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Revolutionary Anarchist No. 3, July, 1973

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needs rather than attacking existing controls. Such an approach in itself was refreshing.

The panel on the second day continued with the same approach. Dimitri Roussopoulos, Editor of *Our Generation*, examined the historical and philosophical implications of self-government on a community level. Marty Corbin described intentional community as it is thought of and attempted at the Catholic Worker, as well as his experience with the Libertarian Press. Marjaleena Repo, of the publication *Transformation*, spoke about the formation and liberation of community on a neighborhood level.

One issue new to me and of general interest is the struggle of Martin Sostre. Sostre is a Puerto Rican black who operated a revolutionary bookshop in Buffalo. When disturbances broke out in that city in the summer of 1964, he was arrested for his alleged participation in them, and received a lengthy prison sentence. Because of his continued militancy in the confines of the prison, he has spent almost eight years in solitary confinement. Some extremely moving excerpts from Sostre's recent letters were read aloud at the close of the conference. He is able to receive mail, and interested people were asked to write individual letters expressing their fraternal greetings to him at the jail which is located at 135 State St., Auburn, N.Y. 13201. (Further information can be obtained from the Martin Sostre Defense Committee, Box 839, Ellicott Sta., Buffalo, N.Y. 14205).

So soon afterwards, it is too early to assess the effects of the conference. An immediate project is a library making available anarchist literature in Toronto. (For further information, write: Toronto Anarchist Group, c/o P.O. Box 429, Sta. E, Toronto, Canada.)

Briefly, it seemed quite clear to me again that people with self-control do quite spontaneously find harmony with each other.

Report, Anarchist Meeting \\ by Andy Chrusciel

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In Toronto on the first weekend in May, at a conference put together by the Toronto Anarchist Group, a remarkably obvious amount of thinking went on. The publicity brochure stated worker control as the theme for the first day, and community control for the second. The themes constituted a focal point for a wider range of subjects discussed, both in the scheduled talks and in the informal conversations.

As remarkable as the depth and scope of the verbalized thinking was the distinct impression that all of the approximately one hundred people present were thinking for themselves whether or not they spoke.

In his keynote speech, Murray Bookchin, author of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, focused on the assumptions which various libertarian movements hold in common, assessed the climate of opinion generally, and arrived at a need for coordination and, indeed, "organization" among people who believe in freedom. He suggested non-hierarchically structured affinity groups as an acceptable form of "organization." With a few well-chosen discouraging words for anarcho-chaotics and dogmatic ideologues, he emphasized the need for self-discipline and a wide perspective both on a personal level and on a group level.

In the panel on worker control, Goddard Graves described the IWW, of which he is 1972 General Secretary. Howard Buchbinder of the *Our Generation* staff dealt with the problems unique to professional people. Heather Beyer described issues unique to women in the context of the direction and function of a center called Women's Place with which she is associated. Each of the speakers explored areas of need, and ways for people to meet those

Taking the Left to Task \\ by Dan Raphael

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I want to share briefly with you an account of just a few of many experiences I've had while active in the movement. They are only now falling into place in terms of my own consciousness. A pattern emerges, and it is a pattern that I find widespread among the rival organizations of the left.

After several years of belonging to various organizations with which I had no real contact, I was recruited to the Young Socialist Alliance. I had some reservations about the organization but was told, "If you find you disagree, you can always quit later." There were a number of things that began to bother me: the children of a couple who were leading members of our branch seemed unhappy; the little girl was treated gruffly by her father. I recall writing a poem about the incident at the time, it disturbed me so much. The little girl's tears seemed to say more to me about the future than our discussion groups and *Militant* sales drives.

The way another comrade liked to order people around bothered me. I thought of Stalin. But what could I say? He didn't do anything, so far as I was aware, that was formally wrong.

I recall asking another comrade, Jon, whether we couldn't recruit homosexual people to our organization. I did not know at the time of Y.S.A.'s exclusion policy against gay people, and he didn't volunteer to tell me about it. Instead his response was, "It's too bad about the way they're treated, but we just can't have them in the organization. The working class just wouldn't understand."

Our first election of Executive Committee members was another incident that bothered me. The Socialist Workers Party/Y.S.A. leaders of our branch nominated each other. I nominated a newly recruited member. Then Paul, a member of the outgoing Executive Committee who had been re-nominated, gave a short speech about electing the most experienced, tried and true members. The fellow

I nominated, by now thoroughly intimidated, withdrew from running.

On another occasion I went up to the Vanguard Bookstore in British Columbia with some other comrades to celebrate the anniversary of the Cuban Revolution with members of the League for Socialist Action, the Canadian counterpart of the S.W.P. I recall looking at their books and discovering pornography on their stalls. When I asked about it, I was told that it was necessary "in order to attract (presumably male) workers into the store." There was no talk at all of sexism in the organization when I belonged, and no one did anything to raise my consciousness on this issue. Again, this was an incident where I had a bad feeling, but I couldn't put it into words that could make sense even to myself.

I eventually joined the International Socialists, serving for a time on the Executive Committee of our branch. I attended a meeting of the I.S. National Committee in Oakland, California, because of my interest in the gay question. There I heard people who did not hesitate for a moment to say that it was bad for women to be submissive and passive and men to be dominant, tell me and others in arguments that the organization should not officially take the stand that "Gay Is Good," because questions of sexuality are personal, not a proper subject of consideration for a political organization, and the organization had no business saying what was good and/ or bad sex. I was told that-apparently unlike all other aspects of human behavior-sex was not the proper interest of a revolutionary socialist organization. Today, several years later, I can look back upon all of these experiences and see a common thread. They are, at root, the expression of two things: 1) a formalistic separation of the personal from the political, and 2) the abstraction-and subsequent obstruction-of revolutionary struggle.

In point of fact, if revolution is not personal then it is nonexistent, because revolution is, finally, for and by the individual human being, working in concert with other human beings. It is not irrelevant or simply slanderous to say to someone, "I agree with your

weeding out and make some decisions about what to carry. We think our political and women's sections are weak right now and need bolstering. We also hope to get together a good periodical selection, get together things which aren't usually available in any one store."

A leaflet put out by Red and Black asks those coming into the store to criticize the stock and to make suggestions as to what should be carried. A special order service is also offered for books or materials not on the shelves.

The five collective members, along with some volunteer labor, operate the store, signing up for shifts. However, no one will be paid for some time. The idea is to pay off all outstanding debts and achieve a margin of monetary safety. Stan Iverson spoke of the Id bookstore, a defunct venture similar to Red and Black, where he used to work: "The Id was started on \$50. As long as income kept up with payments on debts we were all right. But when the economy got bad and sales dropped off, we couldn't keep up."

Red and Black hopes to avoid the same problem. So all the collective members will be working apart from the bookstore to support themselves.

Once on a firm financial base the collective will draw subsistence wages from the store's operation. The possibility of opening a second store on Capitol Hill or downtown has been considered if finances allow.

How has the response been in the first weeks of operation? "Very positive," says Barbara Seely. "People come in and ask how long we've been here, tell us they are glad to see a store like ours. Business has been good and we don't even have a sign up yet."

Red and Black's hours are 10 to 10 Monday through Saturday. It's open, waiting for browsing, discussions, coffee and oh yes, that occasional purchase.

***Red and Black Books: An alternative to that warehouse feeling* \\ by Shawn Crowley**

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Browsing through a bookstore and making that occasional purchase can be an enjoyable pastime. Usually. But not if the bookstore resembles a warehouse with the atmosphere of a fast service hamburger franchise.

Happily, there are a few alternatives to this sort of establishment. Even more happily one such alternative has just opened on the Ave. Red and Black Books, at 4736 University Way, already seems to be carving out a place in the community for itself.

The feeling as you walk in the door is one of casualness. People sitting, drinking coffee, discussing politics...several children and a dog in the back room playing while browsers studiously move along the shelves... posters and buttons to aid Wounded Knee and marijuana legalization.

As the name of the store might imply, Red and Black Books is an endeavor as much political as mercantile. The store is owned and operated by a collection of five people, Barbara Seely, Stan Iverson, Lynne Thorndeycraft, Paul Zilsel and Karen Saugstad.

Politically, the bookstore will be "non-sectarian left" and will carry literature from all segments of the left.

"We feel there is a need for a broader political bookstore on the left, rather than for just one party or viewpoint," said Paul Zilsel. "We're really the only bookstore in the Seattle area doing that."

By no means, however, is the store's stock entirely given over to political material. The majority of it spans all the subjects found in non-political stores. Psychology, literature, photography, science fiction, occult and children's books (a fine stock of Wizard of Oz books) among others are well represented.

"Our current stock was purchased from a store which closed in Bellingham," explained Barbara Seely, "so we have to do some

ideas, but you behave like a Stalin." Liberation has everything to do with what we do in our daily lives and how we do it. The two leaders of Y.S.A. whose little girl is wretched are creating a future far different from the one they give lip-service to.

Self-awareness and self-knowledge are not unimportant, nor can they be dismissed by the words of a haughty theoretician as "psychologism," "petty bourgeois self-indulgence," or "mysticism." The fact is that there are many people on the left who are drawn into radical politics by a desire to cover over or compensate for personal/social problems by striving for power, which is not the same as working for liberation, for in seeking power, they walk all over other people. Those who oppress others will never themselves be free. It is, therefore, at least as important for us to be aware of and sensitive to our motives, feelings, and reactions as it is to be able to verbalize and understand the most current exposition of Marxism or other revolutionary ideas.

If people concerned for fundamental social change cannot even speak to each other in non-oppressive, non-intimidating ways, then "revolution" will remain simply a struggle to see who has power. And power-as history has woefully shown us-does not equal liberation.

Caption for cartoon: Speech balloon for image of Trotsky...

The REAL truth of Leninism was revealed when we slaughtered the Kronstadt Soviet and the Anarchist-Communist peasants of the Ukraine in 1921.

Yet fifty years later our faithful followers continue the alienating hierarchy within their own organization and the corresponding manipulative practice: "leading" the masses They only reinforce (by presenting a false form of opposition) the capitalist system which still reigns everywhere.

***Another Letter to the Left* \ by Dan Raphael**

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While we're all striving to bring about major change in the institutions that have conditioned us, we want there to be some qualitative transformation in our lives. Not only do we desire to change the world around us, but we feel the urge for change—for liberation—in the value of personal daily existence.

We know that the two are really one, for there's no society apart from the "internal" life of people. Just as it's true that our lives are the product of the many institutions that have shaped us, so it's also true that those institutions are the product and reflection of what we are. We affirm the need for revolutionary change in our institutions because we see that they are fundamentally destructive to human freedom and happiness. We see the need for revolutionary change in our lives because we too are flawed and feel the urge to break out of the inward bonds that restrain and deform us.

Therefore, we view this process as dialectical: at once both one and not one. For there to be viable change, it must be total and comprehensive; and that means it must be both inward and outward.

To facilitate our growth away from sexism, away from racism, away from fear, we need to be sure that the organizational and institutional forms we create encourage democracy, freedom, and collective action based upon personal development. The institutions we create and in which we function determine to a great extent the quality of our perceptions and our ability to ascertain what is real and important, as opposed to what is illusory.

Since August 1965, I've been a member of and cooperated with an entire host of organizations holding to various ideologies and engaged in different projects. I've experienced, since that time, a wide range of ideas and actions that have been destructive to the values of life, the values of liberation. This is a selected account of only a few of these experiences, designed to enhance our awareness of what promotes human freedom and what retards it. I've

from across the street from where the film is said to have been taken.

The police were clearly out to get Sostre. Prior to his arrest they had harassed him, visiting the shop and ripping notices from the community bulletin board and posters from the windows. Three weeks after his arrest, but prior to his indictment, Frank Felicetta, Buffalo Chief of Police, testified in Washington D.C. at a Senate Judicial Subcommittee investigating city riots, that Sostre ran a school to teach the making and use of Molotov cocktails. It was also alleged that Sostre was making from 2,000 to 10,000 dollars a week from illegal drug transactions.

Martin Sostre, because of his work for the local community and a previous jail sentence for selling narcotics, was an obvious choice for a frame-up. Williams received money from the police and charges of theft were dropped for his testimony. The Buffalo police had told Williams that they considered Sostre to be "the cause" of riots there in 1967.

The new evidence of Williams's false testimony has been presented in the Federal Court but a decision to release Sostre on bail and grant a new trial is not expected for two or three months."

In the meantime Sostre remains in solitary confinement in Unit 14 at Clinton Prison. The Martin Sostre Defense Committee say he "has been segregated for eight months under the most cruel conditions imaginable." The Defense Committee wants letters of protest at the continual harassment to be sent to Commissioner Peter Preiser, State Campus, Albany, N.Y. 12226. Letters of support and money can be sent to Martin Sostre, P.O. Box B, Danemora, N.Y., 12929. They also urge comrades to write to Judge John T. Curtin, U.S. Courthouse, Buffalo, N.Y., 14201, urging that he drop all charges against Martin Sostre and order his release from prison. Carbon copies of these letters should be sent to Sostre at the above address.

people can do and build together, once they are able to combine efforts and resources on the basis of common interest, rationality and creativity.

We love our Marxist sisters and all our sisters everywhere, and have no interest in disassociating ourselves from their constructive struggles. However, we reserve the right to criticize their politics when we feel that they are obsolete or irrelevant or inimical to the welfare of womankind.

As Anarcho-Feminists, we aspire to have the courage to question and challenge absolutely everything—including, when it proves necessary, our own assumptions.

The Anarcho-Feminist Manifesto first appeared in *Siren—A Journal of Anarcho-Feminism*. 713-W. Armitage, Chicago, Ill., 60614.

Free Martin Sostre

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Martin G. Sostre, a 50-year old Puerto Rican Anarchist, was convicted of selling heroin and sentenced to 31 to 41 years in prison.

Five years after this conviction, Arto Williams, whose testimony put Martin in prison, has admitted that his evidence was false and that he helped the police in a deliberate frame-up.

At the time of his conviction Sostre was running an Afro-American bookshop in Buffalo, New York. The police got Williams to give Sostre 15 dollars at his shop for so-called safe-keeping. Sostre had done similar favors for Williams before, but this time Williams had heroin on him, which was later produced as evidence, as having been bought from Sostre.

The police also say they have film of this transaction, but so far it has not been produced. The defense claim—with supporting evidence from a film-maker—is that even with a high quality zoom lens, it would be possible to see only about one foot inside the store

encountered many, many people who unthinkingly marry, adopt standard male/female roles and whose children are growing up to be unhappy and wretched people. We all know of such instances. Accordingly, as valid as such examples are, I've chosen to describe various personal anecdotes of a bit different character.

In late 1966, I joined the Young Socialist Alliance, the Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist youth affiliate of the Socialist Worker's Party. I was recruited at a party in Seattle which was attended by people representing various political tendencies. I became involved in a discussion about Cuba with one fellow and rapidly found myself arguing with four or five people. I was hesitant about responding to the recruiting pitch given to me, but agreed to join after I was told, "If you find you disagree, you can always quit later."

My being cajoled into joining Y.S.A. without having any overall grasp of the politics and policies of the organization, I've since found, is widely characteristic of the level of Y.S.A. recruitment. Since the object of Y.S.A. is to build its organization and provide new members for its parent body—S.W.P.—and not primarily to develop the independent, critical capabilities of people who are receptive to radical ideas, it is important that new members "understand enough, but not too much."

This manipulative attitude of the dual member Y.S.A./S.W.P.ers who dominate the Y.S.A. probably underlay other things that I discovered later. For instance, the Y.S.A. constitution—mentioned to me before I joined—was never produced to me or anyone I knew in our branch, although I repeatedly asked about it and was told it would be forthcoming. It is incredible to think that an organization such as Y.S.A., which gave all manner of lip-service to internal democracy, did not even provide its members with copies of the organizational set-up and rules, whereby the reins of power would be clearly outlined. But then I discovered, with time, that there is nothing particularly democratic about Y.S.A., since the last several oppositional tendencies within the organization have been expelled.

While I was a member of Y.S.A., I learned something I later was to find characteristic of most “revolutionary” political theory and especially practice: a clear line exists between personal life and political activity, being validly crossed only when the former adversely affects the latter. Accordingly, it was not appropriate to say anything about one Y.S.A.er’s abominable treatment of his wife—that’s “personal” (when I was in Y.S.A. there was no mention of sexism—this concept was too advanced for the “vanguard” party. In fact the Vanguard Bookstore in Vancouver, B.C. had pornography on its shelves next to Lenin and Trotsky. The reason? “To attract workers into the store”). When I later told one of my comrades that I found it alienating to be in Y.S.A. he stared blankly and said he didn’t understand what I meant. At various times he talked about the alienating effects of capitalism in taking from the worker his/her product, and actually turning it against him/her. But my comrade couldn’t understand it when I told him that my product—political work—was being used in an alienating way: to reinforce the power and prestige of the “tops.” For him oppression could only exist “out there.” The needs, the hopes, the fears of the individual were valid and real only when they related to recruiting new members, selling newspapers—doing the work of building the organization.

There were other things kept concealed from the membership. I once asked in all innocence why the Y.S.A. didn’t try to organize homosexual people to the organization. Motivated by a naive but heartfelt notion that the Y.S.A. ought to welcome all oppressed people to its ranks, I wasn’t aware of Y.S.A.’s policy of exclusion of gay people, nor of its history of expelling comrades publicly exposed as gay. My comrade Jon Britton did nothing to enlighten me about these matters; he sympathized, but “We can’t recruit them because it would turn off the workers.”

It was several years later that I, along with the Gay Liberation Front in Seattle, learned of this policy. When the G.L.F. formally denounced the Y.S.A.’s sexism and broke off all relations with

attempts, internal and external, to interfere with people’s private lives and freely-chosen cooperative ventures.

The world obviously cannot survive many more decades of rule by gangs of armed males calling themselves governments. The situation is insane, ridiculous and even suicidal. Whatever its varying forms of justifications, the armed State is what is threatening all of our lives at present. The State, by its inherent nature, is really incapable of reform. True socialism, peace and plenty for all, can be achieved only by people themselves, not by representatives ready and able to turn guns on all who do not comply with State directives. As to how we proceed against the pathological State structure, perhaps the best word is to outgrow rather than overthrow. This process entails, among other things, a tremendous thrust of education and communication among all peoples. The intelligence of womankind has at last been brought to bear on such oppressive male inventions as the church and the legal family; it must now be brought to re-evaluate the ultimate stronghold of male domination, the State.

While we recognize important differences in the rival systems, our analysis of the evils of the State must extend to both its communist and its capitalist versions.

We intend to put to the test the concept of freedom of expression, which we trust will be incorporated in the ideology of the coming Socialist Sisterhood which is destined to play a determining role in the future of the race, if there really is to be a future.

We are all socialists. We refuse to give up this pre-Marxist term which has been used as a synonym by many anarchist thinkers. Another synonym for anarchism is libertarian socialism, as opposed to Statist and authoritarian varieties. Anarchism (from the Greek *anarchos*—without ruler) is the affirmation of human freedom and dignity expressed in a negative, cautionary term signifying that no person should rule or dominate another person by force or threat of force. Anarchism indicates what people should not do to one another. Socialism, on the other hand, means all the groovy things

We do not believe, as some now affirm, that the splintering of the Women's Movement means the end to all of our revolutionary effectiveness. No! The spirit of the women is just too large to be guided and manipulated by a "movement." Small groups, acting on their own and deciding upon their own actions, are the logical expression of revolutionary women. This, of course, does not preclude various groups working together on various projects or conferences.

To these ends, and because we do not wish to be out of touch with other women, we have organized as an autonomous collective within the Women's Center in Cambridge, Mass. The Women's Center functions as a federation; that is, not as a policy-making group, but as a center for various women's groups to meet. We will also continue to write statements like this one as we feel moved to. We would really like to hear from all and sundry!

ALL POWER TO THE IMAGINATION!

Red Rosia and Black Maria
Black Rose Anarcho-Feminists
c/o The Women's Center
Pleasant St., Cambridge, Mass.

Who we Are: An anarcho-feminist manifesto

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We consider Anarcho-Feminism to be the ultimate and necessary radical stance at this time in world history, far more radical than any form of Marxism.

We believe that a Woman's Revolutionary Movement must not mimic, but destroy, all vestiges of the male-dominated power structure, the State itself—with its whole ancient and dismal apparatus of jails, armies, and armed robbery (taxation); with all of its murder; with all of its grotesque and repressive legislation and military

it, the resultant barrage of criticism aimed at Y.S.A. by women's and gay organizations all over the country threatened to throw a wrench into Y.S.A.'s projected entry into women's organizations, and the issue of gay exclusion threatened to become an issue on the floor of the upcoming Y.S.A. convention. Consequently the line was abruptly changed—from above. There was no rank and file decision, because important decisions are not made by the rank and file in Y.S.A. The leaders of Y.S.A. did not admit that they had ever been in error—the line simply changed, garbed in suitably rhetorical language about "changes in objective historical conditions."

It is important to understand that the sort of garbage that I have been describing is characteristic not just of the Y.S.A./S.W.P., but of all the Leninist and social-democratic organizations, in varying degrees and in different ways. The dishonesty, manipulation, insensitivity and opportunism of "vanguard" parties flows directly from their ideology, which is based on the elect leading the relatively mindless mass, in order to change the external features of social organization. The corruption that lies at the heart of Leninist practice flows from the mechanical and manipulative view of people characteristic of Leninism. A party or organization is only capable of building a liberated world, a world without repression and oppression, if its members undergo transformation themselves. The dichotomy between personal and political life is a false one, save to indicate two aspects of one vital process.

Some years later, I had occasion to attend a beer drinking party with some friends at a home near Ft. Lewis, WA. What I wasn't aware of was that several people I didn't know were members of the Revolutionary Union (R.U.), a Maoist organization. When I made sarcastic remarks about Mao, China and Stalin, I was quickly told by the R.U.ers to shut up, in no uncertain terms. Later, all through the course of the evening, I was repeatedly threatened indirectly with several varieties of violence, by the R.U.ers and by one of their political contacts who had earlier told me that "Charles Manson was misunderstood."

Other people have not been as fortunate as I, in only being threatened with violence by the humorless, thin-lipped soldiers of the “vanguard” parties. I read recently of several different incidents where members of the Young Workers Liberation League (youth group of the Communist Party) had assaulted and beaten members of rival political tendencies.

The point of the foregoing examples is not simply to highlight the fact that various leftist tendencies deal with criticism and disagreement with various gangster methods. The larger significance is that their behavior today prefigures, in lesser degree, what their behavior would be tomorrow, when and if they were to gain any real power. Leninist organizations employ relatively mild methods for silencing dissent when they have little or no power in the society at large. Provided with an opportunity to rule, to be at the center of power, their methods have proved consistently less restrained in situations where they were ascendant.

What is of primary importance is not what we say, but what we do. If we talk about human dignity and everywhere around us in our daily lives we make people feel like dirt, then degradation is the reality we favor. If we talk about human freedom, but in our actual behavior we try to encourage people to be dependent upon us, to look to our intelligence and activity to solve their problems, then in reality we encourage stupidity and weakness.

In 1966–67, I attended a talk given by a woman who is to this day still high up in the Spartacist League, a Trotskyist organization. Her actions and her speech were acutely mechanical, lifeless, and dull. After her speech she asked for questions. There was a long and uncomfortable silence.

Finally one fellow asked, “How long did it take you to prepare that speech?” None of us could believe that she had spent the last several days preparing a talk delivered and written as though the last thing she ever wanted to do was to actually communicate with us. Later that night—or the next day, I can’t recall which—there was a party held to celebrate the anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

There is another entire radical tradition which has run counter to Marxist-Leninist theory and practice through all of modern radical history—from Bakunin to Kropotkin to Sophie Perovskaya to Emma Goldman to Errico Malatesta to Murray Bookchin—and that is Anarchism. It is a tradition less familiar to most radicals because it has consistently been distorted and misrepresented by the more highly organized State organizations and Marxist-Leninist organizations.

Anarchism is not a synonym for irresponsibility and chaos. Indeed, it offers meaningful alternatives to the out-dated organizational and policy-making practices of the rest of the Left. The basic anarchist form of organization is a small group, volitionally organized and maintained, which must work toward defining the oppression of its members and what form their struggle for liberation must take.

Organizing women, in the New Left and Marxist Left, is viewed as amassing troops for the Revolution. But we affirm that each woman joining in struggle IS the Revolution. WE ARE THE REVOLUTION!

We must learn to act on impulse, to abandon the restrictions on behavior that society has taught us to place on ourselves. The “movement” has been, for most of us, a thing removed from ourselves. We must no longer think of ourselves as members of a movement, but as INDIVIDUAL revolutionaries, cooperating. Two, three, five or ten such individual revolutionaries who know and trust each other intimately can carry out revolutionary acts and make our own policy. As members of a leaderless affinity group, each member participates on an equal level of power, thus negating the hierarchical function of power. DOWN WITH ALL BOSSES! Then we will not be lost in a movement where leadership determines for us the path the movement will take—we are our own movement, we determine our own movement’s direction. We have refused to allow ourselves to be directed, spoken for, and eventually cooled off.

a movement around single issue programs, thereby implying that “we must be patient until the masses’ consciousness is raised to our level.” How condescending to assume that an oppressed person must be told that she is oppressed! How condescending to assume that her consciousness will grow only by plodding along, from single-issue to next single issue.

In the past decade or more, women of the left were consistently intimidated out of fighting for our own liberation, avoiding the obvious fact that all women are an oppressed group. We are so numerous and dispersed that we have identified ourselves erroneously as members of particular classes on the basis of the class of “our men,” our fathers or our husbands. So women of the left, regarding ourselves as middle-class more than oppressed women, have been led to neglect engaging in our own struggle as our primary struggle. Instead, we have dedicated ourselves to fight on behalf of other oppressed peoples, thus alienating ourselves from our own plight. Many say that this attitude no longer exists in the women’s movement, that it originated only from the guilt trip of the white middle class male, but even today women in autonomous women’s movements speak of the need to “organize” working class women, without concentrating on the need to organize ourselves—as if we were already beyond that level. This does not mean (if we insist first and foremost on freeing ourselves) that we love our oppressed sisters any the less; on the contrary, we feel that the best way for us to be true to all liberation struggles is to accept and deal directly with our own oppression.

We do not believe that rejection of Marxist-Leninist analysis and strategy is by definition political naiveté. We do not believe it is politically naive to maintain the attitude that even a “democratically centralized” group could be considered the “vanguard” spokeswoman for us. The nature of groups concerned with “building” movements is: 1) to water down the “more extreme” dreams into “realistic” demands, and 2) to eventually become an organ of tyranny itself. No thanks!

A couple of workers—real, live workers!—also somehow ended up at the party. Their good-natured but reactionary sentiments immediately brought the same woman who had given the horrid speech to her feet, shrieking that they had been duped.

Perhaps it was the alcohol that allowed her to loosen up a bit. The point is that she belongs to and was high up in an organization in which she was very well-read and totally alienated. Given what was probably one of her few contacts with real working class people, all she could do was shout at them. Freedom is worthy of itself, but here was a concrete instance of one person, at least, who not only could have been happier, but also more politically effective, if her organization and the people she worked with served real human needs—not some abstract trigonometry of doctrinal purity in Trotskyist Heaven. What working’ people would want to join or identify with such organizations?

It was as a member of the Executive Committee (!) of the International Socialists’ Seattle branch that I finally realized the utter futility of trying to achieve fundamental change that didn’t reach into and profoundly affect the shape and quality of individual life. I saw in myself and my comrades the same acquisitiveness, competitiveness, petty jealousy, self-estrangement and intimidation that I saw everywhere around me in the form of capitalism.

I’ll cite just one more example, although there are many to choose from. For eight years I’ve known a fellow who recently joined the Communist Party in Tacoma. He had always prided himself on being an independent and fearless thinker, so I found it ludicrous and sad when he felt called upon to telephone his higher-up in the party for directions. His question?: “Would it be alright to insert the word ‘a’ into an article?” The article in question described a man as being of a particular Indian tribe, but without the article ‘a’ before the tribe. I pointed out that this was grammatically correct, but he felt called upon to check with his boss before making this insignificant move.

So we see that obedience to authority and ultra-bureaucracy are also the products of organizations based upon leader/follower dichotomies. Every organization I've seen and belonged to perpetuated this sort of anti-liberatory value-system and structure, including many I have not mentioned. The present is the seed of the future; in what we do today is contained the embryo of tomorrow.

The fact of the matter is that when the organizations we create are structured with hierarchical power avenues, we're building for a future class society. When we contribute to an atmosphere of academic imperiousness, in which we must cultivate a cult of well-read infallibility that robs us of our vulnerability and tenderness, we are creating and sustaining a value-system based on deceit and macho-politics.

There was a saying that used to be popular in early SDS, before it too became another assembly-line for little Leninist wind-up toys. It is a saying that, I think, sums up well what our attitude must be if we are ever to know the reality of freedom: "Revolution is about our lives!"

There is only one revolution, and it is total.

Dan Raphael
Portland, Oregon

Blood of the Flower: An anarchist-feminist statement

Revolutionary Anarchist No. 3, July, 1973, page 5

We are an independent collective of women who feel that anarchism is the logically consistent expression of feminism.

We believe that each woman is the only legitimate articulator of her own oppression. Any woman, regardless of previous "political" involvement knows only too intimately her own oppression, and hence, can and must define what form her liberation will take.

Why are many women sick and tired of "movements?" Our answer is that the fault lies with the nature of movements, not with the individual women. Political movements, as we have known them, have separated our political activities from our personal dreams of liberation, until either we are made to abandon our dreams as impossible or we are forced to drop out of the movement because we hold steadfastly to our dreams. As true anarchists and as true feminists, we say DARE TO DREAM THE IMPOSSIBLE, AND NEVER SETTLE FOR LESS THAN TOTAL TRANSLATION OF THE IMPOSSIBLE INTO REALITY.

There have been two principal forms of action in the women's liberation movement. One has been the small, local, volitionally organized consciousness-raising group, which at best has been a very meaningful mode of dealing with oppression from a personal level and, at worst, never evolved beyond the level of a therapy group.

The other principal mode of participation has been large, bureaucratized groups which have focused their activities along specific policy lines, taking great pains to translate women's oppression into concrete, single-issue programs. Women in this type of group often have been involved in formal leftist politics for some time, but could not stomach the sexism within other leftist groups. However, after reacting against the above-mentioned attitude of leftist males, many women with formal political orientations could not accept the validity of what they felt were the "therapy groups" of their suburban sisters; yet they themselves still remained within the realm of male-originated Marxist-Leninist, Trotskyist, Maoist rhetoric, and continued to use forms of political organizing employed by the male leftist groups they were reacting against. The elitism and centralization of the old male left thereby has found, and already poisoned, parts of the women's movement with the attitude that political sophistication must mean "building"