

the goal of art. Nor is it a waiting  
 a sake, but rather, as Marx and Freud  
 ters, have pointed out, because human  
 us to master situations instead of  
 stered by them. Unfortunately, how  
 still have with us members of society  
 ad of working with their fellow men  
 common good, strive only to maintain  
 in order to retain and augment their  
 ion of power and privilege. To the  
 removed—even, like Emily Brontë in  
 turned at the stake. But another point  
 to speak the eulogy and to carry on  
 task of helping us to confront our  
 the world.

way, this is the task being carried  
 eek-end by the pianist who plays  
 the farmyard. Like Guillaume at the  
 Chinese, he is taking art to the peo-  
 ver, his is a very human art, a modest  
 like that of Mozart, "too simple for  
 and too difficult for the experts"; and  
 art of dialogue. The pianist does not  
 ital as a spectacle; he breaks into the  
 ll, to explain, to point out his own  
 as an artist. His art, like Godard's,  
 of self-criticism; in fact, it makes  
 an integral part of the artistic

a pianist plays and talks, the camera  
 360° pan shot around the courtyard  
 , encompassing the tractors, trucks,  
 jkers, sheds, farmhands, and the pl-  
 ff. Even the cameraman and his  
 rough they are not shown, are en-  
 within the circle of the 360° pan,  
 n this shot, acknowledges that he is  
 coat with his audience.

erent this self-encompassing pan  
 the long, comic apotheosis of the  
 t, which, earlier in the film, moved  
 head, past stalled cars, lions, mon-  
 and who knows what else, straight  
 nely Olympian in its complete de-  
 ow different, too, is the modest and  
 the pianist from the strident ultra-

Romantic art of the hippie drummer, whose  
 hunt (from Lautréamont), instead of seeking  
 human dialogue, addresses itself to the Old  
 (noon and would proudly wrest from nature  
 the very secrets of the universe.

If there is an image of hope in *Week-end*, it  
 lies in that farmyard circle, self-contained within  
 its narrow circumference and yet open to those  
 who care enough to attempt to establish a dia-  
 logue between one human being and another.

There, in the eye of the storm, in the middle  
 of *Week-end's* nightmarish cataclysm of vio-  
 lence and destruction, Godard has depicted a  
 haven of wisdom and calm. Like the Third  
 World sequence, the scene in the farmyard is  
 unsuspectacular, to say the least; but one of the  
 things *Week-end* seems to be trying to tell us, in  
 its own spectacular way, is that our civilization,  
 if it is to continue, could use a lot more wisdom  
 and calm—and a lot less spectacle.

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***During the past year, young American film-makers and radicals have been banding together into a new organization, NEWSREEL, with a program markedly different from that of earlier documentaries—different from the British or New Deal films of the thirties (and their successors, the TV documentaries) and different from the cinema-verité documentaries of the sixties. NEWSREEL film-makers wish to use film as a revolutionary weapon; and the consequences of this basic orientation are being worked out by a growing band of film-makers, on both east and west coasts. In order to present something of the flavor of this work, we present below a montage of programmatic comments by NEWSREEL film-makers, followed by more detached comments from a critic not associated with the group.***

**NORM FRUCHTER, NY NEWSREEL:**

Newsreel, for me, is the constant challenge of facing choices which are at once, and indissolubly film-making choices, political choices, activist choices, aesthetic choices. None of us are satisfied with the blend that emerges . . . how to make what we want? Films as weapons? (Historical phrase—badly weathered.) Bullets kill, and some films get into people's heads, to shock, stun, arrest, horrify, depress, sadden, probe, de-

Who doubts, any more, that this country is so monstrously damaging, to both its domestic and foreign captive populations, that revolution is essential? The problem is how: what forces we're building, what this multi-faceted thing we call the Movement will grow into, what real organizations we're

mand. We want that kind of engagement—films people can't walk away from, with "Oh yes, I saw a filmshow last night, sort of political."

making out of all the disaffection this country breeds. Not that armageddon is coming, or apocalyptic—but in small ways the streets explode, and the fabric of consent which sociologists once celebrated shreds visibly on the TV. Who knows what's happening to this country? So our films have to attack, they come out of as close as we can get to the activity we value. Getting deeper, harsher, more corrosive, more inflammatory—those are our problems.

We should hate a lot more. Let it out. Let it dissolve the insufferable smugness which protects everybody. The media. None of us are old enough to have any illusions about infiltrating the major media to reach mass consciousness and change it—we grew up on TV and fifties Hollywood.

**MARILYN BUCK AND KAREN ROSS, SAN FRANCISCO NEWSREEL:**

This society is one of spectators, who live and perceive through the news media, particularly the visual media. People's lives revolve around the assumptions which are made by which channel they watch or what movie they choose to see. And all the TV channels and American films speak from the same mouth of control and power. We looked around . . . and Newsreel was conceived and born. A way for film-makers and radical organizer-agitators to break into the consciousness of people. A chance to say something different . . . to say that people don't have to be spectator-puppets.

In our hands film is not an anesthetic, a sterile, smooth-talking apparatus of control. It is a weapon to counter, to talk back to and to crack the facade of the lying media of capitalism.

The radicals who have become involved in San Francisco Newsreel had previously participated in the development of the left political movement. Yet some of these experiences resulted in alienation. A disappointment and frustration with the forms of the left. Creative action was lacking. Newsreel has offered a definite medium in which to work; a weapon to destroy the established forms of control and power over people. We have had to overcome our lack of

technical knowledge of film-making. Moreover, we must realize our political responsibility within our chosen form.

Many others who came to Newsreel as film-makers and artists had isolated themselves in their own work and private political fantasies. Newsreel has become an outlet for real political expression in a medium familiar to them. Their political fantasies were exposed. They had to begin relating to more active participation in the movement. They were political but it was necessary to combine the political content with form.

**FRUCHTER:** Easier to define than make the films we want. We're tied to events, and we shouldn't be: Pentagon, Columbia, Chicago, the Haight. Where should we begin? Most instincts are particular: narrow it down—this group, this action. Follow the officers of the Hanna Company in their jaunts through Brazil? Follow a Peace Corps volunteer? But why document the obvious—none of the people we make films for need **that** bad joke exposed, they've lived with (and often worked within) the reality. The varieties of domestic and external pacification desecrate butlesque, no more. New forms? But how much will time, limited energies, finance, and the wearing pressure of events, the race to stay responsible, limit us?

**BUCK & ROSS:** Newsreel is a collective rather than a cooperative; we are not together merely to help each other out as film-makers but we are working together for a common purpose: to make films which shatter the image and reality of fragmentation and exploitation in this society. Yet there are problems in developing and maintaining this collective form. These lie in the question of assimilation. Assimilation of the filmmaker and the radical, assimilation of the individual into the collective. In making films together which reflect a collective, a movement of ideas and actions rather than the individuality of the artist, we must develop new values, forms,

NEWSREEL

NEWSREEL

new criteria for individual interactions in techniques and analysis; must be worked out collectively. [I endorse the resulting film or it ceases to be distributed through Newsreel.]

**FRUCHTER:** Responsibility. There's no room for party yet, only fledgling form undergrounds. No coherent stricture to stay hewed to, so various politics (our films) on the hoof. How transcend this transition situation? Our response, for instance, if we sabotage is only marginally relevant yet guys are going to jail for it. Who are moved to shoot police men are moved to shoot police men jumping-off point. Or are we ourselves? In '42, '43, '44 in the Zovattini and Rossellini and themselves? Were the partisan alternatives? What were the they said, "But we must find what categories can we use to what categories can we use to conceive and born. A way for film-makers and radical organizer-agitators to break into the consciousness of people. A chance to say something different . . . to say that people don't have to be spectator-puppets.

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**ROBERT KRAMER, NEW YORK:** We began by trying to bridge the states of mind and ways of thinking that were accustomed to as film-making, but for interpretation against established forms of professional canons of "what is professional, acceptable quality and range. Nor do we accept a more sophisticated hierarchy of values. In regard to our films, I think to do with or without cameras.

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politics (our films) on the hoof; our discus-

sions often threaten to become interminable.

How transcend this transition stage? What's

our response, for instance, if we think that

sabotage is only marginally effective and

yet guys are going to jail for it? What's our

response to the police ambush in Cleveland,

who among us has doubts about why black

men are moved to shoot police? Newsreel is

a jumping-off point. Or are we kidding our-

selves? In '42, '43, '44 in Italy, what did

Zavattini and Rossellini and the rest say to

themselves? Were the partisan units a real

alternative? What were the terms on which

they said, "But we must fight as film-

makers"? What historical stage are we in,

what categories can we use to decide what

we must do?

#### ROBERT KRAMER, NEW YORK NEWSREEL:

We began by trying to bridge the gap between

the states of mind and ways of working that we

were accustomed to as film-makers, and the en-

agement/daily involvement/commitments of

our political analysts and political activity. This

had immediate implications—not only for our

film-making, but for interpretations of what, as

film-makers, as people engaged in a struggle

against established forms of power and control,

against established media of all forces, we had

to do with or without cameras.

In regard to our films, I think we argue a

different hierarchy of values. Not traditional

canons of "what is professional," what is "com-

prehensive and intelligent reportage," what is

"acceptable quality and range of material." No.

Nor do we accept a more sophisticated argu-

reality.

the commitment to pretend that we're engaging

liberal viewers) are committed to analyzing.

Well: bullshit. The illusion of the commitment

to analyze. The illusion of real dissent. Rather,

the commitment to pretend that we're engaging

important and pressing, and that we (all good

discussion about issues that we all agree are

show," rational (note well: ostensibly rational)

words are absorbed by the format of the "panel

it through" in isolation.) But also, because their

—not in terms of some vague decision to "think

late necessity of figuring out what has to be done

will be used against you—in terms of the abso-

thought exist in terms of the threat that power

on you? Parity, sure. (Fear and committed

street. Why? Because they can't get their hands

they don't scare you or impress you or make you

You see Cleaver or Seale on a panel show, and

the streets, in their communities, in their heads.

subject population, nor push them to move—in

the confidence that it will neither haunt the

trial, no matter how implicitly explosive, with

documentary, you can lodge almost any mate-

the formats now popularized by the television

all facts/information relatively easily. Within

ostensibly "free" media, has learned to absorb

barred by and totally immersed in complex,

The subject population in this society, bom-

I'm not watching that shit."

about the product—they just say, "Fuck that,

population never even gets to your "message"

filming under stress) alienates, then the subject

range of mistakes that come up when you are

(grainy, troublesome sound, soft-focus, a wide

product isn't sold well, if the surface of the film

ment about propaganda in general: that if the

Panthers in the park—Oakland.



OK. At the point when you have considered this argument then you start to make films with different priorities, with shapes justified in a different way. You want to make films that unnerve, that shake assumptions, that threaten, that do not soft-sell, but hopefully (an impossible ideal) explode like grenades in peoples' faces, or open minds up like a good can opener. We say: "The things you see in these films are happening at this moment, they are our news," they are important to us and do not represent the droppings of a few freaks, but the activity of a growing wave of people, your children who were fighting the pigs at Columbia, your brothers who walked out of this high school, your sons who deserted the army, your former slaves who will not now accept your insufficient reparations, etc., etc. You know this reality. You know enough to know that this is real—now deal with it, because soon it's going to come to deal with you, in one way or another." The effect of our films is more like seeing 250 Black Panthers around the Oakland Court House, or Columbia students carrying on the business of revolt at Kirk's desk, or Free Men occupying the streets of Berkeley, than listening to what some reporter tells us about what these people might have said, and how we can understand "rebellion" psychologically. We strive for confrontation, we prefer disgust/violent disagreement/painful recognition/jolts—all these to slow liberal head-nodding and general wonderment at the complexity of these times and their being out of joint.

We want a form of propaganda that polarizes, angers, excites, for the purpose of discussion—a way of getting at people, not by making concessions to where they are, but by showing them where you are and then forcing them to deal with that, bringing out all their assumptions, their prejudices, their imperfect perceptions.

**BUCK & ROSS:**

Some viewers make the whole choice to see Newsreels. They are aware of what they are going to see, and the films thus reinforce their conceptions—or they may shake these viewers back into radical action and analysis. Most im-

portantly, Newsreels must be weapons: they must confront people who are not motivated to go see them. Newsreel must make half the decisions for them. Street projection is the first answer we've come up with so far. We take the films into the street, we stop people on the street, and confront them with our films. Involve them as participants. They're not home glued to their TVs, where if subjected to action they merely sit and absorb it in some unconscious place in their heads. The truck, mobile, produces live action on the street. Motion within motion. It has come to them during a walk down the street, they've stumbled upon it. Newsreel has forced itself into their consciousness. They have been confronted. The decision to watch, to register disgust or interest is now theirs. We have the opportunity to talk with them about their reactions, between films. To those inquisitive, we explain more. To those objecting, we can try to break their arguments. We have our confrontation as people, Newsreel has its confrontation through film.

Newsreel can evaluate the effectiveness of its films by looking at its audiences and their responses to the films. Many of our showings have been very discouraging: not many people or no reaction to the films at all. Others have been elating: lots of people who react vigorously to the films, asking questions or arguing about the validity of the films. And the difference in the showings may be only the audience. Middle-class neighborhood groups may feel that the straight documentary sync-sound film on draft resistance is very good to see: informative, engaging, and perhaps even motivating. But when the same film is shown to young chicanos, it's absolutely useless. The guys walk out, hiss, and ask "When are you going to show us some action?" And so, we run the Haight riot film, a five-minute street film with a lot of action set to contemporary rock music. And they dig it. We show *Carbide*, a cultural exchange between the Motherfuckers of New York and Lincoln Center, a fast-moving film also, thinking this might also turn the guys on, and they are bored by it and finally walk out. "Far out, those guys are college radicals say, "Far out, those guys are

doing some good things—I like their s the older, middleclass people in the may not dislike it, but don't quite see . . . or register confusion or a polite r the obscene language and people of th

**KRAMER:**

We shoot as best we can—but we sh important to us, what meets our per our lived reality, we cut according to tes, our ideologies, not "to make it simple to them." Not to present a "in present the lived reality as less comp really is. Not to enter into that st modulating our emotions and inter intelligences in some vain hope that b your language your way we can per No, we know the effective outcome of the acceptance of another of the sub- tive, we explain more. To those objecting, we can try to break their arguments. We have our confrontation as people, Newsreel has its con- frontation through film.

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"Who knows what's happening to this country?"

our true understanding of it, not r people knew anything about it—fr were involved. But now, all our audi our audiences represent the full spect about. They read it every day in er digested and shaped to their preconco now we present it to them in its nat

material and still not get beaten/trapped. Well, we, and many others, are at war. We not only document that war, but try to find ways to bring that war to places which have managed so far to buy themselves isolation from it.

So, to return to the issue of propaganda. Our propaganda is one of confrontation. Using film—using our voices with and after films—using our bodies with and without cameras—to provoke confrontation. Changing minds, altering consciousness, seems to us to come through confrontations, not out of sweet/reasonable conversations that are one of the society's modes of absorbing and disarming dissent and movement, of giving that illusion that indeed we are dealing with "the issues." Therefore we keep moving. We keep hacking out films, as quickly as we can, in whatever way we can.

In the approximately nine months of its existence, New York Newsreel has completed fifteen films, with several more almost ready for release. The films are frequently very good and always interesting, although sometimes much good will is necessary to disentangle the web of aesthetics and politics at a particular film's center. But

MAO TSE-TUNG, quoted at various moments by Kiriilov and Veronique in *La Chimioise* carry on a struggle on two fronts. ever progressive they are politically. . . . We must which lack artistic quality have no force, however progressive they are politically. . . . Works of art possible perfection of artistic form. Works of art revolutionary political content and the highest art, the unity of content and form, the unity of

## Newsreel: A Report

socially determined rules of clarity, of exposition, who think that films must use the accepted vocabulary to "convince" we say essentially: you only work, whatever your reasons, whatever your presumed "content," to support and bolster this society; you are a part of the mechanisms which maintain stability through re-integration, your films are helping to hold it all together, and finally, whatever your descriptions, you have already chosen sides. Dig: your sense of form and order is already a political choice—don't talk to me about "content"—but if you do, I will tell you that you cannot encompass our "content" with those legislated and approved senses, that you do not understand it if you treat it that way. There is no such thing as revolutionary content, revolutionary spirit, laid out for inspection and sale on the bargain basement counter.

## LEO BRAUDY

Newsreel shows in general a vital and aggressive willingness to experiment with traditional documentary methods in a concerted effort to work "on two fronts" and integrate its political commitment with the movie-making techniques. The earlier Newsreels are closer to usual documentary form. They do imply that the viewer has some knowledge, for example, of the anti-war, anti-draft movement. But they generally take the expository approach dictated by the documentary assumption "I was there and you weren't." This method is best exemplified by *Boston Draft Resistance Group*, done mostly in synchronized sound with some narration that describes and explains the group's activities. It is clean and straightforward in a kind of BBC manner that perfectly suits the incessant rea-

sonableness of the Boston Draft Group's arguments and their decisional documentary form (even do I have seen) with its radical content of attacking the problem.

Two less successful films about d and resistance are Chomsky and *Land and Resistance*. The frame of the interview with Noam Chomsky th interplay with antiwar and antic ities. It was made just after the C indictment, but still has a sense of im its combination of shots from the f Resist meeting several months before view with Coffin, and the actions individual resisters. *Resist and the Ne Resistance* use the same Call to Res but relates it more directly to indiv sions to turn in draft cards and the plications of such acts.

Except for some close-ups, the *Boston Draft Resistance Group* only is a witness, not a participant or a Such an approach appears more pur called *Four Americans* released by but edited and synchronized from footage. Before a dark backdrop the ers from the *Intrepid* make joint an vidual statements about their decis ing is very stagy and frontal; the ca moves. But gradually the men eme first to their rigid aesthetic format. Later Newsreels do not complete more "objective" and traditional a cause the group preserves a sensit special kind of treatment each subje A comparatively recent film like *Me the again has a fairly straightforward logical form, while it describes in Reports* manner the growth of a side community meat cooperative t fully does away with the bad me prices of the local supermarkets. funds are cut off and it must close. section, in which the leaders of the try to get help from the local con-