

REPORTS

LEEDS

To give an account of the effect that Radical Philosophy has had inside the Department of Philosophy at Leeds, it is necessary to explain what had been happening in this department prior to the emergence of this journal.

Staff-Student Committees within the University are now about 5 years old; the Philosophy committee is noted as one of the most active, because the student delegates to this committee have been pressing continuously for the past three years, both in the department itself and throughout the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, for exam. reforms and for open discussion of all aspects of teaching and course content. This has been partially successful. The staff of the Philosophy department have also played an important part in the movement to democratize the University; it was only after a long fight that the department managed to get the exam. reforms through the Board of Faculties: now other departments are beginning to follow our example.

Over the past few years the staff in the department have come to see that the students have an indispensable role in determining courses i.e. 'consumer-criticism'. Although the Philosophy students have developed their consultative role in advance of other departments, there is evidence that the others are endeavouring to catch up.

However, it has become clear that the Staff-Student Committee will not serve for us to formulate our dissatisfaction with the subject as a whole. The committee has a function within the decision making regarding planning of teaching: if, for example, we ask for teaching methods which will more adequately meet the needs of the majority of the 2nd Year students, who find Formal Logic very difficult, we will be guaranteed a hearing at the Staff meeting, and after much consideration, some change will generally be made. But when we also ask 'Why must we do Logic at all?' the reply is something along the lines of 'You must accept it in faith that the 2nd Year Formal Logic Course is indispensable for the 3rd Year Wittgenstein course'. When, in the 3rd Year we ask 'And why must we do Wittgenstein?' it is as though we had asked the imponderable, or had formulated our question in a wrong way. The Staff at Leeds audibly take pride in the fact that the strength of the department is its Logic team, that it is in the First Division of the Philosophical Logic League, that it has just produced the 'Wittgenstein Workbook', and so on; however, they cannot explain to their pupils why they are teaching us what they do teach us. Somehow, a set of problems were revealed to the human race, and for some reason, a bunch of devotees chew on them from generation to generation, and oddly enough we have found ourselves masticating a few of the more flavourless particles. Or so it seems...

Although undergraduates can develop their own leadership, tactics and principles for attempting to resolve problems of exam. reform, teaching techniques, democratic departments, they are unable to do these things effectively (i.e. to organize themselves) when it is a question of coming to terms with the deeper problems of course content. This was our experience at Leeds. For the problem as such - there were almost as many responses to it as there were students. When Radical Philosophy appeared it provoked an interest, the journal sold quite well; there was some hostility and suspicion from the staff: one of the more repeated statements by staff was that *à propos* the first issue, one important question that has to be faced in assess-

ing academic philosophy is 'Why is Wittgenstein of so much interest to philosophers today?'; there is said to be no evading this issue - you cannot attack academic philosophy unless you can answer this question satisfactorily - yet apparently this does not hold good for the pupil-teacher relationship. Generally the journal was well received by the students. It was considered that it would be a good idea to invite a speaker or two from the Radical Philosophy Group; the Union at Leeds has a Philosophy society but it functions as a platform for visiting academic practitioners of philosophy to display their latest abstractions before the resident panel. Students feel more out of their depth in their own Philosophy Society than they do in the lecture-room. The Philosophy Society always meets in the department and is always dominated by the staff - especially the stars of the Logic team. Although some members of staff regarded it as a serious imposition on the society, Sean Sayers came at the beginning of the Summer term and spoke on 'Mental Illness as a Moral Concept'. This was an interesting talk and it was followed by a lively discussion in which the students were able to take the initiative - a hitherto unheard of state of affairs. Interest in the Radical Philosophy Group was growing.

Meanwhile, steps were being taken to form a Radical Philosophy Group in Leeds because it was evidently not practical to work within the Philosophy Society. The journal was arousing interest among groups of students in other departments: Sociology, Politics, Economics, Education and various language and literature departments. When we all came together it became clear that, because we were all either Marxists or were tending in that direction, we were approaching the problems of philosophy students and others through the question: 'What can we as Marxists do within the University's academic life?'. Thus, for both practical as well as theoretical reasons we decided on the immediate formation of a Radical Humanities Group. The group was founded on May 1, 1972. Our aims have been formulated as: to establish a continuous standing argument on course content in the various departments, to examine the intellectual bases of the subjects taught in the departments, to examine Marxist critiques of these subjects and to encourage students to learn about other subjects than the ones they officially study. The R.H.G. will have divisions which reflect the departments involved. As soon as term begins we will be holding discussion groups about our aims, study classes with local speakers, lectures with visitors, we will distribute leaflets explaining the basic tenets of Marxism, and analysing the University and the Yorkshire neighbourhood in terms of a Marxist critique.

At the beginning of May, the Group organized two lectures by Dr. David Craig from Lancaster University: he spoke at lunchtime to over 500 students on 'The situation at Lancaster', and to about 60 students in the evening on 'The Poetry of Materialism' (on Hughes, Beckett, Camus, Sartre). This latter is an example of what we will endeavour to be doing when we invite well-known visitors - afterwards several students said to me that they found this to be the most interesting statement on modern literature they had heard since they came to Leeds, that they didn't imagine beforehand that a Marxist would have anything useful to say about modern literature, etc. etc.

The RHG has a committee of 6; most, if not all, of the committee will be back in session '72 73. The committee has a pigeon-hole in the Union, to which mail should be sent; the secretary is Paul Worthington. RHG has decided to distribute the journal and other

printed material of the Radical Philosophy Movement and to operate in close conjunction with other groups. We hope that our philosophy students will benefit from the discussions that will arise following the initiative taken by the Radical Philosophy Group - and that with help from this group and other groups of radical intellectuals with whom we will co-operate, a leadership will emerge which will be capable of putting into practice our aims.

ABERDEEN

Most sociologists in the Department welcomed the appearance of Radical Philosophy and were encouraged by the emergence of a radical philosophy movement. Obviously there are close affinities between the problems of contemporary academic philosophy and the sterilization of sociology as a professional discipline, whether in universities, industry or government bureaucracies. Since a case can be made to the effect that sociology arose as a radical critique of industrial society, many sociologists today are, to put it mildly, anxious about the seeming triviality, irrelevance and implicitly conservatism of so-called social science. The next decade will no doubt see a fundamental confrontation of, on the one hand, a sociology which is modelled on the natural sciences, employs survey techniques and is financed by and for the state and, on the other, a critical, humanistic sociology which looks for support from marxism, phenomenology and hermeneutics. The growth of various counter-groups in contemporary sociology - symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and radical sociology - is symptomatic of "the coming crisis". In the present climate of re-appraisal, it is important that radical sociology and radical philosophy should seek out some form of alliance. Indeed, the separate institutionalization of philosophy and sociology within British universities is itself a very real part of the problem.

Given this general sense of unrest and anxiety, a group of sociologists at Aberdeen have formed an interdepartmental study group, with an unspecified link with Radical Philosophy, to discuss issues which seem to us important concerning academic sociology and its relationship to other disciplines, the university and society. Our aim is to draw staff, students, the public into an analysis of what is taught, how subjects are handled and the relationship between knowledge and society. Our immediate discussions will focus on the curriculum, the nature of orthodoxy within different subjects, and the organizational autonomy of sociology, philosophy, history. Future topics of discussion will include: the use (or misuse) of sociology in government planning and inquiry, the role of sociology in British race relations, the sociology of privacy and middle class pressure groups, the role of marxist sociology, the place of rationality in human activity and explanation in sociology, the ethical issues in social science research. Since the group was formed within the sociology department, it is obvious that initially subjects will be selected which are of immediate interest to sociology. (Again, the problem of the division of labour!) But we hope that, as the group expands, other disciplines will contribute to our meetings. We feel the need for such a group, with a loose alliance with Radical Philosophy, because it is important to have a forum where we can discuss the relationship between academic orthodoxies, social control and the regimentation of knowing and learning. Beyond that, we are concerned about the general condition of society and the urgent need for rational criticism.

Bryan S. Turner,
Department of Sociology

"For where philosophy is severed from its roots in experience, whence it first sprouted and grew, it becomes a dead thing."

(Bacon)

RPG ACTIVITIES

Two important general points emerge from the above reports and from similar developments elsewhere: (1) the necessity for Radical Philosophy groups to go beyond the confines of 'philosophy' in a narrow sense, and to cut across academic departments; (2) the welcome emergence of a greater militancy amongst radical philosophers, and a more explicit and active opposition to the academic establishment, mainly as a result of increased student involvement. The original initiatives in Radical Philosophy were taken mainly by younger lecturers and graduate students. Subsequently groups have been formed which have been increasingly the product of undergraduate activity. As well as the Leeds groups, a group has been formed at York which is also composed mainly of undergraduates (details from Ian Hills, Goodricke College). The previous issue of this journal carried a report of the Cambridge group, which was born out of the convergence of a small group of graduates with the wider student activism generated by a sit-in and by conflict within the university over examinations. There are hopes that the same thing may now be happening at Kent. Radical Philosophy activity there has previously been confined to a few members of staff, but last term saw a student sit-in which, though not initially concerned with academic issues, soon became a means of giving expression to the profound dissatisfaction which most students felt with the whole educational life of the university. This gave rise to a good deal of student interest in Radical Philosophy, and it is hoped that an active group will be created this term. At the same time, experience elsewhere reveals the possibility of tensions within the attempted cooperation of students and radical staff. At Bristol, for example, a group was set up last term as a result of the London conference, and weekly lunch-time seminars were held. The group reports that "though these meetings seemed to be popular because they provided some real extra-curricular discussion, the standard of discussion was kept low due to deep divisions between the students involved (all undergraduates) and the more liberal staff. What emerged was that certain members of staff were keen to identify with the movement, but still found it necessary to appear as authorities on all topics discussed, even when it was clear that they were not. The students involved came to deeply resent this attitude."

Mention should also be made of the composition of the London group, for although it too involves students and lecturers it is not primarily university-based. It is the only Radical Philosophy group which exists entirely outside the confines of academic institutions and has a large non-academic membership.

As well as groups which exist explicitly as Radical Philosophy groups, support for the movement has also taken other forms. In some places, for example Sussex University and Enfield College of Technology, there are a number of staff and students active in or sympathetic to Radical Philosophy, but there is not felt to be a need for a Radical Philosophy group as such. At Enfield, Radical Philosophers have been involved in the seminars reported below. At Leicester there has been an active and radical Philosophy Society, independent of the department and involving non-philosophers; here too, therefore, though there has been a good deal of interest in Radical Philosophy, there has been no need for an explicit group.

There is also a fair amount of variety in the nature of the activities undertaken by the groups. We have already referred to the increased activity in the form of critiques of courses, confrontation of institutions etc. Within the category of study and discussion activities, there are further variations. In London the main activity has been the setting up of a number of separate study groups. At Cambridge

a series of regular meetings and seminars were held last term, with papers and discussions on the theme 'Radical Epistemology and the Critique of Method'; particular topics were: Alasdair MacIntyre's 'Against the Self-Images of the Age'; Schutz's 'Phenomenology of the Social World', and other phenomenological writers such as Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger; a discussion with John O'Neill on phenomenological Marxism; and Habermas's 'Knowledge and Human Interests'. At York this term, in addition to weekly meetings, there are plans for the production of a weekly broadsheet. Bristol and Oxford held day conferences at the end of last term, both of which were very successful and well attended. All these are activities which are effectively establishing Radical Philosophy as a prominent force in opposition to the established academic institutions. The question remains whether we can avoid simply mirroring the structures to which we are opposed. Academic elitism is not necessarily avoided in virtue of the fact that one is discussing Marx or Sartre rather than Austin or Moore.

It may be possible to set up groups of some kind in Australia and the U.S.A. If anyone is interested in the idea, they should get in touch with:

Australia:

Wal Suchting, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Sydney, N.S.W. 2006.

U.S.A.:

Gerald Doppelt, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

Larry Blum, 149 Prospect St., Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

Tony Skillen, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado.

Lester Hoffman, Post College, Greenvale, N.Y. 11548.

There are also Radical Philosophy activities going on elsewhere which are not reported above. It is hoped that further reports will be sent to the journal.

ENFIELD

At Enfield College of Technology, one of the main vehicles for the teaching of philosophy up to now has been the B.A. General (London External) degree, which, as many people might already know, is even more obsolete and unsatisfactory than most philosophy degrees available at universities and colleges in this country. In order to offset somewhat the student frustration engendered by the course, we started, at the beginning of the Spring term of this year, a weekly series of seminars, rather pretentiously entitled 'Philosophy and Contemporary Life'. Attendance was optional, and there was no compulsory reading and no written work. Basically it was an opportunity for students and staff to rap together in a context rather looser than that normally available. Unfortunately, reflexes generated by the present educational system die hard: students trained by years of schooling to consider themselves as second-rate were naturally reticent, and they were not helped by the tendency of staff to dominate the discussion. All the same, regular attenders thought the seminars as a whole were fairly successful. Predictably, some of the seminars were freezers, but some of them, especially towards the end of the year, really took off. Among discussion topics were: Punishment (with reference to George Jackson's prison diaries); liberal and socialist conceptions of politics; Freud's 'Civilization and its Discontents'; Reich on political and sexual repression; Illich on education and schooling; Societ schooling; freedom and personal relations (with reference to Strawson's 'Freedom and Resentment'; rationality and culture (Winch's 'Understanding a Primitive Society'); acid (a collective paper by students on Leary's 'Politics of Ecstasy'); comparative religion; religious language; Marx on ideology (excerpts from 'Towards a Critique of Political Economy'); fundamentals of marxist economics. An unkind perspective on the project

would be: a trendy liberal studies course, intermittently flavoured with measures of conventional philosophy. It was, however, sufficiently unlike anything previously available, to my knowledge, to philosophy students in Enfield, to be quite significant.

GLASGOW

Glasgow University's R.P.G. is planning a conference in Glasgow for around next Easter. We are trying to get in touch with people who may be interested. If you would like to be put on the mailing list and receive details of the conference when they are prepared, please contact either Scott Meikle (Department of Moral Philosophy) or Patrick Shaw (Department of Logic).



SALES IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Copies of *Radical Philosophy* may be obtained from the following:

BATH : Michael Rose (Hum. and Soc. Sci.)
 BRADFORD : Paul Walton (School of Soc. Sci.)
 BRISTOL : Keith Graham (Phil. Dept.)
 CAMBRIDGE : David Leon (25 Emery Street)
 CARDIFF : Barry Wilkins (Phil. Dept.)
 EAST ANGLIA : Nick Everitt (Phil. Dept.)
 EDINBURGH : Fritz Neubauer (Pollock Halls of Res.)
 Ted Ninnies
 ESSEX : Ted Benton (Soc. Dept.)
 GLASGOW : David-Hillel Ruben (Dept. of Moral Phil.)
 KENT : Richard Norman (Darwin)
 Sean Sayers (Keynes)
 LAMPETER : H. M. Jones (Phil. Dept.)
 LANCASTER : Howard Feather (Cartmel College)
 LEEDS : Paul Worthington (Radical Humanities Group)
 Hugo Meynell (Phil. Dept.)
 LONDON : Roger Harris (Enfield Tech.)
 J. M. Cohen (Birkbeck)
 G. A. Cohen (U.C.L.)
 Ted Welch (Birkbeck)
 Steve Torrance (Enfield)
 Philip Edwards (N. London Poly.)
 MANCHESTER : John Harris (Phil. Dept.)
 Norman Geras (Dept. of Government)
 NOTTINGHAM : George Kessler (Phil. Soc.)
 OXFORD : Janet Vaux (17 Rawlinson Road)
 Bruce Young (Worcester)
 ST. ANDREWS : L. F. Stevenson (Dept. of Logic and Metaphysics)
 SHEFFIELD : Joe Warrington (Phil. Dept.)
 SUSSEX : John Mepham (Arts Building)
 WARWICK : Peter Binns (Phil. Dept.)
 YORK : Ian Hills (Goodricke College)

"Can any man be a good naturalist, that is not seen in the metaphysics? Or a good moralist, who is not a naturalist? Or a logician, who is ignorant of real sciences?"

(Comenius, *A Reformation of Schooles*, 1642)