



COURRIER TO THE EDITOR

Recalling the challenge

In January of this year, members of our community were host to an interesting visitor at the Strathearn Intercultural Centre. His name is Alain Lipietz, an economist and Green Party member from France. At the close of his talk, Lipietz, in a passing remark reminded me of an important direction we all could reexamine in our efforts toward resolving our social and ecological problems.

Alliances and coalition building have in the past attracted the attention of social activists. They reclaim the order of the day for contemporary progressive movements in the struggle for social justice is being made evident by recent mass demonstrations protesting the proposed social reforms and federal budget cuts. Alliances are increasingly looked upon as the only viable organizational form that can effectively challenge the reactionary elements in today's globalized political economy. The resulting policies emanating from these powerful social forces are seriously menacing our communities. Responsible

social and ecological planning and the fulfillment of basic human needs are increasingly being sacrificed on the altar of capital with government acquiescence on all levels.

The approximately six hundred multinational corporations who control international regulatory trade and finance organizations such as World Bank, IMF, and our continental Free Trade Agreement are firmly in command.

These powerful economic pressures in effect deny all government levels the autonomy needed to ultimately solve our community problems within the constraints of our present economic system. Social democrats in or out of government have shown little inclination to take on this "new economic world order".

Key Struggle

Coalition building is nothing new to Quebec society. In the 80s, following the "quiet revolution", the idea of the need for coalitions had spread considerably throughout the province. Experience began to confirm the impossibility of successfully countering the neo-

conservative offensives on labour, social programs and the environment going it alone; Coalition D'opposition au Libre Échange, Solidarité Populaire-Québec, Front d'Action Populaire en Milieu Urbain, were but a few. The trade union movement in Quebec even adopted an official position which recognized the need to work in coalitions.

Ben Swankey is also convinced of the need to regroup ourselves not only in regional coalitions but alliances everywhere. Ben is the director of the Socialist Education Centre in Vancouver. He describes the dialectical process that is developing; "By their very nature, these huge corporations are attacking all other sectors of the population, - labour, professionals, students, women, the middle class, farmers, small business and even sectors of relatively big capital in their pursuit of profits. But they also create the basis for a very broad multi-class alliance against the multinationals. Building such an alliance is the key struggle in today's world." He further goes on to point out that international solidarity is not only advisable from a humanitarian standpoint but a new ingredient essential to the victory of contemporary democratic forces everywhere.

Libertarian Municipal Tradition

Traditions centered around municipal coalitions and popular urban movements appear in both the past and present throughout much of western Europe and North America generally. The basis for these movements also consist of a broad constellation of issues and problems that are besetting all municipalities of the world. They cut across traditional class lines and have brought people together in assemblies, councils and citizens initiative movements often irrespective of their vocational and economic interests. These libertarian municipal models have in the past shown determination in acquiring control over social, economic and political life that was claimed by the centralized bureaucratic nation-state. Following a more detailed historical description of municipal alliances, author and social ecologist Murray Bookchin states; "History, in effect, seems to be rebuilding in the real world what was once a tentative and fleeting ideal of the Enlightenment from which stemmed the American and French revolutions of the 18th century. For once, it is possible of conceiving of majoritarian forces for major social change."

What is to be done?

Despite the recently lost opportunity for Montreal citizens to

Oyez! Oyez!

Lecteurs et Lectrices de Place Publique!

Cette section du journal vous est désormais entièrement réservée. Elle servira de tribune à tous les résidents qui ont quelque chose à dire sur la vie communautaire, des suggestions pour améliorer la qualité de vie du secteur, des plaintes à formuler, etc. N'hésitez pas à nous écrire et à nous faire part de vos commentaires. Prière d'être brefs. Courrier du lecteur Place Publique, C.P. 746, succ. Place du Parc Mtl, Qc, H2W 2P3

Dear Readers of Place Publique,

From now on the opinion column awaits your comments, suggestions and whatever you might want to say and share concerning community life. This column is all yours, so sit down with your pen, typewriter or computer and write to us. Please be brief. Letters to the Editor, Place Publique, C.P. 746, succ. Place du Parc Mtl, Qc, H2W 2P3

challenge the new "global" order "locally" by electing a larger more critical opposition to "corporate city" politics, the struggle continues. The social forces resisting the attacks and deprivations to communities around the world are slowly on the move likened to the irrepressible geological movement of tectonic plates. The struggle also goes on for a revitalized form of democratic socialism in eastern Europe. Is the class struggle dead or has it merely transcended its old forms whereupon the industrial working class and the factory were more exclusively seen as the "locus of the "power question?"

This brings to mind that almost over a century ago, Karl Marx pointed out that the main contradiction in our society was between social production, where we all

join together to produce the good things of life, and the private appropriation, where the fruits of our labour are taken by a few. Isn't that still the situation today in more complex form? Isn't our struggle today aimed at resolving this contradiction? The new corporate world order, in short, contains the seeds of an alternative world order. But those seeds will only bear fruit if we recall the challenge to this order now, and refuse to accept the wisdom of those who would suggest that, under existing conditions, the answer to the question of "What is to be Done?" is nothing!

By Joe Vega

Une ombre au tableau

Bonjour,

Je tiens à vous souligner ma sincère appréciation face au contenu du journal, à sa pertinence au point de vue social et idéologique. Plus particulièrement aux articles de Jacky Malo, Isabelle Rivest et Stéphane Gagné. En fait, avec l'éditorial et la rubrique patrimoine, c'est le journal au complet qui m'a intéressé. Bravo! Une

seule ombre au tableau; les publicités du Reform Party. Aucun rapport avec le reste: étonnant. Encore une fois bravo, pour votre contribution à la conscientisation et à l'esprit de solidarité dont nous avons bien besoin... Avec vous de tout coeur en attendant d'avoir un peu de temps à vous offrir.

Salutations,
Luce Bourdages

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