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It was a loose-limbed and highly informal gathering built around a day-and-a-half of workshops and film showings, followed on May 16 by several hours of general discussion and argument on possible action plans (a revolutionary anarchist project) and the potential for strong regional ties between the individuals and approximately 20 groups represented.

The symposium-conference was an experiment in regional communication initiated by the Washington collectives of the Anarchist Association of the Americas, Philadelphia's Wooden Shoe Book Collective, Baltimore's Research Group One, the Southern Maryland Anarchist Community, and West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle Anarchist Group No. 1. It generally proceeded with the rough-edged, uneven qualities of such experiments. The organizers took the approach: "This is an event which we all shape together. Let's see what we really want to happen, and then do it!"

The two-day gathering was planned and developed through a series of regional meetings held in D.C., Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. All matters from the scale of the event to workshop subjects, approaches for the conference, group meals, and registration fee were worked out among those persons who would be participants. Many of the positive qualities of the workshops and conference apparently evolved from this open planning process.

In the earliest planning sessions for this symposium-conference, members of the AAA collectives felt that 1) anarchists of great diversity, most of whom did not know each other, would be coming together, 2) that it would perhaps be helpful to begin with workshops so that folks could thrash out many matters of philosophy and get to know one another, and 3) by the time the conference came we would thus be able to move more quickly and smoothly and effectively into discussions of projects and strategies. This order of things was approved in the regional meetings that followed, and we feel, in retrospect, that the plan worked out pretty well. Many feel that there was too little time during the two days for unstructured discussion; there was always free space available, but there was so much going on in such a short time. And almost all of us agree that it would have been interesting to have had a third day (after the conference) to form new groups to begin working on some of the projects that came out of the conference. As it is, we will at least be better prepared to do some of that work at the Second Conference-Symposium which the Philadelphia anarchists are hoping to host in September.

Briefly, here are some of the points covered in the workshops:

"Anarchism for Beginners" was a large workshop, 30-40 people; quite a few of us are very new at this game. The presentation by Howard Ehrlich of Baltimore's Research Group One was stimulating and challenging, and organized to illustrate the key concepts that distinguish anarchism. The logical coherence between ends and means that Ehrlich stressed as central to anarchist behavior was evident throughout the event.

Ehrlich stated that Anarchism is
–a theory of social organization
–a moral philosophy
–a theory of radical practice and social change
and then proceeded to show how these three concepts fit together and define each other in thought and action:

The *philosophy of freedom and equality* for individuals requires a community to support it, and autonomy within this community can be attained by putting into practice a theory of social organization;

this *social organization*—in small-group settings, organized so that there is equality in responsibility, diffusion of power and decision making by consensus, and rotation of tasks (to ensure the separation of expertness and skill from privilege)—

is itself the means of *radical practice and social change* which makes revolution *not* a point in time but a process—living an experiment in the future, making history rather than waiting on historical necessity.

Philadelphia's Patti Stanko and friends led a discussion (for women and men) on anarchism and feminism, how they relate to one another, and how we can incorporate into our daily lives the many discoveries and insights gained in the past decade of intense feminist activity. There was agreement that we need to move past destruction of capitalism, past destruction of the state, to the destruction of patriarchy . . . for, in our society, it is here that unwholesome authority begins. For those who fear "separatism" as an outgrowth of feminism, there was good discussion as to the value that can be derived from periods of work and play with members of one's own sex. After awhile the workshop split in two, one group to continue discussing the fundamental ideas at the roots of feminism, the other to deal with concrete proposals as to what might be done now, such as forming men's consciousness groups in various cities.

From this emerged separate workshops for women only and for men only. A half-dozen women discussed ways in which our anarchist and feminist insights and practices relate to one another . . . or fail to relate. How to use each to best support and deepen the other. And a dozen men strove to take our understanding of our sexism begond the intellectual level (though so much of the time we were, and are, stuck there), trying to learn more about how we men can support each other's efforts. Can we be more gentle with one another? And still effect the kind of dynamic change that women at this conference were trying to help us learn?

Those who learned (in these three workshops) something about being better listeners, about basic human loving kindness, and about combating our so deeply ingrained patriarchal habits of mind probably were able to contribute even more to the succeeding workshops and conference.

Meanwhile there were two far-reaching workshops on labor during these first two time-slots. Carl Craft, Frank Gerould, and Steve Landstreet of Wooden Shoe along with Steve Parr of New York's Libertarian Workers Group and Harry Wade of southern New Jersey and a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers all led a discussion around the question: "Is workplace organizing or union activity in organized workplaces a worthwhile activity for anarchists?" There were many reasons offered for answering the question in the affirmative, and confirmation that anarchism is taking many new directions among workers. We also discussed the idea of organizing efforts in unorganized workplaces, with anarchist activists steering campaigns in decentralized, non-hierarchical directions.

And then Sam Dolgoff shared perspectives gleaned from his almost 80 years of struggle for justice, giving (through his tales of

the Wobblies, etc.) a sense of the historic continuity of which we are a part. Sam suggested that, above all, we be realistic about our goals. And practical in our approaches. Cultivate troublemakers. Take a closer look at pensions. Why are we still stuck with the 40-hour week and high unemployment? Bureaucracy and national organizations can be dealt with: all workers' representatives should be subject to recall by the workers they "represent." There were roars of appreciation for Sam's wit and good sense.

Philadelphia's Wooden Shoe Bookstore Collective tried to help us understand some of the practical problems encountered in trying to operate a "business" in a non-hierarchical manner, while maintaining our libertarian goals in a capitalist society. One question posed by the workshop was how do we learn and foster collective survival? There was lengthy and provocative discussion of the differences involved in trying to make a living from an anarchist business, as opposed to simply maintaining a "business" effort that is supported from outside and that leads to other political work.

Manfred Smith (of Columbia, Maryland) decided to combine his workshop on "deschooling" with the one on "social ecology" that was being presented by Neil Nevins and Karl Hess of West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle Anarchist Group No. 1. Karl opened with over 20 minutes of personal observation on building self-reliance and on our abilities to go beyond what we expect of ourselves; the talk was interesting, but led to some frustration and confusion as to where this (perhaps too large) workshop was leading. Manfred dealt with some of the specifics of deschooling on which Karl had touched. And Neil, telling of his success in working with John Birchers, hit the fascinating note that would carry through the rest of the hour: deal with your own community, deal with where the needs are, by having skills to share and a willingness to learn. Karl told us that his work as a welder has taken him much closer to the basically independent American than he ever got through his job with the Republican National Committee.

A spontaneous workshop on Anarchist music, culture, and Youth Centers was instigated by Ronald Thatcher of Philadelphia's *Savage Pink*. In a block trashed in the Brixton riots, in which only an anarchist bookstore and a Chinese restaurant had been left standing, a youth center was set up and was immediately more successful than any previous attempts. It met the needs of the moment, in the way the people affected wanted and in a location quite accessible to the community. Youth's spontaneous reaction to real life is the real "youth culture" and is often the best example of anarchism that we have.

The band Crass was discussed as an example of a group combining the processes of music making and distribution with their anarchist politics. Punk (as we know it) is not the only form of music/culture with an anarchist strain, and the problems of reactionaries in the movement was of concern. Overall, the need to assess the needs and strengths of our own neighborhood seemed to precede any action to create new facilities for our communities, be they Youth Centers or whatever. Rehumanize yourself!

James Cunningham of Baltimore's Jonah House and Justin Brown of D.C.'s Community for Creative Non-Violence combined to lead a discussion of how their brand of Christianity fits together with anarchist practice. Coming from two enduring and effective communities involved in activist struggle against militarism and capitalist-enforced poverty and racism, James and Justin shared deas on how to try to "reclaim our personhood in the Belly of the Beast," focusing a good deal on the practical problems involved in creating true community. There was lively discussion around the concept of "original sin" as opposed to the more traditionally anarchist belief that human decency will blossom spontaneously when the destruction of the fetters of authoritarianism are broken. And a passionate and timely reminder: that as we sat talking 28 people in the world died of starvation each minute. How can we sustain our sense of urgency in the face of that perpetual horror? Esther Dolgoff closed with an eloquent reminder that we need to persevere, to never give up, and that, together, we have an almost unimaginable potential for change.

Steve Parr of New York's Libertarian Workers' Group led a workshop in discussion of how some had evolved out of various Marxist-Leninist groups, tried the IWW, and wound up forming their own group. They take part in militant factions in the business unions representing them. The general consensus was, in fact, that one of the more constructive activities for employed anarchists is in becoming members of (if not moving forces behind) dissident factions in their business unions. There was much debate over issues raised in the two earlier workshops on labor.

And there was a gathering to discuss strategies that might lead toward a strong anarchist presence in New York during June's special session on disarmament at the U.N., particularly at the assive demonstration planned for June 12th, on the 14 for the hopefully also massive blockades of those "representatives" of the Bombmakers who will be there trying to conduct "diplomacy as usual."
If interested, call Carol at 212-662-4077 or Chris and Dick at 212-265-2132 to learn where the anarchist contingent will gather.

On the afternoon of the 16th, after all the workshops were over, there was a wide-ranging and sometimes intense plenary conference.

OUTLINE OF CONFERENCE

No Nations, No Nukes
1. a campaign to be enacted and coordinated regionally, focusing on the NY, Philly, D.C., and Baltimore areas.
2. to be carried out via spray painting and personal contact.
3. a list was passed for interested people to sign.

New Federalism, True Federation
1. ride the Reagan propaganda machine by pointing out true