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(Re)Proletarian Survival
the Federation Advances
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year in order to see that conference decisions are carried out and to facilitate communication and debates within the organization. Interim decisions are to be made by an elected 10-person Federation Council. The CC is responsible for organizing the debates surrounding interim decisions, tallying votes, and making sure the decisions made are carried out. In an attempt to address gendered power imbalances within the organization, six out of the ten persons elected for the Federation Council are women, and four out of the five persons on the CC are women as well. (For a copy of the by-laws, writ e to the Federation Office address below.)

While it's a bit of a stretch to call this structure a "federation," it is a radically democratic model in which the goal is to encourage the maximum amount of participation in federation activities by members. It is also a structure that is suitable f or the present size of Love and Rage, with a bit of room to grow into as well.

Whether the accomplishments of the Minneapolis conference will foster growth in the organization is up for grabs. Whether or not our work will contribute toward the creation of a broad revolutionary movement is an even bigger question. In addition to i ts traditional commitment to fighting all forms of oppression, Love and Rage now faces a test of its commitment to long-term political work and its willingness to change course should the need arise. As we look ahead to our role in the larger social struggles against capital and all forms of domination rumbling in the world's underbelly, our task—reproles or not—is to develop an anti-authoritarian alternative to the world we live in and the world some crackpots (on the left and right) would like to build. If this conference is any indication, I think we are on the right track.

Democracy is in the Streets (and in our By-Laws)

The final discussions surrounded the structure of the federation. After reports and updates on the various newspaper production groups, offices, and (old) working groups, the conference discussed and debated the by-laws proposal written by Jean-Marc Diveliour and yours truly. Debates over structure aren't exactly thrill city, but what basically happened is that a set of by-laws was adopted that should enable the organization to carry out the decisions it makes at conferences and in between. The structure of Love and Rage is now as follows: The federation consists of members brought together in local branches (where possible) that participate in local activism and try to build the federation and/or revolutionary anti-authoritarian politics in their area . Local groups must work on at least one of the three struggles chosen by the federation, in addition to any other work they choose. Coordinating local struggles with each other is the job of the three working groups, each of which has chosen a contact person. The two newspapers (Love and Rage and Amor y Rabia) are produced by production groups in New York and Mexico City, respectively. Space is reserved for traditionally oppressed groups to form autonomous blocs within Love and Rage. An autonomous bloc i s a group created by traditionally oppressed members of Love and Rage that band together with other members of that group (not necessarily Love and Rage members) to fight oppression within Love and Rage and to act autonomously from the federation in struggles for self-determination, while still receiving support from the federation at large. As of yet, there are no autonomous blocs formed, though there has been discussion about creating a women's autonomous bloc. The major decisions of the federation are to be made democratically at annual conferences. A Coordinating Committee (CC) of five people (currently in Minneapolis) was elected as an administrative body for a

For the first time in its six-year history, Love and Rage had a successful conference. Of course, the conference (held in Minneapolis from Oct. 8–10) was not free of serious problems; but, for the first time, the Love and Rage Federation, as a membership organization: engaged in serious political discussion, made decisions on activist strategies based on these discussions, and chose a structure to carry out these decisions. Not only did this conference prove that Love and Rage (and the anarchist politics it represents) is far from dead (as many critics have long hoped for and prematurely declared), it also showed that our politics, as undefined as they are, have the potential to help build and influence a mass movement.

However, the conference also did something else. Up to now, the organization's main goal has been its own existence. After this conference, the challenge for Love and Rage is no longer to survive until the next conference. We have reached the point where we must judge Love and Rage not by comparing its present condition to its past ineffectiveness, but by its ability to understand the world we live in, and to play a role in changing that world. Such understandings were not achieved in Minneapolis. However, for the first time, they were raised and debated by the organization, and the political work we chose to do at this conference is partly a product of these debates.

Reproletarians of the World, Unite?

The debate over Love and Rage's role in revolutionary struggle was initiated by Saturday's political discussion entitled "What is the Federation for? Why is it floundering? Where should we go?" The main debate was over who or what should be the focus o f Love and Rage's political work. Chris Day, a longtime Love and Rage member, argued that Love and Rage should focus on organizing a particular social base for revolution. This social base, com-

monly called "Generation X," Day calls "reproletarianized youth," or reproles, for short.

Reproles are the twenty-something offspring of the mostly-white North American middle class. Day argues they are potentially revolutionary because they are the first generation of America's middle class that will not live better than their parents, and they know it. Instead of a happy future of suburban housing, two cars, broken marriages, and white privileges, reproles face a job market that is more competitive, work that pays less and is more boring, college degrees that are nearly useless, and a financial situation in which they will scarcely be able to pay the interest on their credit-card debts, much less finance a mortgage. As their class and race privileges fade, reproles are being forced into a position where they straddle a fine line: their new class position could tilt them toward fascism or it could radicalize them to fight for a free world alongside other (relatively more) oppressed groups.

Reproles are also the social base of Love and Rage: Like it or not, we are an organization that is primarily white, primarily middle class, and primarily in our twenty-somethings. We are a Generation X organization. However, we are also a revolutionary Generation X organization. Day argues that because Love and Rage's social base is reproletarian, our main goal as an organization should be to win over reproles to revolutionary politics and to ally with other oppressed peoples (especially people of color) and away from fascism. We should stop pretending to see ourselves as representing the aspirations of the whole of oppressed humanity, and instead acknowledge our social base and work to revolutionize it in order to ally with other revolutionary groups. (For a more detailed explanation of his "reprole" thesis, see the Dec. 1994 Federation Bulletin, address below.)

In contrast to Day's position, others, such as Laura Schere and Noel Ignatiev, argued that, while Love and Rage's social base may be reproletarianized youth, it is a mistake to make "revolutioniz-

debates) . The problem is not that there are no articulate and politically experienced women in the federation. Neither does it seem to be primarily a problem of gender dynamics in meetings: few women felt they were actively discouraged from participating (although this does not mean that gender dynamics played no role in inhibiting women's participation).

Instead, there were two main gender troubles with the conference. First, the terms of the political discussions (especially the initial one on reproles) tended to structure out some people from participating in the debates, particularly women. By focusing almost exclusively on Chris Day's reprole analysis, the conference failed to discuss other key issues that, were they discussed, might have encouraged broader participation. A second problem was identified by Rebecca H. in the lively debates about gender issues that have occurred since the conference (see the Jan. 1995 issue of the Federation Bulletin). The problem, she argues, is that good gender politics for Love and Rage boil down to being nicer to women and opening up spaces for them to speak. This is fine, but what is lacking is a commitment to making women's liberation a political priority of the federation. None of the three working groups' proposals, she points out, have any explicit strategies for women's liberation, nor is there anything necessarily feminist about them. This does not mean the working groups entirely neglect feminist issues, but without an explicit feminist commitment it is unlikely that the terms of political debate within the federation will open up to more women.

To address Love and Rage's gender troubles, an impromptu women's caucus was called for dinner Sunday night. While no concrete proposals emerged from the discussion, a variety of diverse opinions on gender issues and Love and Rage were expressed. The discussion has far from ended since that caucus. In fact, the debate over gender issues is one of the most lively, interesting, and important ones happening within the federation right now.

federation, and to help enable prisoner members of Love and Rage to participate more in the organization.

Aside from the broad criticism that these strategies fail to build a dual power, several people in the federation have raised questions about the particular strategies each working group has chosen. For example, there is an emerging feminist critique o f the almost exclusive focus of anti-fascist strategy on far-right, white-supremacist groups. Does fighting white-supremacist groups fight all sections of the proto-fascist right? What about militant anti-choice organizations, for example?

Furthermore, even though the anti-police campaign proposal was voted down, many people want the anti-fascist group to focus on anti-police work as well. However, the past history of Love and Rage's anti-fascist work (anti-Klan demonstrations in New Hop e, PA; anti-fascist days of action on Kristallnacht [Nov. 9]; the Anti-Racist Summer Project in St. Paul, MN; etc.), as well as the present proposal, gives no concrete indication that the focus will broaden. However, if the Anti-Fascist Working Group does decide to mesh anti-cop, anti-Klan, and anti-anti-choice work, how will it avoid the classic anarchist tendency to struggle against everything until we've spread ourselves so thin that we effectively build nothing? Expect a rich debate on this issue.

Gender Troubles

Despite the high level of political discussion, the conference was not free of problems. The biggest problem at the conference was an old one: male domination. With the exception of some of the working-group caucuses, the discussions at the conference were dominated by men. Men outnumbered women, and, according to the conference minutes, men spoke at least twice as often as women (many of women's comments were criticisms of the fact that many of them felt structured out of participating in the

ing reproles" the purpose of the organization. Instead, we must think and act universally: While we should openly acknowledge our present social base and its limitations, our politics are much broader than this base, so we shouldn't limit ourselves to it. After all, as Schere argued, reproles are not the only p eople who are potential anarchist revolutionaries. What we should be fighting for is our politics; our political consciousness (and thus our political activity) is not, and should not be, limited to a particular social base. Day's reprole strategy may be a strategy for recruitment, but it is not a strategy for political activity.

Several members at the conference, a significant number of them women, criticized the discussion over reproles and Love and Rage's social base as too limited. They argued that the discussion should have been opened up, not only to broaden the debate, b ut also to encourage greater participation, which was primarily dominated by men (see below for more on this). This is a valid criticism: The terms of the debate were largely set out by Day and Ignatiev, and those who were unfamiliar or dissatisfied with these terms could find no way to redirect the discussion. However, the reprole issue is an important one, for it has and will continue to determine the nature of our political work in the future. Many of us have faced the same question in our local politi cal work: Do we focus our work on developing a revolutionary politics and practice that we hope will transcend the limitations of our presently mostly white and middle-class social base, or do we, as representatives of the revolutionary wing of our social base, concentrate on fighting the reactionary elements within our social base (like nazi skinheads, the Klan, etc.)?

One Strategy, Three Struggles

After this discussion, the conference debated which political struggles we should choose to focus on as an organization. As

anarchists, we are opposed to all forms of oppression. However, as a small organization, we have a limited amount of resources. Given our desire to fight infinite oppressions with finite resources, what are we to do? Should we attempt to fight whatever injustice pops up at the moment and risk stretching ourselves too thin, or should we determine the key pillars holding this society up and then make a strategic decision on how to topple those pillars? The unanimous decision was to choose a few areas and focus on them. Four areas of struggle were proposed: anti-fascism, an anti-police campaign, México solidarity, and prisoner support/prison abolition. After some debate, the conference agreed to choose three of them as the primary work of the federation: anti-fascism, México solidarity, and prison work. However, the choice of which struggles to undertake was not based so much on choosing three out of four proposals, but on the strategy members believed was necessary to build a revolutionary movement in the US. Essentially, the debate over our focus was about dual power. Noel Ignatiev put forth the position that the purpose of any revolutionary organization should be to build a dual power. A "dual power" strategy means that our political work should be geared toward building resistance movements that not only oppose oppression, but also embody an alternative (i.e. a "dual power") to t he primary institutions of power in this society. According to Ignatiev, an anti-police campaign (which could involve monitoring the police, videotaping their actions, etc.) would represent a dual power because it would create direct community intervention and alternative institutions in constant conflict with existing law enforcement institutions. In this way, we could link revolutionary urges (everyone hates the cops) to a revolutionary counterpower that challenges the main pillar upholding capitalism and white supremacy: the state and their pigs. Therefore, Ignatiev argued, an anti-police campaign would be more effective in building a revolutionary counterpower than an anti-fascist campaign that focused on the racist right. He also argued that while solidarity and mutual aid with our

comrades in México and in prisons is essential and must not be ignored, it is a mistake to make them a primary political strategy of the federation.

Ignatiev's position, however, was in the minority. Several people felt his proposal was not necessarily revolutionary (or no more so than supporting the Zapatistas, for example), and others argued that it is simply unrealistic to attempt to organize a dual power: organs of dual power come from mass movements, not small organizations like Love and Rage. In the end, the dual power strategy lost out, as did the anti-police campaign proposal.

Although it was never explicitly stated, the decision to establish anti-fascist, Mexican solidarity, and prisoner solidarity/prison abolition campaigns was a decision by the conference both to reject a dual power strategy and to endorse a "reproletarian" analysis of our strengths and possibilities. The strategy and tactics of the federation now concentrate on organizing primarily white and middle-class youth against far-right, white-supremacist organizations, and on creating alliances with other potent ially revolutionary sectors of society (revolutionaries in México and prisoners). This is evident in the long-term goals each of the three working groups presented to the conference after all three groups caucused.

The Anti-Fascist Working Group's presentation focused on building an organization that can confront fascist movements across the continent (politically and physically) with the intention of "stealing the social base" of fascist groups (disaffected working- and middle-class whites: reproles) out from under them. The Mexican Solidarity Working Group pledged to establish closer contacts with Amor y Rabia (México's Love and Rage member organization) and to provide material support for the Zapatistas. It also pledged to work toward creating closer ties with Latino communities and supporting Native sovereignty struggles in the US and Canada. The Prisoner Support/Prison Abolition Working Group pledged to expand prisoner support work within the