

LAND AND LIBERTY

Toward an organically self-organized subsistence movement



HABITATS

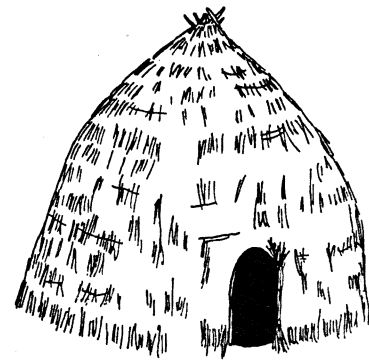
What is a habitat? For humans a habitat is a territory that provides sources for water and food as well as reliable sources of materials for shelter and heat. Typically it is where you first made love, learned to swim, caught your first fish, perhaps even fought a first battle against belligerent neighbors. Practically everybody in your community knows the names of the flora and fauna of your habitat, where the berries are, when the birds leave and return. Most of you have felt a kinship with the totality of your habitat, not only its flora and fauna, but its weather patterns, rocks, streams, mountains and its unique smells and sounds and the various combinations of them that create the singular music of your home. In short, you have a sense of place, you belong. These are all my relations, you will exclaim, when you look around.

How can atomized human beings living in a grid become free individuals embedded in genuine communities? The collapse of urban, hierarchical civilization won't occur solely because of the actions of a minority of eco-activists and indigenous traditionalists. However it is possible that the vast majority of those repulsed by the destructive basis of civilization and who yearn for genuine community will become anti authoritarian eco-activists, and yes, over time, even indigenous, wherever they live. Each success along the way an inspiration, each taste of freedom invigorating. If enough of the population participates a critical point will be reached where the momentum of our collective push toward freedom and kinship with our surroundings will become unstoppable.

Revolution is not everywhere or nowhere. Any bio-region can be liberated through a succession of events and strategies based on the conditions unique to it, mostly as the grip of civilization in that area

weakens through its own volition or through the efforts of its inhabitants. These liberated bio-regions could form alliances or meld in some way, but not necessarily.

It is up to each of us to look for the weak points and the vital points of our opponents armor within our geographical area and to strike them. It is not true that until all are free none are free, that is except perhaps *within* the same community. But it is enraging and sad that some might enjoy freedom and genuine community while others won't. It is this sense of solidarity with others that compels us to spread our freedom.

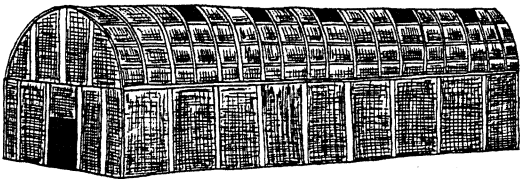


Gothic dome thatched house (Wichita).

Civilization didn't succeed everywhere at once, and so its undoing might only occur to varying degrees in different places at different times. In any case, the process of civilizing (domestication) is an ongoing one. Once it succeeds in dominating any given area, civilization isn't inherently permanent. It's continuance relies on our belief in its superiority, our submission to its authority and on our failure to have successful insurgencies.

Unfortunately civilization is a march toward death. Just to ensure that some diversity of life will endure the brakes must be put on the mega-machine's seemingly unstoppable, out-of-control locomotive of catastrophes.

The captivity of the civilized must be kept up on a daily basis otherwise we'd be constantly organizing and revolting. Coercive Authority relies on entertainment (tourism, drugs, television, etc.), ideologies (Marxism, religion, science, etc.) propaganda (schools, mass media, etc.) and repression (police, morality, hierarchy, etc.) to keep us dumb and



Rectangular barrel-roofed house (Iroquois).

scared. Many of us who know that something is deeply wrong don't fight back essentially because of feelings of isolation and poverty as well as fear of retribution from the repressive and punitive apparatus of Power (police and jail, basically).

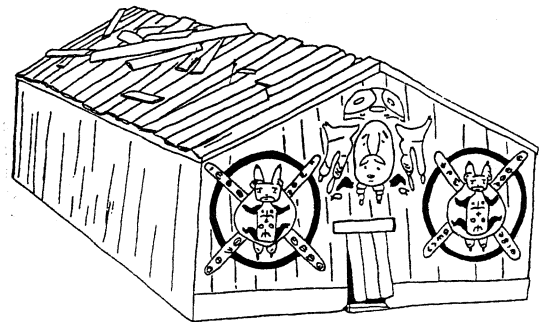
While the rule of capital and centralized power might seem omniscient, they actually aren't. There is a totality of domination but the totality is not yet dominated. There are many psychic and geographical blind spots, openings, frontiers where the sentinels and soldiers are few or at least fewer. We can take advantage of these. Our struggle for individual and collective freedom isn't pointless or hopeless or so overwhelming as to make total surrender appear reasonable and inevitable. For instance, because so much of our captivity relies on internalized cops, on the daily reproduction of social misery by our own compliance with the various roles expected of us (worker, citizen, soldier, intellectual, consumer, activist, tourist, artist, man, woman, etc.), the weakest point in our opponents armor is probably our ability to refuse these roles. It is through withdrawal from scripted roles and cultural constructs that we will get to know our neighbors and comrades as more complex individuals (subjects) and thereby be able to create the communities of resistance that we need in

order to form the bases of our offensives. It also means collectively withdrawing from our participation in the institutions and ways of civilization: entertainment, schooling, dependence on welfare states, wage work rather than subsistence and self-reliance, electoralism and other forms of representation, etc.

CITIES ARE NOT HABITATS, INDUSTRIALISM IS NOT WEALTH

In order to become free individuals embedded in genuine communities we need habitats. Cities are not habitats, they are concentrations of labor, an opportunity for Power to synchronize the activities of large populations. They are also sacrifice zones, that is their original wild state is no longer even recognizable. Nearly every original expression of life and diversity and the organic has been paved over, or re-formed from above by Officialdom and its Planners. A self-reliant culture would find such zones incapable of providing adequate food for a fraction of their existing populations. Free individuals would likely recognize them as hopeless labyrinths of cemeteries and desolation, rather than potential playgrounds to be newly explored and filled with expressions of the marvelous. Urban ways are inherently unsustainable, they are destructive to the environment and to the human spirit. Their territories are organized entirely to accommodate Power.

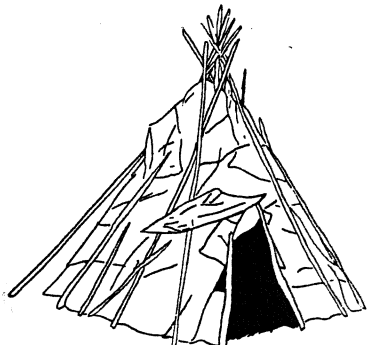
In order for us to create sustainable, self-reliant, autonomous communities, we need a land base, a territory. This means that we need to make the acquisition of such bases a focus of the libertarian struggle. This doesn't mean a simple return to a



Rectangular plank house (Kwakiutl).

movement of rural communes, but these could be an important part of the diverse movement toward achieving a land base for rebels and the excluded. Radicals can focus energy on solutions wherever we live; small towns, villages, cities, ghettos, ethnic neighborhoods or islands.

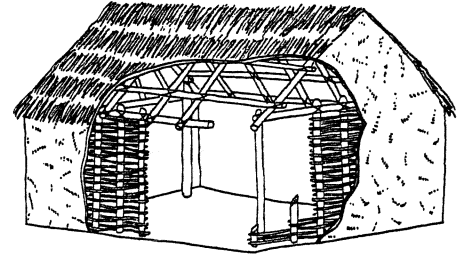
In order to create self-directed communities based on ecological and self-reliant principles, we need a habitat to experiment with, to learn from, to grow and gather food on and to help provide us with shelter. If we can push the project for social freedom and harmony with the biosphere toward one initially dedicated to the liberation of geographical areas within which we can re-create/re-discover viable habitats then several things become possible. For instance, a movement of genuine and stable communities can begin to establish itself. Once this begins to occur, with its tastes of authentic community bonds, freedom, self-reliance (not on the state), organic self-direction, etc., our ability and motivation to resist will be much stronger. Most non-native radicals are admirably fighting against specific forms of oppression and injustice or even trying to find ways to oppose the totality of our domination, but few are fighting for a community and the territory it depends on. This is because so many non-



conical tipi (Ojibwa).

natives of North America are still visitors or settlers, they haven't made this place home yet. Not enough of us apparently have either deep bonds with our surroundings or with those who live within them. Our insurgency should be focused on the liberation of territory (as potential habitats) from the rule of the market and statist forces so that our nascent communities of withdrawal and resistance can become authentic communities thereby gaining the strength

to be genuinely effective forces for authoritarians to reckon with. Non-native rebels should be aiming for a time when *they too* will be defending real communities and their habitats/territories.



Rectangular gabled house, thatched (Middle Mississippi).

I take great inspiration from our comrades in Chiapas, Mexico, who, in defense of their territories and communities, took the first shot and, to a large degree, have won. With the realization that indeed we have nothing to lose but our false freedom, false wealth and false community, we too could be preparing ourselves for secession from the nation states and ideologies that hold us captive, wherever we live.

Much of North America consists of territory still claimed by the descendants of earlier tribal/clan/extended family peoples, and anti-authoritarian rebels need to acknowledge this when going native where we live. It's important for us to educate ourselves about the indigenous folks who lived in our area before contact with empire and its civilized soldiers and citizens, and to reach out to the traditionalists, our natural allies, among them.

Some anarchists might say that an anarchist uprising always includes the liberation of geographical areas from the rule of the state and capital and therefore always includes a renewed relationship with the natural world. But this isn't the case. Many anarchists and other rebels still seek anarchy through the creation of large political organizations, by winning converts and taking over the levers of production. They want us to manage civilization for ourselves rather than abolishing it and creating a total transformation of our life-ways. Many syndicalists, for instance, while having the laudable goals that all anarchists have, namely equality and

freedom through the abolition of both the state and capitalism, are still primarily focused on achieving self-management of industry, not the abolition of the industrial mode of living. Their vision still includes cities, factories, a productivist rather than a subsistence ethic, an overarching infrastructure (transportation, research, development, etc.), large scale agriculture and an obvious absence of individual and geographical wilderness. This doesn't mean that anti-authoritarian rebels like them and other pro-civilizationist anarchists aren't the allies of those who want to re-wild. It just means that while we might have kinship with individuals from within these movements, we don't share a kinship with the movements themselves. I nevertheless retain a strong affinity with most anarchist currents. Those at the levers of production can play a pivotal role in our liberation, not by kicking out the bosses and instituting self-management, but by destroying the productive apparatus of the bosses, thereby opening the doors for new life-ways to emerge.



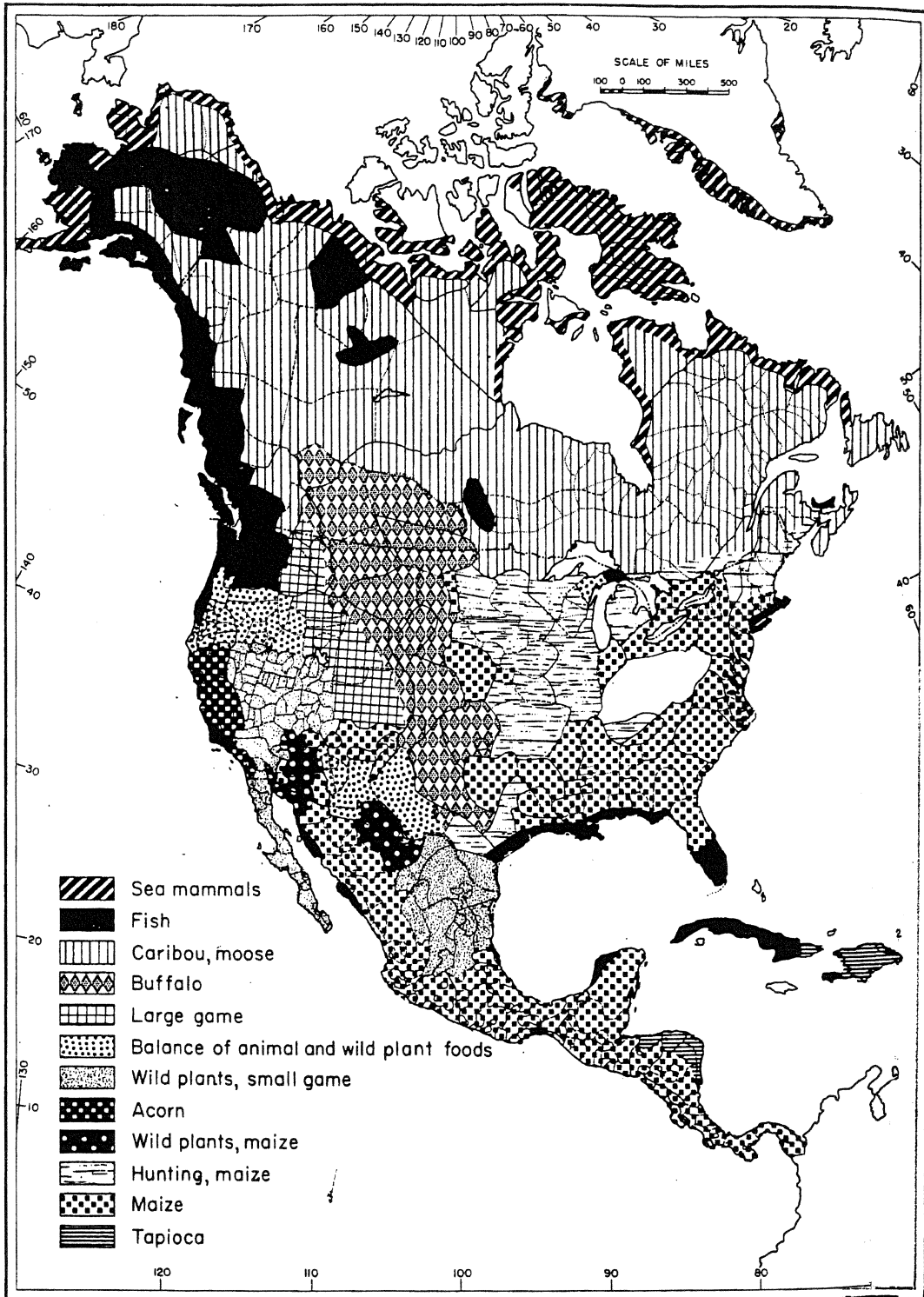
Prairie-Southeast earth lodge (Pawnee).

Anarchy implies not only voluntary association and organic self-organization, but self-reliance, which occurs most naturally and easily within genuine communities embedded in a bio-region. We aren't aliens. Our feelings of indifference to our potential habitats grew out of an imposed separation from them as our homes. Imposed by a world view that seems to have resulted from a series of errors, coincidences and aberrations affecting a few human cultures around the end of the so-called Paleolithic era. This is where we find the beginning of our systematic self-enslavement and self-alienation. All of the developments usually associated with the Neolithic revolution (urban living, a reliance on

agriculture, etc.) have ultimately led to the present mega-technological civilization. Over the centuries, myths have permeated civilized societies in order to make seem natural the ideologies that civilization is predicated on. These myths include the necessity of coercive authority, a belief in Progress, the notion of nature as hostile and the belief that economics (exchange rather than gift giving) are inherent in all human societies. Preceding urban civilization, many changes must have occurred within these cultures' collective psychic experience, for instance the emergence of symbolic mediation, (language, art, time, etc.), that made domestication more likely to occur. These destructive upheavals and changes led to sedentary lives and the domestication of formerly wild plants and animals, breaking age-old, organic life-ways and creating a permanent cycle of increasing separation from our natural surroundings.

No matter the chronology, or whether there actually is an original source of domination, our contemporary predicament is most characterized by lack of access to wilderness and habitat within which to freely live in self-reliant ways. We've all become either prisoners, livestock, inmates, refugees, dependents, slaves, servants and settlers or their various overseers and managers, i.e.: foremen, wardens, parents, property owners, principals, generals, politicians... Restoring or reclaiming genuine habitats means the liberation of geographical areas from the rule of the state and capital, as well as renewing our kinship with nature. Free people living in free communities in harmony with the biosphere need to locate their communities within habitats that are understood and valued by all members.

Where do we begin? It isn't possible to lay out a universally applicable practical strategy. There isn't a perfect plan waiting to be discovered and shared. Revolt takes myriad forms. Ultimately a combination/confluence of defensive and offensive strategies appears most promising. Some ideas are attacks against the real eco-terrorists, the disruption of day to day life as usual wherever we live, the establishment of rent/mortgage free zones and squats (both urban and rural), an urban and rural land commons movement, communes, bio-regional nomadism, anti-authoritarian eco-villages that focus on secessionist strategies (subsistence ways, tax resisting, etc.), wilderness camps and the recognition of, and closer links with, local aboriginal people.



SUBSISTENCE AREAS. Driver and Massey

TOWARD A SELF-ORGANIZED SUBSISTENCE MOVEMENT

Creating anarchy, or the undoing of capitalism and the dismantling of authority, is primarily an unknown adventure. However living in anarchic communities is in our blood. Since the first dawn we have been free except for the long nightmare of this urban civilization. Rediscovering the Free Times, creating, collectively, a new era of the Free Times, will involve many events and upheavals and probably even bloodshed, not because we rebels are violent, but because authority is. All over our planet civilization is devouring the wild and coercive authority is punishing and imprisoning its opponents.

In many areas, where civilization is most ingrained and the population most bribed by the 'goods' of capitalism, we will likely free ourselves in bits and pieces, slowly removing our armor, questioning authority, re-discovering self-reliant ways, learning new strategies and tactics with which to oppose capitalism, unlearning the internalized forms of our domination like homophobia and racism, isolating leftist vanguards and politicians, learning about the natural world, etc. Demanding/creating large commonly held land bases as well as wilderness areas fits very well within this overall strategy for self-emancipation. Cities just need to be abandoned, but this might be a long process. Fighting to renew and regenerate large urban or rural areas by freeing them from the market and returning them to common use and a more natural state will at least give many of us a chance to get some breathing room. These strategies are aimed at probing power for weaknesses while at the same time making attempts at self-emancipation. Expanding our territory while shrinking the enemy's, the ideal move in a territorial contest between opponents.

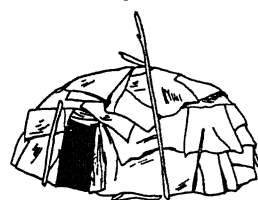
What would a commons look like? The inhabitants of each area will decide. Mine would have a large garden for many, a fruit and nut orchard, shelters, several fire pits, even in the city, groves of trees and an area dedicated to being replanted with native species. These would by necessity be authority and market free zones, meaning no licenses, permissions, zoning officers, inspectors, bankers, lawyers, municipal officials, provincial officials, real estate agents, federal officials, politicians of any color, tax collectors or police, just a council of friends and neighbors and participants re-learning how to make decisions in mutually satisfying and effective ways. A commons could be one step toward creating true

habitats, a camp where we retreat to as we regroup and strategize and revitalize.

Creating habitats in cities would in effect be a way of abandoning them, because rather than reforming cities we would be destroying their essence. The focus on a self-organized subsistence movement is based on a basic vision of a stateless, de-centralized, de-commodified and de-massified world. The project of creating new lifeways in ecologically-centred free communities must include a focus on asserting the need for genuine habitats here and now as well as into the future. Habitats include both wild and permaculture type areas.

SQUATS AND RENT/MORTGAGE FREE ZONES

Squatting has a long history throughout the world. Squats fit into the overall strategy of creating/demanding a habitat because shelter is an integral part of what a habitat provides. The buildings are already there! Squatting as a personal survival strategy is admirable (and necessary for some), but as an isolated act it loses much of its potential to be part of something much larger. If the majority of dwelling units in say twenty square blocks of an urban area were either squatted or freed through rent/mortgage refusals, while several vacant lots within the area were being converted to community gardens and a commons, the whole area slowly becoming a sort of permaculture zone, we'd begin to see life again. Of course we could likely expect that the cops would be sent in either immediately or eventually, but that's what anarchist insurgency is, reclaiming our lives! When local folks, without the intermediary of parties or experts, collectively reclaim the ability to self-organize and self-provide within a specific territory this is called rebellion.



Domed bark, mat, thatch, or hide house (Ojibwa).

WILDERNESS CAMPS

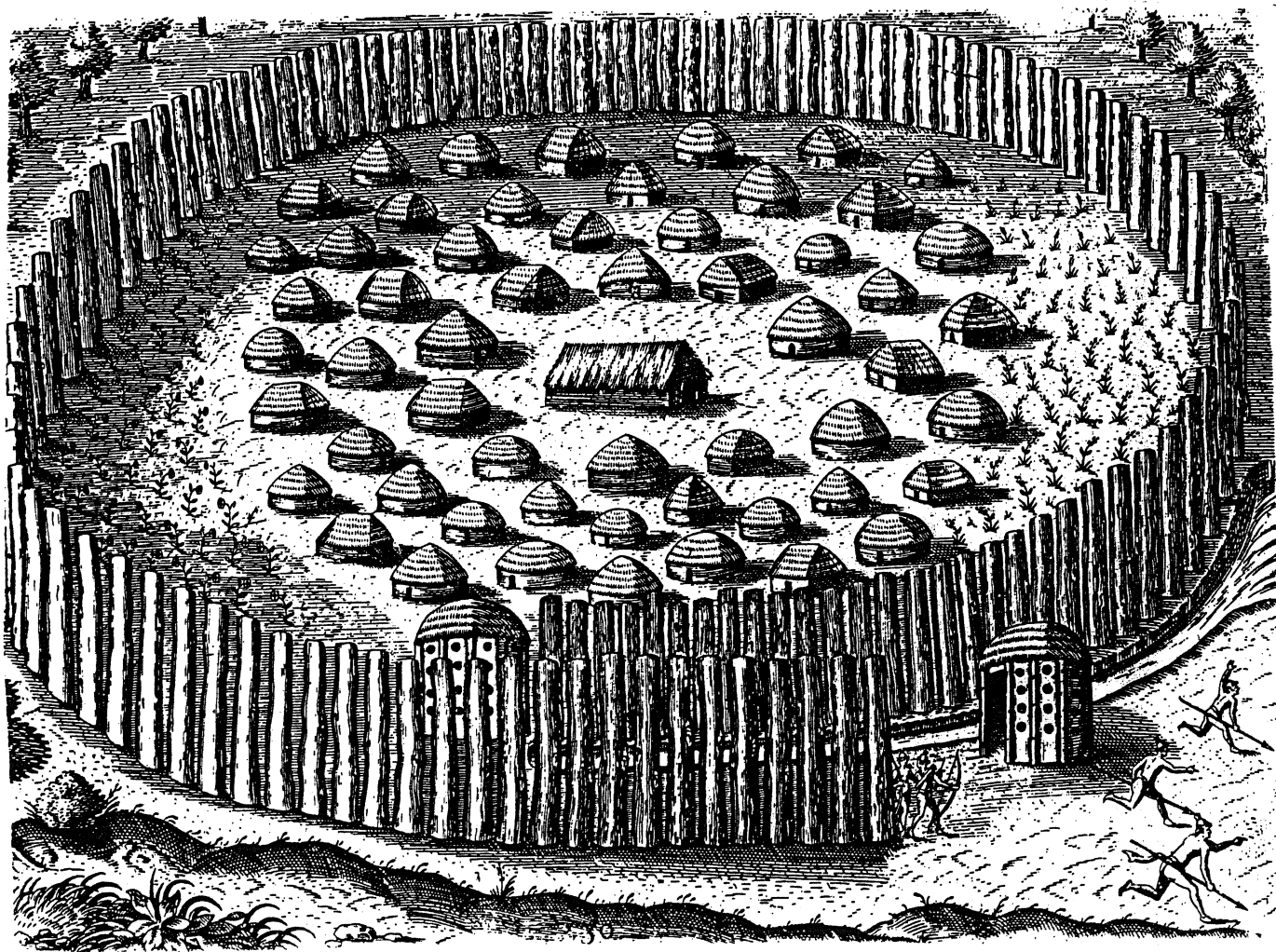
One way to explore your local wilderness areas is to build wilderness camps within them. In my view anti-civilizationists need to create not only

communities of resistance, but communities that are based on withdrawal (psychic, emotional, social and physical) as well. The idea is simple, but takes time and energy. Begin by exploring the paths, streams, logging roads, mountains, valleys, deserts or whatever wild zones are closest to you. As you begin to become familiar with the area you will discover specific spots that are ideal in which to meticulously hide a stash of supplies. These might include knives, a tarp, bandaids, fishing rods, compass, ethno-botany books on the area, canned goods, a rifle, cross bow, rope, etc. A group of close friends/comrades would have several of these stashes spread throughout a valley or mountain range or desert, so that one could survive in the wilderness for weeks and even months without having to leave and without permanent and therefore visible, camps. These would be great for eco-defense, hiding from authority or simply escaping civilization. While spending time there we take as much as we can without damaging its harmonious chaos, like food

stuff, heating materials, medicinal plants, etc., thereby helping us withdraw from the culture of all things commodified and as well relearn self-reliant ways. Of course as we fall in love with our wilderness areas we will feel compelled to defend them. If enough folks spend time in wilderness areas in this way, perhaps a *somewhat stable rebellious wilderness culture* can emerge.

As far as the other ideas mentioned, closer links with local indigenous peoples, bioregional nomadism, rural communes, etc., these don't need any lengthy explanation.

If the above activities don't appeal or are impossible for one to engage in, then the simplest strategy for green radicals is to do as many activities with as large a group of friends/neighbors/comrades as possible as often as possible. Anarchists need to break from the primarily urban activist subcultures the anti-authoritarian tradition seems recently prone to and extend a wider embrace. In the end, it will be



by staying put within a bioregion and getting together with many of the inhabitants closest to you that will create the initial embers of our insurgency.

Urban areas are, by definition, surrounded by less domesticated/sacrificed zones. Presently cities need to be shattered into many small pieces so that various autonomous neighborhoods can begin to form on the outskirts of a regenerating wilderness which would, over time, engulf those neighborhoods. It will be by learning the convivial skills our culture so lacks and making genuine bonds that extend further than sub-cultures and radical currents and dysfunctional nuclear units that will create possibilities for much greater things in our future. Skip school, skip work, turn off the TV, have a bonfire, host a gathering, gather and process some food, have feasts, go fishing/hunting, make music, take self-defense courses, destroy some logging equipment, liberate some animals, guerrilla garden, squat, organize a rent/mortgage strike, reach out to your indigenous neighbors, participate in/initiate a local subsistence movement, debate everything, all of these and more, regularly, with a large group of as many of the same people as possible, folks from your neighborhood or workplace as well as from activist subcultures, and I suspect that this will eventually create the embers of communities of resistance.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON COLLECTIVE REVOLT

I've been trying to identify what seems missing from the otherwise excellent ideas of many radical green thinkers/activists. Some of them correctly locate the sources of the present social and ecological crises in mass authoritarian civilization. I appreciate their original and perceptive insights into how this civilization grew and took hold and the many ways in which it damages its inhabitants. Yes, we need to both change the world and heal, but what strikes me is the absence of any mention of the necessity for organized, collective revolt in the healing and transformative process. A moral/civilized approach seems to permeate most green perspectives, a belief in the ability to enlighten power, in individual 'good' behavior (from recycling to compassionate attitudes) as a sufficient prescription for the social crisis, in the ability to properly heal here and now even though we are captives in civilization's horror show. But when I suggest a focus on a Subsistence Movement, on individual *and* collective withdrawal from as much of

our expected participation in the daily routines that constitute civilized ways, on refusing the various roles expected of us, on demanding the immediate de-commodification of shelters and the ability to feed ourselves, on the necessity of asserting some territoriality, I'm well aware that these activities wouldn't likely be tolerated, that we need to prepare ourselves for repression. Both the withdrawal and the defense of our communities are easier and more effective if we are collectively organized.

I'm part of a group of friends who have organized an intentional community project. We've pooled our resources, bought a few acres of rural land and will create a small neighborhood based largely on principles of mutual aid and cooperation. Although we have worked hard to create this possibility for ourselves, we are nevertheless primarily only lucky and privileged. Our project is about collectively solving our problems and communalism, but it is not a model for the total transformation of society simply because all rebels can't afford to buy their way out with communes and intentional communities, never mind that if you manage to accomplish it, you still must function within this world, i.e. work for wages to pay property taxes, comply with officialdom, etc. Nor should we expect power to dissolve itself as the result of a New (Feminist-Anarcho-Green) Enlightenment. We can't heal ourselves while we are forced to live in societies that make us sick.



Illustration by Posada

Revolutionary Woman Calavera

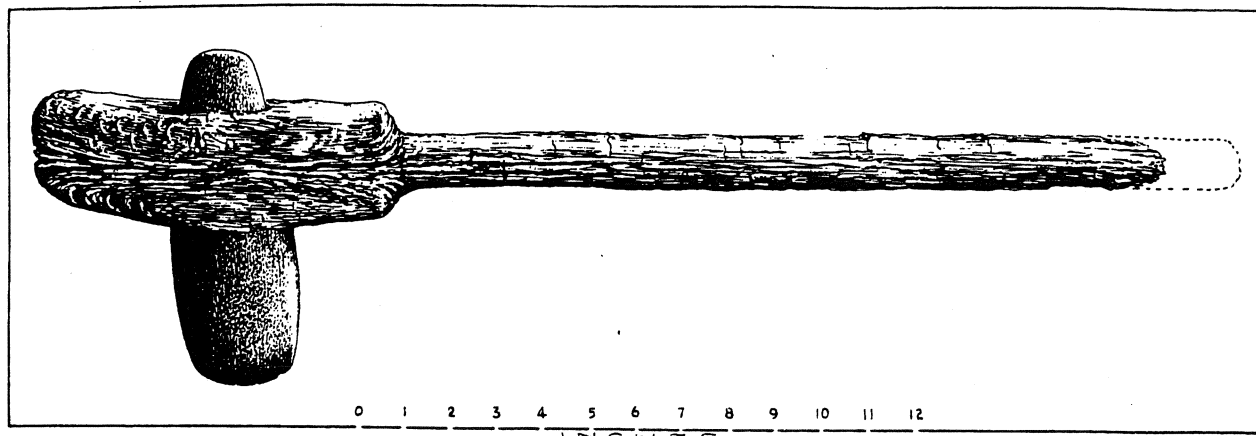


Fig. 11. Axe with smooth stone head set in original haft. This matches some early descriptions of "tomahawks."

COMMUNITY DEFENSE

Community defense is a different topic than discussions around violence and non-violence. It is a question of our willingness to defend our gains, our communities, our territories and our habitats as we create them. Based on conditions specific to their time and place, some attempts at community self-organizing will experience more repression, more violence, more prison time, while in other areas we may succeed with less repression and violence, perhaps, and this is very optimistic, without any at all. Regardless, we need to offer solidarity to both the armed Chiapas peasants and the commune drop outs, the defenders at Gustafsen Lake, Oka, Sutikalh and other indigenous direct actionists as well as the playful bio-regionalist wanderers. *If we want a diverse world, we will need diverse ways to get there.* But history has shown that the foundations of power won't be quietly dissolved through withdrawal alone. Organized defense isn't wrong or futile, it's necessary. Unions may have been reasonably good defense organizations in the past for many within the proletariat, but no longer have that role. Some indigenous activists have warrior societies, but these grew out of specific cultural experiences that most non-natives don't share. Many fighting movements, like the IRA, ETA, etc. over the last century have focused on national liberation and the recognition of a homegrown elite while rarely, if ever, talking about truly autonomous territories for local populations. However there have been many movements that are inspiring that had a libertarian basis, the Magon brothers, Emiliano Zapata and the present day Zapatistas, for example., with their cry of Land and Liberty.

I can imagine a local mutual aid network that also facilitates martial arts training and the teaching of eco-defense skills. The 'warrior' skills and training are only brought forth when necessary. In the meantime green freedom loving radicals concentrate on creating/asserting habitat in a peaceful manner. We can use the knowledge we've gained from various groups and experiments and movements to create local defense strategies that aren't based in political subcultures (activist/intellectual scenes) and aren't controlled by a centralized elite. Many villages in the past, in Russia, Japan, Korea and China for instance, taught themselves some form of martial art. If we aren't going to rely on hierarchical armies, macho brotherhoods or bureaucratic unions to defend our territories, then we need to create new defense organisms that incorporate the best of citizen's militias, folk martial arts, warrior societies, eco-defense guerillaism as well as mutual aid that are designed to evolve in harmony with our newly forming communities. In fact creating these mutual aid networks with a community defense skills component could be seen as an integral part of creating communities of resistance. If not why bother liberating any physical spaces so that we can once again live in harmony with each other and our surroundings. If we aren't ready/willing to defend them, they will just be taken away from us.

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* from David Watson, in *Catching Fish in Chaotic Water*