

4th IN A SERIES OF FILMS ON THE STRUGGLES OF WORKING WOMEN.

Working Woman and Man Bookstore

presents

“One Way or Another”

*program notes &
discussion guide*

THE FILM SERIES: This is the fourth in a series of films focussing on the struggles of working class women. In offering this series our purpose is not simple entertainment, nor romanticism, nor escapism, but rather in keeping with the three-fold purposes of revolutionary film-making:

1. To inform people of issues and events portrayed in films.
2. To develop an understanding of the common links and interconnections between our own struggles and conditions and those portrayed on film.
3. To educate and draw lessons from the films so that we can struggle with our own conditions more effectively.

UPCOMING FILMS:

The film series will be continued throughout the Fall. Films are planned for the last weekend of every month. Film titles and times are to be announced. Topics will include films about working women, day care third world struggles and the economic crisis.

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

Produced by the Cuban Film Institute

Directed by Sara Gomez

I. Introduction:

It is a law of development that everything is in a process of change and that in any process there is something new and developing and something old and dying away. The development of a stalk of wheat illustrates this. At maturity the plant will soon wither but the seed can develop into a new plant. In order to move forward people must look to what is new and developing in society.

The film "One Way or Another" is about the struggle between old forces in society which are holding back human development and those which are new and aiding in human development. These are the forces of capitalist individualism where each lives for their personal gain and the forces of socialism where interconnection between people is facilitated through a collective approach to problems which people face. There are examples of this in our own country as well, such as the Take Back the Night March in Minneapolis last August 16th. Here many people joined together for mass action against sexual harassment as opposed to each person dealing with the problem individually.

The film raises the contradiction of whether a socialist society enhances an individual's development or whether individuality is lost for the common good.

II. Background to the film: Cuba's development.

Prior to the revolution Cuban society was based on individual gain. Large plantations existed side by side with poor and landless peasantry. Corrupt politicians pocketed money set aside for education while illiteracy was the rule in the countryside.

Under socialism new forms have been set up to resolve problems collectively. An example of this is the workers council in "One Way or Another". This is a form by which workers in a factory can make decisions and have control over what happens in their plant through an

elected body as opposed to being under the control of a foreman and management.

Cuba faced many problems coming out of a stage of underdevelopment. The principle obstacle they face is the U.S. economic blockade which has cut them off from needed resources. In spite of this considerable progress has been made in several areas which we will look at briefly.

Housing is one problem that has received attention. In the early years of the revolution, the priority was placed on housing in rural areas. Formerly peasants lived in Bohios which were huts with dirt floors without electricity or plumbing. These have been replaced by the construction of new towns. These are located near state farms which were formed from the old large plantations. They include apartment buildings, day care and medical facilities. The effect is not only to raise the standard of living of the people but also to bring them out of isolation and into closer contact with the cultural and political life of society.

In the early 70s, plans were begun to deal with the housing problems of Havana. It was estimated that a half million people lived in sub standard housing. Plans were made to tear down slum areas and save buildings that could be renovated. The setting of "One Way or Another" takes place at a housing development built where a shantytown once existed. Apartments and furnishings are given to people who need them. Throughout Cuba rents are kept at no more than 10% of a person's income. A housing shortage and the need for new sewers and water works are problems being resolved slowly due to the lack of materials and resources caused by the blockade. But development clearly indicates the priority is to improve the people's standard of living. We may compare urban renewal in Cuba to that in the U.S. where slums are often torn down to be replaced with expressways and civic development having nothing to do with housing for the former inhabitants. Rents are anywhere from 25% to 50% of an individual's income. Urban renewal in the U.S. can be viewed as a bulldozer war against the poor.

Education is another area where there have been dram-

atic advances. Prior to the revolution, people in the countryside were largely illiterate. Not only has literacy been achieved but books and culture have been made available for people in rural areas. Cuba's day care system is viewed internationally as a model system. This we can compare to our own country where students in high school often cannot read and of course everyone knows about the chronic lack of day care. Given the relative wealth of the U.S. the situation can only be viewed as a lack of concern for the people stemming from a system based on individual gain.

Public health has been another area of concern in Cuba. The principle emphasis has been on preventative medicine. In one municipality, the infant mortality rate was 44 per 1,000. At present infant mortality has been wiped out almost totally. In the capitalist countries the main concern is in the treatment of disease where there is the most profit. Little is done for preventative medicine while insurance companies make profits off of peoples illness.

II. Background to the story of "One Way or Another"

This is a film about relationships between people in a society in the process of transformation from poverty and degradation to socialist development. It is about old values of individualism and male chauvinism in conflict with new conditions of social life- collectivized society. It is about the struggle between the old and new. The issue raised is that of individualism versus collective development and its connection to the individuals development. The film was chosen for a women's film series since it deals with Mario's (the leading male) relationship to Yolanda (the leading female role). It is not strictly a feminist film but rather it interrelates many aspects of human relationships as well as man woman relationships. The old values are challenged in all areas of realtions between people. It shows the connection between changes of relationships in society to the struggle against male chauvinism.

Much of the film centers around Mario's friendship to

Humberto. Mario attempts to protect his friend when he knows Humberto has deceived his fellow workers for his own personal interests. He does this out of a sense of honor and commitment to the friendship. The effects on the workplace Mario regards as secondary. The workers at the factory where they work struggle with their practice through the workers council. Humberto's incorrect practice is not so much that he skipped work but that the others had to do his work for him while he was living it up. It is up to the workers to decide what the consequences are. There is quite a bit of heated discussion amongst them over the two's practice. In this way they have democratic control over issues directly effecting them. The effects of people's practice take on a different context in a society where problems are dealt with collectively and the point of reference is what effect it has on the people.

There are parallels between male chauvinism in Cuba and how it manifests itself in the U.S. There are also differences. However, the effects such as sexual harassment of women and lack of equal opportunity for women are similar. The differences are that as a starting point women were much less integrated into the labor force in Cuba than in the U.S. Women were also more protected than in the U.S. and the double standard was even more prevalent. The principle difference at the present time is that in Cuba the problem is being dealt with on a social level with government programs for the advancement of women and government supported women's movement while we have as of yet not passed the equal rights amendment and the police still do not take rape seriously.

One part of the film deals with the "Abacua" sect. This is a ritual of African Cuban origin and is practiced amongst the poorer residents. It upholds male chauvinism and an emphasis on individual honor as its precepts. It represents the old class forces in Cuba and an institution of the former exploitive society. Its significance is in representing the backward aspect of Mario's sense of honor in protecting his friend Humberto, something which is shortlived once he is threatened himself.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Sexual harrassment is a major factor preventing women's development and advancement on the job in our society. How is this being struggled with individually and collectively or through organizations? What solutions are proposed? can we expect to do away with this under the present system or will a new system be needed to end sexual harrassment?

2. If you can afford it and get away with it skipping work is not looked upon as being unacceptable to many americans. And yet in "One Way or Another" Humberto's practice is viewed as incorrect by the workers council and he is criticized and given a period of being watched by his fellow workers. What is the difference between the workers council and the mechanisms of authority in our workplaces (foreman and supervisors)? What are the differences between Humberto's consequences and those which would happen to us should we take off work too much? What does this say about the two societies in terms of how they view the individual? Would a workers council be an improvement at your workplace?

NOTES

Suggestion for further study
 Cuba in Transition, Arredondo
 Cuba Review: The Changing Policy Picture, Vol. 4, No. 4
 Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution, Huberman and Cheery
 Socialism in Cuba, Huberman and Cheery
 The Energy Crisis
 Open Values of Latin America, Eduardo Galeano
 What is Imperialism, Working Woman and Man
 Women's Condition: Women's Condition
 Man's Condition

Suggestions for further study

Cuba in Transition, Armadillo Press.

Cuba Review: The Changing Family Picture. Vol. 4, No. 4.

Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution, Huberman and Sweezy.

Socialism in Cuba, Huberman and Sweezy.

The Enemy, Felix Greene

Open Veins of Latin America, Eduardo Galeano

What is Imperialism, Working Woman and Man Bookstore

Women's Conditions; Women's Struggles, Working Woman &
Man Bookstore

A STRONGER AND BETTER BOOKSTORE THRU YOUR SUPPORT
AND PARTICIPATION.

The purpose of Working Woman and Man Bookstore is to inform and educate working people about issues and events that have a direct and indirect influence on their lives. As a means to do this we have organized the Bookstore Club. Activities of the Bookstore Club include:

1. DISCUSSIONS: BSC members have an open invitation to take part in organized discussions of books and other readings.

2. FILMS: The BSC will continue to show films which describe the effects of institutionalized social oppression and economic exploitation. Films are free to BSC members.

3. RESOURCE: BSC members can use the bookstore as a resource for information about the labor movement, women and other topics. In addition to our stock of books that are very difficult to find elsewhere, we maintain extensive files of periodicals, and other materials for BSC members use.

4. WRITING: BSC members can learn and improve their writing skills and get practice in writing about our class experience in the bookstore newsletter.

JOIN THE BOOKSTORE CLUB! Membership is \$5 per year.

