

**ALWAYS SHORT ON CASH?
NO NEED!
WITH A PART-TIME BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN**



Let's Free Enterprise.

**CALL ME AT
861-1319**

**ASK FOR:
MRS. LYNN JUDD
A LITTLE MOONLIGHT CAN PUT A LOT OF SUNSHINE IN YOUR LIFE**

Letters

continued from page 5
ing Canadian workers. (See George Melnyk, "Showing their hands", *Books In Canada*, October, 1976.)

Melnyk draws our attention to two recently published books, and attempts in his article to review and compare them. The first book, *Working In Canada*, (ed. Walter Johnson, Black Rose Books) is a collection of interviews and articles drawn from the mouths of workers themselves, mostly in the greater Montreal area. The second is entitled, *Essays In Canadian Working Class History*, (eds. Gregory S. Kealey and Peter Warran, McClelland & Stewart), and comprises eight interpretative essays which deal roughly with the period 1850 to 1925.

The problem is, the Melnyk review, so-called, never really gets off the ground since he becomes much more pre-occupied with patterning a total condemnation of the latter book and in conjunction with this, damning the pursuits of Canadian working-class historians in general. To this, Mr. Lotz claps his hands in glee and adds several disjointed notions of his own, with the consequence that we are offered very little constructive critical appraisal of either book and are left wondering exactly what this tempest is which these two gentlemen

leave spewed upon our page. My purpose here is not to review the two books in question, but rather to comment upon the mis-understanding and confusion which emerges from both Mister Melnyk and Lotz's arguments.

Melnyk begins his article by stating, "It is difficult to imagine two more radically different books on the topic of working people in this country than these two." This statement contains perhaps more truth than he may have intended. The books in question are so utterly different in focus and attention as almost to defy comparison. The Johnson book is a contemporary study of the conditions and attitudes of workers in the modern industrial work place—conducted largely by means of interviews. The other, by Kealey/Warran et al, represents a collection of essays on various themes of 19th and early 20th Century working-class history. It attempts to paint a larger picture of how the working-class emerged in Canada and the quite incredible complexities which are intrinsic to it. Melnyk and Lotz rightly assert that since the Johnson book is drawn directly from the workers and portrays a sensitive, first-hand account, it is to be regarded as an important addition to our understanding of the current plight of Canadian workers. On the other hand, however, the Kealey/Warran book, however, represents the work of "ultra-junior academics" who are primarily interested not in vague notions of truth, but rather in the selfish accumulation of "brownie points" on the road to good solid tenure. Their explicit implication throughout is that historians have no business poking their noses into the affairs or indeed the developments of the working-class in Canada, and that what efforts they have produced are to be regarded as both condescending and incompetent—if not downright fallacious. The question they wish us to address ourselves to is, "Who should write and speak for the workers of Canada?"

This question in and of itself may be an important one, however the method by which Melnyk and Lotz suggest we answer it is not only irrational and tending toward further confusion, but also dangerous in certain respects. By juxtaposing the Johnson book beside the Kealey/Warran collection, Melnyk and Lotz suggest we answer it is not only irrational and tending toward further confusion, but also dangerous in certain respects. By juxtaposing the Johnson book beside the Kealey/Warran collection, Melnyk and Lotz suggest we answer it is not only irrational and tending toward further confusion, but also dangerous in certain respects. By juxtaposing the Johnson book beside the Kealey/Warran collection, Melnyk and Lotz suggest we answer it is not only irrational and tending toward further confusion, but also dangerous in certain respects.

Historians of all persuasions and interests have long recognized the value of first-hand accounts of daily work experiences, drawn from individual workers themselves. And yet, these first-hand accounts must always be a single, albeit important, component of a much larger picture. Historical developments in the spheres of labour and politics in Canada, along with every other Western nation, have amply shown that the working-class has no unified voice as such. In fact, workers are very much divided and fragmented in regard to a host of issues including ethnicity, status, attitudes, sex, religion, politics, and language. It becomes the task of the working-class historian to attempt to make some sense of these divisions and distinctions. Indeed, this is a major objective in the Kealey/Warran book and its ultimate importance must be judged on this basis, not on silly arguments concerning the motives of its contributors.

Working-class historians would be the last to suggest that, "the working-class can't speak for themselves"; however that is not to say that workers possess a clearly defined collective sense of their objectives and direction within contemporary society. This is where the comparison of the two

books becomes unfair, and also where the reasoning of Melnyk and Lotz breaks down. Perhaps a better question might then be phrased, "How can the Canadian working-class come to define its goals and direction in a collective and meaningful sense?" Questions like this involve issues which are at once complex and divisive, but solutions will never be forthcoming from the petty quibbling and trivializing exhibited by both Mr. Melnyk and Mr. Lotz.

Keith Johnston

Lotz—a luck

To the Gazette:

Who is Jim Lotz and why has he fallen through his soapbox?

In the last two issues of the GAZETTE, Jim Lotz, has offered to readers a critique of what I'm tempted to label 'The contradictions between workers and academia'. However, I won't. Contradiction is a term used by Marxists in explaining the relationship of opposing forces, in this instance, I am forced. Something of which Mr. Lotz clearly has no conception. Why? I would suggest its results from an inability to separate ideas from circumstance. Rather similar to the analogy used by Lotz in last weeks COMMENT - separating the book from its cover.

On and on, and on, Lotz speaks and writes of workers and professors, workers and government bureaucrats, workers and union officials. So ridiculous has it become that Lotz has bumped into the wall, attempting to look through the window. When Homer Stevens, a Communist Union Organizer was in Halifax, Lotz demanded that he get "Down off his soapbox". Stevens has presumably separated himself from workers by expousing an active political line - or at least a political line Lotz wouldn't touch with a stack of bibles. Rather than credit Stevens with a job well done or an organizer and Communist, Lotz questioned Stevens as to why he was not teaching at a University. Stevens answer hit below the belt, right between Lotz's second and third academic degrees (or was that third and fourth).

This past week, we were treated to a book review in which Lotz demonstrated precisely the difference between academics (are notwithstanding) and workers (perhaps we should check some birthdates here!).

Unlike most book reviews, however, Lotz refuses to deal with subject matter. Rather, he neglects. He breaks through the soapbox, into the mud.

Kealey and Warran's book is a collection of essays written or events in Canadian working class history. Events covered range from Toronto in the 19th Century, through Cape Breton in the Twenties. Subject matter is, almost unimportant for the purpose of this polemic however. What is extraordinary is the fact that neither Lotz or his fellow utopian, Melnyk bothered to check the Sources used by the writers (one of whom, incidentally, in taped interviews and the like, but their newspapers and trade unions were consulted as well. And on I can go. Does Lotz question the politics of workers? Does Lotz question the circumstances under which those philosophies were formed? Has Lotz read *Essays In Canadian Working Class History*?

We must look upon "Lotzian" (and I cringe) thought as being symptomatic of a society intent on dividing ideas. Socialist thought fights precisely that - for it makes no distinction between manual workers and intellectual workers. It

continued on page 7

GUS' GRILL

RESTAURANT AND PIZZERIA



LICENSED

TAKE OUT

& DELIVERY

FULL COURSE MEALS STEAKS FISH & CHIPS

OPEN:

SUN. TO THURS. 7 am - 1 am

FRI. & SAT. 7 am - 2 am

423-0276

423-7786

2805 Agricola St. -- Halifax, N. S.

**FOR THE FINEST
PIZZA IN TOWN
PLAZA EUROPA**

**6021
LADY HAMMOND ROAD
TAKE OUT OR DELIVERY
453-4248**

**IF YOU HAVEN'T
TRIED US THEN YOU
HAVEN'T HAD THE BEST!!**