

Profane Existence publishes last issue

Crisis in the Anarchist Press?

Peter Werbe

1999

We received word in mid-October that Minneapolis' *Profane Existence* magazine was printing its last issue. The collective also announced cessation of their wholesale and mail order distribution, and record production operations.

Besides noting some financial difficulties, this prolific group, cited being "overwhelmed," "we have no personal lives," and "the pay sucks." In other words, terminal burn-out after a decade of what they define as "a very all-consuming undertaking."

The PE project, with its zine's front page boast of "Making Punk A Threat Again," (again?) and their hardcore lifestyle probably would put them in Murray Bookchin's hottest section of Hell, but as much as we had political disagreements with them, they were the core of their city's anarchist activism.

Ultimately, as many of the youthful participants grew older, had families, and in some cases, the heavy drinking and partying punk scene took its toll, it was just too much to maintain by a committed but small group.

PE's demise, following that of the *Love & Rage* newspaper, does not bode well. Usually in a period of ascendancy for a movement, papers are flourishing, not closing. This leaves only Anarchy and ourselves as part of the older anarchist papers to serve what many of us thought was an expanding movement, and both these publications are publishing erratically.

What to do? First and most importantly, take up the call of the late PE collective to DIY—Do It Yourself. Publishing is a tall order for isolated individuals, although there is a marked increase in one-person zines due to the availability of xerox and computer technology, including the Internet.

Collectives can more easily take on the task, but a regularly appearing publication takes time and resources. Optimally, activists are involved in resistance and community building and communicating their work through a zine or paper.

Often, projects have successes, but no one else in the movement is ever the wiser for it. Communicating to people local accomplishments gives others ideas for similar projects in their area, and combats the feeling of powerlessness and atomization the dominant culture attempts to foist on us.

Besides publishing, assisting existing papers through contributions of money and articles insures their/our survival. In Detroit, we frequently hosted pot luck suppers to fund raise for papers across the world, in the tradition of the older Italian comrades we were privileged to know at the end of their lives.

Just as we are buoyed when we receive a contribution from Australia or down the block, we knew that when we sent \$50 to a paper in Scotland, that act of mutual aid would encourage the comrades there beyond just the material support.

Anarchism is the sole remaining opposition to capitalism and the state; all others have been exposed as police state frauds or tepid and meek reformers. It's up to us to maintain and pass on the ideas of freedom that so many people in our movement before us have lived and died for.

fifth Estate

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