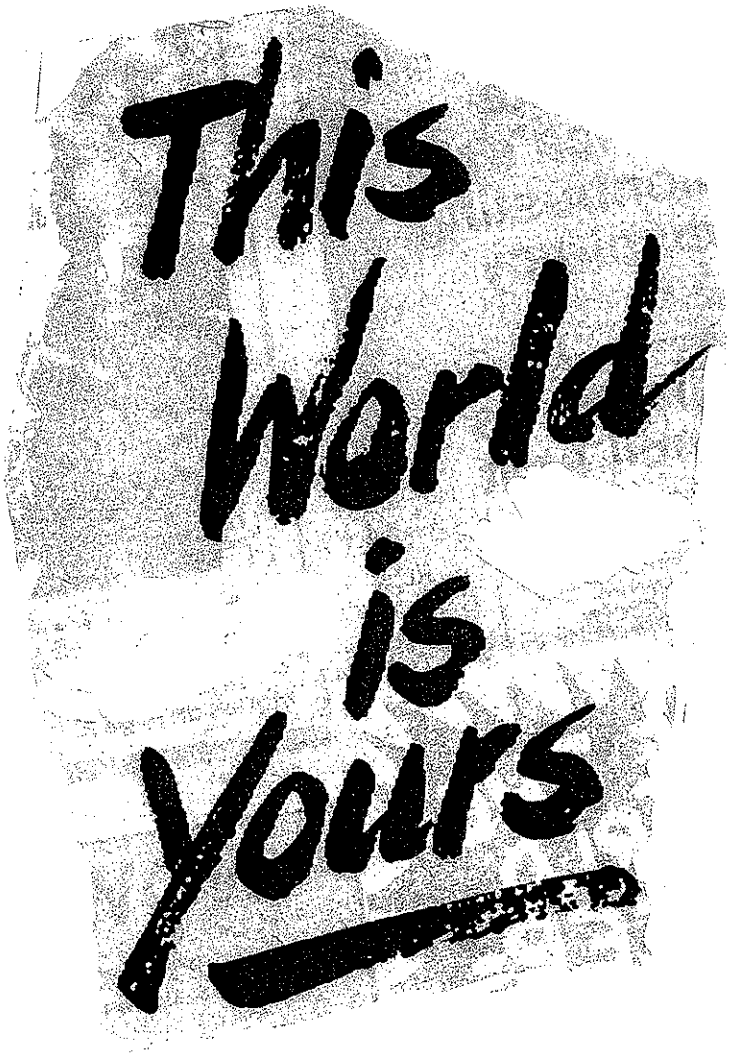
SOME THOUGHTS REGARDING FORUM (#1)




**"In today's world, a true working-class partisanship must include a partisan attitude toward real, existing socialism, with all its weaknesses and shortcomings."**
-Gus Hall, Political Affairs, August, 1989

**"The fundamental objective of perestroika is to revive the original goals of the October Revolution and end people's alienation from two things--the means of production and political power...**

**"One should not delude oneself or other people by thinking that we could have so vigorously begun the tackling of this ambitious task if we had not had at our disposal the vast material and intellectual potential created during the previous 70 years. The generations of our grandfathers and fathers upheld our socialist choice, broke the backbone of Naziism, raised the country with a multimillion population out of poverty and illiteracy and built the foundations of social security for the working people.**

**"What matters is to prevent the pernicious rift between words and deeds from forming again. We Soviet Communists are the motive force of revolutionary change as we are changing ourselves. We realise that our party can play a vanguard role only if it masters Marxist-Leninist dialectics profoundly and in a creative spirit."**
M. Gorbachev, Message of Greeting to the 18th Congress of the Italian Communist Party, Pravda, March 21, 1989

**THE KEY QUESTION:**

# A MARXIST-LENINIST PROGRAMME TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL CANADIANS --AND A VIGOROUS PARTY CAMPAIGN FOR IT

It is now about sixteen months since the party changed its leadership. What has changed? It appears that the old problems remain and some have even become worse--so much so that the change in leadership which gave rise to high expectations now cannot be perceived as yet having strengthened the party as the membership had hoped.

Surely the "discovery" of the fact that the party owes close to half-a-million dollars must have been a shock? Party membership and readership continue to decline; in many party clubs members refuse to take on responsible posts and party leader G. Hewison has his time taken up with solving, or attempting to solve, one crisis after another.

No doubt the information coming from some socialist countries, the USSR in the first place, have had negative effects although these are unnecessarily exaggerated, subjective and even more negative because the party leadership doesn't seem to have grasped the essence of the changes taking place within the socialist countries who are not, as M. Gorbachev said, engaged in a process of consigning socialism to the ash-heap of history. A struggle to make socialism triumph is what is taking place and the party has to make up its mind where it stands on that question.

As the Soviet Party says, Perestroika is a mass, democratic demand for change which had been maturing in Soviet society for some time. It is a process which calls for a high level of ideological awareness and social, economic and cultural development in order for the Soviet people to be able to look critically at their own society. The process is rich in lessons for all Communist parties, including the Communist Party of Canada.

## WHAT WENT WRONG THIS PAST YEAR?

G. Hewison is caught in a complex and contradictory situation which he, himself, helped to create. Before assuming the post of party leader, G. Hewison took part in a process which opened up the change of leadership question in the top bodies of the party. The plan was to win the leadership if possible without any discussion of party problems and differences, i.e., without rocking the boat. When the convention ended W. Kashtan in an aside to S. Walsh, said that it hadn't been too bad after all.

The convention was noteworthy for the fact that only two or three delegates stated their concerns about the state of affairs in the party, and the lack of discussion about it, and called for an open examination of the party's problems. It didn't happen, and the party is the loser.

G. Hewison has been involved in a great deal of dissatisfaction, in-fighting, scheming and manoeuvring, all of which goes to prove that good intentions alone do little or nothing to resolve real problems.

As general-secretary, G. Hewison's first task was to have begun the process of producing an adequate policy to meet today's problems around which the party could be activised. If this process had been followed each new promotion to leadership then could have been directly related to developing party activity in a struggle for that policy--a policy which takes into account the vast and complex changes taking place in the modern-day world and Canada.

Lacking that, it is not clear why some promotions were made and there are some suspicions that, as an experienced trade unionist, G. Hewison made them to strengthen his own position. Some ex-trade unionists now sitting on top bodies in the party were noted in the trade union movement for their dictatorial and bureaucratic approaches to solving questions in the unions which, in the long run, cost the party dearly in prestige.

Because of the nature of the problems people face today, a policy discussion

than they do now and also to see the advantages of socialism as a system--and there are advantages.

The party should be growing among women and youth. A large proportion of party membership should be young people. There can be no sound basis for the achievement of this goal without developing policies which meet the needs of youth and which bring about positive relations between the party and Canada's young people.

**THE CANADIAN TRIBUNE--VOICE OF THE PARTY**

The Canadian Tribune has been a problem for a long time. It is safe to say that without the Canadian Tribune the Communist Party would have no voice among the people and would be less effective than it is.

A frank discussion about whether or not the Tribune meets the needs of the current situation would be of real benefit at a time of growing crisis in all aspects of life--and when the scale of class struggle is widening and when varied social forces are on the move.

The question posed to Forum's readers as to whether or not the Tribune staff needs an "advisory" board reveals that there is either confusion or some thinking about changes which haven't been clearly stated.

Who would be on the board? To whom would it be responsible?

We have always looked upon the Canadian Tribune as a weekly, published by the Communist Party which adopts a working class standpoint, which aims to reach non-communists, which tries to be national in scope, which defends the interests of the working people, mobilises the masses, propagates Marxist-Leninist ideas and solutions, carries political exposures and information on major issues--and has the winning of socialism as its goal.

The Trib is involved in the political education of the working-class, and that process cannot be confined to details of oppression alone. It has to react to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, abuse--not matter what class is affected.

Among the varied tasks the Trib has to effectively combat anti-communism, polemicise against bourgeois ideology in a popular way, deal with municipal problems, dominion-provincial relations, new types of reforms and deliver special features. Its writers should help people to develop a higher understanding of issues--an educational aspect.

The editor of the Canadian Tribune has to be a writer as well as having his finger on the political pulse.

To give it vitality, life, content, it needs country-wide press correspondents (not just reports from provincial leaders). It would assist the Trib staff to adjust to the needs of a rapidly advancing, turbulent political situation.

One of its popular tasks is to expose the reactionary essence of conservative policies. The conservative believes man to be a sinner (particularly the worker), that religion is the basis of maintaining morals in society, that society can advance no further than it has, that people are born unequal and that is proper, that social and economic classes and groups are needed by society as they are and that only clever (conservative of course) people can govern, that freedom and liberty are realised in private property and profit--and that the capitalists and labour have a common cause in making a lot of money for the capitalist.

There are, of course, many trends which need to be discussed in the Canadian Tribune. Surely first-hand accounts by striking nurses of their actual working conditions and the problems they face would have been a useful contribution to the struggle?

**THE MEANING OF "DEMOCRACY" AND "FREEDOM"**

The Canadian constitution is under constant attack. The concept of civil liberties and democracy have been taken to ridiculous lengths in which the rights of those who make money out of selling pornography triumph over the moral question. Whatever is beneficial to the people in the constitution should be defended but, along with that, does the fight for the addition of rights which were deliberately omitted by the politicians who framed it, i.e., the rights of labour, women, Native Peoples,

to a job and a decent home and the right of all Canadians to life itself.

The Communist Party allows itself to be limited on the human rights question and has been caught up (in good company like the United Church) in championing the so-called Gay "cause". Unfortunately this doesn't give the party a real constituency in which to work.

Tragically, the moral ground which rightfully belongs to the left has been taken over by the religious fanatics and right-wing conservative forces who distort it for their own purposes. They seek to impose on each family--with woman as the target--the judgement of the church on such questions as abortion.

The question of bourgeois labour law is extremely important just now with the monopolies and transnationals using every crack to evade living up to their responsibility to labour. Bourgeois labour law is an important element in the legal infrastructure because these laws deal with relations between capital and labour. Labour laws influence the form and methods of capitalist exploitation and, on their part, capitalist governments use th e labour code to weaken and split labour, to make it difficult to organize, to take away social gains, to increase exploitation--and to spread illusions foremost among which is that the state is neutral.

The recent backward interpretation by Quebec judges of the abortion law indicates how judges with a class bias attempt to use the law to achieve their goals.

The majority of the population fall under the labour laws of one level of government or another. The decline of labour in agriculture, the growth of the service industries, the remarkable increase in the use of part-time employees, the increase in the numbers of a new technological proletariat, raises new questions for the trade union movement.

**THE PARTY'S STRENGTH IS ITS MEMBERS**

Time and again the membership of the party have been the source of the Party's strength, a force which brought about improvements within the party and in the party's public performance. They are the ones who work in the mass fields where they learn very much.

The initiative of a party-wide discussion of some of the problems outlined in this FOCUS would be a way of involving the membership in finding solutions and would be an impetus to action and a source of enthusiasm and confidence.

As communists (and we in the CCC have not changed) we are fighting for the party. We recognize what we are up against: there are still many big egos involved in the party leadership. When we were in the party leading cadres who knew better from their own experience joined in an immoral and unprincipled -- even uncivilised -- attack on us in order to preserve their own positions and secure their own places and incomes.

They are the ones who are the source of the claim that "they" (the CCC members) could be in the party if they wanted to. This is an excuse for their own lack of principle and inte stinal fortitude.

Why do they want to sweep everything under the rug? Why do they want to draw no lessons from what happened? Why do they want to ignore the harm done to the party? Who is going to forget and who is going to forgive? Are we in the CCC supposed to be joyous that, after we were kicked out and labelled, we can now get back if we only apply -- and keep quiet? And who will be judge and jury to decide who is "fit" to be readmitted and who must still be rejected? That is not the way a serious communist party approaches its affairs, and it certainly is not the way we approach the matter. We are not about to help the leadership avoid a critical, frank and open discussion about the record. And, although they don't say it publicly, just imagine having people in the party who would say the things we say in this FOCUS -- and more yet.

Of course it is a complicated question as G. Hewison keeps saying. But saying that something is complicated can also be used as an excuse to do nothing about it. How many communists go about talking about their high moral mission and, at the same time, discard those morals when it suits

11

them?

An examination of this problem would help party members to understand the processes going on in the USSR where a large bureaucracy wants to perpetuate its own positions without change, and is prepared to go to any lengths to do so.

The party leadership, including the Central Committee, took part in purging the people who make up the CCC--Many a party cadre in whom we had placed great respect and expectations lined up with the leadership in order to preserve their own positions. Of course, some of them believed a party leader could do no wrong and that, Pope like, the leaders were the guardians of the party's morals and purity.

We have learned a lot of lessons, made mistakes, but remain as committed to the goal of socialism as ever--and believe that goal will be facilitated by a strong Communist Party, a principled and moral party playing its historical role. We will not sacrifice our principles in the mistaken belief that to do so will make the achievement of that goal easier. We won't forget what happened and we do not forgive those responsible any more than we expect them to forgive us for whatever wrongs we committed. We do believe in reducing the blown-up image of the leadership to a more human and realistic dimension as a necessary task for all communists.

The approach and content of this issue of FOCUS is based on our efforts to understand the essence of perestroika.

The CPSU recognized the need for change and understood that both the CPSU and the Soviet peoples had to attain a high level of ideological awareness and undertake a fundamental programme of social, economic and structural development in order to be able to look critically at their own society, including the successes and mistakes of the past.

As perestroika succeeds, Canadian politicians and businessmen, diplomats, will be dealing with a state which differs from earlier ones, that is, is on a more correct path, is overcoming negatives is strengthening democracy and, in that process, is much more influential, even decisive, in world affairs.

Therefore the success of perestroika is in the interests of all Canadians. We must say that it appears that the Communist Party hasn't fully grasped the essence of glasnost and perestroika so necessary for strengthening the work of the party in Canada.

This then is our contribution to the opening discussion of the articles in th e first issue of FORUM.

--The Editors

FOCUS NEWSLETTER depends on contributions for its continued publication. Please make out cheques or money orders to NEW TIMES BOOK SERVICE, 217-1808 Smith St., Regina, Sask., S4P 2N3. Thank you.