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Minneapolis Anti-Racist Action

Michael Corbin

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Rumors of its demise having been greatly exaggerated, a new Minneapolis Anti-Racist Action has formed and become an important force for political agitation and organizing in the Twin Cities. In part because of the absence in general of much action-oriented political activity, and because of the continuing relevance of its anti-racist, anti-fascist message, the re-emergence of Minneapolis ARA is a hopeful and instructive sign in these repressive, post-left times.

Small Steps and Guerrilla Activity

Minneapolis ARA has adopted four main areas of activity: the confrontation of specific white supremacist individuals and organizations; protest, propaganda and agitation at specific sites of institutionalized racism; a “cop watch” and anti-cop organizing campaign; and, finally, a program of internal education. Any of these by themselves, of course, could dominate the group’s time and resources; yet, by pragmatically mobilizing activists into each of these areas, two goals are accomplished. First, with humble expectations, in each area we can effect immediate changes and accomplish limited, but

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important, tactical victories. And secondly, building on these limited victories, each area has the potential to be a site of larger-scale organizing.

Confronting white supremacists, neo-nazi or otherwise, has, of course, been a major focus of ARAs here and elsewhere. While activists grow weary of analyzing the more overt powers that be, it's easy to miss the on-going hard-core, grass-roots organizing of nazis, eugenicists, racist "militias," Christian Identity, survivalists, etc. Confronting these organized white supremacists continues to be an important component in any larger revolutionary strategy. In Minnesota the signs too are ominous, and our anti-fascist work has two specific areas of focus. First, is the racist music scene, both the more mainstream metal bands and the overt fascist bullshit of groups on the Resistance label, like Bound for Glory. The second and related area of focus is the white-supremacist organizing that is going on in several of the Twin Cities' outer-ring suburbs. On this latter front, we hope that ARA can begin to work as a mobile force both in the urban space of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and also in that growing edge-city, exurban world where the right and the whites have their important and growing bases of power.

ARA's work against institutionalized racism has mostly taken the form of being a militant affinity group in some of the larger on-going struggles. For example, an important fight being waged right now is against the racist local utility, Northern States Power (NSP), and its plan to store its nuke waste next to a Sioux reservation in the Mississippi river flood plain. ARA has turned out an autonomous, militant crew to several large demonstrations, providing important tactical support for taking streets, closing roads, general fucking with the cops and the hired thugs of NSP, and propagandizing the importance of race to the more mainstream environmental demonstrators. While having significant limitations, this kind

of activism still has a place in using more traditional symbolic demonstrations as sites of tactical possibility.

The Minneapolis ARA cop watch, like the other two areas, has a two-pronged approach. Bi-weekly, a crew has gone out to an area highly militarized by the cops and, not coincidentally, a place where a lot of non-white youth hang out. By being on the scene at traffic stops, pat-downs, curfew round-ups, and bullshit harassments, we hope to be, and have been, in a position to intervene on behalf of anyone being fucked with. It's also empowering to go out and directly intimidate cops and their colonizing. But more than this, we hope to use the cop watch as an organizing tool to tap and direct the anti-cop sentiment on the street, to propagandize an anti-cop and anti-racist cultural possibility.

Left Out, Left Over, Looking Ahead

Minneapolis ARA can be seen as an instructive example of what can and perhaps should be done by way of militant political organizing. We have, of course, much to do. However, less in common with the more programmatic left, anarchist and otherwise, and more in common with the energy coming out the politics of identity of the last 15 years, Minneapolis ARA represents the kind of ideologically inchoate politics of the present. Growing out of a specific youth scene, with its emphasis on a self-conscious political identity and style, as well as its theoretical presupposition that race is a fundamental organizing principle of a society that needs to be torn down, the new Minneapolis ARA has evolved toward a broader vision of revolutionary possibilities.