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This pamphlet briefly looks at why things are the way they are, why people put up with it, why the left has failed, and what we can do about it — principles, practices, and projects that could lead to a future worth living.

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A Future Worth Living



Thoughts on Getting There



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atmosphere in which members could develop themselves to the fullest, but to serve as models for a new society.

At present, the nearest thing that we have to such a community is the ZEGG experiment in Germany. While it's far from perfect (see above comments), ZEGG is an exciting place filled with idealistic, mutually supportive people pursuing their passions, and which incorporates many of the healthy, anti-authoritarian elements outlined above. One can only hope that a similar political experiment comes into being sometime soon in the North America.²

There's a clear need for one. It would be tremendously useful to have even a small-scale model that would demonstrate—at least to the extent possible given our larger social context—life in a free society. It's one thing to read descriptions of free societies; it's entirely something else to visit even a very imperfect model of such a society, as I did in Germany five years ago. I found that experience more motivating than all of the anarchist theoretical texts I've ever read. It's a very good bet that others would find a similar model here equally inspiring.

Many Roads, One Destination

There are many valid approaches to creating a free society—though I believe that any successful approach will incorporate the principles outlined above—and different approaches will appeal to different people. By following our individual inclinations, while adopting common principles, we can help to realize our common purpose—a free society.

In the end, the goal of our various projects must be to produce large numbers of self-directed, conscious, determined people who know what they want and will work to make it reality. When that happens, real change will occur in all areas of society. Authoritarian society *cannot* meet fundamental human needs (for meaning, love, peace, and freedom), and it's our task to help our fellow human beings to understand that, and to offer them *positive alternatives*.

2. I'd like to hear from others with a desire to create such an experiment here in North America. Anyone interested can contact me via See Sharp Press, P.O. Box 1731, Tucson, AZ 85702, or via See Sharp's e-mail address: seesharp@earthlink.net. (If I switch ISPs and the above e-mail address doesn't work, you can contact me via www.seesharppress.com). There is also an e-mail group dedicated to discussion of the issues raised in this pamphlet, social-transformation@yahoogroups.com; anyone interested can subscribe via Yahoo.

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the project, and that most of those doing the real work necessary to maintaining the Network burned out. Probably the best thing to be said for Network for a New Culture is that it provided a number of object lessons in what *not* to do.

The situation in Europe is somewhat better. There, the ZEGG experiment is made up largely of individuals with political understanding and political backgrounds (many from the student, feminist, and anti-nuclear movements). It's apparently prospering and spawning offshoots, despite its being burdened with a "feminist" sociobiological ideology (that posits that attitudes and traits such as cooperativeness, noncompetitiveness and nurturance are inherently female, and that women, therefore, must lead the way for men),¹ a disturbing reverence for the project's founder (which, to his credit, he does not seem to encourage), and a generally uncritical acceptance of the sometimes exotic, unsupported concepts of the group's leaders.

While there's a need for model communities (along the lines of ZEGG) presenting a positive alternative to authoritarian, sexually repressed, hierarchical society, none exist in the United States. The relatively few nonhierarchical communities that do exist are small, and they mostly ignore the psychological and sexual questions at the root of authoritarian conditioning and personality structures. So their effectiveness is quite limited, and the need for positive alternatives continues.

The essential elements of such positive alternatives would be a minimum of organization, a minimum of rules, direct democracy, non-coerciveness, voluntary cooperation, self-exploration, individual development, and a willingness to face sexual and psychological issues. The purpose of such communities would be not only to provide a supportive

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1. At present, it's far from certain to what extent typically "male" and typically "female" traits are the result of biology, and to what extent they're the result of social conditioning. Even in areas where there do seem to be biological differences, as with males, on average, having better spatial perception than females, the average differences between individuals are not great. When one graphs such biological differences, one normally sees two bell curves (one for males, one for females) that almost entirely overlap, with major differences showing up only on the extreme high and low ends and involving relatively few individuals. Because of this overlap, it's nonsensical to argue, for instance, that women *as a category* should not become airline pilots because of their "lesser" spatial-perception abilities. It's equally nonsensical to argue that women must "lead the way" for men because of men's "lesser" ability to cooperate. It makes far more sense to simply insist upon, and to model, such forms and values as cooperation, noncompetitiveness, nurturance, and nonhierarchical organization in both sexes.

Practical Approaches

There is no one single way to change society. But, fortunately, there are many different, mutually reinforcing approaches, all incorporating the concepts of noncoerciveness, voluntary cooperation, nonhierarchical organization, decentralization, and spontaneous leadership, and all recognizing the psychological realities that make authoritarian, coercive "solutions" so attractive to so many people. Among the many possibilities are free schools aimed at educating children in noncoercive, nonhierarchical environments; educational efforts in the print and electronic media advocating anarchist concepts and, importantly, exposing the psychosexual roots of authoritarian attitudes and conditioning; theater, musical and artistic projects with the same aims; workplace (anarcho-syndicalist) groups with the aim of restructuring work life along nonhierarchical, decentralized lines; and model intentional communities aimed at putting all of these values into practice in daily life—at helping their members overcome their own authoritarian conditioning, at dealing openly with sexual issues, and at serving as launching pads for other projects aimed at social liberation.

Positive Models

At present, projects—albeit small ones—exist in the United States pursuing the first four of these five approaches (and others as well), but at present there is no project pursuing the fifth approach. One recent attempt to organize model communities called Network for a New Culture is all but dead for a number of reasons: 1) excessive emphasis on sexual liberation and intentional community in outreach materials; 2) incorporation of new-agey, "feminist" elements (basically sociobiology from a female-superior viewpoint) borrowed from Germany's ZEGG experiment; and 3) insufficient emphasis on the social, psychological, and political goals of the project. The end result was that Network for a New Culture attracted very few people with social/political understanding and commitment. Instead, it attracted a large number of individuals (mostly men, of course) interested primarily, if not exclusively, in sex; a large number of new age types; and a large number of individuals attracted to intentional community for no other reason than that they saw it as an easy means of meeting their economic, social, and intimacy needs. It's small wonder that such people contributed little to

Preface

For over a quarter-century, the American left has been in disarray. The (unfounded) optimism of the 1960s has given way to the pessimism of the '70s, '80s, '90s, and '00s. For all practical purposes, the left simply doesn't exist on the national level except as a myriad of single-interest groups—pro-choice, environmental, animal rights, and gay rights groups being the most prominent. To put it another way, since the 1960s the focus of the left has narrowed. In the '60s there was, at least in some quarters, a feeling (however delusional) that real, major change—a social revolution—was possible, indeed inevitable; and many activists of the time had hope in their hearts and revolution as their heart's desire. In contrast, most activists today have no hope for major change (at least any time soon), and the single-issue battles they're fighting are almost exclusively defensive battles, which seem very unlikely to foster broad social change. As well, because their struggles seem, ultimately, so hopeless, single-interest groups are plagued by burnout and membership turnover. The end result is that corporate capitalism reigns triumphant, and what little opposition to it that exists is weak and divided.

How did this come to pass? And what can we do about it? Answering these questions is the purpose of this pamphlet. Because we're in such a disorganized state, I do not consider grand schemes for the reorganization of society; instead, I look at principles, practices, and projects that can help the left rejuvenate itself, and that can, I believe, lead to real social change, if widely adopted. (Those interested in blueprints for a future social/economic order should look at the valuable works of Murray Bookchin, Cornelius Castoriadis, Michael Albert, and Tom Greco.)

In order to bring about meaningful change, it's first necessary to understand the society in which we live. So, I begin by looking at the social and economic conditions that induce fear, loneliness, violence, and economic insecurity. I then examine the conditioning processes and agents that produce the masses of people who accept such conditions with hardly a whimper. Those that I examine include sexual repression, the patriarchal family, the education system, organized religion, and the mass media.

Continuing from there, I take a brief look at the two major revolutionary ideologies of the past century, anarchism and marxism; and I analyze the very different reasons why both have failed (more accurately, why marxism has failed repeatedly, and why anarchism has yet to succeed). I then consider some of the self-generated problems that have rendered the American left so impotent. And, finally, I suggest a number of principles, procedures and projects that, if widely adopted, could lead to a resurgence of the left and, eventually, to social r/evolution—a juster, freer, happier world.

These suggestions are *nota* call to self-sacrifice. Rather, they recognize that means determine ends, and that making oneself miserable is not a good way to eliminate social misery. Thus, my suggestions are designed as much to help political and social activists lead happier, more productive lives in the here and now as they are to transform society in the long run.

—Chaz Bufe

Realistic Tactics

Any successful movement toward real change will provide models to be emulated, based on the above-listed principles. If this decentralized, noncoercive approach is to succeed, clearly the only way it will succeed is if it's voluntarily adopted by people the world over. You can't achieve a noncoercive society through the use of coercion. Thus, one of the tasks of any movement toward real change is to provide models attractive enough that others will want to adopt them.

There are several advantages to this approach. First, it actually has a good chance of succeeding—eventually. Second, it should help those taking part in it lead happier, more meaningful lives while the process of change occurs. And third, such a movement stands less chance of being attacked by the government than more overt political movements dedicated solely to making external changes through political means. The reason for this is that even though old-style political-change movements are not a real threat to the hierarchical, authoritarian structure of society, the government often *perceives* them as such.

So, the government attacks them with all the means at its disposal, including disinformation campaigns, frameups, infiltration, agents provocateur, and, occasionally, outright murder. A few famous instances that come to mind are the Haymarket frameup, the Sacco & Vanzetti case, COINTELPRO during the Viet Nam War, and the hundreds of FBI burglaries of CISPES offices during the 1980s. Thus, direct attempts to impose external political change have not only produced no fundamental structural change, but they can be dangerous to participate in.

The Spanish Revolution (1936–1939), thus far the most successful attempt to achieve social revolution through political means (anarcho-syndicalism), was crushed in large part by external totalitarian forces. There's every reason to believe that history would repeat itself should social revolution break out again in one isolated country. All of this makes a noncoercive, evolutionary approach all the more attractive.

Abandoning old-fashioned political movements that are very unlikely to produce fundamental change is no sign of cowardice. (One could just as easily argue that avoiding pointless physical danger, as in skydiving or mountain climbing, is "cowardice.") Rather, it's realism. It's recognizing that one has limited time and resources, and that investing them in confrontational campaigns (no matter how real the evils confronted) diverts one from the fundamental task of building better alternatives to the present social structure.

position, and the group as a whole can dismiss office holders at any time should they abuse their positions.

Sexual and Psychological Issues

Finally, any political movement that hopes to fundamentally restructure social life *must* openly address sexual issues (and the psychological issues they give rise to). Not only are such issues at the bottom of the average person's identity and desires, but failure to address them cripples political movements. Obviously the degree to which groups need to address sexual and psychological matters varies with the aims of the groups and with how tightly they're organized. But even in the loosest groups with the most limited aims, it's harmful to ignore sexual and emotional issues when they arise, because when ignored these matters can create a tense, poisonous atmosphere. In tightly knit groups with ambitious aims, such as intentional communities, it's a dreadful mistake not to address sexual issues and the personal tensions they give rise to. The ZEGG political project/intentional community in Germany provides a good example of a tightly knit group that successfully addresses sexual and psychological questions.

Perhaps the primary reason that ZEGG has succeeded to the extent that it has is that, almost uniquely among such projects and communities, ZEGG has treated sexual matters openly—making them “transparent.” Individual freedom and individual choice are honored at ZEGG, but when potentially disruptive sexual issues and tensions arise (for example, jealousy), these matters are openly, and sometimes publicly, addressed, and the individuals involved are helped, if they so desire, to work through their emotions.

In virtually all other political groups and intentional communities, sexual questions are ignored, or even considered a “distraction” from the “serious” purposes of the group or community. (This is a telling indication of the puritanical, anti-pleasure bias of all too many leftist groups and intentional communities.) Because sexual issues will inevitably arise in any human project, failure to deal with them ensures that when sexual tensions arise they'll leak out in all sorts of destructive, often indirect ways. One would hope that other social change groups will learn this lesson quickly, will begin to recognize the importance of sexual issues (and the psychological issues they give rise to), and will begin to address them openly.

A Future Worth Living

“There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.”

—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

We live in a world which is deeply unsatisfying for most people, a world in which many of our most basic needs—for love, peace, freedom, security, and meaning in life—are not being met. Most of us face constant worry about economic survival, loneliness and isolation, or fear of it, and a constant feeling that there's never enough of anything good to go around, be it love, sex, or money.

As well, for many—probably most—people, there's a constant fear of violence. And for even more, there's a feeling of powerlessness. The end result is hopelessness, apathy, and often bitterness, meanness, and, all too often, outright sadism.

Why do these conditions exist? There's no grand conspiracy, but there are a number of reasons for this lousy situation, and it's important to understand what we're dealing with if we're going to change it.

Insecurity and Perceived Scarcity

The economic situation is a major reason for our present societal difficulties. At present, most people in this country own almost nothing. The top 1% of the population own more than the bottom 90% of the population combined. The top 1% own 40% of the nation's wealth and the next 9% own another 30%, which means that the top 10% own 70% of the nation's wealth; that leaves another 30% of the wealth for the remaining 90% of us, with most of that distributed toward the top end. So, the bottom 50% of the population own nearly nothing—maybe a car and, if we're lucky, a heavily mortgaged house. It's also worth noting that there has been a distinct trend over the last 20 years or so toward a redistribution of wealth toward the upper end of the scale. In other

words, since around the time Reagan was elected president, the rich have been getting richer and the poor have been getting poorer; this trend continued under Clinton, and is accelerating under Bush.

At the same time—notwithstanding the recent small increases—real wages have declined roughly 15% since the mid 1970s. The end result is that people are having to work harder and longer to make ends meet. To top things off, the era of job security is long gone. Instead, we live in the era of corporate takeovers, “downsizing,” and “restructuring,” and in which our job skills seemingly become obsolete every few years.

All of this leads directly to feelings of loneliness, insecurity, and scarcity. Most of us are so preoccupied with paying the rent or mortgage and with keeping our families fed that we have little time for social contacts and, since we’re in such a hard space, naturally assume that we live in a world of scarcity. Another result is that because of very real economic insecurity, artificial scarcity, and feelings of personal powerlessness, a great many of us spend our entire lives working at jobs we barely tolerate, if not outright hate. To put it another way, we’re stuck on the bottom rungs of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and never move up the ladder to satisfy our creative needs and the need for self-actualization.

The Problem of Violence

Compounding the economic insecurities most of us face is the problem of physical danger, and the fear of it. Many of the reasons for violence can be traced to economic inequalities, but even more basic is the common belief in violence and coercion as means to an end. This belief is so pervasive that we’re often not even aware of it. Perhaps the most important example of this is government. Belief in the necessity of coercion is the foundation of government. Belief in the necessity of coercive organization, that is, government, springs from the belief that people are incapable of voluntary cooperation, and that the only way to get them to behave in a civilized manner is to force them to do so—literally at the point of a gun if necessary. This leads to things such as extortion (taxation) and military conscription. Ultimately, it all boils down to the belief that it’s OK to push people around if you’re powerful enough to do it.

This belief is, of course, reflected in daily life. All too many of us consider violence a means to get what we want, be it money, possessions, or dominance. There are millions of petty criminals who use violence—muggings, armed robberies, and carjackings—to get what they want. And there are literally millions of other thugs who intimidate, beat and

teristics is a model of anarchist organization. Anyone interested in decentralized, nonhierarchical organization would do well to study AA’s organizational structure and its organizational principles. On a mass, industrial scale, the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists demonstrated the practicality of this type of organization during the Spanish Civil War. Those interested in this organizational model would also do well to study the many books available on the constructive work of the Spanish anarchists.

Spontaneous Leadership

Spontaneous leadership is also important. Rather than adopt the old model of a fixed leadership in a hierarchy telling everyone else what to do, social change groups would do well to adopt a new model of spontaneous leadership in a horizontal, that is decentralized, organization.

In the ‘60s and ‘70s many leftist and feminist groups agonized over how to eliminate leadership, equating all leadership (including temporary, task-based leadership) with authoritarian leadership. Their fruitless efforts confirm what the more astute anarchists have been saying for over a century—that it’s a mistake to think that *any* kind of group or organization can exist without leadership; the question is, what kind of leadership is it going to be? The old model insists that a static leadership direct everything, regardless of the interest, motivation, or expertise of the leaders, and that others follow the orders of those leaders, no matter how stupid. In the new model, those who have the most expertise, the most interest, and the most commitment provide the leadership. The key here is that they derive their authority not through coercion, but precisely through their interest, expertise, and commitment; as well, only those who feel attracted to their projects will (temporarily) follow them—and, ideally, these temporary followers will, at one time or another, be leaders of other projects. Another key element is that, in this new model, leadership is *permeable*—anyone who has sufficient motivation and commitment will likely become part of the multifaceted, *de facto*, and ever-changing leadership within a nonhierarchical organization.

To coordinate activities, nonhierarchical organizations often create service positions, with those entrusted with the positions taking on certain routine administrative and secretarial functions. To help ensure that such positions do not metamorphose into power positions in a hierarchy, nonhierarchical groups normally install the safeguards of mandatory rotation of offices and immediate recallability. That is, any individual can only serve a limited term and then must exit any given

waste. The most important reason for this is that those at the top, the decision makers, *cannot* have a full grasp of the facts when they make decisions. To give an example, let's take a large corporation with 100,000 employees. Let's say that this corporation has a small research branch employing 100 people working on one particular problem. Who will be better informed about possible solutions to the problem—the 100 people working on it, or the 10 people on the corporation's board of directors who receive their boiled-down information through a chain of command? Complicating matters is the pronounced tendency of those in positions of authority to blame the messenger when bad news arrives. This often—one is tempted to say always—results in those in subordinate positions hiding anything negative, and thus those at the top often receive very skewed information. It's little wonder that hierarchies are plagued with inefficiencies and that those at the top so often make bad decisions.

There are also harmful psychological aspects to hierarchical organization. The most obvious are the development of abusive personalities among bosses and festering resentments among their subordinates. Even when bosses are relatively decent individuals, it's very difficult for real friendship to develop between them and those below (and above) them. In such situations, the boss always has to be sensitive to the possibility that he'll be perceived as abusing his power, as pushing his subordinate around, and the subordinate always lives with the fear that should he say or do anything to displease his boss, the boss will retaliate. To put it another way, hierarchical structure results in social insularity; it makes it nearly impossible for those with different amounts of status and power—that is, those on different levels of the hierarchy—to relate genuinely to each other.

To get away from the stupid decision making, waste, lack of genuineness, and social isolation engendered by hierarchy, nonhierarchical, decentralized organization is necessary. In a social change group, this implies several things: 1) that organization be kept to the minimum necessary; 2) that all members have an equal say in decisions affecting the group as a whole; 3) that local groups be autonomous—that is, that they be independent groups bound only by common ideals, that they be un beholden to any central authority, and that the individuals in the independent groups voluntarily cooperate on common projects, with only those who feel called to do so taking part.

A familiar example of this type of nonhierarchical, decentralized organization is the religious group, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), which despite its destructive social effects and its pronounced cult-like charac-

rape those weaker than themselves—often, their wives and children—in order to (temporarily) feel the power and dominance that they crave. What makes this even more destructive than it is in and of itself is that children see this type of behavior modeled by their parents and other adults, and then imitate it when they're adults, at which point *their* children see it modeled, and later imitate it, continuing the chain through generation after generation. The end result is that we live in a culture of violence, in which many, many people live with violence on a day-to-day basis, and in which almost everyone stands at least some risk of being violently assaulted.

Compounding all of this, psychologically, is the constant portrayal (and often glamorization) of violence in the media. The end result is that even those of us at low risk of becoming victims are often at least unconsciously preoccupied with the possibility of it, and almost no one can see any solution to violence except more violence, usually in institutional form—more cops, more prisons, more sadistic sentencing, and more barbaric prison conditions. That these things do nothing to eliminate the roots of violence is hardly surprising.

The Role of Patriarchal Religions

What makes things even worse is that most people not only see violence as the solution to violence, but that they think they have the right to use violence and coercion to force other people to be "moral." This belief comes squarely from the "thou shalt" and "thou shalt nots" of patriarchal religions such as christianity and islam, both of which have long and bloody histories of murdering and torturing nonbelievers, nonconformists, and heretics. So, it's no surprise that those who adhere to such religions have no hesitation in using violence to force others to submit, or simply use it for the sheer joy of inflicting pain. A quote from the bible nicely illustrates the religious submit-or-die attitude:

And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death. —Leviticus 24:16

The ironic thing about all this is that many of the religious folk most intent upon using violence and coercion to enforce "morality" are themselves quite fearful of becoming victims of violence. Yet the cruel policies they support produce violence.

A good example of this association of violence with "morality" is the war on drugs. It's painfully obvious, that drug prohibition is not only

destroying our civil liberties, but is also producing a lot of violence and property crime because of the combination of illegality and high profit margins; this results in turf wars by dealers, and crimes committed by drug addicts to support the high price of their habits. All of this should be, and is, obvious, but there is so much fear, authoritarianism, and sadism in the general population, and so little ability to analyze data, that the war on drugs continues. And we all pay the price for it through destruction of our liberties, sky-high taxes, and the creation of what could well become a police state.

This, however, should be no surprise, given that another effect of patriarchal religions is the degradation of human reason. One of the primary messages of patriarchal religions seems to be, "You have a brain, but don't use it. Believe, don't think." Two of the most famous manifestations of this attitude are the Catholic Index of Prohibited Books, which was in force for hundreds of years, and the contract that Iran's fundamentalist government put out on Salman Rushdie's life over a decade ago.

The following quote from Pope Gregory XVI's encyclical, *Mirari Vox*, provides a good example of the religious attitude toward the human intellect:

From the polluted fountain of indifferentism flows that absurd and erroneous doctrine, or rather, raving, which claims and defends liberty of conscience for everyone. From this comes, in a word, the worst plague of all, namely, unrestrained liberty of opinion and freedom of speech.

(This encyclical, incidentally, was written in relatively modern times, in the mid-19th century; Gregory XVI was pope from 1831 to 1846.)

An even more direct statement deriding human intellect comes from Martin Luther in his "Table Talk": "Reason is the greatest enemy that faith has."

This distrust and depreciation of human intelligence has influence far beyond the religious sphere. It results in a general inability to think critically, in contempt for logic and reason, and in the widespread holding of absurd beliefs that can't stand up to a moment's critical examination. In the United States, the most christian country in the western world, this is especially pronounced. In regard to even slightly complex questions, most people in this country are simply incapable of applying logical processes to observed facts in order to arrive at the most probably correct conclusions. Worse, they don't even care that they can't

work. In recent years, however, religious zealots have again taken to direct use of violence and coercion to achieve their ends. This is most noticeable in the activities of the so-called right to life movement, which has employed physical harassment, arson, bombings, and murder to achieve its ends.

The end result of all of this institutionalized violence and coercion is a seemingly endless cycle of authoritarian attempts to control others, with attendant resistance, followed by further increases in the use of violence and coercion by the controllers. The truly sad thing about all this is that those who are the victims of violence and coercion often see no other way to resist but through their own use of violence and coercion (either directly or via the government)—and so the cycle continues, generation after generation.

Given that means determine ends, it's essential to abandon coercion if a peaceful, free, and nonviolent society is the goal. This means that any movement for fundamental change cannot rely on violence and coercion (governmental or direct) to achieve its ends. It must, instead, rely upon persuasion, education, and psychological understanding, and must also provide models of voluntary cooperation for others to emulate.

The ZEGG intentional community in Germany provides a good example of the voluntary approach. One of the primary reasons that participation in social change groups is so stultifying is that most such groups—if they do anything other than meet—sponsor *group* projects in which all members are *expected* to participate. The result is that members often participate in projects in which they have little if any interest; so, many of them become resentful and drop away from the projects and groups. Another result is that such group projects, and the groups sponsoring them, very often lack dynamism and end up mired in internal power struggles and squabbling (with the different factions wanting everyone to work on *their* projects). ZEGG has avoided this trap. ZEGG largely functions as an umbrella organization in which individual and small group projects arise. At ZEGG, individuals and small groups originate projects, and only those who feel drawn to the projects participate in them. This avoids the group-projects trap.

Nonhierarchical Organization and Decentralization

In addition to relying on coercion, all of our major social institutions are also hierarchically organized. The destructive effects of such an organizational structure are manifold. The first and most obvious is that it results in a lot of stupid decisions, with a lot of resultant harm and

Other groups, especially antinuclear groups, have sporadic projects, come to life during the projects, and then fall apart as soon as they're over. The Livermore Action Group (LAG) in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1980s is a good example. LAG had no ongoing projects, but rather lurched from one nonviolent direct action to another (against the Lawrence Livermore Lab—a nuclear weapons development facility). During the time leading up to the action, LAG came alive; but as soon as the action was over, all energy drained from the group. There are lessons to be drawn from this.

It certainly appears that having *some* kind of outward-focused, ongoing project—especially one related to the group's aims—is vital to any political group. There are many possibilities. Projects that I'm aware of that have helped to cement groups include bookstores, cafes, coffee houses, bars, lecture series, meeting/lecture/dance halls, pirate radio stations, and publishing projects. Food Not Bombs, which is organized around delivering food to the hungry and homeless (while exposing the reasons that there are so many hungry and homeless), is an excellent example of a political group with a solid utilitarian side.

Seventh, and importantly, means determine ends. The methods and organization of a movement toward real change must mirror its goals. This means, among other things, the embracement of voluntary cooperation and noncoerciveness; nonhierarchical organization; decentralization (that is, local autonomy); and spontaneous leadership.

Voluntary Cooperation / Noncoerciveness

Voluntary cooperation is an important principle. At present, our most important social institutions—government, business, and religion—are all organized around a diametrically opposed principle: coercion. All of these institutions rely upon coercion to achieve their ends. Government does this directly through the threat (and often the use) of armed force. Business relies on governmental coercion to maintain an inequitable social system in which it can flourish; it often battens off contracts funded by the monies that the government extorts from the public (through taxation); and it often influences the government to give it unfair advantages, either through subsidies or through artificial limitation of competition. As for religion, when they've had the power to do so, patriarchal religions such as christianity and islam have invariably used coercion to enforce their "moral" dictates. In the West, the declining power of the christian churches has forced them over the past 200 or 300 years to rely upon government to do their coercive dirty

do this, and often have contempt for those who can. Many people actually believe that their own wishful thinking and uninformed opinions are every bit as valid as scientific theories formulated after years of careful study and testing. (Probably the most blatant current example of this tendency is the equation of religious dogma with scientific theory in so-called scientific creationism, which presents biblical myths as "science.") The end result of all this is that we have a population which is not only frustrated, fearful and mean, but that doesn't think very well.

Put another way, our society faces a grave spiritual crisis: most people feel so alienated, hopeless, and out of control, that they've abandoned (if they ever pursued) intellectual honesty and the search for truth, and instead blindly grab at any concepts and any movements, no matter how absurd, that seem to offer an easy way out of (or even a glimmer of hope in) what they perceive as a hopeless situation. Cults such as Heaven's Gate and the People's Temple are only the most obvious manifestation of this desperate longing for certainty in an uncertain world. Astrology, fundamentalist christianity, and narcissistic, you-create-your-own-reality belief systems are less dramatic, but equally real, manifestations of this desperate, facts-be-damned longing for certainty. What all of these things have in common is that while they can't stand up to a moment's critical scrutiny, they provide easy answers. To some extent they relieve their believers of the "burden" of being critically minded adults; and many of them almost entirely relieve their believers of that "burden." What makes many providers of easy answers, especially fundamentalist religions, truly dangerous is that they not only appeal to the most intellectually craven parts of the human psyche, but that they organize their believers into herds intent on imposing their beliefs on others.

(Even though they may appear very dissimilar to the irrational beliefs of those searching for certainty, other absurd common beliefs, such as those in alien abductions and widespread satanic ritual abuse, serve a similar function. Although many believers in alien abductions and satanic ritual abuse cast themselves as *victims*, their beliefs, like those of new-age narcissists, provide them comfort—their beliefs supply a handy excuse for personal insecurity, neuroses, and lack of accomplishment in life. Like other irrational beliefs, these particular beliefs provide their holders with a means of escaping the "burden" of being responsible, critically minded adults.)

Of course, there are other factors involved in producing current social reality, and we'll get to them shortly. But patriarchal religions and the degradation of human reason have played a larger role than is commonly recognized.

Patriarchal Religions and Competition-Based Economics

At the dawn of the modern state, patriarchal religion combined with competition-based economics to produce truly toxic effects. Put briefly, these effects were the degradation and sexual enslavement of women, and the creation of the patriarchal family.

The available evidence indicates that relations between the sexes in human societies tended to be relatively egalitarian during prehistoric (hunting and gathering) times. But that all changed about 8,000 years ago when human beings began to practice agriculture (large-scale food production). That made it possible, for the first time in human history, for people to create and to accumulate surplus goods on a relatively large scale. There's fairly convincing evidence that almost as soon as this happened inequalities arose (or at least greatly intensified) between the sexes, and that a ruling elite first appeared.

There are various theories to explain this sudden inequality. The one that makes the most sense to me is the theory that during prehistoric times woman's primary economic role was that of gatherer. Once *man* began to practice agriculture, the primary economic role of woman disappeared, and with it the basis for her equality with man. With that, man began to call the shots.

Since one of the functions of a ruling class is to perpetuate itself—and because the early ruling classes consisted of royal families—female sexual exclusivity soon became mandatory. The ruler wanted to know that his children were, in fact, his. A similar thing happened in the lower classes with the advent of private property. Men who accumulated even small amounts of wealth wanted to pass it on to their heirs. So, the patriarchal family was born.

(At this point it's probably good to mention that, largely because of this enslavement of women, a lot of people tend to romanticize prehistoric societies. This is a mistake. While there were undoubtedly a lot of good aspects to prehistoric societies, there were also a lot of bad ones. The most obvious is the early age of death. The average age of death in prehistoric societies, according to many forensic studies, ranged from about 25 to about 35. As well, women suffered greatly from preventable [in modern times] health problems; due almost certainly to the lack of safe, effective contraception, the life expectancy of women was several years shorter than that of men in prehistoric societies.)

Regardless of the positive and negative aspects of such societies, we know that early historic societies were rigidly hierarchical and authori-

attention to the social and emotional spheres—it should provide forums in which its members can explore their desires and motivations, and it should also organize many primarily social events. Of course, this approach would be unworkable under extreme circumstances, as in Nazi-occupied Europe, but in relatively open (and anomistic) western societies, it makes eminent good sense.

Fifth, a workable movement for change *must* have clearly delineated *positive goals*. One of the primary reasons for the failure of the left in the United States is that it never put forth a positive, clearly outlined vision of a better society; and, given the lack of a clear vision, it has done very little to create positive alternatives. Instead, the left has concentrated on campaigns *against* the various excesses of capitalism—*against* the Viet Nam war; *against* nuclear power; *against* racial and sexual discrimination; *against* environmental despoliation; etc., etc., etc.

When the left has outlined positive alternatives, they've been fragmentary and unconnected (as with the solar power and the pro-choice movements). Worse, at times the left's vision has been so myopic that it's promoted destructive programs (for example, so-called affirmative action) that implicitly accept the concept of a scarcity economy and that are seemingly designed to put the working class at war with itself. (Affirmative action is an approach made in heaven for the ruling class. It produces no fundamental social change. It hides the economic nature of exploitation under a racial veneer. And it takes the price of the small improvements it produces out of the hide of the white working class—thus setting workers of different races at each other's throats.) Given this lack of a holistic positive vision, it's little wonder that the left is dispirited and disorganized. This situation will change only when we outline a comprehensive, positive vision based on daily life, a vision that will address the real needs and desires of the average person.

Sixth, any meaningful movement toward social change must have a utilitarian side. It must have actual, ongoing projects not related to its own maintenance in which members can actively participate. One of the primary reasons that the American left has been so dead for so many years is that leftist organizations almost invariably have been fixated upon themselves. The primary goal of a good many—especially political parties—has seemingly been merely to sign up new members and to “build the organization,” which largely accounts for why leftist groups and meetings are almost always deadly dull. Other leftist groups are organized so that a small staff does all of the real work (if any), while the inactive “members” are looked upon merely as cash cows. Both approaches are recipes for lifeless, do-little organizations.

movement that will create real change? Here are a few avenues worthy of exploration:

First, a workable approach must take into account the individual's sexual longings and repressions. These are at the core of the average individual's identity and desires—and at the core of his or her authoritarian personality structures. It's almost certain that Wilhelm Reich was right when he said (in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*) that, "The interest of the mass individual is not political, but sexual." So, any realistic movement toward real social change *must* address sexual issues.

Second, such an approach must be both theoretical and experiential. It must be theoretical if it's to be cohesive, and if those in it are to understand its goals, purposes, and to maintain their motivation—that is, to have a motivating higher vision. And it must be experiential if any real change is to occur in the psyches of those in it, and in those of the people they're trying to reach. Lacking such psychological change, the old authoritarian structures will continue to reproduce themselves no matter what the level of theoretical understanding.

Third, a successful movement for change must be self-sustaining. Probably the most desirable way to achieve this self-sustainability is that those in the movement derive enough benefits and support from participating in it, and understand its purposes well enough, that they remain motivated and active. And the experiential aspects can provide the motivating benefits.

Fourth, in order to provide those benefits, any successful movement will need to provide its members considerably more pleasure than pain. One of the main reasons that the left is so dull is its emphasis on self-sacrifice to the exclusion of pleasure, and its use of guilt as a means of manipulation; many leftist groups are outright puritanical, and even the most enlightened usually treat pleasure as something frivolous, as something unworthy of attention. As a result, participation in most political groups is about as enjoyable as a visit to the dentist. The results of this are a high dropout rate and the continued participation of only the most self-sacrificing members—who, of course, feel justified in demanding (or at least expecting) similar self-sacrifice from everyone else, which contributes to the high dropout rate, and so on.

Historically, leftist groups have never recognized that people are, by and large, *not* altruistic. Instead, they're fearful, insecure and, above all, lonely; and most join political groups as much to meet their own social needs as they do to advance the causes of the groups. When their needs aren't met or, worse, are ridiculed, they leave in droves. What this means is that any successful movement for social change must pay considerable

tarian, and that women in them were degraded and sexually enslaved. Naturally, this inequality, degradation, and enslavement needed justification, and patriarchal religions arose to provide it. Judeo-christianity is a good example. In many judeo-christian "holy" texts, women are treated as unclean, as property, as inferior to men, and, as such, subject to rule by men. Here are a few divinely inspired words on women:

How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? —Job 25:4

These [redeemed] are they which were not defiled with women. —Revelation 14:4

Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. —1 Corinthians 11:9

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church . . . —Ephesians 5:22

Thus, the contribution of patriarchal religion to our social situation includes not only contempt for the human intellect, an authoritarian, thou-shalt-not "morality," and the embracement of violence as a means to enforce that "morality," but also (along with competition-based economics) the subjection and degradation of women. The contributions of patriarchal religion and competition-based economics hardly end there, though.

Social Ramifications of the Patriarchal Family

We've seen that female sexual enslavement and the rise of monogamy (at least for women) arose with the advent of agriculture and private property, and that the justification for this was provided by religion. Just as important, however, was the concurrent advent of the patriarchal family—also sanctioned by religion.

While the form of the patriarchal family has changed over the ages—from large extended families (of married adult brothers, ranked by age) to isolated, nuclear families—it has retained its most important feature: male domination and female subservience. And it has retained its role as a bulwark in maintaining an authoritarian, hierarchical social order.

Only over the last century or so has anyone made a serious study of the role of the patriarchal family in society. Probably its most acute observer was Wilhelm Reich, a prominent psychologist and political radical who fled Germany upon Hitler's rise to power. Here, in a nutshell, is Reich's view of the function of the patriarchal family:

Its cardinal function, that for which it is mostly supported and defended by conservative science and law, is that of serving as a factory for authoritarian ideologies and conservative structures. It forms the educational apparatus through which practically every individual of our society, from the moment of drawing his first breath, must pass.

—*The Sexual Revolution*

Reich posited that the obedience and deference to parents inculcated in children in the patriarchal family is transferred in their adulthood to other authority figures—bosses, politicians, and, in a more general sense, to the entire governmental and economic apparatus. It seems equally likely that the social identification with the family developed in childhood is later transferred to other social entities, such as employers and the state. We're all familiar with workers who fiercely identify with their employers, even when their employers are paying them lousy wages or are causing great and obvious social harm—for example, through clear cutting forests or by producing land mines. We're equally familiar with the multitudes who, especially in time of war, blindly identify themselves with "their" governments, who ardently support suppression of dissent and destruction of civil liberties, and whose most fervent desire seems to be submersion in the "patriotic" herd.

As is obvious, such misguided loyalty is seldom returned in kind. Employers usually think nothing of abandoning sick or injured employees, and mass firings—to use the current euphemism, "downsizings"—are simply business as usual. Most governments do little to reward their partisans, either, as the often-shabby treatment of veterans demonstrates; and the powers ceded to government by "patriots" are often turned against them when the "patriots" cease to serve the government's needs. Clearly, rational thought plays equally little part in obedience/deference to authority figures and in identification of the self with external entities.

But what replaces rational thought in modern society? Reich's answer is that powerful, largely unconscious psychological forces are at work, and that the source of these psychological forces lies in sexual repression. Maurice Brinton, a modern interpreter of Reich, paints an entertaining portrait of the repressive conditioning process:

mentality which makes them afraid of each other. Anarchists appeal to reason and ignore the fact that most people never learned to think very well in the first place. And they ignore the fact that most people are sexually repressed and fearful, and that as a result have poor self-images, crave "strong leaders," and feel at home in rigid hierarchies based on domination and submission. In short, anarchism has failed because it has relied on education and intellectual persuasion, an approach that deals with *external* social realities. As long as it continues to do so, it will continue to fail. To put it another way, anarchism has failed because it expects people to act as responsible, rational, self-directed adults without giving them a means of getting from here to there. (This isn't to say that the educational approach is useless—far from it; rather, it's to say that up till now the educational approach has been fragmentary and is not sufficient in itself to produce fundamental change.)

A cogent explanation of the failure of the purely rational, educational approach to social change is contained in Michel Cattier's biography of Wilhelm Reich, *La Vie et l'Oeuvre du Docteur Wilhelm Reich*:

It would be wrong to believe that working people fail to revolt because they lack information about the mechanisms of economic exploitation. In fact, revolutionary propaganda which seeks to explain to the masses the social injustice and irrationality of the economic system falls on deaf ears. Those who get up at five in the morning to work in a factory, and have on top of it to spend two hours of every day on underground or suburban trains, have to adapt to these conditions by eliminating from their minds anything that might put such conditions in question again. If they realized that they were wasting their lives in the service of an absurd system they would either go mad or commit suicide.

Maurice Brinton adds (in *The Irrational in Politics*), "They repress anything that might disturb them and acquire a character structure adapted to the conditions under which they must live. Hence it follows that the idealistic tactic consisting of explaining to people that they are oppressed is useless, as people have had to suppress the perception of oppression in order to live with it."

Avenues to Change

Obviously, any approach that will produce fundamental social change must address psychological realities—and *not* in a purely theoretical, educational way. How is this to be done? How are we to produce a

Marxism & Leninism

The most influential of these attempts at change has been marxism, more specifically, leninism and its variants. While some portions of the marxist analysis of capitalist economics are valid, the political approach of leninism has been so hideously and obviously wrong that it merits little discussion. Suffice it to say that the numerous leninist attempts to build free, peaceful, egalitarian societies through the systematic use of coercion, violence, and terror by small elites have not been huge successes. The contradictions between means and ends doomed the leninist project to failure—but not, unfortunately, before leninism doomed tens of millions to prison, concentration camps, and death. (It's also worth noting that almost all leninist societies have been pronouncedly sexually repressive.)

Nonleninist marxist approaches haven't been very successful either. The most important of these, social democracy—in which “socialist” political parties take over government through democratic elections—has fallen far short of its followers' expectations. It's largely delivered more of the same-old-same-old, sugar coated with a few mild reforms.

Anarchism

The other major revolutionary ideology of the last century has been anarchism. Many of anarchism's ideas should be fundamental to any new culture. These include the concepts of mutual aid, noncoerciveness, voluntary cooperation rather than competition, nonhierarchical organization, decentralization, and individual freedom coupled with individual responsibility. Still, anarchism has not succeeded and has, rather, remained a marginal, misunderstood, largely ineffectual ideology. Given the attractiveness of many anarchist concepts, why is this so?

Neglecting the baleful influence of irresponsible, mean-spirited, anti-organizational, and just plain crazy “anarchists” (a problem I dealt with in *Listen Anarchist!*, and which Murray Bookchin has dealt with more recently and at greater length in *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*), the most likely explanation is that anarchism has failed because it addressed, and for the most part continues to address, only political and economic (that is, *external*) issues. It ignores the psychological factor, and so is, by and large, ineffective. Anarchists seem unaware that the people they address are, for the most part, lonely, insecure, and have a scarcity

Rigid and obsessional parents start by imposing rigid feeding times on the newborn. They then seek to impose regular potting habits on infants scarcely capable of maintaining the sitting posture. They are obsessed by food, bowels, and the ‘inculcating of good habits.’ A little later they will start scolding and punishing their masturbating five year old . . . They are horrified at their discovery of sexual exhibitionism between consenting juniors in private. Later still, they will warn their 12-year-old boys of the dire danger of ‘real masturbation.’ They will watch the clock to see at what time their 15-year-old daughters get home, or search their sons' pockets for contraceptives. For most parents, the child-rearing years are one long anti-sexual saga.

—*The Irrational in Politics*

According to Reich and Brinton, most children—who originally, innocently engaged in normal childhood sexual exploration—rebel against this anti-sexual crusade by masturbating or engaging in other sexual “misbehavior.” They are then repeatedly punished until they submerge their sexual feelings (or at least actions). But the submerged feelings (and resentments) don't go away; instead, they resurface in nonsexual forms of rebellion, which are again punished. So, sexual feelings and rebellion—in all forms—become associated with punishment, and thus associated with fear. To survive, children become compliant; often, children become so afraid of their sexual feelings, and indeed of revolt in any form, that punishment becomes no longer necessary in producing obedience. Another form of adaptation is overcompensation. To win parental favor, children become servile and, especially when their families are members of anti-sexual religions, puritanical. They identify themselves strongly with their families, with their (subservient) place in their families, and with their families' prudish, authoritarian belief systems.

But this adaptation is far from stable, because the children's new behaviors and beliefs are fundamentally in conflict with their deeper, suppressed desires for individual and sexual expression. And the longer the suppressive adaptations continue, the greater the tension in the individual. For this reason, sexually repressed individuals are almost always hypersensitive to the sexual behaviors and sexual expressions of others, because these expressions and behaviors arouse anxiety; they threaten to arouse deeply suppressed sexual longings fundamentally at odds with expressed beliefs. So, the sexually repressed are often noticeably rigid, and are *always* at the forefront of “moral” crusades for censorship and for suppression of individual sexual freedom.

But, in addition to producing fear of rebellion, fear of sexuality, obedience, servility, abandonment of self, identification with external entities, and repressive, authoritarian behavior, sexual repression has another unfortunate effect as well: a blunting of reason and intelligence. In Brinton's words, "it produces, by inhibiting sexual curiosity and sexual thinking in the child, a general inhibition of thinking and of critical faculties."

He sums up: "In brief, the goal of sexual repression is that of producing an individual who is adjusted to the authoritarian order and who will submit to it in spite of all misery and degradation . . . [The individual] has developed a whole system of reactions, repressions, thoughts, rationalizations, which form a character structure adapted to the authoritarian social system."

Aggravating Factors

This type of familial repression and conditioning is pervasive. It affects nearly everyone to a greater or lesser extent. To make matters even worse, it's reinforced by other, albeit less powerful, forms of authoritarian conditioning in the religious, educational, and mass media spheres. Familial repression ties in neatly with anti-sexual patriarchal religions, whose "thou shalt," "thou shalt nots," believe-don't-question teachings, and hierarchical, authoritarian structures reward their sexually repressed followers with feelings of superiority over their "animalistic" fellow humans. Members of such religions feel several rungs up on the rest of us morally, and thus feel no compunction—indeed, they often feel pleasure—when attempting to impose their repressive beliefs on those they consider beneath them.

The educational system is also an important authoritarian conditioning agent. In primary and secondary education, children are subjected to a type of Pavlovian conditioning utilizing bells and buzzers, interspersed with domination and submission rituals. They are quickly forced to become aware of their "natural" place in the administrator-teacher-student pecking order, and to accept it unquestioningly. All of this serves as a powerful reinforcement to the sexually repressive, authoritarian conditioning that they receive at home and at church, and it helps to prepare them for "normal" roles in adult life.

To a great extent higher education retains the authoritarian structure of primary and secondary education, the seeming purpose of which is to habituate children to life in a hierarchical, authoritarian society. It is true that some academic disciplines, especially the fine arts and sciences,

often encourage students to express themselves, to think for themselves, and to develop questioning attitudes. (It's no accident that the leading dissidents in the former Soviet Union were in the arts and hard sciences.) But in most other academic disciplines, for example, business administration and engineering, the emphasis is purely on learning utilitarian skills useful in making money. As well, higher education retains the hierarchical administrator-teacher-student pecking order, and there is, if anything, an even greater emphasis on grades (that is, competition among students) than there is in primary and secondary education. So, despite some mitigating factors, the overall role of higher education is to reinforce the authoritarian lessons learned in grade school and high school.

The third important conditioning agent is the mass media. In addition to presenting violence and coercion as acceptable, desirable, or even the *only* means of solving problems (as on TV cop shows), the media reinforces authoritarian structures in a more subtle way: it routinely presents such structures as not only being normal, but as being *inevitable*. Even at the height of the Cold War, when power-grubbing sociopaths in Washington and Moscow stockpiled enough nuclear weapons to turn the Earth into a burned out cinder—and came within an eyelash of doing so in 1962—one *never* found even the faintest suggestion that there was any way to organize social life other than through coercive, hierarchical structures controlled by power-mad politicians holding the power of life and death over the rest of us. In part because of the media, most people won't even consider the possibility that there are alternatives to domination, submission, hierarchy, and coercion.

Some Failed Attempts at Change

At present, we're faced with what we've been faced with ever since the dawn of what passes for civilization: an authoritarian, hierarchical society in which women are oppressed, in which sexuality is repressed, in which it's dangerous to have unorthodox ideas or to engage in unorthodox behaviors, in which there's a gross maldistribution of wealth and income, in which a small elite controls all of the major institutions—and in which most people see all of this as normal.

Over the last hundred years, there have been many attempts to create a new society through political means. Some have partially succeeded, some have been ineffectual, and some, almost unbelievably, have made things worse—in some cases, far worse.