

Alternative publication planned for spring

by Sara Gordon

A new leftist newspaper is struggling to begin publication this spring, despite financial hurdles and the past failure of numerous other alternate newspapers in the Atlantic region.

The newspaper, **New Maritimes**, is "an independent paper designed to serve the entire Maritime region, which presently has no left-oriented journal in operation," says Scott Milsom, a Dalhousie University technician and one of the paper's three founding editors. The other editors are Lorraine Begley of Prince Edward Island and Gary Burrill of Wellington, N.S.

New Maritimes' organizers are currently working to raise \$57 thousand by December to cover the deficit expected to be incurred in its first three years of operation. Begley, Burrill and Milsom see this as the best way to avoid what they call the "slow-death-by-debt-and-attribution" from which alternate papers suffer.

Ironically enough their fund-raising methods are similar to those of corporations owned by

stockholders, although deep ideological differences exist. For \$50 any interested person can buy membership on the New Maritimes Editorial Council and have a say in the paper's editorial direction, policy and finances. By selling council memberships instead of shares, **New Maritimes** avoids high set-up costs.

In order to raise the \$57 thousand necessary for twice monthly publication, Begley, Burrill and Milsom must sell 1,140 memberships, but by early September they were still \$40 thousand short of their objective. "Ambitious, yes; impossible, no" they say of their venture, citing the summer postal strike as a major factor in the current shortfall. They are now selling subscriptions: \$20 contributing, \$11 regular and \$9 for pensioners and unemployed. Initial circulation will be 1,000 with a goal of 7,500 in the first three years to reach a break-even point.

Milsom says the paper is aimed at injustice in the way power is structured in the Maritimes. An advance issue, published last April, included articles on the shutdown

of a wall board plant in New Brunswick that cost 65 jobs, a march on legislature by P.E.I. fishing people, a report on opposition to the Klu Klux Klan in Halifax, and the Digby bus drivers' strike. It contained no advertising, although Milsom believes 20 to 30 percent of the paper's future income will be from ads.

The present editors are not professional journalists, but they will hire an editor/writer in each Maritime province. Begley is an historian, Burrill is a former organizer with the Coalition for Full Employment, and Milsom is former editor of the Coalition's newspaper. He also ran unsuccessfully for the Communist Party of Canada in Halifax in the 1979 federal election, although he resigned from the party last March. "**New Maritimes** is not affiliated with any political party," he and the other editors agree with that statement.

Attempts at establishing an alternate press in the Maritimes years and covered the previously untouched news areas such as slum housing and consumer rights as well as local politics, but many



more folded after several issues, have met with uniform failure in the past decade. A few papers such as Halifax's **The 4th Estate** and **The Plain Dealer** from Fredericton managed to survive several

victims of a slow drift to the political right and centre by the general public and, perhaps more critically, killed by the reluctance of rich corporations to advertise in newspapers that sometimes attacked them openly.

New alternate newspapers also frequently find it difficult to compete with the well-established, predictable community news papers throughout the Maritime region -- the very newspapers many readers deplore. The established papers are largely owned by a handful of powerful publishers, including the Irving and Dennis families, the Thompson chain, and Nova Scotian industrialist R.B. Cameron, and critics contend that the political slant of newspapers are established by their rich owners.

er, filler

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We could have political space fillers, student space fillers, or just those simple, straight forward down to earth space fillers that you've already come to know and love: The ones that just sit on your page and fill space. You'll get lots of those.

I'll be getting plenty of ideas for space fillers in the weeks to come. I'm a space filler myself. I've built a career out of doing absolutely nothing but fill space. This includes the seven years I was a senior civil servant, and my term in the legislature.

So tune into my column every week. You may as well, I'm going to write them anyway.

Professor Asquith Hauser
B.A. (Oxford) M.A. (Edinburgh)
Ph.D (Vienna) Doctor of Applied
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Editors Note: Professor Hauser is Druid-in-Residence at Dalhousie.

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