

# **The Rise and Fall of The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective**

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“The chains of authoritarianism and capitalism can only be shattered when they are broken at many links. Vermont is our home, and it serves as the one link that we can access, but it is only one. Any victory here would only be partial. Deliverance to the Promised Land will only come when many more than us rise up against that which holds the multitude in bondage.”

-The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective, From Vermont Secession

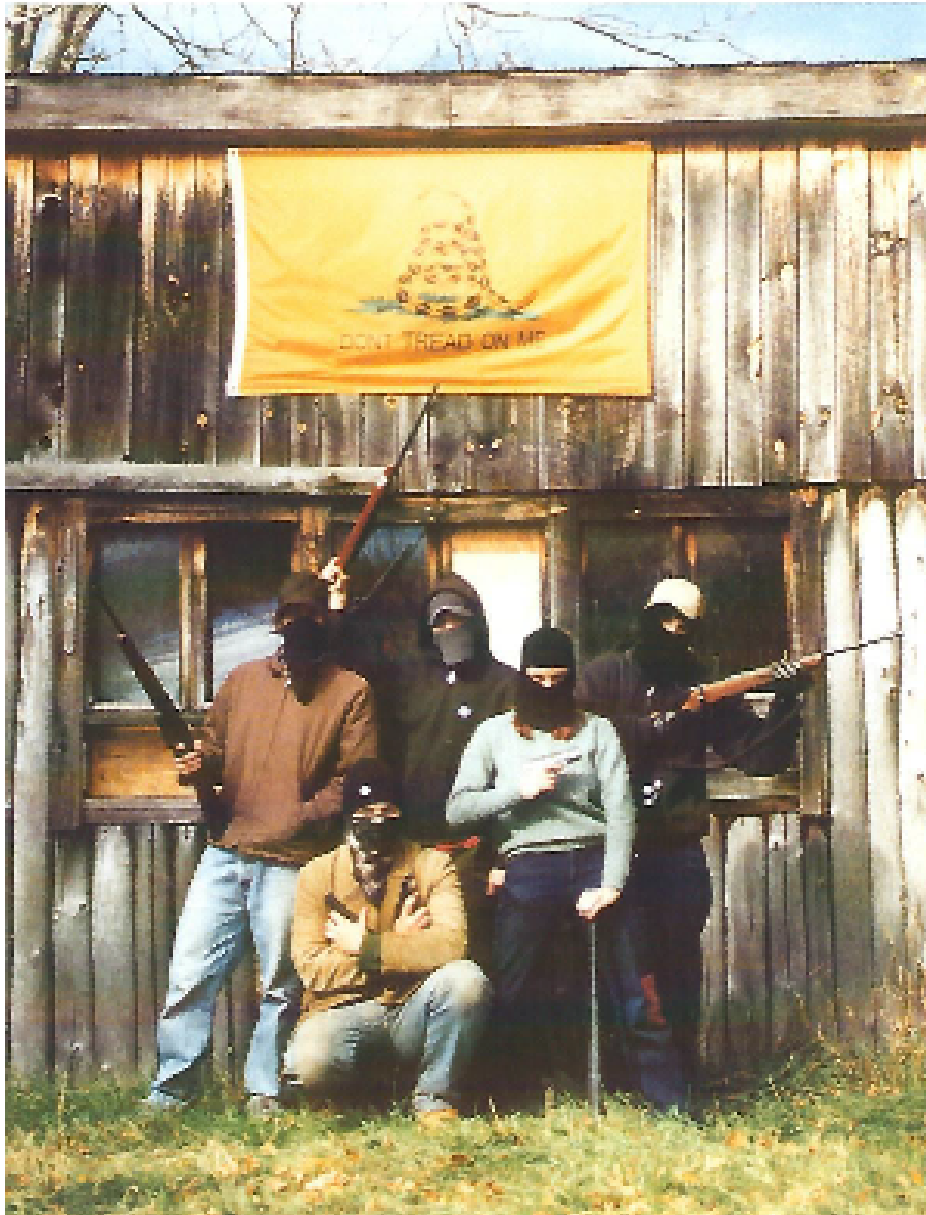
## **Introduction:**

Montpelier, Vermont -Established in 2000, in a cooperative household located at the termination of a wooded dirt road in Southern Vermont, the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective (GMAC), for a time, did its part in carrying forth Vermont’s long tradition of radical, leftist politics. Founded in Windham County by Natasha Voline, Johnny Midnight, Xavier Massot, and (myself) David Van Deusen, the collective was birthed with strong Situationist, leftist, and militant inclinations. The original GMAC nucleus lived together (with along with comrades Imelda R, Bridget M, and Ted K), and operated as a kind of outlaw community, connected to the broader area counter culture based in and around Brattleboro. Together, they functioned on a cash & barter basis, opening phone and utility accounts under assumed names. They adorned the walls with stolen Salvador Dali works. Torr Skoog and Liam Crill, of the Boston band the Kings of Nuthin [who Massot befriended shortly after he emigrated from his native France], were occasional visitors. Half of the household’s income came from the black market, the rest from a single student loan and occasional manual labor [once being paid to build a bird aviary for Kermit W –the rumored son of Egypt’s Nasser]. One household member was wanted by the law (facing some years in prison); another was an artist; two were brought up in strong union households; a few experimented in poetry; the household included two guitars and a five piece drum set in the living room. All present shared an interest in furthering a more creative, life affirming, and non-capitalist future. When not cutting their-own wood to feed the stove (which was typically the case), they “borrowed” a half cord at a time from unoccupied vacation homes scattered throughout the area. Trips to town often involved beer at the Common Ground (a co-op founded by local communes in the 1970s), or \$5.40 double whiskeys at Mike’s (a rough-around-the-edges working class tavern on Elliot Street). However, town, being 15 miles away, largely remained un-visited. Instead, target shooting off the back porch with .22’s & SKS’s, making firecrackers out of black powder, listening to The Clash & Johnny Cash, trying to get a half junked 56’ Chevy working, long conversations, chess, strong marijuana (very strong marijuana), vigorous debate, and intensively reading from the Situationist, Existentialist, Anarchist, and Marxist cannons filled the time until a more direct political involvement came to be.

When this group founded the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective, it was agreed that its first task would be to provide support and tactical innovation to the Black Bloc and growing revolutionary anarchist movement; a movement which was gaining steam in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Seattle [1999]. What marked GMAC as different from some anarchist or leftist collectives, was that it was anchored in a deeply rural community with a strong tradition of local democracy (Town Meeting), and this broader community (Vermont) itself was premised upon a revolutionary uprising prior to the Revolutionary War [the guerrilla war against for Royal New York Colony, 1770-1775]. These facts, as much as the artwork of Dada, Russian Futurists, or the writings of Debord, Bakunin or Marx, came to form the radical world view of this collective,

while also influencing the content of its own writings. In brief, the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective, at its best, helped to give voice and organized action to the anarchist and leftist prescriptions concerning the problems of modern capitalism, while also framing such radical paths of progressive change in an old world language particular to Vermont; Their revolutionary canon being one part Debourd, one part Bakunin, and two parts Ethan Allen & the Green Mountain Boys. That said, the full realization of this revolutionary language did not appear upon conception. Rather, GMAC evolved as the scope of its community organizing experiences expanded.

### **The Political Premise:**



From the start, the collective, which was never a mass organization-but rather a tightly knit cadre, held an anarchist-leftist political position influenced by Situationist concepts. It argued that a developed twenty-first century capitalism, in addition to perpetuating classic class oppression, represents a further abstraction of organic existence; one which seeks to have the individual (and by extension the group) subordinate its notion of reality to the artificial singularity of 'capital' as a universal commodity (with all aspects of contemporary existence being understood as commodities). However, the contemporary nature of 'capital', for the most part, no longer being linked to a universally recognized (tangible) signifier (be it gold, silver, or even paper money), makes 'capital' into a kind of 'Holy Ghost' of the current Western World. In such, capital, and therefore contemporary capitalism, becomes akin to a post-religious and all reaching grid of perception. By achieving this, capitalism maintains its economic primacy while also reaching into a realm previously reserved for religious or mystical understanding; it becomes an epistemology, ontology, and a the means by which a kind of daily survival is perpetuated. Such is the singularity of this form of capitalism that its internal logic dictates a colonization not only foreign markets (as with conventional later-stage capitalism), but also the colonization of the individual's subjective thoughts, desires, perceived needs, etc.. And here, upon success, a kind of artificial objectivity is created where objectivity is, in reality, void. Thus the danger of a more stable oppressive social/economic/cultural super structure becomes apparent.

GMAC also held that this model of individual and mass perception perpetuates a unequitable, unfulfilling, and oppressive class system whereby the many are subordinate to the few insofar as this new campaign to commodify the subjective mind serves the same basic role as the colonization of foreign territories did during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; namely the creation of new frontier accessible to the primary and secondary exploitive relationships to capitalist markets. The few who economically benefit from this new colonization (and the resulting buying and selling of false or perceived want), for their part, also become subordinate to the abstract system which ostensibly serves their material (minority) economic interests. Furthermore, by society focusing mass amounts of time, energy, and resources into the creation of such needs (advertising, public messaging, etc.), and then manufacturing the objects of these needs, requires the equivalent amount of social energy being taken away from tasks which could serve the real interest of humanity. As such, GMAC argued that human growth and political/economic equality (not to mention sustainability) would come only through the success of a militant revolutionary movement which would seek to overthrow not only the political and economic structures which support the status quo, but also the predominate new culture (referred to by GMAC as anti-culture) which allows for the absurd to become accepted fact. Therefore the revolution required to deliver a victory against the new capitalism, would not only take militant action against the state, but also a counter-cultural effort against that which is perceived to be; this victorious revolution would concern itself not only with guns and butter, but also with music and art. GMAC further argued that both the physical and cultural resistance must be emanated from the bottom up (in line with radical democratic principles), in order to reflect the realized goals of a non-alienated, equitable, post-revolutionary society, whereby the individual (and group by extension) could realize its creative potential through a collaborative nexus of free expression, experimentation, and basic cooperation. And finally, in that it would take the many to overcome the few (or in relation to the anti-culture, to overcome the striving totality), and because it is the many who suffer most in the current exploitative paradigm (and are it's natural foe), GMAC understood the need for

this revolutionary process to be an expression of the majority economic stratum; the working class.

The collective, while starting largely as a support cell for the militant movement outside Vermont, soon became deeply engaged in local efforts to bring about radical change in the Green Mountains. These efforts tended to be grounded in the labor movement, but also, at times, ventured into the struggle of the small farmers. As GMAC become more and more vested in the local struggle against capitalism (and for a direct democracy), they also became more drawn to Vermont's unique cultural posits which tend to run counter to the larger consumer culture of the United States. And with such cultural difference, GMAC sought to build a bridge from the distant memory of rural insurrection, over the demons of modern capitalism, to the realization of a socialist community entrenched in the ideals of an expanded Town Meeting democracy; a kind of Guy Debourd and Jean Paul Sartre meet yeoman farmers with aspirations.

### **The Black Bloc and Beyond:**



From its inception, the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective recognized the historic importance and potential for change in the growing anti-globalization movement. Here GMAC posited that this movement was inclined to question not only the negative (social, economic, environmental, etc.) symptoms of the failure of the modern age, but also was inclined to look for the

root cases; the mother disease which birthed said systems. And here GMAC believed the likely conclusion of any such mass diagnosis would be the unveiling of capitalism (with all its current mutations) as the essential prime mover. Given that organized labor and the mass environmental groups were increasingly engaging in this movement (along with small radical cadres from hundreds if not thousands of cities), the collective saw the potential for a shift in popular consciousness. However, GMAC also asserted that capitalism, increasingly fortified by not only the obvious chains of oppression, but also with the unseen chains binding individuals through the colonization of the mind, possess the ability to create many false crossroads aimed at fooling or misdirecting the people. Therefore, a concerted and militant effort would have to be inserted into this movement in order to help create the conditions necessary for a kind of mass clarity; the reality of Bakunin's instinct to rebel. And finally, it was argued that in the face of an increasing singularity of oppression, physical resistance is not only a right, but a necessity. On the other hand non-violence, and non-violent resistance, although not completely rejected by GMAC, was viewed with distrust by the collective. Specifically GMAC questioned whether or not non-violence, if not balanced by a parallel physical militancy, would increase the likelihood of submerging resistance into a quagmire of strictly symbolic action which does little to threaten a status quo already relatively secure in its expanding singularity. Where militant and direct resistance can be jarring, disruptive, and challenging, pacifism, to GMAC, was understood as a sort of hollow self-therapy; a million may walk down the road carrying a sign, and thousands may block an intersection for a few hours, but at the end of the day these actions, alone, do not emit a context altering experience to those who passively view these actions (through the media), or necessarily to those that take part; such activities, alone, do not threaten the mechanisms of contemporary capitalism in a sustained way. According to GMAC, in the more developed capitalist world such activities typically carry little risk; here the lack of risk, to the uninitiated popular mind, often sugars out into a lack of fundamental interest; to those at the pinnacle of power, as little threat. In brief, an apostate that lives in the wilderness threatens no believer.

GMAC did however make a distinction between non-violence as a tactic, and non-violence as an ideology (pacifism). As a tactic, the collective saw a conditional role. As an ideology, it viewed it as borderline insane. In other words, GMAC accepted that a tactic should be utilized and judged based both on contextual analysis and successful results. As an ideology, it viewed it as a very mature and brilliant appendage to the anti-culture (contemporary capitalism); as a kind of false opposition to that which is. For GMAC, once resistance becomes self-limiting and non-lethal to its other, the other has taken a very far and dark step down the road of total victory; total victory here being defined as an alienating social system whereby the chains are no longer seen, and whereby the key is lost to the collective memory.

In the pamphlet, *On The Question of Violence and Non-Violence*, [Black Clover Press, Vermont, 2001] the Collective wrote:

“Clearly there are many circumstances in which non-violent tactics are not only advisable, but also the only effective course possible... this commitment to non-violence... is fundamentally based on pragmatism... while finding its material existence through the implementation of tactics. However, non-violence should, under no circumstances, be understood as a strategy in and of itself.”

And Further:



“Ideological non-violence is the negation of [the working class’s] shared history of struggle. It denies their dreams of freedom by its sheer absurdity and stifles certain forms of their self-expression through its totalitarian and insanely idealistic demands. In a word, strategical non-violence is the negation of class consciousness; it is irrelevant at best and slavery at worst. In itself, it represents the conscious and/or unconscious attempt of the more privileged classes to sterilize the revolutionary threat forever posed by a self-confident, self-conscious and truly revolutionary working class.”

With these premises in place, GMAC understood the rise of the Black Bloc as a chance to further cultivate one aspect of the resistance movement. It was towards the Black Bloc that GMAC therefore turned.

If ideological pacifism represented a kind of hollow self-therapy, GMAC understood the violent and assertive actions of the Black Bloc as a kind of mass shock-therapy; one capable of further shaking the foundation of popular belief and acceptance. Here it should be noted that GMAC did not advocate for an unreasoned, isolated, or suicidal Black Bloc. Rather, it campaigned for one that served its role within a larger movement of resistance which, ironically, was not ready to fully embrace militant tactics. For GMAC, the Black Bloc represented one dynamic and necessary aspect of a diverse struggle waged on many fronts and through divergent means; the totality of these differing approaches, together representing a kind of mutually dependent arising of revolutionary potential. But again in order to realize the full effectiveness of the Black Bloc, GMAC understood it necessary to analyze, critique, and modify its tactics and organizational structure in order to address ostensible failings experienced by the Bloc in historic street actions (failings that GMAC feared would intensify as state police and intelligence agencies studied Black Bloc manifestations). Hence, in its early years the collective worked to strengthen the capabilities of the Black Bloc. This emphasis led it to the writing and wide circulation (within anarchist and leftist circles) of the pamphlet *Communique on Tactics and Organization* [Kersplebedeb Press, Montreal QB, December, 2000].

This pamphlet identified indecision, deficient mass mobility, lack of coordinated planning, and a cavalier security culture as the immediate causes of its limitations in effectiveness. Looking to history (specifically anarchist history) GMAC then sought to recommend a democratic internal command structure within the formation, as well as the utilization of more complex use of tactical maneuvers.

To quote from the tactics communique:

“[O]ur experiences have... illustrated certain short comings that we thus far are yet to overcome. Specifically our lack of democratic tactical command structure has hindered our abilities to act with more punctuating speed and tactical ferociousness... [W]e [therefore] propose that the present use of elected affinity group spokes people be expanded to that of acute tactical facilitator... The role of this person should be to help facilitate the organized movement of their immediate section as recommended by [a] general tactical facilitation core.”

This first edition of the pamphlet was met with a mixed reception among anarchist groups. Some charged that GMAC’s position risked a shift towards a more centralized Leninist command

structure. While others, such as the Boston based Barricada Collective, and Ohio based Columbus Anti-Racist Action agreed with the need to move to a more rationalized re-organization of the Bloc. Those that viewed the work favorably, tended to agree with GMAC's assertion that the temporary election of militant leaders was in line with the historic practices of the CNT and FAI anarchist militias during the Spanish Civil War [1936-1939]. The Barricada Collective published this first version of the pamphlet in 2001, in their magazine, also called Barricada.

An on-going correspondence between GMAC and Columbus ARA lead to the meeting between the groups in Ohio, in the winter of 2001. There it was agreed that further changes should be made in the pamphlet in order to further strengthen the abilities of the Black Bloc. As a result, a second revised edition of the pamphlet was produced and circulated in July of 2001 [Columbus ARA Press, Columbus OH]. This version again called for the Black Bloc to elect a temporary officer core empowered to make tactical decisions, especially concerning movement and engagement with state forces during street actions. In addition, the combined groups called for the Bloc to hold a force of one third in reserve, to be called into action at the demand of the officer core during acute times of need. And finally, it was recommended that individual affinity groups be organized into larger clusters responsible for the integrity of different areas of the Bloc (front, back, right, left, center), and that each affinity group focus on a specialized need concerning the Bloc's core (offensive, defensive, capitalist property destruction, recon, first aid, morale, public outreach, etc.).

Upon its release and distribution (by AK Press), this revised pamphlet, from Black Clover Press, was again met with mixed opinion within the anarchist community; those skeptical of formal organization remaining opposed, those recognizing the value of increased organization tending to be in support. In general, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (who the Barricada Collective was affiliated with) supported the recommendations. GMAC joined this federation, as its Vermont affiliate, in 2002.

In 2001, GMAC members Xavier Massot and David Van Deusen also (largely) wrote and edited the book *The Black Bloc Papers* [Insubordinate Editions, Baltimore MD, 2002]. The book sought to provide a comprehensive collection of Black Bloc communiqués from North America, while further placing the phenomenon inside a cultural-social-economic context of creative resistance.

In the book's introduction, Xavier Massot posits:

“Getting away from the instinctive fear of not having enough is the next real bridge to cross for humanity. Our ancestors had to find ways to survive. The world today knows how to live, yet refuses to do so in an equitable manner. A work ethic is a great thing, that is undeniable, but to work for the sake of working is nothing but a slow cop-out suicide... Let's eliminate the role of society as murderer and rapist. If we are going to fuck up, let's do it ourselves without unnecessary abstractions guiding and excusing our treachery.”

In Chapter I, David Van Deusen writes:

“Within... a [revolutionary] counterculture it is only natural that certain people will carry the ball in this [militant] direction. And it is here that specific people and collectives will organically key in on revolutionary political action akin to that presently

demonstrated by the Earth Liberation Front cells on the one hand and the Anarchist Black Bloc on the other. Here it cannot bide its time and wait for the perfect moment. It must lash out at its other as a basic means of political expression. It must transcend its relative passivity through violent resistance of its own repression as well as the repression directed against the poor and working classes as a whole. And in such, it achieves an honesty that progressive impostors cannot readily provide.”

And again from Massot:

“A lot of people object to the Black Bloc on both sides of the protest fence... I understand their grievances and I disagree with all of them... I am, however, certain that it’s healthy to physically confront authorities who physically uphold a rotten system and to remind the rest of the populous that such things can be done.”

The work additionally sought to further highlight the need for internal reorganization as advocated in its previous pamphlet. Although originally slated to be published by AK Press, this first edition was eventually produced by Insubordinate Editions, Baltimore MD, in 2002, and covered Black Bloc activities in North America from 1999-2001. An expanded online version of the work was published by Breaking Glass Press, Lawrence KS, in 2010 (covering the years 1988-2005). As of 2014, Little Black Cart, Berkley CA, (an imprint of Ardent Press) published a third edition of the work.

In the same year that the Black Bloc Papers was published, GMAC member Van Deusen (the author of this article) produced an additional pamphlet, again supporting militant action over pacifism in *On The Question of Violence and Non-Violence in the Social Protest Movement* [Black Clover Press, Montpelier, VT]. As with past GMAC works, this pamphlet was distributed by AK Press.

It would be wrong to understand the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective as intellectuals postulating on the actions of others. Rather, its members were active participants in militant Black Bloc actions. Prior to the founding of the collective, future members took part in Black Bloc actions across the United States; these included the marches against the Democratic National Convention (Chicago-1996), Millions For Mumia (Phillidelphia-1999), the protests against the International Monetary Fund & World Bank (A16-Washington DC-2000), and the demonstration against the Republican Nation Convention (Phillidelphia-2000). As a collective, GMAC, among others, took part in the Quebec City uprising against the Free Trade of the Americas Agreement (FTAA) in 2001, and the Siege of Lewiston (against a failed fascist organizing drive-Maine-2003). It was through GMAC’s past experiences within the Black Bloc that it drew its conclusions concerning the need to enhance the Bloc’s tactical abilities. During later, post pamphlet actions, it further sought to incorporate the changes it recommended into street experiments.

Leading up to the massive protests against the Free Trade of The Americas Agreement summit, Quebec (April, 2001), GMAC was asked by Columbus ARA to facilitate the clandestine border crossing of this group. At the time, Columbus ARA was recognized as one of the most militant organizations in North America, and there was concern that they would be barred from entering Canada if they sought to cross the border through traditional means. GMAC, with wide logistical support from rural Vermont residents (otherwise unaffiliated with the organized aspects of the movement), was successful in this effort, crossing the frontier on foot, through thick forests in

the cover of darkness. The crossing location, which necessitated a rugged overnight hike over a mountain and through deep spring snow, was recommended to them by a friendly 65 year old radical (RH, a former member of the revolutionary Free Vermont commune movement of the 1970s) who previously used the same route to help undocumented workers (from Central American warzones) pass through the boarders, unseen, in the 1980s. Columbus ARA and GMAC were therefore able to play a militant role in the urban conflict which ensued over two days of rioting in Quebec City. There an ARA and GMAC member suffered minor wounds as a result of police weapons. However, none from this affinity group suffered arrest, and the Black Bloc made a strong showing, as evident in sections of a security fence being torn down, a bank being torched, and police being effectively fought back through the use of clubs, stones, and petrol bombs on numerous occasions.

After the Quebec City actions, membership in the collective became fluent. GMAC's first generation of membership broke down in the summer of 2001 while people traveled; Massot, for points west (and then back to Brattleboro). Van Deusen moved to Columbus, Ohio, for a good part of a year, and worked with ARA. Johnny Midnight left the collective altogether (moving on to become a union electrician). The second generation of GMAC began to take form 2002 when Van Deusen, along with LV of Columbus ARA (and now GMAC member), moved to a rural area in North Central Vermont (near the Capital city of Montpelier). Van Deusen and LV established another collective household, this one, although being less than ten miles from town, being more remote than the first (requiring a snow machine to gain access to the last mile for half the year). From this base, new members became attracted to the group for various reasons and brought with them their unique perspectives. HR, a resident of the Northeast Kingdom (NEK), was a radical largely involved with food security issues. Will Dunbar, who at the time also lived in the Kingdom [in another collective household], was an early member of the Second Vermont Republic (a Vermont separatist organization which he resigned from in order to join GMAC) & was rumored to be attached to the Iconoclast Liberation Front. Will was also instrumental in the founding of the Northeast Kingdom Music Festival. SW, and JM moved from Philly (where they were members of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists-NEFAC) to Montpelier and were interested in retaining their political activity. KW, a Montpelier native, came to the group through her personal relationship with a number of members and her political activism (KW did counter-recruitment against military service among high school students, and soon would become the Chief Steward in a new radical labor union). NR, (a labor activist previously from Michigan) and AL (a Montpelier native) joined after becoming engaged with the collective largely through a union organizing effort. HB was going to the University of Vermont (Burlington) and was a member of the Student Labor Action Project. People joined, and people left. They had their reasons.

It should also be recognized that the collective did not think of itself as strictly geographically based (unless that geography is expanded to include all of Vermont). When the majority of members lived within a dozen miles of Montpelier, it still recruited members in the Northeast Kingdom and even in Burlington. For a time Massot (who would go through periods of being a member and not being a member) maintained an affiliation while remaining in Southern Vermont (even though the majority now lived in the North). Suffice to say that GMAC always viewed itself as a statewide anarchist organization; one that believed its campaigns and energy should be focused on affecting progressive and revolutionary change on Vermont as a whole; not in a

single municipality or community as such. While there doubtlessly are criticisms that could be lodged at GMAC, failing to see the forest for the trees is not one of them.

In the summer of 2001, even while the collective was going through a period of inactivity, a representative of GMAC along with an ally from ARA made an appearance at the Renewing Anarchist Traditions conference, held at the Institute of Social Ecology, Plainfield, VT. The appearance was made in order to seek out a meeting with a trusted member of a Boston NEFAC collective, ML. ML was trusted by the collective (and ARA) because of his past (pre-political) personal relationship with Massot, dating back to when Massot lived in Boston. There, GMAC, which already carried out one successful clandestine border crossing in the spring, offered a contingency plan by which GMAC would facilitate other extra-legal border crossings for U.S. NEFAC members if and when such actions became advisable due to changing political circumstances. It is worth noting that even prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11th (later that same year), GMAC was concerned that the George W Bush administration was heading in a direction towards a clampdown on civil liberties. Here, the relative effectiveness of the Black Bloc, and NEFAC's role in organizing such Blocs, made NEFAC a potential target for a state crackdown. GMAC asked that the offer, and the contact protocols, be made discreetly known to trusted NEFAC members. Before GMAC/ARA made its approach to the Institute for Social Ecology (to relay this offer) the license plate on their 1978 Ford van was removed in case of police/state intelligence gathering.

In September of that same year, the 9-11 terrorist attacks committed by Islamic fundamentalists on the three airplanes & the Twin Towers caught the collective off guard. Massot was in France. Van Deusen and (soon to be a member) LV were together in Western Canada (and were only able to slip back into the US, some days later, after they made their way to an isolated road crossing between Quebec and Vermont favored by GMAC). The political aftermath of this attack changed the social landscape. The state used this as an excuse to launch a massive crackdown on civil liberties, to aggressively go after dissident groups, and the American public seemed to pause; suddenly the tens-of-thousands turning out for anti-globalization rallies dwindled to a few thousand. It would not be until the raise of the mass anti-war rallies in 2003 that the numbers and energy would return to the streets. But regardless, for the next year after 9-11, members of the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective remained dispersed, and direct political activity became immersed in the broader anarchist movement (not with a clear GMAC identity attached to it). The only unique GMAC activities during this time were the publication of written material (as discussed elsewhere in this work). However, by September, 2002, when LV and Van Deusen established the new base near Montpelier, and as a new generation of members began to come to the collective, GMAC would become active, again, as its own political entity. This time it would affiliate with the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (which had member collectives in Quebec, New England, and throughout the broader Northeast region). As NEFAC's Vermont affiliate, GMAC continued to engage in militant street actions, and increasingly in radical grassroots organizing.

GMAC joined NEFAC for a couple reasons. First, it understood the need to better coordinate the militant resistance to capitalism across the region. It also was impressed by NEFAC's apparent ability in organizing Black Blocs. And finally, it agreed with the undertone of member collectives which argued in favor of political organizing beyond mass protests (an assertion increasingly supported by GMAC-but not understood as an either-or proposition). Even so, GMAC was surprised when at a 2002 conference held in Baltimore, Maryland, elements of the federation strongly argued that they should deemphasize their engagement with mass Black Bloc actions at

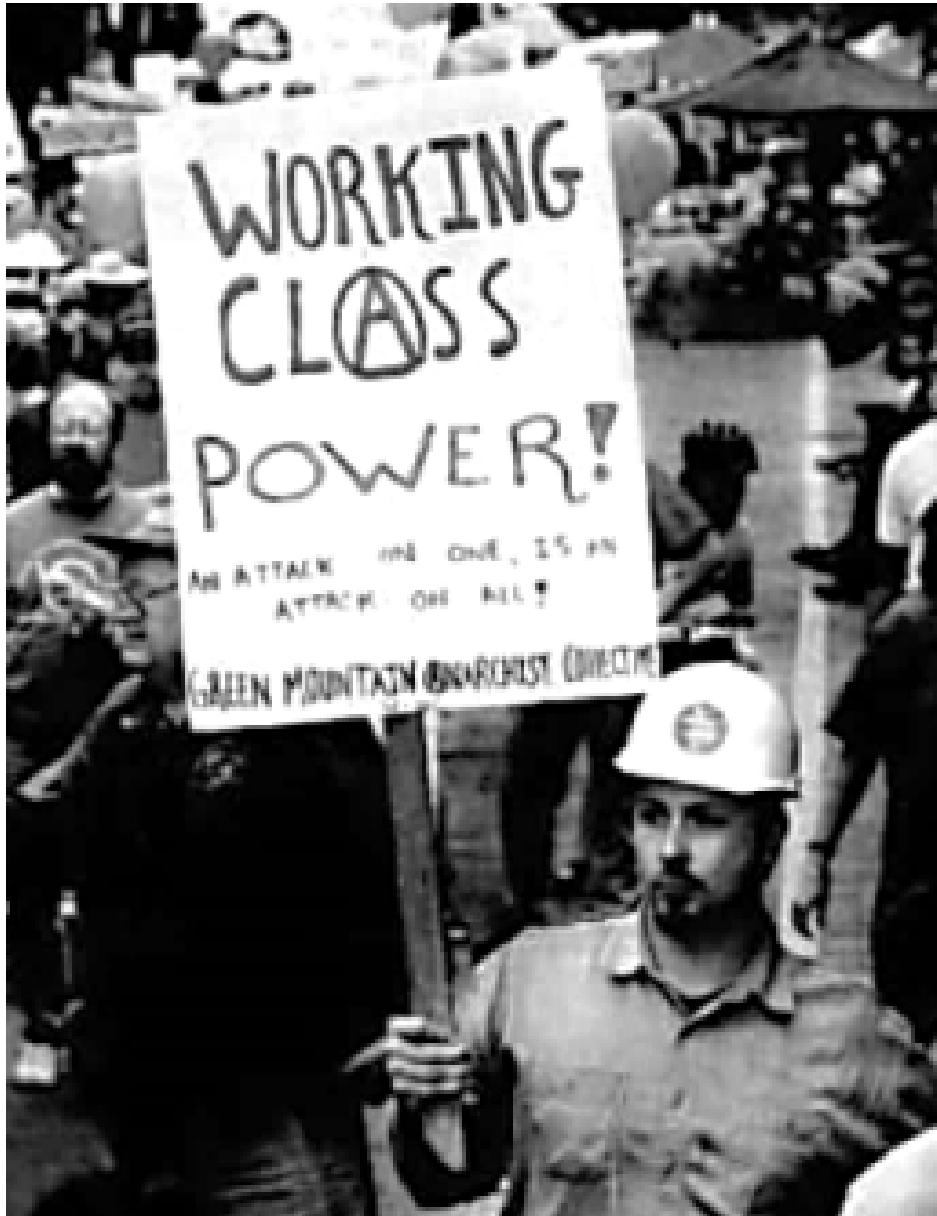
large anti-globalization protests, and instead to focus the federation's collective energy towards labor and community organizing. While GMAC delegates recognized (and agreed with) the need to engage in community and labor organizing, it opposed the decision to partially disengage from large scale Black Bloc actions. GMAC argued that the role of the revolutionary anarchist organizations should be to embody the principles of being both the most relevant and the most militant. GMAC also argued that the relative success of high profile Black Blocs resulted in not only an advance in popular consciousness concerning resistance to capitalism, but also acted as a prime recruiting mechanism, drawing militant and committed revolutionary youth into the federation. However, by a democratic vote of NEFAC delegates, GMAC's position was defeated. GMAC, as an affiliate of the federation, remained in NEFAC and respected the strategic decision of the organization, even if it continued to believe it was the wrong decision.

This refocus by NEFAC, along with the changed domestic political reality following the 9-11, resulted in a temporary regression concerning the use and growth of the Black Bloc as an effective street tactic in North America. This regression would not begin to reverse itself (this time largely without the involvement of NEFAC) until after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

## **Building The Movement:**

Back in Vermont, although without the benefit of a Black Bloc contingent, GMAC members, in November 2002, walked picket lines of striking United Radio, Machine, and Electrical Workers of American (UE) outside the gates of the Fairbanks Scale factory, in St. Johnsbury (NEK), Vermont. [Note that this strike was receiving acute support from the Vermont Workers Center, and to a lesser extent the social-democratic Vermont Progressive Party.] The union factory workers had a long history of militancy (during their previous strike picketers overturned a bus filled with scabs). When a delivery truck sought to drive into the factory grounds, UE members and GMAC participants attempted to block the vehicle. This situation soon led to violence between picketers and deputy sheriffs. One GMAC member exchanged head-butts with one cop, and took a face full of pepper spray as a result. Still, the blockade was not relinquished until union leaders gave the order. When police came to arrest this (now blinded) GMAC member, union leaders intervened, making an arrest impossible. The following week, when GMAC returned to the picket line (despite police statements to the media that arrests were being considered), the union workers met this return with applause. The union went on to win the strike, securing better pay and working conditions on the shop floor.

In January, 2003, GMAC led the militant organizing effort aimed at shutting down a planned fascist organizing effort in Lewiston, Maine. Working with local radicals, other NEFAC collectives, and ARA chapters, the collective (under the direction of LV) helped organize a 500 strong protest contingent, 100 of these being organized into a Black Bloc. In the front line of the march was GMAC along with Vermont comrade, JW (a former member of the Love and Rage #10 Collective, co-founder of the Vermont Workers Center). Utilizing methods supported by GMAC's tactics pamphlet, this Black Bloc was able to push through police barricades, and lay siege to the armory (where the fascist meeting was being held) without suffering a single arrest. [Note that while this militant confrontation was taking place, an anti-racist unity event was also being held. This event drew 5000 local residents.] NEFAC's deemphasizing of Black Bloc tactics only related to their use



at high profile national events. It did not apply to small scale actions, especially those aimed at confronting fascism.

LV, in her written report back to NEFAC stated:

“We were expecting the... pig force of Lewiston to be able to utilize their special training for our arrival, and the following precautions were to be employed by them: the confiscation of flag or sign poles, backpacks, cameras that weren't given previous press clearance (because you know how terrorists like to hide bombs in cameras?!), and random searches. No protesters were permitted to be in radius of the National Guard Armory, and were going to be directed to two 'park and rides' half a mile down another street. Roads were going to be blocked off, and ID's checked upon rerouting traffic to the park and rides... Deciding to use Black Bloc tactics was an advantage on our part. With this situation at hand, the contingent of Antifa decided to employ Black Bloc tactics (it is specifically important here that we decided to march in formation, and elected a tactical facilitation core)... By wearing black, masking up, and marching in a tight rectangular formation with banners on all sides, we looked intimidating to the pigs. The first road block consisted of three cop cars and six or so pigs. All but one stood there staring, while the "ranking officer" approached us. The banner was lifted right over his head, and wouldn't you know-he found himself right in the middle of the Bloc. Piece of cake. (Here, this worked well. In another situation, where the police are our primary combatants, we should never allow an enemy in our midst except to physically deal with them.) The next barricade consisted of two city dump trucks and a few cop cars. It looked tough and could have been, but we never paused and just kept moving forward. The drivers of the trucks were working people. One driver waved to us, while the other backed up just a little. We moved on through...When we passed the [non-Black Bloc] protesters who were stuck at the park and ride, we enthusiastically invited them to join us. A Bloc of only 50 quickly turned into about 300 when seemingly everyone from the two park and rides joined us!”

Not all of the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective's activities were centered in street conflicts. As previously eluded to, from late 2002 on GMAC devoted substantial time and organizational resources to in grassroots campaigns. Seeking to achieve a more broad impact in its efforts, the collective typically worked in cooperation with other democratic/leftist community organizations. In 2002, GMAC made the decision to commit itself to providing limited support to a farmer organizing campaign known as the Dairy Farmers of Vermont (DFV). This group, founded by Progressive farmer Dexter Randle, and organizers Anthony Pollina & Peter Sterling, was seeking to gain the affiliation of farms representing a minimum of one third of all raw milk produced in the state. [Note that Deter Randal went on to be a Progressive Party State Representative for the Town of Troy, Anthony Pollina went on to received 21% of the vote for Governor in 2008 & and became a Progressive Party State Senator in 2010. Sterling would later head the pro-single payer organization Campaign For Healthcare Security.] Upon reaching this number, DFV intended to seek to collectively bargain for a sustainable price for said milk from the processors. Failing this, the group was exploring the possibility of opening a farmer owned processing plant which could provide payments that could be sustaining to family farms. DFV operated internally through democratic principles.



GMAC, recognizing the significance of mobilizing Vermont's farmers towards resistance to current capitalist expressions, provided DFV with volunteer hours on a regular weekly basis. GMAC's support tended to be low level activities (stuffing envelopes, answering phones, research, etc.), but necessary ones never-the-less. In the end DFV, who achieved its membership goals, was stonewalled by the processors, but did manage, for a time, to open and operate a farmer controlled processing plant in the Northeast Kingdom.

In 2003 GMAC worked with representatives of the state's largest labor unions (AFL-CIO, National Educators Association, Vermont State Employees' Association-VSEA), and other mass organizations in forwarding a project called the Peoples' Round Table Organizing Committee. This campaign, largely the brainchild of VSEA President (and IWW supporter and later 2012 Progressive Party candidate for Attorney General) Ed Stanak, sought to build a united left platform from the grassroots of all the major popular VT organizations, and to further this platform through mass action and political participation. However, GMAC learned from this effort that the specific leaders of the various mass (VT) organizations, no matter how well intended, do not necessarily reflect active support from below. While a limited number of public (platform building) meetings were held throughout the state, and while a draft platform was produced (after countless nights and hours of delegate meetings), the campaign largely proved to be lacking in the necessary buy-in and active support from the tens of thousands of members whom the organizing delegates ostensibly represented. Even so, the political sentiment which underlined this effort, a decade later, was to see fruition in the political sphere; The 2011 passage of VT single payer healthcare legislation being one example of such progress [legislation which was later derailed by Democratic Governor Peter Shumlin]. But again, for the moment, GMAC reflected on the fact that they spent significant time on this project, and saw very little (in terms of immediate political successes) in return. It is worth noting that the Director of the Vermont Workers Center (an organization founded in 1998 by members of the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation), James Haslam, warned GMAC of this potential outcome from the start. However, it was a lesson GMAC needed to learn on its own.

In that same year (2003), the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective became heavily engaged in the Montpelier Downtown Workers' Union (MDWU, UE Local 221). The campaign, initiated by the Vermont Workers Center and the United Radio, Machine, and Electrical Workers of America (UE), sought to build an experimental geographic based labor union throughout the unrepresented sectors of Vermont's capital city. The objective was to build a truly democratic, bottom up union that provided workers with a collective voice. GMAC recognized that a successful conclusion to the project (considering it was being launched in the capital) could lead to the model spreading to other towns and cities in Vermont, and beyond. Here GMAC hoped to help create the example of a democratic workers' organization that could both positively impact the realities for workers on the shop floor, as well as one that could give a broader political expression to workers' struggles in general; hence creating a new tool in the struggle against contemporary capitalist homogeny. Although the campaign ended in defeat, GMAC, early on saw the potential of such an effort and became an outspoken supporter of the union, producing and distributing (to Montpelier workers) the handbill entitled Union + Town Meeting = Democracy.

At the time, GMAC argued:

“Montpelier could be just a beginning... [I]f the workers of towns... come together into strong organizations, and these organizations build strong ties between each

other, the Vermont working class as a whole would no longer be at the heels of politicians who have to answer to the bosses... If this time comes, these strong and democratic organizations... in collaboration with farmer's organizations... and taking into account the general will as expressed through more than 200 Town Meetings, would now be in a position to put forth a united and legitimate voice of all these working persons who make Vermont what it is."

GMAC made this campaign its priority for the next two years, eventually counting its members as a majority on the union's Steward Committee (including, among others, SW & NR), along with the elected Chief Steward, KW. At its height, the union claimed 100 members, out of a labor pool of 800, employed in two dozen shops in Montpelier (population: 7800). In a number of shops (including State Street Market, Charlie O's Tavern, Rivendell Books, and J Morgan's/Capital Plaza Hotel) union membership, for a time, represented a majority. Other shops where the union claimed members included, but was not limited to, Shaw's Supermarket, M&M Beverage, Rite Aid Pharmacy, Vermont Compost, Onion River Sports, Karma Imports, and Vermont Center For Independent Living. Contracts were eventually achieved at the Savoy Theater and Mountain Herbal Café.

While the winning of union-labor Contracts was one goal of the organization, it was not the intended end point. Later in 2004 the Union implemented a citywide grievance procedure, facilitated by Steward-workers, that all Montpelier employees had access to (not just dues paying members). Although not enforceable through a Contract (with the exception of the two aforementioned shops), it was remarkably successful in winning a majority of its grievances through public pressure and direct action. Here the effective leadership and advocacy of Chief Steward, and GMAC member, KW should be recognized. It is also of note that the Steward Committee and the citywide grievance procedure was supported by the formation of a Workers Defense Squad. This grouping was co-chaired by GMAC member David Van Deusen, and included rank and file members of other area labor unions (including the Carpenters, the Iron Workers, AFT, etc.).

From 2004 on, major policy decisions were made at Worker Town Meetings through a directly democratic process. This method of internal decision making highlighted the fact that the underlying principles of the union reflected the anarchist practice of bottom up, participatory democracy.

In the spring of 2005, while the MDWU was still fully operational, GMAC hosted a NEFAC conference at the Socialist Labor Hall in Barre, VT. Also in 2005, the Philadelphia affiliate of NEFAC was engaged in a similar effort in the South Street district of that city. At the same time, the Montreal affiliate was engaged in some organizing efforts aimed at workers in its city. Therefore, GMAC made an official proposal to NEFAC that it adopt the geographic, bottom-up union model as the strategic focus of the organization for the coming year. Recognizing that the Vermont experience concerning the MDWU was predicated on the prior example of the Workers Center, GMAC further proposed that in NEFAC areas of operation where no similar organization existed, that the first step be to create the equivalent (as the Love and Rage # 10 Collective proved to be an achievable task by a small group of radicals). This proposal was voted down, in essence, by the federation. NEFAC hence declined to adapt this (or any other) truly coordinated regional campaign, and instead continued to function more as a loosely affiliated network of autonomous collectives than as an organization with a platform of united and rational revolutionary action. While the early years of NEFAC brought the affiliates together through common mobilizations at

large anti-globalization (Black Bloc) actions, since 2002 the federation increasingly lacked such common purpose. NEFAC, at least in name, ceased to exist in 2011.

In later 2005, after failing to win a recognition effort in a larger city hotel/restaurant, and recognizing that overall membership had not reached a self-sustaining level, the Workers Center and UE made the joint decision to conclude their involvement with the project. GMAC, or rather a faction of GMAC, briefly sought to keep the organization present through the affiliation of MDWU with the Industrial Workers of the World. However, this move only put off the ultimate decline of the union, which concluded in its entirety before the start of 2006. The chances of GMAC reinvigorating the union was further limited by the fact that key GMAC members at the time, former union leaders, also (rationally) decided to move on. While failing to win a sustainable geographic union, the effort did prove that the concept was plausible. During its life, the union also gained wide coverage in the Vermont media, and became widely known to the public. The chances of a similar effort building on the successes and failures of the MDWU experience should not be discounted out of hand.

Following the demise of the MDWU [and printed in the *Northeastern Anarchist*], SW reflected:

“We lost the Montpelier Downtown Workers' Union. And the fact is, most organizing drives fail. The cards are stacked against us. At many facilities, workers will go through 3, 4, or even more union drives before attaining success. If organizing at work is truly important to you there are plenty of unorganized places to organize. So don't let one failure get in the way of continuing to fight and eventually winning... Revolutionary socialist anarchism as a political philosophy is based on the fundamental hope that the majority, the working class and all oppressed people, can be the agents of change that will bring about a federated, democratic, and free society of self-managed communities and workplaces... If we, as the majority of common people, are going to do this, we will need to build confidence as a class, and to learn how to work together for our defense and for the advancement of our common interests.”

From 2002-2007, the years in which GMAC was most active and acutely engaged in Vermont politics, the collective also supported the anti-war movement, continuing anti-fascist/anti-extreme right efforts, the worker co-op movement, and ongoing labor struggles. In 2003 GMAC took part in the demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq both in Montpelier and in Burlington. The Collective also attended the two Peoples' Assemblies Against The War. At the second, organized by the anarchist Open City Collective, GMAC proposed and had passed a resolution calling on Vermont soldiers not to engage in offensive combat operations in Iraq. Collective members, in addition, occasionally went out-of-state to lend support to anti-fascist and/or pro-worker efforts throughout the region. Similarly, collective members also were known to take part in national anti-war/anti-reactionary demonstrations.

One amusing incident took place in Boston, at a December 10th, 2004 workers' rights march. In support of this rally (which was sponsored by organized labor), the Vermont AFL-CIO brought down a bus full of Vermonters. Among them was GMAC members (then largely members of the MDWU). Also on the bus was Peter Clevelle. Clevelle, a good and likable man, was then a long time [social democratic] Progressive Party Mayor of Burlington (Vermont's largest city) and that year was the Democratic Party candidate for Governor (opposing incumbent Republican Jim Douglas). Once in Boston, the members of GMAC found the local anarchist contingent organized

by the area NEFAC affiliate. Once the march was underway, under the night sky, a mustached man in a suit and tie emerged from the march of 15,000, and conspicuously walked under NEFAC's black flag. Anarchists, largely with their faces covered by black bandanas, began to give the suited man suspicious looks. None too concerned, the man loudly stated, "I thought I would march with my anarchist friends for a while!" The suited man continued under the black flag, all smiles, for maybe 10 minutes, then moved on to another place in the march. One Boston NEFAC member asked, "who was that guy?" And GMAC member SW, without skipping a beat answered, "That was Peter. He is very possibly the next Governor of Vermont", to which a Boston NEFAC member muttered something akin to "Vermont is a strange fucking place." [Clevelle lost to Douglas in that election.]

In addition to union organizing, some members of GMAC became active in the worker co-op movement. In 2004, GMAC member Will Dunbar, with comrades outside of GMAC, opened up the worker owned Langdon Street Café in Montpelier. The café, which was also a bar, drew the participation of a number of people with connections to the Bread and Puppet Theater group. Langdon Street served for a number of years as a community meeting place and venue for radical (participatory) art, as well as organized leftist political talks. The upstairs of the café was occupied by an anarchist book store (Black Sheep Books-also a co-op -co-op members included anarchist writer Cindy Milstein and others with various affiliations to the Institute for Social Ecology). During its years of operation, the cafe often functioned as the meeting location for the AFL-CIO's Washington County Central Labor Council, as well as Workers' Center events. The café remained in operation from 2004 until 2011.

In 2006, GMAC helped build a successful protest against the Minutemen (a right wing anti-immigrant group). Here, the collective recognized that the leftward trajectory of Vermont was furthered not only by effective grassroots organizing (colored by a unique and revolutionary history), but was also aided by the fact that the left was able to mature in a broad environment where it did not face the challenges of any organized fascist or extreme right wing groups within its borders. Hence keeping Vermont free of organized fascists, not only as an end in itself, but also as a condition of accelerated political moves to the left, remained a priority for the collective. The planned expansion of the Minute Man organization represented a threat to this. The Minutemen, for their part, previously acted as an armed anti-immigrant vigilante group with a focus on the southern border with Mexico. In 2006 these right wing militants had hopes of building local chapters along the northern border with Canada. Towards this end, a Massachusetts based Minuteman chapter announced plans to patrol the border between Vermont and Quebec (in the Town of Derby) with the hopes (and expectations) of identifying local supporters. GMAC, hearing this news, coordinated efforts with the Burlington chapter of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), local unaffiliated anarchists from the Northeast Kingdom, and even the separatist Second Vermont Republic (SVR-whom it issued a joint statement with condemning the racism of the Minutemen). In the end, 50 Vermonters turned out in the rain, in Derby, to protest this racist group and to demand that they leave Vermont. The Minutemen, numbering only 3-5 out-of-staters [flatlanders as they are referred to by Vermonters], panicked, failed to show up, and instead decided to walk a bike path in the nearby city of Newport (near the border) for an hour or two before calling it quits.

GMAC and a number of its recruited supporters, attended the rally with pistols under their coats, and rifles ready in their vehicles. The motivation here was never to see a repeat of what happened in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1979, when the Klan shot and killed 5 activists at

a rally opposing racism. But unlike 1979, GMAC (and its allies) would have the home turf advantage, would be prepared, and in any event this precaution proved unnecessary. Instead of a shootout with pistols, GMAC and the protestors marched to the border, where they met with friendly anti-Minutemen protesters in Quebec. These included NEFAC members from north of the border. There handshakes were exchanged, songs of solidarity sung, and a soccer ball was kicked back and forth across the official line separating these nations.

Later that night, a number of local anarchists (unaffiliated with GMAC) located the motel where the Minutemen were staying. Accompanied by a member of GMAC, these anarchists laid in wait. By the end of the night, one Minuteman suffered a bloodied nose, and another, their apparent leader, had his truck vandalized. The next day the Minutemen left Vermont, never to return. They recruited no one from the Green Mountain State.

All told, the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective remained very active in numerous aspects of Vermont's social movement through much of the 2000s. Its increasingly deep relationships lead to GMAC members joining the Steering Committee of the Vermont Workers Center, and becoming members of the NWU/United Auto Workers, the Teamsters, the United Electrical Workers, and the AFL-CIO in general. A member of GMAC, Van Deusen, served as a District Vice President within the Vermont AFL-CIO, and, again, KW, another GMAC member was elected as Chief Steward of the MDWU, UE Local 221.

In addition to organizing active and militant street protests, GMAC continued to engage in struggle through the written word. In 2002 the collective launched the publication *Catamount Tavern News*. This newspaper, for a time was the only statewide print publication in Vermont, and was the only Vermont media source with a Quebec Affairs Desk (first based out of Quebec City, and later staffed by MD –an ex-NEFAC member- out of Montreal). The paper was published seasonally from 2002-2009. By 2009 it claimed 50 distribution points across the state, and had a circulation of 1,500 (considerable given a state population of just over 600,000). In 2008 it affiliated (as a worker owned operation) with the Teamsters Local 1L, making it the only unionized newspaper in Vermont. In addition to writers from the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective it also published works by James Haslam (Director of the Vermont Workers Center), Traven Leyshon (President of the Washington County Central Labor Council AFL-CIO-and later Secretary/Treasurer of the Vermont AFL-CIO), Brian Tokar (well-known environmentalist), Cindy Milstein (from the Institute of Social Ecology), and leftist-economist Doug Hoffer (who was elected as Vermont State Auditor from the Vermont Progressive Party in 2012). The publication also printed interviews with a number of notable Vermonters including farm organizer Peter Sterling, longtime activist Anthony Pollina, and Iraqi Veterans Against The War member Drew Cameron. While the focus of the paper was on the worker and farmer struggles specific to Vermont (as well as cultural issues), it also provided coverage of national protests and Black Bloc actions, as well as coverage from of the social movement within Provence Quebec, within New Orleans in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, from the streets of Paris during the 2008 French Protests, and EZLN/Zapatista efforts from within Chiapas, Mexico

CT News Mission Statement, which was printed in every issue made clear the following:

“We intend on helping to build a Vermont wherein regular and frequent town meetings, in cooperation with democratic worker and farmer unions, are the basic decision making bodies of the Green Mountains. In addition, we intend on helping to build this society based on the principles of equality, wherein all persons have,

among other things, access to decent housing, healthy food, acceptable healthcare, quality childcare, meaningful jobs, and higher education. This is Freedom & Unity.”

Initially the newspaper was edited by LV. Later, GMAC member SW became editor. In its final years, GMAC co-founder David Van Deusen assumed this role. The paper, with some success, strove to bridge the usual gap between concepts of revolutionary social transformation and regular non-initiated wage workers. It sought to achieve this through the publication of articles and material that further reflected the interest of regular Vermonters. With this in mind the newspaper, at various times, covered the Vermont Golden Gloves boxing tournament, included a regular hunting and fishing column (Written by Joana “Black Jack” Banis), a column on the harvesting and use of wild plants, a crossword puzzle, and (recognizing the necessity of the cultural struggle against contemporary capitalism) printed poetry and artwork. During its years of print, it was not uncommon for its contents to be read and debated in working class taverns, especially in Brattleboro (taverns being common distribution points for the paper). GMAC members LV, Will Dunbar and Xavier Massot played key roles in the operations of the paper, as did fellow travelers (who never joined the collective) such as JR. LV, its first editor, made the crossword puzzle, Dunbar served as a staff writer and distributor for the Northeast Kingdom area of Vermont, Massot as Obituaries Editor, and JR (a self-proclaimed socialist) as staff photographer and Image/Design Editor.

While Catamount Tavern News was perhaps the most visible written organ of GMAC, the collective also made regular contributions to NEFAC’s regional English language newspaper, Strike, and to its quarterly magazine, The Northeastern Anarchist. Even so, the collective’s seminal written political expression must be judged as the pamphlet entitled *Neither Washington Nor Stowe: Common Sense For the Working Vermonter* [Catamount Tavern Press, Vermont, 2004]. The first edition composed and printed while still engaged with the MDWU and DFV, reflected the later maturity of the group. While still concerning itself with the core transformation of society from a modern capitalist one to a libertarian socialist one, the work largely spoke the language of the common Vermonter.

From the pamphlet:

“Because of this remoteness our Green Mountains often feel a century away from Boston, and a million miles from New York. Yet we are still tangled in the treacherous web of Washington politicians and the wealthy elite from Wall Street, to Texas, to Stowe. We are our own people, yet we are compelled to mimic the same bureaucratic structures in our government and economic dead ends in our communities that strangle the common working person from California to Maine.”

And later, while seeking to frame the domestic challenge faced by Vermonters:

“There are, in fact, two Vermont’s: One of wealth and privilege, and one of hard work and sweat. If Vermonters have any chance of success against the forces of Washington and Wall Street, the battle must start in our own backyard against the business and political elite of Montpelier and Stowe. We must guard against the sly maneuvers of both the conservative and the liberal status quo in Vermont, and fight to win more power for ourselves in our towns and workplaces. Could our efforts ever cultivate a

harvest hardy enough to withstand the strong, cold winds of Washington and Wall Street if we do not till our fields first? Can you start a good sugaring season without first cleaning out your sap buckets? The answer is no. There will be no victory over the enemy without before there is victory over the enemy within. For it is the privileged and powerful locally and their dupes who will stand as the first serious line of defense for the privileged and powerful classes in general. So do we bow our heads, mutter curses under our breath, and continue to subsist on the scraps they throw to us- or do we dare to struggle and dare to win against the local elite?"

Drawing on Vermont's deep revolutionary and anti-establishment (rural) tradition, this pamphlet sought to explain the post-revolutionary society as an extension of the Town Meeting system which remains embedded deeply in Vermont consciousness. The work further drew on contemporary examples such as the Dairy Farmers of Vermont and Montpelier Downtown Workers Union to explain how worker and farmer control over the means of production (and the achievement of a non-alienated society) is not only possible, but, perhaps, the logical progression of such movements. In brief, GMAC called for the reorganization of Vermont (and the broader world) through a greatly empowered network of Town Meetings, an expanded and democratic federation of labor organizations, and countywide farmer groups. Staying true to GMAC's early assertions, the pamphlet also called for continuing support and expansion of radical cultural projects such as the Bread & Puppet Theater. Economically, Washington Nor Stowe advocated for the elimination of the commodity driven paradigm, in favor of a stable, more cooperative labor hour means of exchange, along with strong socialist rights concerning a persons' basic social well-being. This pamphlet, first produced in 2004, was revised and reissued in 2007, and a modified release is planned for 2015-2016.

The work, which was distributed through the Green Mountains, concludes with:

"As working class and farming Vermonters, we owe it to our cultural past, the future of our grandchildren, and ourselves to seek the fulfillment of our common dreams and aspirations. We can no more accept a future where our mountains are further masked by the two dimensional trappings of capitalism, then we could a world without seasons. Before consumerism, bureaucracy, and centralization obscure our culture of independence and equality, we must come together in order to reassert that which is just. For this we must continue to build the popular organizations that will inherit our hills, and we must build them so as they face the proverbial south. And for us, that is toward direct democracy, socialism, and creativity. In a word, we are a people who continually look toward the end of winter, and friends with a little hard work the spring will find us."

## **The Fall & Legacy:**

During the active years of the collective the group, which had no more than 20 members (total), cooperated with a number of leftist organizations as is evident in the preceding account of its political history. Often GMAC would lend support to the ongoing efforts of the Workers Center. On occasion it would work with organizations such the Dairy Farmer of Vermont, the United Electrical Workers, the AFL-CIO, and even the International Socialist Organization. It further main-



tained friendly relations with activists within the Vermont Progressive Party. Although GMAC would later criticize and distant itself [see the article: Vermont Secession: Democracy and the Extreme Right, Catamount Tavern News, spring, 2007], it even worked with the Second Vermont Republic (as outlined above) in issuing a joint statement against the racist Minutemen. For working with mass, popular organizations, GMAC was sometimes looked at with skepticism from fellow revolutionary anarchists based outside the Green Mountain State (often by those same anarchist who previously opposed it's militant assertions concerning the Black Bloc). However, central to GMAC's revolutionary analysis, from its inception, was that contemporary capitalism would take a mass movement to weaken and a mass revolution from below in order to defeat. The revolution for GMAC was both a physical and cultural challenge that unfolded overtime, but could explode in an instant. As such, engagement in mass and visible street actions, and engagement in mass organizing efforts were understood as the key to success.

To recognize that a small insular collective, alone, is incapable of throwing off the chains of social/cultural and economic oppression is to come to one of three conclusions; 1. Revolution is in fact impossible, 2. A uniquely new mass movement must be built from the ground up, or 3. Revolutionaries must work with those mass organizations already in existence in order to influence a left turn in their direction. The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective rejected the first of these conclusions out of hand, finding history to tell a different story. GMAC then sought to synthesize the second and third of these conclusions into concerted series of actions. In short, GMAC worked with existing organizations, where possible, to build new expressions of class struggle which would be more grounded in anarchist principles than its parent groups; ie the support for the Dairy Farmers of Vermont and Montpelier Downtown Workers Union [although it could be argued that the Vermont Workers Center, excluding the question of Black Blocs, was as far left as GMAC]. And finally, GMAC saw no compelling reason not to work with existing



mass organizations in a defensive capacity aimed at overcoming further attacks of capitalist and reactionary interest against working people; ie its collaboration with the ISO and SVR in opposition to the Minutemen, and organized labor against acute attacks of the boss against workers (and in favor of a withdrawal of U.S. troops from foreign occupations).

The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective never officially disbanded. However, by 2006 the only original member remaining in the collective was Van Deusen (although Massot later became an active contributor to Catamount Tavern News). After Van Deusen ran for and was elected as First Constable by his Vermont town (2007), NEFAC, in general, expressed concerns that being elected to office (especially an office associated with limited local law enforcement powers) ran counter to the political principles of the federation. As a result, Van Deusen resigned from NEFAC, and began to distance himself from GMAC. For a time, through the continuing efforts of Will Dunbar and HB, the collective continued on. Even so, no longer engaged in a defining strategic project, the collective soon drifted into inactivity. The one GMAC project that had a solid, if limited life beyond 2007, was Catamount Tavern News which was printed into 2009 (although by that time it no longer claimed to be a publication of GMAC). Since GMAC's decline (post-2007), former members have occasionally come together (lending the GMAC name), but only for the reissuing or revision of (past) written works. The time of the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective engaging in political action, as a distinct organization, has past.

So how should one assess the legacy of this anarchist organization from the rural and rugged landscapes of the Green Mountains? On the one hand, their most ambitious political project, the Montpelier Downtown workers Union, failed to achieve lasting success. The Peoples' Round Table Organizing Committee did not achieve immediate political victories. And even the Dairy Farmers of Vermont (which GMAC played a small supporting role in) ultimately was compelled to close down their farmer controlled milk processing plant in 2008. On the other hand GMAC spent considerable energy, for a period of time, helping to build the Vermont Workers Center. And today, the Workers Center is the most effective and powerful grassroots organization in the State (largely responsible for creating a political environment whereby minimum wage was increased to above \$10). GMAC also played a strong role in shutting down the Minutemen's Vermont organizing drive. From the day after the protest on, the Minutemen have had no presence in Vermont. The war and military occupations GMAC resisted are either over or winding down. There is no Free Trade of the Americas Agreement. And politically, Vermont continues to evolve according to a leftist trajectory, largely counter to the direction of the rest of the nation. Did GMAC, on their own accord, achieve these things? No. Of course not. But GMAC, along with thousands (if not tens of thousands) of other Vermonters, and millions of Americans, did their part. They resisted and experimented in new ways through which revolution could be hinted at. GMAC, alone, did not and could not have achieved anything of historic significance. But as part of a broader, diverse movement, one that sought to grow bottom up, rank and file engagement, did have success. But of course the battle, let alone the class war, is far from won. Capitalism, although threatened along the periphery, remains essentially intact. And yet still, the resistance continues and grows in these parts of the Northeastern woods commonly referred to as Vermont. After all, history, progressive change, and even revolution are a continuum filled by organizations, groups, classes, and individuals stretching over the chasm of time, and is periodically sparked into flame by those who are compelled to take risk. The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective, for seven years, took risks; it did its part, no more, no less.

To quote from Xavier Massot, as composed in his afterword for the Black Bloc Papers:

“The times are calling, and have been for a while, for a change in the running of human affairs. This is common knowledge, and no argument can undo this obvious conclusion. The only point against active protest is the desire for survival and safety on the part of those who would risk change, but this is a boring and ultimately futile and self-deceptive avenue, selfish and used up. It is true that the young have more life to live and that old have other things to worry about, but the space will get filled. It always gets filled, with an endless supply of woes to prod people to action... It is dawn here in the woods of northern New England. I’m gonna go to sleep and hopefully dream of nicer things than the ridiculous mess which is choking the human race’s potential for greatness-justice for starters.”

###

\***David Van Deusen** was a founding member of the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective, and is also a past member of Anti-Racist Action, the Teamsters, United Electrical Workers, and the National Writers Union (UAW Local 1981). David is the author of *The Question of Violence and Non Violence In The Social Protest Movement*, and co-authored *The Black Bloc Papers & Neither Washington Now Stowe*. Formerly Van Deusen was a District Vice President & Member-At-Large of the Vermont AFL-CIO [serving on the State Executive Committee]. David held two terms on the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs, two terms on his Town Select Board [endorsed by the Socialist Party-USA, the Vermont Liberty Union Party, the Vermont Progressive Party, & VT AFL-CIO], and was elected to three terms as First Constable in his rural community. Van Deusen has worked in construction, as a farm hand, bartender, archaeologist, freelance journalist, and as the Conservation Organizer for the Vermont Sierra Club[where he was instrumental in establishing the first Nulhegan Abenaki Tribal Forest in over 200 years]. He continues to be a member of the Vermont Workers’ Center and is currently employed as a Senior Union Representative for public sector workers in Vermont.



Van Deusen, Front Right At Union Bike Run, Montpelier VT 2016

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David Van Deusen  
The Rise and Fall of The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective  
September 26th, 2015

via correspondence with author and Retrieved on September 27th, 2015 from  
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