

An Understanding of AAPA

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We regard AAPA as both a means to an end, and a beginning toward the end itself; that end is a better society in which people can live as people. Both in its goals and in its existing structure, we feel that AAPA should work toward merging the two, where the goals are best reached by a means which embody those goals in the here and now, and not only in the Utopian future. With this in mind, we attempt here to find some type of functional "structure" by which AAPA can reach its goals and exist as a part of those goals.

We use two basic concepts in the means toward reaching a better society—namely, that leadership must be redefined, and democracy be used as often as possible. Leadership, as we understand it, is effective action; it is not making good speeches, rallying people, or having charisma, per se. It is leadership when those qualities lead to effective action. We are tired of rallies which result in frustration, tirades of rhetoric which lead to confusion, and general lack of understanding of the problems of the times. Thus, we define leadership as effective action whether that action is work, writing, speaking, talking to friends, or plain secretarial labor. What is important is getting things done.

Democracy is here meant as this: get to as many people as possible, depending on the situation involved. Thus, if there is ample time for a mass decision, that decision should be made by the body as a whole. If there is only time for a quick decision, one person should be able to make the decision, based on his understanding of the situation, and the fact that the rest of AAPA trusts his judgment and thought.

Thus, what evolves is a concept of the "sliding structure"; getting to as many people as possible, and work and leadership being closely related. Something more basic which underlies this structure must be trust and affinity. Thus, the basic unit of AAPA should be the personal, or "us" group (a la Takashi Suzuki), which usually consists of 5-6 people. There can be two types of "us groups": These are the communication group, based logically on geographical locale; and the task work group, these being the functional units that attempt to get things done. These groups should be as flexible as possible, and adhere to the principle that leadership should emerge from as many people as possible. The only way an organization can grow is for that group of people to develop leadership, or effective action. The communications groups should take care of communication of all sorts: newsletters, flyers, meetings, transportation, etc.

The Task Work Groups take advantage of the fact that each person has his own talents and interests. Examples of these work groups, which have emerged from the groups themselves (and most should come from the "us groups") are: Chinatown, China Policy, McCarran Act, Delano, etc. Out of these groups come the effective action: research and discussion which lead to that action.

The communications group ensures trust and an understanding of personal qualities, not just political. This makes effective action more probable. In order to make communication possible for the entire group, we suggest a central "us group", which should meet once a week, and disseminate the various information which the task groups have developed; plus make it possible for new people to get acquainted with the groups. The function of the central "us group" should be communication among the groups, as well as recruitment and publicity for the entire group. Thus, the recruitment group and the general communication group should be part of this central group.

We feel also that a spokesman is necessary to meet the exigencies of the press and other organizations asking questions, plus a central place for communications from other groups. The spokesman should mainly be a communicational cog, and not a decision making provision. However, since this one person will probably know more information about what is happening at any one time, he perhaps should have the power to hold off decisions or make decisions for the group.

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