

WORDS FROM THE WISE ...



Amchitka stories contradictory

Dear Editor,

Your November 5 lead story, "Amchitka protest bombs out", and another story, "You say you want a revolution?", are misleading and contradictory.

You call the demonstrators at the anti-Amchitka Trudeau protest "passivists", whatever that means. No one denies that there were pacifists in the huge demonstrations across the country. They were welcome as were people of other beliefs. Are you suggesting that pacifists should be excluded from such affairs? Your article is confusing insofar as you criticize our "passivism" on the one hand and then say that the best way to stop the bomb was to make a phone call to the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. That was the suggestion of the Voice of Women presented at the Stop Amchitka press conference. We invited anyone to present suggestions that they had.

Your lead article closed with "only President Nixon through a court injunction can now call a halt to the blast." The "Stop Amchitka Committee" had constantly emphasized that there was something that the Canadian government could do to stop Amchitka. You did not even mention that the Canadian government was tied to the Pentagon through the Defense Sharing Agreement and that essential components of the Amchitka bomb were manufactured in Canada. That agreement can be unilaterally terminated by the Trudeau cabinet and that is why Trudeau was more than a symbol. To suggest that Trudeau had no power in the matter is to state the same line as the *Chronicle-Herald*.

To term the Amchitka demonstration "a bomb" may make for humorous headlines but it ignores the importance of what was achieved. The largest and one of the most militant demonstrations in Halifax in a long period cannot be termed

fairly a failure. At least, it cannot be done in terms of fair journalism — especially by journalists who consider themselves leftists.

The majority of the people on the demonstration came out for a specific reason and had, I believe, a fairly clear understanding of Canada's role in the Amchitka test, a clearer understanding in fact than your writer Glenn Wanamaker. Our leaflets and press statements demanded the end of arms sales to the U. S. to stop the bomb.

The demonstration was not a bunch of sheep following blindly behind other sheep. The people there were militant and conscious of their own power. They left the park for the hotel not because I told them to do so but because the overwhelming majority felt their presence would be better felt at the hotel. To the people who wished to enter the hotel, the demonstrators responded with a demand for a purpose for such an action. How would that make it more possible to stop Amchitka? Various views were stated and the decision was made to sit-in in the street.

Admittedly, the demonstration did not receive sufficient leadership from the organizers but it most sharply rejected the would-be leadership of those who entered the hotel.

To regard people as passive who are prepared to take action as far as they see possible is a cop-out on your part. Many of these people were new to demonstrating but they were angry and conscious of their power. Whether Trudeau felt compelled to appear or not, is not the question. These people made it clear that they saw Ottawa deeply tied with the U.S. war machine and the bomb was a vivid example of this. Trudeau's arrogance should not worry those of us who were in the street. He always prefers the company of those who can pay for his presence.

The *Gazette* says you're wrong if you protest peacefully and you're wrong if you confront police. What are you proposing as an alternative to the two views? Phone calls and petitions? Are you simply

contenting yourselves with casting plagues on everyone else's houses?

To negate the importance of the fact that people are prepared to mobilize against what they understand to be wrong is to ignore the power of people united in action. Amchitka may have been an issue that everyone agreed should be stopped but many saw the deeper implications involved. They demonstrated.

Through Amchitka, many people have seen the broader issues involved and the integral role played by the Canadian government.

The *Gazette* position sounds like the critics of the American anti-war movement who say, "Well you demonstrated but you didn't stop Vietnam this week. You failed." Vietnam mobilizations have served as a brake on U.S. imperialist intentions and in the process stimulated the radicalization of new areas of American society. Its influence has helped the growth of mass movements in Black and Chicago struggles, the women's liberation movement, the student movement, gay liberation, and even advanced layers of the working class. Sideline critics can berate the power of mass movements but can you really explain away their influence? Amchitka brought thousands

of Canadians into the streets. I spoke to a rally of 350 in staid Fredericton! 400 marched in St. John and a like number in St. John's, where they were attacked by police. 1000 in Moncton. In the process, many new people came to understand the system better and began to examine ways to change it. One of the more prominent demands raised in Fredericton was for no more American national guard and no more British troops training for Northern Ireland at Camp Gagetown. These people saw the link very clearly between Amchitka, Canadian war sales, and related foreign policy. It will be a little harder now for Canada to act as an extension of the American military operations. Atomic tests cannot be justified to a world dangerously close to ecological disaster. A related issue has reappeared which is to

unfold deep in the heart of Canada and directly ties to the U. S. and British war plans. Thousands of British troops, tanks, and guns will be used on a vast reserve in Alberta. That maneuver next spring will destroy top soil, plant and animal life, and one of the largest, natural areas in Canada. Those troops are to be trained here because their own government will not allow it in Britain. We must stop those maneuvers.

Your concluding comments that "the revolution is a serious enterprise sometimes requiring superhuman effort on the part of the participants" is negated by your own practice. You smear the very people who are using "whatever means will work at the time" to prepare for social change. You cannot simply sit on the sidelines casting stones at those who act to change society.

Comradely,
Walter Davis

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The inaccuracies in your story reflect the difference between the Young Socialists' practice and theory.

Some people at the Stop Amchitka action were ecology freaks, who did not understand American imperialism was an

issue there. When others at the demo tried to make them aware of this, they were shouted down by YS people using bullhorns. Even your slogans are nice and liberal — "Stop Amchitka — stop the bomb!"

The Trots (YS) held the demonstrators back from various things. YS had to follow the crowd when people decided they wanted to move in front of the hotel. And YS was also politely embarrassed, when, trying to control and run the demo, (as usual) some people didn't want to go back to the park when the bullhorns declared they should.

The pacifists referred to in the story are you. Such action, when others are willing to and know why they are taking militant action, is dangerous and is not acting to change society in any real way.

Try fitting your practice to your theory for once.

Soc goes right

(cont'd from p. 5)

TIME IS CRUCIAL. If the liberal-minded faculty do not act quickly and decisively, they will soon find themselves in the students' position. That is, in short, without a meaningful say in guiding the department's direction. Students also must begin to take a more active and critical stand against the right wing trend.

Frustration has led the liberal faculty, unwittingly, to take undemocratic positions. It would be disastrous if they failed to see and act upon the fundamental distinction between their action based on frustration and possibly anger, against students, and that of the right wing, whose position on all aspects of departmental business is grounded in basic anti-democratic and authoritarian principles.

In an attempt to rid themselves of annoying students, the liberal faculty members have most probably set in motion the

construction of the gallows, which will spell doom for their own ideas and beliefs. Regardless of past differences between the liberal faculty members and students, it is of utmost importance that they both take steps to reassert democracy as the working principle of the Sociology department.

(This article was written by two concerned Sociology students.)

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