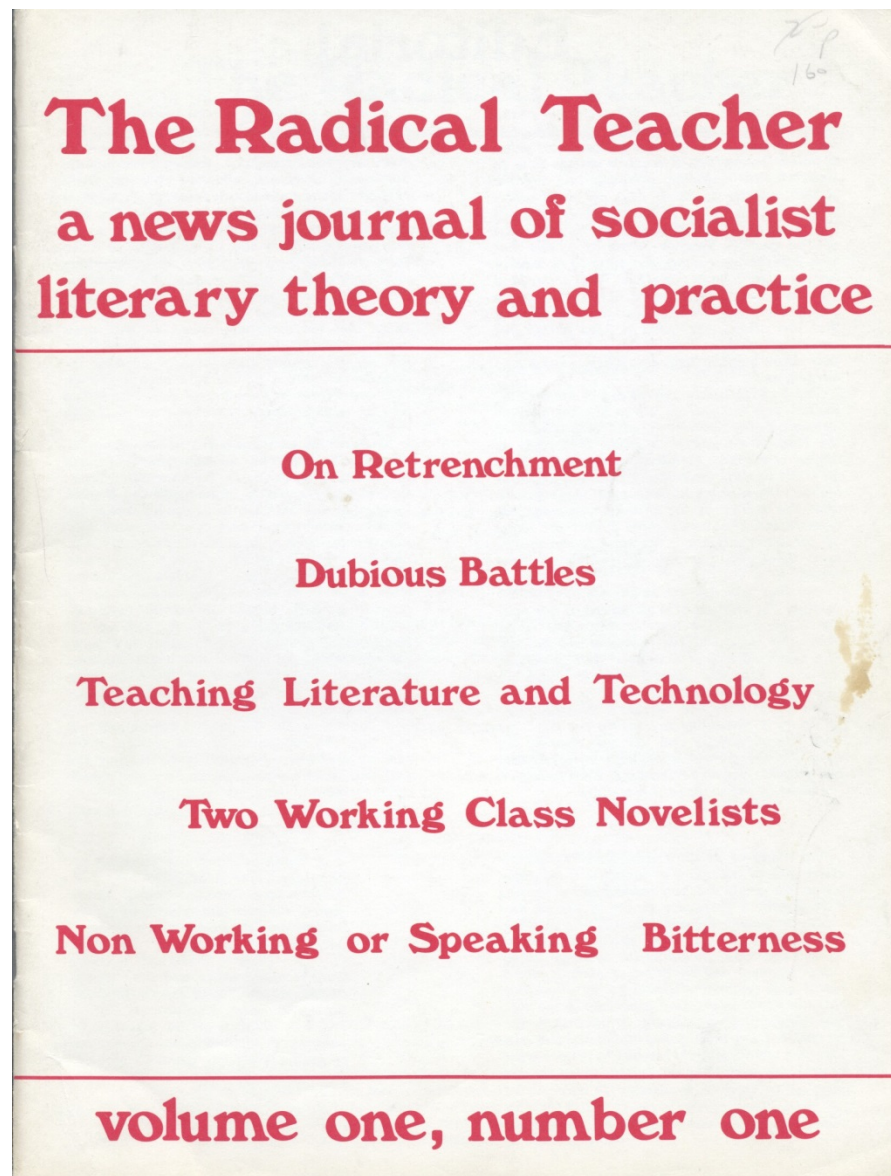


RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Editorial

By the *Radical Teacher* Editorial Group



Retrenchment, the supposed decline in enrollments, the increased use of adjuncts, the "new vocationalism," the impending closings of several public universities. It seems a strange time to launch a new magazine, especially one directed at and written by those who are most under attack: radical teachers. But in some ways it was this sense of crisis that caused the development of *The Radical Teacher*. Many of us felt that now was the most dangerous time to be passive toward such a crisis situation. What was called for was greater commitment than before and a greater sharing of those radical political energies that too often were being isolated within our individual schools. Perhaps we can offer no answer more specific than this when asked about our origins.

The Radical Teacher grows out of the dissatisfaction that many of us felt within our own organization, the Radical Caucus in English and the Modern Languages, a group that finds its origins in the New University Conference of the 60's. We became increasingly troubled with our inability to sustain any real sense of continuity after the decline of the antiwar movement. We were forced to question more closely the scope of our organization and the state of the profession. What was our role in relation to these areas?

Our first response was to express our purpose through the drafting of a statement of five principles on which the membership could agree. From this statement the magazine was formed. The magazine was in a sense a sixth principle, the most effective vehicle through which we could express the other five.

We call *The Radical Teacher* a "Newsjournal" to imply a flexibility expressing the need for both formal articles and yet also meeting the need for the greater immediacy of journalism and progress reports on teaching. What follows is our sense of the scope of this venture.

For many of us the critical focus of literary study and of our work as socialists is the classroom. We would ask how reading and discussing a text with a particular group of people promotes or hinders the development of a working-class movement. To answer such questions, we believe the tools, including the language, of socialist analysis, and tradition of Marxist, third-world and feminist criticism to be important. But the test is in practice, especially in the practice of teaching and learning. While this emphasis differs from that of traditional Marxist criticism, we would nevertheless like to restore greater unity between the practice/theory split.

What we propose is a Newsjournal that will neither succumb to arid detached criticism nor discuss teaching in terms of mere technique. With very few exceptions, academic journals are involved in dead end, rehashed criticism. Radicals and activist classroom teachers are allowed to submit their articles or even to develop special issues. However, they are generally bound over,

consciously or not, to the restrictive structures of academic publications. Most disturbing and most evident is the separation of criticism from the actual experience of teaching and from social theory. These journals hardly acknowledge that the classroom exists, or that ideas about literature and society are fundamentally related. Nor should this come as surprise, for criticism is more a vehicle of academic promotion and a prop to bureaucratic structure than a way of helping people understand and deal with reality.

Not only do we want a new sense of our potential as teachers, but we also want to expand our sense of an audience. We have our roots in the Radical Caucus in English and the Modern Languages, but we wish to be open to other disciplines, rather than accepting the usual self-imposed divisions of standard academic journals. Our hope is also to address students, both graduate and undergraduate; all teachers of whatever level, those in public schools, those instructing graduate students, those in various alternative institutions around the country. We also see this Newsjournal, like the Radical Caucus, as a means for maintaining communication among socialist teachers in isolated situations. To serve these purposes and this audience, the Newsjournal must include a range of articles dealing not only with literary works and with teaching practice, but with the economics of and political structure of academe, with educational theory, and with the impact of movements for social change on our work and lives.

Some areas in which the Newsjournal will solicit articles are these:

Teaching:

Can the teaching of literature be socialist organizing and consciousness raising? radical pedagogical theories and reviews of books on teaching; the politicization of composition.

Class analysis of teacherstudent relationships and the "laying on of culture"; autobiographical reports of our own miseducation.

Reports on developments in various ethnic and minority studies programs, including women's studies, gay studies, black studies, and third-world studies.

The experiences of radicals in the classroom; classroom reality; grass-roots reports; anecdote, firsthand experience leading to useful theory; syllabi, bibliographies, reading lists; reviews.

Literary Theory:

Questions of Marxist, feminist, third-world and socialist literary theory: how these discussions often separate themselves from a broader social theory and, instead of remaining radical, tend toward bourgeois social criticism; why theory rarely reaches into the classroom; how we can unify what never should have been divided.

Reconstructing the canon; attempting to define "canonicity"; reprinting submerged literary works of significance to radicals.

The relationship of cultures of the classroom and of American education (what is generally classed "high") and mass culture.

The Economics of the Profession:

Retrenchment; exposés of hiring and firing practices; attacks on and alternatives to tenure; the implications of union organizing; the "use" of part-time faculty. Interviews with, or autobiographical statements of, those who have not been able to get jobs in the profession.

The Structure and Dynamics of Educational Institutions (on the model, for example, of "Crisis at CUNY"):

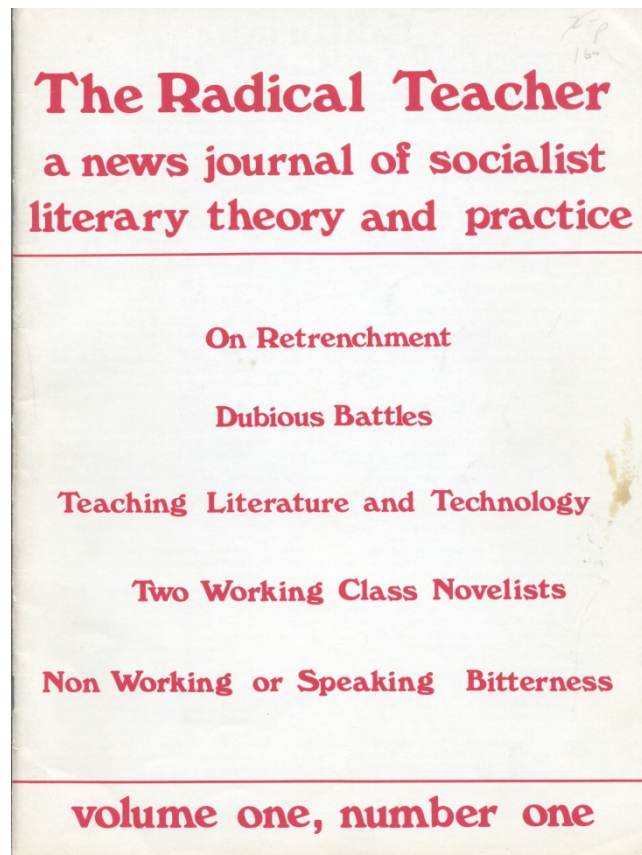
University "master" planning; the "new vocationalism" and how to combat it; the changing social role of education.

Education and the study of literature in other cultures -- e.g., Cuba, China.

Exposure of conservative and liberal academic ideologies: e.g., the attack on affirmative action in the name of "standards," the new push for classroom "neutrality," the move toward independent study and what that means.

Obviously, this first issue only touches on a few of the preceding subjects. Nevertheless, both in our range of topics and through the fact that all of this issue's contributors are members of the Radical Caucus in English and the Modern Languages, we feel that here we have demonstrated the intensity of our commitment. What we have hoped to illustrate is the Newsjournal's flexibility and our openness to various points of view within the radical spectrum. We wish to encourage contributors and would also like to see some specific responses to articles appearing in this number.

-- *The Radical Teacher* Editorial Group



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