

NVS

NOTES ON MICKEY MOUSE AS KING OF MOOMBA

"Blinky Bill is the people's king of Moomba"

March 14th will see the 1977 Moomba procession and Mickey Mouse has been throned as king of Moomba. Already people have voiced their protest at this blatant act by the cultural agents of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists in this country. The call has gone out for action to replace Mickey Mouse with an Australian character - Blinky Bill; and next to Blinky Bill should fly the banner of independence. We do have a strong cultural heritage and will not bow to imperialist penetration.

History of Moomba

On April 21st 1856 a militant demonstration was held in Melbourne as part of the Eight Hour Day movement. This movement was based on the concept of "Eight hours work - Eight hours rest - & Eight hours recreation".

At a time when the working day was sixteen hours or more, when children were ruthlessly exploited (as in the English coal mines), when black people all over the world were still victims of legal slavery, this was a revolutionary demand.

The organized working class in Australia won their demand for a reasonable working day - They- also celebrated this victory by having an Eight Hour Day March.

In 1935 came the first distortion when it was renamed "Labour Day" by an ALP government and was celebrated until World War Two. Continued in 1946, it finally petered out in 1950.

The second distortion came in 1955 when the Balte government resurrected the idea of the march (it had been a public holiday since 1935) and went to some local aborigines for a suitable name. They came up with "moomba" ... which actually means "arse". The aboriginal people have been laughing ever since.

In 1972 came the next distortion when about 50 American cops were going to participate in the march. People's action mounted and protests were planned, but when the day arrived a large state police contingent turned up and the Yanks did not march.

Today we see the ~~mk~~ most blatant distortion of the "Eight Hour Day March" with the theme "A Salute to Walt Disney" and Mickey Mouse as King. This has been thrust at the people by the Moomba Committee in their present role as cultural agents of imperialism. What started as a militant working class action has been transformed into a festival of "popular" (imperialist commercialization) culture, in reality a mediocre plastic celebration that dulls all creativity and poses no threat to the ruling class whatever. The roots of the Eight Hour Day have been forgotten and the people assume that they always had an eight hour day without having to struggle for it. This has become the real function of moomba - to deaden people's consciousness and distract from class struggle.

Mickey Mouse

"Lifting a rock only to drop it on one's own feet" is a Chinese folk saying to describe the behaviour of certain fools: This is so of the Moomba Committee. By putting forward that the 1977 theme would be a tribute to "Walt Disney", they have opened the way for the people to look at this history of Disney and his ideology.

In 1928 the first Disney cartoon starring Mickey Mouse was made. Today there are Disney strips in five thousand newspapers, translated into more than thirty languages, spread over a hundred countries. How did the so-called popularity and this ideology grow?

During the Depression of the 30's Disney comics were well known for their anti-working class stand. In 1935 the then "League of Nations" recognized Mickey Mouse as an "International Symbol of Goodwill". Disney has always been an outspoken political figure, and one who has always been able to count upon government help.

During the Second World War at a time when Walt Disney was on the verge of bankruptcy, the US Defence Department began to commission propaganda, which became his mainstay for the duration of the war. Nelson Rockefeller made it possible for Disney to do numerous tours and films in order to win over hearts and minds vulnerable to Nazi propaganda.

Disney's postwar mouse went "straight", and like the US, he became policeman to the world. New comic characters came into existence such as Donald Duck. They were used to push imperialist culture beside the economic penetration of US imperialism throughout the world.

A good example of this was in Chile where every week Disney comics reached over a million readers - and while the Chilean people tried to organize and arm themselves, Donald Duck preached capitulation and peaceful co-existence. The Chilean people's extremely strong cultural identity reemerged and in 1971 an attack on Disney and his ideology was launched with the publishing of a book "How To Read Donald Duck". Since the fascist coup in 1973, it has been banned and burned with other literature (see attached comic).

Commercialization and Propaganda

It is wrong to assume that Walt Disney was merely a business man. We are all familiar with the massive merchandising of his characters in films, watches, umbrellas, records, soaps, rocking chairs, neckties, lamps, etc. etc. It is true that this ~~blatant~~ is blatant massive merchandising. We can expect in Australia a reappearance of his characters - this is already so with Women's Weekly (2/2/77) articles on Mickey Mouse, a new Mickey Mouse club to be shown on Channel '7' and other assorted public appearances.

Walt Disney Productions in Australia hold copyright to characters for articles and comics to be distributed throughout the land. It also uses Australia as a base to distribute material to SE Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei.

Walt Disney is not only for capitalist commercialization but also the cultural penetration that accompanies economic penetration. In a word - very successful imperialist propaganda.

Superpower Contention

This act of turning Moomba into a propaganda drive for the American imperialists is part, and parcel of their tightening grip on Australia. As they tussle with the new imperialist superpower - the USSR - the US needs to tighten control over its areas of influence. US imperialism is destroying and stifling our culture and attempting to replace it with its own depraved version of "culture" - that of domination and profit. In recent years the Russian social imperialist stream of propaganda has grown remarkably with such absurdities as KGB agents posing as poets at the South Australian Arts festival. More complex is the pushing of the Russian people's dancing troupes, circus displays, and so on, by Soviet authorities and their Australian agents which are popping up more and more frequently.

The forcing of other nations' culture down the throat of people throughout the world, is being rejected, including Australia. To support the preservation and further development of an authentic Australian culture based on resistance against the oppressors is to oppose both superpowers.

Australia Has a Culture

As Australians we have a rich culture of our own. Australian culture is basically the culture of the working people. It grew partly from the wonderful culture of the aboriginal people in its love for ~~the~~ identification with the land, landscape and outback.

It has been enriched by the struggles of the oppressed, such as the convicts, gold-diggers, selectors, shearers and urban workers.

We often marvel at the wonders of another people's culture, and applaud it as something worthwhile imitating (often there is nothing wrong with this) yet we forget that we too have a culture rich in sayings, struggles, customs and traditions.

A culture of earthiness, openness, honesty and hatred of pomp and ceremony. A people's culture of self-reliance which has incorporated and is incorporating into it the people's cultures from the many countries from which migrants have come to Australia.

As far as Moomba is concerned it is ridiculous for an Australian culture festival to appoint an overseas figure as its focal point. Mickey Mouse should be thrown out and replaced by a native, such as Blinky Bill, the koala. We have our own folk lore. Blinky Bill is a book character created by Dorothy Wall in the 1930's and is well known to Australian children.

The crowning of Blinky Bill as the King of Moomba should be part and parcel of the struggle to awaken the people to our own rich culture.

This Moomba will see patriotic people marching further down the road to cultural liberation - a process which also means criticizing the mass 'cultural' merchandising exported so profitably by the imperialists.

The great majority of Australians love their country and know deep in their hearts that much has to be done to get rid of foreign influence and control. Australians have a rich history, be it brief. Out of their efforts to build the country they have created magnificent traditions and a lively, fresh, young culture. Today the great majority of Australians are anxious to protect their heritage, to develop their culture. Such a desire cannot be separated from the quickening tempo of the broad demands for independence. Our cultural heritage comes from those very same demands of previous generations:

March on and may the streets ring with the message, " "Mickey Go Home", "Blinky Bill, the people's King of Moomba".

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"In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is, in fact, no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are, as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine."

Selected Works Vol. III pp.86
of Mao Tsetung