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by Kathleen Gough

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The Political Science, Sociology, and Anthropology Department (PSA) at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia, went on strike on September 24, 1969. The strike protested the crippling of the department and its programs the previous summer. In July the SFU administration had disbanded PSA's elected committees of students and faculty, removed its chairman on unsubstantiated charges of "administrative inadequacy," and placed the department under a trusteeship of six professors, five of them from other fields. In August four PSA professors—including two well-established seniors—were dropped as of 1970 or 1971, having been unequivocally refused tenured appointments or renewal of their existing contracts. Three other faculty members received peculiar, conditional one-year renewals, and three more were refused tenure or overdue promotions, without definite notice to quit. PSA students and faculty read these acts as an unmistakable effort to crush the department's experimental teaching programs and to purge or discourage its more outspoken professors. When the department's scholarly achievements and its fate regarding renewals were compared with those in other departments at Simon Fraser, this was, indeed, the only reasonable conclusion to draw.

Today PSA is smashed. The strike by eight of the depart-

Kathleen Gough is a member of the Political Science, Sociology, and Anthropology Department at Simon Fraser University.

ment's professors, most of its 1,700 students, and several hundred supporting students from other departments, lasted six weeks—the longest in a North American university except for last year's strike at San Francisco State. Its modest demands were to restore the department to normal functioning under its chairman and to negotiate new contracts for the professors. These met with a blank refusal from President Kenneth Strand. Instead, on October 3rd, he locked out the striking faculty by suspending them and cancelling their courses, thus ensuring that their students could not receive instruction in those courses for the rest of the semester. The President then initiated dismissal proceedings against the suspended faculty for failing to teach the prescribed course content in the prescribed times and places during seven working days. The eight suspended professors will probably be in fact dismissed by the Board of Governors at the end of their dismissal hearings before faculty boards during 1970. Two other PSA faculty, who were absent on leave in the fall semester, already have their contracts terminated this summer. In December, twelve teaching assistants were summarily fired by the PSA rump department of six "scab" professors for their part in the strike. The purge is one of the biggest in a North American university since McCarthy days.* It has taken place in a Canadian city just north of the U.S. border, under a President and Dean of Arts who are U.S. citizens, and in a department viewed with hope and enthusiasm by dozens of radical social scientists and hundreds of students. The lesson is one we should learn from, rather than merely lament.

For historical reasons, the PSA Department of 21 faculty contained a majority of New Left radicals and left liberals. Most had been attracted there by T.B. Bottomore, a sociologist and translator of Marx, who founded the department at the

* Since these events San Francisco State University has moved to fire 21 non-tenure faculty members for their support of last year's demands for open Third World admissions policies and a Black Studies department; and Loyola University in Montreal is proposing to phase out twenty-seven professors who supported student demands for the retention of nuclear physicist S. A. Santhanam. A large number of individual, radically oriented professors are being dropped from their appointments in North American universities this year.

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opening of the university in 1965. Bottomore, a Marxologist and Fabian rather than a Marxist, found himself opposed to the fundamental criticisms of imperialist society and its universities put forward by his junior colleagues and students and to their attempts to link theory with action. He left in December 1967 after disputes with both a reactionary administration and his subordinates. He remained, however, on paper a part-time faculty member; and later, by condemning the department publicly and accepting the role of a trustee *in absentia*, he helped bring about its destruction.

In the summer of 1968, a palace revolt by younger, mainly American, faculty leaders caused a tradition-oriented Canadian President to be dismissed and replaced by a U.S. economist and labor relations expert. During a temporary power vacuum in July 1968, in which clamors for faculty self-government and student participation filled the air at Simon Fraser, PSA teachers and students seized a chance to democratize their department and to explore radical approaches to teaching and learning. On paper, the changes of departmental structure were minor. An elected chairman replaced a British-style appointed head. Committees were elected by and from the department's professors to make recommendations to the university administration on hiring, curriculum, budget, teaching methods, contracts, and salaries.

More daring, but well within the university's current rhetoric about student participation, PSA students formed a plenum of the undergraduates enrolled in classes in the department, plus the thirty-odd graduate students, most of whom were teaching assistants. Together, the department's student and faculty plenums worked out a system of "parity." The student plenum elected committees parallel to those of the faculty, with equal powers to initiate proposals. In any pair of committees, neither could pass on a major proposal without discussion and a majority vote within the plenum from which it was drawn. Disagreements between the paired committees or between the two plenums were settled through negotiations, compromise proposals and, if necessary, prolonged discussion. Neither plenum could initiate policy against the veto of the other.

Most horrifying to the university at large, PSA opened all its meetings and files to interested members of the university, including students. Files had previously been open only to members of the administration, privileged secretaries, heads of departments, appointed committees of senior faculty, and in some cases the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. To open them for inspection and discussion by junior faculty and students was viewed as an act of terrorism by senior professors and deans. There was, however (as in most important university conventions) no law against it, and after some initial shocks the system worked with increased goodwill and honesty for over a year.

PSA teachers and students embarked on these changes with different expectations, depending on their previous experiences and theories. Most saw them as an interesting but modest experiment designed to make life more human and learning more serious. They seemed likely, perhaps, to provoke opposition from the die-hards, but unlikely to bring on the holocaust. Personally, however, from the time that PSA professors handed equal powers to the student plenum, I felt certain that, as a community, the department's days were numbered. Without foreseeing the extraordinary series of plots, demarches, and barrages the administration would engage in, I thought the department would somehow be liquidated within a year or two.

This was because our structural changes, although reformist and constitutional, had a revolutionary content and had, from the outset, offended people in power. They meant, of course, government (or more correctly, recommendation) from below rather than from above. They changed the department from a secretly governed cell within an elitist educational club into a people's learning community. Because of the values of its elected officers, and of those who elected them, the community owed allegiance to and served, potentially if not yet actually, dispossessed and oppressed people, both locally and throughout the world. PSA's changes robbed senior professors and administrators of that aura of wisdom which flows so convincingly from esoteric and arbitrary power, and compelled

them to argue about their decisions, values, theories and goals. In this process PSA created a mostly joyful, sometimes conflictful, and occasionally hilarious community effort where before had been a complex of individual, often alienating and competitive work-stints. After twenty-six years around North American and British universities I thought it unlikely such strides toward freedom could be made without awful combat.

Mordecai Briemberg, PSA's former chairman, has analyzed the events of the PSA experiment and of its destruction.* I shall focus on the contradictions that arose in the minds and roles of teachers who undertook the PSA experiment, and between these teachers and those who opposed them—chiefly administrators, faculty leaders, press, and business elites in Vancouver, and a small number of personally ambitious students. One purpose is to trace some of the implications of a radical social science when its practitioners act to modify their relationships in accordance with their theories. This may be useful for other students and young teachers who hope to link theory with practice in their own universities but have not had PSA's unusual, if temporary, opportunities. The other purpose is to point out the limited power of professors to pursue radical themes and goals in their work and relationships, and to suggest that repression of such teachers is increasing. Many may therefore have to use their talents outside the universities, and the question is where.

Although not clearly stated at the outset, PSA's goals were three:

(1) To present to students, and further develop with them, a radical analysis of world society, especially those segments about which we had special knowledge through our professions. I use "radical" in its broadest sense of going to the root of significant social problems. These included the character, development, and effects of imperialism in Third World coun-

* Mordecai Briemberg, "A Taste of Better Things," in *This Magazine Is About Schools*, (Toronto: January 1970). Details of the PSA case are available in a PSA document, *Who Broke Contract With Whom?* available from Ace Hollibaugh, student, PSA Department, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby 2, B.C., Canada.

tries; the roots of underdevelopment; the sources and comparative history of revolutionary movements and movements of protest and reform; the analysis of classes and class conflict in industrial capitalist, subjugated capitalist, and socialist societies; the history of modern racism and of struggles against it by colonized peoples both inside and outside metropolitan industrial nations; the subordination of women in history and social evolution; and the sources of such evils as modern genocide, poverty, population problems, environmental destruction and pollution, and war.

While teaching from, and fulfilling the requirements of, an already-constructed course-catalogue, we increasingly focused our lectures around such themes. Four or five teachers worked from one or another adaptation of a Marxist perspective. Others began with "liberal" assumptions and questions. All viewed and deepened their analyses as the year progressed. For the teachers the purpose of this work was simply to understand, more deeply, the modern world and its antecedents, and to help open up this experience for their students, so that wherever they went afterwards, they might comprehend society and their place in it better, and better struggle to improve it. This was quite different from the usual effect, if not the aim, of university education, which produces narrowly trained and conditioned individuals willing to fill niches in corporate society with minimal protest.

(2) We tried to change the relationships among teachers, students, and secretaries from a hierarchical structure of command, obedience, and selective individual reward or punishment, into a democratic, learning-and-service community which was self-governing with respect to its internal work and relationships. The impetus for this effort came from students' sense of the failure of university education to meet their needs. It also came from their desire to share in decisions that affected their own lives immediately, rather than sometime later, or never at all. Finally, parity came from a belief held by large numbers of students and PSA faculty that, despite differences in knowledge and experience, teaching and learning are best accomplished as a two-way process requiring discussion and argument rather than coercion and obedience.

Since the strike failed, PSA has often been accused of going too far and too fast in egalitarianism; of trying to create a little hot-house democracy too "far out" to relate realistically to the rest of the university and to British Columbia. This may be true. Most of the teachers and many senior students were cosmopolites and radical or liberal nomads, veterans of anti-colonial struggles in the Commonwealth or of anti-racist, anti-war, and free-speech battles in the United States. Only six of the twenty-eight professors who entered the department from its founding in 1965 were Canadians. The rest were U.S., British, South African, German, Latin American, or Asian citizens. Graduate students had a similar spread. Few were sensitized to British Columbia's particular brand of provincial reaction or knew at first how to seek allies in the city—a city located at the bottom of a mountain on which SFU stood in lofty isolation. At the time, however, a fairly sudden shift to equality and solidarity was essential to push through the educational changes on which students and teachers were bent. Indeed, the goals of research were seriously questioned only after student parity was instituted, in the fall of 1968, under insistent student pressure for discussion of knowledge not only "for what?" but "for whom?"

(3) Third and last, many students and some faculty began to relate themselves and their work to the struggles of oppressed people already or potentially on the move in our own society or in societies with which we had contact. Such moves had been made by individuals and small groups in extra-curricular ways before parity was instituted. Thus, many were already involved in anti-war demonstrations, aid to American deserters and draft resisters, and California grape-boycotts. PSA people were influential in forming a women's caucus and a children's co-op in the summer of 1968. But during the winter and spring following, some students and teachers began to focus their research on problems of women's liberation, on the economic and power structures of British Columbia and Canada, the history and class systems of the B.C. Chinese and Canadian Indian communities, or on the B.C. school system and its relations to racial and class discrimination. In January 1969 two groups crystallized around opposed views of the

priorities for Western intellectuals in the struggle against imperialism. One, the Vancouver Labor Forum, brought together students, teachers, and industrial workers in a downtown effort to explore research around problems of Canadian trades unions and unemployment. The other, the African Relief Services, began research and action to aid revolutionary movements in Africa. These two groups, or their successors, together with the women's caucus, spread beyond and survived the smashing of the department.

By the summer of 1968 most PSA teachers had seen that the ideal of value-free social science in which they had been educated was a myth. They vaguely saw that the structure of their work relations and the conventions of social science encouraged them to uphold or at least not seriously challenge the existing society. The experience of parity, however, helped reveal to teachers ways in which they had been actively serving the ruling class of imperialism and helping to perpetuate anachronistic and harmful features of capitalist relationships. To try to move against this trend and to infuse the beginnings of a socialist consciousness into one's work and relationships inevitably involved struggle against, and reprisals by, university and other authorities, even when these were not deliberately sought. As long as he fulfilled the "normal" requirements of his employment, these efforts also involved the teacher in acute contradictions in his own roles.

As professors of Asian, African, or Latin American studies, for example, some PSA faculty were encouraged to involve themselves and the department in applications for research grants or the funding of area study programs from American or Canadian foundations which used funds derived from the interest on loans to Third World countries, or profits on investment, much of it foreign. My own research on Indian politics and economics convinced me that in the case of agencies for research in India, these funds often came indirectly from the labor or the privation of poverty-stricken Indians. The kinds of research sponsored through them (even when not actually funded by the Department of Defense or the CIA) tended to promote counter-revolutionary theories and programs. At best, such large-scale Western-dominated research

involved cultural imperialism and stifled the development of independent indigenous work. At worst, some of the research institutes set up were used as spy-stations by the Central Intelligence Agency.* Naturally, we had to explain such matters to students, refuse involvement in projects which seemed compromising, and, in classes, communicate with evidence our conclusion that in many Third World countries only socialist revolution could redeem the people from their poverty and underemployment. PSA was smashed before this area of concern reached open crisis. Already, however, we had incurred the enmity of at least one senior Asian professor in our own department. We were also becoming worried about how or whether to encourage our own graduate students to research in Third World countries *without* foundation research grants. Eventually, students' questions even forced some of us to wonder about the value-priorities which led us to continue in foreign area research when we might perhaps be of more use to the radical movement and the Canadian people in our country of residence.

At Halloween in 1966 a minor riot of high-school students occurred in a Vancouver suburb. The Board of Education and the government made a grant through the PSA department to four faculty members to investigate the sources of teen-age frustration. The research involved questionnaires administered to school students and parents by PSA student assistants. The forms included questions about patterns of conventionally forbidden or illegal behavior involving drug use and sexuality. In the fall of 1968 an attack was written on the project by a graduate student who had earlier been involved in it, and was presented to a PSA seminar on "Knowledge for Whom?" Criticism centered around the fact that student respondents had thought their replies were anonymous, whereas they were actually numbered and linked to names and parents' names by the researchers. By this minor subterfuge researchers had gained

* See A. Sinha, *U.S. Threat to India's Sovereignty* (Calcutta, 1964), and for similar information on Africa, *African Studies in America; the Extended Family*, by the Africa Research Group, P.O. Box 213, Cambridge, Mass. See also Gerald D. Berreman, "Academic Colonialism: Not So Innocent Abroad," *The Nation* (November 10, 1969), pp. 505-508.

possession of facts which, if revealed, could have endangered individual students in their relations with police or educational authorities, even though the researchers had no intention of using, and did not use, the information to this end. Further complaints were that a private report was to be written for the Board of Education before the materials could be re-collated for publication. Again, the researchers made no effort to communicate their conclusions to students or to help students, although the latter were seen as in some respects powerless and exploited people, at the mercy of a conservative educational system. Finally, no study was made of the power-structure and values of the school teachers, administrators, and business community against which some students appeared to be reacting. Faculty still involved in the project refused to expand or modify its terms of reference, but the department decided not to sponsor such projects again. This was not calculated to endear PSA to educational authorities and local elites, even though it was impossible for the department to prevent individual professors from undertaking more of such contract research.

Student parity at the committee level cast a searchlight on faculty authority in the classroom and brought into focus professors' continuing obligation to grade students' academic performance. In the beginning, PSA professors saw grades as a necessary if unpleasant part of evaluating learning, or at worst a nuisance. Later they came to feel that individual grading of students partly destroyed or made hypocritical their efforts to exchange ideas freely, to help the neediest students, to undercut competition and enhance collective learning, welfare, and consciousness, and to promote a critical social science. These problems grew worse when the administration pressed us to grade more strictly, to grade on a "curve," and to fail a given proportion of students. In fact, PSA's intensive interchange in small tutorials, together with students' interest in the subjects they chose, had, in my opinion, so raised the quality of their work that it was hard by conventional standards to give low grades to most of the work being produced in our department. Our relatively high grades were, however, interpreted by administrators as evidence of "low standards," and threats were

repeatedly made to investigate and deal with the department's alleged "academic incompetence." The virtual requirement that we fail or punish a certain proportion of each class every semester made a mockery of our efforts to engage and encourage every student and to form group research projects, so that the cultural and intellectual level of all might be raised. Anxiety about grades caused many students who would otherwise have been interested in group research and sharing knowledge to work competitively against their peers in an effort to obtain a good job or a place in graduate school. If we used conventional standards, the students to whom we felt obliged to give lower grades were often students from Third World, rural, or poor urban backgrounds or from ethnic minorities, whose English skills were less developed or who had grown up with few books around them. Yet these were precisely the students we most wanted to interest in our critique of imperialism. To interest and then to penalize students for incomplete understanding or linguistic inadequacy seemed a cruel waste. Such students were also most often those whose time for their studies was limited by the need to work for a living. Further complications arose because of the radical and experimental content of much of our work. Some ambitious students who gained high grades from other professors because they memorized data, had verbal facility, or faithfully gave back conventional theories, found they received low grades from us because they would not compare and debate opposing theories. The complaints of a few such students to the administration probably led to the unjust but widely published accusation that PSA radical professors punished those students who refused to "toe the party line"! In any case the arithmetic grading of students proved quite incompatible with our wish to develop different *kinds* of approaches and to try out new ideas. The attempt to pour radical content into traditional work relations also meant that we were inevitably rewarding the more competitive students (even for "radical" work) with degrees, honors, jobs, or scholarships designed to entrench them in managerial positions in the society we were criticizing. The fact that professors themselves occupied such positions in relation to their often

poverty-stricken students was, of course, not lost on the students, and in their eyes made us seem less for real.

Trying to create a cooperative learning *community* ran us head-on into the administration's requirement that faculty compete with, police, undercut, or weed out their own weaker or more rebellious brethren, in addition to serving as custodians of the students. PSA's elected committees and one-man/one-vote meetings, although not opposed to Simon Fraser's procedures, "intimidated" half of our senior faculty within the department, as did its profligate sharing of powers with students. PSA teachers, students, and secretaries tried to discipline each other by collective praise or blame and by appeal to a sense of duty to the department and the public, rather than by having seniors threaten juniors with job loss or loss of salary increments. PSA faculty stressed service to the students, especially teaching, whereas the administration stressed research grants, conventional publications, or pleasing Vancouver's elite. Again, PSA teachers published the list of their salaries and tried to get disparities among them reduced. Such crass forms of sacrilege provoked horrified whispers that "that crazy PSA bunch were even *forming a commune and pooling their salaries*"—but this, although mooted, actually never came off.

While perpetually in conflict with the university administration, PSA faculty's necessary acceptance of the terms of their employment brought them into subsidiary and occasional conflict with the radical student movement. Faculty could not, for example, engage in civil disobedience or any form of "direct action" without provoking dismissal—as they eventually did in the final strike. Before that it was hard to decide which occasions might justifiably call for such "final struggles" and which might not. In November 1968 several hundred students from the Universities of British Columbia and Victoria, from Simon Fraser, and from Vancouver City College, occupied the SFU administration building for three days in protest against racial and class discrimination in student admissions. A hundred and fourteen, including many from PSA, were arrested on charges of criminal trespass and eventually received heavy fines. PSA faculty took no part in planning this action, although

some went to stand between police and students if violence occurred, and most signed statements condemning the president for calling the police. Some students chided PSA faculty for their cautious and "liberal" roles, while most faculty condemned them for supposedly inciting the demonstration. In such crises, worried teachers flapped about rather pitifully, wondering which actions of theirs might be adventurist and which might put brakes on the student movement.

However cautious and tentative, faculty efforts did of course eventually bring on the deluge. After November, administrators made it plain that they were out to get the majority in PSA by any means necessary. A campaign of slander began in the Vancouver press and the university, aimed at our teaching and grading methods, hiring practices, budgeting, public lectures, supposed ideological and political discrimination, "terrorism" (this based on alleged phone calls which none of us ever made), research, and personal styles. From Christmas through spring the faculty's energies were so absorbed in defending the department and justifying their existence that they barely had time to teach their students, let alone pursue new research. The onslaught culminated in the removal of the chairman, the abolition of parity, and the phasing out of seven faculty. Among these, Associate Professor John Leggett was terminated for alleged "unethical conduct" in accepting a one-year professorship from another university while on unpaid research leave from Simon Fraser. This thin accusation came after his arrest at the University of Connecticut for taking part in demonstrations against Dow Chemical and Olin Mathieson. With poetic aptness, I was refused tenure for an article in MONTHLY REVIEW on "Anthropology and Imperialism."* It caused the University Tenure Committee (an economist, a geographer, a pestologist, a chemist, and two educationists) to have "serious doubts about her scholarly objectivity."

The strike for parity and contracts showed the extent to

* "Anthropology and Imperialism," MONTHLY REVIEW, April 1968; also published as "New Proposals for Anthropologists" in *Current Anthropology*, December 1968, vol. 9, no. 5.

which students were involved in PSA. Over 2,000 risked their degrees, credits, bursaries, or places in graduate school, in their lengthy struggle. Eleven students and three professors received injunctions for picketing, with the threat of damage suits for loss of fees to the university. Hundreds of students withdrew from school rather than enter the "scab classes" hastily set up by the administration to replace those it had cancelled after suspending the striking professors. Twelve students and one secretary fasted for periods up to fifteen days. By contrast, Simon Fraser's largely immigrant faculty proved unusually reactionary or fearful. Most kept quiet under the fatal impression that once PSA's trouble makers were removed, by whatever methods, student rebellion would be ended and the university could return to "normal democratic procedures." In any case Douglas Dowd is probably correct when he concludes that the class interests of university teachers prompt most of them to oppose reduction of their power.*

PSA's experience suggests that radical, or even (truly) "concerned liberal" faculty can carry on intellectual *and* political struggle only for brief periods. Most must probably capitulate, become teaching nomads, or seek a berth elsewhere. Moreover, the small handful of house-Marxists in universities who confine themselves to intellectual criticism and forgo action are gradually losing the niches they have occupied uneasily but on the whole honorably since McCarthyite days. Administrative attacks on the student movement force them to take stands that either betray the movement or else provoke their own removal. The five PSA "Marxists" and social democrats who opposed the strike could not opt out: the administration—or their own blindness—drove them to purge the student movement, as well as to acquiesce in the dismissal of their colleagues.

It may be possible for university exiles to turn defeat into victory. A number of PSA's fired students and suspended

* Douglas Dowd: "Campus Disruptions and the Liberal Left," MONTHLY REVIEW (September 1969). There are stirrings, however. Dozens of protest letters have come in and over 200 social scientists have helped finance PSA's Legal Aid Fund.

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faculty are seeking wage-jobs in Vancouver and have formed a Community Center for Research and Education with several hundred rank-and-file workers, minority-group members, women, and unemployed. The Center, open to the public and financed from contributions, holds workshops and classes which seek to explain day-to-day problems of working men and women in the context of Canada's place in imperialist society. This will not be a free university with course-work of limited duration, but a continuing effort by working intellectuals to share knowledge for collective political struggle. With the students and the secretaries, we will bring PSA off the mountain, and in our end find our beginning.

Postscript, June, 1970

In the past five months, new developments have occurred at Simon Fraser. These suggest that the struggle by radical professors to remain on campuses may not be over. A groundswell of support for the goals of PSA among North American social scientists climaxed in May, when investigating teams from the international American Anthropological and Sociological Associations published reports criticizing the SFU administration, demanding the suspension of dismissal hearings, and suggesting ways to re-establish PSA. The Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association, the Canadian Committee on Socialist Studies, and the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars have unanimously passed similar resolutions. President Strand has so far ignored these demands, but there is growing unease on campus as forcible re-organization, and the firing of individual dissenters, have spread to other departments. The outcome of the long-delayed PSA dismissal hearings is in considerable doubt. PSA faculty have renewed their struggle to regain a base on campus from which to explore radical theories of society and responsible relations with the people of British Columbia.