

Every revolutionary movement has an insatiable appetite for printing. Right up to (and past) the shoot-point, the printing press is any revolution's most powerful weapon. That's why our Founding Fathers were so careful to write freedom of the press into the Constitution, and our present rulers are working so hard to write it out again. Even with all the other media that have evolved in this century, the press is still the one that counts. One proof of this is in your hands right now.

The trouble with this, for our movement, is that printing has become so damned expensive that only the Establishment can readily afford it. Even movement printers are expensive; they have to be---it costs almost as much to BE a printer as it does to hire one.

What this means to a newborn revolutionary gang is that if you can break that cost barrier and print for the movement at a price it can afford, the movement will support you in far higher style than the Establishment has ever offered to.

(Not only does every new community crave a printer, the printer often as not creates the community. Where to begin with you've got a disorganized bunch of isolated radicals, the establishment of a press, giving them a voice and an identity, will invariably pull that scattered bunch together into a unified community. Try it and see.)

This is what we did---the communications company---in the Haight in '67, working from an initial investment of \$300. This is something just about any 3 or 4 people can do, and it's a thing that's needed almost anywhere.

What you need to start with is a Gestetner silk screen stencil duplicator, a Gestefax electronic stencil cutter, and a typewriter. [In Chicago, the Gestetner offices are at 531 N. State, 467-6411. Their new line is 'custom-designed,' which translates as more expensive. Some oldies are available, but the best bet is to check out Movement offices, companies where you know somebody, or an auction before giving them a chance at making two profits on the same machine.] These are of machines, available in your town, that are designed to be operated by the average secretary, which means that without any prior experience you and your friends can run them stoned. The duplicator is a hyper-sophisticated mimeograph machines, simpler, faster and better engineered than the standard A.B. Dick thingee, that turns out finished work of nearly the same quality as an offset press (this paper is printed on an offset press) which is 13 times more complicated and 31 times as expensive. The Gestetner will print in as many colors as you have patience for, and it'll run off anywhere from 10 to 50 thousand impressions an hour.

But the secret of the system is the Gestefax stencil cutter. This is an electronic scanning goodie that turns 'camera ready' copy, including art, into electrical impulses which literally burn the copy into a special stencil (cost: 18 cents/stencil). This means you can print practically anything without the excruciating and

AAAAABCD D EEE
GGH JK LMM
O O PPPQOR RR ::
UUUUUUUUUUZZ1
1122334 55556 77889
OO a aabbbccdd :

We began with three people: myself, my partner, and his old lady. During the first month we picked up two friends of mine from L.A., and that was it. Five people in all. Mainly because the machines were so simple to operate, each of us was able to do everything the operation entailed: writing, layout, stencil-cutting, printing, distributing. Functionally we were all interchangeable, and any one of us could do the whole thing in a pinch. That strikes me as the best way to run this sort of thing.

That first weekend my partner and I composed and ran off a few dozen one-page flyers, very heavy on the aesthetics as befit the temper of our psychedelic subculture (we were competing, so to speak, with the original San Francisco Oracle), proclaiming our existence and policy. (That same weekend we taped a charismatic 4-hour Digger rap about freedom, which hooked us completely and pretty much established our policy for us.) We passed these out at the Be-In Sunday, and by Tuesday afternoon we were thoroughly established and in bu-

which everyone else had a response HE needed printed, and so on. Policy statements, position papers, poems, public notices, ads---all of Haight Street filtered through our pressroom, and the energy of the street was our energy.

We hardly ever saw money, and hardly ever needed it. We served the community and the community supported us. The Diggers provided food and stole paper for us. The Glide Foundation paid our rent and our Gestetner bills. Free Clinic doctors were always dropping in to make sure we stayed healthy. We and our world were one.

And all we had done, really, was find an unfilled need and fill it.

Be advised: this same need exists every place that it is not being filled. Long Beach and San Diego are both crying for a communications company. Vancouver need one, and Lawrence Kansas, and Los Angeles. San Francisco probably needs it again, and Isla Vista certainly needs it. Every underground community every-

THE REVOLUTIONARY GANG

Copyright 1970 by Chester Anderson

usually futile labor of slowly handcutting a stencil with typewriter and stylus the way they did it in school. It takes less than 20 minutes to make a perfect stencil of the most detailed copy, and the printed copy looks almost exactly like the original. Another triumph of modern technology. (The sole drawback: photographs don't reproduce well; but anything else is cool.)

These machines together sell for around \$6000, but the Gestetner Corporation is perfectly willing to arrange comfortable terms. Here's how we got ours:

I had some \$300+ royalties from a science-fiction novel (The Butterfly Kid---adv.), and my partner had a more or less straight job as ad manager for the Sunday Ramparts. (Neither of us looked 1/2 as straight as Tiny Tim, but that didn't seem to matter.) On this slim basis, Gestetner Corp. of San Francisco gave us both machines on these terms: \$300 down on the duplicator the first month, \$300 down on the stencil cutter the second month, and \$100 a month thereafter for the set. I thought they were mad.

Furthermore, they delivered the machines (before we'd paid them cent one) on the Friday before the famous primordial Human Be-In in Golden Gate Park (which was January 14, '67), enabling the communications company to make its debut at that auspicious gathering.

siness, a power in the community.

Our policy, stated most simply, was this: we'd print anything for anyone for whatever they were willing to pay, including no pay at all, and everything for the Diggers free. Hip merchants, Krishna Consciousness people, straight do-gooders et al paid cash, at most ten percent of what they'd have had to pay a straight printer; and dealers paid in dope, street people paid in love, the Diggers paid in excitement---an altogether satisfactory arrangement for everybody concerned.

And we printed for ourselves as well: news flashes (often while the news was still happening), raps, warnings of impending busts, gratuitous mind-blowers---we were a free-form daily revolutionary newspaper with a penchant for making the news and a gift for unpredictability. Because we were doing it for fun, we took care to make every piece of paper that we issued was something we'd otherwise be glad to receive---I papered my bedroom wall with our output, a daily torrent of poster-quality publications---with the result that no one who was handed one of our bulletins on the street (except for cops) ever threw it away. People (and one museum) made collections of our work.

Now, before we started, the community didn't miss us, but the moment we began, we were indispensable. Everyone had something he needed printed, to

where needs a voice, and no weekly paper fills that need. But you can.

Here, summarized, are the rules:

- 1) Work as a family.
- 2) Avoid the profit motive; don't be influenced by monetary considerations.
- 3) Print for the whole community, not just people you agree with.
- 4) Print for yourselves a lot, for your own pleasure and/or satisfaction.

Every imitation of the communication company (within six months there were more than 25) failed, in every case because it ignored or broke those four rules. Usually---New York was the classic example---rules 2 & 3 were violated, thus preventing the operation from becoming a living thing.

(Oh, distribution: as soon as we had a bunch of handbills, we'd take them up to Haight Street and pass them out. Got so the S.F. Police Department had a man especially assigned to hang out on the street to collect our stuff. Very flattering.)

And that's it. If you think this might be your thing, go on and do it. If you want more information, write to me c/o the Seed: I'll tell you everything I can: but you'll learn more faster doing it than asking. Nobody told us how to do it. Go ahead!

Let a hundred printing communes bloom!