

SPEECH BY THE ALIVE PRODUCTION COLLECTIVE, AUGUST 6, 1979.

## — UNITY FOR REVOLUTION —

I have a tough proposition on two counts. One is I have to follow the singing of *that* song ("Canada, Our Own Land") which is very difficult. Two is that I have to fit a speech that's about two hours long into half an hour. (*Laughter*) There's a lot of things to be said.

In our July 2 speech, we spoke a lot about the United Front which means unity amongst different strata of society, unity between different sections, different classes of society. We talked about unity in our class itself, unity between various proletarian organizations, unity in the proletariat as a class. We talked about unity between various revolutionary groups, the importance of having unity on the Left. We talked about the integral connection between these three kinds of unity, all of which are expressed very well in the United Front.

One point about that July 2 speech is that to a lot of people in a lot of ways its theme just adds up to being interesting points for clarification. A much more interesting question, a much more immediate question for people we talk to — for people like you who attend meetings like this — is how do we, the Alive Production Collective, unite with you people, people who are in contact with us? How do you unite with us? How do we unite amongst ourselves? How do we work together?

Many of our contacts, of course, already know the answer because we work with them and they know in practice how that happens. Many of our contacts don't know the answer. Because we have many new contacts, it is an important question to us now. In our political work, we have a lot of new people coming into contact with us, more and more people. Obviously, that aspect of our work — many new contacts — and this aspect of our work — holding political meetings — don't overlap too much. We hold political meetings that have only small attendance, yet we turn around and say, "We have many new contacts". So, what that means — if we're telling the truth, of course — (*Laughter*) is that more people *could* be here.

Perhaps more people *would* be here if they knew the answer to these questions: How do people unite with us? How do we unite with individuals?

Perhaps we should say, in more of a self-critical spirit, that more people *would* be here if we implemented the answer to these questions more and more in our practice. We'll get to that — after this meeting. (*Laughter*)

There is a story that is a good bridge between the subject of the July 2 meeting's speech and today's talk — between the concept of different classes uniting, people with definite differences uniting, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the concept of people uniting who do not have such differences. The anecdote is from the life of Lenin.

At one point in Lenin's life, between the 1905 revolution and the October Revolution in 1917, he made an astounding announcement about one of the Bolshevik newspapers. He said: from now on, we *can* and we *will* pay contributors for articles they submit to the newspaper. This caused quite a big uproar. None of the revolutionary newspapers paid people for contributed writing. What explains why Lenin could make this announcement is that at the time the Bolshevik Party was financially in quite good shape because a 23-year-old named Nikolai Schmidt had given them some money. This young man was a nephew of Morozov, one of a large family of millionaires in Tsarist Russia who mainly owned textile mills. Nikolai Schmidt himself was a factory owner. He owned a furniture factory in Moscow.

After the abortive revolutionary attempt to overthrow the Russian Tsar in 1905, a lot of people became politicized, a lot of people became revolutionary. In 1905, Nikolai Schmidt went over to the workers. He became a Bolshevik. Although this action was extremely popular with the Bolsheviks and the workers, Nikolai was not popular with the ruling class. He had turned his factory

into a more democratic work place. So, this factory became known by the police as a "devil's nest". In the Moscow Uprising this factory was a headquarters for certain aspects of the activity. Eventually, Schmidt was arrested. He was brutally treated in prison, beaten and tortured. As a final torture, the police took him to see his factory after they had put it down. All throughout the factory were littered the bodies of the workers who worked for him, "his" workers for whom he had created a better working situation. Then, they took him back to prison and killed him, too.

However, while he was in prison, between torture sessions, Nikolai Schmidt had managed, in a daring way, to get a message out of the prison to announce that he was bequeathing all his property and money to the Bolsheviks. This is where Lenin got the money to pay for contributed articles in the Bolshevik newspaper. They also bought weapons with some of this money, some of the fighting tools that later appeared in the October Revolution.

It is interesting to note that the younger sister of Nikolai Schmidt did the same thing. Having seen what her brother went through, how dedicated he was to revolution, she decided to give her share of the inheritance to the Bolsheviks, too. Trouble was, she wasn't of age and, in Tsarist Russia, a woman who wasn't of age couldn't get control of her inheritance unless she was married and her husband gave consent. She was in love with a leader of the Bolshevik Party. If she had married this man she loved, her husband would've been a known Bolshevik, from whom consent meant she would not get the money. So, she got married to another Bolshevik, who had managed to keep himself on a legal footing, in a fictitious marriage, got control of the money with his consent, bequeathed it to the Bolsheviks and then actually married the man she loved. In this way Elizaveta Schmidt emulated her brother Nikolai.

Between classes you can have the kind of unity we spoke of on July 2. This story of two people — brother and sister — from the capitalist class in Russia who joined the Bolsheviks is significant because it shows that between people of different classes you can also have actual organizational unity, the type of unity we're talking about in today's speech. People from different classes, different backgrounds come forward to participate in revolution.

One of the key questions in today's speech is: Who are the revolutionaries? We answer this question very simply: Revolutionaries are ordinary people. World history and our own experience in Canada tell us there is not one path leading to revolutionary commitment. This is one thing we know very well. People come from all kinds of backgrounds. People come through all kinds of life experiences before joining with revolutionaries, making a revolutionary commitment.

Many believe there is only one path leading to revolutionary commitment. The concept that there is only one path comes, in part, from the fact that once revolutionary commitment is made there is one path. One unites with revolutionaries and there is one path, in the sense of a single direction to a single goal, *from* that point of making revolutionary commitment but there is not only one path leading *to* revolutionary commitment. We say there are as many paths leading to revolutionary commitment as there are people who are revolutionary.

People come from diverse backgrounds. Just look at some of these guys who one might call the "big name" revolutionaries. (*Indicates five hanging portraits.*) Look at Mao Zedong. He was just an ordinary person. People sometimes have the false impression that Mao was born to make revolution, that he was born with revolution in his blood, that he was born with a genius for class struggle. In fact, Mao was a person from the ordinary peasantry in China. He was trained to be a teacher in the provincial school system — a very ordinary job. He wasn't an astounding person at the very outset, not a person from an astounding background. However, he became an astounding figure in revolution.

Stalin is the same. Stalin was just the son of an ordinary worker.

He went to school at a seminary. He was thrown out of the seminary for organizing study groups amongst the other students — they studied something other than religion.

Lenin. He described himself as coming from an ordinary family. Perhaps his family had a higher standard of living than the families of these other two. Was Lenin educated in some special way that lends itself to being a revolutionary genius? Lenin himself describes his training as preparing to be a second-rate lawyer. Pretty ordinary.

Who are the small time revolutionaries? That's us. We're the small time revolutionaries. We don't have "big names". There are people like us all over the world. There are many more small timers in revolution than there are "big names". There are not many Mao Zedongs, Joseph Stalins, and V.I. Lenins. There are, however, lots of people like us. Revolutions are led by people like this (*Indicates hanging portraits again*) but revolutions are made by people like us. Revolutions are made by small timers.

Revolutionaries exist amongst the ordinary people all over the world. Revolutionary consciousness comes up amongst ordinary people. Sometimes when we make a statement like that people ask, "Well, what about these extremely repressive countries? You say, that in a country like the Soviet Union the ruling clique is the only group that is allowed to say it is revolutionary but it is not in fact revolutionary. Is there someone who is actually revolutionary in that country?"

A group in Vancouver called Red Star Collective put out a pamphlet that contained a humorous story about this. Whether it's true or not, we don't know, but the story expresses the basic rebellion, the dissatisfaction with the way things are, the sentiment to have things change which exists in that country.

One day Brezhnev disguised himself so that he could go out amongst the broad masses to see what people actually thought of him. Apparently he went to a movie. He sat through the whole movie with people from the working class all around him. At the end of the movie, the national anthem was played while Brezhnev's image was shown on the screen. All the people in the theatre stood up, straight and tall, and Brezhnev was quite taken by this. He was astounded even to think that people liked him so well and he started to cry. The person standing behind him leaned over, tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Stand up, you fool. We all feel just as you do but there's no use putting your neck in a noose!" (*Laughter*)

So, who makes revolution? The broad masses. People like that person in the Soviet Union. People like us.

The broad masses includes you and me; it is people like you and me. Revolutionaries are people who have faults, people who aren't born perfect, people who aren't born to make revolution but who make revolution nonetheless. There are many contradictions among us as revolutionaries, among us as members of the broad masses. There are many contradictions along the way to making revolution. There are many contradictions just because we are real people. We have our differences.

However, we have one common point in the realm of our needs and our wishes. There's a common point between us, the Alive Production Collective, our needs and wishes as a revolutionary organization, and you, the people attending this meeting, your needs and wishes as ordinary people in society. There's a common point between the needs and wishes we have and the needs and wishes of those people who were invited here tonight as our contacts but who didn't come. There's a common point between our needs and wishes and the needs and wishes of those people who we haven't even made contact with in order to invite them here tonight — we have a common point with people who don't even know us.

The common point in all of these relations is: we need change. We can't properly fulfil our lives' potentials. We can't properly fulfil our aspirations. We have wishes in life that can't be fulfilled.

The reason that we cannot fulfil our lives' potentials is because a few are fulfilling more than their lives' potentials. A few in this society are fulfilling their aspirations and very high-flying aspirations at

that. A few in society are fulfilling every one of their wishes and they're doing so at our expense. We're limited in our wishes. We're limited in our aspirations. We're limited in fulfilling our lives' potentials.

We're limited by oppression. We can't even fulfil our needs. Talking about aspirations, about wishes, is one thing but talking about needs is another thing. Some of us here can fulfill our needs. We have a certain job which gives us enough to eat, enough for shelter, enough for clothing. For many people in this Canadian society, this is not the case. For some people here, this is not the case. Definitely, for many people we know who are not here tonight, this is not the case. One thing we know is that this is becoming a more and more common case. More and more people are unemployed. More and more people don't have enough to eat, don't have enough to shelter their family, don't have enough for proper clothing.

We can say, about those people and about us, that we don't have the standard of living that is merited by the work that we perform everyday, by the production that we take part in. There are people who don't perform any work and who have more than a "satisfactory" standard of living. They have a very high standard of living whereas we and the people like us, who do work everyday, don't have the standard of living merited by the labour we do. We can't fulfil our needs in accordance with our labour because others are fulfilling their wishes at our expense.

So, we get the sentiment for change. Some of us get this sentiment very young, some of us get it when we are older in years but we do get the sentiment for change from the material conditions of our lives.

There's a joke — again from RSC — about a kid who got her sentiment for change very early in life and in grade two at school had one of these teachers who try to fool the kids. One day this teacher asked all her students to write an essay about the police. The kid wrote a one sentence essay: "Police are bastards!" (*Laughter*) So, the teacher was quite shocked. This isn't what such a person would think is good. The teacher organized with the police that her students get a tour of the department headquarters, that they get rides in the squad cars and so on. The kids went and they got their little joy rides, they got free snacks in the police cafeteria and they got told about how "a policeman is your friend". The next day the teacher asked her students to write another essay about the police. So, the little kid wrote something different in another one sentence essay that day. She wrote, "Police are cunning bastards." (*Laughter*)

That is getting the sentiment for change early. That kid knows what's going on in the world.

Revolutionaries are ordinary people with a sentiment for change but what is Revolution itself? That's the next question.

A lot of people think revolution is, "Well, we'll see you at the barricades." As though after this meeting, we'll be throwing furniture out into the road in front of the building to stop the police coming onto this street and we'll be shooting at them if they do. This isn't what we mean when we say revolution is a process that is already being built. This isn't what revolution is.

At a certain stage, revolution takes a form something like that. At a certain stage, revolution takes the form of seizing State power. There's no doubt about that. However, that alone is not what revolution is. The selection from Lenin that was read aloud is very good on this point. Revolution is organizing the people more than it is seizing State power, more than it is violence. Organizing the people is a constant thread through the revolution, violent upheaval is just a moment in the whole historical development of a revolution. The act of seizing State power is also a moment in the revolution. It is a crucial moment in the revolution but it is just a moment. It is a moment which allows us to actually create the possibility we don't now have — the possibility to fulfil our needs and wants, our wishes and aspirations, our lives' potentials. It creates the possibility of harnessing the productive forces in favour of the ranks who produce. In other words, the people who produce reap the benefit and the wealth that comes into being with that productive labour. It gives us the possibility to build a new society,

to no longer live in this oppressive society. All of us can live in a society together which is new, which is better.

Reactionaries sometimes say to us, "If you like revolution why don't you go and live in China? If you want to live in a new society and they're building one in China, why don't you go and live there?" If they're not reactionaries who are up to date on current world affairs, they'll say "Go live in bloody Russia!" or "Albania" or "East Germany" and so on. We answer that we're Canadians, that we have every right to live here, that we want to live here. We want to build a new Canadian society, not go to live in the new Chinese society. It is an illusion that we want to transplant the new Chinese society to Canadian soil.

It is also to foster an illusion that we are all told in this society that revolution is just a violent upheaval. This is emphasized and re-emphasized that to fight for revolution is, simply and solely, to fight for violent upheaval. For some people, seeing the necessity of the moment of violent upheaval is difficult. Violent seizure of state power is a difficult concept. Some people think it is quite bad to have a violent upheaval. However none of these people think it is bad to build a new society. Nobody thinks it is bad to harness the productive forces in favour of those who labour. Nobody thinks that equality amongst all people is so bad. Nobody thinks that sharing benefit amongst all equally is so bad. Nobody thinks that should be painted as black as the violent upheaval should be painted. Nobody here thinks so, anyway. The class enemy — the imperialists, the sell out capitalists — thinks all that is so bad. That is why they paint it so black. That is why they emphasize only the violent upheaval and not the new society. We aren't for violent upheaval in itself but because it opens the door for the new society.

Revolutionaries are ordinary people. Revolutionaries make revolution. Ordinary people become revolutionaries. No one is born to make revolution. This is an important concept. People develop into revolutionaries as a result of the material conditions of society, the material circumstances in which they live. People develop into revolutionaries through a sentiment for change. The sentiment for change is developed by very strong and very definite material conditions in life.

Revolutionaries aren't special. Revolutionaries are ordinary people. Revolutionaries are people who have husbands, who have wives. People who have boyfriends, who have girlfriends. People who have children. People who work for a living. People who work for a living but can't make a living. People who live in families where somebody works for a living but can't make a living. This is where the sentiment for change develops.

A lot of reactionaries paint a picture of revolutionaries whereby, besides being just naturally violent and solely wanting a violent upheaval — as though, if there is not violence every five minutes, there is dissatisfaction — revolutionaries are also painted as being lunatics. I know I'm not a very good case in point against this argument myself. (Laughter) This, however, is contrary to my actual wish. Some people, though, dedicate themselves to proving that revolutionaries are lunatics. We talk about these people often in our speeches and in our magazine. That's because they try to give actual revolutionaries like us a bad name. They try to prove that revolutionaries are lunatics by calling themselves "revolutionaries" when, in fact, what they are is a bunch of lunatics. We call one bunch of these characters Bainzites [also known as CPC(M-L) or the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) which is definitely a misnomer — the proper term we use is after its misleader Bains] and we have one locally who even amongst the Bainzites themselves is known as a lunatic.

However, revolutionaries are not lunatics. Revolutionaries are just ordinary people. Revolutionaries are not people who somehow have had violence injected into their veins. Revolutionaries are people who want change, who aren't satisfied with the present society.

We say, "Well, why don't you get involved in a revolutionary organization?" We say, "Why don't you unite with us on some level?" We say, "We can actually do joint work even if you don't actually get involved in the revolutionary organization." A lot of people respond, "Well, to be involved in, or to do joint work with, a

revolutionary organization means you've lost some marbles." The response is: they're lunatics; to unite with them means you're a lunatic, too.

Lots of other wrong things come up in these responses. People have the false impression that revolutionaries press-gang new members into their organizations. People have the false impression that doing joint work with a revolutionary organization is a proposition of: it's all or nothing. Again, our friends, the Bainzites are among those responsible for propagating this consciousness. They actually tell people who get involved with them, "It's all or nothing". People are only supposed to get involved with them for between three and six months. They're quite efficient. They will have disillusioned most honest individuals by then. In that three to six months they consciously use the phrase, "it's all or nothing". This is usually when people leave them. People say, "Well, if you think I'm going to be all like you, Cruise, I'm leaving!" (Laughter)

We don't say, it's all or nothing. Concretely, why does this phenomenon exist which was alluded to earlier whereby we invite a lot of people to this type of meeting and everytime we do we know only a small number will turn out? We have a lot of contacts but they don't come to these type of functions. The reactionaries have a ready slogan on this question, too: "If you go to those meetings, they'll sign you up." We don't know where that comes from — we haven't asked tonight's audience to get signed up yet. Another variation of the same slogan, "Just to go to the meeting shows you're really committed." Committed to a lunatic asylum, one imagines.

"If you go to a meeting, they'll hand you a gun and tell you to go out and shoot the class enemy." This is another false impression that some people have about revolutionaries, that we are this kind of people. We aren't this kind of people.

We get a kick out of the response to our invitations to these meetings from some people. There are misconceptions about what we're doing. Just before this meeting somebody was telling me about a funny response. We put out a leaflet about these meetings, explaining concretely, as practically as we could, exactly what they are all about. So, one individual read that leaflet and remarked,

#### TEMPORARY LOSS: PERMANENT VICTORY

"They'll kill you",  
the warning voices shrilly cried.

"Maybe they will",  
the calm voice of determination replied.

"I may die, but my people live on.  
Their struggle for justice is bound to be won.  
You, our oppressors may live for today,  
but your class is condemned to rot and decay."

A sneering grin of perverse delight,  
on the face of the torturers of those who fight.  
The deed is done, a hero dies.  
In the wake of the murder, the people arise.

To those who fight, death may come,  
but their sacrifice means that victory is won.  
A chance we must take, the fighters declare.  
Death does not scare them, their lives are to share.

No chance for the murderers, no risk to take.  
Their fate is sealed, the time is late.  
Death is inevitable, the end is near.  
No pleading will halt it, no trembling in fear.

The wheels of history relentlessly turn.  
In raging fires of justice these creatures will burn.  
No reason to stumble, no reason to bend.  
Death will be transitory, we'll live in the end.

Joan Stevenson

"The only trouble with that leaflet is that it makes it sound like they really want people to come to their meetings." (Laughter) So, when this individual's friend told me this here tonight, I said, "Yeah?" (Laughter) "...What's wrong with that?" That individual has the impression there is something wrong with this, that we should be more casual, less "high pressure". Perhaps we should be like the reformists who organize meetings and hope people won't come? (Laughter)

Some people who don't actually live in the city have a funny misconception. People who live in this city don't have this particular misconception. The misconception is that the word "Alive" and the word "Guelph" are synonyms. If you mention Alive, Guelph pops into mind. If you mention Guelph, Alive pops into mind. They seem to feel that this whole city is a territory that we fully control. (Laughter) If they do come to one of these meetings, on the way in they'll be stopped on the outskirts of town at a road checkpoint (Laughter) by fully armed revolutionaries (Laughter), they'll be asked for their "LBA Pass" — Liberated Base Area Pass, eh — "Do you have a pass from the Alive Production Collective allowing you into the city?" (Laughter) This is a misconception. However, we have a sense of humour and we've been doing some intriguing to see if we can't build up this misconception. Right on the Hanlon Expressway which takes you out of the city near the Stone Road crossing, they are constructing a big housing subdivision which they call "George Steffler Residential Park"! (Laughter) We've been telling people we arranged this. You know, George Steffler is our poet. (Laughter) There's also a little municipal park named after George Steffler. This is our Liberated Base Area. Either that or George Steffler is a local personage and construction developer and publishing his poetry is an example of Alive uniting with the patriotic national bourgeoisie. (Laughter) We tell all the people up in Toronto, "No kidding! There is a park, George Steffler Park." (Laughter)

Revolutionaries aren't involved in lunacy. Revolutionaries are not involved in immediate armed struggle, immediate violence — after this meeting we're not going to go and start chewing up the asphalt, just for something destructive to do. What does revolution involve? Revolution involves commitment but not like they say when they warn, "It'll mean committed." Not an abstract commitment but the commitment that comes from dissatisfaction in everyday life.

The unity in a revolutionary organization is a voluntary political association. The commitment is voluntary. This means you don't "sign up" for life, you don't sign your life away if you do some joint work with us. This means you don't sign your life away when you come to a meeting in response to our invitations. In Ireland they have an organization of armed struggle called the IRA which has the slogan: "Once in, never out". That means, once you join, the only way you can get out is in a box. This slogan fits the needs of the IRA for secrecy and internal security as an armed force. We support the IRA. However, this is the IRA's slogan, not our slogan. It's not our policy. People do joint work with us often on a pattern of "in, then out, then in, then out, then in again". We have experience with this; it's fairly common. People do get involved with us, then go off and do something else, come back to get involved with us again and it is all fine. We haven't sent anybody out in a coffin yet.

People ask, "What exactly does it mean when you say 'get involved with us'?" There are misconceptions here, too. "Does it mean I'll have to stand up and make a speech at a public meeting, too?" No. When people get involved with us it's a very unusual process even by the standards of other Leftist groups in Canada. Other groups tell people what to do when they first get involved. They assign you tasks the moment you say you have unity with them. We tend to take another approach. We tend to discuss with people. "What would you like to do? What are you capable of doing?" We find out what people's skills are, what people's interests are. Not only what they are capable of but what they feel confident doing in our work. This gives rise to different things for every different person, all kinds of different things. Different life

experiences give rise to different levels of consciousness. People have differing levels of consciousness. People with differing levels of consciousness do different things with us. Different life experiences bring people from different directions to make the same commitment, we already said this, but people have different willingness in terms of time and energy in working with us. We accept all that. We say it's normal. It's extremely normal that differences in commitment should exist.

Some groups say that the minimum standard in getting involved with them is a certain quantity of work. We say the minimum standard in getting involved with us is a certain quality of work. We want a certain quality of work but if we only get that quality on the basis of only five minutes a week in some place 150 miles from Guelph, we don't mind as long as it achieves that quality. If in the rest of the week, there's a different standard as the individual pursues his or her own life rather than a small commitment to the Alive which has been made; if in the rest of the week, there's a more significant quantity assigned to other things, we don't mind. Like we have already said, different interests give rise to different involvements.

Concretely, what do people do when they unite with us?

With Alive there are lots of different things. Anybody who reads the magazine knows many people contribute poems, short stories and the like. Some other people never write a thing for the magazine in their lives but they distribute it. Some people help with financial donations. Some people just read Alive. We consider that a commitment of sorts. We consider our readers to be an important part of our work. We consider it valuable that people read the educational material that we produce.

We consider all those things to be commitments. If people say, "Commitment? I'm not sure about that!" We say, "Do you read the magazine? Well, that's a commitment of sorts right there." Thus, it is clear a commitment is nothing to be scared of. When we speak of commitment, we're talking about something quite varied, something on many levels, not one fixed idea to be feared.

People hear us use expressions that they don't understand. What does it mean when we speak of "members", "supporters", "friends", "contacts"? These are identifications for different levels that people take up in working with us. Here in this meeting we have "members", "supporters", "friends", and "contacts" in attendance. There are probably even some "readers" here. (Laughter) We also have people who are "members", "supporters", "friends", and "contacts" who aren't attending the meeting tonight.

We have people who join us in very simple forms of unity. We have Alive Readers' Groups, which just means if someone is reading the magazine they can get together with other readers and/or with us, to discuss Alive, to tell us what they think of it. We have organized these Readers' Groups both in this city and elsewhere. These are good things.

At the university we have had another interesting form of unity, which certainly got under the skin of some people. There was a bunch of students who weren't interested in participating in Alive work but who were interested in doing some sort of revolutionary work. We suggested they form their own organization. So, they did. The organization became quite well known. It's called the Progressive Cultural Club. Through cooperating with the PCC, we worked with different people. After the formation of the PCC in Guelph, there were others formed elsewhere. Most of those died out as people moved out of the universities or developed serious differences with the PCC or Alive and split. All these clubs were forms of unity, forums for joint work. These were the result of different people coming forward to us, saying, "We want to do something but we don't want a commitment akin to you swallowing us whole hog. We just want to do something, we don't want to do everything. We want our unity with you to be something other than: it's all or nothing." So, we responded, "Fine". Out of that we worked some working unity out.

There is a small publication existing in this city called Guelph News Service which is organized on the same basis. People who

were somewhat impressed with the work of Alive but not impressed enough to actually work with it, had us say to them, "Well, what do you want to do?" They responded, "All this international stuff is a little high-blown for us. We can understand the situation in Guelph. How about us doing something focussed in Guelph? It seems what's going on in this factory is of interest to people other than those in this factory — let's popularize it." We said, "Sure."

We originally started GNS on this basis of joint work between members and non-members of the Alive Production Collective and a relatively short time ago, we re-established it on this basis. People work with GNS. In working with GNS, people work with us but they are not in a position where they have to go around saying, "We uphold the Alive Production Collective, Alive Magazine is this and that." However, they're doing one form of revolutionary work. They're working with us to do revolutionary education, which is important. That's good.

Then, Guelph News Service, the same as Alive, has its "supporters", its "friends", its "contacts", and its "readers". It has people who make financial donations. It has people who contribute writing. It has people who distribute but don't write in it. All these working relations are very important forms of practical unity.

Another form which has a history in Guelph, like the PCC and GNS, is an organization answering the interest in, and promoting

clarity on, the People's Republic of China. This is important. There existed some time ago a Canada-China Friendship Society in this city. Again our "friends" the Bainzites enter the question because they destroyed this form which existed previously. We at Alive have been waiting for a national China friendship organization to be founded before giving rise to a local form again — waiting in the hope of chartering a branch in the city. However, some others interested in China in the city have founded an Understanding China Society. We've been approached by the people organizing this society because we are local friends of China and some members of the Alive Production Collective will participate in this society.

This is interesting. Alive magazine is the Alive Production Collective's work. We don't presently have the time or energy to make a forum for interest in China our work. In the same way we don't have the time or energy to produce a local newsheet or to organize at the university. We have worked and will work with others to do these things, though. It's good to be able to do so.

The Alive Production Collective is our organization, we can express our friendship for China well from that political base. There are others who say, "I'm not for Alive magazine. I'm not for the Alive Production Collective. But I want to do something on China." So, we say, "Fine. Why not do something to express that interest in China? You certainly don't have to say that Alive

## WORKERS, I CANNOT SLEEP

Joseph William Lea

Workers, I cannot sleep  
but my soul does weep,  
as in bed these words I write,  
alone in the dark of night,  
nervous and lonely but brave still.

Workers I cannot sleep  
but my soul does weep.  
My mind is in turmoil.  
I toss. I turn. I boil.  
I try but I cannot sleep.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
In this society, a labourer's just a jerk,  
but at least I had steady work,  
was certain of food and rent,  
cared for family, grew content.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
Security came in selling my brawn,  
now, like my job, security is gone.  
Yes, they gave me the gate.  
My ex-boss, I really hate.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
Machines and men are compared with arrogance,  
they are not human, have no intelligence,  
but always machines are valued best.  
Workers, I cannot rest.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
No pension to machines they have to pay  
and machines are on time for work every day  
but we demand better wages  
to fight the greed of the ages.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
I went to the union, they ignored me too,  
didn't know problems exist, the old soft shoe.  
This union, like my life, has become a jest.  
Workers, I cannot rest.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
I beg of you don't become as me,  
don't trust a union to make you free.  
On the owners turn your ire,  
make action of your spirit's fire.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
I've been cast out,  
my protest, I shout.  
I'm past my best.  
Workers, I cannot rest.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
I lack in education,  
suffer frustration  
as I wend from door to door —  
if you have work, you I implore.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
Forget not how to count,  
to work simple figures, to account,  
to add and to multiply money is to be smart,  
learn it like a boss, you'll never lose heart.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
My mind is a garbage heap.  
As those in power deride and hiss,  
our ignorance is like a cobra's kiss.  
Workers, listen clear, you must awake.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
My wife doesn't weep,  
she no longer stays close to me,  
even my kids laugh at the father who used to be.  
We have lost our harmony.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
Before life, stills in my breast  
I must shout words of protest:  
We only want to be human and alive,  
for this ideal we must strive.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
The owners command a tyrant's rule.  
We aren't to be discarded like a tool,  
we shouldn't be in bondage or in slavery  
but that's what they mean by "Democracy".

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
Shout your lungs out, let them see  
you are human, you are free.  
Remember your toil is all your might.  
Remember your dignity, rise and fight.

Workers, I cannot sleep.  
pride dictates we must rise up today.  
We need somebody to lead the way.  
Think not it will mean your sorrow.  
Think only it will mean joy tomorrow.

Workers, awake!  
Seeing the red beauty of the sun slowly fill,  
I know we can rise and I know we will!



magazine is great and glorious to do that. You don't have to say you are going to leap right into the Alive Production Collective to do that." Thus, in the past we founded a Friendship Society along with these kind of people. Then, the Bainzites destroyed that Society. We have continued to express our friendship for China within the Alive Production Collective and have maintained and popularized our opinion that a local branch of a national association would be the next step. We have no immediate need of a forum on China. Others who do have an immediate felt need have forged ahead with their Understanding China Society. Again, we support that and it serves as a good example of a type of unity we can have with other people without them fearing being swallowed whole by us because the form is ours. Again, we can work with other people for common interests. The Understanding China Society only demands a simple commitment to studying China, to popularizing information about China. It doesn't demand a commitment to making revolution in Canada, as Alive work does. This is good for such a Society.

Getting back to the ways people can work with us, all these forums of unity involve some amount of commitment. However, all do not involve the same commitment. Making a commitment to Guelph News Service doesn't demand a commitment to understanding all about the revolution in the Philippines, all about the current affairs in Nicaragua. There are varying commitments. Commitment, though, is the key thing. Commitment that comes out of dissatisfaction. Even so simple a dissatisfaction as people being interested in understanding China because they are disgruntled with the lack of clear information about China available here, is enough to give rise to a certain commitment. People support GNS because they're dissatisfied with the situation in a sellout union they are members of, dissatisfied with the situation in their factory, dissatisfied when 20,000 campers from the United States come to Guelph. I don't know why that dissatisfied them. (Laughter)

What are other commitments that come out of the dissatisfaction with life in this society? Just to converse with us is, in a way, such a commitment, if people are talking to us with the knowledge that we are dedicated to revolution and building a new society. Of course, if one of us just happens to be taking a drink at a public water fountain and you happen to come up for a drink too and exchange a few words about the weather, we don't consider that a commitment. However, if you know a person is a member of the Alive Production Collective, dedicated to anti-imperialist revolution, and you consciously converse with that person, asking what it is all about, that's a commitment of sorts. Thus, commitment isn't something to be afraid of, commitment is very ordinary in life. Commitment does not necessarily take over your life, every aspect of your life. For some of us, it does that; for others, it doesn't. The question of commitment is nothing abstract. It is just dissatisfaction and the commitment to change that comes out of that dissatisfaction.

Do you have to agree with everything we say, everything we do, everything we think before you can work with us? To answer this question "yes" is false but it is an opinion fostered by other groups claiming to be Leftists. It is an important point. We tell people this isn't true. There are a lot of people who work with us who don't even know what our political line is on all questions, never mind agree with it all. We're famous around Guelph for the answer we give quite repeatedly, saying, "I don't know but I can find out for you if you like." People come up and ask us all kinds of questions about politics to which we give that answer. We encourage this attitude in other people that if you don't know it doesn't mean you can't work with us. Even if you do know that you have a different position on a certain question than we have, we can still work together. This is the important point we made in our July 2 speech. Why can't we maintain our differences, reserve out differences, say, "Yes, there are differences. I acknowledge that I have differences with you but we can still work together because we also have points in common in what we both want to do."

The other point about thinking it necessary to agree on everything before working together — especially in terms of before

agreeing having to know things in the area of some aspect of the work being carried on by a revolutionary organization — you can't possibly know everything until you are somewhat involved. A lot of the knowledge about the organization comes in being involved in it. So, we don't expect people to know, and/or agree with, everything.

The final point is: what are we doing, what is the specific program of the Alive Production Collective? A lot of Leftist groups, of course, go around spouting this very popular saying from the rooftops, "We are building THE Party." To a lot of ordinary people, this saying is meaningless — they don't understand what THE Party is. They think the Liberal Party is the type they are talking about. They're not talking about that.

We're not talking about that either. We don't go around saying, "We are building THE Party." We don't believe we're building the Party. People come to us saying, "Well, you must be in the Party Building Movement." We respond, "No, we're not." It is not simply because we are not subject to delusions of grandeur that we refuse to say we are building the Party. We are subject to quite grand thoughts! We think we're building the mass movement which is something even bigger than the Party.

We quite seriously think our role is to build the revolutionary mass movement. We say that without too much of a lump in our throats because we do not believe or proclaim that we are the only ones building the mass movement. It is being built in a number of places in the country, by a number of people in this city besides us. The Alive Production Collective isn't the mass movement *per se* but it is in the mass movement that we situate ourselves — a part of the mass movement, building the mass movement.

William Irvine, a member of the "Ginger group" who was elected as an MP in the 1920s made a very funny statement in his maiden speech in Parliament. In the 1930s, the CCF, today known as the NDP, was founded around this group but Irvine was not bad. He and J.S. Woodsworth, his leader, were the only two of their organization elected. So, he said, "I wish to state that the honourable member for Centre Winnipeg is the leader of the Labour group in Parliament — and me, I am the group." (Laughter) Sometimes we get the impression that this is what we are like. We're quite a small group proclaiming we are building the revolutionary mass movement when even to say you are a part of the mass movement is a little strange because it is kind of vague, can't really put your finger on it.

Our work is very definite but it doesn't have any results that are properly described using the word "mass". We think it will have those results. One of the ways we will achieve those results, we think, is if we speak the truth. This is why we say without a lump in the throat, "There's only a few of you here tonight." We'd never get away with saying, "There's a whole bunch of you." If we printed in Alive next week that there was a meeting which 500 people attended, all of you would not attend the next meeting because you would consider us a bunch of liars. The same applies in everything else we do. If we don't speak the truth, people will not be endeared to our line, people will not consider our line to be correct, people will not say as we do, "The revolutionary mass movement should be built. From the revolutionary mass movement will come the vanguard Party."

A legitimate mass movement must be built before a legitimate vanguard party can be built. This is how we answer these people who say to us, "You should be part of the Party Building Movement."

Building the revolutionary mass movement is the most valuable thing to do. Unity is essential. Unity of the United Front type is essential, as we said July 2. Unity within revolutionary organizations is essential. Unity on quite a humble basis, unity amongst just a small group like the Alive Production Collective will give rise to unity amongst a larger group than us. This is important. This kind of unity builds on itself.

This is why we very simply say: Let's work together. Let's unite. Let's build the revolutionary mass movement. Let's make anti-imperialist revolution in Canada. (Applause)