

Student left traditionally disunited

by Tony Tracy

The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was a reasonably short-lived organization, lasting less than ten years before its breakup. Yet this group has influenced the student movement and many left-wing theorists in a way that no other group has done. The Port Huron Statement, drafted in June of 1962 at a national convention of the SDS, has remained a valid document to this day and has become a cornerstone of the student left. James Miller's latest book, "Democracy is in the Streets", is perhaps the best-written history of the SDS to date.

Miller's book is the latest of a number of books and articles released recently which chronicle the student movement, and the New Left, through the 1960s. This year, being the twentieth anniversary of the year 1968, has seen more '60s nostalgia than ever before. Many writers have made the most of the fact that twenty years have passed since the riots in Chicago, the demonstrations in France, the Tet

offensive in Vietnam, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the developments in Prague, Czechoslovakia. However, this history of the SDS is in some ways especially relevant in 1988.

There are many similarities between the years preceding the formation of the SDS and recent years. The McCarthy era, with all its paranoid anti-communism, is in some ways similar to the American nationalism of the new Reagan era. Thus it is not surprising to find that the first attempt to organize a nationwide left-wing student organization since the collapse of the SDS in 1968 occurred earlier this year, at Rutgers University. The failure of this group to draft a constitution is in many ways linked to the failures which led to the demise of the SDS.

The SDS was comprised mainly of young student radicals, coming from a white middle-class background, who were disillusioned with the government of that time. However, this in itself added to the

failure of the SDS to deal with a number of issues, particularly with the issue of black liberation. Groups such as the Black Panther party and various minority groups, including gay liberation groups, were completely alienated by the SDS.

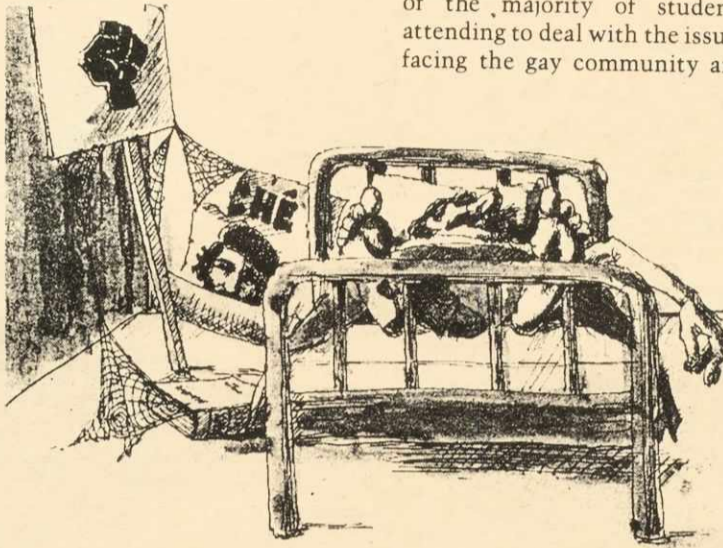
It was this failure of predominantly white leadership of the SDS to deal with minority issues in the U.S. which led to a certain

disillusionment among the members. The Black Panther Party and other minority organizations were becoming more and more militant and gaining support among the grassroots members of the SDS, while the SDS leaders could not formulate a policy supporting these groups.

In the same way, at a national conference held in early February of this year, it was the failure of the majority of students attending to deal with the issues facing the gay community and

minority groups which caused the failure of the convention to do what it had set out to do; form an '80s equivalent of the SDS which would unite the student left once more. This convention, which took place at Rutgers University, was many months in the planning but allowed only a weekend to reach a consensus among the vastly different types of individuals who comprise the student left. Early in the convention weekend, there was a dispute centred chiefly on the representation at the convention, leading to the formation of two dissenting caucuses: a "people of colour" caucus and a gay/lesbian/bisexual caucus. These two groups issued a joint statement that the convention would be a farce if it passed a constitution for the formation of a new group while not being truly representative of the student left. Delegates to the convention realized their failure, and the convention ended with little accomplished except a plan to hold another convention within

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Men: The sexuality and the vitality of form

by Jennifer Latham

The Anna Leonowens Gallery recently featured a show called *He Art/S*. It was a show with bold statements to make about sexuality and vitality in the male form, about the ambiguousness of space, and about intuitive designing. It was a strong showing of talent by Halifax artist Neil MacInnis.

The artist's use of colour was predominantly high-key, and the plain white walls of the gallery accentuated his style. Six giant portraits of men imposed themselves on the room like physical presences rather than as paintings on walls. "The thrust of the show is centred on the idea of unified space, where the viewer sees objects living in space, not just paintings on walls. Instead, the space belongs to the object," said Neil MacInnis.

The poses were of men sitting or standing, but each gave an impression of movement and vitality and of almost overwhelming physical personality. All the paintings were done in high-key oils reminiscent of Van Gogh and Gauguin, but without presuming to imply their greatness. Nonetheless, there is greatness of style and in use of colour in MacInnis' work. The gallery was dominated by the paintings rather than by the crowd gathered to view *He Art/S*. The crowd's response to his art was very positive as viewers lingered at each painting.

On the far wall of the gallery was a work MacInnis calls "Homage to Warhol". It hangs in five pieces, each showing a view of male anatomy from a diver-

gent angle and hung in symmetrical juxtaposition. It is only one of the self-portraits on display. The other is a small-scale self-portrait MacInnis painted of himself painted of himself by direct observation while using for his background the same one Van Gogh used in "Flowering Almond Branches".

MacInnis is a talented and versatile artist. A book of photocopy art called "Random Narratives" showed MacInnis' talent with textures applied to themes. MacInnis says he designed the book intuitively and at random rather than by forethought and design. Also on display was a Gay Tartan designed and woven by MacInnis. "Half the preliminary work was involved in design. I used a computer with a colour program of 166 colours. Then I wove samples and did drawings until I came up with a design and colour scheme I was pleased with." MacInnis shows a strong affinity to textiles and often likes to incorporate a textile with a painting.

To complete his show, MacInnis performed a poetry reading relating the theme off *He Art/S*

both visually and orally.

MacInnis is a graduating student of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. All the works on display were not only new pieces done in the last year, but were also products of his years of learning and experience gained

at the Art College. Mostly, however, *He Art/S* is a showing of an artist's personal exploration of his talent.

MacInnis' style is unique and has a quality of the sensational without the slightest hint of conformity to traditional styles

in art. The sexuality and strength of his brush suggest arrogance, but my opinion is that his arrogance is fully warranted. Let's hope *He Art/S* is just the beginning of a long and productive career for Neil MacInnis.

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