

New Internationalist

Subscriptions: \$22, 1 year; \$39, 2 years, \$54 institutional, from 70 Bond Street, Ground Floor, Toronto, M5B 2J3

New Internationalist has just published its 146th monthly issue. In over twelve years it has provided a remarkably consistent and partisan coverage of what it calls 'the unjust relationship between rich and poor worlds'. It maintains three editorial offices—in Australia, Britain and Canada—and is operated as a cooperative 'whose purpose is to communicate development ideals through print and film to the widest possible audience'. As such it represents a brave attempt at bucking the dominant wisdoms of print journalism while taking into account the existence of television, radio and film. Of 45,000 international subscriptions, 26,000 are in Britain, 6,500 in each of Canada and Australia, 2,500 in the USA and the rest around the world. *New Internationalist* is a Commonwealth magazine, pricking the conscience of whites but not yet making much of an inroad into the American white market, which presumably believes that *Time* or *Newsweek* or *US News & World Report* or even *South* give them all the factoids that are worth digesting.

Only 45,000 copies? Let us begin with that staggeringly low figure for a magazine which is competing with millions. What would you do to prick the conscience of the capitalist world? We could start, I suppose, with blankets for Ethiopia, which are certainly more practical than tears. The Wicks' are right: The naked should be clothed, the cold warmed, the hungry fed. And this is certainly better than the tired old clichés of left and right, that would like us to believe that we are always right, and they wrong because they did not/do not have the right ideology or organization. But, of course, it is not enough, because it is generally too late, too slow. The blankets keep the vultures from pecking away at the cadavers. And our ignorance of what prehistory existed before the locusts swarmed and the desert encroached on fertile plains is part of our willful misreading of all that passes for the third world. (The Falashas, for instance, hijacked from Sudan only after the Israeli rabbinate had, in their tortured wisdom, decided that after 2,500 years they were kosher after all.) So how do you prick the conscience of the rich?

New Internationalist has grown a lot in twelve years. At its inception it looked little more than a mouthpiece for British do-gooders, a secular missionary tract supported by Quakers, Methodists and Baptists who had found their true home in the British Liberal and Labour parties; a kind of journalistic Oxfam. What we have now is a magazine that has a much better sense of theory and practice, recognizing that the third world is not 'out there' but here in our own backyard, that the issues that affect the third world are here in our own schools, on our tv screens, on our streets. The interplay between their problems and ours is the most striking feature of the new *New Internationalist*. Each issue is devoted to a theme, but also includes letters (often the most abrasive part of the magazine), an update on past themes, a page or two on brief news items, a page on

An open letter addressing the issues and state of affairs within cultural journals; we solicit opinions, critiques and submissions.

'Ideas for Action', book reviews, a review of a 'classic' book and a profile of one third world country. All of this is done with a fine blend of reportage, autobiography, photojournalism, statistics and graphics. Given its slender resources, *New Internationalist* is an impressive magazine to look at, and the prose style is generally succinct and direct. It can be read right through at one sitting, at the end of which you have to dash to your typewriter to write to someone, even if it is only *NI*, to get some agro sorted out.

Take the theme issues, for example. At random—Looking Beyond Violence; Tourism in the Third World; The Class System: Education and the lessons of learning; Goodbye to Innocence; The Making of an Adult; Everything Under Control: Life in a managed society; A Second Look—Global reporting in a critical light; Living Images: Popular culture in the third world; The Treatment of Mental Illness. Some of the letters have accused *NI* of being tendentious (linking Rape Crisis Centres with the Greenham Common movement, for example) and there is obviously a problem in trying to make connections in order to establish 'movement' when what may be truer to the facts is that people do what they do for quite different reasons. *New Internationalist* not only tries to give us facts, but also to establish connections between the facts, and they are different facts and different connections than those provided by the rest of the media. Most readers of *borderlines* will probably accept those connections, but not all those who give blankets to Ethiopians will, and thereby lies the problem of media coverage and our involvement in the third world. People relate to the third world for different reasons and a liberal-marxist point of view is not necessarily the obvious point of connection. On Latin America, for example, is Gabriel García Márquez' the 'correct' view as opposed to, say, Mario Vargas Llosa's, who is prepared to take money from the Moonies in order to display his sense of what Peru is all about? *New Internationalist* risks its neck by coming down on one side rather than another—but there are so many magazines piled up on the other side!

The major difference between *New Internationalist* and other magazines dealing with the third world (*South* is an obvious comparison, which tries to appear as a third world London *Economist*) is the economy of words as well as the graphic visual appearance which, together with the emphasis on theme issues, gives the magazine a distinctive campaigning sense. The material is there not for pure information, but to be used (one suspects to be used mainly in educational institutions). Some of the articles are based on individual case studies, which gives a sense of immediacy; others are summaries of trends or research which sometimes leads to superficiality (the special issue on mental illness is a particular case of this). But the overwhelming impression is of reflective urgency.

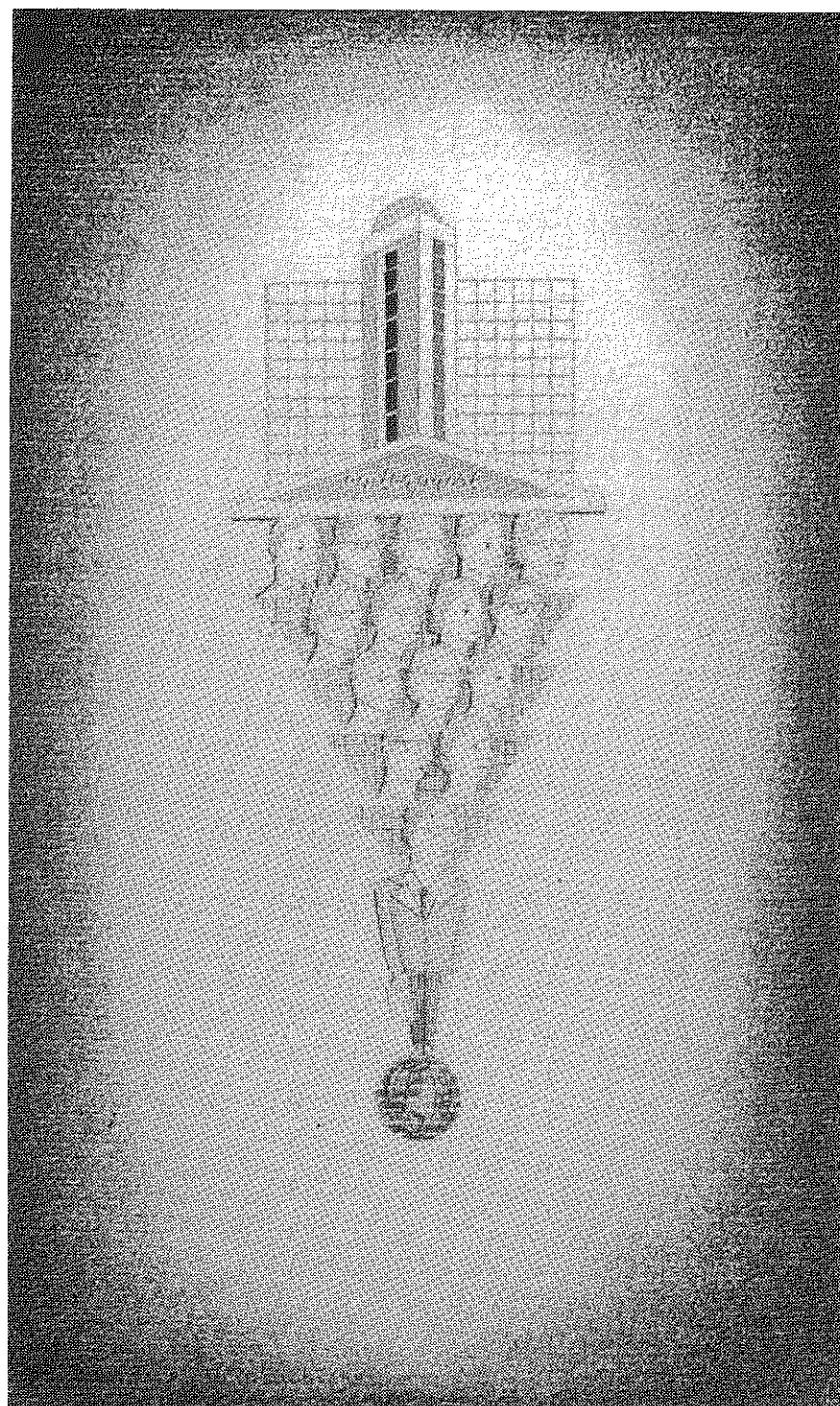
The sense of there being three worlds of development—first thought for us, I think, by Franz Fanon—is an intricate net that has to be reweaved. *New Internationalist* is a beginning in unscrambling those forced definitions, important because they come from countries which have

been instrumental in forging them.

Sometimes, however, in reading the magazine one wishes that there was a wider sense of history. Important as it is to invite readers to confront Robert Tresselt or Karen Blixen, perhaps it would be more important to read them in 'context'. Peter Worsley's *The Three Worlds: Culture and World Development* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984,

into our everyday lives (which it certainly is in intent) then the following points have to be taken into account in wishing for its effectiveness. There is still a tendency in the magazine to depend on slogans and short-cut history. To make a connection between *us* and *them* requires a more specific confrontation on issues (birth control, abortion, violence, migration, exchange rates, etc.) in which the pat-

JUNCTURES



\$8.95 paper) tries to do in one book what I think *New Internationalist* tries to do twelve months each year. But there is a difference. *New Internationalist* plunders history in order to demonstrate that we have been here before: Worsley tries to show the importance of understanding how different we were *then* before we can begin to make connections. He does this, in part, by examining the theories that have been advanced to account for the state of the third world's so-called development, but also by a patient sifting of evidence on migration, poverty, ethnicity, nationalism and agriculture, comparing today's third world with early stages of development in Europe and North America. Where the *New Internationalist* lives in the eternal present, Worsley tries to project us into the past as present.

If, therefore, *New Internationalist* is to be taken as a serious intervention

terms that connect (in Gregory Bateson's sense) are spelled out, debate encouraged (and not just in the 'Letters' section). The selling of the magazine must be more aggressive in the USA. The critique of the Soviet Union and its acolytes must be more astringent. Somehow the tendency of the British editors to refer to Indians as 'blacks' must be curbed (do all 'wogs' still begin at Calais?). And thus the particularity of the different countries must be respected, as well as the life histories of their people.

But all of this is like selling coal to Newcastle. *New Internationalist* is the only popular magazine on the third world and *our* worlds in English. It knows its problems and its advantages. Read it and write agro and supportive letters to Richard Swift, 175 Carlton Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 2K3. Above all, write for it.

Ioan Davies