

Past Lessons, Future Directions

Speech delivered by a representative of the Alive Production Collective on February 8, 1980.

Usually, when we give a speech, we begin by saying the task is very difficult. Tonight, the task isn't very difficult at all. We have to speak about two old and dear friends. One is Alive Magazine. The other is the Alive Production Collective. These two are easy to talk about. We've gotten to know them over quite a period of time. Some of us have come to know Alive Magazine over a period of ten years. Some of us have come to know the Alive Production Collective over a period of eight and a half years. They really are old and dear friends.

We have a lot to say about the future of these two this evening and about the future of other things. We hope we manage to cover all the ground.

We have to tell people that Alive Magazine will be changing. Alive has changed a lot over the period of its history — ten years. It has changed from this to that ... and back again ... and back again. Alive started as what is known as a "purely cultural magazine"; it published only poetry, short stories, creative essays. The specific future of Alive is to go back to be a "purely cultural magazine". It won't include those characteristics any more which people describe as a difficult eclectic mix of forms through which we express our political line. Political affairs, current events, news reportage, theoretical thrust, polemical slant, have all been mixed into our one publication. Thus, Alive will be harking back to its origins, becoming once again a publication presenting literary and art forms only. People have come to know Alive in recent times as a weekly magazine. Alive's frequency will be much less. It will be produced only four or five times per year, at the most.

Continuing Alive as a cultural publication brings us to the questions raised when some people take digs at us for having a cultural thrust at all. Many Left organizations don't have a separate cultural thrust. If they deal with poetry, short stories and the like at all, it is only infrequently. Every once in a while you find a poem in their political newspapers. We don't feel it necessary to defend a continued cultural thrust. However, we are willing to defend it, even though it is not necessary.

Not in the recent past but in the more distant past, up to a point about five years ago, the history of Alive made it better known in established cultural circles than in Left political circles. This has been reversed in the most recent five years. There are a lot of bourgeois writers, a lot of cultural figures in Canada who used Alive as a stepping stone to get where they are today. They published all their early poetry and short stories in Alive, then they became famous, had lots of books published, won reknown all across the country and forgot all about Alive, of course. (*Laughter*) This is the area of influence that Alive had in the past. We think this point in our past should be recaptured somewhat.

Also, this cultural thrust gives us a particularly close connection to those who can be generally referred to as intellectuals — writers, artists, people in the universities. Perhaps intellectuals feel the need for an alternative culture most of all but that doesn't make our group feel, as some purists feel, that there is no need for culture in the revolutionary movement. We feel very strongly that there is a need for cultural work on two fronts. One is to criticize the bourgeois culture. The other is to create a vibrant new culture.

There is a strong renewed pressure to criticize the bourgeois culture right now. The bourgeoisie is bringing out a lot of movies and TV shows quite specifically directed at the working class. This includes the whole spate of films about the Viet Nam war. These films are attempts to win over those who developed the rebellious "youth consciousness" in the 1960's, to win them to a posture benefiting the bourgeoisie. On TV there is a whole spate of new "blue collar" heroes. One is called *Skag*; that's a serial. There are other similar series. Recently there was a TV movie titled, "The

\$5.20 an Hour Dream". The bourgeoisie is trying to speak to the workers about their condition and to speak to the youth about revolutionary things like the anti-war movement of the '60's. Thus, we feel it necessary to criticize the bourgeois culture.

As people see here tonight and other meetings like this, it's very good to have a cultural thrust as a counterpoint to the existing culture, something people can relate to as positive. We don't do these things all that well. We don't put ourselves high on a pedestal for what we do. Sometimes our "new culture", the poems, the songs, the theatre, seem childish, seem little more than newborn. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile.

That's the specific future of Alive Magazine.

Getting that out of the way at the start of the speech is helpful because that's the one that gives the biggest pangs to the heart. We're going to put this old friend off to the side somewhat. *Alive Weekly Magazine* isn't going to exist. Alive will exist but not at the weekly frequency or with the formula people have known. The next issue, numbered 165, will be the last issue of *Alive Weekly Magazine*.

There is another matter to deal with which should also be at the beginning of the speech because it gives pangs to the heart — in a certain sense greater pangs. This matter is to publicly announce that our organization will no longer exist after this meeting. The Alive Production Collective, the organization sponsoring this meeting, actually dissolved itself on January 16, 1980. In dissolving itself, the organization gave itself three further tasks. The first of these tasks was to produce Alive 164. The second was to hold this meeting and the third is to produce Alive 165. These tasks were to announce exactly what is happening to the organization and what its decisions are.

Alive Weekly Magazine will no longer exist. The Alive Production Collective will no longer exist. These statements are hard to get out — the throat gets dry. These are old and dear friends, and we come here to announce, in one sense, their demise.

In another sense, we come here to announce their rebirth. We haven't dissolved our organization in order to join some other outfit. We dissolved our organization so that we could carry on our work in a new and better form. At the same time as dissolving the Alive Production Collective, we formed a new organization. This new structure is clear of any of the confusions, twists and knots that were involved in the previous structure. The advanced revolutionary organization we have formed has a much more clearly specified structure than the Alive Production Collective had. It fulfils much better what had been one of a number of facets of the Alive Production Collective, the most important facet — being an advanced revolutionary organization.

We mentioned in our January First speech the confusion over exactly what the Alive Production Collective is. The confusion expressed itself in the opinion that the organization was little more than a production team, founded and maintained simply for the purpose of producing one publication, Alive. We mentioned, too, past confusion about the group being a commune. There was some basis for this opinion at one time but no basis since January 1975.

We have formed a new structure which is not at all identified as a production team. It is not identified with any of the things which were confusing points in the Alive Production Collective. It is identified as one thing and one thing only — an advanced revolutionary organization.

There are things that Alive means that are identified closely with the new structure.

Anybody who worked with the organization in the past knows we sum up a lot of fine qualities with two words — Alive style. The Alive style is a matter of pride to us. This doesn't mean the style of

the magazine but the method of the organization. The style of the people in our organization is something we consciously cultivate. We train people in our style when they join our organization.

The Alive style will continue. Everybody here is somewhat familiar with the Alive style. It entails some things which other Leftists scoff at us for, like being willing to be humorous. The main parts of the style are political principles, such as the idea of seeking unity. There are attitudes in the style too, such as doing tasks well so that they don't have to be done over again. We've tried to take the methodical approach in structuring our new organization. It is the approach we try to take to any particular task we have.

Ever since the beginnings of the Alive Production Collective we had lofty intentions, again as mentioned January First, to organize. Our self-definition, at the beginning, entailed one tenet: to do educational work. This meant to work through Alive Magazine to try to give some people a general education in revolutionary and broadly progressive ideas by using cultural forms. Very shortly after the beginnings, we formalized a second tenet in our self-definition. This second tenet was: to organize. As mentioned January First, even though this has been a tenet in our self-description, it hasn't been something we've actively taken up as a thrust.

We've been analyzing why the thrust to organize hasn't been one we've taken up in practice. We've asked, what has stifled us? How can we get around the stifling? The answers to these questions are a big factor that led us to dissolve the old organization and to found a new organization. The new basis will allow us to carry on both tenets of the previous self-description. We analyzed that inherent fetters within the Alive Production Collective structure made that impossible previously.

The Alive Production Collective as an organizational structure doesn't fit our needs anymore, we've outgrown it.

Saying these things may sound like a fraud. Even to us who are saying them they sound a little like a fraud in the sense that it sounds like we're describing a very high flying transformation. We're not trying to put a fraud over on anybody. We're not trying to say that something greater than what has happened has occurred. We're not trying to fool people.

Something in the Alive style, which we mentioned, is quite a large dose of humility. The new organization we have has humility as an organization. As we said January First, we know we're not the greatest innovation on earth since sliced bread, we're not even the *greatest thing* in Canada. Of course, we then have to yell in the face of the on-coming stampede, "But we are a thing". (Laughter) These eager negators are prone to say, "That's right. You're nothing." (Laughter)

We don't think this change in the organization we work in or the changes in the materials we use in our educational thrust means we have become the greatest thing. We don't feel our announcement will cause a noticeable stir in Canadian society, causing people to stand up to take notice any more than they have been already. No fraud on our part on that front.

We're simply saying what we've been saying for a long time: we desire to build unity. We think the new structure will allow us to do that in a better way. We have been saying for a long time that the least we want to do is to create a pocket of resistance to the U.S. imperialist domination of Canada. We think we can achieve that more with this new structure.

Something raised with us quite often will come up again with our announcement that we have created and intend to build a new organization. The issue is whether we want to found the Party or not, whether we want to avoid participation in the Party building movement or not, whether we like this or that existing "Party" or not. The new organization we have structured is not a Party. We think it is something closer to the Party than the Alive Production Collective was. It's something consciously closer to the vanguard than the Alive Production Collective was. However, in general, we still have the same line on the question of organizing the Party. We don't consider ourselves to be the vanguard of Canadian society. On the other hand, we don't consider any of the other self-

proclaimed Parties to be the vanguard of Canadian society either. We don't think any section of the Left or the Left in general plays as leading a role in society in Canada as it does in other countries. In some other countries we do think the Parties and the advanced revolutionary organizations deserve the name vanguard. We don't think there is yet an organization in Canada deserving of the name. We are accused of being pessimistic for saying this. We are further accused of being anti-party, against the vanguard concept. We can affirm that saying there is no Party does not mean the Party won't come into existence, does not mean the Party can't be built. It simply means we're acknowledging the current reality.

If the vanguard Party did exist, we would support it.

Now all the groups who proclaim themselves the Party will come knocking on our door, saying, "Well, it does exist! Here we are! Didn't you know about us?" (Laughter) They should just stay away and any currently knocking on doors in Guelph should stow their idealism and get lost. (Laughter) We know the groups that exist which call themselves the Party. It is in knowing that full well and understanding what the word Party in their name means, that we say the vanguard does not exist. A lot of people call themselves the Party but that means as little as King Canute calling himself ruler of the tides.

The Party isn't here and we don't see it on the horizon. We don't see it being just around the corner. We don't see it being founded immediately. This is why we have an organization which takes the attitude: The Party isn't going to be here for a while but we are and we might as well do the best we can while we're waiting. That sounds *laissez-faire*. It sounds like somebody else is going to do everything to found the Party and we're just going to sit around waiting to acknowledge it when it comes. We don't actually take this "waiting for the Messiah" type thrust. Our thrust is actually an active one. However, we have to speak on this Party issue because it is made such a constant issue by other groups who want to conjure up the Party before its time.

We do try to do the best we can. We think some of the problems we've solved in our group recently will help us do that more.

Since we overthrew the misleadership the Alive Production Collective used to have, we have done more than we'd done in any year and a half period before. We have become acutely aware in this that when people see more from you, they expect more. The more we do, the more we hear demands and feel the need that we do still more. Within our old structure, we couldn't do more. We had reached our limits and so we developed a new organizational structure.

In the past, what served as our advanced revolutionary organization, the Alive Production Collective, needed too constant an attention just to be maintained. It constantly needed consolidation. People know about this just by following the progress of Alive Magazine. The publication would break its schedule because the group putting out the magazine needed time to deal with its internal life.

This *constant* consolidation on the advanced level has not only been detrimental to the publishing schedule of Alive, it has also been detrimental to our organizing. As mentioned January First, we haven't made attempts at a big upsurge on the mass level. We have made attempts to organize people who are supporters of our organization, at the starting level of an advanced consciousness. We haven't even been able to organize that well with people who are just outside our organization, people who have a revolutionary outlook, because of the detrimental effect of this *constant* consolidation.

We have a very great imbalance in that we hold meetings like this and not many people attend but we have many contacts, a lot of friends of the organization and more supporters than are here. We just haven't done the necessary work with them. We know we have to do certain tasks before it is correct for us to expect something of them. With our new structure we think this will be turned around.

A sign that points towards us keeping any future schedules for publishing our educational material is that we kept our word on the most recent break. We announced its length before it happened and

we stuck to that length. We're quite proud of this because the twenty other publishing breaks in *Alive's* history were spontaneous. People were taken by surprise when they came. It may not sound like much of a point to be proud of but it shows that at long last we have a material grasp of our own process, of our own organization, of its life, of its strengths and weaknesses. After ten years of doing so, we have a material grasp of the problems of putting out a magazine. We're slow learners but we do learn.

No more publishing breaks in the schedules of any of our educational material are necessary. We can now say that. We've said it before. The difference is that the slogan, outlined January First about keeping two engines going at once, is now materially possible. With our new structure we can keep the work going through which people relate to us — such as our publications, joint work, etc. — at the same time as we wage the struggles necessary to keep our organization's internal life vibrant, the struggles necessary to keep the revolutionary organization revolutionary.

In developing a new organizational structure we have rid ourselves of some of the recurring problems that plagued us in the previous structure.

What we've said thus far doesn't sound so very great and glorious. On the one hand, we say, "A new organization has come into being!" On the other hand, we can only say, "It can do a few of the things the other organization couldn't do." We have more than just that in mind, though. We can sum this up best with a twist on a phrase we've used to describe our self-perceived role before: "If all we can do is to make a contribution to revolution in Canada, that'll be fine." This is the rationale of a small group, a rationale which implies someone else is going to organize revolution. Now, we say it's not just a question of making a contribution to revolution, rather we will participate in organizing the revolution.

We are actually putting our organization forward as one of the groups that will solve problems of revolution in Canada.

Certainly, we will not solve all of the problems of the revolution nor will we solve the problems we do solve all by ourselves. However, we do feel we have a firm enough footing now that we can do more than just "make a contribution". That's the change in our thrust.

Implied in what we're saying is that the whole history of *Alive* and of our organization has been a process of searching. We don't want to sound 1960's hippyish. (Laughter) We've been trying to find some of the "Holy Grails" involved in making revolution. (Laughter) Now, we're saying the "Sir Galahad" stage of our history is over. (Laughter) We've found the "Holy Grail". (Laughter)

Seriously, now we're going to develop some of the keys that come from our searching for ten years or for eight and a half years. We feel that we've had this ability for some time now, about a year and a half or less, and that now we are formalizing that ability. We're confident enough that we're willing to stand up and make promises.

It should be understood about this searching, about *Alive Magazine* itself, about the *Alive Production Collective*, that we are not ashamed of our history. This will be raised at the same time as any questions about the change in our structure being a fraud. No matter how hard we try we can't satisfy the constant critics. We have no doubt these critics will say, "Yes, they are ashamed of their history. They're trying to pretend that rotten *Alive Production Collective* never existed. They're trying to pretend they were never associated with it. All that we've said about them being no good, they now acknowledge and they're ashamed to be associated with it." This is not at all the case. We are not making these changes to cover up mistakes or rotten parts of our history. In fact, we've been the quickest ones to make public the rotten parts of our history.

However, it's not only a matter of not being ashamed of our history: it's a matter of being very proud of our history.

We have had a very natural development, not at all a contrived development. We don't only affirm this for ourselves, we know it's also the case for some other Left groups in Canada. Our development hasn't been one that we just made up as we went along. Our development came from the pursuit of the resolutions

to contradictions that really confronted us. The contradictions weren't conjured up. We didn't just open Lenin's "What is to be done?" and say, "Here's what he says, let's get about doing that." Some of the other Left groups in Canada have developed that way. Rather than that, we came up against the contradictions before we opened the books. It was in looking for the resolutions that we opened up the Lenin, the Mao Zedong and so on.

We have developed our grasp of revolutionary ideas in a very natural way. Because of that normal development, we have a very deep-going commitment to revolutionary ideas. The only reason we've accepted these ideas is because they worked in resolving contradictions we were faced with. We know revolutionary ideas work.

There is no reason for us to be ashamed even of the errors in our history because they are a part of this process of natural acceptance of revolutionary ideas. We've never made any mistakes anyway, so what is there to cover up? (Laughter) Us and Stalin. The Bainzites say Stalin never made a mistake. (Laughter) We say we emulate Stalin — we never made a mistake either. (Laughter)

Last year we made public and denounced a proposal made by the misleadership we had overthrown in our organization which sounds similar to the move we've now made. We're sure that the accusation will arise, "This is the way these revolutionaries rewrite history. On the one hand they say something is no good. On the other hand, as soon as the wind blows over they take it up themselves." Our move now is not at all the same as the idea proposed by this character a year and a half ago. That idea was and still is cockamamie. The basic point here is that we are not the heirs of this misleadership. We are not the heirs of any counter-revolutionary trend. Given this theme in our recent speeches that we have no veteran revolutionaries to draw on, we are our own heirs.

As it was put in something many of you read, in terms of our heritage, we are not a "please" group. (Laughter)

Going back to the joke about never making any errors, the fact that we are transforming our organizational structure is an acknowledgement of mistakes, an acknowledgement of drawbacks, an acknowledgement that problems have plagued our organization that we haven't been able to solve. We're saying, we couldn't solve these problems within this structure, it is necessary to change the structure to do so. Although it doesn't use the formal term, all of this is self-criticism. We're not saying, "Now here is a self-criticism...". It is self-criticism nonetheless. The whole attitude is self-critical. The changes mean we'll achieve a better balance — the very use of the word *better* implies it was worse before. We're getting better perspectives. We're overthrowing bad points in our organization. We're doing all this in the open with public announcements.

We can carp at others, as we did after *Alive 125*, because there are certain other groups who've never been heard to speak a self-criticism, although they state loudly that they have "true self-criticism" in their groups. So, who actually has the attitude that they never make mistakes? We don't think everything should be drawn out in public but we think it is healthy to examine errors and some amount of this analysis in public is a good thing. That's why we do that.

The changes we have made don't mean we are trashing previous history, that everything is going into the garbage can. We're not saying everything to date has been negative. The present changes are developments of our past history, an extension. Without our history, we'd have no foundation on which to build the new structure.

Because we are proud of our history, some of the decisions that have been made were hard to make. For those of us who have been involved in producing *Alive Magazine* and in building the *Alive Production Collective* for a long time, the decisions really were difficult to make. We believe that *Alive Weekly Magazine* is a good educational piece. It has a very good formula. It has attracted good attention. It has created worthwhile responses in people. It has given us new members, supporters, friends, contacts, readers. We

know that formula serves our own interests well. One of the strengths in the formula is that we produce a magazine which we ourselves like. We also know it serves other people's interests well. Other people like it.

The only reason we impose on ourselves the heartfelt sadness we have at stopping it is that we think there is something better. We're not saying this thing deserves to be cast aside. We're saying we think we can achieve more by using another formula.

We're not going to copy anybody else's formula. We don't think the other formulas for Left publications in Canada are worth copying. How's that for a sectarian comment? (*Laughter*) We think we have the best formula. In one sense that's a light-hearted comment. In another sense it's deadly earnest. Perhaps it tips off a bias to make those comments but we obviously have that bias, working as we have on producing *Alive Weekly Magazine*.

The contradiction we examined in some of the Editorials we put in print before our publishing break is the key one. It comes down to the fact that doing good educational work creates a certain potential in people. That potential doesn't just develop itself, though. It has to be consciously developed. We were putting so much time and energy into doing educational work at a definite constant high standard that we never had enough time and energy to develop that potential which we created. This is the reason that the formula of *Alive Weekly Magazine* goes by the board.

The long term planning which we spoke about at length in the January First speech is very painstaking and it leads one on a very tortuous course. The road has many twists and turns. It is painstaking and tortuous to make a long term plan. It is even more painstaking and tortuous in the implementation. This explains the necessity for those decisions that produce the sadness. Only the one half of the decisions produce the sadness, though.

In the future the eclectic mix of forms — the eclectic mix of content is long gone — that has been *Alive* will actually be separated into three "mixes". *Alive Weekly Magazine* has been three things: a political newspaper; it's a cultural publication; and, it's a theoretical journal. It has also lied about itself, saying it's a cultural journal but making forays into the study of the economic base on quite a regular basis. All this makes one big eclectic mix.

In future these various elements will be separate. There will be a political newspaper coming out. People won't be deprived of that. That political newspaper won't be a weekly. It will be produced every other week.

There will be a cultural publication. That will be *Alive*, as mentioned. One element of that is to show we are not at all ashamed of our history. It'll give us a thread to our history. It'll continue the ten year experience we have.

There will also be a study journal. We don't think of ourselves so highly as to dare to call this publication a theoretical journal. The new organization will be putting out this study journal. That journal will deal with those matters which are mainly of interest to a fairly limited circle of our supporters and others who are committed revolutionaries: polemics, expounding our line on the Canadian situation in depth, etc. This theoretical work will be getting some emphasis in the coming period of time. The study journal won't just contain that aspect to the extent that it used to appear in *Alive Weekly Magazine*. We will be paying more attention to this aspect than has been paid so far.

The new organization will continue to hold these kind of meetings. You'll all be happy to know you'll continue to be bombarded with invitations throughout the year. Other forms of meetings will be developed also. So that we can stop saying it in all these speeches we make, we want to solve the problem of only a small number of people turning out to these meetings. (*Laughter*) In order that we no longer have to make ourselves look like fools, we're going to develop forms of meetings which we think are more popular.

All in all, we think we've come up with a more balanced program. Definitely, changes and fine-tuning will still have to come.

The changes we have made are not a major change in our political line. We're still opposed to the analysis that Canada is an imperialist

power. We're still in favour of the analysis that the primary contradiction in Canada is the contradiction between U.S. imperialism and the Canadian people. We haven't developed a line against the Three Worlds Theory, of which we have been called the most active proponents in Canada. We haven't decided to trash Mao Zedong Thought, as others have decided. We haven't decided to support Mao Zedong Thought but denounce the present leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, as some have decided.

We're not making a break with our previous political line. We're not making a break with the developments we've made in theory so far. So, we'll be holding true to the politics expressed so concisely, and so hated by our critics, in the "Alive View" and the "Alive Production Collective View" which regularly appeared in *Alive Weekly Magazine*.

We are saying we're committed to building an advanced revolutionary organization in Canada. We have created an organization that we think is actually worthy of that description — we intend to build it. We are so bold as to say we intend to lead, so bold as to say we intend to organize, so bold as to say we intend to be teachers. None of this is said with arrogance. Many of the Canadian groups that call themselves vanguard organizations are quite infected with this arrogance. We'll try to steer away from it. We ask all our supporters and friends to criticize us if this arrogance begins to show itself.

We don't mean to be arrogant when we say we consider the new organization to be a definite leading element. We simply mean we think we have an organization which is better capable of listening to our supporters, to our friends and to the masses, and which is better capable of summing up what it hears and giving it back to them in concise form as a program. That's all we mean. We'll be leading in terms of Mao Zedong's axiom, "From the masses, to the masses." Nothing more than that. We won't be a "glorious vanguard" with our members answering the question, "Why should I listen to you?" with dogmatic yells of, "Because I'm from the vanguard organization, that's why!" (*Laughter*)

One thing we are doing, which we consider very important, is formalizing this organization a lot better than the *Alive Production Collective* was ever formalized. The *Alive Production Collective* never came into being with a formal beginning. It was a group which evolved as a small group of people working together. It was an organization before it was identified as being an organization and given a name.

The new organization has much more formalized structures to begin than the *Alive Production Collective* had even at its dissolution. The new organization will have formalized documents describing itself. People will be able to read and study its Constitution, its Basis of Unity, etc. People will be able to come to know what the organization is about without being members of the organization. All the formalized structures will be very good.

One of the points that curbs any arrogance which might arise amongst our members is that we know we have a long way to go. We don't think our new organizational structure means Canada becomes a land of milk and honey with us forming the government. We're not even running in the elections. (*Laughter*) Nor will we be in future.

We know we're starting with not very much of what we'll ultimately need. We're going to have to pick up a lot of what we need.

We know, too, that we've been around as an organization for eight and a half years and we have real failures to date. Serious errors have been committed by us. If these mistakes weren't made, some of the points we make in these speeches wouldn't have to be said. There would be more people at these meetings.

In earlier stages of our history, we actually had more people at meetings. We actually had more people supporting our organization in an active fashion. We had more contacts amongst the masses. We had more readers of our magazine. These things were destroyed along the way. These are all reasons why we overthrew this misleadership, because this misleadership caused much of these setbacks.

In the past year and a half we've made some gains. We've recouped some of our losses. We've regained some of our former strengths. However, as yet, we are not even back to the level we've been at previously. We intend to get back to that level. We intend to keep paying close attention to the mistakes that were made when we were at that level so that the successes aren't destroyed again. We intend to go beyond that level, too.

We know, because we have learned it by hard experience, that there is a real need for long term persistence in building an organization. We have needed long term persistence just to overcome some of our major errors. It's taken long term persistence to get to where we are and that's less than where we've been. This illustrates the need for a lot of persistence to get where we're going.

Our organization will be continuing to seek unity on all levels. We'll be seeking unity with other Left groups. We hope for more positive responses than so far. In the past year we have begun to speak openly about the fact that we have been seeking unity with other Left groups but not getting it. This has had what we consider a positive effect and what some others consider an unsettling effect: it has stirred up the hornet's nest. Many other Leftists now find it necessary to justify why they don't respond to some of the calls for joint work that we have issued. Some have never had to justify themselves before, either to the masses or to revolutionaries internationally, so they take even more umbrage to us than before. We set out to join others in the saddle but ended up as burrs under the saddle. (Laughter)

Some of the justifications for not seeking unity have been very good and intelligent, such as, "We don't respond to Alive's calls because they're a police group." (Laughter) Thank you very much. (Laughter) It's important to emphasize... that we're not a police group. (Laughter) No, seriously, it's important to emphasize that in seeking unity, we're not just waiting for some "God of Unity" to smile down on us, (Laughter) saying, "Oh now this group and this group shall be married and never shall the union be rent asunder." (Laughter) We know that Left unity takes an awful lot of work. We don't think we can just put out a call for unity and get it. Even after the call receives positive response, there is an awful lot of work to be done. We know this. It's in the spirit of willingness to do this hard work that we issue the call. We think our thrust in the future will show hard work in this direction by us. If it doesn't, people should criticize us.

There is room for self-criticism, too. Our organization used to be very dogmatic and very sectarian to other Leftists. From time to time we would mouth words in favour of unity but we never pursued it seriously. Some members of the organization definitely had a serious desire for unity all along but the organization itself, speaking through its leadership, was not very serious. We have made headway in the past year and a half. At the least we can say we have been *less* dogmatic, *less* sectarian. That may not sound like much but we think it's a good start.

There are a couple of things we should specify in terms of founding what we call an advanced revolutionary organization, what we hope will prove itself as such. Until it does prove itself to be an advanced revolutionary organization people shouldn't consider it to be such. We should answer the question: Do we consider revolution to be imminent in Canada? Is revolution just around the corner? We don't think so. We think the 1980's will be an interesting decade in many ways. We said on January First that we consider the threat of world war to be an imminent danger in this decade. Our organization would be very hard put to if it had to give people guidance on what to do in face of war. We could give general guidance, drawing in our reading from the Marxist-Leninist classics. In terms of concrete guidance for the concrete situation in Canada, we're at a disadvantage. We'll be trying to develop an advantage. In this we are running a race against time.

The 1980's as a decade are interesting to assess in the light of history. Canadian history can be seen in terms of cycles. Throughout the twentieth century the decades have approximated previous times but at a higher level. In this way history has moved

in a cylindrical fashion. Trends can be identified in terms of ten years at a time. The '20's and the '50's and the '70's have a lot in common. We think the '60's have a lot in common with what's coming in the '80's. We think the '30's have a lot in common with what's coming in the '80's.

Judging by the conditions in the world going into the decade, such as the threat of war, the severe economic crisis — worsening all the time, people who used to talk all the time about Canada being so affluent now say, "Well at least you can get by in Canada" — we think there is an upsurge coming in the 1980's.

Just as with our approach to the threat of world war, the primary issue with us vis-a-vis this upsurge is: Will we be ready? It's simple to identify objective conditions. It's simple to say, "Oh yes, this is what *will* happen and that might happen." It's simple enough that one can do it with a little self-training, anyway. What's very hard is to be ready for those objective conditions, to prepare the subjective conditions. It is hard to actually prepare an organization that can lead people to fulfil the potential for an upsurge. It is hard to lead people to deal with the probability of war.

We don't think that revolution will inevitably come in the 1980's. We do think revolution will once again, as it has previously in Canadian history, become more and more of a probability through the 1980's. The main unsettled question is the subjective factor. Will there be a vanguard to lead? We'll see.

As the probability of revolution develops, the question coming more and more to the fore is: How do we make revolution in Canada? What are the strategy and tactics of revolution? In our January First speech we said we didn't have an answer to these questions. We've racked our brains but we haven't come up with the solution in the meantime. (Laughter) The whole conundrum of how to make revolution in any country is a big problem to solve. People should look askance at anyone who says they have ready-made solutions, "Oh yes, it's very easy. No problem. Support our organization. Pay dues and thanks very much." (Laughter) This is childish, it's a little less than mature. This is not the way to solve the problems of revolution in Canada.

The necessity of building the advanced revolutionary organizations is very strong. We have to actually do something to wage revolution. The ruling class doesn't really have to do too much to make sure revolution doesn't happen. If the people don't do something to make revolution, it won't happen. The ruling class holds sway in the society, the ruling ideas are their ideas. The state machine is controlled by the ruling class. They won't fall out of control of the state. They have to be pushed out of control. Canadian capitalists like John Wood, the U.S. imperialists in Canada and all their ilk don't really have to fight and win anything. They've already won. They already control the society. All they really need is for the people to lose. If we don't win, they're okay. We can't seize our destiny by default. They can win by default.

As a beginning of winning what we have to win, we believe we have to have a unified group. We have to have an organization which represents the advanced ideas. We have to build a larger and larger group of individuals with a unified drive. We consider it our task to build the unified group on the advanced level of the movement to oppose the U.S. domination of Canada.

Our January First speech didn't detail a lot of what we'd be doing in 1980. We won't detail it now in its specifics. To protect the work, it's better if people see the details as they develop. We can outline some general tenets of our work for the next year. Then people can see whether we fulfil our plan or not.

In 1980 we want to build on the foundation created by internal struggles in our organization. We consider the changes we've made have enhanced our organization to such an extent that we can build on them by beginning to organize. We have had the responsibility to organize for quite some time. Now we will. If we organize more people we contribute to solving the problem of how to make revolution in Canada. Just to have more people knit their brows and put their heads together will solve the question of the strategy and tactics of Canadian revolution. More people will obviously bring more success in implementing the strategy and tactics in practice.

We need many, many, many more people. Even if we succeeded in uniting all the Left organizations in Canada, it would still have to be said that we needed many, many, many more people.

A real contradiction facing us comes up because we want to be very methodical about organizing. We don't expect to organize double our number the first day. We want to give people a depth in terms of revolutionary theory, to consolidate them in the specifics of our political line. However, we are in a race against time. We are starting late, much too late. We should have started organizing when we started. We didn't. So, we're starting eight and a half years late in one sense. In another sense, even that point eight and a half years ago was too late. Basically, revolution in Canada should have been organized in a big way continuing from the revolutionary trend in the 1920's and '30's. The rise of revisionism in the Communist Party of Canada should never have been successful, the liquidation of revolution should never have been allowed to take place. So, more than eight and a half years too late, we're over forty years too late.

We're getting a very late start but the race can be won even despite a late start. We intend to win it. To do so we have to be serious about what we are doing.

We have to solve the problem of how to generalize what is strong in what we've done so far to what is weak in what we've done so far. We will try to solve that problem.

What kind of organizing will we be doing? We have been organizing already to some degree. We have been trying to get things straight in our own organization. That's organizing at the advanced level. We've solved a few basic problems there. We've hammered out a political line. We've developed our structure. We've learned to do educational work. We won't be organizing at this level in that way of internal consolidation anymore.

It's easy for us to say to you who aren't in our organization, "Oh yes, we've been keeping very busy inside our organization." You can't see that. We could be lying. We're not. However, in terms of our direction for 1980, our supporters will be able to see the developments. If you can't see it, it's not happening. If you don't see it, it'll mean we're being lazy. Don't expect to see us "do it all" in 1980. Don't even expect to see us do all we've outlined in 1980. We think it's going to take years to do even the specifics of our existing long term plan. Some of it will be seen in 1980.

We have many more contacts now than we have had at any time in the most recent six years. Our goal is to move these contacts on the mass level forward. We want to do that in a big way. We hope people here tonight will help us do that.

Something we've learned during the time our organization has existed is that we don't really move people forward. People move themselves forward, in a certain sense. We don't really organize people, people organize themselves in the sense that if they don't have an interest in revolution they won't get involved in our organization.

All this doesn't mean that if you don't join our organization, you won't get out of the room tonight. *(Laughter)* However, at the next meeting... *(Laughter)* No, seriously it doesn't mean we're going to be running around like some fanatics we've run into who are extremely irritating. They approach one, clipboard and pen in hand, saying, "Comrade, if you just dictate your political biography to me, I'll give you a membership card." We don't intend to become obnoxious, we simply intend to organize. We won't be organizing people against their will but with their willing cooperation. We intend to organize more people than are in attendance here tonight. Some of what we've been saying may sound like particular overtures to particular people but it's not meant to be.

We think we've come up with a better program. We don't think we've come up with a perfect program. We think we've come up with a better framework for our practice. Again, we don't think it's a perfect framework. We think we've come up with a better organizational structure. We don't think that's perfect either. There is always room for self-criticism from us, always room for others to criticize us. There is always room for summing up, for reassessment, for re-evaluation. This has gone on to date and it will

continue to go on. It won't draw our work to a halt in future. The brakes won't be applied to one aspect of our work just because these things are going on in another aspect of our work.

We have long encouraged people to look to the touchstone of practice in assessing our work. We continue to encourage this. If we don't measure up in practice, then as far as we're concerned we don't measure up at all.

We haven't yet offered people pabulum solutions to serious political issues. We don't intend to start offering them. We aren't going to tell people, "Oh, it's very easy to swallow pabulum and politics aren't at all hard." We know it's very hard work to organize revolution. It has taken hard work to organize even the little we have organized. Persistence is definitely needed.

We know that in organizing, in daring to be teachers, organizers, leaders, we should never begin to treat progressive adults as children. We should never let the relationships we have with other people, whether they are members or non-members of our organization, degenerate into unequal relations. We mean to avoid this altogether. The organization should never become patronizing or condescending towards its supporters and its friends. We should never become obnoxious organizers.

We intend to develop our organizing work in a responsible, open fashion in terms of the people who are being organized. We are going to be organizing people conspiratorially in terms of the state machine. This is one point we find troubling in the practice of other Leftists, in that they organize openly in every sense of the word. They stop short of pasting up on public walls lists of the names of everybody in each locality. What they do, though, is paste up notices, proclaiming if you come to this place at this time you'll see everybody we're organizing. We don't intend to proceed in that manner. We do intend to organize.

As we've noted already in our January First speech and as people will have picked up, this is the theme emphasized in the responses to the slogans in our two meetings thus far in 1980. That is not to say that the theme emphasized in the responses to 1979's slogans is gone. "Unity!" is still a theme. We can't organize without the spirit of unity. We can't organize individuals without having the spirit of unity. We can't organize relations between Left groups without having the spirit of unity. Just because we're shouting slogans to which people should respond, "Organize!" doesn't mean we'll never shout slogans again which get the response, "Unity!"

It's fun to mix and match. That way people get it wrong. *(Laughter)* You come to a meeting and shout out "Organize!" and you're supposed to be shouting "Unity!" and you get all tied up in a knot. That's a good thing to keep you on your toes. *(Laughter)*

Thus, the slogans that sum up the reason we have created a new organization and have revamped our educational thrust, and that point to our direction for 1980 are:

Our anti-imperialist task!

Organize!

Our revolutionary task!

Organize!

Our central task!

Organize!

Our immediate task!

Organize!

(Applause)