Heatwave Communist-Anarchist Federation
Young Workers Unite!

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> *"The agitators say the disorder on the streets is a reflection of young idealism and an angry desire for change. But if what has happened showed anything, it is that the young want to take America under seige."* –Ronald Reagan, 1969

Being a young person in this modern world is awful. Growing up in a time where people are laid off a year before they retire doesn't offer much promise for us at a time when we probably won't have social security or company pensions when *we* retire. Likewise, finding a job means having to compete on a job market where potential employers want someone that is "hard-working," "loyal," and "devoted," i.e., not a slacker like you. This is supposing, of course, that the assembly-line jobs have not been moved into that invisible Third World where union organizers are killed by totalitarian governments like Nigeria and labor costs mere cents on the dollar.

Rebellion, of most any sort, has been co-opted. There was a time when being young and rebellious *was actually threatening* to society at large. There was a time when hedonistic tendencies were dangerous because the people that used them were doing so with a

complete disregard for authority, tradition, and certainly business interests. This time was marked with a simple word: Youth culture. It went in many directions, many appearances, but the origins were the same throughout: young people expressing themselves and defying the role of being a "good young person."

Being a non-"good young person" is no longer threatening, sadly. Now that advertising firms have figured out how to reproduce the "hipness" of youth culture into a product, the rebelliousness of it has become watered-down and almost without exception, insincere. Now that you can purchase your own rebellion from a store, it is relatively easy to wear rebellion as a label, but much more difficult to practice it as a tactical method. The end result is a bunch of consumers that insinuate the question, "why bother expressing myself when I can pay someone to express my angst for me?" So what starts out as young rebellion ends up as young consumption– while it may be just as fun, and certainly more accessible, the second multinational corporations involve themselves, it is no longer rebellious.

While the fun of youth culture is just fine, it ultimately does nothing to change the reality–that Monday morning, you go back to a school or a workplace that you probably hate. There was a time when youth culture was integrated with youth politics, where conflict with the "establishment" was just as fun and more productive than going to a concert and smoking pot. Certainly, there are youth organizations around; but in most cases they either waste time trying to work through the system or they have "daddy organizations" like the Socialist Worker's Party that set the membership requirements, in both cases, young revolutionary idealism is stifled. To be sure, both types of politicians want either your signature on a post-card or your undivided obedience, often times both. These groups have little respect for the tradition of youth liberating themselves and identifying their own problems, but the kids on the corner don't seem to have much interest in liberation of any sort unless it entails being a name on a list.

should be a fun spirit, otherwise it's another Monday morning at work.

So let us examine what is being stated here before we make a final conclusion. Being young in today's society means that you face the dual opposites of being both an underpaid worker as well as a member of a specific culture that is often churned out by heavy-handed businessmen (such a phenomenon is common under capitalism). The most commonly popular options are either embracing or escaping such effects of this modern society, though neither is very likely to create social change. Collectives and group settings tend to get more done and yield more results than individual acts, though it is always the individual that should be focused on so that each member feels that the group is more a service than a dominance. Communication precedes collective action through group settings and equal contributions are the most empowering means of organization. Civil disobedience should be direct so that it gets the message across, it should be enjoyable because participants will likely be using their leisure time to get involved.

In conclusion, the end result is that using the third option, collective action (as opposed to buying in or dropping out), has a very positive effect. Whereas the problem, as well as the usual "solutions" end up by leaving us feeling powerless and incapable of change, groups that are organized correctly give each and all a sense of both empowerment as well as a means of changing things. The end result, if executed well, is, as the youth of the British working-class said in 1969, "having a laugh and having a say."

So what do you do? Do you buy Brand X over Brand Y because the commercials were more hip? You can do that, but that won't change anything other than how much money you gave to some multinational corporation. Do you drop out of society and live in a wigwam to stay away from the cold grip of corporate America? You can do that also, but that, like buying Brand X, leaves the current state of affairs in tact. The only options seem to be either embracing or escaping businessmen that don't care much for you except if you gave your money to them. Even if you do decide to drop out, don't think for a second that the wealthy man will shed a tear: You stop buying, someone else will start. Are you beginning to feel powerless? Well, as long as you play by the rules of the consumer market, you are a sand on the beach; insignificant regardless of whether or not you stay or go.

So what do you do? Do you embrace or escape the leaders of this modern society? There is a third answer: Enrage! Individual attacks are full of good-intentions but rarely do they lead to anything that has a lasting effect. If individual attacks are legal, they tend to be ineffective, if they are illegal, they tend to be detrimental to the ideas that incited them. This fact begs the question: If embracing, escaping and individually enraging modern society do very little, what can be done? **Collectively enraging** modern society has a rich history of at least voicing ideas, often times even acting them out– the results of this are astounding. Collective action has led to such things as protests, rallies, resistances, even revolutions–collective action in 1930's Spain even proved that anarchism worked (as well as gave lessons on how to implement it).

In school, we are always taught that history is a collection of famous individuals shifting humanity in various directions. The heroes are always the Thomas Jeffersons, not the people that fought for what people like Jefferson believed in (like owning slaves, for example). While giving credit where credit is due is important, ideas of one person can be manipulated to justify most any course of action you prefer. It is much easier to rationalize

economic injustice by quoting Jesus, one person, than it is to discuss the equally-balanced living conditions of the early Christians, many people. Jesus said many things, but the early Christians acted in one way and one way only; thus, it is easier for a reverend to impose his authority through Jesus than through the practices of the early Christians. The same could be said of how American politicians often say such things as, "when the founding fathers gave us free speech, they didn't have obscenities in mind," given that the average man thinks about sex every few seconds, how realistic is that statement?

Collective actions have changed the world an infinite number of times, and will continue to do so until we are extinct. How does collective action come about? The answer is simple: Group settings. Group settings can be three friends that pass out leaflets to an international organization to everything in between. Group settings are created out of communication, ideas being given and received as an interaction.

As anarchists and communitarians, it is not preferred that one person creates collective action in group settings through communication; rather it is preferred that each individual in the group expands and advances a common idea and unite to act on it. It can best be summed up with this logic: A healthy union of people is best when each person contributes, otherwise, the group has degenerated into something else.

Smarty-pants jargon aside, putting this philosophy into practice means that, instead of one person selling an idea and getting them to "follow orders," it should be a group of people interacting until they reach a common idea. Not many people are interested in being preached to, and then, once "converted," told what to do by some windbag that thinks they know more. Rather, the best response is usually given when a person knows they have a voice and are considered an equal. For example, if you go to the kids on the corner and ask what issues they are most concerned about, you are likely to find that either a) they have the same concerns you do, or b) they

have different concerns that are relevant to you. Once you address the problems, you then try and find solutions.

Once the problem is addressed, the solution must be direct. Direct action is best because it decreases the possibility of the solution being systematically co-opted and it tends to get better results. For example, if you send a bunch of letters to your elected representative, you aren't forcing him/her to recognize your concerns; he/she can easily throw away those letters and forget about you. Also, if your ideas get a large following, it will be expected of you to compromise both principle and practice so that laws and regulations can be made that will appease you. However, if you take direct action, such as refusing to leave (or even refusing to stop disturbing the peace of) said elected representative's office; the message is clear and cannot easily be compromised. It must be noted that the goal of direct action is not to gain social reforms, but to increase awareness of social concerns. Increasing awareness requires inventiveness; if your methods are always the same, it gets monotonous and there can be a considerable backlash. If new tactics are constantly made and expanded on (as well as analyzed and critiqued), it makes the business of direct action more creative as well as keeps things unpredictable (which is essential when it comes to winning over an opposition).

Voting, petition-drives, letter-to-your-elected-representative and other reformist tactics are not only ineffective, they are *boring*. Why would you bother to do any of it when staging sit-ins, chaining yourself to doors, taking over offices and risking arrest is more exhilirating? Sure, joining the line and signing your name may be easy, but not a drop of adrenaline is pumped. If no one is enjoying the collective action, how many are likely to come back next time? In 1968, Parisian radicals nearly shut down the French government, and as one participant commented, "Oh bloody hell what a party!" Do those sound like the words of someone that wanted *more* radicalism or *less*? The spirit of civil disobedience