

PART NINE

Edward Pickersgill Was Not A Problem Solver

Democratic centralism is the revolutionary form of political organization. Revolutionary centralism is the concentration of correct ideas. Unity of understanding, of policy, command and action is attained on the basis of concentrating correct ideas. Leaders who collect and concentrate correct ideas and give leadership on the basis of these ideas are practicing centralism. Such centralism can only be built on the foundation of democracy. People must be free to put their ideas forward. These ideas should be discussed collectively. Differing opinions should be heeded, and the differences analyzed so as to understand the complexity of a situation and to arrive at a correct understanding.

Mao Zedong described the relationship between democracy and centralism in his "Talk At An Enlarged Working Conference Convened By The Central Committee Of The Communist Party of China": "Without democracy, it is impossible to sum up experience correctly. Without democracy, without ideas coming from the masses, it is impossible to formulate good lines, principles, policies or methods. As far as the formulation of lines, principles, policies and methods is concerned, our leading organs merely play the role of a processing plant. Everyone knows that a factory cannot do any processing without raw material. It cannot produce good finished products unless the raw material is sufficient in quantity and suitable in quality. If there is no democracy, if there is no knowledge of what is going on down below and no clear idea about it, if there is no adequate canvassing of the opinions of all concerned and no communication between higher and lower levels, and if instead issues are decided solely by the leading organs of the higher levels on the strength of one-sided or inaccurate material, then such decisions can hardly avoid being subjective and it will be impossible to achieve unity in understanding and action or achieve true centralism. Isn't the main topic of our present conference opposition to decentralism and the strengthening of centralism and unity. If we fail to promote democracy in full measure, then will this centralism, this unity, be genuine or sham? Will it be real or empty? Will it be correct or incorrect? Of course it will only be sham, empty and incorrect."

Edward Pickersgill promoted himself as *the* leader of the Alive Production Collective. However he never learned to practice democratic centralism. Although he said he believed that Collective members should sort out problems amongst themselves, in actual practice he insisted that all problems be brought to his attention. Then he would turn around and denounce comrades for placing such burdens on him.

Collective members were sincere in their struggle to implement the democracy in democratic centralism, yet Edward Pickersgill distorted the centralism of the Collective organization by practicing autocracy. He "initiated" sham struggles for members to practice democratic centralism while in reality he exercised hegemony over "solving" problems.

Edward Pickersgill promoted the illusion that he had long ago come to terms with all the significant problems a person faces when they take up revolutionary work. On this basis he held himself up as the most capable person in the Collective for solving other comrades' problems. He claimed that he individually could solve any problem anyone in the Collective had. To "prove" this grandiose claim, he took credit for any steps forward made by anyone in the Collective.

This false god made a big issue of proclaiming himself as "the person in charge in internal affairs". Other leading comrades were solely to take up responsibilities on the front of the Collective's external relations.

Although it was well-known in the Collective that several of the other leading comrades had a better knowledge of political theory than Edward Pickersgill, he promoted that he could apply what he

knew better. In this way the Collective was somewhat deceived in estimating Edward Pickersgill's leadership abilities, and this "master problem solver" was able to consolidate centralized control in his own hands.

OBSCURING REAL PROBLEMS BY CREATING, THEN "SOLVING", FALSE ONES

Edward Pickersgill's basic thrust in problem-solving was the storm-in-the-teacup approach. A person would come forward to say: "I have a problem, here is what it is and here are some of the alternatives." The petty despot's reaction would be to escalate the situation by denouncing the person. His denunciations were most often slanderous personal attacks rather than criticisms of actual wrong ideas which the person may have had.

Approached for guidance on a problem, Edward Pickersgill would draw out some quirk in the person's make-up or some aspect of their background to explain why they were, to use his words, "acting like a banana". He would deliver this attack in a contemptuous, scathing, intimidating style. Frequently people reacted to this personal attack by crying, panicking, freezing or otherwise going into a "pit" in response to his abuse. They would then be accused of personalizing the struggle.

Edward Pickersgill would then be the one to solve the problem. He would remove the person from the "pit", which he had dug and pushed the person into in the first place, by laying off altogether or by giving an order to the comrade in question to leave the scene. Consequently the person would go away without anyone having addressed the problem they had originally brought forward. Instead the comrade ended up feeling like a worthless criminal.

An illustration of this diversionary technique is a situation in which one of the people in the faction was troubled by her relationship with Edward Pickersgill, and attempted to sort this out with him. This situation occurred during the Mini-Cultural Revolution, a time of internal consolidation of the Collective when a number of diverse and intense struggles were waged in order to strengthen the unity amongst the members. One of these struggles was for the members to come to grips with their family background. Such a struggle is important because it enables each member to become conscious of how their own attitudes and personal strengths and weaknesses have been shaped by their class background. Incorrect attitudes and personal behaviour patterns can be rooted out more easily once their source is identified.

When the factional member brought up her problem, Edward Pickersgill responded by escalating the situation and succeeded in sending her into a glum and teary-eyed posture. He then falsely explained the reason for her behaviour to the other members of the Collective as a problem with coming to grips with her family background. This reason seemed strange to other comrades since her working class family background had not, up until that time, been a source of great problems. He "solved" her problem by sending her to babysit his kids. This "solution" ran counter to the advice of the Collective about not working with kids as a means of getting breathing space in political struggles.

There are two points which should be given attention in this situation. One is that Edward Pickersgill knew that the woman was having a problem connected to their sexual relationship and he refused to address it, let alone solve it. Instead he created a diversionary problem for her, which he then stepped in to "solve" by stopping his harassment of her and by sending her off as a babysitter. The second point is that he knew that the woman knew she wasn't having problems with her family background. The petty despot probably panicked and feared that she would spill the beans about her secret relationship with him. He acted so as to get her out

of circulation with the other Collective members as soon as he could. He left her alone with the problem in order to save his own skin.

THE THEORY OF SOLVING PROBLEMS BY SHAKING THINGS UP

Another of Edward Pickersgill's favourite tactics was to shake people up. In theory he promoted that the Collective should deal with problems in the area where they arose and not burden him. However, in practice, if he heard that a person was having a minor problem with the work, he would barge in and remove the person from the area of work they were most familiar with and from the people they were most familiar working with.

For example, on a number of occasions when one of the comrades was having a minor problem with the work in the Caudwell Unit, Edward Pickersgill removed her on the basis that she was "disrupting". He would either send her home or demand that she write a series of documents of self-criticism. Either way his approach did nothing to solve the original problem. It merely created new problems for the woman comrade since she worried about the articles which she was responsible for completing.

Moreover, Edward Pickersgill manoeuvred in this situation so as to create a prolonged struggle with this comrade. He played on a minor problem she was having and made it into a major 9-week struggle simply for the sake of struggle with her. It was a cruel hoax. When the struggle flared up no one in the Collective, except for Edward Pickersgill, knew what it was all about.

This included the woman comrade. When she objected to the false criticisms made of her, Edward Pickersgill would turn the tables on her. He would criticize her for raising her objections by calling her an individualist or a putschist. She lost confidence in her abilities. She broke down on many occasions. She adopted the position of "working to rule" in the face of the attacks. Whenever she made any move to initiate something she was severely criticized. When she consequently "worked to rule" she likewise faced cruel and persistent criticism. This struggle had no real political content. This comrade's only major problem was Edward Pickersgill himself.

What despicable cruelty! Edward Pickersgill predetermined the intensity of his attacks on this comrade according to his desire to wipe her out as a revolutionary worker in the Caudwell Unit. What was his motive for doing this? In his mind the leading member of the Caudwell Unit posed a direct threat to his own leading position in the Collective. By harassing this comrade who was a very good contributor in this unit, he undermined the work of the unit and indirectly attacked the leading member of the unit. The fact that this comrade was able to continue to make good contributions to the editorial work even while she was under attack attests to the fact that she did not have any major problems of her own.

In the case of another comrade who was having some problems with her work in the Caudwell Unit, Edward Pickersgill unilaterally removed her and placed her in the Bethune Unit. He did this without consulting the Caudwell Unit or the Lu Hsun Unit comrades.

The "master problem solver's" tactic of shaking things up served his own anti-Collective, factional purposes. It did nothing to move forward our revolutionary work.

A key fact is that original problems were never solved. This meant that any comrade who originally had a problem became very confused: the problem was supposed to be solved by Edward Pickersgill's dramatic shake-ups yet nothing in fact was ever accomplished. For other comrades, the petty despot's actions overburdened them with additional work by reducing the manpower in key work units. It also denied them the valuable experience of learning how to deal with contradictions which came up in the course of the work. Often work units would have begun addressing problems and in fact even achieved some success when Edward Pickersgill would swoop in and wipe out the collectivized

problem-solving efforts.

SATURATION WITH UNDEVELOPED IDEAS DID NOT SOLVE PROBLEMS

Another aspect of Edward Pickersgill's style of problem-solving was the way he would saturate people with spontaneous ideas. For example, at a meeting to discuss distribution of *Alive Magazine* he flung out ideas off the top of his head for several hours on end. He never got down to developing any of these ideas during the course of this meeting nor at any other time. Other comrades participating in the meeting were swamped in his morass of words. There were far too many ideas and there was no direction given towards sorting out the actual distribution problem.

Such a meeting tended to confuse and dampen the enthusiasm of the comrades, because no decision was made to actually do something. Edward Pickersgill had none of the patience, motivation or organizing skill with which to turn the ideas into a concrete program. Such organizing was left to other leading comrades.

This tactic of saturation was conscious. It served Edward Pickersgill's autocratic style of railroading his own ideas through. He had no concern for what the most realistic solution to a problem was. He was most concerned with getting his own way. When he used this tactic, people got to the point of saying "yes" to almost anything just in order to have something to latch onto.

CONSCIOUSLY SABOTAGING PROGRAMS TO "SOLVE" PROBLEMS

The intention of Edward Pickersgill's style of "solving" problems was not simply to create a storm-in-a-teacup for the sake of a storm; nor to create diversion for the sake of diversion. He was not malicious only because he enjoyed being malicious. Nor was his style a reflection of blind authoritarianism.

His style was a reflection of a very conscious intent to create splits within the Collective so that he could better consolidate his own faction. His faction didn't stand a chance of surviving if honest and solid unity was allowed to develop amongst the majority of the members of the Collective. So this counter-revolutionary worked to create maximum disunity and maximum confusion so that his faction could flower without fear of discovery. Edward Pickersgill's "problem-solving" actually sabotaged programs which had been set up to promote unity within the Collective.

A clear example of how this type of "problem-solving" undermined Collective unity is the case of a comrade who had had a number of problems coming out of her work in the Collective. She had withdrawn from active participation in the Collective work for a period of time. During this period she had begun to come to terms with some of her problems and moved to a position of again becoming more integrated in the Collective work. In order to help her re-integrate into this work a series of discussions with Edward Pickersgill were set up. He advised her to write notes to set up times for meetings and to describe points that she saw to be in need of discussion. She wrote the notes. However, she seldom got a response. The petty despot seldom agreed to hold discussion nor did he encourage her to keep thinking over these points. As a result the comrade slowed down in presenting her ideas in these notes. She was then severely criticized for abandoning the program. Edward Pickersgill's method in this case was to mess this comrade around and then criticize her when she was confused. This, in essence, is a straightforward police tactic!

The saboteur's undermining of the program arranged with this comrade had quite a negative effect on other aspects of the whole Collective program to re-integrate this comrade back into the work. This conscious sabotage was an instance of Edward Pickersgill driving passive those people who couldn't be consolidated in his faction.

In another situation Edward Pickersgill was less successful in

sabotaging a Collective struggle to build unity. This situation also involved one of the comrades who had problems which caused her to take a passive role in the Collective.

Edward Pickersgill gave the line that this comrade's problems meant that she should be written off and not struggled with. He waged a long campaign with her husband to try to convince him to separate from this comrade.

When her husband refused to kowtow to this line, the petty despot suggested a series of discussions to struggle against the woman comrade's bad lines. The two comrades agreed to this proposal. The petty despot then proposed that he be allowed to sit in on the discussions between these two comrades. Although he was aware that the couple had agreed, he never attended any of the meetings.

Instead Edward Pickersgill organized a special role for himself. He would advise the husband to go into these meetings with a hard-edge to make the points which needed to be made. Then the petty despot would arrange a private discussion with the wife. He would be "Mr. Nice Guy", asking what this woman's needs and wishes were and granting requests which were untenable in practice — much like a glorified fairy godmother. He never consulted with her husband on the nature of the discussions he would have, nor did he ever give him or anyone else in the Collective a report on these discussions.

On one occasion Edward Pickersgill agreed that the woman comrade should be able to spend each evening socializing on an individual basis with her husband. The husband found out from his wife about this concession. He was surprised that such a promise had been made to his wife because it directly opposed what he himself had been saying. The husband was surprised too that Edward Pickersgill had not told him about the promise made on his time.

The husband challenged "Mr. Nice Guy" to defend what he'd done in this situation. Edward Pickersgill replied that he'd been attempting to butter the woman comrade up to throw her off balance and off her guard. This comment in itself reflects a malicious attitude towards solving contradictions among members of the Collective.

Edward Pickersgill didn't succeed in splitting these two individuals up mainly because the husband didn't rely on him for advice but rather sought out the advice of other leading comrades. That this two-facedness was actually part of a scheme to drive a wedge between these two comrades wasn't apparent then. Now that Edward Pickersgill's rotten counter-revolutionary line has been thoroughly exposed his intentions have become more clear.

THE FIVE MINUTE VISIT PROGRAM

The contradiction of a couple lacking time to spend together is one which often arises in revolutionary work. People get so involved in their work assignments and responsibilities that they have little time to do any other things, even those which they regard as important.

After the birth of their baby, one couple faced this contradiction in very real terms. Both husband and wife wanted to spend more time with their child as well as more time with one another, but they found this program difficult to work into their busy schedules.

Edward Pickersgill proposed that every three or four hours the husband should leave his place of work, drive to his home, spend five minutes with his wife and child, and then return to work. This "five minute visit program" was supposed to meet the need of the couple to spend more time together. In actual fact, though, the program was proposed in order to drive a wedge between these two comrades.

After a couple of days of five minute visits the wife told her husband in no uncertain terms that the visits were getting on her nerves. In five minutes he was only able to engage in superficial conversations, rather than get to the heart of any questions she had. In addition, he wasn't around long enough to do any work but

was around long enough to disrupt her work patterns. She told him to skip the five minute visits.

After the husband abandoned the "five minute visit program" he came under criticism from Edward Pickersgill for abandoning his wife. This misleader never considered that the "five minute visit program" was an unacceptable solution to this problem, nor did he ever consider another possible program.

The husband was thus put in the position of being damned if he continued with the program and damned if he didn't. The five minute visits were not meeting the need that he and his wife had, and in fact were creating more problems in their relationship. Yet he was given no choice of alternative programs to follow.

Edward Pickersgill delighted in this situation where he consciously drove a wedge in this couple's social relationship. While driving this wedge he promoted the illusion that he was the "master problem solver". If only people obeyed his every directive, he could solve any problem at all. What a farce!

SUPPRESSING INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE TO COVER HIS TRAIL

In order to sabotage our anti-imperialist revolutionary work, Edward Pickersgill stuck his nose into political programs and personal lives alike. He would act most consistently in this regard wherever members of his faction were involved.

A good example of bare-faced suppression of a Collective member's revolutionary initiative occurred in the early part of the Mini-Cultural Revolution. At the time the logic of Edward Pickersgill's criticism of a comrade's initiative was viewed as strange. Its popularity can be measured by the fact that no one else in the Collective made a comment on the criticism. At the same time, it was not until we deeply investigated the facts of Edward Pickersgill's case that we were able to sum up the rottenness of this particular example.

The incident began when a comrade issued a self-critical wall poster on an incident in which he abandoned an opportunity to give leadership to another Collective comrade. The abandoned comrade was a member of the faction. At the time, there was much internal contradiction in the faction.

The wall poster was clear and factual. It was divided into three parts: a brief introduction, a section titled "What I Did" and a section titled "What I Should Have Done". The poster writer's mistake was that he noticed that a comrade was obviously distraught on two occasions one day, but failed to investigate the situation. Later, at a Collective meeting, he found out by this comrade's subjective behaviour that indeed she had a problem.

In the section of the poster titled "What I Should Have Done" the poster writer stated: "I should have sought out the facts. I should have asked my comrade how she was doing. In this fashion we could have determined the best way (or next step) to go. I don't think I could have solved the problem by myself but I could have assisted in bringing it forward. THIS WOULD HAVE AIDED MY COMRADE. It would have aided myself.

"I must stop abandoning comrades!

"I must start developing a caring attitude."

Edward Pickersgill immediately attacked this self-criticism with a snarky little note titled "There's More Than One Way To Skin A Cat! — Some Way's (sic) Are Better Than Others..." He wrote: "We certainly need discussion of the questions surrounding giving support to comrades as opposed to abandoning them. These discussions should bear in mind that there are definite problems in barrelling into unfamiliar waters. Sometimes an untrained person can do more damage than assistance in the kind of situation mentioned by (poster writer). It would probably be better to notify someone more versed in problem-solving & at least ask for advice. So, I would suggest, (poster writer's) mistake was in not approaching Ed or another member of the leadership and asking for advice. If, in the case mentioned, (poster writer) had taken individual problem-solving — we could possibly have had two people on the skids!"

This note was a condescending insult to the honest self-criticism from this comrade. Look at the arrogance in the prediction that the comrade could possibly have gone "on the skids" if he had taken this initiative. Look at the lie in the characterization of such an initiative as "individual problem-solving". The poster writer specifically says, "I don't think I could have solved the problem by myself, but I could have assisted in bringing it forward."

Look at the subjectivism in the words, "These are definite problems in barrelling into unfamiliar waters." The poster writer happened to be a veteran of the Alive Production Collective with longstanding experience in principled struggle. He certainly is not unfamiliar with these "waters". In addition, nowhere in his note is there indication that he would "barrel" into the struggle.

What Edward Pickersgill was actually worried about was that by investigating this contradiction, the poster writer would unwittingly be looking at one of his "private" factional contradictions. Any such initiative by the Collective was viewed as "barrelling" by the factional leader. The factional bog certainly contained "waters unfamiliar" to this comrade!

On this occasion Edward Pickersgill was, in effect, saying: "Hands off my faction members, buddy. If there's a problem let me know and I'll handle it. I don't want any of the factionalists to reveal my secrets in a moment of pressure."

THE DRUG ADDICT

Edward Pickersgill shocked the Collective shortly after the high tide of the Mini-Cultural Revolution when he announced that one comrade was a "drug addict". With great fanfare he and Michelle Landriault proceeded to put this comrade under a special discipline in order to cure her of the "addiction". It is now evident that Edward Pickersgill was completely off base in his charge. Quite simply, the comrade was not a drug addict. This incident is a classic example of Edward Pickersgill completely fabricating a problem and then "gloriously" proceeding to jump in and solve it.

At the time of this outrageous charge, the comrade was extremely ill. In face of quite severe pain she was taking a codeine-based drug prescribed by her doctor. The "drug addict" campaign was launched at a point when the comrade was literally racked with pain. In an attempt to kill the pain the comrade had upped her dosage of the drug to the maximum allowed under her doctor's prescription. At this point Edward Pickersgill and Michelle Landriault jumped in and made their charge.

Michelle Landriault gave testimony on the addictive nature of codeine. She based her "expert" medical testimony on an over-the-counter discussion she had had with an employee of a drugstore. Edward Pickersgill's contribution was to draw together "all the facts" which pointed to the comrade's addiction to codeine. In actual fact he never investigated exactly how the comrade had been using the drug.

It was next to impossible for the comrade to oppose this baseless charge in the physical condition she was in. She didn't believe she was a drug addict, but consciously adopted the attitude, "If I am a drug addict I don't want to be, so I'll stop taking these pills."

As other comrades investigated the case the facts of the comrade's drug usage came out. Over the month prior to the personal attack, the comrade had averaged less than 1 pill per day. This included the 5 pills she had taken in the day and a half just before the charge was levelled. For many days at a stretch the comrade would not take any pain killers even though she had mild pain. Her conscious plan was to minimize her drug usage as much as possible. When Edward Pickersgill had these facts put to him, much of the steam went out of his campaign.

Edward Pickersgill and Michelle Landriault organized a "drug rehabilitation" program for the "addicted" comrade. Michelle Landriault was "the druggist" and Edward Pickersgill the program organizer. The comrade could only get a pill by asking "the druggist" for one. This system was in force over a two week period. After that the comrade simply stopped taking the drug in order to remove any doubts about her alleged addiction.

As a "druggist" Michelle Landriault was a fool. On a few occasions the comrade would come to her and ask her for a pill only to be told she should take an aspirin instead. The problem with this suggestion was that the comrade was allergic to aspirin! Over the entire two week period, Michelle Landriault handed out more pills than the comrade actually took. Late every evening Michelle Landriault would give the comrade a pill. On those evenings when the pain wasn't too bad, the comrade would reply that she didn't need a pill. However, Michelle Landriault would insist she take it. If the "druggist" then left, the "drug addict" would just not take the pill.

A "therapy" schedule was also set up for the comrade. This program was directly supervised by "Doctor" Edward Pickersgill himself who organized Michelle Landriault and another factionalist to go to where this comrade slept to act as her nursing assistants. This program died out when it became apparent that the comrade was not in any way a drug addict.

Among the hysterical assertions at the beginning of this campaign was that the comrade would be racked with withdrawal symptoms as she "cut down" her intake of codeine. What actually happened was that the comrade had a mild headache at the start of the campaign (probably due to stress from being so viciously attacked) and then had no unusual physical symptoms at all. This convinced the comrade, and many other comrades, that the "drug addict" charge was totally phoney.

A WRONG LINE ON THE CONCEPT OF UNLOADING EXCESS BAGGAGE

"Unloading excess baggage" is a process which every revolutionary must undertake. It is essential for the progress of our work. Class background, emotional ties to family, attitude towards bourgeois education, religious background, attitude towards bourgeois "celebrations" and many other things must be critically analyzed as a person deepens their revolutionary commitment.

Mao Zedong discussed this process in his 1944 essay, "Our Study And The Current Situation". He stated: "In order to win new victories we must call on our Party cadres to get rid of the baggage and start up the machinery. 'To get rid of the baggage' means to free our minds of many encumbrances. Many things may become baggage, may become encumbrances, if we cling to them blindly and uncritically. Let us take some illustrations. Having made mistakes, you may feel that, come what may, you are saddled with them and so become dispirited; if you have not made mistakes, you may feel that you are free from error and so become conceited. Lack of achievement in work may breed pessimism and depression, while achievement may breed pride and arrogance. A comrade with a short record of struggle may shirk responsibility on this account, while a veteran may become opinionated because of his long record of struggle. Worker and peasant comrades, because of pride in their class origin, may look down upon intellectuals, while intellectuals, because they have a certain amount of knowledge, may look down upon workers and peasants. Any specialized skill may be capitalized on and so may lead to arrogance and contempt of others. Even one's age may become ground for conceit. The young, because they are bright and capable, may look down upon the old; and the old, because they are rich in experience, may look down upon the young. All such things become encumbrances or baggage if there is no critical awareness. An important reason why some comrades are very lofty, isolating themselves from the masses and making repeated mistakes, is that they carry such baggage. Thus, a prerequisite for maintaining close links with the masses and making fewer mistakes is to examine one's baggage, to get rid of it and so emancipate the mind."

Edward Pickersgill did not understand this concept. Throughout his life in the Alive Production Collective he promoted that "unloading excess baggage" necessarily involved a superficial theatrical demonstration of radical rupture.

For example on one occasion, in order for the Collective to know that a comrade had come to terms with his religious background,

Edward Pickersgill said that the comrade had to demonstrate it with a theatrical display of ripping up religious books. Only such a display satisfied Edward Pickersgill.

The reality of the situation, however, is that the superficial theatrics was no reflection of whether or not the comrade had critically come to terms with his religious background. Edward Pickersgill was satisfied if it *appeared* that someone had freed their mind of encumbrances; he wasn't concerned about whether excess baggage had *actually* been discarded.

The ripping up of the religious books occurred at the beginning of the Mini-Cultural Revolution. The comrade had been openly discussing his religious background in Collective meetings and had brought a number of his religious books into a Collective work area in order to show them to the other comrades. He made it clear that he had no use for the books and suggested they be put in a Collective library as reference material.

Edward Pickersgill scoffed at this idea and said that the only proper thing to be done with reactionary books like that was to rip them up. He said that by ripping the books up the comrade would have an experience of "unloading excess baggage" which he would never forget.

The comrade's reaction to this suggestion lacked in enthusiasm. He knew that this was a petty thing to do. It would in no way influence him in coming to terms with his religious background. He also knew that the books could be useful to the Collective, either as part of its library or sold to a second hand bookshop for cash. He suggested to Edward Pickersgill that the books could be sold for a good sum of money.

Edward Pickersgill openly laughed at this idea and mocked the comrade for attempting to run away from the struggle to come to terms with his religious background. At this point the comrade said to himself that this was a small point, and it really didn't matter, but if this is what the leader of the Collective required of him he'd go ahead and do it. He then started ripping up the books.

At first the ripping of books involved only the comrade concerned and Edward Pickersgill. Many other comrades were aware of the process going on but stayed clear of it. The general attitude was that here was another of Edward Pickersgill's superficial "radical ruptures" taking place and the Collective would just have to bear with it. A number of comrades were unsettled by the process, however, since they knew the Collective had *nothing* to fear from these reactionary religious books. There was no material reason to have them destroyed.

The process got right out of hand when Edward Pickersgill's two children suddenly came into the Collective work area. Edward Pickersgill immediately got his two kids involved in the book ripping process, gleefully exclaiming that this would be a process they would remember for the rest of their lives. He told them that there are good books and bad books in the world, and since these books talked about Jesus and God they were bad and had to be ripped up.

The kids jumped right in, ripping away with abandon. Needless to say they will remember that experience for the rest of their lives. However, the understanding of the significance of their action will only be realized by them when (1) they understand that dialectical materialists have no reason to be scared of the rotten metaphysics of religion; and (2) they investigate the reactionary ultra-"Left" nature of their father's actions.

There are many other examples of Edward Pickersgill engineering a theatrical "radical rupture" to suit his own incorrect view of the political transformation in an individual. Some of the best known occurred when male comrades were told to shave off their beards or cut long hair in order to mark a concrete political change in their lives.

Edward Pickersgill applied this stupid line to himself. Every time he cut his hair or shaved his beard, he acted as if this marked a great political transformation in his life. He'd go strutting around like a peacock and expect other comrades to make excited comments about his new demeanour. When other comrades didn't say enough

in the way of praise, Edward Pickersgill would criticize them for being "vegetables" and not paying attention to the world around them!

An interesting example of this silly behaviour occurred in late August, 1978 when Edward Pickersgill came into Collective work areas to present some position papers to the Collective. His appearance was neat and clean, a sharp contrast to his scruffy degenerate look of the past few years. He was clean shaven. He sported a new hair cut, a new pair of pants, a crisp shirt and a new leather briefcase. This was how Edward Pickersgill envisioned that a "professional Marxist-Leninist" looked and this was the role he tried to play. His anti-Collective and counter-revolutionary papers exposed his true nature!

Basically the question of beards is altogether superficial. Whether someone has or hasn't got a beard or long hair isn't a point of political principle.

In a document written on the occasion of one of Edward Pickersgill's proposals that a comrade shave off his beard, a comrade expressed the correct "anti-superficial transformation" line. The comrade stated: "I have a long way to go, shaving won't change the world, and it won't root out the bourgeois lines in me. A commitment to engage in the class struggle and transform my thinking and practice is the only thing that will do this. I make that commitment."

It is interesting to note that the comrade did remove the beard just to prove that one way or the other the question of shaving was not a point of principle on which one should make a stand. Yet for Edward Pickersgill the physical act of shaving did have a political significance all by itself. This view of how a person frees his mind of encumbrances is downright twisted!

There are dozens of other examples of Edward Pickersgill's line on "radical rupture". The few which we will cite graphically bring out Edward Pickersgill's total anti-people contempt.

A comrade joined the Alive Production Collective while nearing the end of completing his doctoral studies in English literature. Soon afterwards Edward Pickersgill launched an attack on the question of whether the Collective or his doctorate meant more to him. Edward Pickersgill's line was that the comrade had to show he was willing to give up his doctorate in order to "prove" he had overcome his petty bourgeois careerist ambitions. Of course, this is pure nonsense. The comrade could have (1) quit his doctorate and maintained his careerist ambitions; or (2) continued in his doctorate and maintained his careerist ambitions; or (3) quit his doctorate and given up his careerist ambitions; or (4) continued in his doctorate and given up his careerist ambitions. However, Edward Pickersgill only presented things in terms of possibilities 2 and 3.

Eventually, under consistent harassment from Edward Pickersgill, the comrade decided that he would quit his doctoral program. The majority of the people in the Collective respected this sincere decision and commended his decision to get a job in a factory and do good revolutionary work there.

However Edward Pickersgill treated the decision as the end of a long game. He told the Collective that he was only interested in seeing what the comrade would do. He said the comrade should now go ahead and finish the doctorate.

What was actually in Edward Pickersgill's mind was that the comrade could get a high paying job with his doctorate and bring in lots of money so that Edward Pickersgill could stash even more money away in his private fund! This dog regarded the process of dumping "excess baggage" as a game in which meaningful struggle had no part. He had total contempt for the struggle the comrade was waging against his careerist ambitions.

In a classic example from the early years of the Collective, Edward Pickersgill proposed to a comrade that if she was sincere about her revolutionary commitment, she should be willing to separate from her two week old baby. There was no concrete reason for such a "radical rupture". It was proposed in the spirit of Edward Pickersgill screwing the comrade's head around.

The campaign began when Edward Pickersgill issued a poster

which asked, "Is the new child a Collective kid or this individual's kid?" At a 7 hour meeting later that day, Edward Pickersgill viciously attacked the comrade, giving the line that just because the comrade gave birth to the child it didn't mean that she had any special right to determine the child's future. Edward Pickersgill also stripped the comrade's husband of his right to vote on any proposals at the meeting. In his analysis, Michelle Landriault was held up as the model mother and Edward Pickersgill's two kids as model revolutionary children.

On a number of occasions during this meeting, Edward Pickersgill asked the comrade whether she'd be willing to separate from her husband and child, go to another city by herself and do Alive work there. The comrade replied "no" time after time, but after a while she realized that Edward Pickersgill's relentless harassment would only cease if she said "yes". The final time the question was asked she resignedly replied "yes".

Edward Pickersgill "held forth" for half an hour before he answered the comrade's positive response to his question. He told the comrade that it was his opinion that she shouldn't go anywhere, he'd only asked the question to see how she'd respond.

POKING HIS NOSE INTO ALL ASPECTS OF COLLECTIVE ACTIVITY

In connection with the line of shaking people up and removing them from the work, Edward Pickersgill removed people from programs which he had nothing to do with. In his mind he was the only effective problem solver in the Collective, regardless of whether he knew what was going on or not.

All those who were involved in the collectivized finance system had their food shopping organized collectively. This had usually been done by one person. As in the rest of society, the cost of buying food needed more money each week. To try to come to terms with this, that one person began investigating bulk food buying. She went to Edward Pickersgill to report on her initiative and discuss the problem. His response was to ignore her ideas and simply accuse her of being extravagant. This was ironic given the fact that she was actually making suggestions for saving money. Edward Pickersgill then accused her of being an individualist and of being in a panic. He yanked her off the job.

In setting up a new organizing pattern for shopping under Michelle Landriault's direct control, Edward Pickersgill did not consult with the original organizer of the food shopping. When she offered to assist, the petty despot told her it was out of her hands and she should forget about it. By using this method for "solving" the problem, Edward Pickersgill alienated this person from an aspect of the work in which she had been involved and shown initiative. By refusing to even let her act as a consultant, he was in effect telling the comrade that her past experience was no good. His attitude in this situation was to tear down all that had been developed in a certain area of work and put different people in charge. This did not change the original problem.

THE STARVATION DIET

In Edward Pickersgill's hands the concept of streamlining food purchases became "cut the food bills in half" — an unrealistic proposal which had serious political and nutritional repercussions in the Collective. This policy became known in the Collective as the "Starvation Diet". Basically, the "Starvation Diet" was forced on the households of those people participating in the collectivized finance system on the basis that they had to circumvent what he called a "desperate economic crisis".

Since Edward Pickersgill, assisted by his hard core factional partner Michelle Landriault, was in charge of financial affairs, other Collective members accepted in good faith his analysis that there was a dire financial situation. The members willingly agreed to a big change in diet when Edward Pickersgill presented the case as, "either change your diet or cut back on the political program!"

As it turned out, the Collective was not in such a major financial crisis. The organization always needs money, since any known surplus of funds is immediately slotted for political work. The situation then was not significantly different from the on-going "financial crisis" in the Collective's life. In retrospect, we can see that the facts presented in justifying the "Starvation Diet" were incomplete and misleading. Edward Pickersgill was simply creating conditions so that he could salt away large amounts of money. Overall, the Collective made a serious mistake in allowing its financial management to be centralized in two individuals' hands to the extent that the ins and outs of our financial system were largely unknown to other members.

Edward Pickersgill implemented the "Starvation Diet" through the Bethune Unit of the Collective. Since the leader of this work unit was himself, and since his closest "comrade-in-arms", Michelle Landriault, was also in this unit, this was an ideal place to launch the campaign. Furthermore, the campaign was designed to establish the Bethune Unit as a unit of "uncompromising revolutionary action", as opposed to the other basic work units which were engaged in such "academic" and "impractical" tasks as producing the content of Alive Magazine every week. Out of this campaign, Edward Pickersgill began terming the majority of Bethune Unit members as "hard-nosed" and engineered the removal of the remaining "soft-nosed" members from the unit.

The process whereby these members were "booted" out of the unit was another instance of the tactic of solving problems by shaking things up. One of these comrades was indeed having problems but they arose from her sexual social relationship with Edward Pickersgill and her involvement in his faction. These problems could not be solved by booting her out of her work unit. The other member was accused of not making any contributions to the unit's work. In actual fact he was doing much of Edward Pickersgill's lay-out work along with numerous other tasks directly under the "training" of the petty despot. Booting these comrades out of his unit was more a means of consolidating Edward Pickersgill's leadership over the unit than a matter of real concern for their problems. The "Hard-Nosed Remnants of the Bethune Unit" was his unit's new appellation and, in a total distortion, he compared this unit to the model Hard-Boned 6th Company in China.

In every participating Collective home the food-economizing plan began with a great facade of democracy. A seven day meal plan was posted and Collective members were asked to express their opinions on the menus and suggest foods they would prefer. Initially a number of Collective members did participate in this process, although a great many others made the mistake of sitting back and saying, "Whatever food we get will probably be okay." Those who expressed special preferences in this public process had their opinions disregarded. After a few weeks the democratic facade was removed, and Michelle Landriault engaged in menu planning without consulting those who would have to eat the food. This program established one set of internal economic norms for the Collective and entirely different norms for the faction.

Snack food like pop, chips and cookies were immediately removed from the shopping lists. The main consumers of these items were factional members, and the truth of this fact was revealed as the "Starvation Diet" progressed in time. Special snack foods for factional members gradually made their way into the kitchen cupboard of the factional household. First popcorn and then pop, pizza and chips "snuck" in. Expensive cans of Irish stew, a favourite with Edward Pickersgill were also purchased. All this was organized on a factional basis to serve the personal needs of factional members. Who were really the big individualists?

The case of the purchase of pop is an interesting one. Before the "Starvation Diet" pop was purchased in bulk for quite a cheap price. Twelve large bottles of pop cost \$3.00. It was viewed as a worthwhile purchase because a number of Collective members preferred pop to other beverages like tea and coffee. Pop was then removed from all Collective shopping lists. However, in the months to follow, pop made its way back into the cupboards at the

factional members' home, but *not* on the same economical basis as before. It was impetuously purchased at variety stores and as a result was quite expensive. Initially the pop was earmarked for Michelle Landriault who was under doctor's orders to drink flat gingerale. She soon began diversifying her tastes to cola and other factionalists joined in on the pop guzzling. By July, pop was a regular item in the fridge at the factional home, although the "Starvation Diet" was still in effect elsewhere.

Collective economic restraint obviously wasn't paramount on the factionalists' minds. Edward Pickersgill particularly exhibited this in the gluttonous way he consumed pop. Visitors to this home were always shocked to see the petty despot remove a pop bottle from the fridge, take a long swig out of it and then put it back in the fridge.

The "Starvation Diet" campaign made eating quite a dull, unenjoyable, unnutritious and even intimidating process for Collective members. Variety was removed from the menus. There were standard "cheap" meals which regularly appeared on the menus. After 4 months Collective members found they couldn't stand the thought of some of these meals. As a result, a majority of people were losing their appetites, eating less and losing weight. One Collective member lost so much weight in this way that her doctor told her that if the weight loss continued he wanted to do some tests on her to determine its cause.

Another reason for the lack of enjoyment was that a number of Collective members weren't getting enough to eat. Heavier eaters were cut off from second helpings in everything but starchy foods like bread and butter. There was never any extra meat, vegetables or dairy products. Their only recourse was to eat wherever else they could — at work or at friends' houses.

The actual meals, besides lacking in variety, were also very poorly balanced nutritionally. There were never any fresh cooked vegetables included. Instead, day after day, there were tasteless frozen peas, frozen corn or frozen beans. Salads were a regular menu item, but were quite boring. At one point a comrade asked Michelle Landriault why she didn't purchase some green peppers to liven up salads. Her reply was that "nobody in the Collective likes green peppers". An investigation has shown that the vast majority of adults involved like green peppers.

One of the most vicious actions on Michelle Landriault's part was her conscious neglect of the interests of those comrades with special food preferences. Rather than organizing to meet these comrades' needs, she organized to block these comrades from eating properly. On some evenings these comrades would sit down to a meal and quite literally not have more than one thing they could eat in front of them. In the same vein, those comrades working on afternoon shifts asked for enough food to be purchased so that leftovers from dinners could be set aside for them. This was never done on a consistent basis. Michelle Landriault was a petty tyrant in charge of the "Starvation Diet".

One of the most oppressive aspects of this diet occurred at the end of meals. At that point a Collective member, under the direction of Edward Pickersgill and Michelle Landriault, would count up the leftovers. "How many frozen peas are left over?" "Any boiled potatoes?" This process would often go on while other comrades were still eating.

Michelle Landriault exposed her petty stupidity on the front of food purchasing. In order to economize she would consistently buy cheap luncheon meats which would remain uneaten and eventually be thrown out. On one occasion she got a real bargain on chicken necks. They were also thrown out.

Rather than employ the method of comparing the prices between different stores on the basis of weekly newspaper ads, Michelle Landriault would send the assigned foodshopper to a particular store with instructions to buy the cheapest brand they could find of such and such an item. The result was that the foodshopper had to do all kinds of arithmetic calculations in the store, thus wasting a lot of time.

Another quirk in Michelle Landriault's food shopping plan was

that although she didn't bother comparison shopping between stores in order to find low priced specials, she always sent the foodshopper to a different store for a certain brand of strawberry jam. This strawberry jam was usually the only item bought at this particular store. The explanation given to the foodshopper was that a particular comrade would eat only this specific brand of strawberry jam. Michelle Landriault invoked one of the comrade's names along with this explanation. Subsequent investigation shows that this comrade doesn't even eat strawberry jam and that it was Edward Pickersgill who had this fetish for a special brand!

This inconsistent and oppressive "Starvation Diet" was topped off with Edward Pickersgill's persistent rhetorical questions: "We're eating well aren't we?" and "That was a nutritious meal, wasn't it?"

This needed Collective members who were only putting up with the poor diet in order, they thought, to preserve the Collective's political work.

Edward Pickersgill and Michelle Landriault, the ringleaders of the "Starvation Diet", were also the biggest individualists on the front of having food purchased and prepared especially for them. Michelle Landriault had very bourgeois tastes when it came to food. Whenever she went out, both before and during the "Starvation Diet", she had to stop and have a snack. Milkshakes were her regular snack and full course restaurant meals were her favourite pastime.

In this period, Edward Pickersgill was the only person who had special meals and snacks cooked for him. His standard meal was fried eggs, ketchup and frozen peas.

It was very common for Edward Pickersgill to skip meals, most often sleeping through them. When he skipped supper, he would ask that a serving of everything on the table be put on his plate and kept warm for him in the oven. "I'll eat it later", was his standard response to a supper call. It was very rare that this petty despot ate what was set aside for him. At first he would just ignore the plate of food and have a special meal cooked up which he would eat, leaving the standard fare in the oven with the warmer on to waste electricity until the next morning. Then some comrade would just throw the dried out meal in the garbage. So, the comrades stopped putting his food in the oven, leaving it on top of the stove with the idea that he could warm the meal up when he actually wanted it. Edward Pickersgill's response to this was to take the plate of food and throw it in the garbage himself, before having his special meal cooked up. This wasteful performance was so common that the comrades who prepared the supper began to creatively adapt Edward Pickersgill's slogan "I'll eat later" by saying, "Just put a plate of food aside, Ed wants to throw it away later."

Needless to say the money wasted in throwing away food and using electricity in this manner ate into the savings made by starving the other comrades!

Edward Pickersgill was also the first one to propose that food be picked up from a fast food restaurant rather than be prepared in Collective members' homes. On one occasion he violated the "Starvation Diet" by ordering one meal for 7 people, spending \$80 on "take-out" food only to have more than half of it go uneaten!

The "Starvation Diet" in the Collective ended in August, 1978 when we overthrew these two corrupt "leaders" and started eating wholesome meals again!

