

The Mayday Tribe: 'Creativeness, Joy and

By ROBERT M. SMITH

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WASHINGTON, May 2—The Mayday Tribe says that "Mayday is an action, a time period, a state of mind and a bunch of people."

Mayday's symbol is an Indian, one of its leaders is the radical Rennie Davis and its immediate goal is to shut down Washington.

But for those in the tribe, Mayday is an experiment. It is an attempt, they say, to develop an aggressive but non-violent tactic that will provide a new way to protest the war.

The Mayday "tactical manual"—on the philosophy and practice of the current protests—prints this picture: "Thousands of us with bamboo flutes, tambourines, flowers and balloons moving out in the early light of morning to paralyze the traffic arteries of the American military repression government nerve center. Creativeness, joy and life against bureaucracy and grim death. That's nonviolent civil disobedience; that's Mayday."

Bid to Avoid Violence

Elsewhere, however, the "tactical manual" is more down to earth: "The aim of the Mayday actions is to raise the social cost of the war to a level unacceptable to America's rulers. To do this we seek to create the specter of social chaos while maintaining the support or at least toleration of the broad masses of American people."

The manual says the Mayday



Associated Press

Rennie Davis, right, a protest leader, at the campsite. He said the arrests would not deter group from going into streets. Several dozen demonstrators were arrested yesterday.

Collective chose nonviolence because such a course permits disruption without alienating the masses. Also, it says, non-violence limits "the containment and dispersal options of the Government" and lessens

"the likelihood of coming into violent conflict with the G.I.'s who will be ordered to disperse us and who we wish to win on our side."

That is Mayday from Mayday's viewpoint. The Federal

Bureau of Investigation would make no comment on the tribe and the Justice Department said it was not ready to say anything yet.

One of the spokesmen for Mayday is Steven D'Arazien, a

Life Against Bureaucracy and Grim Death'

26-year-old former member of Students for a Democratic Society, editor of the Boston University News and correspondent for a student press service in Vietnam.

Puffing first on a cigarette, then a pipe and finally a cigar, the bearded spokesman explained that the Mayday Tribe had no single leader.

For Mr. D'Arazien, in his denim work shirt and blue jeans, that is a major difference between the Old Left and the New Left, although he would not call them that. The trouble with the old movement, he said, is that "the movement developed leaders, and the leaders became the people who ran things, and there were other people who did the junk work—ran things off and licked envelopes and became alienated from the politics of the thing."

By contrast, he explained, the Mayday Tribe has "the S.D.S. notion of participatory democracy." He said that notion was embodied in the Mayday Collective. It was in a part of the collective, at a commune in northwest Washington, that the F.B.I. recently arrested Leslie Bacon as a material witness in the Capitol bombing on March 1.

Decisions at the Moment

Out on the dirt field here called West Potomac Park—their campsite until the police ordered them out before dawn today—other Mayday Tribe members echoed Mr. D'Arazien.

Like Rennie Davis, a prominent antiwar activist and defendant in the Chicago conspiracy trial, they spoke of regional decentralization (targets for tomorrow and Tuesday were picked by groups from different areas of the country) and the emergence of street leadership (leaders who pop out of the crowd at crucial junctures).

Mr. Davis, with his long brown hair and metal rim glasses, his blue jeans ripped down the seat, and avoidance of movement clichés, hardly looks like the public enemy of F.B.I. fame.

He is the liaison man between the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice and the Mayday Tribe—in effect, between the Old and the New Left. At 30, he seems to have something in common with both. He is worldly wise and intellectual, young and active.

Mr. Davis is a coordinator of the people's coalition, which has associated with it such old-line groups as the American Friends Service Committee, the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, Clergy and Laymen Concerned, the National Student Association, Women Strike for Peace and the International League for Peace and Freedom.

At the same time he seems to be a more-than-equal member of the Mayday Tribe. The tribe is, for all practical purposes, the tough arm of the people's coalition; it gets money from the coalition and shares some office space.

According to Mr. D'Arazien, the tribe is an attempt to get youngsters to try the new tactic—nonviolent and massive disobedience—in their war against the war. When the youngsters in the tribe—both high-school and college students—sit down at the traffic circles, he argued, they will be doing something quite different from the speeches and rally at the Capitol on April 24 and from recent lobbying at Government offices.

Mr. D'Arazien said "the militant tone with nonviolent tactics" has "turned on a lot of people who were into trashing [vandalism] a year ago and burning down banks."

"All that violence came out of a feeling of frustration and bitterness that a massive legitimate demonstration had not worked," he said. "Then the violence erupted and innocent people were killed, people began to think things over. Kent State showed you could be killed if you demonstrated."