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The Objectives of the CrimethInc. Convergence

We Are Everywhere

CrimethInc.

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We Are Everywhere
June 3, 2010

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ery day? What if we had asked ourselves that five weeks ago when oil first started pumping into the Gulf of Mexico? What if we had asked ourselves that in the days following the recent credit crisis that sent stock markets plummeting and banks into ruin? What if anarchists had asked themselves that on September 12, 2001? Surely, the more appropriate question is “what parts of August will bear our name?” How much will we know about anarchist activity in North America on September 1, 2010? What will we feel capable of doing after we know this about ourselves? These are questions that *will* be answered.

We are proposing this broad strategy because we are tired of focusing on the differences. Each of us live our lives differently, it’s true. Every anarchist has deeply personal perspectives on power, society, and the world around us, so there are bound to be disagreements. But let’s see what it means to activate our own rebellions in concert. What it will mean to be *visible together*.

Let’s sound the fire drill! Do what moves you! If you already have plans for August, unfold them harder! If you’ve got a black flag, that’s all you’ll need! Adorn it with whatever color you please! Let’s get all over the place! Fight where you stand! Climb the nearest whatever and announce it! Let it echo from collective house to social center! From folk band to hip-hop crew! From garden plot to giveaway! From classroom to janitor closet!

This August 2010, do something. Get Everywhere. Do something thirty-one times in a row. Do something on your lunch break. Challenge yourself to play well with others. Observe all the principles that make for effective protests and potlucks. Sell shit to pay for gas or never leave the park bench. Wave the black flag or burn it, just let people know: **WE ARE EVERYWHERE.**

The birds are singing,

– **The CrimethInc. Experimental Committee.**

The plan was all over the place from the beginning!

It is early in the summer of 2010 and CrimethInc. agents have not yet revealed the location of the the summer gathering that has occurred annually for almost a decade; on the heels of a controversial disruption, and after reaching a plateau of opportunities and variations on the model itself, the CrimethInc. Experimental Committee is researching objectives for the model that would eventually become the events of August 2010. It is late evening and dusk has just turned to night. The air is humid and still. Clouds roll on the horizon.

In a moment of stasis while researching and revising our plan for August 2010—surrounded by notes, maps, newspaper clippings, and antiquities from our archives—we acting members of the Experimental Committee looked up at each other in unison. It hadn’t fully materialized in our work that *we hadn’t been a part of this from the beginning*. It was true: the gatherings that we were studying *predated* our lives as anarchists. We were a new generation of anarchists and many of us could trace the lineage of our meaningful life experiences back to some profound moment at a CrimethInc. Convergence and one similar moment of realization: that *we could spend the rest of our lives fighting for our values*.

Fully metabolizing this information was our big breakthrough; we knew that if we confined our deliberations to the narrow spectrum of possibilities capable of being realized by *organizers* we’d be doomed to endlessly repairing models that may not be capable of achieving certain objectives in the first place. As inspired newcomers, the convergence *had never been done before* and even later when we first helped to make them work, those were new experiences too.

Thus, any outreach project attempted on the scale of a CrimethInc. Convergence *must* be composed of new and adventurous experiences—for the fascinated newcomers, the autonomous groups who come together to organize the activities, and *the anarchist community as a whole*.

It was from this hearth that the CrimethInc. Experimental Committee—entrusted with all of the reckless abandon and audacity that made us—struck the “We Are Everywhere” campaign. However, if we are to try something new, we ought to first understand the objectives and intentions of the CrimethInc. Convergence so as to not lose more than we gain by replacing it.

WHAT WAS THE POINT?

- To maintain an accessible point-of-entry into the anarchist community.
- To demonstrate a sustainable way to organize on a national scale, *without* a summit.
- To invigorate and inspire anarchist communities.
- To create a safe and experimental space to hone and practice our values.
- To practice managing and organizing zones of autonomy.
- To reunite old comrades in new ways.
- To be adventurous and uncontrollable.

To maintain an accessible point-of-entry into the anarchist community.

Geography – Probably the single most obvious shortcoming of a national gathering is that it can happen only in one place,

To practice managing and organizing zones of autonomy!

Autonomy – Before we are ever capable of actualizing collective desires, we must first feel free to act on our own. By planning our own activities and taking responsibility for our contributions, we can exercise our abilities and demonstrate our intentions. In doing so, we will bounce through everywhere, building a charge and attracting companions.

Community – It is about time we table our obscure disputes and nay-saying! This model was prepared from scratch to preempt everyone who would refuse to participate on the grounds that their theoretical rivals were *also* participating. Working together without agreeing on every issue is what makes anarchism happen—the more we show that we are willing to stand beside our adversaries in theory, the more we will be able to coordinate against our adversaries in *real life*.

To reunite old comrades in new ways!

Intersections – For all those socialites who long to reunite with old friends, you must from now on *work* for it. If you would travel across the country to catch up with your friends during a national gathering, you should be willing to make stops along the way, and foresee the points of intersection ahead of time.

Assembly – There is no reason that regional gatherings cannot be organized in the span of two months. Go ahead and plan them, perhaps cleverly located on the shores of Louisiana or the mountains of Appalachia or the classrooms of California or in the foreclosed homes that belong to your friends.

To be adventurous and uncontrollable!

In setting the timeframe for the whole month of August, we took a daring risk: *what if nothing happens?* But that is a point-less question to ask *now*. What if we asked ourselves that *ev-*

be separate or lost from our struggle for other worlds. We cannot continue to overwhelm them with stress, nor can we ever be afraid to work with them carefully to achieve broader goals: local infrastructures can *safely conduct electricity*.

Pressure – That we are organizing in decentralized ways means that we can focus on working through the problematic power dynamics in our relationships without jeopardizing the success of the larger campaign. We know that this work will never be completed—*nor will it ever be possible to postpone*—so we should not organize campaigns that don't enable that work to be done.

To create a safe and experimental space to hone the practice of our values!

Affinity – Working with people you trust means that you can resolve important issues and work on your projects at the same time, that you can safely confide in your companions, that you can trust them to have your interests in mind. Just as we can form tours or organizing groups that we feel safe in, we can organize events in the communities to which we belong: wherever the moments of *everywhere* occur, they will be part of everywhere and therefore stand not above or below, but beside.

Risk – By traveling and being everywhere, we demand that agents of repression must also be everywhere, and thus maximize the expense of investigating our friendships, interfering with our personal lives, and preying on our young. We cannot be cornered, and we will not be undermined—whether or not we can be outnumbered has nothing to do with the number of anarchists who travel to summits, but how many more homes of resistance there are than police stations. By waving our flags now, we've already won.

which limits its accessibility geographically immediately. A further complication is that most people for whom it is a financial option to travel cross-country cannot spend such time away from work¹—including involved and sympathetic anarchists—and consequently cannot travel the distance. This means that the population of anarcho-curious participants are predominantly unemployed or self-employed. Although this is often an observation leveled against CrimethInc. Convergences by skeptics, the fact that they are geographically inaccessible to many people is merely *a circumstance of the medium*; as any national gathering's accessibility—from bookfairs to social forums—is limited to locals, committed organizers, and the extra-regional participants privileged enough to attend.

Accommodations – It should be considered a small victory alone that none of the participants over the years have ever had to pay for the reclaimed vegan meals or the outdoor camping at a CrimethInc. Convergence. However, an innumerable amount of would-be participants have forgone attendance because living arrangements *didn't accommodate for them*.

Prioritization – In traveling across the country with a prepared workshop, we *pass* through dozens of small towns and anarchist communities. In doing so, we miss these opportunities to share information and create new points-of-entry; this prioritization of “doing everything in one place” works against the logic of the swarm models that we've carefully honed in street confrontations for years.

¹ Although clearly we mean to say that many people cannot spend two weeks away from their jobs, it also needs to be made clear that many anarchists are so involved in local organizing that they cannot leave those projects for long either.

To demonstrate a visible and sustainable way to organize on a national scale *without* a summit.

Visibility – Though recent protests coordinated by anarchists have proven new models of success, we are visible in those historical moments because we are intervening in an arena where mainstream media is already waiting at the sidelines. Therefore, anarchists in the streets of Athens, OH, are far less visible—even to the Athenians—than the comparable number of anarchists on the streets of Denver during the DNC. No matter what we do with convergences, the national attention won't focus on them until there is more widespread anarchist activity.

It is therefore imperative that we not presume massive gatherings are separate but equal to mass mobilizations with respect to visibility—they are indeed *less* visible both to mainstream media and within our circles.

Sustainability – Although it is fairly clear what it takes to organize a convergence if you've ever been to one—and in that sense they are *self-reproducing*—the fact remains that few organizers step forward into subsequent organizing roles in the years following their first contributions. This tendency likely stretches deep into the heart of this analysis: that the goals and objectives held by new organizers are rarely met, and those who help year after year and insist upon convergences simply lack imagination.

Additionally, *convergences are disproportionately exhausting to organize*. As is expected for centralized work of this magnitude, almost all of the heavy lifting falls on a small group of locals. Occasionally, some workloads are taken on by nearby anarchist communities, but it is a limitation of the model that a few critical locals will be overworked, and the larger community too removed from the organizing to be helpful, even when they'd be excited to help.

arenas. Similar strategies have been tried before, but by existing as a part of a larger model, these will encourage accessibility, rather than limit it.

Localized Events – Because locals are most likely to know what will be appropriate and effective, their organization of creative actions can invite visibility in ways that national events are doomed to make mundane. Opening the scope of possibilities to include and benefit from small-scale autonomous activity will demonstrate and focus our resources, achieving our objectives in ways that reach beyond our communities and into our collective momentum.

To demonstrate a visible and sustainable way to organize on a national scale *without* a summit!

Visibility – In identifying common objectives and demands, we can create a *phenomenon* that maintains cohesive visibility in the mainstream, independent, and social medias. We can open ourselves to our neighbors, locate ourselves for our allies, and fortify our position against our enemies. We can insist that a group of touring legal workers protecting against repression can hail from the same imperative that inspires a collective of gardeners to distribute free produce—we can wave a black flag and announce that *none of us will ever surrender*.

Movement – Because it is possible to move together in the maelstrom of street confrontations, it is also possible to move together on a field the size of a continent. To practice doing so will illuminate the context of our daily work so that we might always move this way.

To invigorate and inspire anarchist communities!

Infrastructure – Every day anarchists work to found and maintain projects and communities; our campaigns should both benefit from and contribute to these things so that they may never

clearly ahead of time so that we can learn important lessons later, whatever the results.

WHY ARE WE EVERYWHERE?

- To maintain an accessible point-of-entry into the anarchist community!
- To demonstrate a sustainable way to organize on a national scale, *without* a summit!
- To invigorate and inspire anarchist communities!
- To create a safe and experimental space to hone and practice our values!
- To practice managing and organizing zones of autonomy!
- To reunite old comrades in new ways!
- *To be adventurous and uncontrollable!*

To maintain an accessible point-of-entry into the anarchist community!

Tours – By encouraging groups to tour the country with workshops, discussions, and presentations, we can spread information and initiative throughout our regional networks. We can bring communities together on terms determined by local anarchists. The concurrence of enthusiastic adventures with practical activities means that new spaces can open within seasoned

To invigorate and inspire anarchist communities.

Infrastructure – Even when convergence organizers are actively involved in the local projects they utilize while organizing, groups rarely benefit from the arrangement. Although it is easy to say that this is a problem with CrimethInc. Convergences exclusively, it is a likelihood that this stress and exhaustion occurs because anarchist infrastructural efforts *in general* have no contingency plan for benefiting from a surge of participation and demands. Success stories include things like cleaning up an illegal dumpsite for a host and repairing hundreds of bikes with various cooperatives, but the other side of the story is probably more common: that collectives and social spaces are stretched and warped by the convergence beyond repair. To make this less likely, we can make sure the projects we work on locally know how to benefit from the influx of volunteers and participants—that we don't already have measures to achieve this perhaps indicates that we *don't expect our ideas to be popular*. In the meantime, we should put less stress on local projects so that we can forge mutually-beneficial relationships.

Mutual Aid – Of all the Really Really Free Market projects founded during CrimethInc. Convergences, none of them have ever stuck. A short piece published by some local organizers who stayed with it suggests that these 'Free Markets *can* make a comeback long after the convergence, but undoubtedly it would be best to spend months of work founding a mutual aid project *before* the influx of extra participants and energy, rather than after.

Pressure – Because essential basic accommodations are so difficult to organize, the pressure to “make it work somehow” builds in the months leading up to each convergence. Often times, great things come from mandates like these, but when it regards questions like “how can we make sure an imminent mass of 300 people can live together in the same space?”, it puts

such torque on interpersonal relationships that rarely any good comes of it. Moreover, this pressure has at times severed local affinities and ruined relationships. Where these pass-fail pressure paradigms exist, the inspiration and encouragement that might follow a successful experiment is lost, and thus the larger objective cannot be achieved for organizers on the ground.

To create a safe and experimental space to hone the practice of our values.

Anti-oppression – To create a space where incoming participants can learn and practice sensitive communication and develop admiration for those who actively work against oppression within themselves should be a primary objective for any anarchist outreach project. Great care must be taken to ensure this learning and discovery can occur without jeopardizing our cumulative efforts as long-term community members. At times, open-invitation gatherings, regardless of the sensitivity and care invested beforehand, *cannot* be these spaces. As many of the queer, trans, female-bodied, and people of color who have been a part of organizing convergences in the past know, their role as organizers cannot preempt the institutionalizations that exist both in the social arenas from which many first-time convergence-goers hail, and from within our own communities. The question then, is, how can these spaces be organized and populated by non-white, transgendered, and/or female-bodied people exist without being vulnerable to the same sorts of oppressive and marginalizing behavior found elsewhere? Should gatherings be organized separately, as some of the disrupters of 2009 have argued? Should we adapt our policies and workshops retroactively, attempting to address specific issues as they unfold, as has been happening? All the caucuses and corresponding auxiliary discussions we can organize will not change the fact that eventually we must know how to work, love, and live

AUGUST 2010: WE ARE EVERYWHERE

... and what it means to believe it.

It is early in the summer of 2010 and CrimethInc. agents have just announced plans for a month of decentralized activities to help create visibility for anarchist projects and alternatives. After eight annual national gatherings, the CrimethInc. Experimental Committee has decentralized the renowned CrimethInc. Convergence. The committee is tearing up their membership documents, and questioning the decision they've just made. It is the first hours of morning, and the moon has just set behind the trees. The soil is fresh with rain. Rose blossoms open and wait for the bees.

This whole campaign began with these questions: can anarchists work together to achieve common objectives if only given a limited timeframe? Could we respond to a financial crisis or ecological disaster before we missed the opportunity? Could we mobilize solidarity for our allies if they asked for it? What if we could? What if we knew we could? If those remain hypothetical questions, will we be doomed to miss opportunities until “the time is right”, or is it that we simply lack a model?

That is why we have torn out our hair, debated through the night, collapsed in exhaustion: looking for a model to share with each other, looking for an answer to these questions. **Our first experiment is this: a month of activities, with only two months to prepare.** We've organized a fire drill, a giant game of capture the flag using an atlas: everyone can participate, and we're all on the same side. Every person's contribution benefits every other participant equally.

At the end of the summer, we will all feel the results of this challenge. We can determine where we stand with respect to these questions. That is to say, we can determine how much we've won. To make these determinations, we will outline the following objectives

To be adventurous and uncontrollable.

We broke the convergence down into component parts and found that several mechanisms had been missing all along, and that far more had been bent out of true as a result of the torque and stress of the workload we hoped it could handle. As elements of the project, the objectives were both sound and optimistic, but when considered as parts of a whole they were lost in the mess of logistics. Untangling the objectives has meant looking at our mistakes closely and taught us in a new way to *learn from our experiments*.

There are some who would try to relive their exhilarating first convergence moments, or experience them vicariously through new generations of participants, but ultimately feeling obligated to organize a convergence means that we have lost the initial spirit of them. But convergences dare us to *up the ante*. Sometimes that means moving beyond them, especially when they do not achieve our worthwhile objectives.

In many ways the convergences have been successes beyond our wildest dreams. Friendships have been written in stone because of them. Conversations and debates have become book chapters and song verses. Workshops have changed lives.

Having achieved all of this means we can move beyond, to struggle for these objectives in different ways. We can challenge ourselves to greatness. It is in this spirit that we embark on the next great experiment: to *decentralize* the CrimethInc. Convergence. To announce to the world, to our comrades, to our comrades-to-be that WE ARE EVERYWHERE.

together. And if we constantly prune a project, we will always be reacting to problems that could have been avoided. The most reasonable answer is that neither of these strategies will work, and that if we maintain focus on the original objective, we will have to find an overall strategy that allows different methods to be simultaneously tried and practiced according to the needs of the organizers and participants.

Surveillance & Repression – Though very few arrests have occurred during CrimethInc. Convergences, and those that did involved appropriate support structures, the gatherings themselves have been a hunting ground for FBI infiltrators. These despicable impostors—*sheep in wolves' clothing*—have undoubtedly been among the attendees at each event since 2002, looking for inexperienced and impressionable young people to entrap and later defame. This is not to say that convergences are more vulnerable than other places. Avoiding gatherings wholly on the grounds that they attract infiltrators is naive; wherever we do important work, they will come. It is good form to practice assembling with new people and protect ourselves with effective security culture. However, if we aren't changing our models more often than repressive forces, we risk expediting their processes.

To practice managing and organizing zones of autonomy.

Consensus Process – It is worthwhile to note that during convergences, each day begins and ends with group-encompassing conversations during which participants are free to address each other. In this manner, tasks and roles are bottomlined, issues are raised, schedules are discussed, plans are announced, iffy plans are called out, and so on. Historically, however, con-

vergences have been *bad* at assembling as spokescouncils and responding to immediate emergencies².

Conflict Resolution – Spokescouncils work when the difficult and problematic power dynamics within small groups are prevented from affecting decision-making by dividing power by the number of participants. Autonomous groups that report to and share with a collective spokescouncil are able to focus on their own work in ways that convergence organizers cannot. If the organizing body of a convergence is having a difficult time balancing power, coming to consensus, or following through on commitments, *everyone loses*.

Adjustments – Convergences as they have been historically organized don't allow us to *hone* our ability to prepare autonomous zones, precisely because they are models of imitation. The lessons learned at each consecutive convergence are rarely successfully passed from one organizing group to the next, and therefore the model cannot refine into better versions of itself; the imitated formula—centralized location, autonomous workshops, free accommodations, group activities, and reunion-socializing—only allows *so much* variation. A more active research and development of effective convergence models would be a worthwhile endeavor, but in the meantime the anarchist convergence will continue to be both flawed and valuable in *predictable* ways.

Cooperation – Most importantly: even though readers of CrimethInc. literature and other members of the anarchist community have infinitely diverse contexts, perspectives, and interests, CrimethInc. Convergences have a certain reputation, and therefore a limited attraction. It makes sense that we

² In 2004, after a group of convergence-goers were arrested for mischief, chaos ensued and people evacuated when the JTTF began harassing people on the streets. The same disarray occurred 5 years later when the convergence was disrupted in Pittsburgh. In these and many other emergency situations, convergences have had a very difficult time coming to consensus on contingency plans.

have always maintained a “become part of the organizational effort, or plan a convergence according to your own needs” stance when it comes to criticism, but that attitude only works in deflecting those eager naysayers who would sooner complain about the priorities of others than work on behalf of their own. When it comes to learning the greatest lesson of massive collective undertakings—working together for common objectives despite social grievances—anarchists of all stripes and affinities must be *encouraged by the model* to work side by side. If the convergence doesn't give us an opportunity to at least *try* to work together in this way, we should develop other models that do.

To reunite old comrades in new ways.

Distractions – The convergences are treasured mostly because they offer an opportunity for old friends to meet, socialize, renew their networks, and have adventures together. However, convergences are actually *difficult* places to catch up with old friends because the constant schedule of activities demands attention and participation. Not to mention that anyone who has been to more than one convergence often ends up filling a de facto organizing position and then has more responsibilities than time to play and reminisce. It would be better to attempt to meet this objective separately from the others, than to force the rest of the objectives to become secondary priorities.

Subculture – While we're at it, let's not forget the hundreds of people who went to one convergence and decided *never to go again*. The people on the sidelines during every convergence aren't interested in returning to reunite *precisely because* so much subcultural social networking and bonding occur during these open-invitation gatherings that newcomers outside the subculture rarely benefit from this objective.