

U.S.G.

NEWSLETTER

Union of Socialist Geographers

VOL. I NO. I

INTRODUCTION

The first issue of the U.S.G. newsletter is a result of a series of discussions at the first annual meeting of the U.S.G. held in Vancouver, May 25 - 29. At that time it became apparent that with a widely scattered membership the Union was in need of an informal and flexible vehicle for transmitting news and information and a forum for the exchange of ideas. The Vancouver local offered to accept responsibility for producing a bi-monthly newsletter--hopefully, to fill this vacuum.

The form and content of the newsletter should be a product of the expressed needs and requirements of the membership of the U.S.G. Its character and its success then, will depend upon the active participation of the membership. To start the ball rolling and to bring everyone up to date, this issue is devoted primarily to an account of the recent annual meeting. Subsequent issues of the newsletter may contain some of the following items, to which all are invited to contribute.

1. Brief account of seminars. The Vancouver local is planning a series of seminars around the general theme of ideology. A reading list plus brief summaries of meetings could be written up.
2. Bibliographies--hopefully annotated to some degree. The Vancouver local has both an interest in and information on the following topics:
 - (a) Anarchism and Geography--the work of Elisee Reclus and Peter Kropotkin
 - (b) Housing
 - (c) Imperialism
 - (d) Ideology and Social Sciences
3. Course outlines--any available information about courses taught which have adopted a socialist approach to geography. Also, suggestions of books which are suitable for use in undergraduate courses that present a socialist perspective.
4. Brief notices of recent publications of interest and significance. These will not be long book reviews but merely an indication that somebody has published a good book on a certain topic.
5. Announcements of forthcoming events--including regional meetings.
6. Reports of meetings and activities of individuals and groups within the U.S.G.
7. Letters.

This list represents the ideas of the Vancouver local to date, and hopefully it will be considerably augmented by suggestions and contributions from the membership at large. The floor is yours.....

FIELD TRIP

The field trip was organized as an attempt to personally acquaint visiting U.S.G. members with the history of Vancouver in general and of the East End working class area in particular. Vancouver's evolution from a depot of British capital to its present attempts at development of an 'Executive City' image (at the expense of working class communities) affords considerable opportunity for a socialist interpretation of the city's development. The field trip was also intended to allow members to meet one another in a situation removed from the hustle and bustle of conference meetings and large groups.

The trip was mostly on foot and took five hours, with each group consisting of six people or less. Field-trip pamphlets containing information compiled from the work of people in both the U.S.G. and the Vancouver Geographical Expedition were distributed and used as back-up manuals.

The field trip was and still is of an experimental nature, and when the idea was first proposed much discussion was provoked. The opponents' main objection was that field trips are basically bourgeois 'touristy' affairs. The Vancouver members felt that it was quite feasible to operate a 'non-touristy' field trip and also believed that our involvement in the East End area in the past and at present had made us quite sensitive to these requirements. Further, to understand Vancouver and the processes operating within it one should walk through the city and see those processes in operation.



Following is a list of observations made during and after the trips:

- Some amount of conspicuousness felt by members. No cameras were allowed but the big yellow pamphlets may have been suggestive of city employees or real estate employees to some residents.
- The field trip, at five hours, seemed quite long.
- The trip succeeded in allowing people to meet one another outside of the confusion of general meetings.
- It took many hours to compile the information in the pamphlet and design a field trip route.
- As a side effect, the pamphlet pooled a lot of information on the history of Vancouver and the East End which lay in scattered places until this time.
- The pamphlet will be rewritten in a more coherent form, translated into several languages and made available to East End and Vancouver residents.

We would still like to hear non-Vancouver members' observations or ideas on our field trip, or on field trips in general as part of future U.S.G. meetings.

The U.S.G. has been invited
to present a session at the
Ontario C.A.G. regional meet-
ing in February of 1976.

Anyone interested in doing
such, contact:

John Marsh
Dept. of Geog.
Trent University
Ontario, Canada.

Bernard Curtin (SFU Geog., Burnaby), read a paper entitled, "The Classification of Economic Activities and Occupations". He outlined how geographers had borrowed the threefold classification of economic activities into primary, secondary and service (tertiary) sectors, from the economist Colin Clark. Clark chose physical or material criteria to draw the boundaries between the three classes. In fact, Clark invoked "common sense" to sanctify his classification system.

Marx, following a tradition established in classical political economy (A. Smith, D. Ricardo), classifies occupations as either productive or unproductive. Those who sell labour-power to Capital and produce surplus-value are productive workers. Thus, the cook who works in a restaurant owned by a capitalist is productive because he/she produces surplus-value. On the other hand, the cook who works in the home of the capitalist is not a productive labourer because he/she, in this case, consumes the capitalist's revenue. Therefore, it is one's social relation to Capital that establishes whether one is a productive or unproductive worker.

In this sense, workers in the sphere of 'pure' or 'economic' circulation, (as opposed to transportation and communications; real circulation) are unproductive. These workers, (accountants, cashiers, bankers, salespeople, etc.) are unproductive because their labour merely changes the forms of the value of capital. They are necessary but not productive from the viewpoint of capital, yet because they perform surplus-labour time, they are exploited.

Discussion

Much of the discussion dealt with the differences between necessary and productive labour from the standpoint of capital. It was mentioned that although policemen, soldiers, and FBI and CIA agents are necessary to maintain the rule of capital over labour, they are not productive workers because they, in fact, consume surplus-value in the form of taxes.

The deficiencies of common sense were discussed. If common sense were correct, the earth would still be flat. It was agreed that the maps that geographers draw, are a function of their classification systems. The obsolescence of concepts and the need to revise the meanings of concepts as reality changes received the attention of the discussants.

The discussion ended with David Harvey's comment that the distinction between productive and unproductive labour was not all that important. He noted that the key fact is that workers in both spheres of production and circulation are exploited.

The session continued with a paper from Bob Galois (SFU Geog., Burnaby) on the idea of nature and the nature of geography; The case of Peter Kropotkin. (A full-length version of this paper will be appearing in a forthcoming edition of Antipode.)

One means of attacking the ideological content of geography, is an examination of the work of previous socialist geographers. Extracting 'the idea of nature' contained therein can be a useful conceptual approach. The 'idea of nature' embodied in the writings of the anarchist geographer, Peter Kropotkin, can be summarised under the following headings:

- 1) Organic or holistic - no event, activity, etc. can be completely understood other than in its full contextual situation.
- 2) Historic - nature has evolved and co-operation has been more important than competition in this evolution.
- 3) Spontaneous - spontaneity as a means of progress, an embodiment of freedom and expression of feeling.

Discussion

The subsequent discussion centred around the following topics:

- 1) The need to rewrite the history of geography. The ideological content of the history of geography as now written helps sustain the present form of geography. Other alternative traditions of geography are either ignored or dismissed or rendered trivial, further buttressing current ideological conformity. The work of socialist geographers such as Elisee Reclus present a fertile ground, largely unknown today. Other useful work on socialism and geography was undertaken in Germany in the 1920's.
- 2) Behaviourism - The impact of psychology and other disciplines on geography, bringing with them a series of atomistic and competitive interpretations of nature.
- 3) The work done by a number of zoologists, such as W.C. Allee, confirming the importance of co-operation in evolution. Their work has also largely been ignored.
- 4) The ideological content of geographical metaphors. (e.g. river capture)



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The afternoon segment of the Tuesday session featured the reading and discussion of four papers written by Toronto Geographical Expedition members. The authors were not present at the Vancouver conference and hence could not reply to the discussion which followed the papers.

W.W. Bunge: "The Drivers' Plan for a Mass-transit, Taxi-cab Service; More Work and Higher Wages".

Bunge's paper attacked and deplored the irrationalities and inefficiencies of the private taxi-cab industry.

The irrational locational behavior of the two classical ice cream vendors (both of whom locate in the centre of the beach instead of locating one quarter of the length of the beach from each end) has its parallels in the irrational location of gas stations (often two, three or four to an intersection) and of taxi-cabs (stands with many cabs and queues for passengers.) Bunge cites such inefficiencies of the taxi-cab industry as "cross hauling" (ie: the nearest cab not going to the nearest customer), "dead time" (waiting for calls), lack of return runs, irrational fear of "doubling" (taking more than one fare.) "Drivers and public should form an alliance against the profiteers" (private owners). If computer dispatched cabs were used effectively, taxi-cabs could be integrated intelligently into Toronto's present mass transit system. Drivers, carless people and families, and the ordinary taxi-cab user would reap the benefits of cheaper fares and a more efficient taxi service.

Tom Scanlan and Derek Stephenson, Toronto Geographical Expedition: "Explorers as Cab Drivers."

Members of the Toronto Geographical Expedition (T.G.E.) who also drove cabs found "cab driving [to be] one of the most informative methods of learning about the city." It helps in developing a series of mental maps of regions of the city

and acquainted us with "events and issues in the city, important to a wide spectrum of people." We identified regions of prostitution, radar enforcement (very strict in rich neighborhoods), violence, high security (banks, I.B.M., wealthy residential enclaves), and regions which attract tourists. We became aware of attitudes towards racism, police brutality, and of development and redevelopment plans before newspapers began to comment on them. We recommend that geography departments should own cab licenses and cars and make cab driving a geography course.

Derek Stephenson, Toronto Geographical Expedition: "The Aim of Geographical Expeditions Is to Practice Geography, Not to Organize Communities."

"The theory of geographical expeditions put forward by W.W. Bunge... makes clear that the purpose of expeditions is not to organize people in urban communities, but to place geography and geographers in the service of the people and communities." The jobs of organizer and geographer are different. The organizer tries to "unite the people and mobilize them to take action" around specific issues. The "geographical expedition, by comparison, seeks out local leadership... and offers to apply its geographical skills and labour power to problems the community has identified." The experience (ups and downs) of the T.G.E. illustrates the importance of the distinction between geographer and organizer. The validity of this distinction, however, does not "imply that in their day to day work expedition members remain aloof from direct participation in the community in which they and their neighbors live."

The four Toronto papers provoked a good deal of discussion. C. Akatiff argued that cab driving is an exhausting job. This job appears to attract many geographers, but most of them quit it quickly. Akatiff said a friend of his wife had driven a cab for 25 years, was quite knowledgeable about certain areas and aspects of the city, but remained completely ignorant about (the) major urbanization processes.

It was argued that geographers who participate in expeditions should get over the missionary complex. They are not preachers, and should not see themselves as such. There is nothing messianic about participating in progressive working-class struggles.

Quite a few people expressed disagreement with the view that geographers should not play active roles in community groups. The geographer, they insisted, should do more than just make available geographic skills and knowledge to community groups.

There then followed a long discussion of the dangers and drawbacks attached to community groups. The real danger, some said, was that most community groups tend to shift attention from the workplace--the dominant arena of exploitation--to problems of consumption. Some discussions strongly stressed that community groups ignore the fact that the vast majority of workers have to sell their labour-power to capital or to an institution (educational system, civil service) that serves the interest of capital. Inherent in community groups is the danger of artificially dividing (separating) the workplace and living space (community).

Some people maintained that it was essential to have an adequate theoretical grasp of the 'capitalist mode of production' before useful community work could be performed. Others said that the best strategy is to integrate theoretical and community activities. It was agreed that participants in expeditions should have a good grasp of class struggle; moreover, class struggle is indispensable to geographic theory. Opposition to speculators, freeways, etc. should be fought along class struggle lines.

A discussion pointed out that the system can accept defeats such as the discontinuation of the Spadina expressway. However, what irks the system most is an increase in the number of and militancy of strikes. It was concluded that workplace struggles and community struggles should not be put into watertight compartments. The reality is that conflict and contradiction develop in and exist at both the points of production and reproduction. The energy of the geographer should be directed to where it will be most productive.

Tom Scanlan, Toronto Geographical Expedition: "The Toronto Geographical Expedition and Service to the People."

Experience in the Toronto Geographical Expedition shows us "that we must follow the basic principle of working with the people, on tasks they define." The following advice should be heeded:

- 1) Community leaders tell us what kind of research is useful to the community. However, we should not undertake research on non-geographical problems.
- 2) Win the trust of the community by working hard. "Good relations with the community [are] important in the data collection stage of...research."
- 3) When "the stage of developing proposals for remedial action" is reached, community input is essential.

The Future of Expeditions:

The TGE, it was said, deserves credit for the formation of the USG. Although the expeditions were focussed on particular places (Detroit, Toronto, and Vancouver) their presence and example served as a magnet to bring radical geographers together. Therefore their impact was not confined to their geographic locations.

It was agreed that the USG is, at present, the best vehicle for the dissemination of socialist geography. Common interests, not spatial propinquity, is the basis for the unity of the USG.

The Immediate Task of Socialist Geographers:

It is in our class interests to introduce into geography radical geographical traditions and socialist analyses of the geography of the capitalist mode of production. The massive contributions to geography of the anarchist geographers P. Kropotkin and E. Reclus have been omitted from the histories of geography. Therefore, there is an urgent need to rewrite the history of geography.

Somebody asked what was the point of such a rewriting of geography. The reply was that socialist geographers have to produce a new and anti-bourgeois ideology. Moreover, the struggles against capital within and without geography are not mutually exclusive activities. As geographers our primary aim should be to fight the battle against bourgeois ideology within geography.

It was noted that the geographical establishment is not completely inflexible. Within the establishment there is room to manoeuvre. We should exploit the legitimacy of and the contradictions of the establishment.

Socialist geographers should also work within the state bureaucracy (all levels from municipal to federal). Information from confidential reports and memos could be filtered to left-wing newspapers and magazines and to sympathisers who work for radio and television. In short, all avenues should be explored.

IMPERIALISM

The intention of this session was that the papers, taken together, would provide a structured overview of imperialism. Rather than adopt an eclectic approach we hoped to take geographers through a logical analysis of imperialism, beginning with an analysis of bourgeois theory and moving through Marxist and Neo-Marxist theoretical formulations to concrete analyses of concrete situations.

The reality we were faced with was, as is all too often the case, somewhat removed from theory. Papers, previously promised failed to materialise and so some contributions had to be produced over-night. Thus our initial plan had to be re-drafted.

Nonetheless we consider the session to have been a success insofar as:

1. It occurred as an official C.A.G. session.
2. It provided a forum for four papers from a socialist perspective.
3. It raised many questions, resolution of which will be important for the U.S.G.

In order of presentation the papers were:

1. "A Theoretical Introduction to Imperialism" by Colm Regan (SFU Geography, Burnaby). The paper briefly surveyed contributions by Marx, Lenin, Baran and Sweezy along with the contributions of "dependency" theory.
2. "Seven Theses on Colonialism" by Jim Blaut (U. of Illinois, Geog., Chicago). Jim discussed the use of the term colonialism, its historical emergence and its continuance today through the process of neo-colonialism.
3. Francis Walsh (S.P.C.M., Geog., Co. Kildare, Ireland) discussed the "Impact of Multinational Investment on Ireland's Manufacturing Industry". He pinpointed Ireland's growing infiltration by U.S., Canadian and European Imperialism.
4. Mariasel Capote (P.S.P. Chicago) analysed "Puerto Rico--Showcase of Colonialism" in which she addressed its history vis-a-vis the United States, and the domination of its society, economically, socially and culturally today.

David Harvey concluded the session by commenting on the nature of capitalist accumulation and how studies of imperialism must relate to this. He discussed class and contradiction as two fundamental elements yet to be fully incorporated into the analysis.

The discussion session afterwards was far from satisfactory--it was sparse and non-focussed and certainly did not address issues of prime importance especially from the point of view of educating and radicalising geography.

Alienation and Geography

A session devoted to the use of the Marxian concept of alienation in analyzing geographical problems was the topic of the second set of papers presented by the U.S.G. at the C.A.G. convention. The session was the result of an ongoing study group within the U.S.G. Since the use of the concept of alienation is relatively new to the field of geography, an introduction to the theory provided an overview for the four papers presented. The overview relied primarily upon the interpretation of Bertell Ollman in his Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society. The review identified four potential areas of application of this theory to geographical problems:

1. the conception of human nature upon which models in geography are based
2. the relationship of people to nature
3. the origin and nature of value
4. the issue of control

All papers given dealt largely with the fourth area, and the issue of ~~non~~community control in North American urban settings formed a common thread running through all of the papers.

The first paper, titled 'Spatial Alienation' by Ron Horvath (S.F.U. Geography) analyzed empirical data on urban residential property within a matrix of territorial alienation, and provided a critique of this analysis from the perspective of alienation theory.

In the second paper, titled 'The Loss of Community Control in East Vancouver: 1910-1920' Suzanne Mackenzie (S.F.U. Geography) employed the theory of alienation to provide a framework for integrating several apparently disjointed problems she found facing working class urban communities. Economic processes in the city of Vancouver between 1910 and 1920 caused work place and home to become increasingly separated, both physically and conceptually, breaking the essential production based bond of community and causing the spheres of production and reproduction to become hostile to one another.

In the third paper, titled 'Alienation and the Vancouver Board of Variance', Bob Arnold (S.F.U. Geography) used the theory to provide a framework for understanding the way in which the state appears to be an independent representative of all groups in society, but is in reality structured so as to reflect the interests of the dominant class. He analyzed the role of the state as an intermediary in the control of urban land use, using data from an empirical study of decisions of the Vancouver Board of Variance.

In the final paper, titled 'Social Democracy, Alienation and the Housing Crisis: A Framework for Analysing the state Owned Dunhill Development Corporation', Nathan Edelson (S.F.U. Geography) discussed the role of the state as a producer of commodities. His paper analyzed the mechanisms which exist within a market exchange economy that prevent the Dunhill Development Corporation, owned by the Provincial Government of British Columbia, from providing adequate shelter for the poor and eliminate the possibilities for effective community control over the location, quantity and quality of publically developed housing.

In the discussion that followed, various aspects of the theory of alienation and of the subjects of the four papers were expanded. The question of private property ownership, and its effect as a mechanism for co-optation was raised. The situation of First World workers in this respect was contrasted with that of workers in the Third World. Discussants stressed the pre eminence of alienation at the point of production as opposed to the point of reproduction, emphasizing the distinction between alienation and objectification and between subjective and objective alienation.

The session organizers agree that the subject is one that requires further elucidation and study, and hope, in co-operation with other Socialist geographers, to continue this work.

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**HOW TO RECOGNIZE A UNION ORGANIZING ATTEMPT:
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS TO LOOK FOR**

Each office and department is a potential union organizing target. Early recognition of an organizing attempt, and the initial reaction to such activity, is the most critical factor in resisting unionization of our staff . . . If any of the following signs or symptoms are observed, report to Management immediately:

Union authorization cards, handbills, or leaflets appear on the premises or in parking areas. (See page 4 for exhibits of typical union authorization cards.)

Employees meet and talk in out-of-the-way places.

Employees begin meeting and talking with known union members.

The nature of employee complaints changes, and frequency increases.

Complaints are made by a delegation, not single employees.

Strangers appear on bank premises or in work areas.


Employees develop an unusual social consciousness or begin using a strange vocabulary.

Employees or strangers show unusual interest about bank affairs and personnel.

A personal visit, a telephone call, or registered letter is received from a union representative.

— from a Bank of America manual distributed to office supervisors.

Source: New American Movement Newspaper, 1/78.



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BE AN OPEN FORUM - THIS CANNOT
HAPPEN UNLESS EVERYONE CONTRIBUTES.
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COMMENTS AND ANYTHING USEFUL
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CANADA

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The session of Socialist Perspectives on Urban Geography focussed on three different views of the metropolis/hinterland process under capitalism in British Columbia. These were contrasted in the final paper with an examination of deurbanization in the People's Republic of China.

Brian Campbell (Langara College, Sociology, Vancouver) presented an overview of metropolis/hinterland theory through the perspective of Vancouver as a headquarters for major Canadian and Japanese firms actively engaged in Pacific Rim trade. The locational advantages of the city are being enhanced by major federal, provincial, and municipal government projects designed to modernize port facilities, facilitate the flow of commuters and commodities, increase office and commercial space, and expand expensive recreational activities. Most significant, he suggested, is the fact that traditional working class and ethnic areas of the inner city are being systematically redeveloped - at enormous profits - to provide housing, work, shopping, and entertainment places for the ruling class and its executive and service functionaries. Low income and blue collar people and jobs are being pushed to the periphery of the Vancouver region, the B.C. province, and the Pacific Rim itself, to make way for the Executive City.

Murray Griffin, a researcher for resident groups in Richmond, a suburb of Vancouver, looked at the implications of the Executive City for suburban communities. Here, he found evidence of incredible speculation wherein interrelated companies - often directly or indirectly affiliated with local politicians - were able to bid up the price of land by selling to one another. He has been particularly concerned with speculation on farmland as it is converted to housing subdivisions and industrial complexes. Already this has resulted in significant losses in agricultural production, despite Bill 42, the social democratic government's attempt at controlling this process. Murray traced the systematic revisions and interpretations of the law which have made it more acceptable to major corporations.

John Bradbury, from Simon Fraser University, first of all outlined the background of metropolis/hinterland theory in Canadian Literature related to resource development, and then showed how the theory could be applied to those resource towns which had been created and were controlled by large corporations and multinational corporations in the hinterland of British Columbia. The result of this particular mode of development has been a significant key in the urban cultural history of mining and lumber towns in the province, producing a range of distortions in the socio-economic milieu of each community. Isolation, company dominance, a sense of impermanence, uneven development, unbalanced age structures and sex ratios, high labour turnover, community instability and industrial alienation are all aspects of the manifestations of metropolitan based dominance exercised by resource companies over the character and extent of economic development in hinterland areas where isolated single enterprise towns are the primary urban form.

It is important to stress that there is nothing inevitable about these distorted communities in the downtown, suburbs and periphery of advanced capitalist countries. Ace Hollibaugh examined some of the ways in which the Chinese people are attempting to eliminate the past effects of imperialism

and to create a new social order by decentralizing production, services, and decision making throughout the countryside. He traced the history of the Chinese Revolution and showed how the principles of self-sufficiency and self-reliance as well as the inter-relationship between centralized leadership and the masses, are reflected in current Chinese industrial, urban and social planning.

After the four papers were presented, Donald Gustein, author of Vancouver Ltd., expressed a general agreement with the analysis of urban redevelopment. He emphasized the significance of ORION, a group of multi-national corporate officials, which is attempting to coordinate development and trade throughout the Pacific Rim.

David Harvey, from Johns Hopkins University, stated that it is important to develop a strong theoretical framework in which to connect these various 'perspectives'. He was somewhat critical of the power structure approach which, though useful for political publicity, tends to leave the impression that conspiracy, rather than the requirements of accumulation, is at the core of capitalism. He emphasized the need to look at the contradictions inherent in capitalist development and the intertwined relationships between finance capital, the state, and labour. Without such an analysis 'radical' proposals can often backfire as the true nature of the system reveals itself.

socialist revolution

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A quarterly Marxist journal that provides theory, information, and debate around a wide variety of topics related to the building of a popular socialist movement.

In the current issue (no. 23):

Samir Amin, "Toward a New Structural Crisis of the World Capitalist System"
Richard Elchman, "Marx's Theory of Ideology"

In Recent Issues:

Eli Zarestky, "Male Supremacy and the Unconscious" (nos. 21-22)
Michael Lerner, "Putting Socialism on the Agenda" (nos. 21-22)
Stanley Aronowitz, "Food, Shelter, and the American Dream" (no. 20)

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It was initially intended that this should be a 'Union of Socialist Geographers' session within the C.A.G. In the weeks prior to the conference it became evident that we had no guarantee that all of the papers could be termed 'Socialist'. Accordingly, the U.S.G. formally disassociated itself from the session, but continued to work so that the nature of the session would be to the best advantage of Socialist Geography. Although we were by no means swamped by papers, those which were finally presented suited the occasion admirably and challenged Establishment Geography in two ways. The first of these was the exposition of areas of study which have generally been ignored by geographers.

Alison Hayford (Dept. of Finance, Regina Saskatchewan) in her paper 'The Geography of Women: an Historical Introduction' outlined the changes in the roles of women which have taken place during the development of capitalist society. Due to the sharp division between the household and the public sphere of most production, women have only recently found active roles within the capitalist framework. However, larger spatial systems cannot be understood without appreciating the impact that women's roles have had upon them. This is most evident when the woman needs to be close to her workplace in certain situations, due to transit needs or the care of her children. Geography has been in part responsible for this exclusion of women from the field of social scientific research.

Peter Usher (Native Brotherhood) approached the study of the native Canadians of the North from the perspective of class and of metropolis-hinterland relationships. This analysis of the logical outcome of continued exploitation of the Northern peoples left no doubt as to the required remedy—a complete re-ordering of Canadian society, a comprehensive land claims settlement and a drastic slowdown of petroleum development.

The second challenge was contained in Jim Blaut's (Univ. of Illinois, Chicago Circle) analysis of bourgeois epistemology and Michael Eliot Hurst's (S.F.U. Dept of Geog.) presentation of the utility of the dialectical method.

Using ethnoscience which defines statements of belief, axioms, assumptions etc, as valid to the degree that they conform to the values of a cultural group, Jim outlined the importance of this approach as a radical attack on ethnocentrism. Although he did not have time to develop the argument that under the schema of ethnoscience professional geography is not biased but indeed conforms well to a particular class and culture, he opened up possibilities for just such a radical analysis of how geographers know and what they believe.

Michael's paper, 'Geography and Mao Tse-tung's Four Essays on Philosophy' explored the possibilities of the dialectic method as a geographic approach. He said that if we allow our method to spring from what we study, if we realise the importance of study-practice-study, then the everchanging nature of reality will reveal not new things but new ways of looking at familiar things. However this method must be couched in the framework of a partisan approach, a commitment to people.

Jim Sellers (Douglas College, New Westminster) read a paper on 'Human Geography in a Post Humanist Era'. The challenge he proffered was to Socialists, suggesting that although Marx laid the foundations for the reordering of society we must look further afield in order to discover the forms of social organisation which will best facilitate human existence and the blending of Socialism with Heideggerian vision.

It is worth pointing out that at this plenary session of the Canadian Association of Geographers, each speaker espoused Socialism in some form, either explicitly or implicitly. The impact of Socialist Geography can be further pronounced through

the engineering of such sessions at other professional conferences at which an audience is directly confronted with and challenged by socialist analysis and theory on a broad range. top P 15

At Vancouver the audience did not take up any challenge. Either the panel looked too formidable or the advent of lunch-time pre-empted the discussion. 14

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was extended over several nights, and as such, no official minutes were taken. The following account is thus a compilation of topics which people could remember.

The question of organization was discussed at length and still not fully resolved. Some people suggested a central committee to coordinate the business of the USG, yet there was apparently little support for this tight, centralized type of organization. Organization on a regional basis was suggested, with roughly three regions--east coast, Prairies/mid-West, west coast. Consensus on this point was by no means complete, because most people within these regions are so scattered. Several people were in favour of electing an honorary figurehead, a person providing focus, as Clark Akatiff did last year, who could act as an information source for Union members. This idea also did not get much support.

There was also discussion on what lines we should organize; as a political party or as a pressure group. People seemed to favour the definition of the USG as being closer to the latter than to the former. A main purpose of either would be developing a socialist paradigm within geography. With this in mind, discussion centred around what realistic, attainable goals we could set for ourselves for one year, with the idea expressed by some that the Union organization should be designed to carry out these general goals:

1. Stressing the importance of and practising cooperative activity and mutual help in research.
2. Drawing more people into the USG through college and university courses.
3. Sharing ideas for new course outlines.
4. Working collectively through seminars, if physically possible.
5. We were reminded that our Union is very much oriented towards the academic discipline of geography, and there are many people outside of the university who can contribute. We should attempt to accommodate these people in not being exclusively oriented towards academia.
6. Liason with other disciplines--radical philosophers, economists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, etc.

We all agreed that a newsletter would provide a structure for communications, and that for this year the loose regional organization would centre around this organ of the USG. The Vancouver local agreed to take responsibility for the newsletter until the next A.G.M. It was emphasized that material should be submitted from all U.S.G. members, and the oneness not be left with the Vancouver local to generate material for the newsletter.

It was agreed that we should continue the practice of organizing regional meetings, despite the diffuseness of the regions. Certain representatives from all three regions agreed to provide the impetus for such meetings. 216

Perhaps in a year, time and money permitting, we will elect someone to travel the continent, disseminating information about the U.S.G. (a full-time travelling minstrel). Until that time, just talk to the person on your left.

The importance of keeping our finances in order were emphasized most strongly. It was mentioned that other groups have fallen apart due to a lack of, or mismanagement of finances, and we don't want to suffer the same fate. Colm Regan (Vancouver) volunteered to take charge of finances for one year, and with two others, would form a finance committee. The money will be deposited in a Fisherman's Co-operative Credit Union in Vancouver for this year.

Yearly dues were decided to be \$2.00 for those who are broke, \$5.00 as the standard rate, and additional donations from those with the means. All dues will be payable on May 1st of each year.

We agreed that we would have our next annual meeting close to the time and place of the next A.A.G. meeting (New York City in May 1976). This will hopefully keep travel costs to a minimum for members. We decided from this years experience, to have it the week previous to the A.A.G. in some nearby location (Baltimore? Boston?). In this way, we can have a conference in our own right, and the opportunity to concentrate on the U.S.G. without having to perform for outsiders at the same time.

Strategy at the A.A.G. : As it stands, we will have one seperate session of the U.S.G., maybe more. There will also be the Antipode session. Otherwise, people are encouraged (by our member on the paper selection committee of the A.A.G.) to submit papers to regular sessions, as this is the best way of reaching people who would not attend a special session of the U.S.G. Paper submission may also bring travel money.

THE UNION OF SOCIALIST GEOGRAPHERS
CONGRATULATES THE VICTORIOUS PEOPLE
OF VIETNAM. MAY THEIR VICTORY
BE AN INSPIRATION TO ALL OTHERS,
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, STRUGGLING
FOR SOCIALISM.

On Hosting U.S.G. Meetings

The members of the Vancouver local of the U.S.G. decided to provide some thoughts on our experience in hosting the Vancouver U.S.G. meeting and to make some concrete suggestions for future organizers. We had decided in advance to provide meals and room to all people attending the Vancouver meetings. The logistics of providing meals were as follows: individuals volunteered to be responsible for preparing lunches and dinners. These individuals purchased and prepared the food. All food costs were collected by one individual who reported the costs at the general meeting. People then paid according to income.

Logistical Recommendations for Future Meetings

1. That food and room be provided for all people attending the U.S.G. meetings. (if at all possible)
2. In order to plan meals, housing and meeting rooms etc., it is essential to have a rough idea of how many people are planning to attend the meetings. We therefore suggest some form of pre-registration, possibly a form to be filled out and returned to conference organizers. This could be circulated in the U.S.G. newsletter a few months before the conference.

3. That a registration fee be collected from each individual at the outset of the meetings to be used for meeting costs, particularly food. (Several people left the Vancouver meeting and neglected to pay for food.) We suggest the following registration fees be continued

| | |
|---------|--|
| \$2.00 | unemployed |
| \$6.00 | part-time employed |
| \$15.00 | full-time employed (a minimum, not maximum figure) |

Thus, as individuals who purchase food run up expenses, they can submit their bills to the meeting treasurer and be reimbursed.

4. Beer was provided each evening and individuals paid for each bottle by depositing money in a container by the beer. This procedure worked well.
5. If all of the above are adopted for the 1976 meetings of the U.S.G., all people attending should upon arriving volunteer for one or more of the following activities:
 - a. preparing at least one meal.
 - b. selling Antipode and sitting at the U.S.G. desk during the A.A.G. meetings.
 - c. collecting money (two individuals should volunteer to do this for just meeting expenses.
 - d. and many others.

One would prefer that these matters happened in a spontaneous way, which that great socialist geographer Peter Kropotkin suggested is "nature's way", but a little organization seems to be a precondition for spontaneity.

Paper Acceptance Procedure

It was felt by the members in Vancouver that everyone should be involved in the decisions as to papers for the conference. We therefore agreed that submitted papers would be circulated, discussed and on that basis accepted or rejected. We solicited papers for the various sessions through Antipode and by mailing notices to all Canadian departments and some in the States and Europe. However the practice with which we were faced differed drastically from what we had hoped.

We feel, therefore, that some suggestions may be in order;

- (1) in order to promote equality - all members involved in the conference organisation also be involved in paper acceptance, etc., whenever possible.
- (2) Papers be submitted and circulated well before the conference.
- (3) In order that discussion be encouraged, discussants be elected for various papers or sessions.
- (4) Papers which are not submitted in advance be rejected.

We felt that this was one area where the Vancouver meeting failed. The ill-prepared nature of some of the papers was all too obvious. We hope our suggestions may help solve this problem at future meetings.

Finances: The U.S.G. had \$532 to its credit prior to deductions for this newsletter.

CORIOLIS FORCE AND THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIALISM

(The first in a series of discussion papers for the Union of Socialist Geographers newsletter written by the Radical Geomorphology Collective.)

In Socialism: Utopian and Scientific Engles admonishes those who attempt to understand the workings of society to look to its material base rather than to its ideological superstructure. Engles' point certainly would be well taken by geographers who have failed, nearly to a person, to examine the material roots of social relationships (1.) Unfortunately the same criticism must be laid at the door of Marxist geographers as well, as they also have failed to perceive the true geophysical foundations of such relationships.

A particularly illustrative question in this regard is that of the causes of social change and of revolution. To disguise their inability (or unwillingness) to explain these phenomena most geographers have resorted to such meaningless and mystifying constructs as "take off stages" or "revolutions of rising expectations." Marxists, while coming closer to the mark, have ultimately also had to resort to rather mystifying concepts such as "dependency" and "metropolis-hinterland relationships." The key to a real understanding of these issues however is at once more fundamental and much simpler. A glance at geophysical laws, in this instance at the Coriolis force, quickly untangles an apparently profound ideological thicket from which neither Rostow nor Berry, nor Lenin or Frank has been able to extricate himself. Strahler describes the action of the Coriolis force in the following terms, "Any object...moving in the northern hemisphere tends to be deflected to the right... In the southern hemisphere a similar deflection is to the left." (2.)

It would behoove social scientists, both Marxist and non-Marxist, to examine the importance of Coriolis force. To understand social change it is no longer necessary to develop such elaborate concepts as historical materialism or export of capital, but rather to look at the simple but inexorable rule that everything in the northern hemisphere moves to the right and everything in the South moves to the left. In equatorial regions where Coriolis force is generally of reduced effectiveness, conditions will of course be less stable, with small variations in geomagnetic force fields overriding the weak Coriolis effect. Thus, it is not at all surprising that we find the such areas as Central America, Equatorial Africa and South-east Asia are areas of great instability and rapid fluctuations from right to left.

Perhaps the most promising area for research at present is on the question of Coriolis anomalies. The limited research which has been done thus far by Heinschmidt (3.) indicates great promise, pointing the way for example to the explanation of events in the U.S.S.R. since 1917. The Soviet Union (particularly Leningrad and Moscow) being rather far north, the failures of the Soviet experiment since 1917 were entirely predictable. (In fact, had Lenin fully appreciated the nature of geo-social laws, he would never have attempted the October Revolution in such northerly latitudes.) What is more difficult to understand at first glance are the events of 1917 themselves, but here the results of Heinschmidt provide the answer. For several months in 1917, as was also the case for almost the entire year of 1848, the northern hemisphere experienced severe Coriolis anomalies and reversals which made possible, actually inevitable, violent turns to the left throughout Europe. These were, of course, doomed to failure ultimately, as Coriolis anomalies are extremely transitory (4.)

Heinschmidt's work is as yet far from complete, but it is clear from the information available so far that it is in the precise reconstruction of Coriolis variations that explanation of the vicissitudes of human history is to be found.

Footnotes

1. Regan, C.A. (197?) Partially Written M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University.
2. Strahler, A.H. (1965) An Introduction to Physical Geography, p. 79.
3. Heinschmidt, H.S. von (1963) "Ist der Grossenflechen von der Coriolis den Optenpfhlatt Anomolous?" Zeitschrift fur Nicht vol. 576, p. 210-297.
4. It should be noted that recent work by Heinschmidt in the southern hemesphere indicates the existance of a severe Coriolis anomoly along the western coast of South America in late 1973 and a semi-perminant anomoly over the Cape of Good Hope. Thankfully, however, the alter appears to be weakening rapidly.

A Statement by the Organizer of the 1975 C.A.G. Conference to the U.S.G.

The Geography Department of SFU hosted the 1975 annual meeting of the C.A.G. According to several visitors, the conference was a success. The major reason for this success must have been the weather which, if good, allows even the 'black monsters' of 'mini-Manhattan' (downtown Vancouver) appear less oppressive, but makes the surrounding mountains and waters reflect beauty and peace.

The regular sessions, the daily 'drag' in which members earned their travel bonuses, were highlighted by a surprisingly large number of unrepulsive papers. The plenary sessions, the organisers' pride and showoff, heard some very good speakers and enjoyed the services of extremely lively chairpeople. The field trips had leaders who could combine the weather with their perfect knowledge of the area.

But all these events will soon be forgotten. I am convinced that, if at all, only one aspect of the conference will be remembered and that is the participation of the students. Believe me, it was not easy to get to a common denominator but it was worth all the fight for parity and all the reminders for abstracts.

The Union of Socialist Geographers took part in every type of activity; they organised one plenary session (Alternative Perspectives in Geography), two general sessions (Imperialism and Alienation), one special session (Socialist Perspectives on Urban Geography), and one field trip (a walking tour of East Vancouver). They were all excellent and well attended by non-U.S.G. members in addition to union members. I will suggest to the organisers of the coming conferences to try to get their students similarly, that means self responsibility involved.

Thanks to the U.S.G. for their great participation.

Tom Peucker,
Organiser, C.A.G. conference. Vancouver 1975



**ALL POWER
TO
THE PEOPLE !**