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Contents

Community organizing from an anarchist perspective acknowledges that no revolution will be meaningful unless many Americans develop new values and behavior. This will require a history of work in cooperative, decentralized, revolutionary organizations in communities, workplaces and schools. The task before us is to build and nurture these organizations wherever we can. There are no shortcuts.

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less fun, but the persistence was important. Three months after we started, in December, the City agreed to make a public building available as a shelter and agreed to adopt a policy that no homeless person would be denied shelter in Camden. The good aspect of this action was that homeless people were able to participate and help make it happen. It was a concrete way that they could have fund and feel good about helping to improve their own situation.

Concluding Comments

The kind of community described here is not easy or straightforward. It can be extremely frustrating, with many pitfalls, temptations and diversions pushing it off the track and allowing it to assume a more liberal posture. This article described some of the main challenges: overcoming the welfare/drugs culture; maintaining independence; and working with people with few skills and low self-esteem. One other deserves mention--mobility.

In our society, mobility is expected. People are supposed to move to take a better job, to find a better house, etc. It is acceptable to displace people to build new expressways and universities. The average American moves once every five years. This mobility attests to the stability of community organizations. Leaders and workers may get trained, get involved and then leave before they have been able to give much back to the organization. The drug traffic in many low-income neighborhoods exacerbates the stability problem; families face crises on a regular basis which take priority over community involvement.

The revolutionary work of community organizations, would be enhance with more population stability. Why aren't jobs created for people where they are? Why aren't a mix of housing types and sizes available within all communities? Why isn't displacement avoided at all cost? We need to address these questions if our communities are going to be more fertile areas for community organizing.

Many anarchists probably cringe at the notion of any person or group being "organized" and believe that the very idea is manipulative. They point to countless community organization leaders who ended up on government payrolls. They can't see how winning traffic lights and playgrounds does any more than help the system appear pluralistic and effective.

Such skepticism makes sense. Community organizing has always been practiced in many different ways to accomplish many different things. In reviewing the history of neighborhood organizing, Robert Fisher summed it up this way:

> While neighborhood organizing is a political act, it is neither inherently reactionary, conservative, liberal or radical, nor is it inherently democratic and inclusive or authoritarian and parochial. It is above all a political method, an approach used by various segments of the population to achieve specific goals, serve certain interests, and advance clear or ill-defined political perspectives. (Fisher, 1984; p. 158)

If we just look at some of the progressive strains of community organizing thought, we still face a lot of confusion about what it is and how it is used. Saul Alinsky, a key figure in the development of community organizing as we know it today, wrote:

> We are concerned about how to create mass organizations to seize power and give it to the people; to realize the democratic dream of equality, justice, peace, cooperation, equal and full opportunities for education, full and useful employment, health and the creation of those circumstances in which man can have the chance to live by the values that give meaning to life. We are talking about a mass power organization that will change the world. (Alinsky, 1971, p. 3)

The Midwest Academy, a training institute for community organizers founded by some ex-civil rights and SDS leaders, asserts that:

> More and more people are finding that what is needed is a permanent, professionally staffed community membership organization which can not only win real improvements for its members, but which can actually alter the relations of power at the city and state level. These groups [citizen groups] are keeping government open to the people and are keeping our democratic rights intact. (Max, 1977; p. 2)

A senior member of ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), a national association of mostly urban community organizations, describes the goal of organizing as strengthening people's collective capacities to bring about social change (Staples, 1984; p. 1). ACORN organized local communities, then employed its constituency at the national level, attempting to move the Democratic Party to the left.

Finally, a participant in a workshop on community organizing I conducted a number of years ago characterized community organizing as "manipulating people to do trivial things."

In this article, I will focus on how community organizing can be useful in advancing an anarchist vision of social change. Community organizations that build on an anarchist vision of social change are different from other community organizations because of the purposes they have, the criteria they have for success, the issues they work on, the way they operate and the tactics they use.

My experience with community organizing spans a 16-year period including four years in Baltimore, Maryland and twelve in Camden, New Jersey. I have primarily worked with very low income people on a wide range of issues. I will draw heavily on my personal experience in this article. I use the term "community or-

The tactics used should be fun for the participants. This isn't always possible, but often is. Street theater can often be used to challenge a routine action into a fun one. Let me provide a few examples.

When Concerned Citizens of North Camden (CCNC) ran its homeowner program (the program which resulted from the squatting in 1981), the City tried various mechanisms to discredit it. On one occasion when they threatened to cut some of the public fund involved in it, CCNC conducted a funeral march with about 100 people and carried a coffin from North Camden to City Hall where a hearing was being held on the Community Development Block Grant funds. Right in the middle of the hearing, a squatter came out from inside the coffin and told the crowd how the people's movement could not be silenced and make a mockery of the whole hearing. The effect was spectacular, as was the press coverage the next day.

When trying to stop the second prison, residents circulated a special issue of the community newspaper that made fun of the land owner, the mayor and the Commissioner of Corrections. The front page of the paper included photos of the three, captioned with the names of the Three Stooges (the resemblance was striking). The text on the front page made fun of each person's role in the project. We circulated the paper at a big public meeting which all three of these individuals attended. It helped give people courage and set the atmosphere for people to freely speak their minds. When people talk about the prison campaign, they laugh and remember "the three stooges."

Finally, when the homeless problem started to escalate in Camden (1983), we learned that people were being turned away from available shelters because there was not enough space. Leavenhouse, a local soup kitchen, then started to serve its meals on the steps of City Hall one day each week. This created a party atmosphere; a couple hundred people would gather to eat and hang out every Wednesday at noon. As the weather got colder it because

governor who had made a public commitment to construct 4,000 more prison beds during his term in office.

Our legal system is set up to protect the interests of private property. Using it to dismantle the institutions that thrive on private property is obviously problematic.

6. Use direct action.

Direct actions are those that take the shortest route toward realization of the ends desired, without depending on intermediaries. A simple example might help to clarify. If a group of tenants is having a problem with a landlord refusing to make needed repairs, they can respond in several ways. They could take the landlord to court. They could get the housing and health inspectors to issue violations and pressure the landlord to make repairs. Or they could withhold rent from the landlord themselves, and use the money withheld to pay for the repairs. Along the same vein, they might picket the landlord's nice suburban home and leaflet all of his neighbors with information about how he treats people. The first two options put responsibility for getting something done in the hands of a government agency or law enforcement official. The latter course of actions keeps the tenants in control of what happens.

At a major state-funded construction project in Camden, residents wanted to make sure that city residents and minorities got construction jobs. Following the lead of some militant construction workers in New York City, they organized people who were ready for work, and blocked the gate to the job site at starting time. Their position was simple; they would move when local people were hired. The group got talked into negotiating and supporting an affirmative action program that would force the contractor to hire local people whenever the union hall couldn't provide a minority or city resident to fill an opening. The enforcement of that program was so mired in red tape that only a handful of local workers got hired. The group would have fared much better if they had stuck with their original tactic--the most direct one.

7. Have fun.

ganizing" to refer to social change efforts which are based in local geographically defined areas where people live. This is the key distinction between community organizing and other forms of organizing for social change which may be based in workplaces or universities, involving people where they work or study instead of where they live. Some issue-oriented organizations are considered community organizations if their constituency is local.

Goals of Anarchist Organizing

Anarchist community organizing must be dedicated to changing what we can do today and undoing the socialization process that has depoliticized so many of us. We can use it to build the infrastructure that can respond and make greater advances when our political and economic systems are in crisis and are vulnerable to change.

The following purposes illustrate this concept.

1. Helping people experiment with decentralized, collective and cooperative forms of organization.

We have to build our American model of social change out of our own experience; we can't borrow revolutionary theory in total from that developed in another historical and/or cultural context. Community organizations can help people log that experience and analyze it. Because of our culture's grounding in defense of personal liberty and democracy, social change engineered by a vanguard or administered by a strong central state will not work here.

David Bouchier is on the right track when he says, "For citizen radicals evolution is better than revolution because evolution works" (Bouchier, 1987; p. 139). We must learn new values and practice cooperation rather than competition. Community organizations can provide a vehicle for this "retailing." "This means that a cultural revolution, a revolution of ideas and values and understanding, is the essential prelude to any radical change in the power

arrangement of modern society. The purpose of radical citizenship is to take the initiative in this process" (Bouchier, p. 148).

Any kind of alternative institution (see Ehrlich, et al., *Reinventing Anarchy*, p. 346), including cooperatives, worker managed businesses, etc., that offers a chance to learn and practice community control and worker self-management, is important. We must experience together how institutions can be different and better. These alternative institutions should be nonprofit, controlled by the people who benefit from their existence. Most charities and social service agencies do not qualify as alternative institutions because they are staffed and controlled by people who usually are not part of the community they serve; they therefore foster dependence.

The recent proliferation of community land trusts in this country is an exciting example of community-based, cooperative and decentralized organizations. Through these organizations, people are taking land and housing off the private market and putting them in their collective control.

I have been a board member of North Camden Land Trust in Camden, New Jersey since its inception in 1984. The land trust now controls about thirty properties. A group of thirty low income homeowners who previously were tenants without much hope of home ownership now collectively make decisions concerning this property. The development of the land trust embodies many of the elements that describe community organizing grounded in a social anarchist vision for society.

2. Increasing the control that people have over actions that affect them, and increasing local self-reliance.

This involves taking some measure of control away from large institutions like government, corporations and social service conglomerates and giving it to the people most affected by their actions. David Bouchier describes this function as attaining "positive freedoms." Positive freedoms are rights of self- government that are not dependent on or limited by higher powers (Bouchier, p.9).

consideration of tactics. We can't move the system by testifying at hearings, negotiating at meetings and lobbying elected officials.

We must defy the rules of the system that fails to meet our needs. We must use guerilla tactics that harass, confront, embarrass and expose that system and its functionaries.

2. Clear, precise and measurable demands are the cornerstone of any organizing campaign.

A group must know exactly what they want before they begin to confront the opposition.

3. Gradually escalate the militancy of your tactics.

The tactics in a campaign should gradually escalate in militancy, so that people new to political struggle are not intimidated. Let the militancy of the tactics increase at about the same pace as the intensity of the anger.

4. Address different targets simultaneously.

The tactics should be simultaneously directed at different parts of the system that are responsible for the injustice or grievance that needs to be resolved.

In the campaign to stop construction of a second State prison in their neighborhood, North Camden residents directed tactics at the Commissioner of Corrections, the private landowner who was willing to sell the waterfront land to the state for the prison, local politicians, the governor and the two gubernatorial candidates.

5. Avoid legal tactics.

Legal challenges are difficult. They take a lot of energy and money, people who aren't trained in the law have a very difficult time understanding the process, and they are easy to lose. I have never experienced success with a legal challenge.

When North Camden residents opposed construction of the first State prison in their neighborhood, they sued the state on environmental and land use grounds because the state planned to use valuable waterfront land for the prison. After a year of preparations, the case was heard before an Administrative Law judge. He threw the case out on a technicality. Understand that he was appointed by a

matches suburban church groups with vacant houses. The church groups then purchase materials and provide volunteer labor to do the rehabilitation work. Another group relies on contractors to perform the work, few of which are in Camden. A third group has hired and trained neighborhood residents to do all rehabilitation work. The workers are paid a decent wage for what they do. The latter approach develops skills in the neighborhood, allows neighborhood residents to feel good about improving their community, and fosters cooperative work habits which the construction crew members will carry into other organizations in the community.

Since the crew employed by the third organization is paid a decent wage, the first organization mentioned above rehabilitates more houses for less money. Again, when the commitment is to social change, the short-term tangible results are not the most important measures of success.

Tactics

A considerable body of literature has been written about tactics in organizing and political work. I do not want to rehash all of that here, so I'll offer just a few guidelines about tactics that have consistently proven themselves. The discussion here is relevant to advocacy campaigns designed to take some measure of authority from government or private interest and put it in community control, or to force a reallocation of resources (public or private) in the interest of the community.

1. Be disruptive.

The tendency today is for community organizations to be less militant and confrontational, working through established community and political leaders to "engineer" the changes they want. No tendency could be more dangerous to the future of community organizing. The historical record and my experience say the opposite. We must be disruptive. No guideline is more important in the

In the neighborhood where I live and work, residents are starting to demand control over land use decisions. They stopped the state and local governments' plan to build a second state prison on the waterfront in their neighborhood. Instead of stopping there, the residents, through a series of block meetings and a neighborhood coalition, have developed a "Peoples' Plan" for that waterfront site. Control of land use has traditionally rested with local government (and state and federal government to a much more limited extent), guided by professional planners and consultants. Neighborhood residents believe they should control land use in their neighborhood, since they are the ones most directly affected by it.

The concept of self-reliant communities described by David Morris (1987) also helps us understand the shift in power we are talking about. Self-reliant communities organize to assert authority over capital investment, hiring, bank lending, etc.-- all areas where decision making traditionally has been in the hands of government or private enterprise.

3. Building a counterculture that uses all forms of communication to resist illegitimate authority, racism, sexism, and capitalism. In low-income neighborhoods, it is also important that this counterculture become an alternative to the dominant culture which has resulted from welfare and drugs.

The Populist movement can teach us a lot about building a counterculture. That movement used the press, person-to-person contact via roving rallies and educational lectures, an extensive network of farm cooperatives and an alternative vision of agricultural economics to do this (Goodwyn, 1976; 1981).

Every movement organization has to use the media to advance its ideas and values. Educational events, film, community-based newspapers, etc., are all important. The local community advocacy organization in North Camden has done a good job of combining fundraising with the development of counterculture. They have sponsored alternative theater which has explored the issues of bat-

tered women, homelessness and sexism. After each play, the theater group conducted an open discussion with the audience about these issues. These were powerful experiences for those who attended.

The question of confronting the dominant culture in very low income neighborhoods is one of the greatest challenges facing community organizations. Many families have now experienced welfare dependence for four generations, a phenomenon which has radically altered many peoples' value systems in a negative way. People must worry about survival constantly, and believe that anything they can get to survive they are entitled to, regardless of the effect on others. It has not fostered a cooperative spirit. The response of low-income people to long-term welfare dependency is not irrational, but it is a serious obstacle to functioning in a system of decentralized, cooperative work and services.

One experience in this regard is relevant. A soup kitchen called Leavenhouse has operated in Camden for 10 years, during nine of which it was open to anyone who came. A year ago, the soup kitchen changed into a feeding cooperative on weekdays. Guests now have to either work a few hours in the kitchen or purchase a ticket for five dollars which is good for the entire month. Daily average attendance has dropped from 200 to about 20. The idea of cooperating to provide some of the resources necessary to sustain the service is outside the value system of many people who previously used the kitchen. Leavenhouse realizes now that it must address the reasons why people have not responded to the co-op, and is planning a community outreach program designed to build some understanding, trust and acceptance of the idea of cooperative feeding.

The 20 people who have joined the co-op have responded favorably. They appreciate the more tranquil eating environment and feel good about their role in it. The co-op members now make decisions about the operation of their co-op. Friendships and information sharing (primarily about jobs) have been facilitated. Fewer peo-

This applies especially to community organizing in low income areas where the local resources are extremely scarce. Many well-to-do "do-gooder" organizations like to have a ghetto project. It makes them feel good. Community organizations do not exist to alleviate ruling class guilt. Dependency on upper- class skills and money is a problem. Poor and working people must wage their own struggle.

An illustration of this is provided by the soup kitchen in North Camden. Suburban church folks, once they heard about Leavenhouse, were more than willing to send in volunteers each day to prepare and serve the meal. Leavenhouse told them not to bother, except perhaps occasionally with two or three people at a time. This allows the soup kitchen to develop local ownership, and for neighborhood residents to feel good about taking care of each other. It avoids the traditional social service model where one group comes into the city and delivers a service to another group of people who live there and takes it.

Leavenhouse does accept money and food donations from outside the neighborhood, but its basis operating costs are covered with the rent of the community members who actually live at Leavenhouse. The outside income is extra; without it Leavenhouse will not shut down.

6. Have a cultural and social dimension.

Cultural and social events not only help to build a counterculture, but they help people feel good about who they are and where they came from. This is an important dynamic in overcoming powerlessness. Political music and film are especially effective in building class unity and strength, and in providing basis political education.

7. Staff the organization, to the greatest extent possible, with local workers and volunteers.

This seems obvious enough, but many community organizations draw on outsiders to perform the bulk their work.

In Camden, nonprofit community organizations which provide affordable housing do it in three different ways. One organization

In 1983, it spun off the Delaware Valley Community Reinvestment Fund, an alternative lending institution which provides credit for community-based housing and community development projects. Social change organizations in the Philadelphia/Camden area are extremely indebted to these two support organizations. They play a vital role in helping organizations to maintain their independence.

4. Reach out to avoid isolation, but keep the focus local.

Community-based organizations must maintain loose ties with other grassroots groups. Progressive groups should be able to easily coalesce when that makes sense. We can always benefit from ideas and constructive criticism from supportive people who are not wrapped up in the day to day activity of our own organization.

This is another way in which left-wing fundraising/grantmaking groups like the Bread and Roses Community Fund in the Philadelphia area play an important role. They identify and bring together those groups in the region with a similar political agenda. Through Bread and Roses, the community advocacy organization in North Camden (CCNC) has maintained a very loose but productive relationship with the Kensington Joint Action Council (KJAC) in Philadelphia. KJAC squatted first, and helped CCNC plan its squatter campaign. CCNC spun off a land trust first and assisted KJAC in the development of their own land trust, Manos Unidas. Some ideas they developed for their land trust in terms of building comraderie among members are now being considered by North Camden Land Trust.

Statewide and national organizations try very hard to pull in active local organizations and get leaders involved in issues at the state level. Be wary of the drain this can place on the local work. Cloward and Piven, in their Poor People's Movements, do a wonderful job of illustrating this danger in their discussion of welfare rights organizing. Successes are won via direct action, not via formal organization.

5. Do not foster cross-class ties.

ple are being served, but meaningful political objectives are now being realized.

4. Strengthening the "social fabric" of neighborhood units - - that network of informal associations, support services, and contacts that enable people to survive and hold on to their sanity in spite of, rather than because of, the influence of government and social service bureaucracies in their lives.

John McKnight (1987) has done a good job of exposing the failure of traditional social service agencies and government in meeting people's needs for a support structure. They operate to control people. Informal associations ("community of associations"), on the other hand, operate on the basis of consent. They allow for creative solutions, quick response, interpersonal caring, and foster a broad base of participation.

A good example of fulfilling this purpose is the bartering network that some community organizations have developed. The organization simply prints a listing of people and services they need along with a parallel list of people and services they are willing to offer. This strengthens intraneighborhood communication. In poor neighborhoods, this is especially effective because it allows people to get things done without money, and to get a return on their work which is not taxable. Concerned Citizens of North Camden (CCNC) has supported the development of a Camden "Center for Independent Living" -- an organization that brings handicapped and disabled people in the city together to collectively solve the problems they face. Twelve step groups are another example of informal, nonprofessional associations that work for people.

Criteria for Success

Many community organizations measure success by "winning." The tangible result is all that matters. In fact, many organizations

evaluate the issues they take on by whether or not they are "winnable." The real significance of what is won and how it is won are of less concern.

For organizations that embrace an anarchist vision, the process and the intangible results are at least as important as any tangible results. Increasing any one organization' size and influence is not a concern. The success of community organizing can be measured by the extent to which the following mandates are realized.

1. People learn skills needed to analyze issues and confront those who exert control over their lives;

2. People learn to interact, make decisions and get things done collectively--rotating tasks, sharing skills, confronting racism, sexism and hierarchy;

3. Community residents realize some direct benefit or some resolution of problems they personally face through the organizing work;

4. Existing institutions change their priorities or way of doing things so that the authority of government, corporations and large institutions is replaced by extensions of decentralized, grassroots authority; and

5. Community residents feel stronger and better about themselves because of their participation in the collective effort.

Picking Issues

Much of the literature about community organizing suggests that issues should be selected which are: 1) winnable; 2) involve advocacy, not service; and 3) build the organization's constituency, power and resources. "Good issue campaigns should have the twin

pects of the organization--office work, fundraising, decision making, financial management, outreach, housekeeeping, etc.

Teams of people should work on different projects, with coordination provided by an elected council. Pyramidal hierarchy with committees subordinate to and constrained by a strong central board should be avoided. The organization must remain flexible so that it can respond quickly to needs as they arise.

3. Maintain independence.

This is extremely important and extremely difficult. No organization committed to radical social change can allow itself to become financially dependent on the government or corporations. This does not mean that we can't use funds from government or private institutions for needed projects, but we can't get ourselves in a position where we owe any allegiance to the funders.

In 1983, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee was involved in a march from Toledo, Ohio to the Campbell's Soup headquarters in Camden, New Jersey. They were demanding three-party collective bargaining between Campbell's, the farmers it buys from, and the farm laborers who pick for the farmers. A coalition of groups in Camden worked to coordinate the final leg of the march through Camden. Many community-based organizations in Camden, however, refused to participate because they were dependent on donations of food or money from Campbell's Soup.

The bankruptcy of such behavior was driven home last year when Campbell's closed their Camden plant and laid off 1,000 workers. They made no special effort to soften the impact on the workers or the community.

All resources come at a price--even donations. We simply cannot accept funds from individuals or groups who condition their use in ways that constrain our work, or we must ignore the conditions and remain prepared to deal with the consequences later. vAlternative funding sources are providing a badly needed service in this regard. In Philadelphia, the Bread and Roses Community Fund raises money for distribution to social change organizations.

> imbalances in a class society, an alternative vision of what people are fighting for, a context for all activity, whether pressuring for a stop sign or an eviction blockage. Otherwise, as has repeatedly happened, victories that win services or rewards will undermine the organization by "proving" that the existing system is responsive to poor and working people and therefore, in no need of fundamental change. (Fisher, 1984; p.162)

Any organization which is serious about social change and committed to democratic control of neighborhoods and workplaces devote considerable energy to self-development--building individual skills and self-confidence and providing basic political education. The role of the state in maintaining inequality and destroying self-worth must be exposed.

This is particularly necessary in low income and minority neighborhoods where people have been most consistently socialized to believe that they are inferior, that the problems they face are individual ones rather than systemic ones, and where poor education has left people without the basic skills necessary to understand what goes on around them. Self-esteem is low, yet social change work requires people who are self-confident and assertive.

This dilemma is another of the major challenges in community organizing. The socialization process that strips people of their self-esteem is not easily or quickly reversed. This problem mandates that all tasks be performed in groups (for support and skill-sharing), and that training and preparation for all activities be thorough.

2. Be collectively and flexibly organized; decentralize as much as possible.

Radical organizations must always try to set an example of how organizations can be better than the institutions we criticize. All meetings and financial records should be open and leadership responsibilities rotated. Active men and women must work in all as-

goals of winning a victory and producing organizational mileage while doing so" (Staples, 1984; p.53).

These guidelines have always bothered me, and my experience suggests that they are off the mark. Issues should be picked primarily because the organization's members believe they are important and because they are consistent with one of more of the purposes listed above. Let me offer a few guidelines which are a bit different.

1. Service and advocacy work must go hand in hand, especially in very needy communities.

People get involved with groups because they present an opportunity for them to gain something they want. It may be tangible or intangible, but the motivation to get involved comes with an expectation of relatively short-term gratification. The job of community organizations is to facilitate a process where groups of people with similar needs or problems learn to work together for the benefit of all. Through this process, people learn to work cooperatively and learn that their informal association can usually solve problems more effectively and quickly than established organizations.

I will offer an example to illustrate this point. When Concerned Citizens of North Camden (CCNC) organized a squatter campaign in 1981, the folks who squatted and took all of the risks did so because they wanted a house, and because they believed squatting was the best way to get one. Each one of the original 13 squatter families benefited because they got title to their house. The advocacy purpose was served because a program resulted that allowed 150 other families to get a house and some funds to fix it up over the subsequent five years. Because CCNC has stayed involved with each family and facilitated a support network with them (up to the present), 142 of the houses are still occupied by low-income families.

The government bureaucracy tried to undermine this program on numerous occasions, but without success. Participants willingly rallied in each crisis because they benefited in a way they valued deeply. The squatter movement allowed them to win something

that they knew they would never realistically be able to win through any traditional home ownership programs. The squatters were poor, most had no credit histories and most were Hispanic. Official discredit, for whatever reasons, was meaningless because people knew the effort had worked for them.

In my experience, I have never been a part of a more exciting and politically meaningful effort than the CCNC squatting effort in 1981. The initial squatting with 13 families was followed by five years of taking over abandoned houses which the City reluctantly sanctioned because of the strength and persistence of the movement.

2. Issues that pit one segment of the community against another--for example, issues which favor homeowners over renters, blacks over Puerto Ricans, etc.--should be avoided.

Most issues can be addressed in ways that unify neighborhood residents rather than divide them.

3. An informal involvement in broad political issues should be maintained on a consistent basis.

While I believe the kind of decentralized associations which form the basis for any anarchist vision of social change are most easily formed and nurtured at the local level (neighborhood or citywide), people must also connect in some way with broader social change issues. Social change cannot just happen in isolated places; we must build a large and diverse movement.

We need to integrate actions against militarism, imperialism, nuclear power, apartheid, etc., with action on local issues. They often can and should be tied together. This requires getting people to regional and national political events from time to time, and supporting local activities which help people to connect with these broader issues.

4. Avoid the pitfalls of electoral politics.

This is a very controversial area of concern for community organizations. The organizations I have worked with in Camden have vacillated in their stance vis-a-vis electoral politics.

The danger of cooptation through involvement in this arena is severe. Whenever a group of people start getting things done and build a credible reputation in the community, politicians will try to use the organization or its members to their advantage.

I have yet to witness any candidate for public office who maintained any kind of issue integrity. Once in the limelight, people bend toward the local interests that have the resources necessary to finance political campaigns. They want to win more than they want to advance any particular platform on the issues. We delude ourselves if we believe any politicians will support the progressive agenda of a minority constituency when their political future depends on them abandoning it.

I have participated in organizing campaigns where politicians were exploited because of vulnerability and where one politician was successfully played off against another. It is much easier for a community organization to use politicians to advance a cause if neither the organization nor its members are loyal to any officeholder. My experience says that any organized and militant community-based organization can successfully confront elected officials--regardless of whether they are friends or enemies.

Operation

For organizations committed to the long term process of radical social change, the way they operate is more important than any short-term victories that might be realized. The discipline, habits and values that are developed and nurtured through an organization's day-to-day life are an important part of the revolutionary process. Some guidelines for operation follow.

1. Have a political analysis and provide political education.

> Lower-class and working class neighborhood organizations must develop long-range goals which address