gay anarchist circle

SILENT RADIO

THERE'S a fellow that stands at the corner of Connecticut & K sometimes, decked out in a sandwich board that proclaims "25% CAN HEAR SILENT RADIO." The leaflet he passes out says that government, industry, education, and religion conspire to impoverish our lives; that our mail, our media of communication, and even our thoughts are censored; and that this is all accomplished by means of an advanced technology--the "silent radio"--that wipes out our own ideas and substitutes those of our political and economic masters.

OK, so he's a crackpot. But we're crackpots, too. We hold the obviously insane belief that the rich and powerful will stop at nothing to retain their riches and power; that government institutions and officials universally pursue their own interests and not those of the people they purport to represent; and that we are all being hoodwinked, cajoled, stroked and browbeaten into collaborating in our own oppression. We subscribe to the ridiculous notion that people know how to run their own lives; that they value freedom and diversity over authority and homogeneity; that they are willing to work to make a better world.

We are crackpots. We are anarchists. And we're coming to get you.

AND NOW THE GOOD NEWS

But it's OK, really, We just want to be friends. It's true that we'd like to destroy all the major political, economic, and ideological institutions of the society we live in. But for now we'll be content with just telling you a little bit about ourselves:

ANARCHISM has been the most widely misunderstood political philosophy of modern times, and that is no accident. Its basic tenets, though they seem reasonable to us, have appeared so threatening, so unimaginable to mainstream politicians and media that they've rarely been accurately transmitted to the public at large. Frequently anarchism has been confused with other movements, such as Nihilism or Bolshevist Communism--systems of thought which even the most superficial inspection reveals to be incompatible with anarchism. The major figures in the history of anarchist thought include some of the great names of modern times: William Godwin, Henry David Thoreau, Emma Goldman, Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi.

WHAT IS ANARCHISM?

Paul Goodman, the outstanding gay anarchist thinker of recent times, offered this definition:

> Anarchism is grounded in a rather definite proposition: that valuable behavior occurs only by the free and direct response of individuals or voluntary groups to the conditions presented by the historical environment. It claims that in most human affairs, whether political, economic, military, religious, moral, pedagogic, or cultural, more harm than good results from coercion, top-down direction, central authority, bureaucracy, jails, conscription, states, pre-ordained standardization, excessive planning, etc. Anarchists want to increase intrinsic functioning and diminish extrinsic power.

In other words, anarchism aims to replace the state and all its long, death-dealing arms with free and voluntary association. Unlike Marxism, for example, or liberal democracy as we know it in the US, anarchism stresses the idea of freeing society from the pressures of authority, rather than presenting a dogmatic program for the structuring of future societies--whose members we hope will have their own ideas about how to run their own lives, just as we do.

COMES IN ALL SIZES, SHAPES, AND COLORS

Anarchists do not accept a particular class analysis of society; they have been communist and radically individualist, religious and atheistic, revolutionary and evolutionary. Yet, as Goodman says, "despite these differences, anarchists seldom fail to recognize one another, and they do not consider the differences to be incompatibilities." This is because it is basic to anarchism that no body of authority should be imagined to speak for all of us, and no abstract set of principles allowed to stand in place of complex human realities. Anarchism is a movement of great philosophical diversity, united only by the idea that authority is bad for you, and not a necessary or "natural" function of society.

Granting its diversity, however, anarchism has had a particular appeal recently to groups of people with common interests who recognize that only an an-

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