



Bound Together

Newsletter no. 10

GOODBYE TO ALL THAT

This is the last issue of the *Bound Together* Newsletter, at least in this incarnation. I do the most of the work involved in putting this newsletter out, and I will be leaving the bookstore at the end of December. I feel that it would be unfair to my fellow collective members, my readers, and my friends to simply quit without an explanation, and this is my attempt to answer why I'm leaving. So often people simply drop out of projects without a word; journals end by ceasing to exist without a discussion of why they have ended. By writing about my reasons for leaving, I hope that I can touch upon questions that people who have an anti-authoritarian/anarchist perspective need to attempt to answer, and if they can't, they

need to re-examine their own participation.

At this point I don't think these questions can be answered within the ideology of anarchism and anti-authoritarianism.

My name is Freddie Baer. I have been working in the *Bound Together* bookstore collective for about three years now. At first I just worked on the first incarnation of the *BT Newsletter*, doing graphic design, but in May '84 I joined the Bookstore collective and began doing a weekly shift. My reasons for joining were very personal. An eight year relationship I had been in had just ended badly, and I was very depressed, lonely, and feeling isolated. I joined the Bookstore in an attempt to end that isolation and involve myself with others that I felt shared some of my political beliefs, in

what I perceived was a community. I had considered myself part of the "anarchist movement" in one way or another since 1972 (including a stint at Processed World for fifteen months) though I had not called myself an anarchist for some time, finding that label too restrictive and narrow, in fact, not liking any labels at all. However, I did call myself anti-authoritarian when I had to, using an acceptable political verbal shorthand for very complex, diverse ideas.

In the fall of 1985, I started working in an office where I have access to a MacIntosh (for typesetting and lay out) and a xerox machine. At that time there was not a regular Bay Area anti-authoritarian journal, and I felt that it would be useful to report and comment on important local events that could be of interest to both the local and more distant anarchist/anti-authoritarian community. I also thought that newsletter could pass along information about the bookstore and upcoming events. Finally, there are many creative people around this community, and I felt that the newsletter could be a format for their (and my) work. Since I had the means of production at my disposal and the inclination, the newsletter began.

Has the **BT Newsletter** served my original purposes? I don't know. I see articles from the newsletter reprinted in the anarchist and anti-authoritarian press. Somebody, somewhere, must be reading it. I occasionally get comments from friends and correspondents. I also get criticised for what I and others write, though more often than not, I just hear that someone's unhappy about something I've written. Most of the time nobody really says anything about the newsletter one way or another. Has the newsletter really made a difference in anyone's opinions?

I'm leaving the bookstore because I have asked myself many questions about what it means to participate in an anarchist bookstore, and why I have participated, and I have not been able to answer

satisfactorily to my own self. I joined the bookstore to be less isolated, but I became more isolated within an insular and self-perpetuating community that does not question its own ideology and action. I joined the bookstore to work on a project with others with a similar political viewpoint but never questioned why I felt the need to be doing that project or why I assumed others would share my political viewpoint just because they, too, called themselves anti-authoritarian.

What does it mean to be an anarchist bookstore? The rote answers have become to disseminate information on anarchism and anti-authoritarianism that is not available elsewhere and to provide an alternate gathering place for the anarchist/anti-authoritarian community, but these answers are no answers because they raise more questions that go unanswered. Why is it important to disseminate anarchist ideas? Why are those ideas considered applicable to anyone's daily life? What does it even mean to be an anarchist/anti-authoritarian in 1986? What is/Who is/Where is an anarchist/anti-authoritarian community?

I have often said that the anarchist/anti-authoritarian community is a false community, that the only thing that unites this community is the rather tenuous glue of opposing the state, and even that is not consistent (considering some's qualified support of some state government apparatus as in Nicaragua). The community then further fragments into different forms of opposition, different types of anarcho-isms that have their own pat solutions to what ails the world. Regardless of this, shared politics alone do not a community make.

I have also said that within this false community of anti-authoritarianism, you can find people with whom you can share ideas and interests other than politics, and form your own community of friends. However, I have come to the conclusion

that to form a friendship on the basis of shared politics alone is not very healthy. Politics because of its nature is not very nurturing; it is cold and rational and anti-human, and anti-authoritarianism remains a politics.

I have become identified with my activity--the bookstore has become me. I go observe a demonstration and by my presence there am the ipso facto representative of Bound Together. It doesn't make a difference that I have criticisms of the bookstore, that I don't even consider myself an anarchist...I have become Ms. Anarchy Activist of 1986 by my very participation and the production of the newsletter. The newsletter became something acceptable "to do." I never questioned its function, how it contributed to my continued self-isolation within anti-authoritarianism, and how people related to me on the basis of the production of the newsletter.

I would like to go beyond politics; I would like to go beyond polemics. I would like to go beyond the politics of opposition (the state/capitalism/church--what have you), and I'd like to go beyond opposing opposition--the nasty negativity that pervades anti-anti-authoritarianism lately. I would like to grow and become more human. I would like to understand why I am the way I am, why I do what I do, and how I can change. I want to understand why I do things, and I want to be able to answer the questions that I raise, at least for myself. I want a sense of history; I want to develop theoretically. I want to be more creative and integrate what I feel and think into what I do and create. I want my social relationships to be based on caring, not critiquing, and I want to help people grow from criticism, not cut them down. For of all those who have said that I am too critical, please remember that I am more critical of myself than anyone, and that I question my motives on all that I do and think.

I am not leaving the bookstore angry; I am leaving somewhat sad and depressed because I have spent three years of my life there, and it is a major life change for me to depart. I care very much for some of the people I have worked with and met there, and I hope very much that those friendships will not end with the end of my participation there. On the other hand, if those friendships do end with my leaving, it reflects back on my earlier statement that politics alone can not be a basis for friendship.

This is going to be one hell of a last newsletter. Besides my departing statement, Lawrence has just submitted a piece critical of anarchism which brings up a lot of the same points that I make (but in a more, shall we say, academic way), Lee has written a piece (sort of) critical of criticism, and Keith Sanborn has submitted an almost unreadable denunciation of the Lettrist disruption reported in the last issue. I imagine this is going to make for some dense reading and will give more ammunition to those who perceive that the discussions going on here on the west coast are nothing but squabbles and petty feuds. I think that the discussions in here are much more complex than bickering and should not be written off as such. To do so would ignore the fundamental problems with anti-authoritarianism/anarchism.

Finally, I recognize the influence that Stephanie Klein has had on me; the questions that she raises in *Bizarro Processed World* are the ones that I have asked myself. I have spent a long time agonizing over whether or not those are questions I would have asked myself otherwise if she had not brought them up. I can honestly say that I believe that I had begun to question my own activity; however, Stephanie lucidly and coherently put into words that which I had been feeling. For this I thank her.

--Freddie Baer
11/30/86