Communes

Survival in Amerika #1

Fifth Estate Collective
J.R. Kennedy

1970

The Fifth Estate is going to start a "Survival in Amerika" column, beginning with this issue.

With all the shit that's coming down in Amerika today, and with the revolution that's starting to build, our lives are changing very rapidly on all levels. Whether by choice or by fate, all of us are finding ourselves having to deal with new situations under new conditions. And this produces new hassles. We have to learn new skills, find out new kinds of information, and develop new ways of living just for the basic purpose of survival.

Survival means many different things. Women need the power to determine when and when not to have kids—information on birth control and free abortions must be freely exchanged. Guys have to know how to keep themselves out of the Pig Army and how to deal with the mad butchers down at Fort Wayne. We need to learn new skills—how to fire a rifle, how to run mimeograph machines, etc. Health care must be provided (the government won't do it), so the V.D., smack, and speed that run rampant in our communities can be eliminated. We need to know all the rip-offs and free things in the city. And with the pigs running wild in the streets, we need to learn all kinds of self-defense—armed, legal and medical. We need to know these things and much more.

The time is coming when the practical application of all this knowledge and all these skills will be an everyday necessity, part of our total existence. The first major transformation that will come, however, is the reorganization of our life style and our social relationships with other people, so we can indeed really survive and put our new revolutionary skills and ideas to work.

For this purpose, we are initiating the Survival Column with a rap about communes.

Communes

by J.R. Kennedy

Lately, more and more communes are beginning to appear in the Motor City. They aren't just happening without reason, but are responses to problems that many young people are having to face. For a lot of kids things are beginning to get very tight.

Economically, jobs are hard to find and apartments are too expensive. School and home can become a drag because they often only seek to separate and isolate us from our friends. Police harassment and brutality is on the increase. It's getting down.

If young kids try and hang out in the parks, or any place else, they are attacked by pigs and forced to split. If they try and fight back alone, they are beaten and busted. At all levels of our lives young people


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are feeling the weight of failure, as the contradictions of this system become more obvious. We must fight back together.

So a commune is more than a good idea. For many, it has become a real necessity. It is necessary because we have realized that when we come together, live together and work together we can begin to have an effect.

Far too often, existing political forms, outside or inside the movement, have failed to provide ways of confronting those issues. A commune is more than a chance to get together and enjoy yourself. It is a revolutionary living experience that can become a force for change in the conditions of our lives, and in the lives of our brothers and sisters.

Within a commune we can grow personally by developing new ways of dealing with each other. There will be some who cannot face the challenges, because it is not easy. Struggle is involved, but it is a positive thing. We can move closer to our brothers and sisters. To love we must fight.

The shortage of bread and jobs, police repression and harassment, personal isolation and the lack of methods for solution, all have made communes an important, and in many cases, a direct necessity.

A commune can seldom become a stagnant institution. It is alive and moving. It is always changing and growing as new ideas are exchanged and developed. It is not an easy option. A commune that is part of the revolutionary struggle grows out of need and understanding, and is guided by love and concern for one another.

If a commune establishes itself within a community and tries to support and relate to that community, it can develop a base where the people understand your struggle also and will support you. We must understand that a commune is not an end in itself. It must become a means, a way to bring us and our people closer together—closer to social freedom.

When our people are busted we can bail them out because we have collective strength. We can pull that bread together and buy or rent a house. We can eat good meals without the high cost. We can help our friends; we can expand and grow.

We can coordinate efforts with other communes, organizations, and community projects. We can begin to assert ourselves as a real political force.

So, get it on and get it together. It's not that hard. Join with your friends and the group that you hang with. Rent a house; set up ways for work division; divide the costs. You can make it happen.

You can go direct to the bakeries (Wonderbread and Silvercup have a "thrift shop" outside the factory) and buy bread at less than half the cost. You can pick up some deals at Gratiot Central Market. You can learn to live. You can learn to fight for each other.

You can get together once a week or so and have meetings to talk about the things that have come down. You can feel the changes.

A commune is part of the life style that is part of the revolutionary struggle. It's heavy, but it's all about awareness and power. Seize the time.

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