

## Radical Imagination Festival, Activist Information Session

Emily Bagnald for STAND

My name is Emily and I'm here today with Eva representing the libertarian-communist affinity group STAND. My comrades thought you might be interested in hearing a little of who I am and how I came to radical politics. So I will tell you that very briefly.

Like most children I had a strong sense of justice. I expected truth and fairness from others and the world, and felt anger and alienation when that was not what I saw around me.

I never grew out of that yearning for fairness, honesty, and genuine connection. I never grew out of the anger either but I do believe I have learned to direct that energy in a positive way.

I only came to radical politics a few years ago. I have a background in human services and worked for several years in Vancouver, supporting marginalized women.

That work, and some of my own experiences combined to help me form a political analysis based on an underSTANDING of systemic and intersecting oppressions, and of capitalism as inherently exploitive.

I know those conclusions are pretty basic for most of the people in this room but they were a revelation I came to over time and one I think it's crucial that more folks come to.

I spent some time at Occupy Vancouver before moving back to Nova Scotia, which has been home to me most of my life. I was lucky shortly after to meet members of STAND, who I am now happy to call my comrades and friends.

STAND is based on the affinity group model. Very basically an affinity group is "a group of people linked by a common interest or purpose."

Our common interest is preparation for a socially just society, which for us is a libertarian-communist society.

Very simply: we oppose the state & we believe in and practice mutual aid.

Our purpose is to support each other to endure the alienation inherent in life under capitalism and to, as much as possible, live lives which are consistent with the principles of co-operation, mutual aid and solidarity.

Our principles are based on those of communism and include consensus based decision-making, a commitment to dignity, class struggle, global solidarity, and a rejection of the nation state.

While our analyses differ slightly and while we approach organizing with various tools and tactics we agree on certain important tenants.

We are absolutely willing, and even eager, to work with other organizations and members already do that, but for the sake of cohesiveness we find it very useful to organize with others who mostly share our political worldview.

We are Marxists, unapologetically. We believe strongly in the maxim “from each according to their ability and to each according to their need”.

We strive to maintain consciousness of these principles and to enact them in our everyday lives as much as is possible under the current system of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

We are attempting, through our interactions and relationships with each other, to practice a more honest, connected and fair way of being in the world.

Some of us identify most strongly with anarchism. Some prefer the term socialism to communism (although this is not necessarily a great diversion; Marx used the terms socialism and communism synonymously).

As individual social justice advocates and political humans we have different focuses. Some focus our extra-STAND efforts on environmentalism, some on tenancy issues, some on feminist issues. Some on raising rad kids.

Of course there is overlap on many of these issues and that short list is by no means exhaustive.

We often bring ideas, worries, practices and inspiration from our other organizing and life experiences to the group, and so are able to support and learn from a wide variety of each other's activities.

We include our children in our discussion spaces. They are welcome, not just to tag along, but to participate. And they do.

We are not, as a group anyway, attempting to foment revolution, but we do prepare for and welcome it.

As for projects we focus on what we call positive projects.

At the moment we have three different working groups engaged in research and discussion on topics we believe are in need of radical analysis and underSTANDING. These include education, parenting, and the topic of mental and emotional well-being.

We plan for these discussions to take the form of presentations to which the public will be invited. We hope you come participate in those conversations.

Thank you