

# Brilliant theories have never put food on table

By JOHN SOMER

Ah capitalism! What a wonderful thing it is! It puts food on the table of the ones that can pay for it. It does it at the expense of good and responsible farmers, but what the heck, let future generations think of something to return fertility to impoverished soils. Right now we have plenty.

The tables in our so-called developed West are groaning with food. Capitalism seems to have solved the problem of want, right? And yet there is poverty in our countries.

No matter what we do, the poor are always with us. The crudest social-darwinist propaganda explains it with laziness and faulty genes. Only the fittest must sur-



Ideas and The Arts by John Somer

vive! Who doesn't work shall not eat either! Let's sterilize poor unmarried mothers and get them off the welfare rolls!

This hateful propaganda never explains why there are so many

without work. Are there really that many jobs out there that go begging and never get filled? The truth is that the best-run economies in the Western World have unemployment. Without a labor pool (a euphemism for chronic unemployment) wages would go through the roof and all profits would vanish.

There was a time when the poor were left to rot. Most modern states however, desire a good press internationally, and therefore have devised ways and means to give handouts to the poor, to not have them begging in the streets, at least not in the better parts of town.

But when a recession hits (a recession is the capitalist

equivalent of a famine in a third-world country) we try to save money by cutting the handouts to the poor. It's far more glamorous to help famine victims than your own people. Yet every penny a poor person gets is spent at once and becomes fuel to the economy, while the rich often hoard their money in foreign accounts and use every tax shelter imaginable.

We humans are strange. How quick we are to accuse the poor of not working enough, as if all the rich are self-made. How many of them are? How many of them were born into riches and brought up by servants and went to the best schools and eventually got daddy's millions? It is not work so much that is needed to make or to keep a person wealthy, but opportunities, and opportunities in this world are always limited.

Division of labor, an absolute must in a civilization like ours, limits opportunities. Not everybody can be a boss, no matter how hard you work. To say that everybody can make a million is as much nonsense as to say that everybody can win in a lottery. Unfortunately, the poor, instead of rebelling, believe this nonsense and spend too much of their money on lottery tickets.

At the moment there seems to be no substitute for capitalism, and as long as it is linked with democracy, we can live with it. But it is not a perfect system and never will be. We have found out that communism, because of its lack of counterbalancing forces (private property, free press, opposition parties, etc.) is deadly.

In small communities, in particular if they are based on a religious code, some forms of

communism seem to work, as for instance with the Shakers and the Amish. In larger organizations, religion is no protection against repression. Think of the armies of former Popes waging wars all over Europe, think of the people burned at the stake, all in the name of our compassionate savior.

What caused the present recession? It is ironic to hear business leaders say governments should be run more like businesses. God forbid! We are in this recession because big business, with the help of President Reagan, gambled as if there was no tomorrow. The 80's saw the biggest spending spree in all history. Big banks and big business engaged in frenzied speculations that were positively obscene.

Apart from the small independent businessman and woman, few remained sober, millions thought they could spend themselves rich. Now the whole irresponsible mess has come down like a house of cards and promptly, the very people who got us into it, start preaching.

With many thousands of people thrown out of their jobs, big business says: no rescue operations, no more money for re-education for these poor wretches. We need the money from the governments to bail out our over-extended enterprises. If we don't get this cash from the governments (the taxpayer) we will go somewhere else. Neat. Apparently the poor are now to pay for the follies of the rich.

It's a farce of the blackest kind, and anybody who is becoming a part of it should be deeply ashamed.

## Tony Meers exhibit opens

A gala evening is planned tonight for the official opening of an exhibition of drawing and painting by Toronto artist, Tony Meers, being featured at the Halton Hills Library-Cultural Centre.

The collection of 25 years of drawing and painting by the successful commercial artist will hang in the gallery in July and August, with the artist and his wife and a number of dignitaries attending tonight's opening, sponsored by the Friends of the Halton Hills Libraries.

The show will be composed of a

selection of original work created for the covers of Canadian romance and adventure paperback novels. Also included in the exhibition and sale will be a number of portraits, watercolors, drawings and sketches.

Tony Meers, *The Making of a Working Artist, 1966 to 1991*, will be officially opened by Mayor Russell Miller and will hang in the gallery from July 10th to August 10th. The artist grew up in Georgetown, attending Wrigglesworth Public and Georgetown High Schools. Taking part in the opening will be his former High School instructor,

Terry McDonald of Streetsville and John Somer, local gallery owner and early mentor, also a columnist with the Halton Hills Herald.

Former school chums of the artist and the public are invited to attend the Opening Gala between 7 and 9 p.m. Refreshments will be served by The Friends.

Following the opening, the Library Gallery, 9 Church Street, will be open to the public during library summer hours, including Tuesday through Thursday evenings until 9 p.m. There is no admission charge.

## Artists budget increases

The Ontario Arts Council announced that the 1991-92 budget for the Artists' Workforce program has been increased to \$100,000. Last year \$45,000 was allocated to this program.

Norman W. ... Executive Director of the Ontario Arts Council, said this increase has been made possible by the Ontario government's increase OAC's appropriation for this year. "We are pleased to recognize the success of the Artists and the Workforce program in this tangible way," said Walford. "Through this program we are able to offer employment for professional artists, and at the same time provide opportunities for members of the trade union movement to become involved in the design and development of arts projects," he added.

Since the program was introduced in 1968, a total of \$300,000 has been awarded by OAC to 39 projects throughout Ontario, with participating unions contribution at least \$75,000.

Further information and application forms for this juried program can be obtained from the Community Arts Development Office of the Ontario Arts Council, 151 Bloor Street West, Toronto, M5S 1T6, or by calling (416) 961-1660 or toll-free in Ontario 1-800-387-0058.

## Status of artist studied by province

The Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications has now begun comprehensive consultations with the arts community to develop a provincial policy on the status of the artist. Minister Rosario Marchese announced.

Throughout June, ministry staff met with representatives from the Ontario arts community, as well as other provincial ministries with legislation and/or policies that affect the socio-economic status of the professional artist.

"Artists make an important contribution to our collective identity and our economy," said Marchese. "They are among the most highly trained professionals, yet their average incomes hover on the poverty line. The current system severely limits their access to benefits and labour relations standards."

Among the areas of concern that the province will address at the meetings are labour relations, including collective bargaining, employment stan-

dards, workers' compensation, and health and safety concerns; fiscal compensation, such as pension plans, tax deductions and credits; training and professional development; housing and workspace availability; and, public awareness and arts and education. Recently-introduced federal legislation proposed the extension of labour rights under federal jurisdiction.

The meetings have been structured on an issue-by-issue basis and are designed to stimulate discussion of the alternatives available to the Ontario government in addressing the concerns of the artist. A discussion paper outlining policy options is expected to be completed by September.

Marchese continued, "I am committed to working with the arts community and my colleagues in other ministries to develop a strong and effective status of the artist policy in Ontario. These consultations represent a significant step forward in achieving that goal."

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