

The Consequences to Rahtid

Fundi

February 1974

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Joseph Edwards, a Jamaican refrigeration mechanic, spoke of radical labor politics in Rasta idioms. Let's reason "to Rahtid!"

His selected writings have been published as Workers Self-Management in the Caribbean (2014). When we read his ideas comparatively with Trinidad's CLR James, Guyana's Walter Rodney, and Jamaica's Michael Manley and Trevor Munroe we can begin to see the antagonisms or debates within the Caribbean radical tradition that nobody wants us to know about. Further research into Edwards' legacies reveals another one of his fugitive essays. Unsigned, and without a title, it might best enter history as "The Consequences to Rahtid." The editors have made some slight edits and added subtitles to clarify reception of the text.

Edwards aka "Fundi," the Caribbean Situationist, besides being adept in the language of Rastas, Rudies, and Dreads, was an experimental thinker alert to anarchism and autonomist Marxism, Surrealism and Dada, the intersection of art in everyday life and the search for a liberating psychology.

We were pleased to discover this essay as the Introduction to Documents of the Caribbean Revolution published in February 1974 by New Beginning Movement. This places him firmer among those who advocated a Caribbean federation from below.

*This essay concludes by emphasizing that **"none shall escape the consequences to rahtid."** The Jamaican patwa term "rahtid" can be used in isolation as an exclamation of excitement, astonishment or recognition that a bad outcome will impact us adversely. The way some might respond "Oh, shit!" when spontaneous events don't go their way, place their ambitions in danger, or make their previous plans a burden or embarrassment. In this idiom, though, the suffix "to rahtid" indicates a punctuation or accent. **None shall escape the consequences to their fullest expression and extent.** Reflect on this as we read the popular social motion he recognizes and records alert to dread philosophy.*

He also begins the essay with the word "Iddeally." A typo was not going to be found in the first word of the first sentence. And he was not emphasizing "I" like Rastas underscore the presence of Jah. Instead it was a play on the psychological "Id" that Freud, who was embraced surprisingly often by radicals of his generation, framed as the unconscious impulses or instincts of our psyche that contain elemental drives and hidden memories. What did this mean for a radical political life?

Fundi talks about spontaneity and organization in an original manner that reveals that we cannot understand the unfolding Caribbean Revolution unless we understand how activists with a faulty way of seeing can replace the social motion and ideas of the Caribbean masses with the pronouncements of their parties, unions, and organizations — remarkably he says despite the insightful visions offered found therein, this is a limitation of the very book he is introducing.

How many "progressives" are aware trade unions can be oppressive to workers today? How many mentally go to pieces in the midst of prison breaks and what is termed looting? Are you aware that in freedom movements there are often a clash between wishing to fulfill one's ideals and principles and "radical" activists who believe no matter how rebellious everyday people express themselves they will never be ready for what they think revolution requires? This is a result that for far too many "revolution" is their bureaucratic policies coming to state power — and they will relate to any strategy for them to have weight above society.

Fundi underlines a certain type of Caribbean Nationalism is worried about radical ideas being shared that are not homegrown in the region. He thrashes the argument as an obstacle to communication between toilers across the globe together clarifying their experiences. Fundi says it is by learning comparatively what has happened to struggles for direct democracy and labor's self-emancipation on a world scale that one can be confident about the dynamics that will unfold in the Caribbean

region, that of course is made up of different territories with borders dividing us. We know from his other writings he has in mind the popular committees of the French, Russian, Spanish, and Hungarian Revolutions that CLR James taught many Caribbean radicals to value equal to the Haitian and Cuban Revolutions.

Past revolutionary history is littered with what Fundi calls 'gaps' between the aspiring leaders (in and out of organizations) apparent consciousness, and the masses creative self-directed initiative. And for Fundi this is how popular self-directed liberating activity appears but can be defeated and contained by emerging new States where radicals and progressives often justify the joining of its bureaucracy after the fall of the Old Regime.

Listen to how Fundi encourages us to help unleash the creative spontaneity of everyday people. He wants us to become comfortable with what appear Jamaican and Caribbean toilers impossible demands on society. And he poses what happens when we don't expect such events unfolding before our eyes.

Consistent with the "Consequences to Rahtid" that none shall escape, will our response to popular self-directed initiative be an invigorated excitement? Will we smile but be awkwardly astonished? Or will we see the rebellion of ordinary Caribbean people as "the problem" of the aspiring Black rulers whose pursuit of power starts from the premise that they preside over an unconscious people?

Joseph Edwards was arguing that none shall escape the consequences of the instincts, elemental drives, and hidden memories of the Caribbean toiler to self-emancipate. We can with enthusiasm prepare to take part and fan the flame, or we can reveal our panic, anxiety, sense of inconvenience, and hostility to the impending confrontation. All are the consequences taken to their logical conclusion — "to rahtid!" Direct democracy and workers self-management must become the foundation of Caribbean unity and federation.

The Consequences to Rahtid

Ideally this document [or book] is not finished. This is called "Documents of the Caribbean Revolution." But at the same time, it does not express the total quality of our struggle, because the emphasis here is on what certain organisations are doing, which is not as expressive as they could possibly be of the real struggle taking place in the region.

The wildcat strike, the armed struggle, the self-organisation for particular demands, the individual subjective rebellion, the spontaneous revolts, the fire in the prison and prison breaks, the mass demonstrations, the day to day appropriations from the banks and warehouses, all these conscious attacks against capitalism and its agencies of unions, parties, and the state, by the poor and oppressed of the region, are not expressed in these pages to the extent that it should. At the same time, the theory that will help to the way towards the radicalisation of these events which was elaborated by revolutionaries outside of the region, from their experiences, and the experiences of proletarian struggles in other parts of the world, was suppressed on the argument that the proposed statement to be included was not a *Caribbean Statement*.

We Cannot Allow Caribbean Nationalism to Suppress Insights from World Politics — Especially Where We Can Learn About Popular Self-Directed Challenges to Unions, Parties, and the State

Thus a variant of the same nationalism that the Caribbean struggle is already superseding, now springs from our ranks to block the continuing supersession that is possible with the sharing of proletarian experiences throughout the world. The compromises made, consciously or unconsciously for the publication of this [book of documents], sacrificed not only the knowledge of proletarian activity in other parts of the world, but what is happening in the [Caribbean] region itself.

What has happened in the production of this [book] parallels with the revolution on a whole. Which, in essence, within the movement is a struggle between the realities of the ideal and partial demands. We must necessarily manifest the ideal in whatever we are trying to do. There is a problem. Even in the revolutionary movement, in its milieu of organisational activity, many are still afraid to attempt the most radical possible theory and practice that the situation necessitates to advance.

Understanding Spontaneity as Instinctive Self-Organization

Spontaneity is the motive force of mass mobilisation through instinctive self-organisation. Spontaneity to date has not achieved its own internal radicalisation to overthrow the State. At the same time that it moves through time and space, it does so with increasing magnitude.

Witness the five year move from Jamaica 1968, through Suriname 1969, Trinidad in 1970, Suriname again 1973 and Grenada 1974. The situation bleeds for a revolutionary organisation that will organically participate with the revolt, radicalising the confrontation with its practical precision, and with its prevailing influence of revolutionary theory and example, move instinctive self-organisation to the position of instant self-management in the places of work.

The extent to which production is so a part of daily life, control over affairs where we live will necessarily move at the same speed as control over production. Because unity is a process of growth, the unity already established at different points of space throughout the territory, will naturally move at the same time that it is being further radicalised by the revolutionary organisation, to the united coordination of these units as a social power into the whole of national decisions. Decisions [will be] made by mandated delegates who are revocable at any time by their particular base.

We Must Overcome the Intrigues of Those Who See Our Struggles As Equal Opportunity to Enter the Rules of Hierarchy

The capacity of the masses to overpower the intrigues of those who want to relate to the struggle only at the point of present leadership, and therefore as future bureaucrat in their scheme of things, is going to depend from now on revolutionary organisation[’s]... relentless elaborat[ion] [of] the theory of self-management over all aspects of daily life.

The dynamic of self-management as the end and means to the end, means that the revolutionary organisation must proceed from the radicalisation of its own internal relations, by creating positive projects that will pool its resources and energy to end the dependence on wage slavery as a means of survival for its members.

Use Political Methods that Anticipate Workers Self-Management

The additional time controlled by members will increase their knowledge of the terrain of struggle, necessary to be able to move through space and use it to the advantage of security. This same time affords also to take the initiative with employed workers who are not willing or able to break with wage slavery at this time, to create an organisation to have more control over the conditions of their work, an organisation that by its methods of work will be in opposition to the unions and parties, and be the rudiments of the future decision-making councils of self-management in production.

Key: The Quality of Activity Preceding Spontaneous Revolt

And the enthusiasm of this activity must demand the best of everything. We may not get it, but we will get much more of what we want, than if our demands remain limited. This is the necessary approach that will effectively guarantee the development of maximum capabilities, towards the maximum possibilities in the revolutionary situation.

This quality of activity preceding the spontaneous revolt, and its emphasis on certain skills, constitute the organic relationships that will protect the revolutionary organisation from deteriorating into the bureaucracy of the new State after the fall of the old regime.

From Trinidad to Grenada to Martinique

Those who are not willing to keep this vision of the new society in the forefront of their forehead as revolutionaries, are going to be included in history, in the responsibility for any gap between the consciousness of existing organisational activity, and the demands of the consciousness of spontaneity.

Remember well the failures of the past when the consciousness of spontaneity was at the door of the [Eric] Williams's regime [in Trinidad]. It was just now at the doorstep of the [Eric] Gairy regime [in Grenada]. And what will replace the fall by spontaneity of the Sedney-Lauchmon regime [in Suriname]? What now is the role of the New Jewelers in the Grenada revolutionary situation? And as I write the French imperialists are landing troops in Martinique in confrontation with strikes and riots.

Do You Remember?

Remember well the two things that dies in the chasm and gap after each spontaneous revolt: the real demands of the masses *and* the organisers both in and out of organisations. Remember that whatever escapes this burial ground, whether it be the demands of the masses or human life, is usually reformed and imprisoned in the after calm and come back of the State.

For the consciousness that thinks the wind of change is already blowing in the Caribbean, the storm is only brewing. To batten windows is to face the additional wrath of flying glass, for in the cleansing fury and saving grace of the wind with rain, ***NONE SHALL ESCAPE THE CONSEQUENCES TO RAHTID.***

One Heart

Toward A New Beginning

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Matthew Quest and Ryan Cecil Jobson.*

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