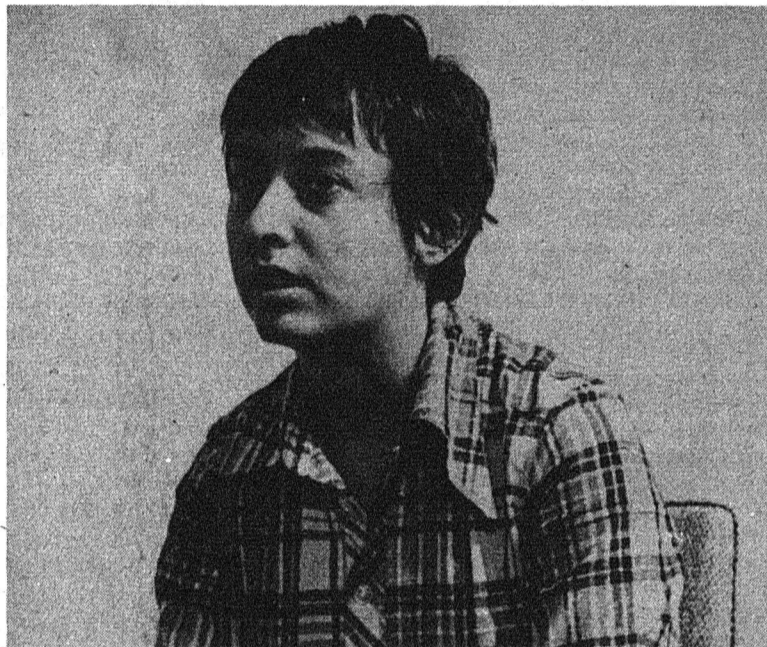


CURTIN'S CONCLUSION...

Chinese women not as liberated as we think

by Tom Baker

On Oct. 29 Gateway staffer, Tom Baker was able to procure this exclusive interview with Katie Curtin, author of *Women in China*. Curtin is a young Canadian feminist who has spoken extensively on women's liberation issues and has written articles for the theoretical journal, *International Socialist Review*, and newspapers such as the *Militant* and *Labor Challenge*. She is currently editor of the *Young Socialist*, a Canadian youth paper.



Katie Curtin, traces the development of Feminism in China. "There must be a critical analysis..." Photo by John Kenney

Pathfinder Press, the largest publisher of women's liberation literature in Canada, has recently published her new book, *Women in China*. Her book traces the development of the early feminist movement in China, the role played in the civil war, and the transformation of women's status following the victory of the revolution. It also details how and why the Communist Party abandoned its early stand of full support to the cause of women's emancipation.

Curtin is on a cross country tour promoting her book. She has been in Edmonton for the last week participating in public lectures and debates on and off campus and speaking at seminars sponsored by several university departments.

What influenced you to write the book Women in China?

My initial interest was caused by the growing feminist consciousness and the fact that there is very little written about women's history. At the university during the time that I was writing the book the feminist movement had caused a heightened degree of awareness about the role of women in history. There was a growing interest in the gains that women had made in the Chinese revolution and an examination by many women of what socialism would mean for women.

How did you get involved in the feminist and radical movement?

I first became involved in the feminist movement when I attended university. I had always believed that women should have equal rights and felt very strongly about this - but this was the first place that I encountered any organized group.

At the same time while being conscious about the oppression of women I was also becoming aware of the problems of society as a whole - of the poverty that many people had to live in under this system, of the genocidal war against the Vietnamese and of the racism fostered against blacks and other oppressed groups.

This led me to become convinced that the solution to many of society's problems could be found by instituting a planned economy under workers' control. During my first year at university I joined the Young Socialists, the group that seemed to have the best strategy.

Why did you write about the position of women in China?

I thought that this was one of the aspects of the Chinese revolution which had been least explored though it was commonly admitted in the books I read that women played a major role in the revolutionary process. One main book on women in China was written by Helen Snow who tended to look rather uncritically at Maoist policies towards women. Apart from that there were only fleeting references in many other books.

There was a lack of adequate statistics on women's participation in education and the work force and on child care facilities. While one could get a picture of the situation from various travelogues written by visitors to China, I found I had to

be very careful as the places these visitors were shown were carefully selected and monitored by the Chinese tour guides.

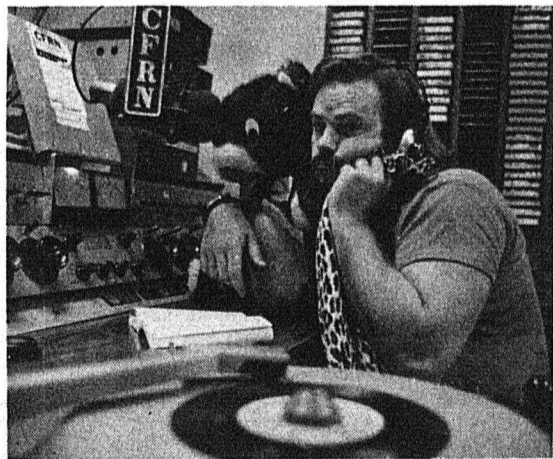
I suppose you are aware of the U of A Students' Union's reversal of its decision to sponsor your tour. What is there about your ideas presented in Women in China that has caused such a controversy within the women's groups and student councils?

I'm not sure of all the exact reasons in this case, but in general I have noted that there are two main views on this question. There are those anti-socialists who say there is nothing to learn from the Chinese experience and there are others who hold up China as a model for the women's liberation movement. According to the latter the Maoist government is doing everything it can to liberate women.

I strongly disagree with both views. I fully support the Chinese revolution and the great gains of its people, but there must be a critical analysis of the problems that still remain.

Katie Curtin see page 5

Music to Late Study or Go Beddy Bye...



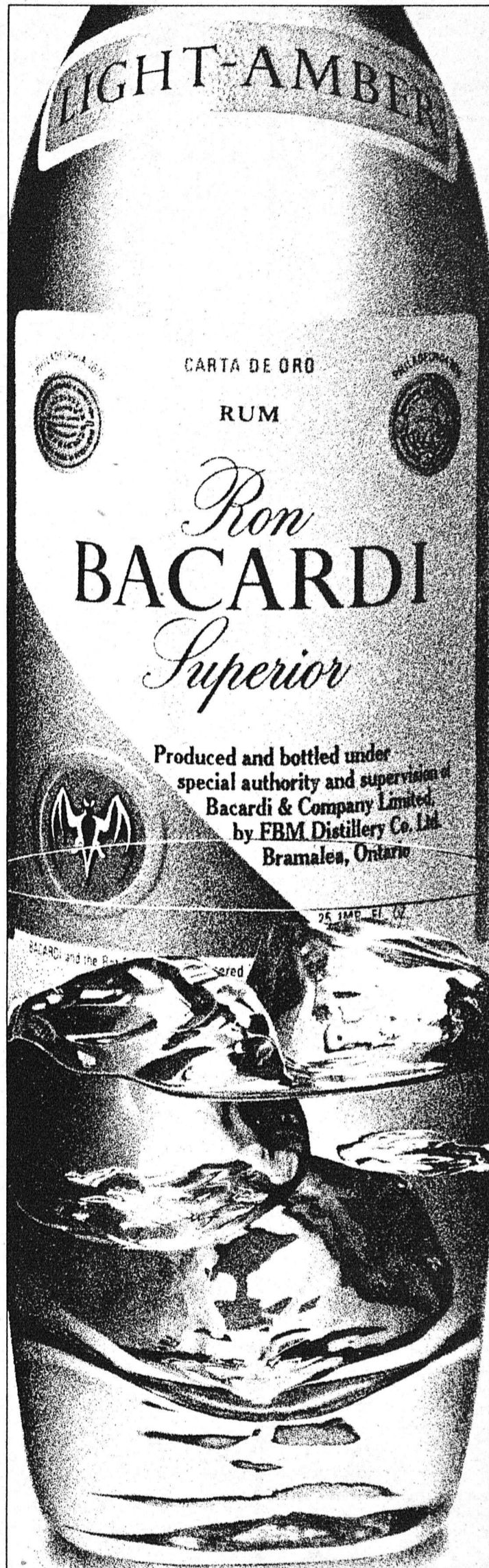
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