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**Anarchism in America ★★1/2**

(2006) 130 min. DVD: \$19.95. AK Press (avail. from most distributors). Color cover. ISBN: 1-904859-51-8.

Given the rise of the global economy and the new threat of terrorism, American anarchism—the belief that men could live best without interference from the state—almost seems a bit dull. Yet in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the public's fear of anarchists—stereotyped as bearded, bomb-throwing radicals—was very real. This DVD features two archival documentaries, directed by ex-hippies Steven Fischler and Joel Sucher, which recall the rise, glory days, and decline of American anarchism. In *Anarchism in America* (1982), the filmmakers define anarchism, separate it from competing philosophies, and illustrate why anarchism appealed to immigrants arriving on the bottom rung—economically and socially—in a strange new land. Essentially, the program is a road trip that visits aging radicals, who recall flash points in anarchist history—notably the Russian revolution and the Spanish Civil War—periods of great hope and activism followed by inevitable disappointments. The interviewees make the valid point that anarchism is an idea very much in the American grain, and still cling to their faith that anarchism is a workable, essential ideal. Unfortunately, while the program valuably preserves the memories of these men and women, the documentary is rife with unidentified clips of news footage and bits of satire (and, perhaps appropriately, is rather disorganized). *The Free Voice of Labor* (1980) offers a more personal view of anarchism—sort of an old home week marking the shutdown of a long running anarchist paper in 1977—in which the focus is on immigrant Jews, who recall sweatshops, labor rallies, and run-ins with the cops (one man proudly notes he was arrested 39 times). Although the paper was doomed due to cultural assimilation, declining use of the Yiddish language, and simply changing times, the memories still burn bright for these old anarchists. Despite the flaws, this inexpensive double bill is recommended for academic libraries and a strong optional purchase elsewhere. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)