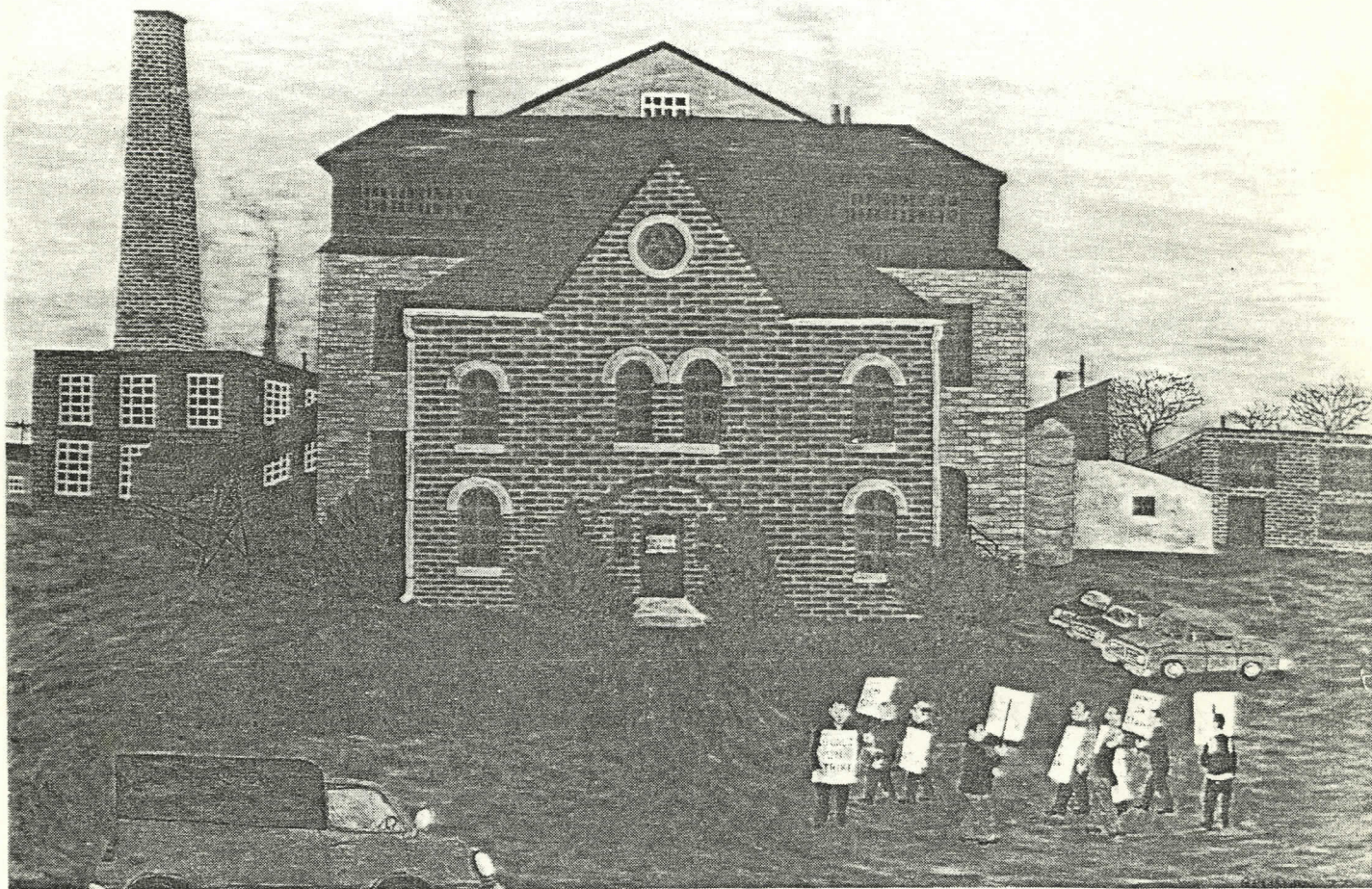


ART & LABOUR:

WORKING PARTNERS



Michael Behnan, TANNERY SERIES --THE STRIKE, 1977-78
(18"x 27"), courtesy of the artist's estate

A Report from the Labour, Arts & Media Working Group

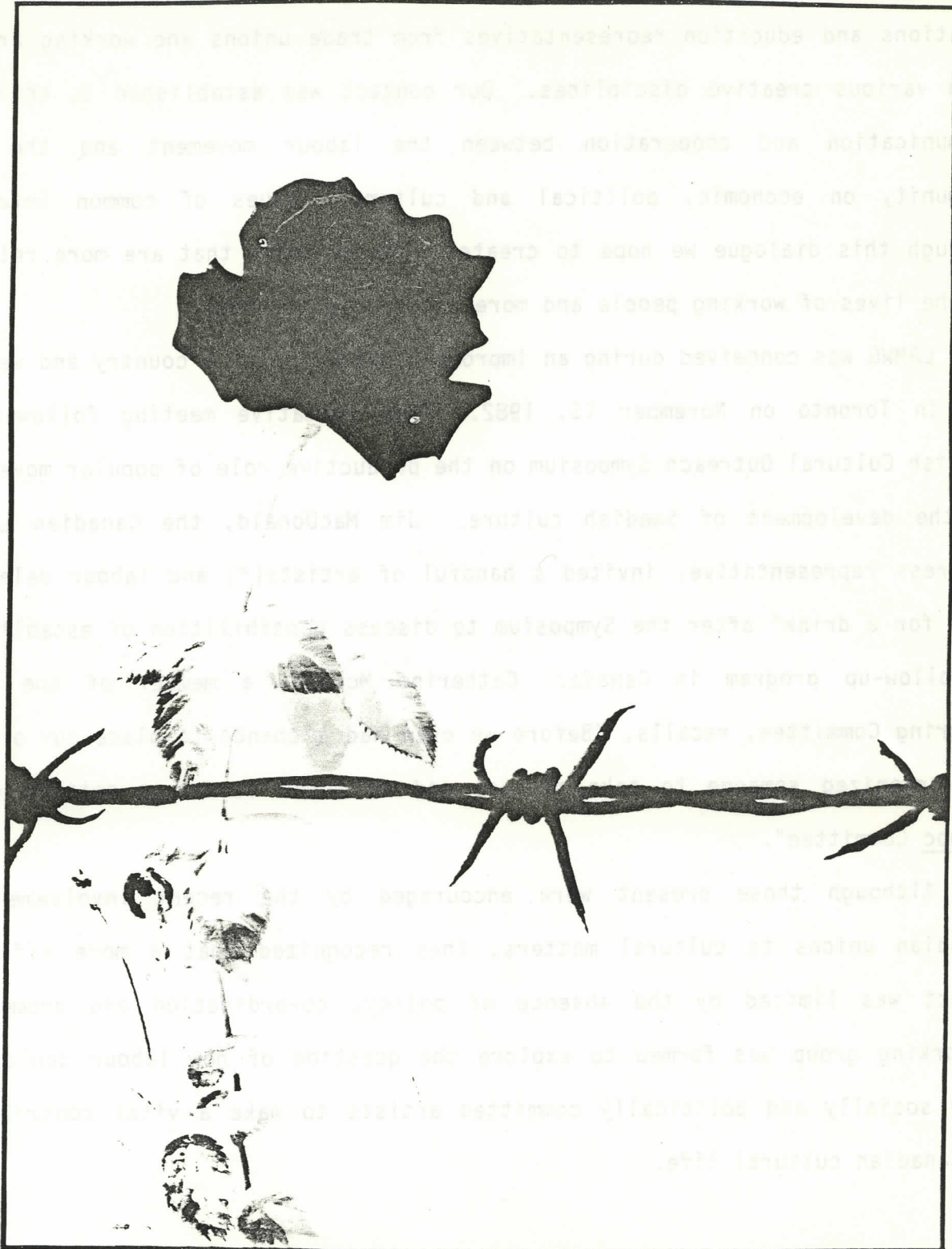
1983

Women's Labour History Project
2534 Cambridge Street
Vancouver, B.C. V5K 1L4

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INTRODUCTION



CUPE National Office, THE ROSE POSTER
 designer-Huntley Brown, July 1981

The Labour Arts and Media Working Group (LAMWG) is composed of public relations and education representatives from trade unions and working artists from various creative disciplines. Our contact was established to encourage communication and cooperation between the labour movement and the arts community on economic, political and cultural issues of common interest. Through this dialogue we hope to create cultural forms that are more relevant to the lives of working people and more accessible to them.

LAMWG was conceived during an impromptu gathering at a country and western bar in Toronto on November 15, 1982. This formative meeting followed the Swedish Cultural Outreach Symposium on the productive role of popular movements in the development of Swedish culture. Jim MacDonald, the Canadian Labour Congress representative, invited a handful of artists(*) and labour delegates "out for a drink" after the Symposium to discuss possibilities of establishing a follow-up program in Canada. Catherine McLeod, a member of the LAMWG Steering Committee, recalls, "Before we even had a chance to place our orders, Jim organized someone to take minutes and we found ourselves setting up an ad hoc Committee".

Although those present were encouraged by the recent involvement of Canadian unions in cultural matters, they recognized that a more effective impact was limited by the absence of policy, co-ordination and promotion. A working group was formed to explore the question of how labour could join with socially and politically committed artists to make a vital contribution to Canadian cultural life.

(*) Artists invited had been previously involved in creative projects for the labour movement. Among them were: Rosemary Donegan, IMAGES OF OUR LABOUR poster series with the CLC; Karl Beveridge and Carole Conde, creators of STANDING UP with the USWA and the photo monage OSHAWA, 1937 with the UAW.

II THE BASIS OF OUR ALLIANCE



Bill Featherstone, SPARWOOD
(6'x 4'), courtesy of the artist

* "I believe working, playing, laughing, crying, eating, singing, dancing, study, leisure and creative art to be not separate aspects of living for separate people, but natural manifestations of the whole act of living for everyone to engage in and enjoy."

(Arnold Wesker, Fears of Fragmentation)

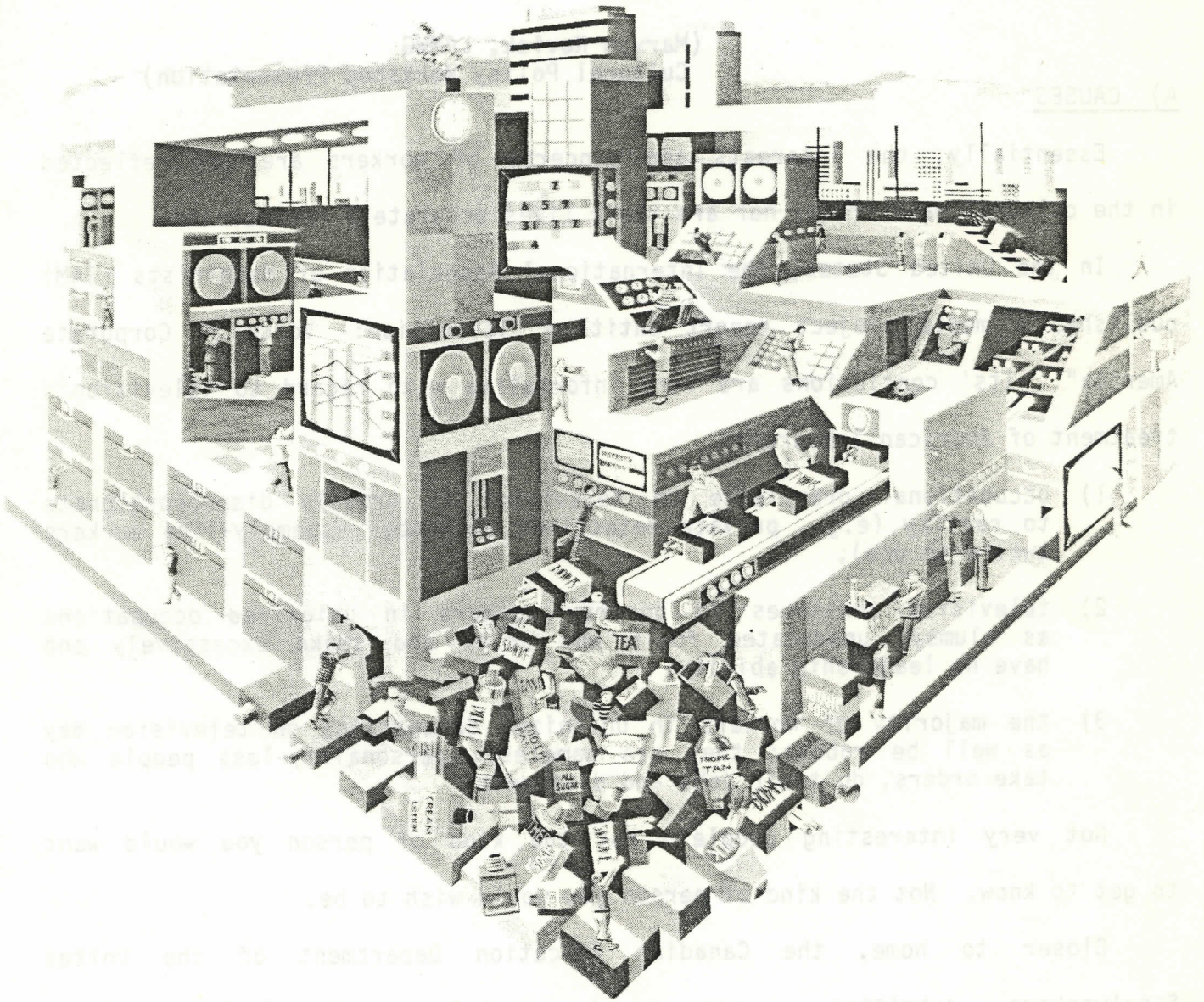
A series of regular meetings were held subsequently at the Artists Alliance Building and later at the United Steelworkers Hall. The group was expanded as the initial members did some grass roots recruiting, inviting interested friends and colleagues.

Visual artists, theatre workers, musicians, writers and film-makers whose creativity had for years been inspired by social issues, expressed the frustration of not having a consistent outlet for their work. Labour representatives spoke of the need to find new and effective means of communicating with their membership. In spite of the differences in life-style, approach and language, members of both communities recognized that the common purpose they shared was to enrich the lives of working people.

As we shared our mutual concerns and aspirations, a single factor emerged as central to our discussions: that working people - although integral to social, economic and political reality - are alienated from existing art forms; and that such alienation is detrimental not only to the workers, but also to the Arts in general.

We evolved an understanding of the social causes and repercussions of this problem, and began coming to terms with our responsibilities to find a solution.

III CULTURAL ALIENATION



Don Carr, NINE TO FIVE
(2'x 3'), courtesy of the artist

"There is a larger politics which embraces the electoral process and labour activities. It is the success of the neo-right in shaping the perceptions of working people about themselves and the unions to which they belong.

The outcome has been:

- 1) creating a sense of shame and powerlessness that working people hold of themselves and what they do, and
- 2) defining the labour movement as hostile and alien to North American life."

(Marvyn Novick, LAMWG
Cultural Policy Workshop Presentation)

A) CAUSES

Essentially, the interests and concerns of workers are not reflected in the cultural mainstream; nor are their lives accurately represented.

In the United States, the International Association of Machinists (IAM) published a media project report entitled "Television: Voice of Corporate America". Its' conclusions are very informative with regard to television's treatment of American labourers:

- 1) occupational prevalence on television is grossly disproportionate to reality (e.g., private detectives outnumber assembly-line workers twelve to one);
- 2) television continues to portray workers in unionized occupations as clumsy, uneducated fools who drink and smoke excessively and have no leadership ability;
- 3) the majority of workers in unionized occupations on television may as well be robots; they are nameless, personality-less people who take orders, do their jobs and disappear.

Not very interesting people. Not the kind of person you would want to get to know. Not the kind of person you would wish to be.

Closer to home, the Canadian Education Department of the United Steelworkers, submitted a comprehensive brief to the Applebaum-Hebert Commission stressing the need for "a significant expansion of support for community culture" as well as a more realistic portrayal of workers' lives in popular and commercial culture. The Canadian cultural establishment underscored the extent of its' concern on this issue by ignoring these recommendations in the Commissions' final report.

Further, with few exceptions, working people have no voice on the boards of directors of art-producing institutions (such as theatres and art galleries) nor within the decision-making processes of funding agencies(*). Hence, we lack a mechanism for closing this gap.

Workers, then, generally ignore cultural events simply because these problems ignore their existence.

B) The Politics of Perception

A lack of positive cultural models reinforces the separateness and implosiveness of workers. The self-image is negative. It renders us passive.

In terms of public perception of trade unions, the IAM report concluded:

- 1) unions are almost invisible on television;
- 2) television, when it does pay attention to unions, depicts them as violent, degrading and obstructive;
- 3) on the three major networks, news coverage of social issues favours corporate positions by 68%.

These findings are consistent with the bias to be found as well in all major news media, creating a less than favourable public impression of the trade unions as a relevant social force.

C) Cultural Responsibilities of the Labour Movement

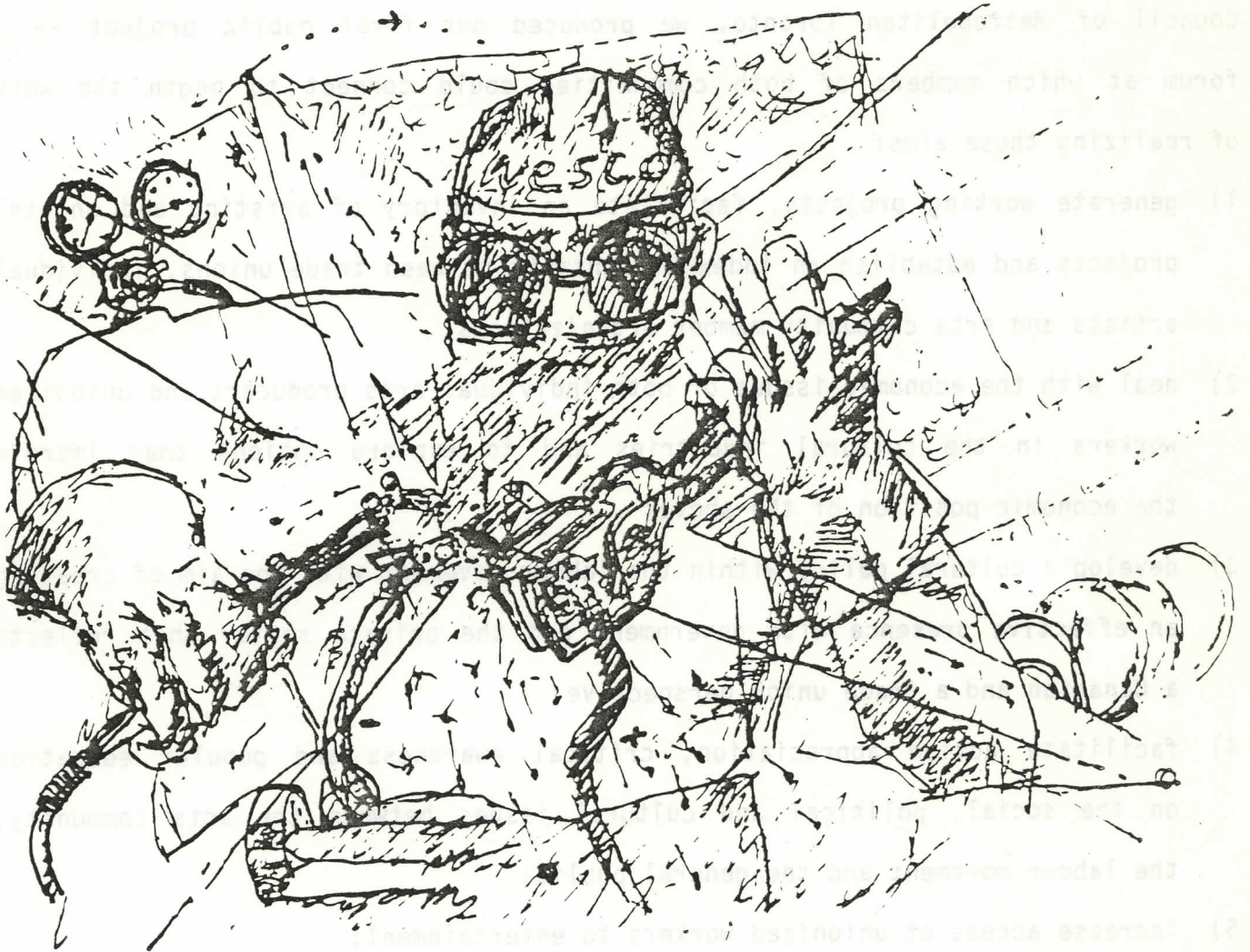
The strongest and best organized of the popular movements in Canada is the labour movement. Its traditional role as the workers' guardian in wage struggles and improvement of working conditions has expanded to embrace women's issues and occupational health and safety.

Given the present social and political climate, labour has recognized a responsibility to its membership and the community-at-large to counteract the prevailing negative perceptions of workers and their unions by providing an alternative set of images, a vision of real experiences and possibilities.

(*) Following the LAMWG forum, George Luscombe (artistic director, Toronto Workshop Productions) requested that a labour representative be appointed to the board of directors of T.W.P.

The Steelworker's brief to the Applebaum-Hebert Commission stated, "The labour movement, with all its present flaws and inadequacies, is our country's best assurance of political and economic democracy in the future. Positive development of community culture should occur together with an affirmation of the rights and the creative potential of working people. In this process...we can lay the groundwork for the more just and more exciting society that our children deserve to inherit".

IV AIMS AND OBJECTIVES



Chris Reed, THE FIRE EATER
(5'x 7'), courtesy of the artist

LAMWG became recognized as the link between two communities engaged in providing for the fulfillment of "the whole act of living".

Inevitably, we reached the point of going public -- of extending our vision to a broader cross-section of cultural workers and union representatives. With the financial assistance of the Ontario Arts Council, the Labour Education and Studies Centre of the CLC, the Toronto Board of Education and the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto, we produced our first public project -- a forum at which members of both communities could connect to begin the work of realizing these aims:

- 1) generate working projects, facilitate an inventory of existing and ongoing projects and establish an index of contacts between trade unions, individual artists and arts community member organizations;
- 2) deal with the economic issues of both individual arts producers and unionized workers in the cultural industries and to explore options that improve the economic position of the above;
- 3) develop a cultural policy within the labour movement with the aim of creating an effective presence with government and the private sector that reflects a Canadian and a trade union perspective;
- 4) facilitate active appreciation, critical awareness and popular education on the social, political and cultural issues between the arts community, the labour movement and the general public;
- 5) increase access of unionized workers to entertainment;
- 6) encourage and promote cultural work that reflects people's actual lives and daily experience.

The Forum was held on Saturday, April 30, 1983 at the Steelworker's Hall in Toronto and was attended by seventy-five people.

V THE FORUM



Frederick Taylor, TALKING UNION
(71cm x 94cm), 1950, courtesy of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

A) WORKS OF ART ON DISPLAY

On the morning of April 30, the Steelworkers Hall was transformed into an art gallery/performance space. Visual art on display included paintings, posters, drawings, photographs and puppets. There were film and slide presentations, a poetry reading and performances of original music and theatre. Several artists and organizations contributed their creativity to highlight the Forum.

Visual Art

Karl Beveridge	Ted Jackman
Don Carr	Bob Kell
Carole Conde	The Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto
Mike Constable	Daniel Manrique *
Canadian Labour Congress	Chris Reed
CUPE National Public Relations Office	Charles Stimac
Gail Geltner	Krzysztof Wodiczko
Shouster Guindon	

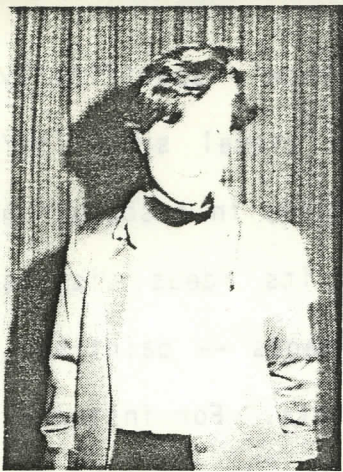
Performances and Demonstrations

Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta read selections from his poetry.
Steven Bush performed excerpts from LIFE ON THE LINE (music by Allan Booth).
Rosemary Donegan showed a labour-arts slide presentation.
Arlene Mantle sang several original songs.
Laura Sky showed a segment of her film GOOD MONDAY MORNING.

DOCUMENTATION

Documentation of the Forum, including video, slides and photos by Kim Tomczak and Christian Morrison.

*The mural, MATER-MATERIA by Daniel Manrique, was sponsored by The Group For the Defence of Civil Rights in Argentina with the financial assistance of several trade unions.



ROSEMARY DONEGAN
ART HISTORIAN & INDEPENDENT CURATOR

"I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like!"

I would like to explore behind/beneath this often quoted rhetorical statement, but I'm not interested in what people know about 'art' -- but more about what it is people 'know' about images/symbols/traditions.

Although we seldom think of visual symbols as images, civic coats of arms, the Coca Cola brand name, the dove of peace, the 'union made' label and even the silhouetted tree of the Group of Seven are visual symbols, that have a commonly acknowledged meaning.

The most recognized visual symbol of the labour movement today is the Solidarnosc logo of the Polish free trade unions. The designers were J. and K. Janiszewski, two semi-employed graphic artists who developed the logo during the August 1980 strike at the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk. We recognize and read Solidarnosc as a strong and powerful symbol; as an image, it means, Poland, trade unions, the 1980's, collective action and popular support. The logo's evocative power, its strength, is because it is rooted within a strong 'national' culture which has historically developed popular signs and symbols and an artistic climate that has a long tradition of graphic arts. Its authority is primarily derived from the immediacy and strength of the Polish trade union movement's power within Poland. *

In Canada, we do not have the same kind of self-recognition of trade unions and working class movements with symbolic images. Canadians, as a composite nation, have a weak tradition of visual symbols, we do not have a well-developed common visual language. However, we do have a history and a contemporary practise

I am interested in exploring what people do already 'know', specifically in popular movements, such as trade unions, about our own visual symbolism/images/pictures. All of the images presented here, were produced in association or in sympathy with the trade union movement, reflecting its ideas, issues and analysis. Let's examine how specific kinds of visual images -- paintings, photographs, posters -- have meanings and common reference points. For instance:

- the language: how is the idea/message communicated? (through type, through pictures, outside references)
- authority: how do the images command attention/interest/respect?
- conventions: what are the elements (line, colour, space, style) used to convey/represent? (messages/ideas/emotions)
- intent: what are the differences between propaganda/advertising/advocacy; public relations/corporate image; education/information; agit-prop/intervention?
- new conventions: how are new symbols elaborated and given meaning?

I think that examining the images at a level beyond the particular issues or campaigns involved will enable us to define and clarify what we already 'know' about these images. I would like to address the recent interest in, and attempts at broadening the imagery and symbolism of the trade union movement, beyond the rhetoric of the clenched fist and dogmatic image ideas, as well as the emerging tendency towards vague generic images that have no specific meaning or authority within the labour movement.

It is my hope that developing an understanding of what we already 'know' -- but for which the trade union movement does not at present have a working language -- will allow us to address and open up new questions. For it is within the layering and inter-relationships of our own historical traditions, the present artistic practise and the actual experience and strength of popular movements that new images that have meaning, vitality and commitment will be produced.

* Lawrence Weschler, "SOLIDARNOSC", Art Forum, February, 1982.

A. SOLIDARNOŚĆ

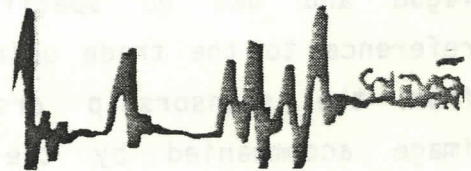
J. and K. Janiszewski, 1980, official logo Solidarity trade union, Poland. - the style of the script (as opposed to a set type face) gives the single word an emotional intensity - a sense of urgency - it is demanding, aggressive, strong.

- this is further elaborated by the specific addition of the Polish flag as an asterisk above the N, an explicit nationalist reference.

B. SOLIDARNOŚĆ GRAPH

Artist unknown, c. 1980

- the jagged vertical graph line (which looks like a seismograph reading or an electrocardiogram) is cross-referenced to the numbers 44, 56, 68, 70, 76 and 80 - each number representing the date of Polish revolts - the culmination of the graph under the 80 with the Solidarność logo refers to its continuity with previous struggles.

C. LONGSHOREMEN

Miller Brittain, 1940 (National Gallery of Canada)

- Brittain lived in Saint John, N.B. (he appears to have been inspired by the ideas of the Oxford Group), throughout the 1930's he painted the local people, everything from rummage sales to the causes of tuberculosis in modern society. - the painting captures our attention and interest by the use of a tightly cropped scene with five boldly painted men who communicate by gestures and glances. Although the picture is very suggestive, the meaning is unclear and somewhat ambiguous.



- Even though this is one of the most important images of working people to come of the 1980's, most trade unionists do not like it. They feel it portrays a negative image and find the conspiratorial inference upsetting.

D. **RACISM HURTS EVERYONE**

Ontario Federation of Labour campaign (conceived by Catherine MacLeod, produced by Jerry Ciccoritti, co-ordinated by Allan Pryde)

- a television, poster and leaflet campaign, drawing on the imagery of punk rock (and a host of movies from West Side Story to Hillstreet Blues), it was aimed at a mass television audience specifically attempting to appeal to a youth audience.

- Although the actual slogan is rather vague and has no specific connection or reference to the trade union movement (apart from the sponsorship credit) the strong image accompanied by the rock music was unusual within the television format of public service ads and it was considered a success by the OFL and the federal government (who paid for some air time after its initial release).

E. **STANDING UP**

Karl Beveridge and Carol Conde, 1982.

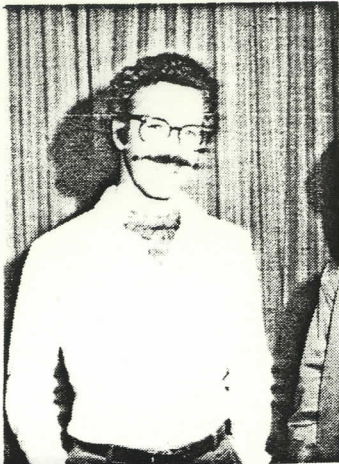
- a photographic re-enactment of a strike for a first contract at a small branch plant manufacturing company. The main figure, a woman, is depicted in the semi-privacy of the factory washroom, reading a trade union newspaper while the background is a composite of old snapshots, referring to family and friends.



- Although there is no specific message within any one of the images - the story line (narrative) is explicit in the series of images, which also includes numerous internal cross references.

- The formal technique of photo montage is able to depict within one image, the immediate present, recent events and past history, which allows for a layering of facts and ideas. The image demands our attention, exactly because it is unclear what the relationship is between the glossy foreground image to the familiar and heroic images in the black and white photos.





D'ARCY MARTIN
CANADIAN EDUCATIONAL DIRECTOR
UNITED STEELWORKERS OF AMERICA

"I thought it would be helpful today to give some perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of the labour movement as a place for doing cultural work. Those of us who work in it and love what we do and perhaps don't share often enough or clearly enough our sense of the value and dignity of the labour movement. People have expectations of unions as leading a working class movement. Now there's a kernel of truth in this, but only a kernel. To develop that kernel, we have to understand some other facts that are operating. So it might be valuable to lay out a few straightforward adjectives to describe the trade union structure.

The first one would be "weak". We now have 38-40% of working people organized into unions. If you look at the private sector, we're around 25%, which is terrible. We don't have a structure that is sufficiently strong enough in the cultural sphere to be able to say "This needs doing, so we'll do it". And if you remember that, you'll understand why when you approach us, we're so defensive - because we're over-committed.

Second point is: Unions are "collective". Many people in the arts are deeply involved with fostering individual expression. We are accustomed to the discipline of a collective movement. There are times when these two stances can clash. We will have to work through a lot together to realize that both perspectives are legitimate reflections of different historical experiences.

"Institutionalized" - got to throw that one in. We don't have a mass organized movement. We're divided, regionally disconnected and have jurisdictional battles going on. Consequently, there is an edginess with regard to artists who might be working with other institutions in the labour movement with whom this week we might be having a fight.

We are also "internally politicized". There is a complex of personal rivalries and conflicting ideological differences based on the type of workers represented. So, if artists go in through one channel, there are natural oppositions they will encounter through another channel.

All of these things, being weak, institutionalized, etc., are worth getting around because my last point is that the labour movement is incredibly exciting. Unions are the strongest continuing structure working people have got. And the most democratic. That's what keeps us going and what hooks creative artists into getting involved with us.

Unions are on the ropes right now in this country. We are making attempts to gather some resonance for the symbols working people now need. We need allies badly.

The door is open, but there's lots of stuff to trip over on the way through."



LAURA SKY
FILM DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

What I'd like to talk about today is the traditional role of the artist and the transition from that role to that of an artist vitally involved in the movement for political - and cultural - change. It is a process of challenge, contradiction, and at times, conflict.

The traditional documentary film springs both from journalism and aesthetic realities. It is my feeling that the traditional role of the artist and of the journalist is one that contradicts the progressive process of documenting life as it really exists for most of the people who live in this country.

Let me tell you briefly about a personal experience that I found both devastating and also very illuminating. I was fortunate enough to travel in Italy and France last summer. Like many tourists, I went from church to church, from gallery to museum. The larger the institution, the more mighty the work of sculpture or painting, the more oppressive I found the experience. Finally, I found myself angry. The images were those of the forces of power, the wealthy, the elite, officers of church and state. Icons surrounded by the symbols of powerful alliances between church and state - a thousand years of power. There were so very few ordinary, real people in these paintings. There were some faceless peasants, small, tiny and insignificant.

As in the case very often today, images of ordinary everyday life were invisible. Peasants were anonymous - as are workers in most cultural forms today.

I asked myself, what role does the traditional artist play in collaborating with the process of making the lives of ordinary, everyday people invisible?

In our lives as artists, as creative people, we are encouraged by a reward system - the implicit and explicit rewards offered to us that serve, in reality, to separate us from working people who face the struggles of everyday life. We receive status, respect, and a specific veneration awarded to artists in our society. These rewards, are not, of course, matched by economic support. The rewards, and our need to internalize these rewards - support that separation between even progressive artists and working people. This is often reflected in the art of these artists - as they too often show us the romanticized workers, or on the other end, the faceless masses. Rarely does the artist confront and portray - on an equal level, the working person that she/he is painting. As a result, rarely does the artist afford the audience the opportunity to face, in an equal manner, the person(s) portrayed in that painting.

As progressive artists - as militants - many of us face a very visceral conflict. Often, because of the economic insecurity we face, we are tempted to compensate by 'buying' the position that being artists affords us - the egotism of it - the specialness of it. It's a part of ourselves that we don't like to admit. The other part of us wants terribly to achieve a connectedness - an effectiveness with the forces of change in our country. We want to be able to contribute to the winning of a better life - for artists and workers alike. We understand clearly the necessity and the immense satisfaction that are inherent in developing a connectedness with all people who are fighting these fights.

This relation is often difficult to achieve - it's a complex process - because we must be prepared to relinquish that separateness - the separateness that says artists are 'better' than workers.

In fact, we must evaluate our lives in such a way that reveals to us, and to the working people with whom we are allied, what the points of connectedness really are. Like most workers in this country, we face enormous debilitating economic insecurity. In fact, we as artists, have none of the benefits that our brothers and sisters in the union movement have fought for and won.

In my work, I have found almost all workers I have met, share a crushing, demanding need - the need to be productive - a need that we too share. How many of us know this terrible reality? We have a vision - a concept that could allow us to produce something wonderful and valuable. We want more than anything in the world to be able to produce. One of the most agonizing processes in our world is the inability to produce - the economic forces make it almost impossible for us. Like all working people, working artists often face the horror of being cut off from the satisfaction of being productive and valuable in this society.

Some of us have tried to build alliances with working people through their unions. We began work with the labour movement because we felt that this relationship would give workers access to the work of artists, so that our work could be integrated into political and educational mobilization. It is difficult for artists and institutions to relate without conflict and contradictions. In order to make that relationship effective, we have forged alliances with progressive people within the unions. Together, we try to challenge the prejudice that alienate workers and artists from each other, so that we may work together effectively in the building of a popular movement for change in Canada.

As a documentarian and an artist, I see our function as that of documenting the realities of working people in such a way as to contribute to the sharing of analysis and approaches for change. Ultimately, I believe that our alliance and our attachment has to be the way that workers see their own lives, rather than to the way we see and interpret their lives for them. We must listen

carefully and watch with honour - we must see ourselves with a common purpose, in practical and political ways. Accordingly, our first obligation is to be constantly questioning ourselves on the accuracy of our perceptions of their reality.

I would encourage you to remember the humour and the fantasy, too. It is humour and a shared wish for a better world that connects us with each other. What we're trying to do is find our collective imagination and to find our collective vision and to realize real dreams together.



MARC BELANGER
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT
CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

"When I was asked to come here, I said to myself that I had nothing to say to people like you, whom I hold in awe, who orient themselves to beauty and quality. So I decided that what I would do is not talk about you, but talk about me which is much easier for me.

What I do for a living is mainly tied to collective bargaining. I do pre-strike and strike publicity. We use art to make points, point out things as quickly as we can, given the resources that we have, given the time that we have. That takes us out of a number of art fields: art as an imitation of nature, art as an expression of the artist's soul, art as self-containing, self-justifying. It takes us into the realm of pragmatic art. Pragmatic art that says there is the more perfect reality, that says we can teach. That's where I come in.

We use different media to do that. We use television; we do radio commercials. We use especially the graphic arts. That's the PR people of the labour movement. That's where we come from. We come out of a journalistic background. I can more easily convince people to do a magazine or a newspaper or a leaflet or something of paper than I can, unfortunately, something as powerful as a film or a slide show because that's where the budget pathways are.

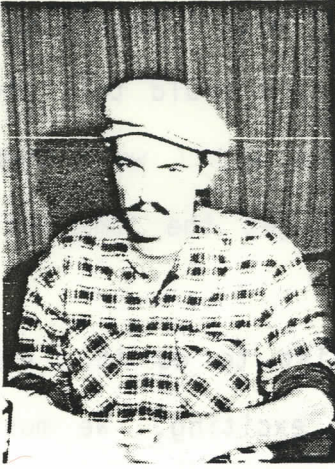
It also involves the distribution channels. We generally use agencies to produce our material, rather than individual artists. Why? Because we don't want to browbeat anybody else.

Last week I was in Portage La Prairie for a strike. I didn't know about it until the day before I had to fly there - 13,000 people. I could tell the agency I want leaflets, buttons, stickers, radio commercials and I want them by the beginning of next week. How else are we going to get the immediate production and distribution we need almost overnight?

I'd like to get a socially committed independent artist to do it. And I hope we can find a way to make that possible. That is exciting. We must build that together.

I can't start anywhere else but do say that I need an entry point to your discussions. I am a stranger in your house with big feet.

There will be, in our discussions, many sour notes. I'll give you five sour notes, you give me five and at the end, hopefully we become better friends."



STEVEN BUSH
PLAYWRIGHT/DIRECTOR/ACTOR

"I am here representing Mixed Company: theatre artists for social responsibility. We are dedicated to popular theatre; to seek and affect the audience to work for positive social change. We are dedicated to formal innovation - the exploration of new forms. Why? To expand the possibilities of the artist in the work; to expand the possibilities of the audience in the world.

Mixed Company is a member of the Labour, Arts and Media Working Group because we believe that artists and labour can form a powerful alliance to achieve our mutual goals. As well as the economic/structural changes for which we are working, artists and unionists can be a productive educational combination. The effect can be to raise consciousness throughout society - about the problems we all face and the solutions we have to offer.

Mixed Company's first project is a show called **LIFE ON THE LINE**. Audience focus is on workers. We are committed to accessibility in subject matter, form and price. The show doesn't follow a story line in the usual sense; we have a series of moments touching the experience of working people and the unemployed.

If I get this job
I hope I get this job
It'll be an improvement if I get this job
I'll be in a better position if I get this job
Yeah
If I get this job, I won't have to worry for awhile
I can buy some things
I can get out of town now and then
I can eat as much as I want to
If I get this job
Yeah

If I get this job
I can actually consider becoming a father
If I get this job
I won't have to be here
If I get this job
I'll have a job
I'll have a future
I'll have a present
If I get this job
I hope I get this job

Another moment is about stress in the workplace and how it affects everything else:

I came home from work
I barked at the wife
The wife hit the kid
The kid hit the dog
The dog barked at me
....gotta get rid of that dog!

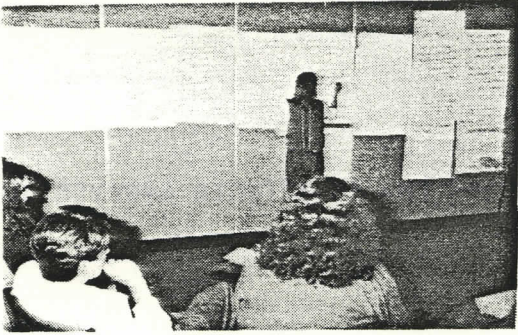
We've tried to build connections outside the theatre system as we know it. We've tried to connect with unions, with community centres and various political groups. We want to take this show to people who don't usually go to theatres. We want to start liberating artists from the urban small-audience ghetto that is the condition of most theatres today.

We are particularly concerned here with the labour movement. Artists and labour have to stop intimidating one another. We've got to get over that fear to deal as directly and honestly as we can with each other. As an artist whose creative energies are dedicated to working people, I confess to the labour delegates here, that I share your vision and I need your help.

There has been a lot of talk today about the need for images to help create the world we want to see. I compiled a list of political artists for LAMWG. The list contains names from several creative media. Many images already exist, and the artists I've named - and others, I'm sure, are available and willing to produce more such images. Let's get together and start doing the work."

MUTUAL AWARENESS

(How is Cultural Awareness Developed In The Labour Movement And Labour Awareness Developed in the Arts Community?)



The participants were asked to give examples from their own experience of art which reflected workers' reality in a powerful, mobilizing way. We then analyzed the elements of these examples to discover what makes a work of art effective. Examples were given from almost every medium: visual arts, theatre, literature and film. Of the elements particular to each example, a few began to emerge as the most consistent and influential:



- Heroism
- Sense of Reality (a direct relationship to life)
- Historical Perspective and Information
- Inspiration (the summoning of the best from people)
- Fulfillment (a sense of freedom in the act of creation itself)
- Understanding (solidarity created by collective effort)

Next, we looked at the negative side of the situation, asking what hinders art from reflecting workers' reality. The most direct approach was to examine the blocks which exist between Artists and Labour.

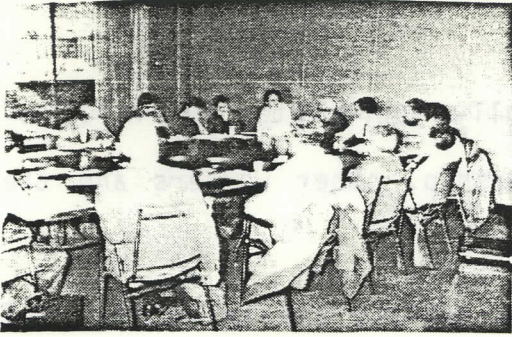
1) Separateness: we speak different languages and there is not yet a place for us to meet and discover common ground.

2) Style: the freedom and individuality of the artist vs the collectivism of Labour.

- 3) Mistrust: most commercial culture is anti-worker which breeds a mistrust for all culture, including progressive art.
- 4) Lack of Recognition: Labour does not yet fully appreciate the value of Art as a medium of communication to its membership, other workers and the uncommitted.
- 5) Snobbishness: workers find it hard to talk to artists and be critical of Art without being made to feel dumb.
Labour does not see the artist as being a true "worker".

The development of mutual awareness should be initiated by looking at these barriers and exploring; however, we offer these guidelines.

- 1) We must communicate more directly, more often, to begin building trust on both sides.
- 2) We must encourage workers to create art themselves.
- 3) Artists must listen more carefully to the concerns of working people and to the reality of their lives.
- 4) We must be honest on both sides about our weaknesses as well as our strength.



There was a general agreement on the need to build a stronger link between progressive artists and organized labour as a means of giving voice to the concerns and struggles of working people. Although the workshop did not suggest the undertaking of any specific projects, we endorsed the formation of a special sub-committee to outline project proposals.

The fundamental problem of cultural alienation and accessibility received considerable attention. It was universally accepted that workers are artistically dis-enfranchized. We concluded that labour must react with sponsorship of creative programs within the union structure itself as well as to seek representation within the existing arts network.

Recommendations:

- 1) that LAMWG make submissions to all future arts and cultural public commissions and enquiries
- 2) that labour, through LAMWG, seek representation on boards of directors of art institutions and funding agencies
- 3) that a directory of artists be produced for the use of trade unions
- 4) that labour seek joint-funding projects with the public funding agencies

- 5) that we link cultural work with union educational projects
- 6) that we investigate organizing an Artists Union.



The movement has clearly understood the importance of creating cultural forms of expression and creating people's organizations to its own political interests." (Murray Kovic)

Working people (e.g. the non-union, non-lawyer, non-officer, non-managerial) have been left with a negative self-image and a sense of powerlessness as a result of the way they are portrayed in the popular press. Art, it was argued, is a powerful tool that can bring people together to define common goals, to stimulate a shared confidence to assess and resist.

Labour is the strongest existing mechanism through which artists can work to create positive cultural images for working people. Given the structure of organizational labour, it should embrace a tested political strategy in order to provide a genuine alternative to all levels of the movement.

What are the elements of a cultural policy for labour? The purpose of a cultural policy for labour should be to give workers a positive sense of themselves. A worker is a good, good thing to be." (Michael Lyons)



Discussions of Cultural Policy were focussed around several questions posed by workshop chairman Michael Lyons.

Do we need a Cultural Policy for the Labour Movement?

"The neo-right has clearly understood the importance of capturing cultural forms of expression and shaping peoples' perceptions to its own political interests"
(Marvyn Novick)



Working people (e.g. the non-doctors, non-lawyers, non-oil baron, non-managerial types) are left with a negative self image and a sense of powerlessness as a result of how they are portrayed in the popular media. Art, it was agreed, is a powerful tool that can bring people together to achieve common goals. It stimulates a personal response to issues and values.

Labour is the strongest existing mechanism through which artists can work to create positive cultural images for working people. Given the structure of organized labour, it should embrace a stated policy on the arts in order to provide a mandate of action to all levels of the movement.

What are the Elements of a Cultural Policy?

"The purpose of a cultural policy for labour should be to give workers a positive sense of themselves. A worker is a good, proud thing to be."

(Michael Lyons)

A policy should include a set of principles, a set of priorities and an identification of concrete projects. It should recognize the necessity to stimulate creative activities within the membership itself as well as to initiate projects for the community-at-large using the skills of cultural workers outside the movement.

How Can a Policy be Achieved?

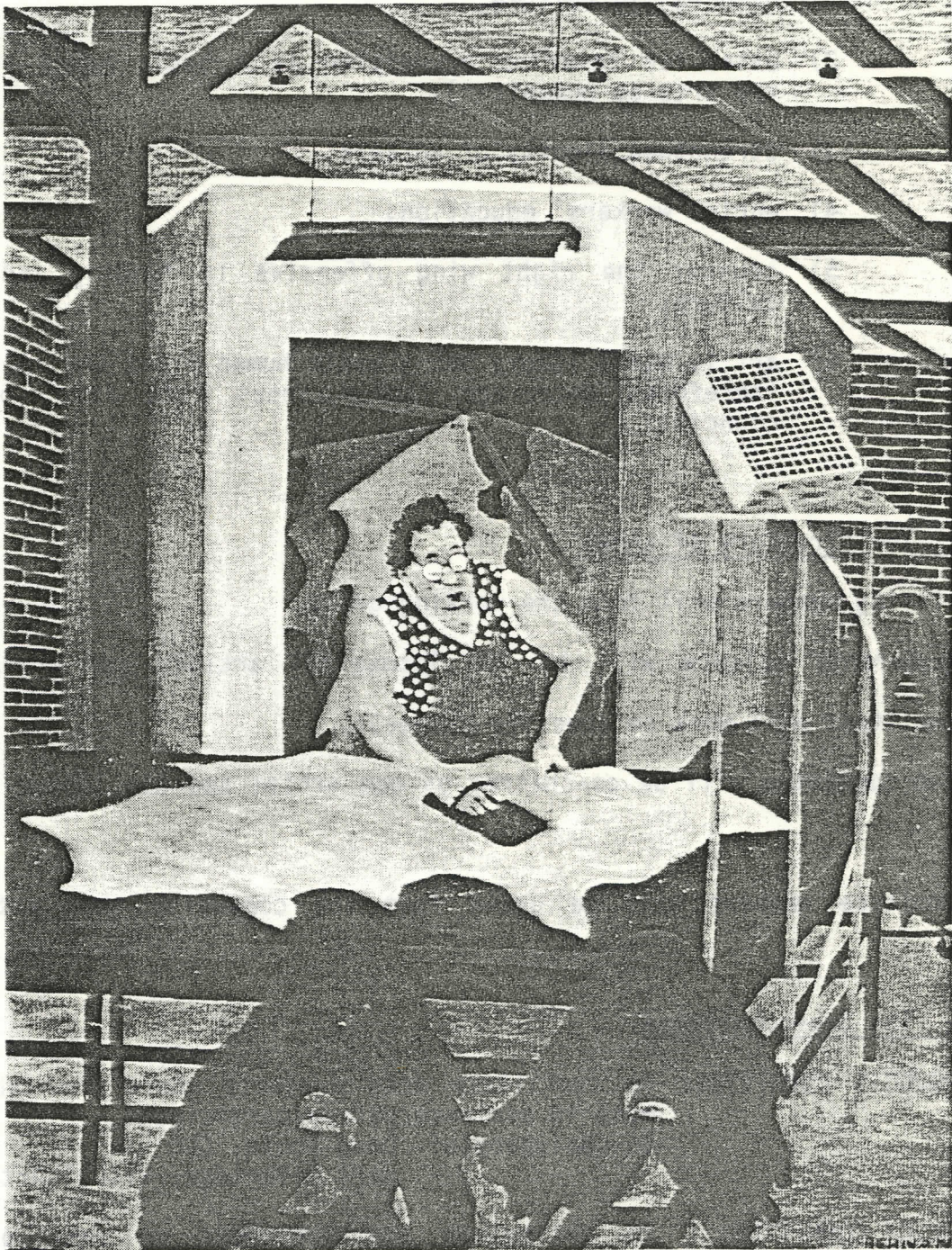
"We should enshrine creative expression as a basic human right and we should provide everything necessary to exercise that right".
(Steven Bush)

Accepting the adoption of an arts policy in the near future, we must look at practical means of moving it into life. This question produced the concrete recommendations of the workshop.

Recommendations

1. that the CLC, OFL and LCMT give high priority to initiating a number of labour-arts events in the current year
2. that the LAMWG steering committee draft a policy statement which, upon adoption, should be viewed as a mandate for all levels of the labour movement
3. that such a policy include provisions for:
 - a) use of union facilities and revenues for creative activities of union members
 - b) use of same as a base for relevant "outside" creative activities
 - c) use of same for continued display of creations (i.e., as a labour art gallery, performance space or museum)
 - d) commissioning of cultural workers outside the union structure to teach creative workshops, produce relevant projects, etc
 - e) organization of events such as craft fairs, art exhibits, recitals, performances, etc., for public display of members' creations
 - f) exploration of establishing a secure economic base for alternative/ labour-related artists.

VI WORKING ON



Michael Behnan, TANNERY SERIES --SWABBING (24"x 19"), courtesy of the artist's estate

Attendance at the Forum was very encouraging to the working group. The quality of the contributions made by the participants presented us with a broad scope of recommendations. We distilled six "working ideas" from the guidelines which emerged from the workshops:

- 1) democratize culture;
- 2) establish creative expression as a basic human right (i.e. the arts as humanizer);
- 3) strengthen dignity of workers;
- 4) enrich workers' education;
- 5) counter the right wing offensive in funding and producing culture;
- 6) art is not a luxury but a basic human right and is political; therefore, encourage labour input into Arts' boards and councils.

APPENDIX A: The Structure of LAMWG

The existing members will form the working group.

The membership balance will be 50% labour/50% artists and organizations.

Sub-committees will work on specific projects.

Each sub-committee will be co-chaired by one artist and one labour representative.

Sub-committee members will be drawn from the community that attended the Forum.

APPENDIX B: The Sub-committees

- 1) **PROJECTS COMMITTEE:** to facilitate arts projects where the labour movement is audience/patron/participant.
Co-chairpeople: Doug Tobin, CLC
Karl Beveridge, Visual Artist
- 2) **POLICY COMMITTEE:** to articulate and implement an arts policy for the labour movement in dialogue with unions in the arts as a basis for labour representation in arts decision making & government policy.
Co-chairpeople: Jane Craig, ACTRA
Richard McKenna, Director/Writer

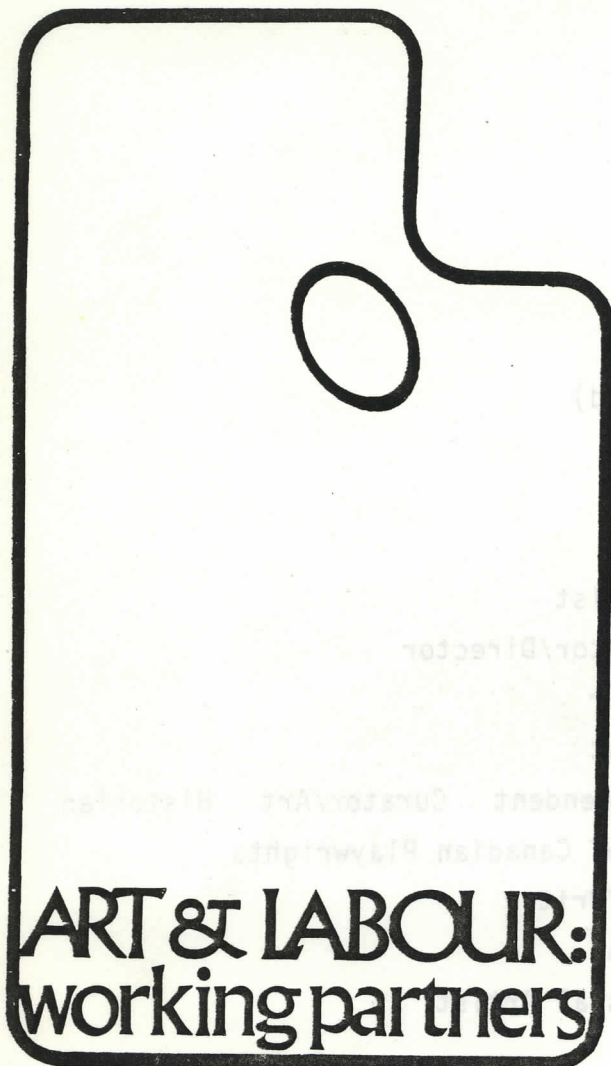
3) INCOME COMMITTEE: to support efforts to improve the income and working conditions of artists in Canada.

Co-chairpeople: Lynn Kelly, CAMERA
Carole Conde, Visual Artist

APPENDIX C: Members of the Working Group

Labour Representatives: Shelly Acheson, .OFL
Guy Adam, CLC
Marc Belanger, CUPE
Jane Craig, ACTRA
Lynn Kelly, CAMERA
Michael Lyons, LCMT
Jim MacDonald, CLC (Retired)
D'Arcy Martin, USWA
Doug Tobin, CLC

Artist Representatives: Karl Beveridge, Visual Artist
Steven Bush, Playwright/Actor/Director
Tish Carnat, Theatre Worker
Carole Conde, Visual Artist
Rosemary Donegan, Independent Curator/Art Historian
Catherine MacLeod, Guild of Canadian Playwrights
Richard McKenna, Director/Writer
Simon Malbogat, CAEA/ACTRA
Kim Tomczak, Video and Visual Artist



ART & LABOUR:
working partners

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Rasmery Bonegar, Independent Curator/Art Historian
Catherine Macleod, Guild of Canadian Playwrights
Richard McKenna, Director
Simon Malpas, CAEA/ACTRA
Kim Tomczak, Video and Visual