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Playing Custer: Adventurism in the Occupation Movement

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One thing that is more amazing than the expansion of the strategy of occupation from school to school is the remarkable similarity in the rhetoric of our opposition across terrains.

And I don't mean Capital or university administrations, I'm talking about our most fervent opponents within our own ranks: particularly among the "build the movement first" leftists.

Rather than enter the discourse over the effectiveness of the "demand and march" model of campus activism or movement building as preceding any action, these opportunists and proceduralists have resorted to calling students who take the initiative to liberate buildings and spaces "adventurists." This same term has been repeated to such a degree between New School and UC-Santa Cruz that it appears that our detractors maintain networks parallel to our own.

[Somewhat ironically, these factions of the "left" have repeatedly sought to co-opt student initiative, breaking and entering into spaces and situations of adventure merely to augment their dwindling memberships while marginalizing our rage. But in so doing,

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they are presenting a dead end avenue for venting. In fact, these self-proclaimed “revolutionary” organizations are nothing but the parasitic pygopagus conjoined twin of Capital and the State and will die upon the liquidation of both — attaching themselves to any sites of revolutionary adventure like leeches and sucking them dry. In this regard, they are no different than our student governments.]

But while they use the term pejoratively, we actually see it as a compliment. Perhaps the fact that they see adventure so distastefully sheds some light on the impotence of the contemporary Left, that they are so willing to self-castrate the only appendage that has historically been effective in staving off Capital.

But adventure is what is ultimately appealing to the disaffected masses, and what is necessary. The ability to find some excitement, to find a rupture in the daily anesthetized routine of life, is at the root of sports riots, affairs, shoplifting, and amusement parks. Television even fulfills this need when there is a lack of access to rupture or genuine adventure.

This also explains why no one comes to our meetings and rallies. We are tired of work and school, why would we choose to emulate those prisons elsewhere? Why must our “organizing” projects such model replicas of the greater mundanity of alienated life?

Adventure is self-defense, self-learning, mutual experience. We find ourselves and each other in adventure, in life-altering occurrences which tear apart the fabric of the status quo and give us a blank canvas upon which to paint our future.

We can never liberate others for them. We can never impart all of our correct consciousness upon workers, nor can we with words alone convert students to our particular brand of Marxism or Anarchism. What we can do is generalize conflict, and create situations of adventure. Remember how we ourselves came into our own individual politics: most likely through a series of life-changing experiences, through situations of adventure. With this in mind, if we are truly interested in “building the movement,” we have to understand that we can only draw our peers into the politics of

liberation through the spaces of liberation and the politics of adventure as well. “Movement” implies a continuation of action; any real movement must move to grow.

Whether we are already cognizant of its existence or not, there is a global subterranean civil war. We are all unwitting participants; our choice is not whether to fight or even who to fight, but how and where to fight. It is up to us to open new fronts, discover new weapons. Others will join the struggle as they pass through these fronts. This war cannot be won with words, guns, or members. Victory in this war depends on the generalization and expansion of adventurism, via the tactics of temporary occupation, expropriation, sabotage, and guerrilla action. If we refuse to fight, we die. If we become content with our victories and refuse to expand and generalize, we die. Only in a constant state of adventure can we experience individual and collective liberation, which inevitably recedes the moment we capitulate to authority or return to the dull, lifeless drawl of the endless meeting.

Rather than condemn adventurism, we must come to recognize the necessity of creating spaces and situations of adventurism and developing a politics of adventurism. Until then, those of us already engaged in clandestine and adventurist action will continue to do so, as we watch the rest of the “movement” atrophy.