

A brief history of the rapprochement process of US class struggle anarchist organizations

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July 29, 2013

Contents

1) Beginnings	3
2) Early Period	3
3) Middle Period	4
4) The Rochester Conference	4
5) Looking Forward	4

1) Beginnings

During the late 2000s, individual and collective consciousness began developing around the fact that not only were U.S. based anarchist and syndicalist organizations of previous generations persisting and growing in size, but, simultaneously, new groups identifying with these tendencies were emerging all over the country. The membership of these nascent organizations was comprised of veterans of previous groupings and struggles as well as energized newcomers, all representing diverse experiences of politicization. Most importantly, these groups seemed to benefit from an understanding of the failures and successes of past formations as well as the opportunities provided by a particularly ripe political moment. Instead of burning bright and fading away over a short period of time, these groups persevered and began to put down roots. In the shadow of a looming economic crisis, comrades around the country were preparing to take up with renewed vision and heart the old struggle against capitalism and the State.

The founding and proliferation of these new organizations coincided with the rapid, massive expansion of communications technologies. The new communications paradigm very soon became fertile ground for the seeds of international collaboration in struggle, best represented by the collaboration of international anarchist organizations that produced the websites Anarkismo and Anarchist Black Cat. In fact, it was within and by means of the new communications paradigm that a discussion, begun on the (international) Anarchist Black Cat in 2008, soon developed into a project, mutually supported by old and new class-struggle anarchist groups in the US, to start on a process of regroupment aimed at achieving a coast to coast anarchist federation.

2) Early Period

The first Class Struggle Anarchist Conference was called in June 2008 in New York City. Following New York, there were three more CSACs: Detroit (2009), Seattle (2010), and Buffalo (2012). These conferences were organized by members of the participating organizations and attended by their memberships and sponsored observers. They featured speakers, workshops, trainings, open discussions, and activities designed to excavate political similarities and bring to light situations for possible collaboration and mutual aid.

By the end of the Seattle CSAC, there was a collective will to take things to the next level — that is, to create a formal network of participating organizations. A shared listserv and website were created and groups elected delegates to participate in monthly conference calls.

By the end of the Buffalo CSAC, a delegate track was begun, where political documents and positions were hashed out, furthering progress towards the idea of building a unitary coast-to-coast anarchist organization.

Over the course of time, many groups participated in the CSAC process. Some groups disbanded, others emerged, and new members continued to join the ranks of participating organizations. Some groups also exited the process — which by then had come to be called Rapprochement — citing a variety of reasons for why this was not a good match for them politically or strategically. Those who remained continued to work on weaving the network work together and testing again and again for similarities and controversies.

3) Middle Period

In the fall of 2012, the question was called: has the process of rapprochement finally brought us to a point where we can form a new organization that reflects the best of what all the participating organizations and individual members have to offer?

4) The Rochester Conference

The first weekend of February 2013, delegates representing Common Struggle (Boston, Providence, Western Mass., Buffalo, and at large) Four Star Anarchist Organization (Chicago), Miami Autonomy and Solidarity, Rochester Red and Black, Wild Rose Collective (Iowa City), and Workers Solidarity Alliance (Bay Area, St. Louis, Northeast, at large) convened in Rochester, NY for our first delegate convention. Discussion centered around drafting points of unity and a constitution for our proposed new organization, as well as establishing a time line for our continuing regroupment towards this goal.

5) Looking Forward

Following the Rochester convention, our groups have continued working on our founding documents, through a process of committee edits, organizational amendments and membership referendum. Our membership recently approved a constitution, and we are aiming for a hard launch of our new organization in late 2013.

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