

Graffiti Interview

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Basically people are driven to action by the intransigence of the system, the cogs that keep it running, and its apparent inability to change.

I fully expect to see more politicians and authorities spit on by disgusted citizens. That would definitely be a positive trend. When you see them come gladhandling this election give 'em a glob. I also believe you can fight City Hall and the Welfare Department. It's amazing how wimpy these bureaucrats and functionaries really are when you confront them directly. I'd like to see mobs of unemployed going into the legislatures, the City Halls, the Social Service Agencies and demanding action. I don't expect they would get any. If they then went into the supermarkets and department stores en masse and took what they wanted they would get action.

Just a few weeks ago some people at the Food Bank (a charity service which provides free groceries once a week for people who are starving in Vancouver) line-up were trying to get everyone together for a march to Safeway. They had enough bags of food that particular day to cool things out, but who knows what will happen in the future? I think the organizing around the Food Bank is one of the reasons why City Hall has just decided to start funding the project.

Q: Was there anything specific that particularly turned you on to direct action?

A: Fielings. Seeing people pushing pies into the faces of pompous authority figures. There haven't been

any in Vancouver lately, but 7-11 (all-night grocery mart) never closes and there's always somebody running around who deserves a pie in the face. I think the pieings were effective in turning a whole lot of people on to creative action. That was part of a viable period around 1977 that came in with punk rock, anarchy, Groucho-Marxists, which we're still seeing the repercussions of today. That's what turned me on to activism again, seeing things happen, the graffiti, the actions.

Q: Are you trimming your sails since recent publicity around the group calling itself Direct Action broke?

A: Everyone in anarchist circles is being a lot cooler now because there's a lot more surveillance and police presence. We could all learn a lot from the experiences in the last couple of years of folks in West Germany (during the repression of the urban guerrilla movement) or Britain (during the Persons unknown frame-up) about how to operate in the community under siege by the police and the media.

Q: What do you say to people who may oppose nuclear war just as strongly as you do, but who choose moral witness, non-violent civil disobedience, and do not seek confrontation as a means of struggle. Wouldn't your attitude threaten them?

A: I think a lot of people who are bearing moral witness are doing just that, they're not in any way attempting to change the system. They are making a token protest. You see a lot of that in the peace and anti-nuke movements — civil disobedience is often a way of choreographing protest for easy arrest.

People who might otherwise be involved in constructive activities are

being diverted into Ghandian style protest. He's really being promoted now by the established powers: books, a movie, numerous articles.

Q: Why isn't direct action applied more often by people with radical, or even revolutionary ideas?

A: Well, a lot of people who call themselves revolutionaries are not going to revolutionize shit. The fact is, once you engage in direct action, you feel good and want to do it again. But, you've also become an Enemy of the State and the accumulated files limit your options in society after a certain point.

Actually, a lot of people who go around calling themselves leftists, Marxists, whatever are seriously planning to be part of the government in the future. They certainly don't want to put down the idea of government or make a practice of using direct action to humiliate the authorities. Their idea is that at some point somebody, like the NDP (Canada's social democratic party) will get into power and they'll have good jobs and be able to pass along their version of how people should live.

Q: What is it that drives you to continually take the risks direct action seems to imply?

A: On a day to day basis, I try to take as my motto Jonathan Jackson's (prison activist George Jackson's brother who was killed in an attempt to free him from prison) statement "If I don't do some damage every day, I get these headaches." I try to look back at the end of each day to something I've done to actually attack the system, even if only in a small way. At this point my interests are inimical to those of the system, directly opposed to it. It just worked out that way. I wouldn't have thought that as a kid, I used to be a patriotic Canadian boy, like everybody else.

Personal Politics

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mines the role of each member — the patriarchal adult male, service-oriented adult woman and consumer-obsessed and powerless children (in training for their adult roles). As long as the institution of the nuclear family holds sway in a mediating position, it's almost impossible for men, women and children to establish direct and unmediated relationships. Their behavior is distorted and self- and other destructive.

Production and Consumption

The nuclear family was exposed a long time ago by Marxist research as the economic foundation for capitalist society — both as a mechanism for the transmission of wealth through inheritance and as a unit of production and consumption. But its function as an ideological horsecollar has only more recently come to be perceived with some precision.

Wilhelm Reich, the Austrian revolutionary psychoanalyst whose life's work was aimed at enhancing the autonomy of the individual, has written how the nuclear family imposes compulsive marriage and sexual repression as the "authorized" ways of building relationships. From those two acts of self-denial flow the hang-ups, lies and alienation that prevent authentic personal interaction.

Reich wrote: "As the economic basis (of the family) became less significant, its place was taken by the political function which the family now began to assume. Its cardinal function...is that of serving as a factory for authoritarian ideologies and conservative (character) structures. It forms the educational apparatus through which practically every individual of our society, from the moment of drawing his first breath, has to pass...it is the conveyor belt between the economic structure of conservative society and its ideological superstructure."

Attempting to build a relationship outside the nuclear family can be a form of direct action, since the individuals have to learn to deal with each other in the absence of assigned roles. A whole spectrum of liberated lifestyles now manifests itself (see the accompanying article on affinity groups, as one example). No wonder the New Right is so flipped out over abortion, gay rights, equal pay, day care and other similar issues: it's not that they're "immoral" in themselves, it's that they weaken the hold of the nuclear family. After all, as the Right knows so well, if people learn to stand on their own two feet, it becomes that much harder to steamroller them.

(For a short introduction to some key Reichian concepts, from an anti-authoritarian perspective, check out *The Irrational in Politics*, a pamphlet produced by the Solidarity Collective in England, and published by Black and Red, Box 9546, Detroit, Mich. 48202. For a clear explanation of constructive criticism — although beware of the anti-anarchist smears and the heavy Leninist "leadership" bias — have a peek at *Constructive Criticism: A Handbook*, by Gracie Lyons, published by Issues in Radical Therapy, Box 5039, Berkeley, Calif. 94705.)

DIRECT ACTION ON THE AIR

Hope For Radio

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the Airwaves' movement which is dedicated to deregulation, or at least, breaking the government's monopoly control of broadcasting.

"We will get community radio but it will be a compromise," says a skeptical pirate at OUR Radio station, operating out of London. "It will be made very expensive to get a licence and to rent a transmitter... there is very little the government can do in the face of a lot of people broadcasting. The government will be forced to legislate."

"Unfortunately, the way in which they will do it will maintain the monopoly. There is an information embargo in this country and as long as there are a limited number of licenses around, the government will manipulate that."

Why are governments so afraid of free radio?

According to pirates at Andromeda Independent Radio, operating out of Manchester, "The government is frightened of change, a change in who controls information. Ultimately access to radio by ordinary people in a community means quick access to each other. The organizing power that sort of communication fields could be very potent."

At OUR Radio, they believe the authorities recognize the subversive potential inherent in popular control of radio.

"People often draw parallels between the freedom of the press and radio but it's

really not the same. It's easier to start a newspaper but there are major problems involving distribution and capital which restrict all but the rich. Whereas radio is much simpler and cheaper and gets the message across quicker, so it is seen as potentially more dangerous, as a direct threat. Certain views and attitudes are not allowed to be heard by large amounts of people."

As a spokesperson at Radio Zodiac, operating in the London area, points out, the only way to free the airwaves is, "not to form committees, like London Radio Workshop, but direct action. Go out and break the law if the law is wrong."

"We are encouraging — through the Free Airwaves campaign — a proliferation of stations. We hope that these will pressure for some form of legislation to set up the system we want. We take our lead from France and Italy where illegal pressure seems to have paid off."

Inundated With Nausea

The situation, that gives rise to pirate radio stations in Europe and other areas, is different in North America. The North American airwaves are swamped by nauseating radio stations controlled by corporations or governments. The problem is to compete on a massive level with a media Goliath that already has a strangle-hold on the consciousness of

society. We are plugged into an all-pervasive electronic prison that manipulates the way we view the world.

Progressive minded people will have a difficult time breaking the cultural hegemony of the dominant powers but the calculated biases and repressive nature of the existing media may yet create its own communication void that human scale media like pirate radio could fill. In North America it also seems possible that the advent of cheap video cassettes, large format viewing screens, community video libraries and cable television capabilities could change the whole way communities exchange radical information.

As it stands, the words of Elvis Costello's song "Radio, Radio" ring truer here than anywhere: "Radio is in the hands of such a lot of fools, trying to anaesthetise the way that you feel... They say you better listen to the voice of reason, but they don't give you any choice 'cause they think that it's treason."

An excellent article on the technical details of setting up your own radio station is featured in the Cienfuegos Press, *Anarchist Review* #5: Over the Water, Sanday, Orkney KW17 2BL, U.K. About \$6.

*Free the Airwaves' Campaign: 35 Maresfield Gardens, NW3, U.K. has advice and technical information on pirate radio stations. As well they should be able to give the addresses for the stations mentioned here.