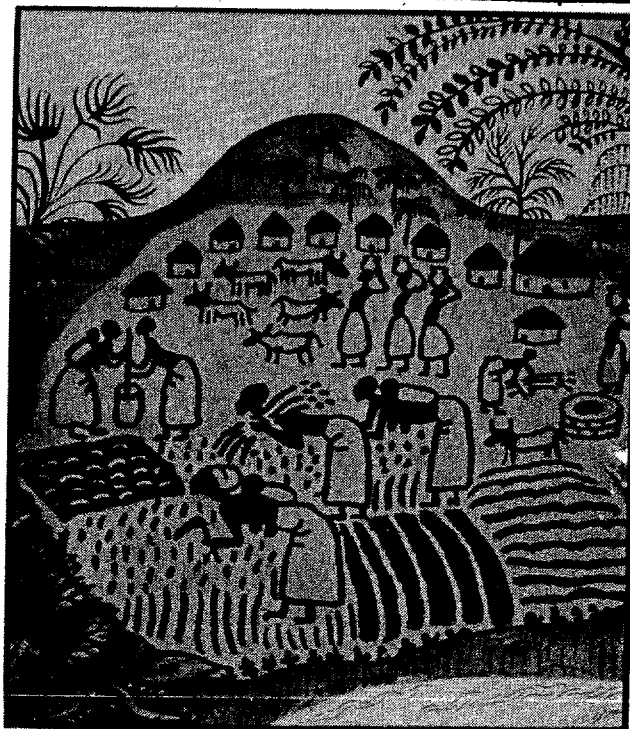
We feel that the film series' greatest success was the number and variety of people we reached through it. There were almost 200 people at each showing and every movie had a substantially different audience. It was a comfortable atmosphere in which to introduce the Women's School to a larger community than it had ever reached in the past. Hopefully, people began to consider the contradictions and solutions presented by the films and to think about the connection between those problems and the possibilities that the Women's School and other groups offer for action.

We continue to feel strongly that new images of women, social analysis of women's problems, and new solutions need to be created and supported. We continue to feel that a film series that includes these kinds of films and the discussions of the films is an exciting approach to what has traditionally been passive entertainment.

--Helen Rosenfeld and Mary Retsinas

The History Book

The History Book is a movie you won't see at a family theater or drive-in near you. In fact, you may look far and wide and not find one ad for it even though it's provocative, thrilling, controversial and all the other stuff a good blockbuster is supposed to be. You see, The History Book is a socialist film, and although it's a whole lot more engaging than its title, it doesn't just amuse, amaze, and anger you and then leave you dangling by your shredded senses. It challenges you



Village Chiefs with others tending their animals gives rise to classes. The History Book.

to think critically and act decisively in response to the history it presents. And that just ain't good box office.

The History Book is a two-and-a-half hour, three reel series of nine short "lessons" that tell the story of capitalist enterprise from the appearance of the first Venetian merchant among the feudal lords of Europe to the global reach of the American empire. The first reel explains the "buy cheap, sell dear" strategy by which early European merchants grew wealthy and shows how they forged modern nation states in order to rid themselves of the unprofitable nuisance of feudal tolls and taxes, then subjected Africans, Asians, and Americans in competition with each other for mercantile empire.

Reel two traces the growth of the slave trade, showing how it destroyed African civilizations for the profit of New World plantation owners and European merchants. Then, as machines become more productive than human labor, capitalists turn increasingly to industrial investment. Cutting prices and wages to eliminate competitors in their glutted markets, they bring on depressions and organized resistance from workers.

The final reel shows how bankers organized

REVIEWS REVIEWS

cartels to eliminate destructive competition by controlling production and prices. After two world wars for empire capitalist nations led by the USA have given up political administration of colonies in favor of less costly economic domination, but have met with increasingly successful resistance from national liberation fighters in Asia and Africa.

Dull, drab economic history? Not at all. You may tire--two and a half hours in relentless pursuit of capitalism is a long time--but you won't fall asleep. The History Book combines graphic richness, drama, and a clear and consistent point of view to stay lively and provocative. Graphically, the film is an almost luxurious display of invention within standards of meticulous historical accuracy. Historical paintings and prints are invigorated by animation. Cartoon characters act against printed backdrops of childlike charm and simplicity. Relatively recent events are portrayed with movie clips. And the whole is vibrantly colorful and lively.

The dramatic power of the film comes from its uncompromising opposition to the capitalist system. The narrator, an animated rat who scampers in and out of the picture, champions the toilers exploited by capitalists as he builds a sense of titanic struggle and challenges you to choose sides. Sometimes the film is shrill, as when the rat comments on the suicide of a small businessman squeezed out in competition with a large manufacturer, "He couldn't stand to work in his own factory." Sometimes it sidesteps issues that would open it up to criticism, as when it avoids clear comment on the role of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe since 1950. But these are minor flaws, and to dwell on them is to avoid the film's central dramatic conflict and historical challenge: in the struggle between capitalism and the people it exploits, whose side are you on?

The History Book was made by the Danish state film office for use in schools. Used one "lesson" at a time with supplementary discussion and reading, it makes excellent curriculum for adults as well as children. The first reel is simple enough for upper elementary children to understand. The second is more difficult but does a fine job of clarifying such complex events as depressions brought on by overproduction in a situation of unrestrained competition. The third is less difficult, but offers less valuable historical explanation as it gives way increas-



Africa resisted imperialism. But weapon technology won and the African people's courage was drowned in blood. From T.H.B.

ingly to bombastic propaganda. The film is most valuable educationally where it challenges an adventure story approach to history. For instance, Stanley's excursion in search of Livingstone becomes an entirely new event when you learn that his exploration of interior Africa was used by Cecil Rhodes to begin the wave of European imperialism in Africa that led to World War I.

The English language version of The History Book was given its Upper Midwest premiere in June by the Education Exploration Center. Reactions seem to warrant the purchase of a copy that could stay in the Twin Cities and be readily available here. But the film is expensive (nearly \$2,000) and if EEC is to buy it, we will need help. If you are interested, call or write EEC, 3104 16th Ave So., Mpls 55407, 722-6612.

—Jim Stengel

Bluegrass

Aside from being rich in Scandinavian culture and history, the Twin City area is also a font of musical tradition of quite a different heritage. This is the music of the South, known to some as "Old Time" or "Bluegrass," and to the uninitiated as "Hillbilly" or "Country Western." To clarify matters, let me say that this article is about acoustical (non-electric) music, with ensembles consisting

REVIEWS REVIEWS



James Tordoff (right) with guitarist Sean Blackburn (left). Photo: Mike Shupe.

generally of a bass, guitar, banjo, mandolin, and dobro; and not Country Western, the commercialized electric music that is aired on radio stations in this area. Examples of Country Western music are the songs of Johnny Cash (who actually does a large amount of traditional tunes, owing to the fact that he married into the family that founded alot of today's old-time music, the Carter family), Merle Haggard, Buck Owens, Tammy Wynette, Tanya Tucker, Loretta Lynn and so on down an endless list. About the only big name in Bluegrass is Bill Monroe, who did a concert at the Guthrie last winter, and is worth seeing if he comes to town again. There are many other bands (Reno and Harrell, Lester Flatt and the Nashville Grass, The New Grass Revival, The Monroe Doctrine, etc.) that play in this area occasionally, but who remain unknown to the general populace.

It is well known that the Minneapolis-St. Paul area produces talent with alarming regularity and the field of traditional music is no exception. There is probably more Bluegrass (both music and musicians) in this area than in most Southern cities (with the exceptions of Nashville or Muscle Shoal, Alabama) that originally spawned traditional music. The problems involved in bringing traditional music to the public are simple. There is no place (bar, coffeehouse, restaurant or dance hall) that features Old Time music regularly and no money to hire the performers. Such is the musician's lot--all dressed up and no place to go. This situation keeps the music in the musician's kitchen, picking until late at night, disturbing the neighbors (a notoriously surly audience), and supporting the coffee and

tobacco industries. Where does the interested or curious person go to hear a little Bluegrass on a cold winter's night? It's not easy. The places that regularly feature it are scarce, and this, coupled with little or no advertising, weeds out all but the most hardy listeners. It seems that the University area has most of the spots that one might attend, such as the New Riverside Cafe, which features this style of music most frequently, the Cafe Extempore, running a not-too-close second, and the Whole Coffeehouse, which presents the music occasionally.

In trying to locate this music, it would be helpful to know who the traditional musicians are in this area. They range from long established groups with tight harmonies and flashy instrumental arrangements to "pick-up bands" designed for that particular gig. With a group like this anything can, and usually does, go and whatever feels right at the moment usually sets precedent. For custom pick-up bands, call the author. For slick, toe tapping fun, the names to know are the Middle Spunk Creek Boys (the only really established group in town, together for about 5 years now) and the Uptown Shiners (although it is dubious as to whether or not they are still performing publicly). Other names to look for are Bill Hinkley and Judy Larson (first rate entertainment), the Dayhills (Irish music that preceeds most music in this country), Craig Ruble, Ron Colby Rod Bellville, and Dakota Dave Hull. There are more people who play in the Cities, but you'll have to search them out for yourselves due to lack of space to name them all. You can see from the list that the really steady, established groups go by quickly, and what is left are single acts, not purely Bluegrass or Old Time, but very much in the same vein. This all points to their problem of money and location. Sure, Bluegrass may be enjoying a popular upswing, but "it just ain't Broadway, Bud." At least not yet. Who knows, in ten years it is conceivable that traditional musicians will be dictating the newest fads, driving gaudy automobiles, and jetting coast to coast. It is highly unlikely, to say the least, but conceivable. In the meantime, though, acoustical traditional music seems relegated to the places where only he who seeks may find it, and sometimes even next door, late at night, for the third time that week. But remember our situation and take comfort in knowing that your lack of sleep is bringing the next generation a music worth having.

—James Tordoff

REVIEWS REVIEWS

Food Coops— Washington, D.C.

Washington D.C.? Cherry blossoms, monuments, demonstrations? Many visit the nation's capital, but few know much about the people who live here, the problems we face and how we are dealing with them.

Among the many problems that must be dealt with, food delivery has become a major issue. Safeway overwhelmed the mom-and-pop stores in the 50's, but is now fleeing the city to higher profits in the suburbs. Absentee corporate officials in Oakland, California make decisions to close Safeway stores with little advance notice to the community. Low-income residents are forced to cope with the vacuum by patronizing higher priced alternatives or taxiing to other chain stores.

Several small Black chains have attempted to fill the gap. Often seeded by government loans, these stores are able to maintain a larger selection of foods, but at a higher price than the larger chains. Workers in the stores, along with the community, have little control over management decisions.

Non-profit coop stores have also arisen in various locations. In the late 60's, the Martin Luther King Coops were created in small spaces in public housing projects. Large government subsidies have been awarded to these businesses, yet unfortunately, their stock is rather limited and volume is extremely low. Most residents use them as convenience stores. However, the two MLK coops that now operate do have a tremendous amount of community involvement and have helped support special community projects such as athletic teams, food baskets, etc.

Working closely with the MLK Coops is the Washington Food Federation consisting of three anti-profit collective stores, a warehouse, trucking collective, bakery and restaurant. Like the MLK Coops, these stores grew out of buying clubs whose original purpose was to provide residents with wholesome foods at the lowest possible prices. These stores carry stock that is more extensive than the MLK Coops, but smaller than the Black chains. Yet they are more selective: less meat, less prepared foods, etc. Integrated staffs make management decisions at collective meetings.

Let's take a closer look at the two stores in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood of D.C.: Stone Soup and Fields of Plenty. Adams-Morgan is a very diverse neighborhood (60% Black, 15% Latino, and 25% white). Both of these stores operate with collectives of 20 and 16 people respectively. Stone Soup, which opened in August of 1973, grosses about \$20,000 a week while Fields, which began six months later, makes a little over half of Stone Soup's volume. Various criteria were used to structure these non-profit food projects: 1) anti-profit: operating on low cost with individual gain, 2) collectively managed: workers make management decisions on an equal basis, 3) open financial information, 4) open community meetings and 5) youth job training programs.

Originally, there was a lot of community input in the stores through people attending open weekly meetings and loaning money for start up capital and expansion. While a lot of support is still there, vehicles for involvement have declined. Management meetings were moved to daytime as a convenience for the workers. The monthly community meetings now held are not well publicized. Decision making in both stores rests mainly with the workers' collective.

The two stores have been very active politically, and have met success in repealing the city's food and drug tax, organizing tenants, challenging the chains at public hearings, and participating in various demonstrations. They have enjoyed incredible publicity, making "anti-profit" and "collective" household words.

While prices are low, so are wages--less than the MLK Coops and less than half of union pay. This has caused a high turnover in Black and Latino residents. With improved efficiency and higher volume, wages could increase.

Whereas two years ago, many of the workers saw these stores as escapes for the counter-culture, anti-profit businesses are now viewed as part of the larger movement for economic democracy and justice in America. As Safeway pulls out of the city, the Martin Luther King Coops and the Food Federation will continue to work together in establishing non-profit, community-worker operated food stores.

Mark Looney works with Strongforce funding anti-profit business such as Stone Soup.

we're an award-winning magazine!

This summer, Common Ground received two awards: first, the Minneapolis Star's Barbara Flanagan award for "Encouraging a Greater Sense of Neighborhood Unity Throughout the Metropolitan Area and for Helping Us Rediscover Beauty Where We Live." Second, we received The Committee for Urban Environment (CUE) award for Environmental Quality: for "A maverick and unique attempt to provide a sense of history and place to the people of the central cities."

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The Red Star Chorus was only one of the many singing, acting, and musical groups that were created by Populists in the late 1800's and early 1900's. They sang songs spreading the gospel of anti-monopoly and cooperation, creating a broad-based culture of cooperation. Practically all the women in the Chorus were employees of the Co-op. Central Exchange. See page 26 for an article on the history of populist culture. Photo courtesy M.H.S.

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