The following article was written by an American anarchist during the 1930s. We reprint it so as to look back at our history and to reflect on what we have in common with Comrade Labadie, and how we differ with him. He presents his views on anarchism and the state, which in many ways are rather odd and should not be taken as a statement on behalf of the "Emancipation" collective or the AAA. In future issues we will be publishing other articles on anarchist history and philosophy. You can expect them to be as diverse in content as the movement itself.

ANARCHISM

What It Is and What It Is Not
by Joseph Labadie, Detroit, circa 1930

What is anarchism? In my simple way I'll try to explain that it is not what the uninformed and capitalistic newspapers generally say it is. To learn the truth about Anarchism, one should go for information not to its enemies but should read real Anarchist literature and talk to real Anarchists. And it's not safe to take what one or two anarchists may say about it. Take what a goodly number of them say, and cancel out statements in which they are not in accord. What remains is in all probability true.

For example, ask a dozen or more people What is Christianity? Likely their answers will not agree in every particular, though they may agree on some fundamental propositions such as Christianity is loving one's fellows, and doing good to those who despise you. Such agreement is more likely to represent the correct position of Christianity than the statements made by any one of them. This process of cancellation is a good way of finding out what any philosophy is. I've done this with determining what Anarchism is, and presumably I've arrived tolerably near the truth.

In the language of Benjamin R. Tucker, Anarchism may be described as that doctrine that "all the affairs of humans should be managed by individuals or voluntary association, and that the State should be abolished."

The State is "the embodiment of the principle of invasion in an individual, or a band of individuals, assuming to act as representatives or masters of the entire people within a given area." Government is the "subjection of the non-invasive individual to an external will." Mr. Tucker's definitions are generally accepted by Anarchists everywhere. Not using the word "state", "government", or "Anarchy" in any other sense than the Anarchists use them makes good sense.

Origin of the State

The state, according to Herbert Spencer and others, originated in war -- aggressive war -- in violence -- and has always been maintained by violence. The function of the state has always been to govern -- to make the non-ruling classes do what the ruling classes want done. In a monarchy, the king is the state; in a limited monarchy it is the king and parliament; in a republic like the United States, the state is in representatives; in a democracy like Switzerland it is the majority of the voters.

History shows that, as the powers of the state over the individual are reduced, the masses are always improved in mental, moral, and material conditions. As humans become more enlightened regarding their interests (individual and collective), humans insist that forcible authority over them and their conduct shall be abolished.

It is pointed out that the church has improved in its material affairs, to say nothing of the spiritual, since the individual is not compelled to support it, and to accept its doctrines -- or be declared a heretic or burned at the stake or maltreated. The point to the fact that people are better dressed since the state has anulled the laws regulating dress; to the fact that people are happier married since each person can choose his own mate; to the fact that people are better in every way since the laws were abolished regulating the individual's travel, trade, window panes in his house, chewing tobacco, or kissing on Sundays, and so on without number.

Even now, in Russia and some other countries, no one is allowed in the country or to come out of it, without legal permission; or to print or read books or papers except those permitted by law, to keep anyone in your house over night without notifying the police, and in a thousand ways the individual is hampered in his movements. Even in the freest countries, the individual is robbed by the tax collector, is beaten by the police, is fined and jailed by the courts -- is browbeaten by authority in many ways when his conduct is not aggressive or in violation of equal freedom.

Absolute Freedom Under Anarchism?

It is a mistake often made, even by some Anarchists, to say that Anarchism aims at absolute freedom and is trying to do the impossible. What Anarchism aims at is to make equal freedom applicable to every human creature. The majority under this rule has no more rights than the minority; the millions no greater rights than the one.

Anarchism assumes that every human being should have equal rights to all the products of nature, without money and without price; that what one produces would belong to himself, and that no individual or collection of persons, be they outlaw or state, should take any portion of it without his knowledge or consent. Moreover, that every person should be allowed to exchange his own products where he wills; that he should be allowed to co-

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AAA NEWS AAA NEWS AAA NEWS AAA NEWS

This October 1 and 2 the Association held its first All Regions Gathering in the mountains of West Virginia. The meeting was small but very fruitful. Here are some of the highlights.

1. The first corresponding secretary resigned and the task has been taken up by individuals in Rascal (all correspondence should now be sent to them).

2. The newly formed A Political group in Geneva, N.Y., will coordinate an AAA discussion bulletin in order to increase communications within the Association.

3. An individual in A Political will act as our international corresponing secretary, initiating contact with other anarchist organizations outside North America.

4. Various proposals for either a "Nobody for President" or "Big Brother for President" campaign to commence with the primaries in February. Stay tuned for more on this one.

The next Mid-Atlantic regional meeting is tentatively planned for January 30th in New York City, so that we can all attend the A-Fest and bring in '84 together.

A POLITICAL IN N.Y.

Nestled within the sweetly rolling hills of the Finger Lakes wine country, placid Geneva is the innocent latest victim of the recent upswing in anti-authoritarian activity on the North American continent. Any day the mounting ferment is expected to burst out, realizing itself in A Political -- a godless group of anarchist decriers of all external coercive forms of authority, and ardent workers in the struggle against power in all its insidious and destructive forms. Interested? Write: Chris, Box 168, Geneva, N.Y. 14456.

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Peltier soon was looked to as a natural leader among the extraordinary collection of young radicals, older traditionals, and mixed-bloods who made AIM the engaging and passionate organization it had become by the early 1970's.

Of course, Peltier also attracted the attention of the FBI for his out-front role. He was a participant in the 1972 takeover of the Washington headquarters of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the 1973 "siege" at Wounded Knee. These actions marked him--along with chief AIM spokesmen Dennis Banks and Russell Means--for extermination.

The feds got their chance when Peltier went to live on the Oglala reservation at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, near the site of Wounded Knee. An AIM camp was formed there, in large part to protect the Indian traditionals who were increasingly the victims of abuse and shootings by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) reservation police under a hoodlum tribal council head named Robert Wilson (an Indian rancher who controlled an annual budget from the federal government of $24 million). During the 1970's, under Wilson's rule, there were more than 100 unsolved murders -- chiefly of traditional full-bloods and AIM activists -- on Pine Ridge; there were also as many as 60 heavily-armed FBI agents assigned to the reservation (a supposedly large area of Indian land, but one on which 90% of all acreage had been sold off or leased to white ranchers).

On June 26, 1976, two FBI agents drove up to the AIM camp area and opened fire with rifles. The Native Americans returned the fire; one Indian and the two FBI men were killed, and the AIM activists escaped to the nearby hill country just moments before a large, heavily-armed force of FBI agents, BIA police, state troopers, sheriff's deputies, and vigilantes surrounded the camp site. Four of the Indians who had been at the AIM camp were charged with murder, but in all cases but Peltier's, either charges were dropped or acqittal was won; Peltier was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The case is the subject of two recently-published books: Peter Matthiessen's lengthy volume under review here and Jim Messerschmidt's The Trial of Leonard Peltier (South End Press). Both books make it plain that Peltier was framed by the federal government in an on-going plan to disrupt and wipe out Native American activism. Both books give elaborate details on the economic background of the events leading up to the shooting incident at Pine Ridge and to the efforts by the feds to have Peltier assassinated in prison.

Matthiessen's In the Spirit of Crazy Horse is a very impressive work indeed and the interest it has aroused in the straight press and among liberal members of Congress may succeed in bringing on a new trial for Peltier. (The FBI still refuses to release 6,000 pages of files on Peltier for reasons of "national security" -- but there is still much evidence of sufficient FBI misconduct to warrant a retrial).

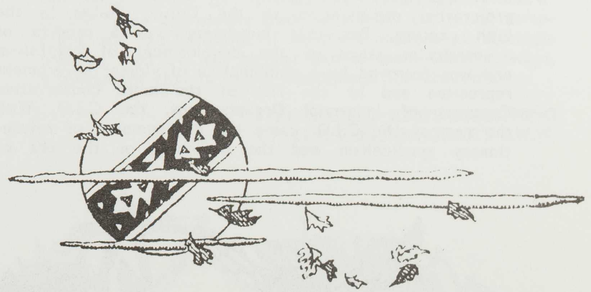
Peter Matthiessen is a hot writer: big name, best-seller, award winner, literary prestige, savvy reporter, veteran of noble conflicts; you name it, he's got it. The story of Leonard Peltier -- and the entire background of AIM -- that he tackled could only be told properly through exhaustive detail after months and even years of travel, piece-work research, government harassment, Indian hostility, difficult-to-obtain interviews, probably threats of violence, and just plain slogging-it-through frustration. Few writers would have attempted the job; it is a small miracle that one actually completed the task and prompted a publisher to print and distribute a book that probably will not make real money.

Matthiessen does deserve praise. His narrative is carefully put together, his presentation of the horrendous story of government corruption, theft and murder is readable and non-polemical. He must have gotten very angry many times in creating this book, but he is intelligent enough to know that the power in presenting such a gory and heart-breaking tale was best told in a manner of calm detachment, allowing the startled reader to discover his or her own anger.

Matthiessen is convinced of Peltier's innocence and makes it plain that the FBI does not really care who shot whom but rather believes that the only good Indian leader of traditional view is a dead Indian leader. This book is essential reading for all progressive people who have real concern with civil rights, cultural justice, environmental issues and just plain decency. Hiding just behind the painful case of Leonard Peltier is an equally harsh tale of the destruction of all Native Americans who still have a land base and, behind that, the destruction of North America's eco-system itself. Study this case and then go out and do what you must to bring justice to Leonard and his people.

Daniel Venn

WHAT YOU CAN DO.

1. Write Leonard. Address your letter of support to Leonard Peltier, Box 1000, United States Penitentiary,

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