

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

**Towards The Creation Of Regional North American Anarchist Federations & The
Adoption Of An Organizational Model From Which a Broad Based Strategy Can Be
Carried Out**

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Proposal To: The Federation of Revolutionary Anarchist Collectives-Great Lakes Region¹

¹ This proposal was provided to the still forming Federation of Revolutionary Anarchist Collectives (Great Lakes Region-Midwest) in December, 2001 by the Black Heart Anarchist Collective (Columbus, Ohio). It was not adopted by the federation. It was also sent to the Northeast Federation of Anarcho Communists. David Van Deusen wrote the bulk of this document with assistance from Lady. The proposal was adopted as a position by the Black Heart Anarchist Collective as a whole, whose members also had input into the content. The Black Heart Anarchist Collective was an offshoot of Anti-Racist Action-Columbus. The collective (which included Van Deusen, Lady, Dustin, Noah, and others) formed for the primary purpose of engaging in discussions with other regional anarchist collectives about forming the Federation of Revolutionary Anarchist Collectives. The Black Heart Anarchist Collective were participants in a number of meetings leading up to the creation of the federation. However, prior to the official formation of the federation Van Deusen & Lady moved back to Vermont, the collective disbanded, and was never an official member collective of the federation. Van Deusen was in Ohio, and a member of Anti-Racist Action, for some time in 2001-2002. The Federation of Revolutionary Anarchist Collectives folded in 2005.

Submitted By: The Black Heart Anarchist Collective-Columbus Ohio, December 25 2001
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Lady and the Black Heart Anarchist Collective.

Introduction

Columbus, Ohio, 2001 –We do not question the need to form tightknit membership based revolutionary anarchist federations. This need is self-evident. We recognize the need to do so on a regional basis, so that organization can be more responsive to the cultural, social, and economic particularities of the region in which it is situated. Regional organizations also carry the added benefit of being autonomous and self-sustaining. Therefore, if one particular federation suffers internal problems, the broader organized movement cannot be dragged down with it.

To date, upon the continent of North America, there is only one such federation (the Northeast Federation of Anarcho Communists-NEFAC) and, to our knowledge, only one other in the process of forming (the Federations of Revolutionary Anarchist Collectives-FRAC). It is our hope that individual anarchists and collectives located within different regions will take it upon themselves to form additional regional bodies in the coming months.² We also urge NEFAC (and FRAC after it is officially launched) to give whatever support they can to persons/collectives which take the initiative in forming such organizations. We must strive to develop such federations all throughout the continent so that a strong and organized revolutionary anarchist movement of the working class can begin to engage in concerted campaigns which bring us closer to the social revolution, which is both necessary and encompasses that which we desire and our passions demand.

Regional federations should develop out of the experiences of individual anarchists and collectives as found within the given social environment. They should be founded upon anti-statist, anti-authoritarian principles which are compatible with the basic tenants of revolutionary socialism. In a word, they must seek to bring forth a world in which the means of production are owned and controlled by those whose present social position is that of the poor and working class. Such a world must function according to participatory and directly democratic means while guaranteeing a material, political, and social equity for all, as well as deliver a society which is both more interesting and aesthetically pleasing by virtue of the unleashing of the creative aspirations of the masses.

“From each according to their abilities. To each according to their need.”

-Peter Kropotkin

These federations need to be composed of dedicated anarchists who understand the need of struggle, and who through experience also understand the pragmatic means by which struggle can potentially be transformed into victory. They must be rooted in their local communities, or, in some cases, be fully immersed in their life on the road. This, along with a commitment to the revolution, must be the minimum requirement for membership into the collectives which compose the various regional federations.

² Soon after this proposal, in addition to NEFAC and FRAC, the Northwest Anarchist Federation would form, as would also the Great Plains Anarchist Network. For a time there was much potential for building a strong and united anarchist movement in North America. However, these regional federations, while doing good organizing work, never matured to the point of forming a formal alliance or adopting a common strategy. Today, 2017, none of these organizations are still in existence.

We welcome the formation of FRAC, of which we hope to be part of. We hope that this potential organization will become operational and manifest during the course of the coming year; even more preferably by May Day, 2002.

In is of our opinion that soon after FRAC becomes politically functional, it should seek to establish formal ties, while still maintaining federation autonomy, with NEFAC in the form of a strategic alliance and a program of mutual assistance. The adoption of such strategies and programs should be facilitated through open proposals, discussions, and debates through the means of an internet listserv set up exclusively for these reasons, as well as by direct correspondences through the mail, telephone, and personal meetings. Mutually agreed upon points should be ratified at an annual continental alliance congress, at which delegates from all federations should be present. The exact process by which ratification should occur should be decided at the first such congress.

In turn, these federations should encourage the establishment of further regional anarchist federations. Their structural goal being the establishment of such groupings throughout all distinct cultural, social, and economic regions of North America.

Prior to the formation of such other regional federations, independent collectives should be encouraged to formally connect themselves to the broader anarchist alliance on a provisional basis. The status of such independent collectives should remain provisional until such time when they themselves organize a regional federation within their area of operation. At that time, such federations should be encouraged to join the broader anarchist alliance as fully recognized and equal partners. The process by which future regional anarchist federations should be functionally incorporated into the alliance should also be decided at the first continental alliance congress.

Such federations, while developing autonomous point by point programs based on the needs and desires of the broader poor and working class communities living within their select region³, need to create a formal inter-federation anarchist alliance, and move to develop a mutually accepted North American revolutionary strategy. However, in order for any emerging continental anarchist strategy to become effective, the various anarchist federations, from whom such strategic proposals can be expected to emanate, must develop a dynamic relation within the broadest tenants of the contemporary social movement. Here the federations must help facilitate a macro and micro structure through which it can effect a further radicalization of the mass movement.

We must recognize that the regional federations will, at least at this historic juncture, most likely will materialize as small, tightknit membership organizations with a likely constituency of maybe 100-500 members per region (as is the present case with NEFAC). Such small organizations lack the mass base for them to go-it-alone. Therefore, for them to be effective in regards to radicalizing the broader population, they must have a sophisticated method of interacting with the masses at large. Here we contend that the best way for such small highly politicized federations to do so is through working directly with larger radical leftist organizations which already

³ Such a point by point program should be taken very seriously and should entail an in-depth analysis of the economic particularities of that federation's region. It should also seek to project the particular economic and social changes that a working class/anarchist revolution will demand. In addition, all possible intermediary steps should be discussed at length. -The fact of the matter is the capitalist parties, be it the Democrats or Republicans have such economic analysis at their disposal, as well as a platform which describes what they intend to do, how they intend to do it, and how that will effect/change the common experience of the common wo/man. Granted, the rubbish which these parties print, claim, etc. is bullshit. However, the fact that they can point to the particulars of a seemingly realistic and comprehensible platform is a massive psychological lever that they use to separate themselves as relevant from radical anti-capitalists, who often do not produce such point by point programs, as irrelevant.

exist, and in turn to encourage a concerted effort on their part to engage the rank and file of the even larger left-leaning/more liberal mass organizations such as within the labor movement and the social justice movement.

We must strive to democratically consolidate the efforts of the already organized masses so that the revolutionary aspirations of the self-conscious poor and working classes can begin to spread like wildfire. And where the masses are not organized and are still slumbering in the delusions of consumerism and institutional oppression, we must *directly* facilitate the basic awakening of class consciousness and help provide the social and political vehicles necessary for a broad based class struggle.

A Structural Proposal

We contend that such regional anarchist federations should act as the facilitator of a more radical world/class analysis. Such leanings can already be found amongst the natural inclinations of the poor and working classes, as well as amongst the more oppressed people generally. Even so, in order for such a highly radical and politicized membership organization to be effective, it must not seek to be the official umbrella of the larger movement. Rather it must, in part, work within the broader mass movement in order to influence its course.⁴ This is in no way meant to imply that the revolutionary politics of the federations should be watered down in order to create a quasi-reformist united front. On the contrary, we believe that a well-organized system of inter-organization fluidity can result in the presently liberal influenced elements of the mass movement becoming further radicalized without the anarchist federations compromising their revolutionary positions. We assert that this can best be achieved through select members of the federated collectives joining and participating in other larger organizations which are not specifically anarchistic.

“All workers are socialists, regardless if they know it or not.”

-Mikhail Bakunin

We see this strategy as two prong. First, certain members of the federated collectives should join already existing larger radical left-wing organizations. Second, members of these other organizations, as emanating out of local chapters, should be encouraged to become involved in the even larger left-leaning liberal influenced mass organizations as found within the labor movement and the social justice movement. Here we mean specifically that of Anti-Racist Action (ARA) and, *possibly*, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). We view these organizations as gateway groups with the *potential* to act as a link between the highly politicized and strictly anarchist left, and the mass base of the largely liberal influenced labor movement and social justice movement.

This is not to say that the federations should seek to infiltrate, control, or manipulate such organizations. That is a dirty task best left to dirty authoritarian and self-destructive groups who lack popular support. For us, we must be very open about our presence within other organizations, and not seek to control them, but rather to foster a more thorough radical social and political analysis into their world view.

When the federation alliance adopts a strategic platform which requires the participation of these gateway groups, the platform should be brought to the local chapters of these organizations

⁴ This proposal is not meant to imply that the various collectives making up regional federations should forgo

through the dual members. At that time the proposal will, of course, be discussed and debated. If the proposal is unacceptable to these organizations, it should be brought back to the federation alliance for necessary modification. Likewise, when and if certain strategic initiatives develop from these larger organizations, they can quickly be brought to the federations' attention, again, through the dual members.

This task of inserting federation members into ARA and the IWW will not take an extraneous amount of work, as many of us, especially those of us who are involved with the formation of FRAC, are already members of such organizations and are only now coming to form more specifically anarchist collectives which we already hold dual membership in. However, the formation of federated collectives should not be carried out as an unofficial leadership clique within already existing groups. Nor should such collectives be formed as paper organizations, essentially existing in name only with all local organizing and actions being done solely through the broader group of which members are part of. Nor should groups such as ARA be weakened to critical points through the formation of such collectives (i.e. through a significant amount of members leaving in order to form anarchist collectives). Here we must strike a reasonable balance, and seek to organize in such a way as those already existing larger radical organizations are strengthened rather than weakened.

We suggest that we strive for a balanced ratio whereby at least two ARA and two IWW chapters exist per every one federated collective. In areas where ARA and IWW chapters do not exist, federated collectives should make it a priority to help establish such chapters, and in turn these chapters should be composed of a large majority of individuals who are not also members of federated collectives. In addition, we recommend that only a small amount of members of each anarchist collective hold an *active*⁵ dual membership within their collective and another broader organization such as ARA or the IWW. This would ideally translate into federated collectives having one or two fully recognized members within each ARA and IWW chapter within the area of the federated collective's zone of operation. Even so, we recognize the necessity of each federated collective making such *exact* decisions on their own, based on the specific dynamics of their local scene. Even so, maintaining a tight limit on the number of dual members per collective would seem advisable so as we do not get ourselves into a position where we create an organization while retaining a super-active role within an existing organization – thereby creating twice as much work for each member. We recognize that ultimately workloads will be decided by the individual and we are not to say who can handle what. However we must create a balance wherein we do not over extend ourselves, and thus do two times as much half-ass work, rather than focus our time and abilities on limited projects which we carry through with the utmost of thought and effort.

The role of such dual members would, in part, be to keep the federated collective in contact with the day to day campaigns and operations of the broader organizations while simultaneously suggesting a more radical politic to the local chapters of these other organizations. These gateway

militant direct social and political actions taken locally, through their own initiative. Collectives must initiate such activity! However, these collectives, through their capacity as members of the broader federation, and even the larger alliance, must also work to solidify the more general efforts of the mass struggle against the status quo.

⁵ This is not to say that persons should not hold dual membership in a relatively inactive sense. For example, it would make sense for federated collective members to hold official membership within labor unions such as the IWW. However, this membership should not impede on the work that person performs within their primary collective and within the federation.

organizations should then come to fulfill certain structural roles within the broader continental-wide working class strategy for social revolution.

For such an organizational plan to be successful, NEFAC, FRAC, and future regional federations would have to prioritize the task of creating new ARA and IWW chapters in areas where the federation is active. At the present time there are roughly 11 ARA and 10 IWW chapters in NEFAC's region of operation; this in comparison NEFAC's 7 federated collectives and few support collectives. In kind, there are roughly 21 ARA and 12 IWW chapters in the broader region of FRAC's area of operation; this in comparison to an undetermined number of potential FRAC collectives. With the possible exception of FRAC in relation to ARA's, the above ratios are still too unbalanced to maximize the effectiveness of anarchist federations in relation to the developing broader radical community. Therefore, these less sectarian groupings must be strengthened and chapters need to multiply so that the developing discontent of youth and workers can be effectively channeled through the organized bodies of radical opposition.

Why Anti-Racist Action?

ARA presently encompasses 50 chapters throughout North America and is a non-sectarian organization which functions upon directly democratic principles.⁶ Its primary focus has historically been to attack fascists at the street level, and in doing so allowing for the space necessary for leftists to organize in a somewhat less combative social sphere. One of its strengths is that it has a certain appeal to young people who, although they may not recognize themselves explicitly as anarchists, come to identify themselves as militant anti-fascists. For many people ARA becomes an impetus, through direct political experience, for individuals to gain pragmatic insight and to develop a more radical world view. In addition, some ARA chapters have been successful in entering coalitions on the local level that, for better or worse, are more representative of the broader social justice movement. In some cities, such as Columbus Ohio, ARA chapters have official representatives in coalitions such as Jobs With Justice⁷, the local anti-war group, a community newspaper, etc.. These are positive characteristics that should be continued and further pursued.

We recommend that ARA chapters continue their direct and militant anti-fascist work, while also making it a priority to connect with the broader social justice movement in the area in which the chapter in question is active. These two facets of ARA activity should, respectively, be the first and second priority of the organization. And in its capacity as a vehicle connecting the more radical element of the broad leftist movement with the more democratic socialist/liberal element it must seek to suggest a more thorough militant energy into these historically less dynamic tendencies –not necessarily by engaging the leadership of such organizations, but by making strong connections with the *rank and file* of such organizations. ARA must build strong

⁶ Through a concerted and coordinated effort it is reasonable to think that ARA, with the federations' assistance, could double in size to 100 chapters over the course of the next half decade.

⁷ For a time David Van Deusen served as ARA-Columbus's representative to the local Jobs With Justice chapter. ARA-Columbus, for a time, also organized weekly food deliveries to striking Mansfield Steel Workers. These workers were on strike for years. Van Deusen had the idea of providing support after he read about a recent escalation n of tension whereby a worker sought to fire a homemade rocket at scabs/management/security thugs. Lady largely secured food donations from area businesses. Then then collective members would drive the food to the USWA Union Hall in Mansfield. There ARA would drop off food and revolutionary literature.

grassroots connections between all spectrums of the social justice movement, thereby creating necessary connections between the more militant left and the mass base of organized status quo opposition. It will be through such constructed inter-organizational relationships (between the anarchist federations and the larger radical gateway groups, between gateway groups and the mass organizations) that future continental-wide strategic programs can be brought from the relative isolation of the federation, to the already organized masses.

We recommend that ARA chapters utilize a similar model as that discussed above relating to federation dual members. Furthermore, the ARA-social justice movement dual members should not be composed of persons already serving in a similar capacity in relation to the regional anarchist federation and ARA. To do so would translate into federated members taking on a disproportional amount of work, as well as compromising the political autonomy of the ARA chapter in question. We do not and cannot advocate the development of inter-organizational relations whereby the regional anarchist federations come to *artificially* dominate other larger groupings. When federation/alliance policy/strategy comes to be accepted by larger groupings and/or the mass organizations, it should do so through the conscious adaptation of such principles by the free constituency of the organization.

“The bourgeoisie came to power because it is the class of the developing economy. The proletariat cannot itself come to power except by becoming the class of consciousness.”

Guy Debord, Society of The Spectacle

It will be through the building of such positive working relationships that the more liberal inclinations of the moderate left can begin to be subverted, with the effect of establishing a more spirited movement with clear rank and file respect and understanding between those who advocate more direct action and those who historically, although sympathetic, display more timid characteristics and reformist platforms. Without the building of such networks the process of bringing more activists to a more radical/revolutionary line can be expected to be obscured by the perceived lack of more militant options.

We also must recognize the changing of the political climate; first following Genoa⁸, and second since the September 11th attacks. Genoa revealed a growing conservatism among the broader leftist organizations in Europe. For it was many of these organizations which not only publically denounced the actions of the Black Bloc, but some of them went so far as to physically restrain them or prevent their free movement during street battles with police. It is rational to expect that this trend, insofar as Europe seems to be on a similar political and social trajectory as the U.S. (only in a more advanced stage), will eventually make itself domestically manifest in the near future. And again, September 11th brought a massive rise in the overt abilities of the police state, again effectively spooking many less radical elements of the North American left. Therefore, groups like ARA should be encouraged to build strong relationships with the rank and file of these groups in order to help foster a feeling of courage and hope as well as to attempt to prevent (or at least minimize) any trend aimed at the further de-radicalization of these larger social justice groups. We must remember many of the consistent 10,000 or so direct action protesters at the more recent demonstrations have emerged out of these groups. To lose them would clearly weaken the effectiveness of large actions at this time. Finally, it is through positive contact with

⁸ In July of 2001 massive demonstrations occurred in this city in opposition to a G8 meeting. There a large Black Bloc engaged in violent clashes with state forces; one Black Bloc participant, Carlos Giuliani, was killed by police gun fire.

groups like ARA that we can better guarantee the general support for ‘diversity of tactics’ as has grown out of A20 (The Battle of Quebec City).

ARA, while still retaining its first priority of attacking fascists on the street level, has the potential to act as the bridge between the broader social justice movement and the highly politicized anarchist federations. Through strong working relations and a concerted effort on the part of the regional anarchist federations and ARA chapters, we will have the capacity to create stronger more effective continuum ranging from the anarchist federations all the way through the much larger and presently liberal-dominated social justice movement. And it is through the establishment of such a continuum that a strong sense of solidarity and more radical consciousness can begin to more fluently move throughout the ranks of the masses.

Why The IWW?

The Industrial Workers of the World is a labor union/organization which functions according to directly democratic principles and has the stated goal of the workers seizing the means of production. The IWW contains approximately 55 North American chapters⁹ with a total membership of around 1500 persons, making it one of the largest anarchist influenced organizations in North America. In addition, the IWW officially represents several workplaces and produces a monthly newspaper (The Industrial Worker) which boasts a fairly broad distribution base. This labor union/organization can trace its roots back to the turn of the century, with its political hey-day centering around the time leading up until World War I when its membership was estimated to have been over 100,000.

The IWW’s long history is significant in that it was this union which played a pivotal in gaining many of the basic rights which the North American worker nominally has today (i.e. the eight hour work day). Many other skilled trade unions, such as the electrician’s union in NY (IBEW), presently require that apprentices take a college level course which teaches about the history of labor movement. And within these courses, a significant amount of time is given to the historical efforts of the IWW. In other words, even though this union is quite radical, it has maintained a certain degree of psychological acceptability even among the more conservative elements of the unions.

Today the IWW is still active within the labor movement. More recently there have been several IWW organizing campaigns aimed at unionizing select workplaces as well as concerted efforts to gain workers’ benefits at non-unionized shops. The IWW has also marched with larger unions at all major anti-globalization demonstrations from Seattle (N30) to Quebec City (A20). It was the IWW, along with elements of the Sheet Metal Workers & United Steel Workers, which acted as the radical contingent within the usually subdued labor marches. In Seattle it was these elements which led the breakaway march to the downtown area (the site of the major protester/police clashes). On local levels, IWW chapters have, at times, made headway in regards to connecting with other more mainstream union locals. At times these connections have been utilized as a de facto common front aimed against anti-worker corporate interests.

Structurally the IWW functions on a democratic delegate system. Major decisions are made collectively at annual conventions. Membership can be achieved by being in a workplace represented by the union, being in a local chapter formally recognized by the organization, or simply

⁹ Also known as General Membership Branches.

by being a dues paying worker. All members are required to pay a monthly dues ranging from \$6 (\$72 a year), depending on income.¹⁰ Members are allowed to retain an additional membership in a different union (i.e. AFL-CIO). There is only one paid member of the union –that being the elected Chairperson.

We contend that this organization is *potentially* capable of being a strong force within the labor movement and within the movement towards social revolution generally. It is non-sectarian, although it's implied politics clearly favor that of anarcho-syndicalism. Its focus upon the obvious struggles of the worker, in the workplace, make it potentially appealing to a wide range of working class persons. Its acceptance of members who hold an additional membership within another union makes it an organization with potential to enter the political arena of the large unions such as the UAW and Teamsters. In many regards the IWW has the ability to act as a powerful gateway organization between the anarchist federations and the 13,000,000 union members throughout the U.S. Also, its primary function of organizing non-unionized workplaces holds the potential to bring more working class persons into the organized ranks of the movement.

We recognize that some anarchists from within the federations may assert that the IWW, as syndicalists of a certain stripe, hold certain ideological differences with certain tendencies within anarcho-communist groups. Here we would counter with the claim that the social revolution, as well as the free society which emerges through this struggle, will take on many forms within the general parameters of direct democracy and socialism. Certain regions, or even certain industries, will come to organize themselves along lines which are consistent with the basic notions of anarchism and which best meet the challenges of their particular circumstances. Therefore, we do not see the slight ideological differences between the various anti-authoritarian-socialist organizations as problematic inasmuch as we view them as healthy differences within a united yet diverse movement.

As a potential gateway organization, the federated anarchist collectives should approach the IWW in the same ways (as recommended above) that we approach ARA. We should help build chapters where there are none, and we should have a select number of dual members who join locals. In turn, the IWW, while maintaining their first priority of organizing the unorganized, should begin to *place* select IWW members within the larger unions. Ideally each IWW chapter would have *at least* one member also being a rank and file member of a larger union, and another member joining a larger union in the role of a staff organizer. In the same way that we advocate ARA developing stronger inroads to the social justice movement, we see the IWW as a means to develop a continuum between the anarchist federations and the broadest elements of the organized labor movement.

Developing such connections with the mass union rank and file is unquestionably a required task that needs to be carried out. We all recognize the official leadership of the large unions as bureaucrats who, more than often, place their interests as powerful figures within the status quo above the best interests of the working class as a whole. Before and since Seattle, these power brokers have been turning 10,000s out into the streets in order to demand 'fair trade' and 'a seat at the table' (meaning representatives on such capitalist organizations as the World Trade Organization). When and if this moderate request is granted by the plutocracy, it must be expected that the 'leaders' of these unions will make an effort to gain the complacency their members.

¹⁰ The \$6 rate is for those making less than \$1000 a month. There is a sub-minimal dues rate of \$3 a month, but this is only approved for select cases.

No longer will they be officially mobilized for mass actions against the economic structures of capitalism. No longer will they be officially agitated on the issues of neo-liberalism. Their leaders will seek normalization of the relations between capital and labor. They will attempt to deliver stability as the price for more power within the framework of ruling class homogeneity. We must plan now for this eventuality and we must find ways to limit the ability of the bureaucrats to turn back the tide of social unrest. When these leaders call on workers not to attend demonstrations, we must have other voices ostensibly from within their ranks who can out shout the conservative hierarchy. We see this as a task well cut out for the IWW.

However, the fact that the IWW is maybe 99,000 members smaller than they were before World War I, and the fact that they only officially represent a tiny number of small workplaces, makes this organization a questionable ally with a seemingly dead end trajectory. This being said, we would argue that with some slight internal modification this organization could quickly experience a full renaissance. First of all, the organization needs to win a big victory. It cannot wait for its bread and butter to walk upon the plate. It needs to identify a *larger* nonunion workplace of maybe 1200 employees with optimal conditions for organizing. Once this target is found, at least 75% of its resources, over the course of a year, should be geared to win this victory. Such a large win, in addition nearly doubling membership, would massively increase the economic abilities of the organization, effectively generating thousands of dollars a week for the union; which in turn could be used on massive educational campaigns and additional union drives.

However, for such a victory to be turned into a sustainable success we recommend that the IWW repeal its current policy of not automatically deducting union dues out of each paycheck. The system they currently operate under, that of voluntarily handing over dues to the local shop steward, suits its present conditions of only representing small workplaces. But once those numbers grow into the thousands, it would seem advisable to do so automatically in order to maintain efficiency and to guarantee a more or less set income every week. The resulting economic stability would seem to better serve a sustained mass organizing drive – *the kind of which our times absolutely demand*.

Another retarding factor regarding the IWW growth is its policy of requiring a set monthly dues from all card carrying members – regardless of whether or not they are presented by the union or active members within a local chapter. These dues are seen by many poor and working class persons, who are not officially represented by the union, as a means by which to throw away some much needed cash that could better be spent on food and rent. The minimum dues of \$72 annually is a lot of money for a person making \$9000 a year. If the IWW did away with the economic requirement it would not be surprising to see their membership grow by 2000 from this change alone in a single year; all told it is conceivable that it could reach a total of 10,000 within five years. But here of course the question becomes ‘if these potential members are not in a represented workplace and if they are not politically active within a local chapter, then why bother considering them members of an organization they do not take an active role within?’ Here we have to understand that the social revolution is not simply a political question demanding political activity. It is first and foremost a social question, and with that the question of social identity becomes a major factor. For ultimately the social revolution, as mapped out by Mikhail Bakunin, requires the development of a class consciousness among the great majority of laborers. Without the development of such no political revolution will arise out of the masses that carries with it the broader social aspirations of a classless, stateless, free society. And with the above in mind, we view it as a positive thing if a worker comes to identify him/herself as one

who supports the world view of leftwing syndicalism –and namely that of the IWW. The moment of such a self-realization is a moment of which class consciousness, ever so slightly, advances. And with that, this new identity should be supported through the incorporation of that worker into the larger community of the radical left. To give that person an IWW union card would, at the very minimum, help further the physiological grounding of that person as one that sees themselves on the radical left. And here, even if that worker does not take an active role within the broader IWW, it can be expected that s/he will at least talk about her/his views with other workers and friends, and in kind educate them about the organization in which s/he is a member. This activity can be expected to result in more workers becoming interested in the IWW and some may even join, and others may even start an active local chapter. Thus even the way in which a worker comes to identify her/himself bares with it the potential to further the growth of class consciousness –as well as, in the long run, increasing the operational effectiveness of the radical left as a whole.

If the IWW does not make these changes or develop a different means by which it can demonstrate a sustained growth and influence within the broader labor movement, we must be prepared to modify the above recommendations. For if the union fails to emerge as a significant force within labor, then it may become necessary for the federations to limit their interaction with the IWW in favor of helping develop independent anarchist labor unions. In a word, either the wheel we have will work, or, regrettably, we must reinvent the fucking thing.

Conclusion

The above has been presented in order to better frame the question as to how the emerging anarchist community can disseminate a revolutionary disposition among the broadest elements of the working class and social justice movement as a whole. We recognize that some persons/collectives will charge us with putting the cart before the horse (so to speak). This, in that we advocate building semi-formal relations throughout the broadest aspects of the left in order to effectively carry out a North American anarchist strategy which does not sufficiently exist. However, we see such structure as being necessary to construct prior to or simultaneously with the construction of such a plan of action. For any such plan would wither away in its own isolation within the anarchist ghetto if it is not allowed the social motion that this proposal, or a similar such model, would better allow for.

Of course we recognize that the above model must be allowed the space for general modifications within certain regions. In select areas it may make more sense to engage in gateway organizations other than ARA and the IWW. However, for the most part we believe that the above groups fit these roles well.

Finally, we would like to end this proposal by noting that while the language found throughout this document is political, and although we obviously view the formation of political organizations and the development of political strategies to be both necessary and positive, we do not and cannot understand the political struggle to be the be-all-and-end-all of the anarchist movement. On the contrary, we see this struggle as being fundamentally of a social kind, and as such we understand the struggle towards revolution to be largely of a cultural sort. We see capitalism and all authoritarian systems as manifestations of a culture of death and oppression; *an anti-culture*. We see the developing anarchist movement, by enlarge, being the realization of the social revo-

lution through the development of a working class counter-culture. And while the politics are an absolutely necessary facet of this struggle, we see them as representing no more than the skeleton of a complex and horizontal social fabric which can and will surmount the palisades of anti-culture.

“There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one that is hacking at the root.”

-Henry David Thoreau

In Solidarity,

The Black Heart Anarchist Collective,

The Midwest, North America

Anarchist library
Anti-Copyright



The Black Heart Anarchist Collective, David Van Deseun, & Lady

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Towards The Creation Of Regional North American Anarchist Federations & The Adoption Of
An Organizational Model From Which a Broad Based Strategy Can Be Carried Out

December 25, 2001

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