

# ALLiance<sup>®</sup>

a journal of theory&strategy

able to do so far. But still we are puzzled that they should play schoolmaster on this question. Better for them, perhaps, to observe more and admonish less their sons and daughters. All the old good hopes rest now with them, the young, whose risks are obligatory.

It simply must have been heard in this country, sometime, that democracy is nothing if it is not dangerous.

*By Carl Oglesby*  
*SDS President 1965-1966.*



## ALLiance Is Nothing If Not Dangerous

*ALLiance Journal*: a grassroots, shop-floor, dirt cheap, tabloid aspiring to inspire the Left-Libertarian Movement to delusions of grandeur. We are full of piss and passion; and we will never stop even in the face of singularity, peak oil or Ragnarok. Check us out at [alliancejournal.net](http://alliancejournal.net) or [libertyactivism.info](mailto:libertyactivism.info).

*ALLiance* aims to be  
a movement journal for the  
*Alliance of the Libertarian Left (ALL)*.

The *Alliance of the Libertarian Left* is a multi-tendency coalition of mutualists, agorists, voluntaryists, geolibertarians, left-Rothbardians, green libertarians, dialectical anarchists, radical minarchists, and others on the libertarian left, united by an opposition to statism and militarism, to cultural intolerance (including sexism, racism, and homophobia), and to the prevailing corporatist capitalism falsely called a free market; as well as by an emphasis on education, direct action, and building alternative institutions, rather than on electoral politics, as our chief strategy for achieving liberation.



Teaching Liberty

Darian Worden

Democracy Is Nothing If It Is Not Dangerous

Carl Oglesby

## Teaching Liberty

Education is key to our struggle for liberation. A libertarian society cannot be reached by seizing power and dictating the way of life for the masses. It can be reached when enough people are good enough at applying the principles of liberty to their personal situations to make the vast majority of individuals recognize it is in their best interests to not act in a tyrannical manner.

That doesn't mean that everyone needs to be familiar with thousands of pages of literature before they can do anything. We can have intellectualism without elitism — a division of labor does not necessitate socio-political hierarchy. There are people who do the complicated work of examining and creating theory, and there are people (sometimes the same theorists) who make the finished product useful to a variety of individuals (which often means making it simple or including introductions when using specific language).

What teaching liberty does mean is spreading the basic principles (no person may rule over another, consensual organization, etc), addressing questions honestly and thoughtfully, and spreading skills useful in building libertarian community (organization, creating value and meeting basic needs outside of authoritarian structures, etc). A libertarian community would be an actual community, where individuals interact on a voluntary basis to the common benefit, and not an authoritarian grouping, where individuals struggle against each other for dominance or only interact in designated environments that they didn't create and often bolster the authoritarian status quo.

The internet can provide the base from which libertarian education can be built. The internet is full of how-tos. Conversations can begin on blogs, forums, and social networks like Facebook, Diaspora, and Fr33Agents. YouTube channels and infotainment podcasts provide audio and visual introductions to libertarian concepts.

While activism can certainly start at the keyboard, it shouldn't end there. You can't eat crypto, and major portions of our lives are experienced offline. But the internet's role as a force multiplier in on-the-ground activism should not be underestimated. It provides tools which hold varying utility depending on how you use them.

This effect might be best seen in websites like LibertyActivism.info and ZineLibrary.info, where users can upload media which will be hosted for download by anyone. Many of the files at these sites are paper media meant for widespread distribution. The new activist does not have to make new literature, but can download what has already been made. The activist could adapt what he finds for local use or add local contact information, and if he makes a new file he can upload it for others to use.

Center for a Stateless Society (c4ss.org) creates a lot of content that could be adapted to various uses. And Center for a Stateless Society has recently started a program called Stateless University to teach about market anar-

Morally, there is just no choice. Our vulnerability must be total. Is that naive? Yes, I think it is naive. Innocent? To be sure from love. Is it also fatal? Only if America so decides.

But there is also, I think, a quite practical wisdom in our stand. I doubt it, but perhaps we'd be more tempted if we were shown how exclusion leads to a more democratic distribution of political power. Clearly, it leads to greater acceptance. But acceptance by what but the prevailing power champions whom we should be striving to unseat? Acceptance to what use but the license to survive without sway in an unchanged society? It is not the aim of the New Left to become the love child of the wretched and the Bank of America. The aim is to change society. We choose to remain unacceptable to those who would not have it changed. And we already know that if they cannot red-bait us and they can do that, as you know, at whim and with no proof then they will beard-bait, beatnik-bait, now this new depravity, Vietnik-bait; and when all else fails, idealist-bait as if when it is once shown that you have ideals, your arguments stands refuted in advance.

Compromising to meet the guilt-by-association attack is thus not only unethical, it is also naive, innocent, and fatal. But from fear this time, not love. And among political deaths, too, there are the quick and the slow, the better and the worse.

There is maybe still a richer reason for our not saying no to anybody.

I see SNCC as the Nile Valley of the New Left. And I honor SDS to call it part of the delta that SNCC created. We are other things, too. But at our best, I think, we are SNCC translated to the North and trained on a somewhat different and broader set of issues. Our best concern comes from SNCC. Some find that concern a bit shocking, but I'll name it anyway. It is to make love more possible. We work to remove from society what threatens and prevents it the inequity that coordinates with injustice to create plain suffering and to make custom of distrust. Poverty. Racism. The assembly-line universities of this Pepsi Generation. The ulcerating drive for affluence. And the ideology of anti-communism, too, because it smothers my curiosity and bribes my compassion. This ideology decrees for me that I may not love Castro, however shining-bright his anguish, or Gus Hall, however long his sorrow. And I quite likely speak for most all of us in SDS when I refuse that ideology on plain and self-evident principle.

Finally, I would be so bold as to lecture our liberal critics a bit on the subject of democracy.

Even as they counsel us on this matter, we stare their failures in the face. What, after all, is the idea of "political democracy" which they claim to be jeopardized by our radical trust? Is it this quadrennial spasm of the body politic that puts purchasable men in the low places and purchasers in the high? Do they see the fruit of their own generation's political wisdom in this recently paroled Congress, which met with such amazing silence what may be the major crisis of American character, the Vietnam war? SDS, believe me, is by no means smug or even to very hopeful about what it has been

us the perceptible telltale clues that divide pretense from belief, or how to find the twisting motive in the straight-seeming act. Motives are invisible. And it is so obvious one nearly weeps to say it that to judge the invisible even, alas, in politics is a type of sorcery. We judge behavior. Those whose behavior runs athwart the deep SDS commitment to democracy just have no leverage over the democrats of SDS.

And, in any case, SDS retains no detectives.

Further, it is hard to see how a group could be “taken over” unless it has handles of power that can be seized, some “central apparatus” that can enforce orders. SDS has no such apparatus only a beleaguered hotspot in Chicago and it is a main hard point with us that it never shall. In all our organizing work, in slums and on campuses, we aim to involve everyone equally and openly in the making of decisions, to break down social machines that bestow power undemocratically and withhold it in the same sorry way. Bureaucracies concentrate and conceal power. We avoid them. Anyone who tries to invade us therefore invades only himself; for the only power available to any of us is the power of good sense and humanity.

But the criticism has entirely missed the real point: “infiltration” is not nearly the problem that “association” is.

What should we do when we find ourselves agreeing on a special issue with “outcaste” groups that we may strongly disagree with generally? Mao Tse-tung wants the U.S. out of Vietnam. And according to the official sources, so does President Johnson. Ho Chi Minh would doubtless like to retire [Defense] Secretary Robert McNamara whom Barry Goldwater the other day suggested should go back to making Edsels. How may Mr. Goldwater and President Johnson cleanse themselves?

The manual of American realpolitik recommends dissociation, exclusion. We are pure, they are not. Our motives are good, theirs ulterior. We pluck out this offending eye, cut off this hand. We march alone. But that would hardly be SDS. Radical democracy, we believe, is exactly that social freedom that can reflect critically upon its own foundations. It exposes itself on purpose in order to be itself. It insists on the equal thinkability of all thoughts. Whoever gives himself to real democracy thereby gives himself to a most demanding experiment one that never closes except in the defeat one form of which is called “consensus.” Is it not clear on the face of the matter that democracy exists so that struggle can exist without death? That it responds to the problems of variousness in fact by requiring variousness?

Of course there is peril for SDS in the democratic commitment two kinds, in fact. First, the danger that our democratic faith might be outargued from within. I cannot describe the remoteness of that danger. It seems to me galactic. But the other danger is more intense. Our acceptance and trust of others opens up the possibility of short-term cooperation with what the great world condemns as untouchables. This can lead to our prejudice, thence to our political ostracism, and thence to defeat.

Then how do we justify taking such a stand?

chist theory and practice – another chance to gain knowledge online that can be used offline.

Paper media can be used by itself (adding pamphlets to racks or posting flyers on the walls) but it can also be used in conjunction with face-to-face education. Literature tables and speaking events are great places to find out what people are interested in, and to use literature to elaborate on responses to concerns they might have. Information on paper can more easily be placed in front of people than information online. Finding the right website means actively searching for information, while a flyer at a bus stop can be read with minimal investment – and can direct the reader to a website that will furnish useful information.

Another face-to-face environment for libertarian education is the conference. Students for Liberty, North American Anarchist Studies Network, the Free State Project, and other organizations create opportunities to learn, teach, and network, allowing the activist to participate in creating a greater understanding of liberty and how to get there.

Not every educational opportunity is as formal. Involvement in community or campus groups, and attending political rallies present the activist opportunities to learn and teach. And since a lot of libertarian education is about breaking barriers of statist ideas that keep people from reaching a libertarian perspective on their own, street theater and other creative activism can be very useful. A good recent example is the “Uncle Sam is an Asshole” videos by Liberty on Tour, where an activist dressed as Uncle Sam walks around telling people to keep paying their taxes so he can keep bombing people, and tells them they need permits for things.

Learning through experience is useful to pick up the skills of libertarian community building. Skill shares, where people meet to teach and learn useful skills, can be valuable in increasing one’s capability of personal autonomy. Events like this can be used as a foundation for further community-building.

Libertarian educators should not ignore existing establishment framework. High school students have access to a building where many young people spend a lot of their day, and can find places there for anti-authoritarian literature or space for conversations. The majority of people who are entering college will experience more autonomy than they are accustomed to, within an environment where there is the expectation of critical examination, trying new things, making new connections, and taking new directions. Activism on campus can introduce libertarian alternatives to authoritarian ideas and conditioning. Teachers at all levels who encourage critical thinking, discuss varied perspectives on ideas and events, and suggest different ways of learning can reduce the portion of a student’s “education time” spent on merely satisfying authority.

Educating for liberty helps answer the question of how education could work without the state. The libertarian educator is demonstrating a functional alternative where those who are interested in teaching actively do

so, create organizations to facilitate their efforts, and encourage others to participate in them. Quality control is assured by the open offering of different perspectives, the encouragement of questions and criticism, and possibly the showing of credentials (publishing credits, Center for a Stateless Society certifications, etc).

After all, knowledge can hold great value. It is likely that experiencing education as something irrelevant to life or being given the role of passive receiver of knowledge makes learning certain topics less desirable. By bringing individual choice into education, it is made more relevant and desirable for the individual.

The libertarian future is not exclusive to people who have time for thousands of pages of text, but it cannot exclude them either. The rhetorical struggle for freedom must be waged with the shortest slogans as well as the most time-consuming research. Learners must think critically about what ideas are most valid, and how they can apply those ideas to their own lives.

*By Darian Worden*

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*storming bastilles with glands of steel*



*a bombastic interactive libertarian anarchist talk program*

## **Democracy Is Nothing If Not Dangerous**

I see SNCC as the Nile Valley of the New Left. And I honor SDS to call it part of the delta that SNCC created.

A question has been raised in the New Republic of Oct. 30 which I think it most appropriate for me to take up here. The question is a familiar one, an old companion of American radicals.

The editors criticize Students for a Democratic Society for being too casual about the prospect of communist infiltration. Our members, they say, “do themselves and their aims a disservice by welcoming communists in their ranks, and by making a virtue out of indifference to the possibility of communists becoming the dominant voice in their organization.”

Presidents of SDS I am the fifth don't really preside over much. They don't make policy. Least of all do they speak final words in the organization's name. So my attempt to reach into the heart of this concern is my own. And on a matter as perplexing to Americans as communism is, I'm of course doubly cautious. And cautious a third time because the problem is a very hard one.

I will cavil a bit to begin with, for the editorial in question has somewhat misconstrued us. So we “welcome” communists, do we? “Welcome” is of course the loaded word, automatic on these occasions. We welcome small-d democrats and converts to radical democracy, not totalitarians in cloaks neither red cloaks nor fed cloaks. And the editors surely have an odd view of our simple human pride in values if they think we'd be “indifferent” to the loss of the organization that embodies and sustains those values.

Still, their question is real, even piercing. SDS does not screen, purge, or use loyalty pledges. So along with Senator Dodd, the New Republic editors narrow their eyes at us. We are not confused, however. We can perceive the differences between Sen. Dodd and [the New Republic editor Gilbert] Harrison. We understand about the strange bedfellows that politics makes. Indeed, this is the whole question, isn't it?

So what answers do we have? What about the problem of “infiltration”?

It must surely be common knowledge that factionalism is the reef of the American left, and that the “infiltration” argument is one of the chief weapons of those who take comfort in its disarray. THE way, that is, to factionize and fractionate the left here is to cry, “Beware the Red Menace that bores from within!” It is by this incantation that “pure” radicals are divided from the “impure,” and those among the pure who dispute the categories from those who find them tolerable. It is not news that this happens. And when we are referred to labor's experience with communism in the 1940s as if that record proved the virtues of exclusionism it is not news either that we could theorize from the same record that our Establishment unions exist today at the expense of an American left.

And just what are we expected to do, anyway? We say we are democrats and are told that's not enough, for a man may smile and smile, and be a villain. Certainly. He may also be a happy democrat. Our critics must show