

RADICAL PHILOSOPHY 5

SUMMER 1973

It has always been intended that the editorship of this journal should circulate regularly from one group to another. This intention is now to be put into practice; and with the next issue the work of production and distribution will be taken over by a group in London based at the Middlesex Polytechnic. The more general editorial work will continue to be done by a wider group than those involved in the actual production. If anyone would like to involve themselves in the editorial or distribution work they should get in touch with Jonathan Ree (Middlesex Polytechnic at Hendon, The Burroughs, London NW4 4BT; tel. 01-202 6545).

As this is the last editorial we shall be writing we would like to use the opportunity to state our views on the immediate needs of the movement. The question is: What sort of movement has developed so far? - and what sort of further developments are now needed?

So far, the journal has become well established as a theoretical and propaganda organ; but its contents are still remote from any concrete activities. An active movement of radical philosophers, aimed at challenging the organized basis of contemporary British philosophy, is hardly yet established. It is this side of our activities which, in our opinion, must now be developed if radical philosophy is to maintain itself as a live force for change, and not become merely another theoretical journal.

The overwhelming majority of our readers and active members are engaged in teaching and learning in various institutions of higher education. It is therefore inevitable that the major (though not exclusive) base for a movement will be local groups in educational institutions.

The existing local groups have done important work in stimulating interest and activity at a local level. But they have sprung up here and there without any coordination or relation; and there has been no attempt so far to discuss common experiences and to work out common aims: i.e. to organize a *movement*.

However, it has become clear that there are two main functions that local groups can perform:

(1) Discussion Groups: These fulfil a vital educational function and are an important part of our activities. We have not been as efficient as we would have liked in organizing conferences etc., At the local level, however, discussion groups are often difficult to sustain over a period of time. One of the lessons to be learned from attempts to organize such groups so far (Free Universities etc) is that a very high level of motivation and rapport is required from all involved for their survival.

(2) Active Groups: This area has been much less well developed so far; but if we are serious about changing recent British philosophy we must organize ourselves to challenge its institutional and material base.

The absurdity of learning and teaching a type of philosophy which is a technical and specialized academic subject is becoming increasingly apparent. To change this situation we must fight not only the theory of contemporary British philosophy, but also

the organized structures which perpetuate it: courses, syllabuses, and the exams and administrative structures which enforce them; and eventually even admissions policies (Roger Waterhouse raised these issues in *RP 4* pp.16-7). It is only if we can take our struggle against contemporary British philosophy onto this material level that we shall properly exert ourselves as a movement and as a force.

It is in this context that the question of organization needs to be seen. At the last two Open Meetings (see Report p.42) a directionless discussion of organization in the abstract has completely overshadowed any consideration of concrete goals. This reflects an absence of any real activity and real confrontation.

Our own view is that, although some form of defined organization is clearly necessary, any further debate on the appropriate form of it should above all take account of two main considerations:

(a) The organizational structure must be fitted to the nature of the movement as it actually exists, and not to the movement as we would like to imagine it. The real present danger is of the groups, and with them "the movement", ceasing to exist altogether. This is inherent in the lack of any attempt so far to define even the most minimal concrete programme and to organize systematically to fight for it. It is essential to tackle the question of the nature and purpose of the groups. As and when the network of groups develop and become a force, then the overall organizational structure will need to develop accordingly. But it is essential that the form of organization be related to the actual development of the groups.

(b) Radical philosophy can certainly combat contemporary British philosophy most effectively if it continues to create pressure as a broad front of all those dissatisfied with it. At present this "broad front" includes people of differing political tendency. As with other left groups, the basic tendencies are an "organizing and centralising" one, and a "spontaneist and libertarian" one. It is very important for the future effectiveness of Radical Philosophy that people of both tendencies should be able to work together within it. And it would be very regrettable and retrogressive if one tendency were to impose a form of organization which has the effect of excluding others from contributing to the work of the movement. These issues will be discussed at the next Open Meeting (see details p.42) to which everyone is invited.

Richard Norman
Sean Sayers



Material of all kinds is needed for the next issue. Please send it typed and in triplicate if possible.

Deadline: RADICAL PHILOSOPHY 6: 6th August
(Notes, short pieces etc: 20th August)

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