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Anti-mass

Methods of organizations for collectives

The Red Sunshine Gang

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1970

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Anti-Mass — Methods of organization for collectives is an essay written anonymously in 1970 or 1971. The authors called themselves the Red Sunshine Gang and are believed to have been members of the civil rights and anti-war movement in Berkeley, California, USA. It quotes Mao and argues revolution is only possible through the actions of small collectives. The essay has been published several times in different zine editions. It was critiqued in the pamphlet *Methods for the Communalization of Confusion*.

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the ones which make us easy targets. We must not mistake the level of appearances for new cultures. The whole point is not to make a fetish of our lifestyles. In the psychedelic atmosphere of repression, square is cool.

Always keep part of your strategy underground. Just as analysis helps to differentiate the enemy so it should provide you with different levels of attack. Mao says: "Flexibility is a concrete expression of initiative."

Going underground should not mean dropping heroically out of sight. There will be few places to hide in the electronic environment of the future. The most dangerous kind of underground will be one that is like an iceberg. The roles created to replace our identities in everyday life must become the disguise of the underground.

An underground strategy puts the impulse of confrontation into perspective. We must fight against the planned obsolescence of confrontations which lock us into the time-span of instant revolution. Going underground means having a long range strategy – something which plans for 2004. The iceberg strategy keeps us cool. It trains us to control our reflexes and calculate our responses.

The underground strategy is also necessary to maintain autonomy. Autonomy preserves the organizational form of the collective, which is critical to the sharpening of its politics. Nothing will be achieved by submerging ourselves in a chaos of revolutionary fronts. The principle strategy of the counterfeit Left will be to smear over differences with appeals to a class unity that no longer exists. An underground strategy without a revolutionary form of organization can only emerge as a new class society. To destroy the system of oppression is not enough. We must create the organization of a free society. When the underground emerges, the collective will be that society.

The fear of co-optation often leads people to shun the challenge of corporate liberals. Some of the purest revolutionaries prefer not to think about using the co-opter for their own purposes. Too often the mentality of the 'job' obscures the potential for subversion.

The existence of corporate liberalism demands that we not be sloppy in our own thinking and response. The strength of the position is that it forces us to acknowledge our own weaknesses — even before we engage in struggle against it. The worst mistake is to pretend that this enemy does not exist.

Urban struggle requires a subversive strategy. Concretely, working 'within the system' should become for us a source of money, information, and anonymity. This is what Mao means when he says, "Move at night." The routine of daily life is nighttime for the enemy — when he cannot see us. The process of co-optation should become an increasingly disquieting exercise for them.

Exploiting splits within the enemy camp does not mean helping one segment defeat another. The basic aim is to maintain the splits. There are significant differences among the oppressors. These have the effect of weakening them. Under certain circumstances these splits may provide a margin of maneuverability which may be strategic for us. The main thing is not to view the enemy monolithically. Monolithic thinking condemns you to one way of acting.

There is a tendency to see the most degenerate forms of reaction as the primary enemy. The corporations are consciously pandering to such ideas through films like *Easy Rider* which also attempts to identify with young males. The function of analysis is to break down and specify the different forces within the enemy camp.

The spaces created by these splits are of crucial importance to the preparation of a long range strategy. It will be increasingly difficult to survive with the visibility that we are accustomed to. The lifestyles which declare our opposition are also

The Difference Between Mass and Class

Why is it important to know the difference between mass and class? The chances are that there can be no conscious revolutionary practice without making this distinction. We are not playing around with words. Look. We are living in a mass society. We didn't get that way by accident. The mass is a specific form of organization. The reason is clear. Consumption is organized by the corporations. Their products define the mass. The mass is not a cliché — 'the masses' — but a routine which dominates your daily life. Understanding the structure of the mass market is the first step toward understanding what happened to the class struggle.

What is the mass? Most people think of the mass in terms of numbers — like a crowded street or stadium. But it is actually structure which determines its character. The mass is an aggregate of couples who are separate, detached and anonymous. They live in cities physically close yet socially apart. Their lives are privatized and depraved. Coca-Cola and loneliness. The social existence of the mass — its rules and regulations, the structuring of its status, roles and leadership — are organized through consumption (the mass market). They are all products of a specific social organization. Ours.

Of course, no one sees themselves as part of the mass. It's always others who are the masses. The trouble is that it is not only the corporations which organize us into the mass. The 'movement' itself behaves as a mass and its organizers reproduce the hierarchy of the mass.

Really, how do you fight fire? With water, of course. The same goes for revolution. We don't fight the mass (market) with a mass (movement). We fight mass with class. Our aim should be not to create a mass movement but a class force.

What is a class? A class is a consciously organized social force. For example, the ruling class is conscious and acts collectively to organize not only itself, but also the people (mass) that

it rules. The corporation is the self-conscious collective power of the ruling class. We are not saying that class relations do not exist in the rest of society. But they remain passive so long as they are shaped solely by objective conditions (i.e. work situations). What is necessary is the active (subjective) participation of the class itself. Class prejudice is not class consciousness. The class is conscious of its social existence because it seeks to organize itself.

The moral of the story is: the mass is a mass because it is organized as a mass. Don't be fooled by the brand name. Mass is thinking with your ass.

Primacy of the Collective

The small group is the coming together of people who feel the need for collectivity. Its function is often to break out of the mass — specifically from the isolation of daily life and the mass structure of the movement. The problem is that frequently the group cannot create an independent existence and an identity of its own because it continues to define itself negatively, i.e. in opposition. So long as its point of reference lies outside of it, the group's politics tend to be superimposed on it by events and crises.

The small group can be a stage in the development of the collective, if it develops a critique of the frustrations stemming from its external orientation. The formation of a collective begins when people not only have the same politics, but agree on the method of struggle.

Why should the collective be the primary focus of organization? The collective is an alternative to the existing structure of society. Changing social relations is a process rather than a product of revolution. In other words, you make the revolution by actually changing social relations. You must consciously create the contradictions in history.

Struggle on Many Levels

Struggle has many faces. But no two faces look alike. Like the cubists, we must look at things from many sides. The problem is to find ways of creating space for ourselves. The tendency now is toward two-sidedness which is embedded in every aspect of our lives. Our language poses questions by making us choose between opposites. The imperialist creates the anti-imperialist. Before 'cool' there was hot and cold. 'Cool' was the first attempt to break out of two-sidedness. Two-sidedness always minimizes the dimensions of struggle by narrowly defining the situation. We end up with a one dimensional view of the enemy and of ourselves.

Learn to be shrewd. Our first impulse is always to define our position. Why do we feel the need to tell them? We create space by not appearing to be what we really are.

Shrewdness is not simply a defensive tactic. The essence of shrewdness is learning to take advantage of the enemy's weaknesses. Otherwise you can never win. The rule is: be honest among yourselves, but deceive the enemy.

There are at least three ways of dealing with a situation. You can neutralize, activate, or destroy. Neutralize is to create space. Activate is to gain support. Destroy is to win. What's more, it is essential to learn how to use all three simultaneously.

Struggle on many levels begins with the activation of all the senses. We must be able to conceive of more than one mode of acting for a given situation. The response, i.e. method of struggle, should contain three elements: 1) a means of survival; 2) a method of exploiting splits in the enemy camp; 3) an underground strategy.

The fundamental tendency of corporate liberalism is to identify with social change while trying to contain it. Wouldn't it be ironic (and even a relief) if we could turn the threat of co-optation into a means of survival?

One of the best ways to discover and correct anti-work attitudes is through self-criticism. This provides an objective framework which allows people the space to be criticized and to be critical. Self-criticism is the opposite of self-consciousness because its aim is not to isolate you but to free repressed abilities. Self-criticism is a method for dealing with piggish behavior and developing consciousness.

To root out the society within us and to redefine our work relations a collective must develop a sense of its own history. One of the hardest things to do is to see the closest relations — those within the collective — in political terms. The tendency is to be sloppy, or what Mao calls ‘liberal,’ about relations between friends. Rules can no longer be the framework of discipline. It must be based on political understanding. One of the functions of analysis is that it be applied internally.

Preparation is another part of the process which creates continuity between meetings and insures that our own thinking does not become a part-time activity. It also combats the tendency to talk off the top of one’s head and pick ideas out of the air. Whenever meetings tend to be abstract and random it means the ideas put forward are not connected by thought (i.e. analysis). There is seldom serious investigation behind what is said.

What does it mean to prepare for a meeting? It means not coming empty-handed or empty-headed. Mao says, “No investigation, no right to speak.” Assuming a group has decided what it wants to do, the first step is for everyone to investigate. This means taking the time to actually look into the matter, sort out the relevant materials and be able to make them accessible to everyone in the collective. The motive underlying all the preparation should be the construction of a coherent analysis. “We must substitute the sweat of self-criticism for the tears of crocodiles,” according to a new Chinese proverb.

Concretely, this means: organize yourselves, not somebody else. The collective is the organizational nucleus of a classless society. As a formal organization, it negates all forms of hierarchy. The answer to alienation is to make yourself the subject, not the object, of history.

One of the crucial obstacles to the formation of collectives is the transitional period — when the collective must survive side by side with a disintegrating movement and a mass society. The disintegration of the movement is not an isolated phenomenon but reflects the weakening of the major institutions in American society responsible for our alienation. Many people are demoralized by this process and find it bewildering because they actually depend subconsciously on the continued existence of these institutions. We are witnessing the break-up and transformation of an institution integral to society — the mass market. The mass market is corporate structure which few

These contradictions make it imperative that any people who decide to create a collective know exactly who they are and what they are doing. That is why you must consider your collective as primary. Because, if you don’t believe in the legitimacy of this form of organization, you can’t have a practical analysis of what is happening. Don’t kid yourself. The struggle for the creation and survival of collectives at this moment in history is going to be very difficult.

The dominant issue will be how collectives can become part of history — how they can become a social force. There is no guarantee and we should promise no easy victories. The uniqueness of developing collectives is their definitive break with all hierarchic forms of organization and the reconstructing of a classless society.

The thinking of radical organizers is frozen in the concept of the mass movement. This form of struggle, no matter how radical its demands, never threatens the basic structure — the mass itself.

Under these circumstances it takes great effort to imagine new forms of existence. Space must be created before we can think of these things and be able to establish the legitimacy of acting upon them.

The form of the collective is its practice. The collective is opposed to the mass. It contradicts the structure of the mass. The collective is anti-mass.

Size of the Collective

The aim of any organization is to make it as simple as possible, or as Marshall McLuhan puts it, “high in participation, low in definition.” The tendency is just the opposite. Our reflex is to create administrative structures to deal with political problems.

Most people cannot discuss intelligently the subject of size. There is an unspoken feeling either that the problem should not exist or that it is beneath us to talk about it. Let’s get it out in the open. Size is a question of politics and social relations, not administration. Do you wonder why the subject is shunted aside at large meetings? Because it fundamentally challenges the repressive nature of large organizations. Small groups that function as appendages to larger bodies will never feel like small groups.

The collective should not be larger than a band — no orchestras or chamber music please. The basic idea is to reproduce the collective, not expand it. The strength of a collective lies in its social organization, not its numbers. Once you think in terms of recruiting, you might as well join the Army. The difference between expansion and reproduction is the difference between adding and multiplying. The first bases its strength on numbers and the second on relationships between people.

Why should there be a limit to size? Because we are neither supermen nor slaves. Beyond a certain point, the group

Attitudes toward work are shaped by our relations to production, i.e. class. Class is a product of hierarchic divisions of labor (including forms other than wage labor). There are three basic relations which can produce anti-work attitudes. The working class expressed its anti-work attitude as a rebellion against routinized labor. For the middle class, the anti-work attitude comes out of the ideology of consumer society and revolves around leisure. The stereotype of the ‘lazy native’ or ‘physically weak woman’ is a third anti-work attitude which is applied to those excluded from wage labor.

The dream of automation (i.e. no work) reinforces class prejudice. The middle class is the one that has the dream since it seeks to expand its leisure-oriented activities. To the working class, automation means a loss of their job, preoccupation with unemployment, which is the opposite of leisure. For the excluded, automation doesn’t mean anything because it will not be applied to their forms of work.

The automation of the working class has become the ideology of post-scarcity radicals — from the anarchists at Anarchos to SDS’s new working class. Technological change has rescued them from the dilemma of a class analysis they were never able to make. With the elimination of working class struggle by automation (the automation of the working class) the radicals have become advocates of leisure society and touristic lifestyles. This anti-work attitude leads to a utopian outlook and removes us from the realm of history. It prevents the construction of collectivity and self-activity. The issue of how to transform work into self-activity is central to the elimination of class and the reorganization of society.

Self-activity is the reconstruction of the consciousness (wholeness) of one’s individual life activity. The collective is what makes the reconstruction possible because it defines individuality not as a private experience but as a social relation. What is important to see is that work is the creating of conscious activity within the structure of the collective.

ple lose their curiosity. Meetings become a routine like everything else in life.

A lot of problems which collectives will have can be traced to the work habits acquired in the (mass) movement. People perpetuate the passive roles they have become accustomed to in large meetings. The emphasis on mass participation means that all you have to do is show up. Rarely, do people prepare themselves for a meeting, nor do they feel the need to. Often this situation does not become evident precisely because the few people who do work (those who run the meeting) create the illusion of group achievement.

Because people see themselves essentially as objects and not as subjects, political activity is defined as an event outside them and in the future. No one sees themselves making the revolution and, therefore, they don't understand how it will be accomplished.

The short span of attention is one tell tale symptom of instant politics. The emphasis on responding to crisis seems to contract the span of attention — in fact there is often no time dimension at all. This timelessness is experienced as the syn-copation of over-commitment. Many people say they will do things without really thinking out carefully whether they have the time to do them. Having time ultimately means defining what you really want to do. Over-commitment is when you want to do everything but end up doing nothing.

The numerous other symptoms of casual politics — lack of preparation, being late, getting bored at difficult moments, etc. are all signs of a political attitude which is destructive to the collective. The important thing is recognizing the existence of these problems and knowing what causes them. They are not personal problems but historically determined attitudes.

Many people confuse the revolt against alienated labor in its specific historical form with work activity itself. This revolt is expressed in an anti-work attitude.

becomes a meeting and before you know it you have to raise your hand to speak. The collective is a recognition of the practical limits of conversation. This simple fact is the basis for a new social experience.

Relations of inequality can be seen more clearly within a collective and dealt with more effectively. "Whatever the nature of authority in the large organization, it is inherent in the simple organization unit." (Chester Barnard, *The Function of Executives*, 1938). A small group with a 'leader' is the nucleus of a class society. Small size restricts the area which any single individual can dominate. This is true both internally and in relation to other groups.

Today, the mode of struggle requires a durable and resilient form of organization which will enable us to cope both with the attrition of daily life and the likelihood of repression. Unless we can begin to solve problems at this level collectively, we are certainly not fit to create a new society. Contrary to what people are led to think, i.e. united we stand, united we fall, it will be harder to destroy a multitude of collectives than the largest organizations with centralized control.

Size is a key to security. But its real importance lies in the fact that the collective reproduces new social relations — the advantage being that the process can begin now.

The limitation on size raises a difficult problem. What do you say to someone who asks, "Can I join your collective?" This question is ultimately at the root of much hostility (often unconscious) toward the collective form of organization. You can't separate size from the collective because it must be small in order to exist. The collective has a right to exclude individuals because it offers them the alternative of starting a new collective, i.e. sharing the responsibility for organization. This is the basic answer to the question above.

Of course, people will put down the collective as being exclusive. That is not the point. The size of a collective is essentially a limitation on its authority. By contrast, large organizations,

while having open membership, are exclusive in terms of who shapes the politics and actively participates in the structuring of activities. The choice is between joining the mass of creating the class. The revolutionary project is to do it yourself. Remember, Alexandra Kollontai warned in 1920, “The essence of bureaucracy is when some third person decides your fate.”

Contact Between Collectives

The collective does not communicate with the mass. It makes contact with other collectives. What if other collectives do not exist? Well, it should take to itself until the day they do. Yes. By all means, the collective also communicates with other people, but it never views them as a mass — as a constituency or audience. The collective communicates with individuals in order to encourage self-organization. It assumes that people are capable of self-organization, and given that alternative, they will choose it over mass participation. The collective knows that it takes time to create new forms of organization. It simply seeks to hasten the crumbling of the mass.

Much of the problem of ‘communication’ these days is that people think they have got to communicate all the time. You find people setting up administrative functions to deal with information flows before they have any idea what they want to say. The collective is not obsessed with ‘communicating’ or ‘relating’ to the movement. What concerns it is the amount of noise — incessant phone calls, form letters, announcements of meetings, etc. — that passes for communication. It is time we gave more thought to what we say and how we say it.

What exactly do we mean by contact? We want to begin by taking the bureaucracy out of communication. The idea is to begin modestly. Contact is a touching on all sides. The essential thing is about its directness and reliability. Eyeball to eyeball.

There is no getting around it — we need new formats, entirely new formats. Otherwise we will never sharpen our wits. To break out of the spell of print requires a conscious effort to think a new language. We should no longer be immobilized by other people’s words. Don’t wait for the news to tell you what is happening. Make you headlines with presstype. Cut up your favorite magazine and put it together again. Cut big words in half and make little words out of them — like ENVIRON MENTAL CRISIS. All you need is a good pair of scissors and rubber cement. Abuse the enemy’s images. Turn the Man from Glad into a Frankenstein. Making comic strips out of great art. Don’t let anything interfere with your pleasure.

Don’t read any more books — at least not straight through. As G.B. Kay from Blackpool once said (quoting somebody else), “Reading rots the mind.” Pamphlets are so much more fun. Read randomly, write on the margins and go back to comics. You might try the Silver Surfer for a start.

Self-Activity

Bad work habits and sloppy behavior undermine any attempt to construct collectively. Casual, sloppy behavior means that we don’t care deeply about what we are doing or who we are doing it with. This may come as a surprise to a lot of people. The fact remains: we talk revolution but act reactionary at elementary levels.

There are two basic things underlying these unfortunate circumstances: 1) people’s idea of how something (like revolution) will happen shapes our work habits; 2) their class background gives them a casual view of politics.

There is no doubt that the Pepsi generation is more politically alive. But this new energy is being channelled by organizers into boring meetings which reproduce the hierarchy of class society. After a while, critical thinking is eroded and peo-

munication. Its information power has already outmoded the school system. The secret is to gain as much pleasure in creating the form as in expressing the idea.

How do we defend adopting the style of advertising when its function is so oppressive? As a medium we think it represents a revolutionary mode of production. Rejecting it has resulted in the stagnation of our minds and a crude romanticism in political culture. Those who turn up their noses at ads think in a language that is decrepit. Using the ad technique transforms the person who does it. It makes writing a pleasure for anyone because it strives in orality in print.

What we mean by the use of ad technique is to physically use it. Most of the time we are unconscious of ads and, if we do become conscious, we don't act upon them — don't subvert them. Ads are based on repetition. If you affect one of them, you affect all of them. Know the environment of the ad. The most effective way to subvert an ad is to make the contradiction in it visible. Advertise it. The vulnerability of ads lies in the possibility of turning them against the exploiters.

Jerry Rubin says you should use the media all the time. At least he goes all the way. This is better than the toe-dipping approach that seems so common these days. Of course, there are groups who say don't use it at all and they don't. They will probably outlast Jerry since the basic technique of mass media is over-exposure. That is why Jerry has already written his memoirs. The Situationists say: "The revolt is contained by over-exposure. We are given it to contemplate so that we shall forget to participate."

We are not talking about the packaging of politics. Ramparts is the Playboy of the Left. On the other hand, the underground press is pornographic and redundant. Newsreel's projector is running backwards. And why in the era of Cosmopolitan magazine must we suffer the stodginess of Leviathan? We much prefer reading Fortune — the magazine for 'the men in charge of change' — for our analysis of capitalism.

Other forms of communication — telephone, letters, documents, etc. — should never be used as substitutes for direct contact. In fact, they should serve primarily to prepare contacts.

Why is it so important to have direct contact? Because it is the simplest form of communication. Moreover, it is physical and involves all the senses — most of all the sense of smell. For this reason, it is reliable. It also takes account of the real need for security. Those who talk about repression continue to pass around sheets of paper asking for names, addresses, and telephone numbers.

There are already a number of gatherings which appear to involve contact but in reality are grotesque facsimiles. The worst of these and the one most people flock to is the conference. This is a hotel of the mind which turns is all into tourists and spectators. A lower form of existence is the endless meeting — the one held every night. Not to mention the committees formed expressly to arrange meetings.

The basic principle of contact between collectives is: you only meet when you have something to say to each other. This means two things. First, that you have a concrete idea what it is you want to say. Secondly, that you must prepare it in advance. These principles help to ensure that communication does not become an administrative problem.

The new forms of contact have yet to be created. We can think of single examples. A member of one collective can attend the meeting of another collective or there may be a joint meeting of the groups as a whole. The first of these appears to be the more practical, however, the drawback is that not everyone is involved. There are undoubtedly other forms of contact which are likely to develop. The main thing is to invent them.

Priority of Local Action

The collective gives priority to local action. It rejects the mass politics of the white nationalists with their national committees, organizers, and the superstars. Definitely, the collective is out of the mainstream and what is more it feels no regrets. The aim of the collective is to feel new thoughts and act new ideas — in a word to create its own space. And that, more than any program, is what is intolerable to all the xerox radicals trying to reproduce their own images.

The collective is the hindquarters of the revolution. It makes no pretence whatsoever in regard to the role of the vanguard. Expect nothing from them. They are not your leaders. Leave them alone. The collective knows it will be the last to enter the new world.

The doubts people have about local action reveal how dependent they are on the glamour of mass politics. Everyone wants to project themselves on the screen of revolution — as Yippies or White Panthers. Having internalized the mass, they ask themselves questions whose answers seem logical in its context. How can we accomplish anything without mass action? If we don't go to meetings and demonstrations, will we be forgotten? Who will take us seriously if we don't join the rank and file?

Slowly you realize that you have become a spectator, an object. Your politics take place on a stage and your social relations consist of sitting in an audience or marching in a crowd. The fragmentation of your everyday experience contrasts with the spectacular unity of the mass.

By contrast, the priority of local action is an attempt to unify everyday life and fragment the mass. This level of consciousness is a result of rejecting the laws of mass behavior based on Leninism and TV ideology. It makes possible an enema of the brain which everyone so desperately needs. You will be re-

our not knowing who we are. The motivation to look at yourself critically and to explain society comes from the desire to change both. The heart of the problem is that we do not concretely imagine winning, except perhaps, by accident.

Analysis is the arming of the brain. We're being stifled by those who tell us analysis is intellectual when in reality it is the tool of the imagination. Just as you can't tolerate intellectualism, so you cannot act from raw anger — not if you want to win. You must teach your stomach how to think and your brain how to feel. Analysis should help us to express anger intelligently. Learning how to think, i.e. analysis, is the first step toward conscious activity.

No doubt you feel yourself tightening up because you think it sounds heavy. Really, the problem is that you think much bigger than you act. Be modest. Start with what you already know and want to know more about. Analysis begins with what interests you. Political thinking should be part of everyday life, not a class privilege. To be practical, analysis must give you an understanding of what to do and how to do it.

Thinking should help to distinguish between what is important and what is not. It should break down complex forces so that we can understand them. Break everything down. In the process of analyzing something you will discover that there are different ways of acting which were not apparent when you began. This is the pleasure of analysis. To investigate a problem is to begin to solve it.

The Need for New Formats

The need for new formats grows out of the oppressiveness of print. We must learn the techniques of advertisement. They consist of short, clear, non-rhetorical statements. The ad words. The ad represents a break with the college education and the diarrhea of words. The ad is a concentrated formula for com-

veloping an analysis requires new ways of thinking. Without new ways of thinking we are doomed to old ways of acting.

The question of what we are going to do is the hardest to answer and the one that ultimately will determine whether a collective will continue to exist. The difficulty of the question makes analysis all the more necessary. We can no longer afford to be propelled by the crudest forms of advertisement — slogans and rhetoric. The function of analysis is to reveal a plan of action.

Why is there relatively little practical analysis of what is happening today? Some people refuse to analyze anything which they cannot immediately comprehend. Basically they have a feeling of inadequacy. This is partly because they have never had the opportunity to do it before and, therefore, don't know they are capable of it. On the other hand, many activists put down analysis as being 'intellectual' — which is more a commentary on their own kind of thinking than anything else. Finally, there are those who feel no need to think and become very uncomfortable when somebody does want to. This often reflects their class disposition. The general constipation of the movement is a product of all these forces.

One reason for this sad state of affairs is that analysis gives so little satisfaction. This is another way of saying that it is not practical. What has happened to all thinking can best be seen in the degeneration of class analysis into stereotyped, obese definitions. There is little difference between the theory-mongers of high abstraction and the sloganeers of crude abstraction. Theory is becoming the dialect of robots, and slogans the mass production of the mind. But just because ideas have become so mechanical does not mean we should abandon thought.

Most people are willing to face the fact that they are living in a society that has yet to be explained. Any attempt to probe those areas which are unfamiliar is met with a general hostility of fear. People seem afraid to look at themselves analytically. Part of the problem of not knowing what to do reveals itself in

lieved to discover that you can create a situation by localizing your struggle.

How can we prevent local action from becoming provincial? Whether or not it does so depends on our overall strategy. Provincialism is simply the consequences or not knowing what is happening. A commune, for example, is provincial because its strategy is based on petty farming and glorification of the extended family. What they have is astrology, not a strategy.

Local action should be based on the global structure of modern society. There can be no collective action without collectives. But the creation of a collective should not be mistaken for victory nor should it become an end in itself. The great danger the collective faces historically is that of being cut off (or cutting itself off) from the outside world. The issue ultimately will be what action to take and when. Whether collectives become a social force depends on their analysis of history and their course of action.

In fact, the 'provinces' today are moving ahead of the centers in political consciousness and motivation. From Minnesota to the Mekong Delta, the revolt is gaining coherence. The centers are trying to decipher what is happening, to catch up and contain it. For this purpose they must create centralized forms of organization — or 'co-ordination' — as the modernists call it.

The first principle of local action is to denationalize your thinking. Take the country out of Salem. Get out of Marlboro country. Become conscious of how your life is managed from the national centers. Lifestyles are roles designed to give you the illusion of movement while keeping you in your place. "Style is mass chasing class, and class escaping mass." (W. Rauschenbush, "The Idiot God Fashion," *Woman's Coming of Age*, eds Schmalhausen and Calvert, 1931).

Local action gives you the initiative by enabling you to define the situation. That is the practice of knowing you are the subject. Marat says: "The most important thing is to pull yourself up by your own hair, to turn yourself inside out and see the

whole world with fresh eyes.” The collective turns itself inside out and sees reality.

The Dream of Unity

The principle of unity is based on the proposition that everyone is a unit (a fragment). Unity means one multiplied by itself. We are not going to say it straight — in so far as unity has suppressed real political differences — class, racial, sexual — it is a form of tyranny. The dream of unity is in reality a nightmare of compromise and suppressed desires. We are not equal and unity perpetuates inequality.

The collective will be subject constantly to pressure from outside groups demanding support in one form or another. Everyone is always in a crisis. Given these circumstances, a group can have the illusion of being permanently mobilized and active without having politics of its own. Calls for unity channel the political energies of collectives into support politics. So, as a precaution, the collective must take time to work out its own politics and plan of action. Above all, it should try to foresee crisis situations and their ‘rent-a-crowd’ militancy.

You will be accused of factionalism. Don’t waste time thinking about this age old problem. A collective is not a faction. Responding to Pavlov’s bell puts you in the position of a salivating dog. There will be no end to your hunger when who you are is determined by someone else.

You will also be accused of elitism. This is a risky business and should not be dismissed lightly. A collective must first know what is meant by elitism. Instead of wondering whether it refers to leadership or personalities, you should first anchor the issue in a class context. Know where your ideas come from and what their relation is to the dominant ideology. You should ask the same questions about those who make the accusations. What is their class background and class interest? So far many

people have reacted defensively to the charge of elitism and, thus, have avoided dealing with the issue head on. That in itself is a class reaction.

The internal is the mirror of the external. The best way to avoid behaving like an elite is to prevent the formation of elitism within the collective itself. Often when charges of elitism are true, they reflect the same class relations internally.

The ways of undermining the autonomy of a collective are many and insidious. The call for unity can no longer be responded to automatically. The time has come to question the motives and effectiveness of such actions — and to feel good (i.e. correct) in doing so. Jargon is pigeon talk and is meant to make us feel stupid and powerless. Because collective action is not organized as a mass, it does not have to rely on the call of unity in order to act.

“Does ‘one divide into two’ or ‘two fuse into one’? This question is a subject of debate in China and now here. This debate is a struggle between two conceptions of the world. One believes in struggle, the other in unity. The two sides have drawn a clear line between them and their arguments are diametrically opposed. Thus, you can see why one divides into two.” (Free translation from the Red Flag, Peking, September 21, 1964).

The Function of Analysis

Not only can there be no revolution without revolutionary theory, there can be no strategy without analysis. Strategy is knowing ahead of time what you are going to do. This is what analysis makes possible. When you begin, you may not know anything. The purpose of analysis is not to know everything, but to know what you do know and know it good — that is collectively. The heart of thinking analytically is to learn over and over again that the process is as important as the product. De-