

Affinity Groups

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AFFINITY GROUP = A STREET GANG WITH AN ANALYSIS

“Ideas can create life-and-death situations, but a man can really only fight and die for himself and for the lives of his friends.”

–Chief Joseph

In the present struggle forms of organization must come into being that are appropriate to the changed conditions that are the real content of our times. These must be forms that are tenacious enough to resist repression; forms which can grow secretly, learning to manifest themselves in a large variety of ways, lest their mode of operation be co-opted by the opposition, or they simply be smashed. The affinity group is the seed/germ/essence of organization. It is coming-together out of mutual Need or Desire: cohesive historical groups unite out of the shared necessities of the struggle for survival, while dreaming of the possibility of love. In the pre-revolutionary period affinity groups must assemble to project a revolutionary consciousness and to develop forms for particular struggles. In the revolutionary period itself they will emerge as armed cadres at the centers of conflict, and in the post-revolutionary period suggest forms for the new everyday life.

Mass demonstrations succeed in two ways: they bring predominate levels of consciousness into the streets and make visible the quantity of active alienation in our society...and they sometimes transcend the issues of “demonstration” to become mass actions. As mass demonstrations they fail to advance the nature and the forms of our struggle—as mass actions (whether against cops or against property) they begin to define the direction and the reality of what our struggle must become. “Riots” or rebellions are the highest forms of mass action that we have seen so far.

These rebellions project the consciousness of a community in action as it (1) liberates goods and geographical areas, and (2) engages the occupying forces (PIGS) in battle. This form, too, has advantages and limitations, and it is in response to both of these that people are discovering the tactical-theoretical possibilities of working together in small intimate groups. The prospects for the future are clear in at least one respect: the Man and his Pigs are learning “crowd control” and they are escalating their response to all masses of people who take it upon themselves to behave in violation of this society’s “law and order.” Our preparations for advancing the struggle must always take into account the abilities and tendencies of the enemy. Mass demonstrations and community rebellions will continue to serve particular needs in many situations...But in

the general sense of ongoing struggle it is necessary that we begin to act in that manner which is most favorable to our means and to our goals—THE SMALL GROUP EXECUTING “SMALL” ACTIONS IN CONCERT WITH OTHER SMALL GROUPS/“SMALL” ACTIONS WILL CREATE A WIDESPREAD CLIMATE OF STRUGGLE WITHIN WHICH ALL FORMS OF REBELLION CAN COME TOGETHER AND FORGE THE FINAL FORM: REVOLUTION...

Already we have seen the small group response—Columbia’s Communes, Berkeley’s Revolutionary Gangs, France’s Committees of Action, and others so far known only by their actions (Cleveland). In the months to come these groups and the many others which will be forming face two kinds of absolute necessity as they seek to create the possibility of real community:

(1) Internal development and security. Each group will continue to create its own sense of identity through the conscious synthesis of theory/practice, and each group will apply this identity to the existing reality in the most effective manner.

(2) External relationships with similar groups. We must begin to set up those forms of communication and mutual awareness that can allow for greater mobility and greater response to more-than-local crises. This means that we will have to begin to create a network of affinity groups (both within existing communities and between those communities).

This network or “Federation” must be characterized by a structural looseness which guarantees the identity and self-determination of each affinity group, as well as an organizational reality which allows maximum concerted actions directed toward total revolution.

The concept of the affinity group in no way denies the validity of mass actions, rather, this idea increases the revolutionary possibilities of those actions. The active minority is able, because it is theoretically more conscious and better prepared tactically, to light the first fuse and make the first breakthroughs. But that’s all. The others can follow or not follow...The active minority plays the role of a permanent fermenting agent, encouraging action without claiming to lead...In certain objective situations—with the help of the active minority—spontaneity finds its place in social movement. It is spontaneity which permits the thrust forward, and not the slogans or directives of leaders. The affinity group is the source of both spontaneity and new forms of struggle.

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