

Proposition on re-establishing an Australian anarchist federation

Antonio Burgos (Grupo Cultural de Estudios Sociales de Melbourne) on the provisional Anarchist Federation Australia (AFA) at the time

Antonio Burgos

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The concept of formalising and once again re-establishing an Australian anarchist Federation is commendable and deserves our admiration.

Although we would have to recognise, understand, and clearly spell out the reasons and needs for establishing once again such a national organisation on the Australian mainland.

Reading and discussing within our small group (Grupo Cultural de Estudios Sociales de Melbourne) the suggested statutes for the proposed Anarchist Federation Australia (AFA), I personally fail in being able to understand what would be the accountability and subsequently the necessity for such an organisation which as it is detailed in the proposed statutes simply has the specified tasks of collecting fees, maintaining a role of representation at an international level, and complete the task of writing a few letters. Analysing the written words one needs to ask the question, what is the logic in establishing an organisation and appointing an executive with such trivial responsibilities?

Yes, it is a critique, but a positive one, with suggestions for appropriate discussion and consideration amongst the various federalist affinity groups, and I hope that the *compañeros/compañeras* also see it as a positive critique once they have had the opportunity to read the paragraphs that follow hereunder.

The frequent statements made by numerous active anarchist militants within our shores are very well known, militants who in no way deny their anarchist convictions, militants that tirelessly work on social struggles around the continent and at every occasion put forward a libertarian point of view, yet unfortunately their opinion is, that it would be inappropriate in the present circumstances to waste our time in reorganising an Australian anarchist federation, and for many of them this is an opinion that they have held since the 1970's.

I, on the other hand, believe the complete opposite.

I shall voluntarily disregard the sentimental or romantic motives that could influence my point of view, having (many years ago) participated as a delegate of a libertarian youth group in all those unforgettable gatherings held around Andalucía from 1934 until the beginning of the Spanish social revolution (with the Civil Guard following our every step), assisting in the setting up

of libertarian ateneos (storefront school, or culture centre) and establishing local federations that would embrace the local anarchists into anarchist affinity groups within the suburbs, townships or villages. Yet, this period of my life has clearly proven to me, together with a basic analysis on the current situation of the Australian society, as well as that of our movement in Australia, the necessity for anarchists to be organised. And I further ask to be forgiven because I make these statements with the weight of years spent in Franco's prisons together with the atrocities and anguish suffered in the North African exile.

And it is this accumulation of activity and turbulent life that drives me to have the opinion that we anarchists should hasten to establish and strengthen our own organisation, combining these specific activities with the gigantic efforts that must be made in developing and consolidating a revolutionary syndicalist organisation with the aims of establishing a libertarian communist society.

It is also imperative to clearly identify the impossibility that by the simple act of reestablishing an anarchist federation, the Australian society will be enlighten from one day to the next with the libertarian ideal, unfortunately it is the complete opposite *compañeros/compañeras*. In order to widen an understanding of the anarchist ideal within the Australian society we will require continuous steady efforts and personal sacrifices which could be achieved more easily if all the affinity groups work in unison.

And of course we must also accept that an Australian anarchist federation cannot be the representative of all the Australian anarchist disciplines. It could never represent Australian anarchism with all its wealth of ideas, with all its variety of expressions and anarchistic analysis, which is always subject to constant involvement and interpretation of its basic principles, of its fundamental idealism.

Globally, anarchism cannot be represented by any exclusive form of organisation, even if this organisation adopts the most idealistic structure possible. Nonetheless, this does not imply that there cannot exist organised anarchist streams.

Formalising our entity will be a major factor essential for the further development of anarchism in the Australian continent. If the establishment of such an organisation was necessary in past years, it is indispensable in the present and it will be even more so in the future.

The greater the number of anarchist groups that exist, which have been consciously and mutually created, coordinated and federated at a local level, at a district level, regional and national level; that conscientiously, as well as by the voluntary choice of its members, accept the principles to respect and implement the agreements, the decreed decisions of the collectives which have been achieved by their own input and mutual consensus, determined by they themselves (this of course being completely separate to whatever other projects each group wishes to initiate), who are willing to work together and pool their efforts, will provide greater opportunities and better scenarios for anarchism to further develop in Australia.

The most harmful arguments during these crucial moments would be to argue in favour of an anti-organisational position, splitting us into different ideological factions, quarreling over simplistic differences or interpretations and regrettably forcing us once again to vegetate within our own egocentric circles. This unfortunately will only further enhance more confusion within the community at large and the majority of the workers, whom unfortunately are quite apathetic towards any innovative social movements, as well as all the social injustices and atrocities implemented by the system.

For anarchism to be dynamic and an effective contributing fundamental ideal, influential in the progression of humanitarian and social development within Australian society, breaking down all the barriers and not stagnate as a projected image of utopian chasers divorced from the realities of the daily struggles, we, have to recognise that we have to establish a coherent working entity demonstrating that contrary to the mythical opinion we are neither “*dreamers*” nor demonic individuals with “*red tails*”.

What should further be well understood is that anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism, without confusing one with the other should at all times complement each other. Any separation between the two will inevitably be fatal. There should be no ineptness between an Australian anarchist Federation and the appropriate revolutionary syndicalist organisation, each unfolding in their own sphere of action and activities, supporting each other, through all the contingencies and circumstances, giving joint impetus to an Australian libertarian movement.

For these reasons, the various affinity groups that agree with the proposition to federate nationally must ensure that the suggested statutes of an Australian anarchist Federation incorporate a plan of action, a strategy of activity at the national level, and of course these activities will be completely separate and in addition to whatever activities each group may initiate on their own.

And I grieve in reminding one and all, that initiating a program to awaken the social consciousness of a community with the project to develop a grass root core of active militants cannot be achieved with a once a year printed publication or a digital web site whereby only the converted will search for it.

We need to maintain an active presence conveying each and every time a libertarian point of view (ensuring that we do not become a new catechism), with the promotion of discussion and free debate with regards to all the repressive social issues that the Australian population is going to and will be confronting more and more in the not too distant future. We have the opportunity in the grasp of our hands; thousands of laid-off workers from Telstra, Holden, Ford Et cetera., a tragedy that has been taking place for more than one year; the shame of Australia Post, contributing a sum of more than 2 million dollars towards a Religious Islamic Museum and yet they retrenched more than 900 workers.

Consequently I urge that the proposed statutes include, defined fundamental objectives of projects and activities designed to awaken the consciousness of the Australian society and propel the “*ideal*”.

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