

Any Time Now

Fall 2007

For Social Anarchism

Number 27

<http://www.atnzine.net>

Ten Years After

This is the 10th anniversary issue of ATN. A lot sure has happened in those ten years! When Dick and I started this zine, the anarchist movement seemed at low ebb. In North America, at least, people who considered themselves anarchists were few in number – not that there are millions now – but I would say off the cuff that there are 20 times as many now as then. Counter-cultural and primitivist currents prevailed, to the despair of those of us who wished to relate anarchism to the lives of ordinary people. Many supposed anarchists seemed to think that anarchism was a sub-variety of Maoism or social democracy. Soon after, arose the Black Blocs and the old cliches about anarchists as violent and irresponsible were shouted about in the media.

To counter what we saw as a misunderstanding of the nature of anarchism, we insisted that the term meant something and that it could be boiled down to a small set of principles involving liberty, anti-statism and voluntary cooperation. These principles were more important than the other issues that might divide anarchists. Thus, at one point, the call for “an anarchism without hyphens.” We reached out to others we felt were truly principled anarchists, people like Fred Woodworth, Laurens Otter, Pat Murtagh, Peter Good, John Griffin, Eugene Plawiuk, and Jonathan Simcock to name but a few. At the same time, groups who were anarchist, or near anarchist, who tried to relate libertarian principles to the daily lives of ordinary people, such as non-sectarian syndicalists or the workers coop movement, were also contacted and written about.

We also tended to emphasize the individualist aspect of anarchism. Unlike our comrade, the late Murray Bookchin, we did not see the problem with anarchism – or society in general – stemming from individualism, but a false or perverted version of it – narcissism. True individualism, we felt, would combat a society of mass consumerist conformity. Real individualists understand their individuality can only be manifested successfully through cooperation with others and dog-eat-dog capitalism, with its attendant and ever-encroaching State, is the greatest single obstacle to individual freedom. And while some “collectivist” anarchists at this time, seemed to be little more than social democrats or soft-core Leninists, many of the Individualists we contacted knew that what separated anarchism from other forms of socialism was the emphasis on liberty and anti-statism.

During the mid-90's there was a wave of populism, centered mainly in the US. Though much of it was reactionary, and even fascistic, not all of it was. We recognized that some of the populist revolt was proletarian in nature, and that given the inability of anarchists and revolutionaries to relate to the.... => page 2

THE WITCH HUNTS

Assimilation and the Creation of the Capitalist Nation State From: This Time We Fight Back c/o the Purple Thistle Centre 260-975 Vernon Drive, Vancouver BC, Coast Salish Territory V6A 3P2 The Burning Times occurred between 1400 and 1800 C.E. And it is estimated that as few as 40,000 and as many as 9,000,000 people were executed, 85% of whom were women. This historical campaign is often referred to as a women's holocaust by feminists and neo-pagans. The vast majority of accused and convicted witches were women, and the most well circulated written work on the subject, the Malleus Mallificarum, blatantly stated that women were inherently more susceptible to the charms of the devil. In order to fully instill patriarchal ideology in the people of Europe it was necessary to defame and destroy women's traditional power. However, the ideological motivation of the Witch Hunts stretches beyond that. It was not only an attack on women, but on the traditional land based cultures of Europe in their entirety, which were generally non-patriarchal and which the peasantry still clung to in a Christianized form.



The Witch Hunts were strategically utilized by the State and Church (which at the time did not even present the veneer of separation) to suppress any remaining vestiges of the old pagan cultures of Europe, in which women played powerfully important roles. It was an instrumental approach in the transformation of European society from its relatively decentralized, locally and tribally rooted heritage to a centralized, bureaucratic and eventually capitalist conglomeration of Nation States. It was a later stage in the process of colonization and assimilation which had carried on for several centuries by that time. Accusations and trials often directly followed peasant rebellions and insurrections. The witch bunts were necessary in order to assert the power and validity of the state. => page 3

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actual working population, these populists created a movement with the tools they had at hand – ideology from right-wing libertarian sources and handed-down rural populism. We wrote about the more radical of these populists. Also much that concerned us, such as war, imperialism, offensive by-laws, the drug laws, etc, transcended the right vs left dichotomy. We felt that left and right libertarians should work together on these common goals.

We also came to the conclusion that some of the more individualist or radical right-wing libertarians were veering toward anarchism. If only these could be encouraged to go all the way to traditional anarchism, we thought. The obvious place for anarchist-inclined free-market libertarians would be in a revived form of Mutualist anarchism, a type of anarchism that was socialist and anti-capitalist, yet at the same time chose not to abolish individual, usufruct-based property and engaged in free exchange. Thus, a portion of the “right” could be split off, to join in what we hoped would be a larger multi-tendency anarchist movement. We linked up with Kevin Carson, who was of the same mind, and he with a number of other Mutualists have developed a still small, yet very vibrant Mutualist or “Left-Libertarian” current within anarchism, which does ferocious battle with the pseudo-libertarians of the right.

After Seattle, we condemned the actions of the Black Bloc, something which aroused hostility among other anarchists. We felt that such actions made it difficult for anarchists to relate to working people and were a dead end, as the cops would, and did, catch on and defeat such tactics. We also feared that the Black Blockers might end up replicating the history of the Weather Faction of SDS and that armed struggle groups would give cause for the state to completely crush the anarchist movement. Thankfully, the Black Blocs faded away and we were wrong about their evolution. Some ex-BBers, in fact, have become important organizers for groups like the IWW and NEFAC. It is good to be proved wrong! By 2002 it seemed evident that anarchism was maturing, that tendencies relating to the lives of ordinary people were beginning to predominate and the counter-culturalists and primmies were becoming marginalized. Social anarchism was back, and then some! At the same time, most right-wing populists/libertarians were sucked into the maw of neo-conservatism. With the war against Iraq and the obvious failure of the so-called War on Drugs, the remaining, honest libertarians and populists, in the US at least, formed a united front with the left against these crimes, something which we had always promoted. Furthermore, the Mutualist Movement was developing independent of us. Thus in Issue # 20 we changed the sub title from “An anarchist-decentralist newsletter” to “A newsletter of social anarchism.” Practical, people-oriented syndicalist, anarchist communist, communitarian and mutualist groups can now be found in most areas of North America. As for Europe and Latin America, neo-platformists and syndicalists have put down roots and are doing serious organizing. The tendency away from self-marginalization is ever-greater.

Given this new situation, is there still a role for ATN? We are no longer the only show in town, as we once were in Canada when we started out. And the theoretical and practical development of groups like NEFAC or the Left Libertarians has gone way, way beyond our little efforts. While we are glad to see all this activity, some of us should remain independent, allowing us to speak out should any of these groups fall into opportunism or start watering down their anarchism. Since issue 20, our activity has been more of an effort to report on the new movements (or revitalized old ones) and create links between the anarchist groups and the whole raft of semi-anarchist organizations, such as co-ops, decentralist groups, alternate economies etc which have also proliferated during the past decade. There is also a fair number of anarchists who do not belong to any group or tendency, yet have something worthwhile to say. ATN is a place for such writers. Thus, I think there is still a place for us. ----- Larry Gambone

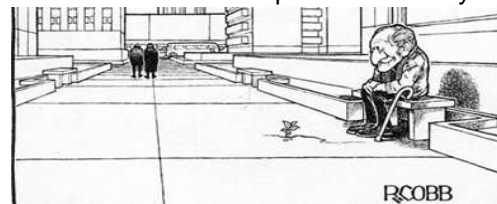
The Road Towards Anarchy of a High Degree

by D. Dorn

<http://www.anarchy.no/andebate.html>

The organization of the anarchist society of a high degree on a large scale can only be achieved gradually as material conditions permit, and as the people convince themselves of the benefits to be gained and as they gradually become psychologically accustomed to radical alterations in their way of life. Since anarchism of a high degree cannot be imposed, I assume the necessity for the coexistence of various economic and political – administrative forms, communist anarchist, collectivist anarchist, mutualist/social individualist anarchist, individualist anarchist – on the condition that there will be no exploitation of others. I am confident that the convincing example of successful libertarian collective will attract others into the orbit of the collectivity. For my part I do not believe that there is “one” solution to the social problem, but a thousand different and changing solutions, in the same way as social existence is different in time and space.

The Anarchist International <http://www.anarchy.no/ai.html>



Any Time Now (copy left)

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The Cuningham Amendment



From the Frampton Obligations which regretably are not available for Leisurely Discussion:

'We are as crazy as loons to take this world seriously. The real joke is all around us. If you are not careful you can end up spending years struggling to achieve illusions you can never obtain, and on a planet that could never support the same craved-for lifestyles. The problem with the rat race is that even if you win, you are still a rat. Watch Out! If you don't position your soul positively there are others who will do it for you negatively.'

Or take this bit of wisdom:

'The idea of utopia is Absurd. The forces of freedom and the forces of servitude will always be present, always in conflict. Check which side you are on. There is only one battle, only one enemy. Servitude Breeds Servitude.'

Excerpts from Why I am an Anarchist

(from the Cuningham Amendment)

Anarchism is a broad system of political thought, practice, and analysis. Anarchism has a solid tradition of supporting the struggles of women, people of color, and similar oppressed groups. Anarchism encompasses anti-racist and anti-oppression analysis. Anarchism is about the liberation of all people from oppressive systems. The struggles of oppressed people are just as important as the struggles against capitalism, imperialism, and other oppressive systems and institutions.

Anarchism is about the rights of an individual in the context of a community. A community can only be free and healthy if it is comprised of liberated, free individuals with full rights. Individuals benefit from, being part of a greater community. The split between *individualists* and *collectivists* is mostly a false one, as an anarchist society would be based on an integrated meshing of community responsibilities and individual rights.

The revolution of everyday life. Anarchism is practical. We must build the type of society we want to live in, now. Putting our ideas into practice not only demonstrates the vitality of anarchism, but it helps us create the space for anarchy within the current system. Anarchy is more of a process than it is a magical moment "after the revolution". In order for the idea of anarchy to take hold among people, they have to embrace it as an alternative. People become liberated when they "kill the policeman in their head" not when a vanguard of revolutionaries seize government power. Of course, sudden shifts in popular consciousness are possible.

THE WITCH HUNTS (from page 1)

This is demonstrated in the following quotes by Jean Bodin, an early advocate of free trade, whose ideas contributed significantly to the development of capitalism.

"There are two means by which states are maintained in their weal and greatness -- reward and penalty: the one for the good, the other for the bad. And, if the distribution of these two be faulty, nothing else is to be expected than the inevitable ruin of the state."

"...if the role of ecclesiastical leaders is to ensure that the true religion is not stained by superstition or impiety, it is also the role of the magistrates, who hold the reins of the state, to ensure that the youth do not forsake the one, unchanging religion to follow other, diverse beliefs. In this manner we may conserve the semblance of a State."

The old ways, in a plenitude of regional manifestations, were intrinsically linked to the land. European spiritual tradition was heavily focused upon direct experience and inspiration and a personal relationship with the land, its spirits, deities, etc. Rather than the abstraction of "faith" or "belief," it required exploration. The kind of world view intrinsic to an earth-centered spiritual tradition is not cohesive with the kind of mass mentality necessary for the existence of the rigid structure of the Nation State, I do not mean to suggest that pre-Christian Europe was non hierarchical or some kind of egalitarian utopia as that would be a blatant lie. However, it is accurate to say that in order for Empires to be built it is necessary to divert the attention of the masses from their land and their own direct experience and fill them instead with the abstractions of faith and patriotism. They must shift their identification with their direct relations to an identification with the ideology of their own oppressors, God's representatives and the State, Witch Hunts were a means to achieve this mass psychology because those that had not yet been accused would likely become caught up in the fervor of proving their Faith. They were convinced by the clergy that there were witches among them, responsible for the suffering they experienced who received such power supernaturally through allegiance to Satan.

The European Witch Hunts were an intrinsic part of the colonization of Europe and the assimilation of land-based cultures. Without waging this specific campaign against the traditional culture still pervasive in Europe, the Nation State and capitalism would not have been able to develop as they did. People must be stripped of their connection to their land and their traditional community, and have their direct experience replaced with the abstraction of faith and the fear of dis-order in order to submit to the ideology of being controlled. The Burning Times were a major turning point in the trajectory of culture and society and its influence can be seen in many aspects of contemporary culture.

British Update

The UK, for a decade or so, the slow one in the global anarchist parade, now seems to be catching up. The British IWW reports about 300 members, a 40% growth from last year (and indeed, I can remember when the entire IWW membership worldwide was not much more.) The Anarchist Federation, member group of the =>

International Anarchist Federation, also reports substantial growth, with activities across England and a new social center in Liverpool. Sol Fed, the British AIT group has some new members and the Class War Federation is reborn and reports a lot of growth in northern England. Another positive development, is an apparent decline in the sectarianism that used to plague the UK - a major contributor to the weakness of the anarchist movement. The Anarchist Federation and the IWW work together, indeed, many AF members are Wobblies, and it seems like the AF and Sol Fed are working together in the Education Workers Network. (Info from Freedom and the Industrial Worker)

Eminent Domain:

When the state steals your home

and gives it to the rich.

(Tariq Khan, Rebel Stew, Box 2351, Falla Church VA 22042 USA)

I've heard people, mostly patriotic types, say that this is a free country. How it is free, I have yet to see. This is a country where the government can, and does, seize people's land, and then either uses it for it's own evil purposes, such as building courts, prisons, or some other "public" use, or gives it away to some richie-rich businessmen who build something there that the government can tax and make a load of money off of. It's called eminent domain, but really it's theft and it's government bullying.

In most cities across the country, city government officials and big-shot developers are in bed with each other. A developer may want to build condos in a certain scenic location because he knows that he'll make a lot of easy money there. But a problem arises. People already live in houses at that location. So the developer, who is good friends with the Mayor and his cronies, brings up the fact to the Mayor that the tax money from condos in that location would be much greater than the tax money city officials are making off of the houses there.

What to do? Eminent domain. But wait a minute. Doesn't Eminent Domain only apply if the land is going to be for some "public" use? Not any more. Madeleine Cain, Mayor of Lakewood, Ohio, a person who has absolutely no respect for individual liberty, explains that it doesn't have to do with whether or not an area will be used for the public; "The question is whether or not that area can be used for a higher and better use." That is a perfect description of the kind of arrogant attitude of self-importance so many city officials are infected with these days. "We have higher, better use for your land, so we're just going to take it from you, ok? Don't worry. It's for your own good, you insignificant commoners." And what "higher, better" use did Mayor Cain have in mind? That's right, condos; what sociologist George Ritzer would call the "Mcdonaldization" of housing.

Of course, to blatantly kick ordinary people out of their homes, tear down the homes, and build ugly condos for rich people would seem like a violation in the eyes of the public, so the city officials had to come up with something to make it seem like the right thing to do. Simple answer; label the houses in that area "blighted". That way, they're not tearing down the nice homes of good people; they're

tearing down ugly, dilapidated "blighted" homes in order to beautiful the city. Right? According to the dictionary I have blighted means "in a deteriorated condition". But remember, the way most people define words is not the same as the way governments and laws define words. Lakewood city officials define a blighted house as one that doesn't have three bedrooms, two baths, an attached two-car garage, and central air. Huh? What this definition does is give the city government power to destroy those houses in the, scenic location on the grounds that they're "blighted" and then sell that land to the developers who will build condos which will in turn lead to the city government making a ton of money. Eminent Domain.

And this type of legalistic bullying and theft is going on all over the country. The television show 60 Minutes did a story on Eminent Domain in which they talked about a case in Mesa, Arizona where city officials were kicking an independent hardware store owner out of his building, which had been there since 1952, and selling it to Ace Hardware under the guise of "redevelopment". 60 Minutes talked to a libertarian nonprofit called The Institute for 4 Justice which has documented "more than 10,000 instances of government taking property from one person to give it to another in the last five years." One of those cases takes place in Times Square where "New York State has forced a man to sell a corner that his family owned for more than 100 years. And what's going up instead? A courthouse? A school? Nope. The new headquarters of the New York Times." The city says it's "blighted property" and that kicking the man out and selling it to the New York Times will, of course, "benefit the public".

Giving government and big business the power to take away people's homes and small businesses may help a few already rich people make a lot of money quickly, but it does not "benefit the public". It's a crime against individual liberty and common decency. A country that allows government to kick people out of their homes and small businesses in order to use that land for "higher, better" purposes, is not a free country. Government officials who believe that their vision for what a city should look like is so perfect that it should be enforced through law are not good people who deserve respect, but rather, they're power-tripping control freaks with absolutely no regard for basic individual liberty. Oppose them, ridicule them, criticize them, and resist them.

First Gathering of

BC Anarchist Writers Group

The weekend of November 9-11 saw 14 people gathered on Denman Island for the first meeting of the BC Anarchist Writers Group. (This is not the "official name" - Black Ink has also been suggested.) We ranged in age from mid-twenties to mid-sixties. We hailed from various places on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands as well as Vancouver and the Kootenays. As well as BC, our backgrounds and experiences ranged from Illinois, Alberta, Newfoundland, Toronto and Montreal. We were poets, essayists, journalists, historians, song writers, playwrights, performance artists, zinesters, film makers, Surrealists, chapbook publishers and radio pirates.

Most of us had never met before, so much of our time was spent in getting acquainted; sharing ideas, zines, =>

and other publications. There was a lot of preliminary discussion about interests, directions and ideas. People wanted to stay in touch and share projects, not just by email, but to mail out our writings for comment and support. We had a really enjoyable time together, much laughter, sharing of fine food and wine. We planned our first public event – an evening of reading, film, music and performance in the Denman Island Community Centre. About 35 people showed up – usual for such a small place – and it went on for 4 hours. Afterward, we all agreed that the evening had been a great success and plan to have more of these in other parts of the province.

After a leisurely Sunday breakfast we headed over to Tree Frog Radio and a number of us went on air. Hugging everyone good bye, we headed back to our respective homes in anticipation for the next gathering.

Larry Gambone

BRIEF REVIEWS

FIFTH ESTATE - Halloween '07, Issue deals with the topic "the end of the world" both as a critique of Fundi Armageddon nonsense, an examination of what to expect during environmental collapse, and a debate upon the nature of communication and representation. \$3.00 Box 201016 Ferndale MI 48220

THE OYSTERCATCHER #4 - anarchist/surrealist zine of poetry and thought from Denman Island. This issue includes poems by Ron Sakolsky, Sheila Nopper, Monte Merrick and articles on the Vancouver Yuppies (Bob Sarti) Cumberland Coal Miners and Mayday (Ron Sakolsky) and the Rebel Worker (Larry Gambone). Available for donation from Ron Sakolsky, A-4062 Wren Road, Denman Island V0R1T0

FUN IS FREE PRESS - Fall-Winter 2007 is a catalogue of anarchist/surrealist poetry, surrealist games, stamp carvings, anarchist cards, vegan cooking, and a LOT more, all done by anarchist poet Paula Belina c/o Pedestrian Productions, Box 8501 Victoria BC V8W 3S1 also www.liberatethemarvelous.blogspot.com

COMMUNICATING VESSELS 18 - Summer '07 – Surrealist zine from Portland. Includes Eugene Nelson's story "The Dying Wobbly", an interview with Wob Surrealist Morgan Miller, the life of Kenneth Rexroth, the adventures of B. Traven, review of Franklin Rosemont's "Joe Hill" and more. \$3.00 #127 – 3527 NE 15th St., Portland OR 97211

PARSER - May 2007 is a journal of poetry and poetics, edited by anarchist poets Roger Farr and Reg Johanson. This issue includes works by the editors as well as Alice Becker-Ho, Rita Wong, Alfred Bonnano and Vancouver poet Dorothy Trujillo Lusk. \$12.00 Box 2684 Terminal Stn, Vancouver BC, V6B 3W8

TOTAL LIBERTY - Summer 2007 Includes articles by Colin Johnson, Jonathan Simcock, Dick Frost, Peter Good, Patrick Cullen, Brian Morris, Richard Griff in. Topics include anarchism and Islam, student radicalism, myths, language, rights and wrongs.

TOTAL LIBERTY - Winter 2007 includes Harold Barclay, Joe Peacott, Keith Hebden, and Larry Gambone. Articles on "Were the Indus Valley and Middle Niger Cities

Anarchist?", "The Drug War Is The Health of the State" "Anarchy In Fashion", Send £1 to: 47 High St. Belper, Derby DE56 1GF UK

ABOLISHING THE BORDERS FROM BELOW - Issue 26 is an anarchist journal which translates articles from Eastern Europe. Find out what our comrades in Poland, Russia, Czech Republic, Serbia etc are doing. This issue includes articles on anti-Semitism, resistance to the G8 summit, anarcha-feminism in Croatia, the Budapest Riots and more. \$3.00 Order from AK Press www.akpress.org

THE MATCH! #105 – is still going in spite of Fred's illness – and is as good as ever. No pub. exposes statist idiocy and cop brutishness better than the Match! See "Evil Empire Notes" and "Who the Police Beat". Also a review of Genet's The Balcony, scores of letters and a free facsimile edition of Hypolite Havel's 1916 paper REVOLT. Donation, say \$3.00 a copy, (no cheques!) from Box 3012, Tucson AZ 85702

ANCHORAGE ANARCHY 10 - includes "What is the Matter With Kids Today?", "Alaska Notes", "War against the World." \$1.00 Box 230332 Anchorage AK 99523-0332 USA

FREEDOM—oldest English language anarchist publication, bi-weekly, news and analysis for £1 plus postage from 84B Whitechapel High St. London E1 7QX UK

THE NORTHEASTERN ANARCHIST - Issue 12 Winter 2007 Articles on Zanon, land resistance in Korea, an anarchist study of the Iroquois polity, anarchists and the French Popular Front, Solidarity and the Six Nations land struggle and the experiences of the Montpellier Downtown Workers Union. \$4.00 Box 230685 Boston MA 02123

THE WOBBLY DISPATCH - issue 5 #2 April 2007. From the Edmonton IWW. Haymarket and Mayday, report on Canadian IWW Convention, Notes from Argentina and more. Send donation to:

IWW, Box 75175 Edmonton AB T6E 6K1

CUNNINGHAM AMENDMENT - hilarious zine done on a letter press, for "revolutionary acts of joy" for £1 from: 1005 Huddersfield Rd., Bradford BD12 8LP UK

REBEL STEW - Fall '07 articles revealing what "the Founding Fathers" were all about, FEMA, feminists in the military, Peter Gelderloos and the Spanish cops, the eminent domain hustle, obedience to authority Edward Abbey and lots of letters. Donation: Box 2351 Falls Church, VI 22042

Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed #64 - Well; here it is again another 80 pages of pulp fiber, they do have an electronic version so this should cut down on the environmental waste; at least there is some improvement here. So they say: "An anarchist intentionality is thus an exterior intentionality, defined by the exteriority of the desire that motivates it in relation to systems of hierarchy and control. And the maintenance of intentional exteriority is the lynchpin of avoiding recuperation." I think I just got a headache. If you want more of this; Subscription \$20 to: C.A.L. Press, P.O. Box 3448, Berkeley, CA 94703

www.anarchymag.org

Hobnail Review Sept 2007 #11 – A lively review of radical and anarchist literature, Zines and events. Also contents include reprints, like Benjamin R. Tucker on anarchism and copyright, and discussion like Paul Petard on copyright.

“Copyright is a monopoly. In fact the whole notion of intellectual property rights is quite nonsensical and arrogant. After all just because you claim to have thought of a particular thing first why should you be allowed to monopolise it? And how can you prove the idea or thing came into your head first and was in nobody else's head anywhere in the world? In fact everybody might have secretly thought up the idea already but just hadn't told you. Thinking up an idea., or in my case a cartoon, doesn't even require any effort; it might just happen by accident while in a daydream, while I'm worrying about things. Even the meritocratic superstition that effort ought to receive a reward doesn't apply in this circumstance. So yes, I'm in favour of anti-copyright and in favour of creating wealth.”

They say freely distributed but send a donation to Hobnail Press Box 208, 235r Earls Court Road, London SW5 9FE UK - hobnailpress@btinternet.com

Cracks In The Concrete - Summer 2007 A great little zine produced by Luke Romano with an anarcho-pacifist slant. In this issue Government is Violence, What are We?, Why I Hate the word “Hippie”, Goodriddancehighschool. He also produces a great CD. Send this guy a donation to; Radical Rabbit Distro, 101B Cooper St., Westmount NJ 08108 USA - TreeHugger029@aol.com
www.freewebs.com/radicalrabbitdistro
www.myspace.com/radicalrabbitdistro

Consensus/Democracy

I started out to write a review of Consensus by Peter Gelderloos, published by See Sharp Press but ended up with this essay instead. Peter's book is interesting, thoughtful and useful for anyone involved in consensus but I really feel we need to get a better understanding of how consensus should fit into organizational processes.

~~ Dick Martin

What we call democracy can be structured in many ways so that it uses different processes or formulas of representation. These different processes may, in degrees, make some democracies seem better than others or that people have more of a say in one arrangement than another. So long as governance or political control is the main agenda of democracy it serves social authority. This is a power relationship where people vote for leaders, this is the basis of politics, it is not a shared process, but an imposition on the freedoms in society; the value of egalitarian ideals are lost because the practice of democracy is a power process. So democracy is debased by the process of determining who is going to have power rather than founded upon practical things like what people can do together or how to share resources. In the end democratic power serves the interests of social authority by centralizing around an executive or leadership.

Thus, as it is twisted, democracy serves the interests of the modern state and corporate economy well, it provides an adaptable social authority that can conform to all the

changes that take place in a modern dynamic social economy and still maintain control. It is not who runs the system that we have to decide; but how can we evolve away from a power based process toward one of freedom. Liberating the personal conscience, and creating freedom for multilateral peer to peer participation. It just happens to be that democracy has to survive in wealth driven power culture; this is what has to change.

Consensus in name has increasingly become recognized as an alternative decision making process to democracy or majority rule power; but it is a process that is abused and misunderstood to the extent that it can form an inverted democracy which is really a dictatorship of a minority. Although some people believe (even have such religious beliefs) the consensus process is the answer to everything; it must be recognized that there are limitations and appropriate circumstances. It should be realized that there are various ways of using consensus which may be suited to specific situations, but it is not a replacement for democracy.

It is important to approach the issue of consensus with caution as it can become as cold and manipulative as any other power based system of group decision making. So the essential question about any group process asks; is it power based or not, definitely applies to consensus. One of the mistakes people make is to use consensus as a means to shape control of social organization or as a tool for factional interests. This happens typically when people relate to consensus as a way to achieve political objectives rather than a process to synthesize new solutions. Power process is a typical scenario when the consensus process is mismatched to a larger size group than is appropriate.

The most often occurring problem with consensus involves withholding agreement, or as it is called, blocking by individuals and small groups to prevent a decision. Discussing and exploring the concerns of individuals and minorities is very important to the consensus group process, as well as democracy and is one of the things consensus does the best. It is also the place where the process falls down the worst. To really work consensus requires participants to adopt a bigger perspective and focus on group needs.

One cannot simply replace democracy with consensus, first because consensus does not exclude democracy, but is actually part of the democratic process and second consensus in character serves a different level of group organization and social process. It would not be inconsistent to use consensus in certain areas of organization and more formal democracy in other areas, the two processes should be seen as working together.

Many of the tracts that have been written about consensus talk of process and facilitation and go on and on about techniques and methods to make it work. Group decision making needs to be a natural process that isn't dependent upon expert leadership, and complex processes. If you need experts to make consensus or any decision making process work, democratic or otherwise, then the process has failed.

Consensus works well in small groups where 5 to 7 is the optimum size, but somewhat larger may still be viable although for larger or more diverse groups a more formal form of democracy is better. Consensus is really the =>

fine structure of decision making, when issues concern the community level the consensus groups should come together to form larger (coarse structure) democratic entities. These consensus based groups are commonly referred as affinity groups which really are the basic unity of anarchist social organization. For example in a neighborhood or intentional community there would be affinity groups which would be responsible for specific projects but when the entire community needed to be involved in a decision the community could use democratic process involving representatives from the affinity groups. Thus any number of small consensus affinity groups could join together to form a larger democratic plenary, or represent themselves to a democratic federation. It is essential to see that consensus and democracy work together not that one should replace the other. DM



Fun Is Free Press

– handmade zines, comix, blockprints, collage, spoken poetry by Paula Belina

FUN IS FREE PRESS is now the umbrella press for zines I make/will make as well as others who connect with me on vision inspired by surrealist and anarchist notions of liberation of self & others, accessibility, creativity which moves beyond boundaries and challenges them. Work to have fun, have fun working for real change in the world around us. <http://liberatethemarvelous.blogspot.com/>
c/o Box 8501, Victoria BC V8W 3S1 Canada

Letters

Dear Dick, Pat, Kevin & Larry,

Thanks for the latest ATN! Always a pleasure Here is our latestest project, the first issue of Going Postal! A zine to explore different aspects of zine & mail art history and to give active participants in these overlapping movements a place to voice their ideas & opinions. - Kris Mininger

From an article in Going Postal by Dale Speirs

called Zines Past & Present which ends:

Don't rely on the courts to protect your freedom of speech. Any barrister can tell you how arbitrary judges and juries can be. Electronic text can be wipe automatically by computers, but paper requires a physical search,

something impossible to do if the documents are widely scattered and still being reprinted. That will be one of the great values of the Papernet.

(Well, the present zine networks are not exactly like the samizdat press which was the clandestine copying and distribution of government-suppressed literature in Soviet-bloc countries. But the samizdat demonstrates how survivable zine networks are even under very authoritarian governments, it creates a network that is embedded in the social resistance to authority – DM)

You can get a copy of this interesting new zine by sending a donation to: Going Postal!, Calle Obispo 4B, Plasencia 10600, Cáceres, Spain

A JOURNEY THROUGH THREE ANARCHIST NEWS PROVIDERS:

Let's call these three the 'Holy Trinity'(HT) . What they are is an anarchist attempt to provide at least an internet alternative to the daily barrage of news and pseudo-news that everyone is exposed to. How do they stack up ? While the dream of an 'anarchist daily' in the world of print seems long ago and far away there are numerous internet efforts that attempt to fill the same need. How successful are they ? let's look at the three which Molly feels are the best of the bunch:

A-Infos <http://www.ainfos.ca/>

Anarkismo <http://www.anarkismo.net/>

LibCom <http://libcom.org/>

Not that these are the only anarchist news feeds around. It is just that they are the most prolific and consistent of those which stand in the "social anarchist" description. At least one other newsfeed is on the internet that can equal at least one or two of the above for sheer volume, but it too often shades off into the "anarcho-insanity" so prevalent in the USA and is thus not worthy of presentation to ordinary people who might want to see what anarchism is all about. "Social anarchist" means that the site is consistently "anarchist" without any bows to either so-called right wing anarchism nor social democracy masquerading as "anti-authoritarianism" that promotes little but "guilt politics" . It also means that they are "social" ie they do not stumble into cultism nor glorification of mindless attempts at juvenile terrorism. it means that they see anarchism as the creation of a majority of ordinary people and not that of self-appointed "saviors".

The general layout of the three feeds varies tremendously. A-Infos presents its stories as a simple text list each day. Only titles are given to alert the reader about the context of the stories so linked. The site is void of graphics or any other "bells and whistles". Anarkismo is quite different, being laid out in the usual Indymedia format with a newsfeed on the right, navigation aids and special features on the left, bracketing a main story section in the centre. The newsfeed articles are presented as title-only links, but the main stories have at least a short leader so the reader can get the feel of the bulk of the rest of an article. There is a limited but well designed use of graphic content on the main page and in a few of the newsfeed articles. =>

Anarkismo's left sidebar contains search, comments, a photo gallery, archives, events, links to articles in the 'Other Libertarian Press', and links to what is somewhat inaccurately called 'The Non-Anarchist Press' (all of them articles reprinted from said sources in the pages of Anarkismo). The layout of LibCom is the most complex of all, perhaps far too complex. The main page is divided up into a number of boxes that are hardly straightforward-library, organize, history, news, new articles, sectors, thought, forums and, of course, an almost useless "navigation". The organization is about as clear as the manual for a piece of imported electronics. The categories overlap, to put it mildly. The "tags" section differs from that found on other pages of the site. Five out of eleven items in the buttons on the top don't work except as invitations to search. The bottom row of the upper buttons draws down menus that are partially obscured by the main boxes on the page.

The LibCom site is certainly the largest and most comprehensive, and, if you want to explore, holds a wealth of hidden treasure that is great fun to discover. This is the best site for those who like to screw around and press mouse buttons to follow links. For quick and easy reference, however, Anarkismo is the best, being the easiest to navigate with the fewest hidden subworlds. Navigation around A-Infos is pretty Spartan. You can sort by language or chronology. The search function of A-Infos is similarly sparse, using a simple Google function. Perhaps that is all that is needed in the vast majority of cases.

Speaking of 'language(s)' LibCom is entirely in English. This contrasts with A-Infos and Anarkismo. Both are multilingual in all the major European languages, including Turkish. The difference is that A-Infos has a few posts in Russian while Anarkismo has a large number in Greek. It takes a bit of effort to make a website present posts in a script other than the usual Roman one. A-Infos is probably more consistent in their multilingual policy, but Anarkismo sometimes goes down some interesting roads with stories in Hebrew or Arabic script and even some in scripts I cannot recognize (Korean?, Japanese ?). I await with bated breath stories in Hindi or Thai script or perhaps Ethiopian. Fun indeed, but not of much use unless one has serious expansion plans in the future.

In terms of timeliness A-Infos is the best, followed by LibCom and then Anarkismo. This may be because of the longer history and better establishment of A-Infos, with more contributors to draw from. It may also, however, be due to the choice of subject matter. All these sites are social anarchist ("class struggle" in the present fashionable idiom) so a lot of 'fashion anarchism'(let alone "anarcho-insanity") is off the table. LibCom's coverage is the broadest, taking in a lot of class struggle that has little obvious anarchist content. Both A-Infos and Anarkismo contain a lot of what be termed "anarcho-trivia", and it may be that ignoring this (or including other sections of LibCom outside of the "news" section) would change the perceived picture and make LibCom the most timely site.

The depth of coverage is perhaps best on LibCom, and their library section is a true joy. The coverage on A-Infos is deliberately brief as its avowed purpose is to be simply a current events newswire. Anarkismo is somewhere in

between, but it is the newest of the three and may become more comprehensive in the future. They should perhaps consider a library section such as LibCom has.

The interactivity of the sites also varies. A-Infos has no public comments. Anarkismo allows comments, but with heavy moderation. At LibCom you have to register as an user, but then the comments are pretty free wheeling. The forum section of LibCom is one of its great hidden secrets. The offerings range from the truly intelligent to the truly amusing with far less of the usual lefty/movement cant than is usual in such an online forum. What has happened there is that there is an online forum where ordinary people who have sympathy for the ideals of anarchism are allowed to speak their mind and actually say what they feel in response to the leftoids. This can lead to some interesting exchanges that have pissed off many amongst the conservative "paleolithic left" who have gone to LibCom and been offput by the fact that the people there don't speak in politically correct rhetoric. All the more reason to recommend such a site.

Summing up, each of the sites has its own strengths and weaknesses. For the "daily anarchist news" the place to be is, of course, A-Infos. For following such things over time, for greater depth of coverage and for a broader look at class struggle outside of the limited anarchist scene LibCom is the place. While all three sites are committed to a social anarchist viewpoint only Anarkismo is committed to a specific form of organization-platformism. This focus is marred by the fact that they have no obvious list of links and contacts, something that should be de rigueur for organization builders. Neither LibCom nor A-Infos has this level of specific commitment. Only A-Infos, out of the three, has a real links section, and that is in grievous need of updating.

So how do you choose the best site ? The answer is that you don't. My favourite is LibCom, but it is hardly the site that I look at on a day to day basis. Only when I am in the mood to explore. The other two I consult pretty well every day. This probably reflects their simplicity and straightforward presentation. Are any of the three the great outlet to the "general population" ? Obviously not. They are all much too much self-referential even if they are far from the childish cheerleading of some feeds. There is a difference between adult and not being offensive and actually being popular. The actual formula for such a site has yet to be discovered. The minute that you see a (non-vegan) cooking section on an anarchist site you will know that such a site is being constructed.

Waiting for Mr. Goodsite: Molly

BLOGS

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