



Anarchism in America

Dead Kennedys, Ursula LeGuin, Murray Bookchin, Kenneth Rexroth

Three stars (out of four)

Hoodlums gleefully ambush police officers. So starts the early 1980s documentary "Anarchism in America," just out on DVD. The Emmy and Guggenheim award-winning directors Steven Fishler and Joel Sucher then ask average people what they think anarchism is. The response is chaos and violence.

The two then travel the country talking to actual anarchists, such as Murray Bookchin, about what the philosophy stands for: Cooperation and individual freedom rather than subservience to ruling powers. Not using the word "anarchism," the filmmakers next ask average people (including a family in Truckee) their ideas about freedom and their responses echo anarchist philosophy.

There's an interview with the Dead Kennedys (plus concert footage), a brilliant soundtrack of obscure radical songs, looks at worker-owned businesses and self-sufficient communes, and a funny clip demonstrating how various fruits and vegetables survive being beaten with a police baton.

Appealing to anyone with an interest in political theory and history, the DVD also includes a Fishler-Sucher documentary called "The Voice of Free Labor," about a Yiddish anarchist newspaper in America publishing its last issue after 87 years.

-- *Mark Robison, Reno Gazette-Journal*