

Sarah Boddy

A Successful Austrian Commune

Some five years ago, three Austrian couples, full of idealism, set up a communal household. After a short period problems and tensions arose and there was a danger of the whole thing splitting up. Instead of separating, the three couples had an honest sharing about the problems and decided that what had gone wrong was the 'pairing'. Being tied to specific partners meant that the inter-relationship tended to produce conflict and jealousy. So they decided to try again, this time without treating themselves as three pairs, but as six individuals belonging only to themselves and to the whole group.

This was the basic philosophy of the A.A. commune which was explained by a small group of participants at the Conway Hall on March 23rd. They reject the concept of man as naturally monogamous and suggest instead that as part of his natural gregarious nature, sexual activity should be equally free and communal. They now have eight communes in and around Austria in all of which they practise 'free sexuality, common property, and common production'.

Like many other communes, the A.A. Communes produce their own food, clothes, and build their own houses, sometimes they have their own factories and they are completely self sufficient. Their contact with the outside world seems to be mainly financial - goods manufactured in the commune's factory are sold to the market - so enabling a cash flow which is ploughed back into the development of the commune.

All members of the commune groups wore a functional unisex dress of boots, jeans and warm plain jackets. All members wore their hair in an unstylish crewcut - somewhat peculiar to us but to commune members a sign of the commitment to 'common property' and the principal of equal and free sexuality.

Perhaps the key note of the commune is freedom - not particularly of sexuality, but of expression.

'Incarcerated in a nuclear family, restricted by the internalised attitudes of parents whose demands for love are themselves distorted and unreal - man grows up to be unreal, making unreal demands on the world. How therefore can he become part of a sharing commune without undergoing any change?'

This to them emphasises the importance of individual therapy and growth. Every Commune member is committed to undergo individual therapy - where his personal restrictions inflicted upon him by society, and particularly, his parents, are closely examined. Only when a member has freed himself from these restrictions may he be capable of sharing himself, and his love with every commune member. Hence the notion of free sexuality. The daily fuck they see as a simple and direct way of expressing love and life.

It appears that a new member will undergo an intensive period of therapy, supervised by one of the three specialist. Then members will be encouraged to work amongst themselves, as current problems arrive. No one technique seems to be dominant, although quite a lot of body work is done, and a lot of straight verbal analysis.

So what is there in the A.A. Commune for an 'Outsider'? Opportunities to experience commune life is provided in the form of summer camps. For £65 a week one can live in the visitor's quarters set slightly apart - and participate in the commune's daily work and leisure programme.

The group who talked to us certainly appeared relaxed, open and thoroughly likeable people. They reminded me a little of a small salvation army group without their hats. Also - their promotion film seemed to be a little out of character. Having taken a full hour to explain the natural gregariousness of man, and the necessity of free expression we were then warned that the film about to be shown might shock us. Normally the commune spent more of the day working than shown in the film . . . neither did they spend all their leisure hours naked, wiggling their bottoms and breasts in front of a camera . . .

A pity because it looked like fun - however for those who would like to try 10 days, 6 or 8 week course in 'A.A. Consciousness' details from A.A. Commune, A-1020 Vienna, Austria Praterstrasse 32/2/12.

(maybe)

it was a game. Love me
& i'll love you back; only
love me came first & not only that
but love me in my own way
(do my thing) do your thing but do my thing
first.

it was a game. the rules changed
& you couldn't laugh, & everything was spelled out:
god was spelled GOD;

rejection mattered: love was taken from the dictionaries
& given a lack of meaning: it was used
to hurt. love me came first.
i'll love you back came last.

(maybe)

Wilson Stapleton