

a background of some political activism; you cut your ideological teeth in the 1960s, and haven't given up the struggle, as so many have. So I guess in that sense most of us have some significant shared experiences, opposing the war in Vietnam, working for civil rights, justice and peace. A lot of you are writers: historians, poets, a few small press publishers. I expect that you are fairly sophisticated, and appreciate complex ideas; otherwise you wouldn't keep subscribing.

I need a clearer sense from you what our common situation is, how you see it, what you think we can do. Are we just a formless collection of individuals, however radical we may be? At present I often feel as if I am producing the Fred Whitehead Newsletter, odd and interesting, somewhat like Izzy Stone of old (again, the Sixties model). Stone, by the way, started with a solid list of several thousand subscribers, from the *PM* newspaper in New York City; no such basis has been available for *PC*. I suppose I could be content with that, but to be honest, I have little interest in what is known as "niche" publishing, where we have newsletters and journals devoted to everything from 50s pulp romances to barbed wire or golf tees. My question to you is: can *PC* serve as the voice of an emergent cultural movement? Will it ever connect with larger organizations, such as labor unions, the historic core of social progress? Maybe someday it can become the tribune of a revolutionary movement, but for the moment, the issue is survival and a reason to keep going.

From a financial standpoint, *PC* is paying its way (though the editor and contributors, of course, are unpaid). Money, again, is not the issue. What I need is for you to write me and give me your ideas about the condition of our movement, and even if we have a movement at all. Can you help obtain subscribers from contacts in your local community, from colleagues, from your correspondents? Can you take subscription flyers to professional or political meetings? Are you able to use copies of articles in your classes (feel free to photocopy these, within reason)? Above all, what do you think about getting young subscribers, who are the future?

If you think you might be able to write for *PC*, even on an occasional basis, please advise of your interests; we can generally obtain review copies of books, music, etc.

In the past, cultural people used to have big national meetings, where we could get to know one another. Certainly the large, dynamic artists and writers conventions of the Thirties were a great morale boost for all who participated. International writers, from Spain or Germany, were greeted with great emotion and enthusiasm. In the late 1970s, and again in 1985, we in Kansas City reinstated these gatherings, where many of us met Meridel LeSueur, Jack Conroy, Tom McGrath, and Truman Nelson for the first time. Can anyone come forth with a commitment to organizing some such "congress of druids"?

In general, we need to ally our political beliefs with the pleasure principle, discarding the stubborn heritage of puritanism for an open and happy form of paganism—to live the good life as best we can under conditions of oppression. The journalist Molly Ivins was just in Kansas City to give a lecture, and proposed that "we should have fun while we're fightin' for freedom, since it might be the only fun we'll have." Furthermore, she said, "I am here to encourage a spirit of creative mischief." The answer to fragmentation is surely integration and synthesis: we will have to forge our own new culture, and no one else will do it for us.

It would be a shame for any of us to live in communities without regular poetry readings, art shows, film and video series—all or any of these with parties, discussions, and an atmosphere of solidarity and imaginative momentum. When I was in Germany in 1983, it was wonderful to see the cultural posters everywhere: why don't our artists supply the needs of the various activist movements: the defenders of the women's clinics, unions, political campaigns, etc.

We need, always, to remember our heroines and heroes: almost every locality in this country has some person who has contributed to our lives. Have a reading or festival to commemorate them. Sometimes we won't have to organize our own festivals: so join one that already exists. Where we live should be adorned with statues of our great creators. In days past, schools were named for poets; now, I fear that the students rarely have any idea who these people were. Whittier, for instance, was a household name in the 19th century, but who knows he was a staunch abolitionist who was mobbed for his beliefs?

In K.C. we have had a successful Labor History Tour, taken by scores of people; we got a bus, and visited all the historic sites associated with the stock yards, the Great Southwest Strike of 1886, the organization of the Pullman porters union, etc. Every city in America should have such expeditions, and then labor history should be fully integrated into the curriculum of the schools and colleges. While some of the leaders of these tours were academics, others were rank and file workers; we shouldn't underestimate what people will be willing to do if the challenge arises.

Finally, save some of your time, every day, for your utopian imagination: what would the USA look like if we had a just and beautiful, artistic society? What would schools teach if they taught the truth, if they had a positive and constructive environment? How can we make public television public, instead of a vehicle for British upper class melodramas? Ask your own questions, but supply some answers too. For the next issue, I would like to run a special section of responses to this column, so please indicate when you reply if I may publish it there. I'll give a prize of a copy of a magnificent coffee table book, *America in 1492* (value: \$50), to the best letter. If I don't get any letters, then I'll have no choice but to proceed with plans to close this project down at the end of 1994.