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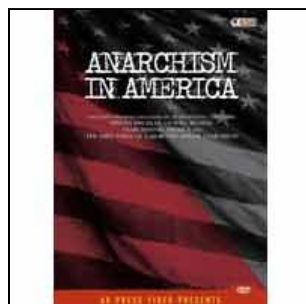
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Anarchism in America

AK Press Video

MVD

Two documentaries on one DVD concerning a much stigmatized and poorly covered political stance: is anarchism really as terrible as some people claim?

Anarchism in America contains two documentaries on one DVD: Anarchism in America and Free Voice of Labor. Both documentaries are the work of Steven Fishler and Joel Sucher, film school classmates of Martin Scorsese in 1969. Educational and enlightening, Anarchism in America focuses on the history of anarchy in and out of the USA, and Free Voice of Labor examines the history of the Yiddish anarchist newspaper of the same name. The two films portray a balanced representation of the ethos of both right-wing ('free-market') and left-wing ('socialist') schools of anarchistic thought

Anarchism in America comprises of archive interviews with prominent anarchists Karl Hess (who used to write speeches for Presidents Eisenhower, Nixon and Ford), political exile Mollie Steiner, and anarchist intellectual spokesman Murray Bookchin. These are interspersed with clips of political demonstrations and a spirited display of punk-rock angst with live footage of the Dead Kennedys playing California Uber Alles (sample lyrics: "I am Emperor Ronald Reagan, born again with fascist cravings"). The alternating elements of Anarchism in America make for a diverse, interesting and entertaining documentary, raising awareness of a political movement that has been misinterpreted and stigmatized since its conception. "It is a humanistic ethic," explains Bookchin at the close of the film.

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Free Voice of Labor - The Jewish Anarchists, follows the story of anarchistic Jewish immigrants in America. In 1890, disenchanted with the capitalistic world of sweatshops and poverty, the Freie Arbeiter Stimme (Free Voice of Labour) newspaper commenced publication in New York. Acting as a mouthpiece for the Jewish political left, intent on building labour unions and cooperatives for impoverished workers and supporting the rights of the down-trodden proletariat, the newspaper remained in print until 1977. The film contains archive footage of strikes from the first half of the 20th century, interviews with elderly Jewish anarchists who were involved in the strikes (“the police arrested you if you hit them with your fist- so I used my knee,” explains Sonia Farber, ex-protestor), and interviews with Ahrne Thorne, the last editor of the Free Voice of Labor.

Although it could be argued that both films are biased in their pro-anarchist viewpoints, and that the footage used is outdated, they nevertheless serve as informative documentation of a political stance that is rarely given fair representation in popular culture. There are also no DVD extras for either documentary, not even subtitles. However, Anarchism in America will appeal to those interested in sociology and alternative political viewpoints.

www.mvdb2b.com

By **Will Dowling**

This release was published on 14 Jun 2006.

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