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REMARKS TO THE PUBLIC HEARING

April 10, 1969

Art Workers' Coalition

So far,

The Coalition is the best trades union I have ever been associated with. This is an achievement only in terms of the trades union movement, which is a nineteenth century phenomenon rapidly passing out of style. The trade union is not being superseded by a more powerful agglomeration of suppressed forces. It is expiring because all of its aspirations have been achieved, on the one hand, and on the other, people now think differently than they did in the nineteenth century. At last! Some time ago, I had the idea that in the near future, workers will strike, but their strike will be a permanent one. They will say, we refuse to work under any conditions! At that time, there will be a general recognition of a situation which already exists on a broad scale. The series of factors which results in the requirement that each person ~~justify his existence~~ justify his existence in terms cast down to him by superior beings of all sorts is no longer viable. Already the question of who will be offended if people say fuck on television is imponderable. A year ago, the pope of the Roman church made a serious announcement. He said that the church heads was facing a leadership crisis which was threatening the very foundations of that institution. The implications of all early modern revolutions from the First French Revolution to the First Russian Revolution are that one set of rulers is preferable to another. The exemplary revolution which I believe ~~is~~ is indicated by our experience at the present time is a revolution of a substantially different sort. It is a revolution so broad in its implications that its success will render meaningless everything that can be expressed and recorded and published in connection with this hearing. I say this in order to indicate the scale of the proceedings in which I believe we are involved, no matter whether we like it or not.

We are speaking tonight in the auditorium of an art school which according to some predominant definitions of what a school is, is not a school at all. According to this definition, this school is a small business. It is so because the powers that be recognize the fact that this school does not do what all real schools must do—they must prepare people to live in a situation which must be described as slavery. It is a tribute to the School of Visual Arts and its owner Silas Rhoades that we are permitted to express such thoughts as we may care to make public on his premises.

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It happens that last night I went out to have something to eat and my tape recorder and two of the tapes that I made for a performance scheduled for later tonight were stolen from my loft because I forgot to lock the door of the elevator. This experience, although I have hardly had time to assimilate its meaning, indicated to me that I should add something to this speech specifically concerning the aspect of art which is related to private property. I believe that this organization should make no attempt to enforce the ~~propriety~~ proprietary rights which may be claimed by avaricious artists. On the contrary, artists should take the lead in declaring themselves in favour of and in league with the thieves and vandals of all sorts who are now making life difficult for people who own things, and who will soon make private property a thing of the past. In this connection, artists should renounce all claims to originality and uniqueness in their own work, and devote themselves instead to addressing and directing all the rebellious natures in society because of the privileged position which artists already enjoy, namely that of licensed disturbers of the peace.

I believe that this organization must come to grips with the profound questions which are being brought to everyone's attention so forcibly today. The implications of these events are comprehensive. Most basically I urge that artists working together should declare clearly that we are no longer the servants of the wealthy.



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