

RADICAL PHILOSOPHY 4

SPRING 1973

With this issue, *Radical Philosophy* is one year old. During this year the movement has created a good deal of interest and received a lot of support. However, this success has also served to highlight the long struggle which will be needed if we are to have significant effects. The features of British academic philosophy which we are fighting remain largely unchanged. Our programme is still a two-fold one: (1) to attack academic philosophies for their intellectual sterility and ideological character - to criticize their theories and to attempt to change the structures which give rise to them and support them in practice, particularly the institutions of higher education; and (2) to encourage the development of radical alternatives in theory and practice - linking ourselves closely with other radical political movements is crucial to this.

Radical Philosophy originated within the universities and polys, and that is where its major basis of support still lies. We are very keen to widen this basis of support; it is crucial that the journal speak to people outside the small world of academic philosophy. But the movement will not broaden its base until people set up groups/start activities and begin to produce work for the journal from outside the universities and polys. Of course we will help any such moves in every way we can, but this cannot be achieved by *fiat* from the editorial group - it will be achieved only when people actually produce work for the journal which deals with subjects of wide concern in popularly intelligible terms, and nobody should underestimate the difficulties of doing this.

It is clear that a group like Radical Philosophy cannot have a political programme of its own to challenge the existing political groups. But it is important to see that this does not mean that Radical Philosophy has no political role. Its political activity, however, must remain limited: to theoretical and educational work and to challenging the organized basis of academic and other bourgeois philosophy. Furthermore, if our theoretical work is to be informed by experience it must remain in close contact with other spheres of radical politics. It is for this reason that we are publishing Rosalind Delmar's article in this issue, and we would welcome discussion of the theoretical and practical problems it raises.

Although the political role of Radical Philosophy must remain a limited one, that is no reason to despise it. Most of all, the experience of this first year proves that Radical Philosophy meets a real need and fulfils a real function for many people who are oppressed by the sterility of British philosophy and by its organized imposition in philosophy courses. Radical Philosophy has given such people a focus for their activities and a medium of communication for their views. This is an important achievement.

This view was challenged in the cartoon leaflet distributed with Radical Philosophy 3. That leaflet asserted that "the guardians of the status quo rejoice" at the existence of Radical Philosophy. There is no basis for this assertion - in fact the opposite has occurred: the established profession of philosophers have *ignored* Radical Philosophy in so far as they have been allowed to, and attacked it when not. However, it is certain that the "guardians of the status quo" *would rejoice* if Radical Philosophy were to forget them and become entirely engaged in introspections about its own character.

Nevertheless, the possibilities and limitations of a movement like Radical Philosophy are questions on which there must be continuing debate within the movement. It is these issues that the cartoon leaflet raised, and we are again carrying several pieces which deal with them. They were also discussed at the recent Oxford meeting, and we expect this debate will continue at future Open Meetings, which are now planned to take place regularly (see p.44). We hope that people will continue to send us material of all kinds for future issues.

Coming deadlines:

RADICAL PHILOSOPHY 5 -- 24th March
(7th April for notes, short pieces etc.)

RADICAL PHILOSOPHY 6 -- 20th August

(please send material typed and in triplicate if possible)

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"Philosophers, especially those with an academic position, inherit a long tradition of arguing for the sake of arguing; even if they despair of reaching the truth, they think it a matter of pride to make other philosophers look foolish. A hankering for academic reputation turns them into a kind of dialectical braves, who go about picking quarrels with their fellow philosophers and running them through in public, not for the sake of advancing knowledge, but in order to decorate themselves with scalps. It is no wonder that the subject they represent has been brought into discredit with the general public and with students who have been trained to care less for victory than for truth." (R.G.Collingwood)