

1989 Anarchist Gathering

San Francisco: (A) without borders

Fifth Estate Collective

1989

Final planning is in high gear for the 1989 Anarchist Conference/Festival to be held in San Francisco on July 20–25. Its theme and name are “Without Borders.” Over 3,000 anti-authoritarians and anarchists from around the world are expected to attend, which would exceed the total participants for the last three previous gatherings in Toronto, Minneapolis and Chicago.

The address and phone number of the Conference/Festival are: Without Borders, 1369 Haight St., San Francisco, CA 94117; 415/864-4674 or 431-8355. There is a reservation form the organizers ask participants to complete; it is available from the above address or from the Fifth Estate office.

The organizers of the event say they are hoping to create an “anarchist city”—“an experimental environment where we can live and learn.” The scope of the event is so immense that two volunteer food service groups, Seeds of Peace and Food Not Bombs expect to be serving approximately 24,000 meals. Room rentals alone may cost as much as \$5,000. At our press time, however, the site had not been secured.

Participants should come prepared to contribute to the expense of the conference and food being provided. Contributions are also needed immediately to defray the large and mounting costs of such a large undertaking, so both individual and collective efforts are encouraged. In March, the Ann Arbor anarchists held a fund-raising function and one is planned for the Detroit area just prior to the event. T-shirts, a poster and other items are available from Without Borders to both publicize the event and to raise money (they are shown on p. 14).

Since San Francisco is at land’s end, transportation will be a problem for many people outside of the region. The Without Borders organizing group is putting together a list of regional carpool contacts throughout North America. If you can function as a regional contact write the Without Borders office or call 414/UNI-HOPI. Also, people needing rides should contact them for the person in their area. Locally, people can call us or write the FE office for information on rides or if they are driving.

San Francisco is an expensive, tight-for-space town so you should secure sleeping accommodations as soon as possible. If you are not able to provide them yourself, contact the Housing Committee immediately or call them at 415/541-5613, or write c/o Carrie Faak, 273 Frederick, San Francisco, CA 94117.

Conference Structure

The week-long event will have much of the same structure(lessness) as other gatherings, with educational/workshop/forums, cultural events and a Day of Action all scheduled. Undoubtedly all of it will carry with it the unique flavor of the West Coast. Themes of the workshops are similar to those in Toronto: the anarchist press; animal liberation, national liberation struggles; ecology; etc.

One difference this year will be specific theme days. July 18–20 will see separate women’s and men’s pre-gatherings which will in part allow each gender to gather its different strengths and sense of identity for what

will probably be a fairly turbulent week. Anarchist women will hold their OWN (Obnoxious Wimmin's Network) gathering beginning July 18 with discussions, actions and festivities. They plan a full moon ritual with music from Blue Vulva Underground. Hopefully a RAW Power (Revolutionary Anarchist Wimmin) t-shirt will be made in time for the gathering, if funds are available. Contact AnarchaFeminist Pre-Gathering '89, Box 915, Station F, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 2N9 Canada for more information.

July 19th is the date of a Men's Day camp-out in a rural area north of San Francisco. Contact Without Borders for more information. All other events will take place in San Francisco except the Day of Action.

Friday, July 21st has been designated as a Day of Anti-Sexism followed on Saturday, the 22nd by a Day of Anti-Racism. The institutions of patriarchy and racism constitute two of the most powerfully negative forces in the ruling ideology—ones which keep people fighting among themselves rather than confronting the rulers.

The anarchist-anti-authoritarian movement seems strong in its commitment to anti-sexism, but remains a largely white movement. This is neither a criticism nor a call for "recruitment" of minorities, but rather for the recognition that minority communities and particularly black ones are under increasing racist attack by the ruling society.

Materially, the conditions within black districts are deteriorating at an incredible pace and physical assault from cops and neo-nazis is at a fever pitch. It is squarely within the anarchist tradition of mutual aid to learn what is happening in the most oppressed sectors of society and to assist in whatever manner called for.

Other days and events are still being planned at this writing.

Day of Action

Perhaps the most controversial of all the events at past gatherings and one which continues to be at this one, is the Day of Action—demonstrations which each year have led to confrontation with the police. There has been considerable heated debate as to the wisdom of such marches which have traditionally followed each gathering. They were a subject of much discussion at the Philadelphia conference planning meeting in January.

One side argues that militant confrontation with the police and damage to capitalist property is what will help build a radical, street-oriented movement. Those critical of such forays see them as useless expenditures of resources, time and money, to say nothing of the arrests and injuries sustained at the hands of the police. They also contend that such public expressions of violent behavior only strengthen the common stereotype of anarchists as representing "chaos" while those who support the actions feel that is what will attract people, particularly youth, to a combative movement.

Some, but not all of the dispute, unfortunately, splits along an age fracture with much of the "wisdom" against such adventures coming from older comrades, while those anxious for street confrontations are often, but not exclusively, younger in age. Those at the center of the fray in each engagement with the cops, and particularly in Toronto, seemed to be in their late teens to early 20s so maybe the disagreement is understandable.

After hearing quite a bit from both sides of the argument, we're content to let youthful exuberance take the lead. All the practical arguments seem to make sense, but when you're in the streets, it's often the spirit of the moment that takes charge. So, if there's a confrontational demo in the East Bay, so be it. Each of us will have to decide what level of support and participation we feel capable of at the time it occurs.

A Day of Action (DOA) committee has been formed in the East Bay area (Berkeley, Oakland, etc.) assuring that the demonstration would take place outside of San Francisco proper. This is in part a tactical consideration given the incredible viciousness of the S.F. police. (See letter in this issue.)

A lot of advance planning has been taking place such as researching targets, legal information, medical personnel (!), fundraising for a bail fund, so if an action occurs, it will be well provided for. During the gathering, action planning meetings will be held daily to decide on the day's scenario, to form affinity groups and to organize jail solidarity.

The DOA Committee would like people to voice concerns, ideas and proposals for the action. They also need fundraising for bail money and to publicize the event. If you're interested in what the planners call a "dynamic, militant, effective action against the state," contact Dogtown Anarchy House, 1491 34th St., Oakland, CA 94608.

Another controversy which will surely raise its head again is the desire in some quarters to create a continental anarchist organization. We at the *Fifth Estate* have always viewed the sorry history of such formations, no matter how well intentioned as resulting in stultifying, bureaucratic morasses which become a substitute for building

an anti-authoritarian movement. Unfortunately, they often become playpens for those who feel insecure unless surrounded by a structure with rules, titles, programs, etc. This is the stuff of the authoritarian Leninist movement and should be left there where it belongs.

It probably makes no sense to attempt to block such an effort since its establishment would at least serve to halt the frantic agitation among those who seem to think that an anarchist movement has no chance to develop without an organizational form. It would also hopefully put an end to the rabid attacks on those of us who won't ride the hobbyhorse of organizationism and let such a grouping rise or fall of its own efforts.

We hear that the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) plans to formally disband by this Fall, so one can expect that, having been left bereft of a comforting structure, its ex-members will be scrambling to get in on the ground floor of any new anarchist organization. An organization of the type envisioned by those pushing for it in Toronto would group all of those similarly inclined into one unit and hopefully mean that we won't be bothered with the same old arguments at Gatherings for the next few years.

However, maybe someone should give the sad history of the Anarchist Communist Federation which existed in the 1970s for a few years as an example of why such groups are dismal failures. As usual, we would also suggest a reading of Camatte's *On Organization* for an unflattering picture of such activity.

Coordination and (gasp!) even organization will come about as a movement begins to build and spread. It will occur organically and doesn't need a name or rules or a program. Such organization occurs overnight when the situation demands it as in Poland during the early days of the Solidarity movement or most recently in China as the people prepared to defend Beijing against the Red Army. Relax, comrade militants, build your local movements, write letters to each other, send out your local papers and 'zines and release the chimera of organization from your consciousness; an organization will only create an illusion of anarchism while driving you crazy. Have some confidence in anarchy!

Hopefully, such a discussion of organization will only be a minor note in what should prove to be an enlivening and richly rewarding experience. As revolution again comes to the forefront world-wide, it is the notion of anarchy alone which goes beyond the tired reforms of new political parties, new politicians or "revolutionary" nation states. We may be in the calm before the storm, a storm which gives no prior notice of its arrival, and the idea of a world swept clean of rulers, their planet-killing machines and the international work pyramid can begin in San Francisco this July as well as anywhere else. Let's do it all!

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