

Detroit Poets Challenge DCEW, Artists' Workshop

League of Revolutionary Poets

1966

Conformist Logic & The Political Question

(An open letter to the Artists' Workshop and the Detroit Committee to End the War in Vietnam.)

"But for art to transform as well as reflect, there must be a great distance between the artist and life, just as there is between the revolutionist and political reality."

—Leon Trotsky, *Literature & Revolution*

What is reality? The old philosopher's trick. Is it Ginsberg's absolute reality of a New York taxi cab driver, Heraclitus' elusive river, or a step into Paleolithic man's monist magic? What ever it is it changes and however we see it we then define ourselves by it. It is none of those things and all of them. We say that wherever you are and whatever you are doing that is NOT reality. We do not have it, not any of us. We do not have it because we are fettered: unfree. And because we as flesh and blood living feeling men sense our alienation, our neurosis, or whatever word you prefer, according, my good man, to your discipline. It all comes to the same things: unfreedom. So that any reality we would postulate from the overwhelming fact of our unfreedom is finally false, for this state we find our selves in is alien to us and to the rhythms of the universe we feel around us (that is those of us whose rhythms have not yet defected). Therefore the only absolute reality is our potential for complete freedom. The total liberation of man is the only concept upon which we can create a language of liberation. All other orientations from false and psychotic abstractions offered as "reality" we all function on pragmatic conformist logic that only leads to total enslavement: "civilization."

Recently, John Sinclair, the energetic and principled spokesman of the Artists' Workshop, called for a united front against what he termed a decadent" and "burgeoning police state." We agree completely with this projected alliance.

However, all pragmatic solutions must be abandoned. We call for the DCEWV to abandon its program of middle-class politics. We call for the Artists Workshop to abandon its program (as articulated by its manifesto which appeared in the article "Getting Out From Under", NEW UNIVERSITY THOUGHT, Summer '65) of attempting to create a niche for itself within that repressive society which it so despises.

The only real alliance that can be built against the military-industrial elite now uglifying the world is to begin now struggling for an international revolutionary community of man. All other solutions to the problems we face here and now to make this place, i.e., Detroit, a place where a free liberated individual can work and live will end in failure. All other solutions will end in failure.

The struggle we face is not one against Philistinism and hypocrisy but against oppression. The struggle to end war is not against Johnson and Co. but against international Capital. To change the absolute facts of our lives, we MUST change the social and economic fetters that determine those lives. We call for total resistance.

We call on writers to initiate a reign of terror against the language. We call on radicals to initiate a struggle for a principal social revolution. Together we can create an unrepressed society: the total liberation of man.

"...COME OUT, with your help we can occupy the reality studio and retake their universe of fear death and monopoly."

—William Burroughs, *Nova Express*

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(**Ed. note:** We await response from the DCEWV and the Artists' Workshop Society.)

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