

POWER, ORGANISATION & IDEAS

free or donation

Anarchist Federation
c/o Freedom Books
84b Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX
www.afed.co.uk

ence through its control of the media and education and by perpetuating racism and sexism. The working class is never wholly atomised nor solid and united, conscious of itself and its power. The anarchist revolutionary organisation knows this; its problem is that the only possible working class revolution is a mass revolution to smash the apparatus of the ruling class (the police, courts, bureaucracy etc) and the class itself, a revolution of many not a few.

The anarchist organisation must always be part of the working class. This creates a tension. While on the one hand its consciousness is more developed ("in advance"), its ability to develop and extend its influence in the class depends on not being too far in advance. If it is then it will fall into the trap of ignoring or rejecting the new forms of struggle and organisation. There are dangers in this contradiction and the revolutionary anarchist organisation needs to develop ways of acting based on an awareness of the contradiction. We must always be ready to learn from the class and constantly revise our tactics with the unfolding situation. The revolutionary organisation is transformed as the working class is transformed in the revolutionary process. Theory and practice must be rooted in concrete conditions.

5. TASKS OF THE ORGANISATION. Anarchist Federation.

Accepting that the revolution can only be made by the self-activity of the working class, the anarchist revolutionary organisation still has a number of tasks to perform. It must act as a propaganda grouping, untiringly putting over the message that the working class must destroy capitalism and establish a libertarian communist society. It must also show how this can be done by giving examples of self-activity. It must search out the history of past struggles and share the lessons to be learned with the rest of the class as part of the development of class consciousness. When important developments occur, the revolutionary organisation must spread the news through its links with organisations in other countries. But the organisation is not just a propaganda group: above all it must actively work in all grass-roots organisations of the working class such as rank and file groups, tenants associations, squatters and unemployed groups as well as women's, black and gay groups. It must try to link unionised and non-unionised workers, building a movement at the base.

Reclaiming ourselves can only occur in areas outside the main focus of capitalist control: our neighbourhoods, campaigns of resistance or protest, autonomous zones and initiatives. This is where we reconnect with the 'unemployed', the 'underclass', the socially excluded. Since work does not depend on employment and freedom is about what we do not how much money we earn, there should be no boundaries between revolutionaries and those laying the foundations for a self-managed society. The need to control our lives, to use our skills in

a 'good' cause, to choose who we transact and interact with, to achieve a balance between giving and receiving, to entrust our lives to others, all are central to us as human beings and all can be experienced through work only on a personal or local level, never within a mass society. The revolution may not be led by an awakened proletariat breaking out of the factory prison but by a radicalised citizenry emptying the factories. Does this mean that people in work can play no part in the revolution? It is likely mass, alienated labour will not lead the revolution. There will be opportunity for strikes and sabotage any time there is a rising tide of rebellion but it is more likely that the worker will join direct actions and movements outside her/his workplace. The revolution will re-connect workers and non-workers as people, not classes, it will be made and led by affinity groups sharing common values about work, the environment and social relations, rather than trades unions. These groups may be free associations built on mutual respect rather than associations created by economic necessity.

The revolutionary organisation supports struggles to improve life for the communities we live and work in before the revolution, such as single-issue and campaigns for reform. But although these may bring about important limited gains for the working class in the here and now, they are at best temporary and reversible. Many reforms do not and cannot make a revolution. Therefore the revolutionary organisation works inside single-issue groups to help radicalise them and to argue for a break with reformism and authoritarian revolutionaries. It respects the independence and autonomy of working class movements and (unlike others) does not try to subordinate them. This does not mean that it does not seek to spread its ideas in these movements. The organisation works to bring about mass participation inside all these groups and the class as a whole, working for self-activity and self organisation in every struggle and aspect of life. These ought to be working class organisations as cross-class movements hide class differences and imply that the working class have shared interests with the ruling class. Full emancipation cannot come about without the destruction of capitalism. Only by building such organisations in the course of struggle can the working class hope to achieve liberation. To make revolution more likely, working class communities must be united in both thought and action. The creation of self-managing and autonomous groups within society will make the revolution more likely as we see what life might be like outside state control and the iron logic of profit and competition.

Agents and apologists of the ruling class will resist us. Neighbourhood groups will clash with local councils, workers with trade unionists, artists with the cultural elites who control funding and so on. Activity which is unofficial, unsanctioned and independently organised is more likely to build the self-confidence and skills of people than initiatives that are bureaucratized or led by reformists from the start. Campaigns that set out forth-

right demands and are fuelled by people's anger avoid the danger of partial, negotiated solutions. Movements that can count on a high degree of solidarity or which strike a chord among many communities will exert far more pressure than isolated struggles. The revolutionary organisation itself must have mass participation and decision-making. It must also be organised federally as only federalism can hinder bureaucratic degeneration and encourages active participation by all members in the organisation. The anarchist organisation realises that the social revolution cannot be won without struggle at the point of production and the seizure of the means of production.

However, it should not relegate struggles in other areas of life to a secondary role. All these struggles within capitalism are closely intertwined. The questioning of one facet of capitalism can lead to a total rejection of the system. The militants of the revolutionary organisation involved in these groups must pinpoint the ways the class system causes and/or perpetuates the problems different sections of society are confronting. It is vitally important that a 'libertarian front' of these movements and groups is built. Thus, revolutionary work consists in part of linking each area of struggle, bringing out all latent anti-capitalist and libertarian tendencies.

Revolutionary anarchists seek to unite all those whose struggle is global and act as a driving force of this unity, constantly drawing in radicalised elements and building a mass movement. The revolutionary organisation is a means of communication and a weapon to be used by the working class, not how anarchists take over mass movements. In a non-revolutionary period people will generally accept conservative ideas and values. The organisation tries to keep revolutionary ideas alive. Adopting one role, organisations are often surprised by the speed at which revolutionary activity develops and the audacity and imagination of the revolutionary masses. It must be aware of this danger and adopt a flexible strategy. If the revolution progresses, counter-revolutionary forces will press for statist or piecemeal solutions; the revolutionary organisation has to defend the advanced ideas of the masses. With its clearer understanding of hierarchical society, the concept of self organised society and authoritarianism, the revolutionary organisation will need to struggle against 'revolutionary parties' based on authoritarian notions of power. It will be a struggle at the grass roots, a war of ideas and tactics against authority and bureaucracy, using revolutionary anarchist theory and practice.

ACE — Anarchist Communist Editions	
Anarchism—AsWeSeeIt.	60p
Manifesto of Libertarian Communism.	60p
Role of the Revolutionary Organisation.	60p
The Anarchist Movement in Japan.	£1.00
Where there's Brass there's Muck.	£1.00
Beyond Resistance: a Revolutionary Manifesto.	£2.00
Organisat magazine of the AF.	£1.50
Resistance monthly bulletin.	SAE

1. UNTYING THE KNOT. Introduction.
2. THE TYRANNY OF STRUCTURELESSNESS.
3. THE TYRANNY OF TYRANNY.
4. WORKING CLASS SPONTANEITY.
5. TASKS OF THE ORGANISATION.

Anarchist Federation.
Jo Freeman.
Cathy Levine.
Anarchist Federation.
Anarchist Federation.

1. UNTYING THE KNOT. Introduction.

Politically we seem to be at a watershed. On the one hand organisations and institutions once tightly organised and disciplined seem to be withering away. Ideologies are unravelling, lines are becoming blurred. Old notions of organisation seem no longer to be so effective while the certainties of life - whether ideas, relationships, alliances or structures - are disintegrating. On the other hand, less formal ways of organising and structuring life and managing change are arising but seem so far to have no firm foundation or ability to transcend the self-chosen but limited fronts and environments in which people act.

If true this raises many questions. Is there something intrinsically wrong with 'organisation'? Are the failures of the 'Old Left', the splintering of the feminist movement and mistrust of revolutionary ideology amongst environmentalists inevitable because of the way they organise or a product of specific times and cultures? Is there any science of relating, organising or deciding on which a libertarian society can be built? Is it possible to bring about revolutionary change without organisation?

It is our belief that current movements for change, including the anarchist, libertarian and environmental can learn from the recent histories of other groups in struggle. This pamphlet consists of two articles re-published in the 1980s, followed by some thoughts on organisation from the Anarchist Federation.

The articles are statement and response by two people deeply engaged in the women's liberation movement, displaying many of the features of an intellectually-led movement for radical change. Initially it spreads, unnoticed; there is a gradual upwelling of thought and sentiment. Ideas begin to be articulated, challenges made. Coalescing and cross-fertilising ideas create a movement. Groups cluster and spin off, going towards different destinations. Action brings reaction and confrontation; the movement adapts. Divisions open as strategy and tactics are debated. The debate spreads ideas but dissipates energy; the movement becomes distracted. Confusion sets in and groups splinter and re-splinter. Distorted by struggle it is gradually drained by histories and dogmas that cripple and restrict. Struggle becomes ritualised, channelled, contained.

In the "Tyranny of Structurelessness", Jo Freeman argues that de-structuring restricts the range of activities mutual and affinity

groups can perform to simple "consciousness-raising". Since liberation movements are intent on radical change they need different forms. She argues that the basis of such groups (friendship, affinity, mutual experience) are insufficient to prevent elitism and build mass organisations. The end of consciousness-raising leaves people with no place to go and the lack of structure leaves them with no way of getting there. This statement has a familiar ring. Unless a movement for change can overcome this problem it will not develop but become inward-looking, trapped in sterile rituals, dominated by elites. To break the authority of structurelessness she attempts to show that, in fact, all groups have structure, no less real for being informal. These structures based on knowledge, association and experience create in-groups that confer power and



out-groups who are disempowered. To protect status and authority, in-groups create criteria by which people are judged: they are 'allowed' to join, they participate but only in prescribed roles or channels.

A key dilemma she poses is the question of power: If the movement continues deliberately not to select who shall exercise power, it does not thereby abolish power. All it does is abdicate the right to demand that those who do exercise power and influence be responsible for it. Without formal structure, hierarchies develop in which some people are free to act without reference to the group while others find themselves blocked at every turn. Close observation show which are the effective people, the leaders who always get their way and who are the 'spear-carriers', the legitimisers. She suggests a series of 'solutions' to the processes of inclusion, participation, sharing, decision-making, endorsing. Her main concern is that without the means to make progress, organisation or structure, the women's liberation movement will fragment, become absorbed by other struggles and movements.

In reply Cathy Levine takes a class position. "The Tyranny of Tyranny" defends the vol-

untary association model of organising and emphasises the need for the development of a 'culture' in the radical milieu which offers respect, is inclusive and participatory, nurtures and sustains people and avoids the competitiveness that seems to characterise large organisations and divided movements. As well as organising ourselves we must develop personally. The tyranny of tyranny has prevented us from relating to individuals or from creating organisations in ways that do not obliterate individuality with prescribed roles. We must continue to raise consciousness and create cultures of exploration and development that are themselves liberating. If we only adopt the forms necessary to create a movement, we run the risk of replicating the conditions and processes capitalism uses to control us.

This is certainly an analysis the Anarchist Federation would endorse as well as her statement that the reason for building a movement on a foundation of collectives is that we want to create a revolutionary culture consistent with our view of the new society. The strength of her argument is primarily based in the historical experiences of the working class. In particular, though anarchists have not yet created an enduring libertarian society, the organisational ideas of anarchism, applied in certain places and at certain times, have provided the best examples of an empowered, liberated and progressive working class defining itself and determining its own future.

As ideologies and organisational forms among libertarians converge, questions of power, participation, organisation, responsibility, accountability and delegation become more important. The vital task of spreading consciousness remains: voluntary association, affinity groups and open networks must continue to play a big part. Without progress we run the risk of being absorbed, decaying gradually over time unless they can develop a broad culture of resistance. These articles raise our consciousness by giving us insights we ignore at our peril.

2. THE TYRANNY OF STRUCTURELESSNESS. Jo Freeman.

During the years in which the women's liberation movement has been taking shape, a great emphasis has been placed on what are called leaderless, structureless groups as the main form of the movement. The source of this idea was a natural reaction against the overstructured society in which most of us found ourselves, the inevitable control this gave others over our lives, and the continual elitism of the Left and

similar groups among those who were supposedly fighting this over-structuredness. The idea of 'structurelessness', however, has moved from a healthy counter to these tendencies to becoming a goddess in its own right. The idea is as little examined as the term is much used, but it has become an intrinsic and unquestioned part of women's liberation ideology. For the early development of the movement this did not much matter. It early defined its main method as consciousness-raising, and the 'structureless rap group' was an excellent means to this end. Its looseness and informality encouraged participation in discussion and the often supportive atmosphere elicited personal insight. If nothing more concrete than personal insight ever resulted from these groups, that did not much matter, because their purpose did not really extend beyond this. The basic problems didn't appear until individual rap groups exhausted the virtues of consciousness-raising and decided they wanted to do something more specific. At this point they usually floundered because most groups were unwilling to change their structure when they changed their task. Women had thoroughly accepted the idea of 'structurelessness' without realising the limitations of its uses. People would try to use the 'structureless' group and the informal conference for purposes for which they were unsuitable out of a blind belief that no other means could possibly be anything but oppressive.

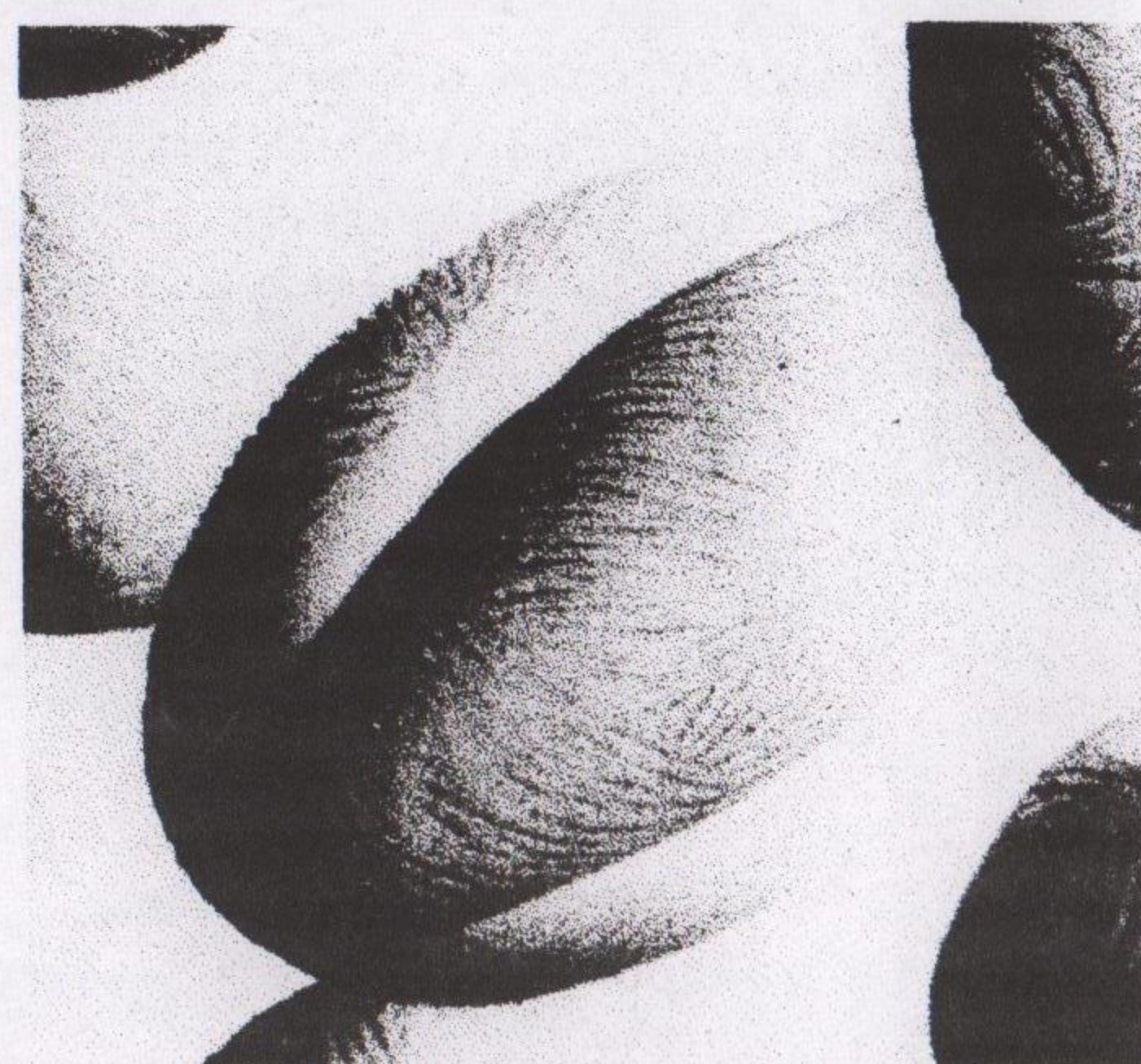
If the movement is to move beyond these elementary stages of development, it will have to disabuse itself of some of its prejudices about organisation and structure. There is nothing inherently bad about either of these. They can be and often are misused, but to reject them out of hand because they are misused is to deny ourselves the necessary tools to further development. We need to understand why 'structurelessness' does not work.

Formal and Informal Structures

Contrary to what we would like to believe, there is no such thing as a 'structureless' group. Any group of people of whatever nature coming together for any length of time, for any purpose, will inevitably structure itself in some fashion. The structure may be flexible, it may vary over time, it may evenly or unevenly distribute tasks, power and resources over the members of the group. But it will be formed regardless of the abilities, personalities and intentions of the people involved. The very fact that we are individuals with different talents, predispositions and backgrounds makes this inevitable. Only if we refused to relate or interact on any basis whatsoever could we approximate 'structurelessness' and that is not the nature of a human group. This means that to strive for a 'structureless' group is as useful and as deceptive, as to aim at an 'objective' news story, 'value-free' social science or a 'free' economy. A 'laissez-faire' group is about as realistic as a 'laissez-faire' society; the idea becomes a smoke-screen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others.

This hegemony can easily be established because the idea of 'structurelessness' does not prevent the formation of informal structures, but only formal ones. Similarly, 'laissez-faire' philosophy did not prevent the economically powerful from establishing control over wages, prices and distribution of goods; it only prevented the government from doing so. Thus 'structurelessness' becomes a way of masking power, and within the women's movement it is usually most strongly advocated by those who are the most powerful (whether they are conscious of their power or not). The rules of how decisions are made are known only to a few and awareness of power is curtailed by those who know the rules, as long as the structure of the group is informal. Those who do not know the rules and are not chosen for initiation must remain in confusion, or suffer from paranoid delusions that something is happening of which they are not quite aware.

For everyone to have the opportunity to be involved in a given group and to partici-



pate in its activities the structure must be explicit, not implicit. The rules of decision-making must be open and available to everyone, and this can only happen if they are formalised. This is not to say that normalisation of a group structure will destroy the informal structure. It usually doesn't. But it does hinder the informal structure from having predominant control and makes available some means of attacking it. 'Structurelessness' is organisationally impossible. We cannot decide whether to have a structured or structureless group; only whether or not to have a formally structured one. Therefore, the word will not be used any longer except to refer to the idea which it represents. *Unstructured* will refer to those groups which have not been deliberately structured in a particular manner. *Structured* will refer to those which have. A structured group always has a formal structure, and may also have an informal one. An unstructured group always has an informal, or covert, structure. It is this informal structure, particularly in unstructured groups, which forms the basis for elites. **The Nature of Elitism** 'Elitist' is probably the most abused word in the women's liberation movement. It is used as frequently, and for the same reasons, as 'pinko' was in the '50s. It is never used correctly. Within the movement it commonly refers to individuals though the personal characteristics and activities of those to

whom it is directed may differ widely. An individual, as an individual, can never be an 'elite' because the only proper application of the term 'elite' is to groups. Any individual, regardless of how well-known that person is, can never be an elite. Correctly, an elite refers to a small group of people who have power over a larger group of which they are part, usually without direct responsibility to that larger group, and often without their knowledge or consent. A person becomes an elitist by being part of, or advocating, the rule by such a small group, whether or not that individual is well-known or not known at all. Notoriety is not a definition of an elitist.

The most insidious elites are usually run by people not known to the larger public at all. Intelligent elitists are usually smart enough not to allow themselves to become well-known. When they become known, they are watched, and the mask over their power is no longer firmly lodged. Because elites are informal does not mean they are invisible. At any small group meeting anyone with a sharp eye and an acute ear can tell who is influencing whom. The member of a friendship group will relate more to each other than to other people. They listen more attentively and interrupt less. They repeat each other's points and give in amiably. The 'outs' they tend to ignore or grapple with. The 'outs' approval is not necessary for making a decision; however it is necessary for the 'outs' to stay on good terms with the 'ins'. Of course, the lines are not as sharp as I have drawn them. They are nuances of interaction, not pre-written scripts. But they are discernible, and they do have their effect. Once one knows with whom it is important to check before a decision is made, and whose approval is the stamp of acceptance, one knows who is running things. Elites are not conspiracies. Seldom does a small group of people get together and try to take over a larger group for its own ends.

Elites are nothing more and nothing less than a group of friends who also happen to participate in the same political activities. They would probably maintain their friendship whether or not they were involved in political activities; they would probably be involved in political activities whether or not they maintained their friendships. It is the coincidence of these two phenomena which creates elites in any groups and makes them so difficult to break. These friendship groups function as networks of communication outside any regular channels for such communication that may have been set up by a group. If no channels are set up, they function as the only networks of communication. Because people are friends, usually sharing the same values and orientations, because they talk to each other socially and consult with each other when common decisions have to be made, the people involved in these networks have more power in the group than those who don't. And it is a rare group that does not establish some informal networks of communication through the friends that are made in it.

Some groups, depending on their size, may have more than one such informal

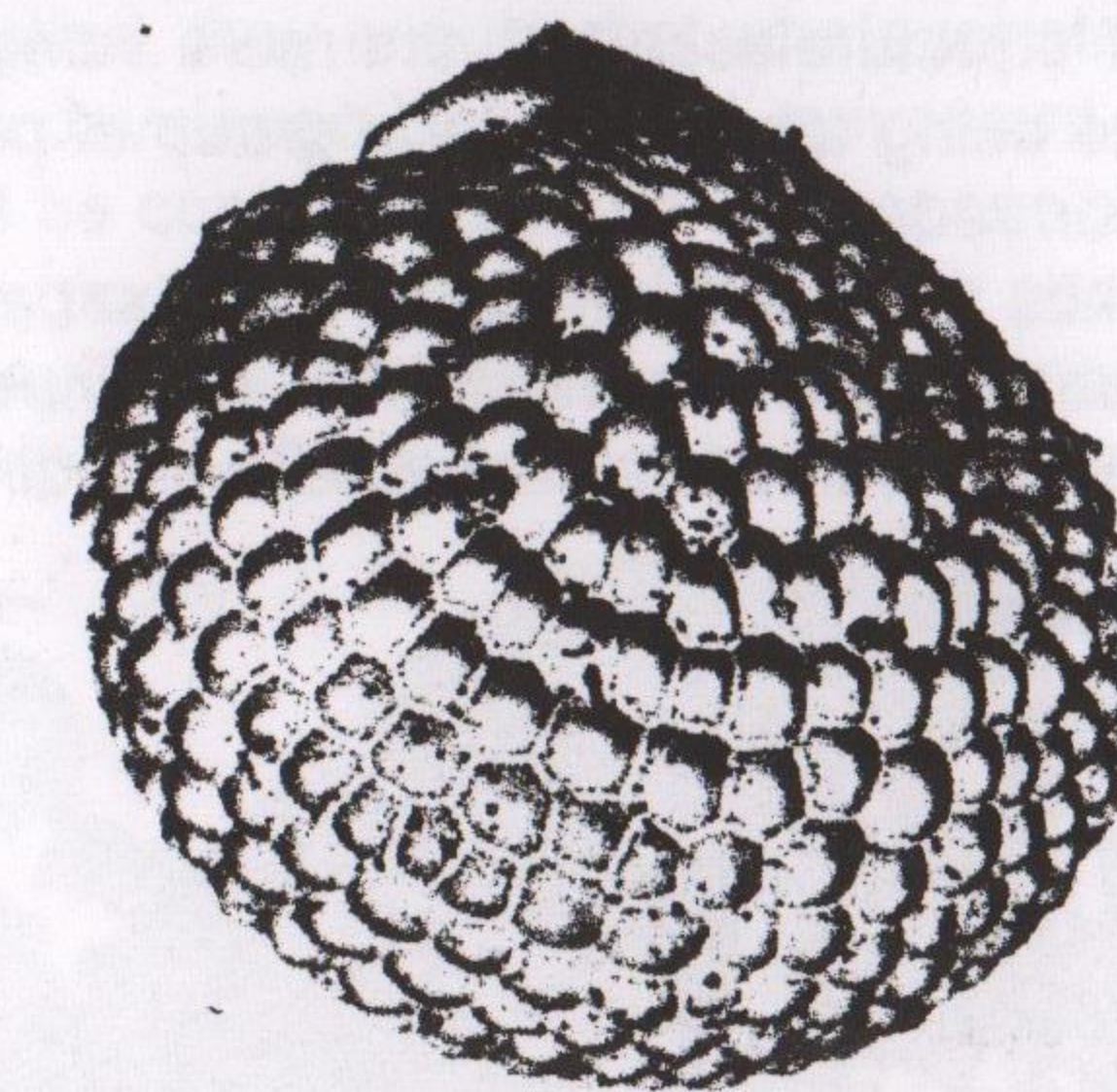
communication network. Networks may even overlap. When only one such network exists, it is the elite of an otherwise unstructured group, whether the participants in it want to be elitists or not. If it is the only such network in a structured group it may or may not be an elite depending on its composition and the nature of the formal structure. If there are two or more such networks of friends, they may compete for power within the group thus forming factions, or one may deliberately opt out of the competition leaving the other as the elite. In a structured group, two or more such friendship networks usually compete with each other for formal power. This is often the healthiest situation. The other members are in a position to arbitrate between the two competitors for power and thus are able to make demands of the group to whom they give their temporary allegiance.

Since movement groups have made no concrete decisions about who shall exercise power within them, many different criteria are used around the country. As the movement has changed through time, marriage has become a less universal criterion for effective participation, although all informal elites still establish standards by which only women who possess certain material or personal characteristics may join. The standards frequently include: middle-class background (despite all the rhetoric about relating to the working-class), being married, not being married but living with someone, being or pretending to be a lesbian, being between the age of 20 and 30, being college-educated or at least having some college background, being 'hip', not being too 'hip', holding a certain political line or identification as a 'radical', having certain 'feminine' personality characteristics such as being 'nice', dressing right (whether in the traditional style or the anti-traditional style), etc. There are also some characteristics which will almost always tag one as a 'deviant' who should not be related to. They include: being too old, working full-time (particularly if one is actively committed to a 'career'), not being 'nice', and being avowedly single (i.e. neither heterosexual nor homosexual). Other criteria could be included, but they all have common themes.

The characteristic prerequisite for participating in all the informal elites of the movement, and thus for exercising power, concern one's background, personality or allocation of time. They do not include one's competence, dedication to feminism, talents or potential contribution to the movement. The former are the criteria one usually uses in determining one's friends. The latter are what any movement or organisation has to use if it is going to be politically effective. Although this dissection of the process of elite formation within small groups has been critical in its perspectives, it is not made in the belief that these informal structures are inevitably bad merely that they are inevitable.

All groups create informal structures as a result of the interaction patterns among the members. Such informal structures can do very useful things. But only unstructured

groups are totally governed by them. When informal elites are combined with a myth of 'structurelessness', there can be no attempt to put limits on the use of power. It becomes capricious. This has two potentially negative consequences of which we should be aware. The first is that the informal structure of decision-making will be like a sorority: one in which people listen to others because they like them, not because they say significant things. As long as the movement does not do significant things this does not much matter. But if its development is not to be arrested at this preliminary stage, it will have to alter this trend. The second is that informal structures have no obligation to be responsible to the group at large. Their power was not given to them; it cannot be taken away. Their influence is not based on what they do for the group; therefore they cannot be directly influenced by the group. This does not necessarily make informal structures irresponsible. Those who are concerned with



maintaining their influence will usually try to be responsible. The group simply cannot compel such responsibility; it is dependent on the interests of the elite.

The 'Star' System

The 'idea' of 'structurelessness' has created the 'star' system. We live in a society which expects political groups to make decisions and to select people to articulate those decisions to the public at large. The press and the public do not know how to listen seriously to individual women as women; they want to know how the group feels. Only three techniques have ever been developed for establishing mass group opinion: the vote or referendum, the public opinion survey questionnaire and the selection of group spokespeople at an appropriate meeting. The women's liberation movement has used none of these to communicate with the public. Neither the movement as a whole nor most of the multitudinous groups within it have established a means of explaining their position on various issues. But the public is conditioned to look for spokespeople. While it has consciously not chosen spokespeople, the movement has thrown up many women who have caught the public eye for varying reasons. These women represent no particular group or established opinion; they know this and usually say so. But because there are no official spokespeople nor any decision-making body the press can interview when it wants to know the movement's position on a subject, these women are perceived as the spokespeople. Thus,

whether they want to or not, whether the movement likes it or not, women of public note are put in the role of spokespeople by default.

This is one source of the tie that is often felt towards the women who are labelled 'stars'. Because they were not selected by the women in the movement to represent the movement's views, they are resented when the press presumes they speak for the movement... Thus the backlash of the 'star' system, in effect, encourages the very kind of individual non responsibility that the movement condemns. By purging a sister as a 'star', the movement loses whatever control it may have had over the person, who becomes free to commit all of the individualistic sins of which she had been accused.

Political Impotence

Unstructured groups may be very effective in getting women to talk about their lives; they aren't very good for getting things done. Unless their mode of operation changes, groups flounder at the point where people tire of 'just talking' and want to do something more. Because the larger movement in most cities is as unstructured as individual rap groups, it is not much more effective than the separate groups at specific tasks. The informal structure is rarely together enough or in touch enough with the people to be able to operate effectively. So the movement generates much emotion and few results. Unfortunately, the consequences of all this motion are not as innocuous as the results, and their victim is the movement itself.

Some groups have turned themselves into local action projects, if they do not involve too many people, and work on a small scale. But this form restricts movement activity to the local level. Also, to function well the groups must usually pare themselves down to that informal group of friends who were running things in the first place. This excludes many women from participating. As long as the only way women can participate in the movement is through membership of a small group, the non-gregarious are at a distinct disadvantage. As long as friendship groups are the main means of organisational activity, elitism becomes institutionalised.

For those groups which cannot find a local project to devote themselves to, the mere act of staying together becomes the reason for their staying together. When a group has no specific task (and consciousness-raising is a task), the people in it turn their energies to controlling others in the group. This is not done so much out of a malicious desire to manipulate others (though sometimes it is) as out of lack of anything better to do with their talents. Able people with time on their hands and a need to justify their coming together put their efforts into personal control, and spend their time criticising the personalities of the other members in the group. Infighting and personal power games rule the day. When a group is involved in a task, people learn to get along with others as they are and to subsume dislikes for the sake of the larger goals. There are limits placed on the compulsion to remold every

person into our image of what they should be. The end of consciousness-raising leaves people with no place to go and the lack of structure leaves them with no way of getting there. The women in the movement either turn in on themselves and their sisters or seek other alternatives of action.

There are few alternatives available. Some women just 'do their own thing'. This can lead to a great deal of individual creativity, much of which is useful for the movement, but it is not a viable alternative for most women and certainly does not foster a spirit of co-operative group effort. Other women drift out of the movement entirely because they don't want to develop an individual project and have found no way of discovering, joining or starting group projects that interest them. Many turn to other political organisations to give them the kind of structured, effective activity that they have not been able to find in the women's movement. Thus, those political organisations which view women's liberation as only one issue among many find the women's liberation movement a vast recruiting ground for new members. There is no need for such organisations to 'infiltrate' (though this is not precluded).

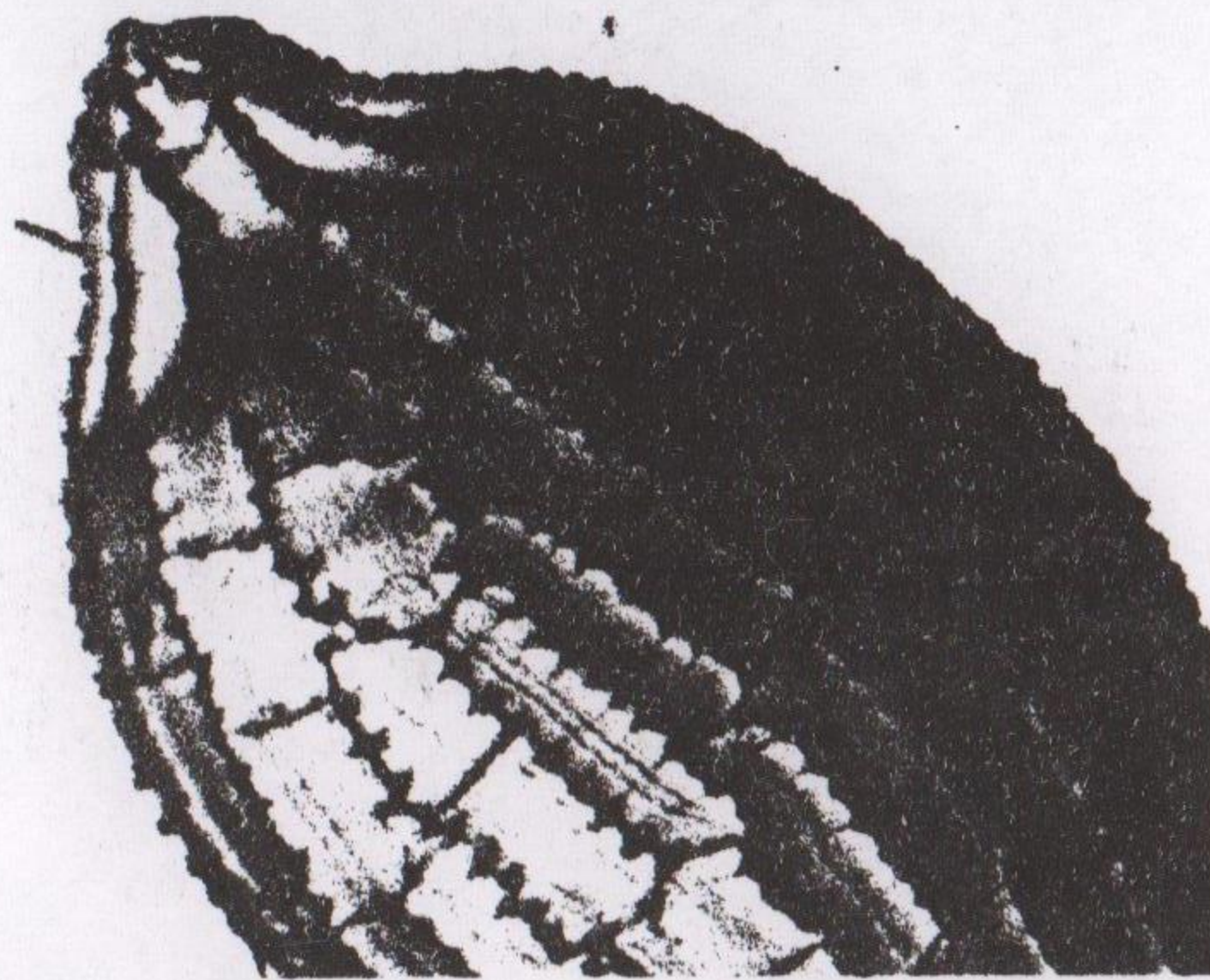
The desire for meaningful political activity generated by women by becoming part of the women's liberation movement is sufficient to make them eager to join other organisations. The movement itself provides no outlets for their new ideas and energies. Those women who join other political organisations while remaining within the women's liberation movement, or who join women's liberation while remaining in other political organisations, in turn become the framework for new informal structures. These friendship networks are based upon their common non-feminist politics rather than the characteristics discussed earlier; however, the network operates in much the same way. Because these women share common values, ideas and political orientations, they too become informal, unplanned, unselected, unresponsible elites whether they intend to be so or not.

These new informal elites are often perceived as threats by the old informal elites previously developed within different movement groups. This is a correct perception. Such politically orientated networks are rarely willing to be merely 'sororities' as many of the old ones were, and want to proselytise their political as well as their feminist ideas. This is only natural, but its implications for women's liberation have never been adequately discussed. The old elites are rarely willing to bring such differences of opinion out into the open because it would involve exposing the nature of the informal structure of the group. Many of these informal elites have been hiding under the banner of 'anti-elitism' and 'structure-lessness'. To counter effectively the competition from another informal structure, they would have to become 'public' and this possibility is fraught with many dangerous implications. Thus, to maintain its own power, it is easier to rationalise the exclusion of the members of the other informal structure by such means as 'red-baiting', 'lesbian-baiting' or

'straight-baiting'. The only other alternative is formally to structure the group in such a way that the original power is institutionalised. This is not always possible. If the informal elites have been well structured and have exercised a fair amount of power in the past, such a task is feasible.

These groups have a history of being somewhat politically effective in the past, as the tightness of the informal structure has proven an adequate substitute for a formal structure. Becoming structured does not alter their operation much, though the institutionalisation of the power structure does not open it to formal challenge. It is those groups which are in greatest need of structure that are often least capable of creating it. Their informal structures have not been too well formed and adherence to the ideology of 'structureless-ness' makes them reluctant to change tactics. The more unstructured a group it is, the more lacking it is in informal structures; the more it adheres to an ideology of 'structurelessness', the more vulnerable it is to being taken over by a group of political comrades.

Since the movement at large is just as unstructured as most of its constituent groups, it is similarly susceptible to indirect



influence. But the phenomenon manifests itself differently. On a local level most groups can operate autonomously, but only the groups that can organise a national activity are nationally organised groups. Thus, it is often the structured feminist organisations that provide national directions for feminist activities, and this direction is determined by the priorities of these organisations. Such groups as National Organisation of Women and Women's Equality Action League and some Left women's caucuses are simply the only organisations capable of mounting a national campaign. The multitude of unstructured women's liberation groups can choose to support or not support the national campaigns, but are incapable of mounting their own. Thus their members become the troops under the leadership of the structured organisations. They don't even have a way of deciding what the priorities are. The more unstructured a movement is, the less control it has over the directions in which it develops and the political actions in which it engages. This does not mean that its ideas do not spread. Given a certain amount of interest by the media and the appropriateness of social conditions, the ideas will still be diffused widely. But diffusion of ideas does not mean they are implemented; it only means they are talked about.

Insofar as they can be applied individually they may be acted upon; insofar as they require co-ordinated political power to be implemented, they will not be.

As long as the women's liberation movement stays dedicated to a form of organisation which stresses small, inactive discussion groups among friends, the worst problems of unstructuredness will not be felt. But this style of organisation has its limits; it is politically inefficacious, exclusive and discriminatory against those women who are not or cannot be tied into the friendship networks. Those who do not fit into what already exists because of class, race, occupation, parental or marital status, or personality will inevitably be discouraged from trying to participate. Those who do not fit in will develop vested interests in maintaining things as they are. The informal groups' vested interests will be sustained by the informal structures that exist, and the movement will have no way of determining who shall exercise power within it. If the movement continues deliberately not to select who shall exercise power, it does not thereby abolish power. All it does is abdicate the right to demand that those who do exercise power and influence be responsible for it. If the movement continues to keep power as diffuse as possible because it knows it cannot demand responsibility from those who have it, it does prevent any group or person from totally dominating. But it simultaneously ensures that the movement is as ineffective as possible.

Some middle ground between domination and ineffectiveness can and must be found. These problems are coming to a head at this time because the nature of the movement is necessarily changing. Consciousness-raising, as the main function of the women's liberation movement, is becoming obsolete. Due to the intense press publicity of the last two years and the numerous overground books and articles now being circulated, women's liberation has become a household word. Its issues are discussed and informal rap groups are formed by people who have no explicit connection with any movement group. Purely educational work is no longer such an overwhelming need. The movement must go on to other tasks. It now needs to establish its priorities, articulate its goals and pursue its objectives in a co-ordinated way. To do this it must be organised locally, regionally and nationally.

Principles of Democratic Structuring

Once the movement no longer clings tenaciously to the ideology of 'structurelessness', it will be free to develop those forms of organisation best suited to its healthy functioning. This does not mean that we should go to the other extreme and blindly imitate the traditional forms of organisation. But neither should we blindly reject them all. Some traditional techniques will prove useful, albeit not perfect; some will give us insights into what we should not do to obtain certain ends with minimal costs to the individuals in the movement. Mostly, we will have to experiment with different kinds of structuring and develop a variety of techniques to use for dif-

ferent situations. The 'lot system' is one such idea which has emerged from the movement. It is not applicable to all situations, but it is useful, in some. Other ideas for structuring are needed. But before we can proceed to experiment intelligently, we must accept the idea that there is nothing inherently bad about structure itself - only its excessive use. While engaging in this trial-and-error process, there are some principles we can keep in mind that are essential to democratic structuring and are politically effective also:

1. *Delegation* of specific authority to specific individuals for specific tasks by democratic procedures. Letting people assume jobs or tasks by default only means they are not dependably done. If people are selected to do a task, preferably after expressing an interest or willingness to do it, they have made a commitment which cannot easily be ignored.

2. Requiring all those to whom authority has been delegated to be *responsible* to all those who selected them. This is how the group has control over people in positions of authority. Individuals may exercise power, but it is the group that has the ultimate say over how the power is exercised.

3. *Distribution* of authority among as many people as is reasonably possible. This prevents monopoly of power and requires those in positions of authority to consult with many others in the process of exercising it. It also gives many people an opportunity to have responsibility for specific tasks and thereby to learn specific skills.

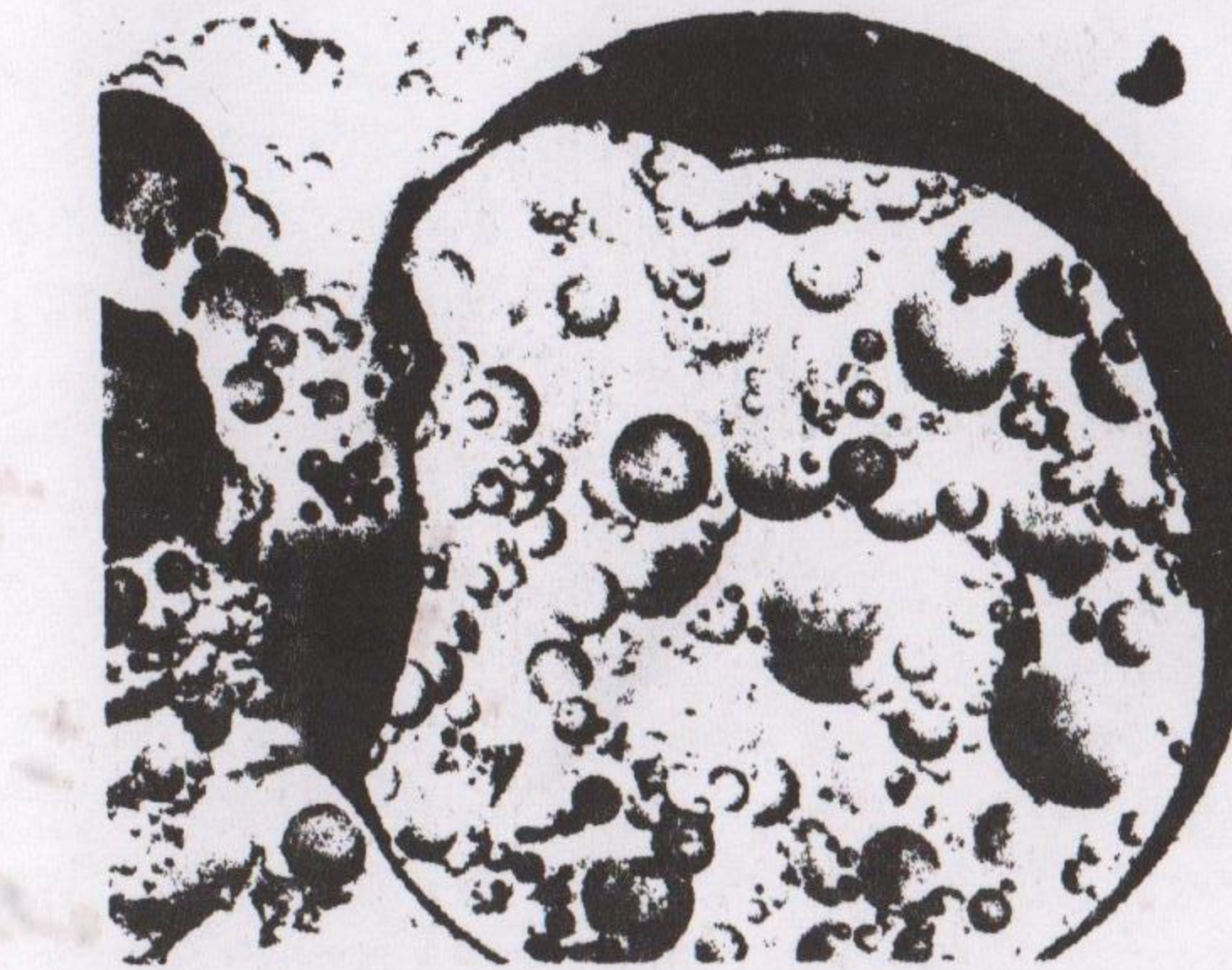
4. *Rotation* of tasks among individuals. Responsibilities which are held too long by one person, formally or informally, come to be seen as that person's 'property' and are not easily relinquished or controlled by the group. Conversely, if tasks are rotated too frequently the individual does not have time to learn her job well and acquire a sense of satisfaction of doing a good job.

5. *Allocation* of tasks along rational criteria. Selecting someone for a position because they are liked by the group, or giving them hard work because they are disliked, serves neither the group nor the person in the long run. Ability, interest and responsibility have got to be the major concerns in such selection. People should be given an opportunity to learn skills they do not have, but this is best done through some sort of 'apprenticeship' programme rather than the 'sink or swim' method. Having a responsibility one can't handle well is demoralising. Conversely, being blackballed from what one can do well does not encourage one to develop one's skills. Women have been punished for being competent throughout most of human history. The movement does not need to repeat this process.

6. *Diffusion* of information to everyone as fre-

quently as possible. Information is power. Access to information enhances one's power. When an informal network spreads new ideas and information among themselves outside the group, they are already engaged in the process of forming an opinion. Without the group participating. The more one knows about how things work, the more politically effective one can be.

7. *Equal access to resources* needed by the group. This is not always perfectly possible, but should be striven for. A member who maintains a monopoly over a needed resource (like a printing press or a darkroom owned by a husband) can unduly influence the use of that resource. Skills and information are also resources. Members' skills and information can be equally available only when members are willing to teach what they know to others. When these principles are applied, they ensure that whatever structures are developed by different movement groups will be controlled by and be responsible to the group. The group of people in positions of authority will be diffuse, flexible, open and temporary. They will not be in such an easy



position to institutionalise their power because ultimate decisions will be made by the group at large. The group will have the power to determine who shall exercise authority within it. Jo Freeman.

3. THE TYRANNY OF TYRANNY Cathy Levine.

An article entitled 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness' which has received wide attention around the women's movement. (in MS. Second Wave etc) assails the trend toward, 'leaderless', 'structureless' groups, as the main — if not sole — organisational form of the movement, as a dead-end. While written and received in good faith, as an aid to the movement, the article is destructive in its distortion and maligning of a valid, conscious strategy for building a revolutionary movement. It is high time that we recognise the direction these tendencies are pointing in, as a real political alternative to hierarchical organisation, rather than trying to nip it in the bud. There are (at least) two different models for building a movement, only one of which does Joreen acknowledge: a mass organisation with strong, centralised control, such as a Party. The other model,

which consolidates mass support only as a coup de grave necessity, is based on small groups in voluntary association. A large group functions as an aggregate of its parts — each member functions as a unit, a cog in the wheel of the large organisation. The individual is alienated by the size, and relegated, to struggling against the obstacle created by the size of the group — as example, expending energy to get a point of view recognised. Small groups, on the other hand, multiply the strength of each member. By working collectively in small numbers, the small group utilises the various contributions of each person to their fullest, nurturing and developing individual input, instead of dissipating it in the competitive survival-of-the-fittest/smarest/wittiest spirit of the large organisation.

Joreen associates the ascendancy of the small groups with the consciousness-raising phase of the woman's movement, but concludes that, with the focus shifting beyond the changing of individual consciousness toward, building a mass revolutionary movement, women should begin working towards building a large organisation. It is certainly true and has been for some time that many women who have been in consciousness-raising groups for a while feel the need to expand their political activities beyond the scope of the group and are at a loss as to how to proceed. But it is equally true that other branches of the Left are at a similar loss, as to how to defeat capitalist, imperialist, quasi-fascist Amerika.

But Joreen fails to define what she means by the women's movement, which is an essential prerequisite to a discussion of strategy or direction. The feminist movement in its fullest sense, that is, as a movement to defeat patriarchy, is a revolutionary movement and a socialist movement, placing it under the umbrella of the Left. A central problem of women determining strategy for the women's movement is how to relate to the male Left; we do not want to take their modus operandi as ours, because we have seen them as a perpetuation of patriarchal, and latterly, capitalist values.

Despite our best efforts to disavow and disassociate ourselves from the male Left, we have, nonetheless, had our energy. Men tend to organise the way they fuck — one big rush and then that "bam, slam, thank you ma'am", as it were. Woman should be building our movement the way we make love — gradually, with sustained involvement, limitless endurance — and of course, multiple orgasms. Instead of getting discouraged and isolated now, we should be in our small groups — discussing, planning, creating and making trouble. We should always be making trouble for patriarchy and always supporting women — we should always be actively engaging in and creating feminist activity, because we all thrive on it; in the absence of feminist activity, women take to tranquillisers, go insane and commit suicide.

The other extreme from inactivity, which seems to plague politically active people, is over-involvement which led, in the late '60s, to a generation of burnt-out radicals. A feminist friend once commented that, to her,

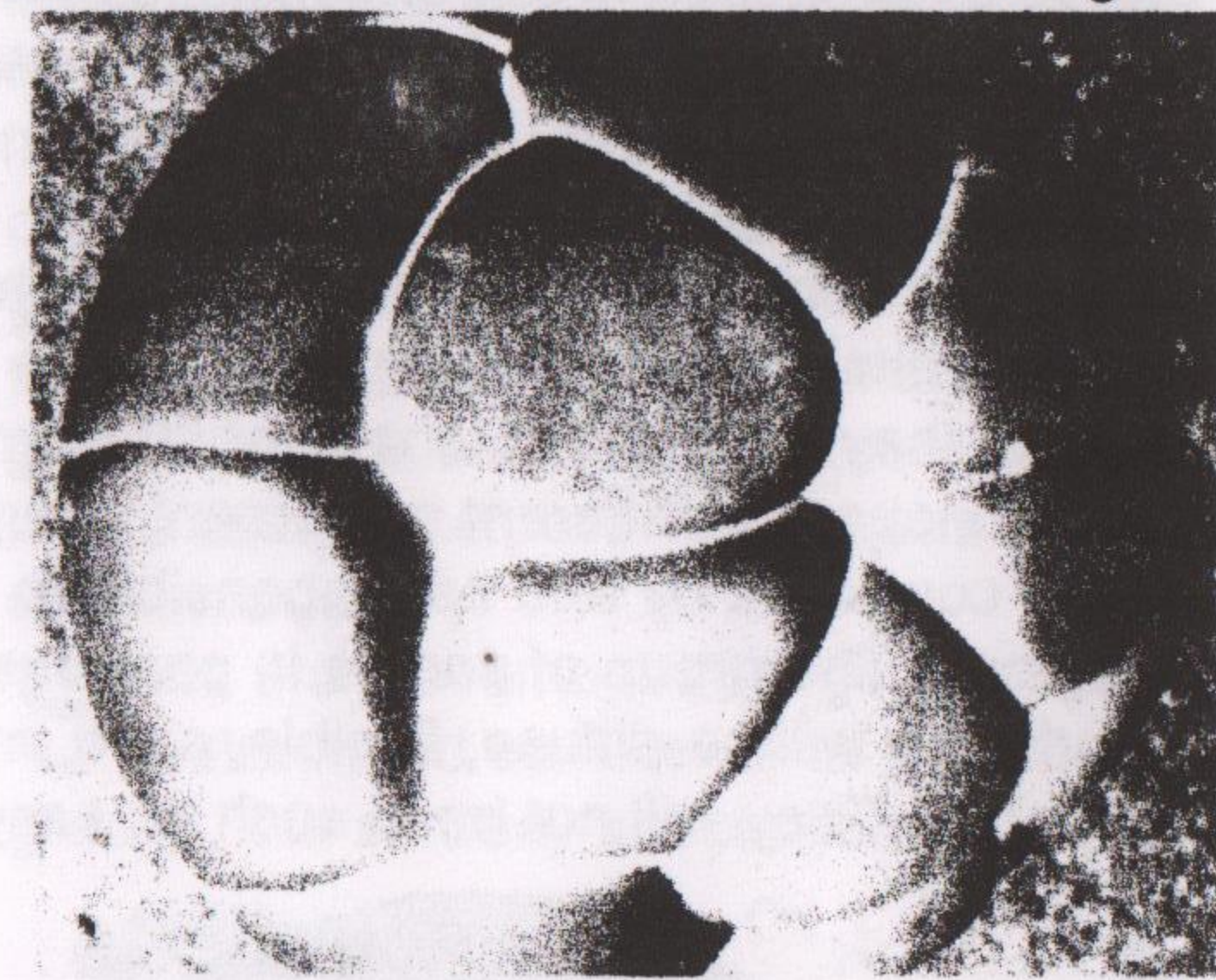
"being in the women's-movement" meant spending approximately 25% of her time engaging in group activities and 75% of her time developing herself. This is a real, important time allocation for 'movement' women to think about. The male movement taught us that 'movement' people are supposed to devote 24 hours a day to the Cause, which is consistent with female socialisation towards self-sacrifice. Whatever the source of our selflessness, however, we tend to plunge ourselves head-first into organisational activities, neglecting personal development, until one day we find we do not know what we are doing and for whose benefit, and we hate ourselves as much as before the movement. (Male over-involvement, on the other hand, obviously unrelated to any sex-linked trait of self-sacrifice, does however smell strongly of the Protestant/Jewish, work/achievement ethic, and even more flagrantly, of the 'rational', cool, unemotional facade with which Machismo suppresses male feelings.)

These perennial pitfalls of movement people, which amount to 5 bottomless pits for the movement, are explained by Joreen as part of the 'Tyranny of Structurelessness', which is a joke from the stand point that sees a nation of quasi-automatons, struggling to maintain a semblance of individuality against a post-technological, military/industrial bulldozer. What we definitely don't need is more structures and rules, providing us with easy answers, pre-fab alternatives and no room in which to create our own way of life. What is threatening the female Left and the other branches even more, is the 'tyranny of tyranny', which has prevented us from relating to individuals, or from creating organisations in ways that do not obliterate individuality with prescribed roles, or from liberating us from capitalist structure.

Contrary to Joreen's assumption, then, the consciousness-raising phase of the movement is not over. Consciousness-raising is a vital process, which must go on, among those engaged in social change, to and through the revolutionary liberation. Raising our consciousness — meaning, helping each other extricate ourselves from ancient shackles — is the main way in which women are going to turn their personal anger into constructive energy, and join the struggle. Consciousness-raising, however, is a loose term — a vacuous nothingism, at this point — and needs to be qualified. An offensive television commercial can raise a women's consciousness as she irons her husbands' shirts alone in her house; it can remind her of what she already knows, is that she is trapped, her life is meaningless, boring, etc — but it will probably not encourage her to leave the laundry and organise a houseworkers' strike. Consciousness-raising, as a strategy for revolution, must involve helping women translate their personal dissatisfaction into class-consciousness and making organised women accessible to all women.

In suggesting that the next step after consciousness-raising groups is building a movement, Joreen not only implies a false dichotomy between one and the other, but also overlooks an important process of the

feminist movement, that of building a women's culture. While, ultimately, a massive force of women (and some men) will be necessary to smash the power of the state, a mass movement itself does not a revolution make. If we hope to create a society free of male supremacy, when we overthrow capitalism and build international socialism, we had better start working on it right away, because some of our very best anti-capitalist friends are going to give us the hardest time. We must be developing a visible women's culture, within which women can define and express themselves apart from patriarchal standards, and which will meet the needs of women where patriarchy has failed. Culture is an essential part of a revolutionary movement — and it is also one of the great-



est tools of counter-revolution. We must be very careful to specify that the culture we are discussing is revolutionary, and struggle constantly to make sure it remains inveterately opposed to the father culture.

The culture of an oppressed or colonised class or caste is not necessarily revolutionary. America contains — both in the sense of 'having' and in preventing the spread of — many 'sub-cultures' which, though defining themselves as different from the father culture, do not threaten the status quo. In fact, they are part of the 'pluralistic' American one-big-happy-family society/ethnic cultures, the 'counter-culture'. They are acknowledged, validated, adopted and ripped off by the big culture. Co-optation. The women's culture faces that very danger right now, from a revolution-ary new liberating girdle to MS magazine, to The Diary of a Mad Housewife. The New Woman, is middle-class, college-educated, male-associated — can have her share of the American Pie. Sounds scrumptious — but what about revolution? We must constantly re-evaluate our position to make sure we are not being absorbed into Uncle Sam's ever-open arms. The question of women's culture, while denigrated by the arrogant and blind male Left, is not necessarily a revisionist issue. The polarisation between masculine and feminine roles as defined and controlled by male society, has not only subjugated women, but has made all men, regardless of class or race, feel superior to women — this feeling of superiority, countering anti-capitalist sentiment, is the lifeblood of the system. The aim of feminist revolution is for women to achieve our total humanity, which means destroying the masculine and feminine roles which make both men and women only half human. Creating a woman's culture is the means through which we shall restore our lost

humanity.

The question of our lost humanity brings up the subject that vulgar Marxists of every predilection have neglected in their analysis for over half a century — the psycho-sexual elements in the character structure of each individual, which acts as a personal policeman within every member of society, Wilhelm Reich began to describe, in narrow, heterosexual, male-biased form, the character armour in each person, which makes people good fascists or, in our society, just good citizens. Women experience this phenomenon every day, as the repressed feelings, especially obvious among our male friends, who find it so difficult to express or even 'expose' their feelings honestly. The psychic crippling which capitalist psychology coerces us into believing is the problems of the individuals, is a massive social condition which helps advanced capitalist society to hold together. Psychic crippling of its citizens makes its citizens report to work, fight in wars, suppress its women, non-whites, and all non-conformists vulnerable to suppression. In our post-technological society, every member of which recognises this as being the most advanced culture, the psychic crippling is also the most advanced — there is more shit for the psyche to cut through, what with Jonathan Livingston Seagull and the politics of 'You're okay, I'm okay', not to mention post-neo-Freudians and the psycho-surgeons.

For the umpteenth time, let it be said that, unless we examine inner psychic shackles, at the time we study outer, political structures and the relationship between the two, we will not succeed in creating a force to challenge our enemy; in fact, we will not even know the enemy. The Left has spent hours and tomes trying to define the ruling class; the ruling class has representative pigs inside the head of every member of society — thus, the logic behind so-called paranoia. The tyranny of tyranny is a deeply entrenched foe.

Where psychological struggle intersects political involvement is the small group. This is why the question of strategy and tactics and methods of organisation are so crucial at this moment. The Left has been trying for decades to rally people into the straps, always before a number sufficient to make a dent exist. As if Stone pointed out, you can't make a revolution when four-fifths of the people are happy. Nor should we wait until every-one is ready to become radical. While on the one hand, we should constantly suggest alternatives to capitalism, through food co-ops, anti-corporate actions and acts of personal rebellion, we should also be fighting against capitalist psychic structures and the values and living patterns which derive from them. Structures, chairmen, leaders, rhetoric — when a meeting of a Leftist group becomes indistinguishable in style from a session of a US Senate, we should not laugh about it, but re-evaluate the structure behind the style, and recognise a representative of the enemy.

The origin of the small group preference in the women's movement — and by small group I refer to political collectives — was,

as Joreen explains, a reaction against the over-structured, hierarchical organisation of society in general, and male Left groups in particular. But what people fail to realise is that we are reacting against bureaucracy because it deprives us of control, like the rest of this society; and instead of recognising the folly of our ways by returning to the structured fold, we who are rebelling against bureaucracy should be creating an alternative to bureaucratic organisation. The reason for building a movement on a foundation of collectives is that we want to create a revolutionary culture consistent with our view of the new society; it is more than a reaction; the small group is a solution. Because the women's movement is tending towards small groups and because the women's movement lacks direction at this time, some people conclude that small groups are to blame for the lack of direction. They wave the shibboleth of 'structure' as a solution to the strategic stalemate, as if structure would give us theoretical insight or relief from personal anxieties. It might give us a structure into which to 'organise', or fit more women, but in the absence of political strategy we may create Kafkaesque irony, where the trial is replaced by a meeting.

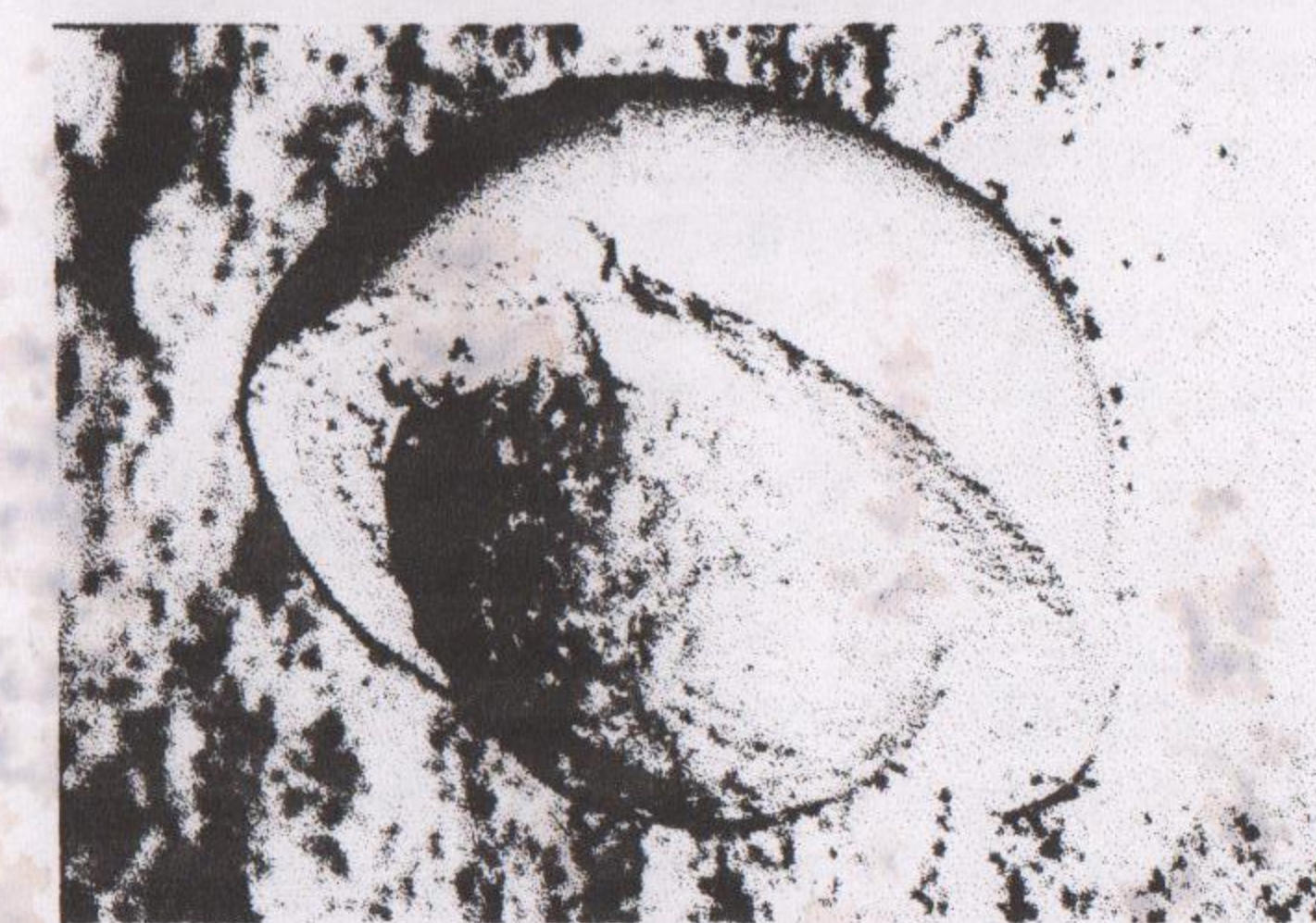
The lack of political energy that has been stalking us for the last few years, less in the women's movement than in the male Left, probably relates directly to feelings of personal shininess that tyrannise each and every one of us. Unless we confront those feelings directly and treat them with the same seriousness as we treat the bombing of Hanoi, paralysis by the former will prevent us from retaliating effectively against the latter. Rather than calling for the replacement of small groups with structured, larger groups, we need to encourage each other to get settled into small, unstructured groups which recognise and extol the value of the individual. Friendships, more than therapy of any kind, instantly relieve the feelings of personal shininess — the revolution should be built on the model of friendships.

The omnipresent problem which Joreen confronts, that of elites, does not find solution in the formation of structures. Contrary to the belief that lack of up-front structures lead to insidious, invisible structures based on elites, the absence of structures in small mutual trust groups fights elitism on the basic level — the level of personal dynamics, at which the individual who counters insecurity with aggressive behaviour rules over the person whose insecurity maintains silence. The small personally involved group learns, first to recognise those stylistic differences, and then to appreciate and work with them; rather than trying to either ignore or annihilate differences in personal style, the small group learns to appreciate and utilise them, thus strengthening the personal power of each individual. Given that each of us has been socialised in a society in which individual competition with every other individual is the way of existence, we are not going to obliterate personal-styles-as-power, except by constant recognition of these differences, and by learning to let differences of personal styles

exist together, insofar as we are not the enemy, but the victims, we need to nurture and not destroy each other.

The destructive elements will recede gradually as we grow stronger. But in the meantime we should guard against situations which reward personal style with power. Meetings award prizes to the more aggressive, rhetorical, charismatic, articulate (almost always male). Considering how much the various derivatives of the term 'anarchism' are bandied about, very few people in the Left have studied anarchism with any seriousness. For people priding themselves on cynicism about social taboos, we sure are sucked in by this taboo against anarchism. Like masturbation, anarchism is something we have been brought up to fear, irrationally and unquestioningly, because not to fear it might lead us to probe it, learn it and like it. For anyone who has ever considered the possibility that masturbation might provide more benefits than madness, a study of anarchism is highly recommended — all the way back to the time of Marx, when Bakunin was his most radical socialist adversary... most radical, because he was a dialectical giant step beyond Marx, trusting the qualities of individuals to save humanity.

Why has the Left all but ignored anarchism? It might be because the anarchists have never sustained a revolutionary



victory. Marxism has triumphed, but so has capitalism. What does that prove, or what does it suggest but that maybe the loser, up to this point is on our side? The Russian anarchists fiercely opposed the very revisionist tyranny among the Bolsheviks that the New Left would come to deride with sophomoric callousness, before their old Left parents in the '60s. Sure, the old generation of American Leftists were narrow-minded not to see capitalism regenerating in Russia; but the tunnel vision with which we have charted a path of Marxist-Leninist dogma is not something to be proud of either.

Women, of course, have made it out of the tunnel way before most men, because we found ourselves in the dark; being led by the blind men of the New Left, and split. Housewife for the revolution or prostitute for the proletariat; amazing how quickly our revision restored itself. All across the country independent groups of women began functioning without the structure, leaders and other factotems of the male Left, creating independently and simultaneously, organisations similar to those of anarchists of many decades and locales. No accident either.

The style, the audacity of Emma Goldman,

has been touted by women who do not regard themselves as anarchists. Because Emma was so right-on. Few women have gotten so many men scared for so long as Emma Goldman. It seems logical that we should study Emma, not to embrace her every thought, but to find the source of her strength and love of life. It is no accident, either, that the anarchist Red Terror named Emma was also an advocate and practitioner of free-love; she was an affront to more capitalist shackles than any of her Marxist contemporaries.

4. WORKING CLASS SPONTANEITY Anarchist Federation.

The emancipation of the workers must be brought about by the workers themselves. *Marx*

Let us put it quite bluntly: the errors committed by a truly revolutionary workers movement are historically far more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of even the best central committees.

Rosa Luxemburg

The working class by itself can only attain trade-union consciousness.

Lenin

The Left has spent many years and spilt much blood over the question of whether it is possible for the working class to bring about a revolutionary change in life without leaders, discipline and organisation. Some anarchists (including the Anarchist Federation) believe that the working class can and does spontaneously become radicalised, developing new forms of resistance to oppression. But the concept of working class spontaneity has been distorted and misunderstood for so long. It is wrong to ignore history or to study it and to draw the false conclusions (as even some anarchists do) that the working class springs into revolutionary activity with no memory of or connection with previous struggles and no previous agitation by revolutionary minorities. On the contrary, the work of revolutionaries over many years to clarify and co-ordinate struggles in the working class greatly helps the revolutionary process. Working class spontaneity is the ability of that class to take direct action on its own behalf and to develop new forms of struggle and organisation. This happens in every great revolutionary upsurge where working people often form committees and councils independent of "vanguards". The activities of the working class have taken place regardless of and sometimes against the urgings of the revolutionary elite.

The experiences of working class life constantly lead to ideas and actions which question the established order. This leads to "working class consciousness" but different sections of the working class may reach different degrees of consciousness. At the same time, the ruling class seeks to keep the working class divided, undermining solidarity based on culture and common experi-