

**Socialists, Christians debate**

# Can Marx or Christ cure human alienation?

By DEBBIE PEKILIS

What is the solution to human alienation: Marxism or Christianity?

The York Socialist League and the York Student Christian Alliance attempted to answer this question two Tuesdays ago in a debate between Samuel Esobar, national director of the inter-varsity Christian fellowship, and Gord Doctorow, executive secretary of the York Socialist League.

Esobar, speaking for the Christian view, defined human alienation as a process of man becoming conscious, or coming to his senses.

"It is the discovery of the distance between what we are now and what we have grasped we should be," he said. "It is the human being living in an inhuman situation.

"Man is alienated because his way of life in the world is not as it should

be. Man puts himself at the centre of the world and has no meaningful relationship with his neighbour, his family, or his friends."

Esobar said this situation is caused by man taking things that he has created and making them his god.

"Man creates institutions and machines which escape his control," he said, "and he prostrates himself before them."

Esobar said Christianity realizes that man is an alienated being, not living as he should. Jesus Christ gives men morals, he said, that will teach them to be what they should be.

"He has a way of showing them how to be human, how to be disalienated."

Doctorow, speaking for the Marxist view, defined human alienation as "an expression of the fragmentation or disintegration of human consciousness due to a lack of control over conditions".

Two specific types of alienation, he elaborated, are the alienation of

communication, and economic alienation.

Doctorow said economic alienation means that a worker is forced to sell his labour power to an employer in return for his subsistence, or that he is separated from his means of making a living. In this way, man is no longer human, but is an abstract being, a part of the productive process. This was Marx's definition of alienation.

Economic alienation, said Doctorow, extends from the economy to the broad social sphere. In society, this alienation takes the form of "commercialization of leisure and supplanting of real needs with imaginary needs." People who can't afford their imaginary needs become frustrated and may turn to crime. This is the result of the manipulation of consumer tastes by producers.

Doctorow said alienation of communication means that people have no real communication with each other, and, as a result, are lonely and apathetic to what goes on around

them. This condition is brought about by man and is the product of history, said Doctorow. Therefore, "it is only temporary and can be unmade".

He said human alienation can only be overcome "in a classless society ushered in by violent revolution". In a classless society, alienation will disappear because the conditions that cause it — economic scarcity, private ownership of business, class divisions — will also disappear, he said.

There followed a rebuttal during which the debaters defended their views to each other and the audience. Esobar said, "There is something in Christ that delivers man from alienation now. We don't have to wait until an ideal society comes about."

He also said Marx's solution to alienation, expressed by Doctorow, covers mainly economic alienation under capitalism, whereas Christianity goes beyond this to cover all areas, social and psychological.

Doctorow said Marx's solution to human alienation is based on concrete, tangible evidence, not on an unrealistic basis. He added that, as a result of the capitalist productive process, the human being is abstract.

"He is only part of the process, alienated and inhuman. No religion can solve that."

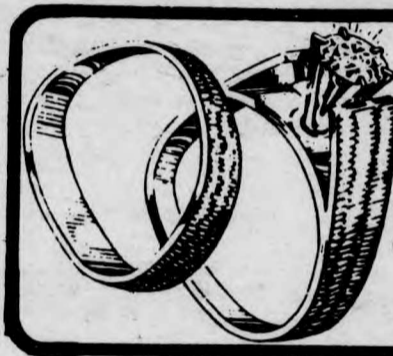
*Addendum: Due to an oversight, Debbie Pekilis's byline was left off last week's article on the plight of American and Canadian prisoners.*

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## Labour camp prisoners try to aid Chilean victims

Four Ukrainian female political prisoners in the Mordovian ASSR labour camps sent an appeal to the camp administration proposing that their wages at hard-labour camps be assigned to a fund for victims of the Chilean Junta.

This request was in response to an appeal printed in issue number 13 of the New Times, a Soviet publication. The news was reported in September, 1974,

through the 33rd issue of the Chronicle of Current Events, which is the Russian-language underground journal.

The four women, Nadia Svitlychna, Iryna Stasiv-Kalynets, Nina Strokata and Stefania Shabatura, also demanded that a representative from the imprisoned women be allowed to attend a Congress of the International Democratic Federation of Women.

Both demands were denied by camp authorities.

These four women are presently serving sentences of four to nine years for alleged "anti-Soviet propaganda". They are being kept in labour camp number three at Barashevo, Mordovian ASSR, and are reported to be seriously ill.

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