

# A Tale of two Regions

(The following is a tale of two regions, offering two roads to radical social change in North America in the Seventies. There's the Kootenays, a 30,000-square-mile sea of Canadian mountains with a few scattered company towns and small communities, building a new society within the shell of the

old; and Ohio, heavily industrialized and urbanized, wedded to direct action and mass confrontation.

(This isn't meant as a travelogue, nor as a blueprint. Just a few ideas on how ordinary folks can get it on down-home.)

## KOOTENAYS:

### Goin' up the country

By Bonnie V. Giuliano

The Indians called it "Kutenai," a coming together of many different waters. The people of the Kootenays are like that, too; some were born and grew up on the land, and others came from halfway around the world. Together, they form a large, stronger organism.

The Kootenays of British Columbia is the name for a triangular region hidden in the corner of the province, slashed by three mountain ranges, dotted with lakes, and home to many powerful waterways. It is fenced in on one side by the 49th parallel between Canada and the U.S. and on its third side by the Okanagan Valley.

Kootenays folk say the hard-to-penetrate natural barriers have given the area an autonomy and identity all its own, providing a base for self-determined lifestyles and freedom from authority.

A rich, and potent, mixture of people have made the Kootenays their stronghold—the Kootenay Indians, plus the dissident Doukhobors who fled oppressive militaristic Russia to preserve their communal, pacifistic life, Japanese interned by a paranoid Canadian government during the war, and settlers of every race who formed the backbone of an exceptionally militant labor movement.

In the 1960's and 70's, the Kootenays became home to a new generation of dissidents and militants, young people fleeing Amerika and its south-east Asian war, and those who saw the region as a base for building the non-hierarchical new age society.

The spirit of resistance has forged a unity that breaks down barriers between groups, races and societies and gives the Kootenays an allegiance to lawlessness. Doukhobors who fought for communalism and pacifism can learn to respect the new generation of freeks who want to build their own society outside the control of the government. And the hippies now fight for the issues the Doukhobors see as important, uniting on education, anti-pollution and agriculture.

A Kootenays bar, like the Arrow in Castlegar or the acre-wide beer parlors in Trail, is hippies and working men and women, Doukhobor sons and daughters and Kootenays oldtimers all drinking, fighting and laughing together. And if it comes to shooting out transformers on one of the hydroelectric projects that destroyed the Kootenay Lakes and the Columbia River, everyone goes and it's no questions asked.

"Out here, it's not whether you're a Doukhobor, a freek or a hardhat; what it comes down to is whether or not you talk to cops," says a Kootenays woman. "And whether or not you smoke dope, though that's easier—everyone does."

The provincial government has attempted to flush the freeks out of the woods by cutting off welfare to the West Kootenays, terming it a chronically high unemployment area. The hippies have dug in their heels,

many choosing to bypass the system entirely, surviving on seasonal work, cottage industries and co-operatively buying and growing their own food.

"The co-op is a way of life up here—we've got co-ops like other people have unions, or families, or organizations with a board of directors," says a Slocan Valley woman. "That's the way we operate."

The communalism practised by the Doukhobors was an early form of mutual aid among whites in the Kootenays, and the co-operative attitude has since caught on in a big way. For many people in the Kootenay valleys and towns, the co-op is the key to their survival, operating in all aspects of their life, including buying land, building houses, having babies, growing gardens and distributing food.

The co-op has become even more crucial in the hard-time 70's, with the drying-up of federal government handouts such as Local Initiatives Program (LIP) and Opportunities for Youth (OFY). Many a people-run project, including the militant newspaper *Arrow*, got off the ground in the '60's with government bucks, enabling most freeks to lead an easy life alternating between grants, unemployment and welfare. Today things are tougher. Many Kootenay folk count on the co-op, interspersed with back-breaking seasonal work such as tree-planting, almost universally done by freeks who take their couple of thousand dollars back to the family pool to buy durables and goods they can't get through the co-op.

The influx of younger people into the Kootenays in the 60's was mainly squatters, who got together to build shelters and hack out gardens. Others found that by pooling their resources they were able to purchase small plots of land and construct communal houses. "We had to work together just to survive," recalls one back-to-the-lander. "Then we just found it was a lot nicer way to live and that we could aid each other in all different areas."

One family group in the Slocan Valley is typical: their "family" is two women, three men and a child. The baby, Tierra, was born at home with the help of friends and midwives in a Kootenays birth collective. They belong to the food co-op, share a garden with neighbours, and get dairy foods from a nearby collective which raises goats and chickens. "Nobody's trying to get more than anyone else," says Jen, one of the women. "Every time someone gets another trip together, like the goats, or spinning wool or something, we all benefit."

The Kootenays are divided into several autonomous food co-ops, scattered throughout the valleys and the urban centres. Food is ordered from Fed-Up Co-operative Wholesalers in Vancouver, the nucleus for a web of food co-ops throughout B.C. It's then trucked up to the Kootenay centres and distributed to members.

"We're able to get just about all the dried

goods, such as nuts, seeds, grains and flours, that we want," says a Pass Creek man. "Cheese and canned goods are the problem, it costs too much to refrigerate and ship them."

In the Slocan Valley, co-ops have made their first move toward autonomy from capitalist food-suppliers. With pooled funds, they've bought a truck which they send on runs to the nearby Okanagan Valley for fruit and over the Rockies to Alberta for organic grains. A co-op member then mills the grain into flours which are offered on the co-op list.

Prices for food, despite freight costs, usually wind up being lower than the local rip-off Safeway or IGA, but that's not the only motivation for co-op members. As one man put it, "Co-ops are not just cheaper

peanut butter."

Food co-op members tend to be fairly homogeneous in the Kootenays—most young, rural freeks living in a collective situation. But the lifestyle is beginning to spread: millworkers, single parents and second-generation Doukhobors have begun to join, and in Castlegar, the mainstay of the collective is a single mother with six kids.

Women's groups in the Kootenays thrive on collective practice and at various times have run birth collectives, theatre groups, health-care centres and even house-build co-ops. "It's helped us to build our confidence as women, and increase our survival skills, to get together and share the work and information—though we share a lot of good times, too," says Anne, a Slocan Valley resident.

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## OHIO: Getting do

By Steve Conliff

People are wondering how come Ohio is so *ultra* these days. Even Mark Brothers called up to ask, "Why a hayseed place like Ohio?"

It's true enough that the Kent State gym campaign has been cranked up to a proportion that would have made Berkeley proud in the old days, but then, things have always been that way in Buckeye-land: half the Columbus Yippies remember when the Weatherpeople burst into their high school classrooms announcing the Revolution had arrived.

"Move the Gym"

KENT. "You are fools / to bring back bitter memories. / Ghost rise inside a million minds," warned Joy Hill in a poem passed out beside construction-scarred Blanket Hill. The Kent State University Administration, stubbornly building its gymnasium to obscure where Gov. James Rhodes' National Guardsmen plotted to murder student protestors, is frantic to destroy the evidence before the reopened civil damages trial of Rhodes and the Guard. Most Ohioans are sick of hearing about Kent. Only the fanatics still care. But the fanatics number thousands: wide-eyed children, jaded adults, or flower brigaders out facing down the troops, something happened to us on 5/4/70 that won't let us let them desecrate this blood-hallowed land without a fight. After a spontaneous Administration Building takeover, the longest non-violent occupation in campus protest history (62 days on Blanket Hill), three mass arrests, many individual arrests, two minor riots, innumerable boring rallies and convoluted court appeals, roadblocks and injunctions and the outright suspension of the First Amendment; after anarchist disorganization, pacifist fussiness, and finally a Maoist coup alienating many; even after the start of construction behind a

Stalag-like fence and Coalition leaders' concession it is no longer possible to stop the gym—the grim-faced survivors remain. The last day on Blanket Hill, watching this mythical Mayday Tribe prepare to meet its arrest officers, a *Columbus Free Press* reporter said to me: "These kids are the people we'll be seeing at demonstrations for the next decade."

*Leatrice is a 26-year-old Kent State student. She has lived in the Kent-Cleveland area most of her life and knows well its revolutionary nature. In June, after a final fight with her redneck mother, she moved out and onto Blanket Hill. Now, in winter of November, she has tucked her two year-old son under her arm and hitchhiked to Chicago to collect Legal Defense money at a smokin' in.*

Indecency Days

POT/PIES. Ohio has decriminalized small amounts of marijuana—which makes prosecution of neighborhood dealers immeasurably more efficient. When, in May, Columbus and Ohio State University co-ops arrested 42 people over small amounts of reefer, thousands rallied in protest, finally marching on the State House to sit-in Rhodes' office. Of several summer and fall smoke-ins, the most successful was May 1970. Perk Indecency Day in Cleveland, where 2000 huddled taking throughout a chaste Halloween afternoon to celebrate the pie-induced defeat of Cleveland's porn-obsessed Mayor. As Yippie organizers ponder how to motivate the stoned hordes to action, the marijuana pogroms continue—though pot busts have become rarer than acid on the O.S.U. campus.

*Nevin was a Kent radical briefly in the early '70's, but mostly he has been a hippie, not too choosy about which drugs he took, living from eviction to eviction. In May he got involved with the crusade to free the 400. In June he began to insist he would pie the*

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## Doukhobor protest march; Pics in the Kootenay area.



Cominco is the monster that ate up a town and spat out ruined bodies of workers; the corporate citizen that dumps nitrates, phosphates, mercury, lead and other noxious substances into the rivers and lakes of the once-clean West Kootenays. Workers at Cominco once had the life expectancy of 18th-century underground coalminers, and were represented by a big American union that took their dues but had no interest in their health and safety—the United Steelworkers of America. In 1972, they almost managed to kick Steel out in favor of the independent militant Canadian Workers Union, but were shafted on a technicality by the then-reigning social democratic (read class collaboratorist) provincial regime, which preferred the devil it knew to the one it didn't know. Another battle was lost the following year in a similar manner, but the Cominco workers haven't given up yet; they're just biding their time.

"We're not going to die like the workers used to in the last 20 years," Jeff, the Cominco worker, says. "We finally figured out how to get some control over our lives,

In smelter and pulp mill, where workers are now largely represented by the Canadian union PPWC (Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada) health and safety have been key bargaining issues.

Pressuring the large multi-national corporate employers for "benefits" taken for granted elsewhere has become easier for workers who now know their union won't give up on them.

Independent unionism has also eased the economic pressure on workers, a cause of racism and bigotry against workers who came from outside the Kootenays to work in the mills, dams and smelters. "There's a lot of Doukhobors, many older Italian men who have been in Trail for years, some Indian guys and a lot of freeks like me," says Jeff. "They're my buddies, you know, I don't get any hassle for having long hair because the oldtimers have seen us come in there and work just like them."

Younger workers spread new attitudes inside the workplace—they are adamant about safety conditions and don't have the old company loyalty once demanded of workers. Rather than cause friction, the "laid-back about work, but dead serious about my lungs" attitude has caught on: older workers who gave years of their lives to the company

are now demanding comprehensive health plans, injury compensation and early retirement.

The struggle began with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) who were active in the battle for miners' rights in the early 1900's—when the mortality for workers in B.C. mines was the highest in the world (5 per 1000). In the Kootenays, an IWW organizer named Ginger Goodwin who was shot by a special constable in 1918, still has the stature of hero for young workers. Most know his story: after taking an active role in the bitter miners' strike in Trail in 1913-14, Goodwin was reclassified as "A" by the Canadian draft board, whereupon he split to Vancouver Island, 600 miles west of the Kootenays, and holed up in the hills near the mining town of Cumberland. He was only following his own conscience and the IWW constitution which called for workers to refuse to participate in the "plunder-squabbles of the parasite class."

Goodwin was shot in the back with a soft-nosed dum-dum bullet by a special constable who managed to track him down. The constable was exonerated by a "special inquiry," but he did suffer one punishment: he went hungry in Cumberland—a town with as militant a history as any in the Kootenays—because no waitress would serve him.

Doukhobor means spirit-wrestler. It's a name that fits the Kootenays because of the long history of struggle by people of all stripes in the region for the right to live in dignity, autonomy and self-determination.

The Doukhobors came as religious dissidents from Russia to Canada in the late 19th century. Leo Tolstoy, the Russian writer, was instrumental in arranging with Queen Victoria for the Doukhobors to be granted land in common, allowed to live as a community and guaranteed exemption from military service.

The Doukhobors first settled on the Prairies and for a number of years lived out their ideal of "toil and a peaceful life," prospering without private property, militarism, nationalism and public school education. But as their farmland grew to be more valuable, the Canadian government took a new interest in them and passed a law

requiring them to take an oath of allegiance to the British Crown or give up their land.

Many Doukhobors refused, and were promptly dispossessed. So they had to move on, in 1905, to a less fertile, but more remote land—the Kootenays.

As George Woodcock notes in his book **The Doukhobors**, the Canadian government "used the issue of the oath to seize land for which there was public demand."

The acts of the Canadian government, designed to split the Doukhobor community, in part succeeded. Some Doukhobors remained in a Kootenays commune to which the government retained the title and others chose to farm as independents, after signing an oath of allegiance.

A sect of the Doukhobors known as the Sons of Freedom, or Freedomites, launched a series of protests against the assimilation of their people. Freedomites removed their clothes in public, refused to send their children to school and burned material possessions such as buildings and machinery. The Freedomite struggle was harshly repressed in an attempt to break the spirits of the Doukhobor people; Freedomite men, women and children were imprisoned for long periods in specially-created jails.

The Freedomite struggles—especially where they disrupted public services—were deeply resented by the non-Doukhobor population, but most Doukhobors have become completely assimilated and live at peace with their neighbors.

When freeks began to pour into the Kootenays and attempted to homestead, the pacifist Doukhobors were fascinated and supportive of their efforts. (As well, they saw a chance to boost themselves out of a subsistence lifestyle by selling their heretofore low-value land to the relatively-well-heeled Americans; in 1970-71, for instance, they sold off more than \$1 million in real estate in the Slocan Valley alone.) There was a sharing of land, food and agricultural know-how, as the Doukhobors saw in their new neighbors a new expression of pacifist, communalist values.

But a certain disenchantment set in when the Doukhobors saw some of the newcomers return to the city in the back seat of Daddy's car. However, genuine respect and solidarity continues to prevail between the Doukhobors and the here-for-good hippies.

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It's a Thanksgiving party in Robson, B.C., across the river from the smoking, festering Cancel pulp mill, its sirens warning of chlorine gas leakage every few shifts. The party is a cross-section of Kootenays people—the three people who live in a dome at Pass Creek, several collective members of the counter-culture/labor/anarchist newspaper **The Arrow**, local community college professors and a daycare worker. A young guy with long, red hair, says you don't make real friends in the city like you do in the country. How does he survive economically? He says he's a hardhat—a laborer inside the giant Cominco zinc-lead smelter at Trail.

## in the streets



Kent gym protest.

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Governor on the opening day of the State Fair. The rest of us thought he was crazy—no Yippie could get within 50 feet of Rhodes. But Nevin kept insisting.

### Klan Smashing

KLAN-BASHING. Pies aren't all that Ohio rads throw at pigs. Fists, clubs and eggs rained down upon a renegade Ku Klux Klan faction which twice tried to demonstrate at the State House. While many leftists feared

that violence inspired by breakaway Marxist-Leninist factions would sabotage the broad bi-racial coalition opposing the Klan and increased chances of bloodshed when Columbus schools are integrated next year, few could help digging the images of whipped

Klansmen cringing behind the cops. More blacks have told me Klan-bashing is a bad idea than middle-class whites have.

*Earlene can yell louder than practically any other Columbus Yippie. No doubt she inherited it from her mother, a long-time union organizer who lost a couple of fingers in an industrial accident. Earlene likes to yell at Communists almost as much as she likes to yell at cops, but at the second Klan-bashing she and her husband peeled a SWAT cop off one of the few Progressive Labor Party leaders who didn't end the day in jail. Earlene is 19. She is a punk.*

### Anti-sexism

SEXISM. Early in the Spring, 200 gay rights supporters rallied at the State House. Late in the Fall, three times that number rallied at O.S.U., in support of a lesbian harassed and finally raped by male students. When a bourgeois newspaper accused Women Against Rape of opportunism for not sending the victim to police, W.A.R. shot back such an impressive list of organizing accomplishments (including shelter houses and a rape crisis center) that the paper was deluged with letters supporting the feminists and one lone letter opposing them, too rambling to print.

*Sunny is a second year law student and the icily-calm spokeswoman for W.A.R. Daughter of a Cleveland politician, once a downer freak, lover of a movement heavy and lesbian separatist, she has developed into a strong-willed Marxist-Feminist with her own bullhorn. Sunny and I come from the same generation of revolutionaries, more used to apathy and repression than cheering crowds, wise enough to know that mass rallies, like tiny rallies, are an optical illusion.*

UNDERGROUND PRESS. "Interpretation changes reality. What you report about something is what most of your readers will think of it if you're doing your job,"

Dana Beal (another Ohioan, born in the hospital where the Kent State casualties were taken) once wrote, adding: "Even the Weatherpeople put out communiques." Another thing Sunny and I have in common is we both used to work on the **Columbus Free Press**.

*Pancho White Villa is a member of the Revolutionary 3 Stooges Brigade and the publisher of Cheat Sheet. He pied Dayton Power and Light Company spokesman Donald L. Speyer on the first day of International Pie Week—and escaped.*

### Revolutionary Youth Groups

ON OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS. Ohio today has much in common with Ronald Reagan-era California: after a statewide period of liberal reform (Gov. Edmund Brown's Administration in California, John Gilligan's in Ohio) and at the start of a national period of liberal reform (Johnson, Carter), amidst the consequent rising expectations, a reactionary State Government (Reagan's, Rhodes') dashes those expectations, coming into conflict with reasonably well-organized and growing groups of revolutionary youth. Since Ohio's campuses and prisons remained turbulent, even during the post-Kent massacre interregnum of Gov. Gilligan, Buckeye militancy should continue after Big Gym Roads, like Ray-gun, is relegated to the garbage cans of history.

*Steve Conliff, who faces a possible seven months in jail on assault and disturbing a lawful meeting charges for pieing Gov. Rhodes, is running as a Yippie against the "Butcher of Kent State" in the Ohio Republican gubernatorial primary this spring. Donations to his defense fund should be sent to Box 8234, Columbus, Ohio 43201.*

**The Kent Legal Defense Fund also needs help. Contact them at Box 366, Kent, Ohio 44240.**