

Ex-football player discusses revolutionary political theory

by Laura Katz
Spectrum Staff Reporter

"One of the most common myths about football players is that they're dumb. They really aren't. Their social environment doesn't stimulate creativity, but some of them are bright guys." So speaks Speed Powrie, former football player turned SDS activist.

Born Charles Raymond Powrie in the sunny suburbs of swinging Akron, Ohio, Speed—he got his name when he was little, not from any mind-expanding drugs—is almost a legend on campus at the State University of Buffalo. Since he made the transition from football player to radical, he has become one of the most avid and articulate spokesmen for SDS.

"I wasn't actually kicked off the team. Doc Ulrich saw me on television during the Dow Chemical demonstration. He asked me what the hell I was doing, and I told him that I was doing what I thought was right. He gave me an ultimatum—either quit demonstrating or lose my football scholarship."

Faced with the choice of quitting or being fired, Speed chose to "resign" and cope with the resulting financial difficulties. "At the time, I felt like exposing the whole thing. I made a mistake by not doing that. You have to make people understand what's really going on."

Player to revolutionary

Although he was firmly opposed to this week's referendum on a mandatory athletic fee, Speed has by no means turned anti-sports. "I play rugby now. It's a good example of what sports should be. The guys organize it themselves. After the game the home team provides the beer and you get to know the guys you're playing against. It puts athletics in a human context. What football has come to mean is not what the Greeks meant sports to be."

"I went from a football player in one year to a revolutionary the next," he says and Speed Powrie likes being considered the latter. To him, Che Guevara was a "model revolutionary." "But," he adds, "it's not in my nature to kill. The movie 'The War Game' had a profound effect on me. It was just horrible to watch. Che

Guevara was a killer and a good one. I'm just a working class kid."

As a junior majoring in history, he feels that he hasn't read or learned all he'd like to, but he is glad he came to school in Buffalo. "I'm lucky to have come here and to have been exposed to radical thought. I would have been a football player with liberal views. Now I'm beginning to grasp all the things that affect my life—the dynamics of the situation. It's strange, but now that I'm thinking and understanding, I feel a lot less alienated—more involved."

However, he doesn't think that the State University of Buffalo is the "Berkeley of the East" yet. "Meyerson is good at his job, which is to block the movement," he says. "That's why he was brought in."

As Speed Powrie continues to speak, you realize that he has an impressively well-developed and

rational political philosophy. Regarding the current political situation, though, Speed either can't or won't support any specific candidate. "I don't believe in electoral politics," he says.

Come the revolution

He continues to say that "the greatest thing that could happen to the United States would be a socialist revolution with a minimal amount of lives lost. We have to show an alternative to people—not a utopian one—but we must get out of this insanity. Our generation is in a funny position. We either have to change the system radically or eradicate the world."

In pursuit of this aim, SDS has changed its focus this year. "Instead of going to political rallies and being attacked, we plan to leaflet in shopping centers and start making contacts with the industrial working class—to begin a form of internal education. Our only alternative for meaningful change rests with the students and the white working class."

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