

True to our democratic and egalitarian principles, we have always favoured decentralised organisational structures (instead of bureaucratic and authoritarian parties and unions). Each autonomous/local affinity group or "cell" is a building block of the anarchist movement.

Focussing on these local cells, this pamphlet deals with the inherently revolutionary nature of anarchist organising principles; the nature of affinity groups, questions of group size, how to overcome problems within them and how to build them into effective action groups.

*This short text is a printed weapon!!!*



This pamphlet includes the following essays:

- ★ The Case for Anarchist Organisation
- ★ Forms of Horizontal Organisation
- ★ Anti-Mass: Methods of Organisation for Affinity Groups



**Zabalaza Books**

*"Knowledge is the Key to be Free"*

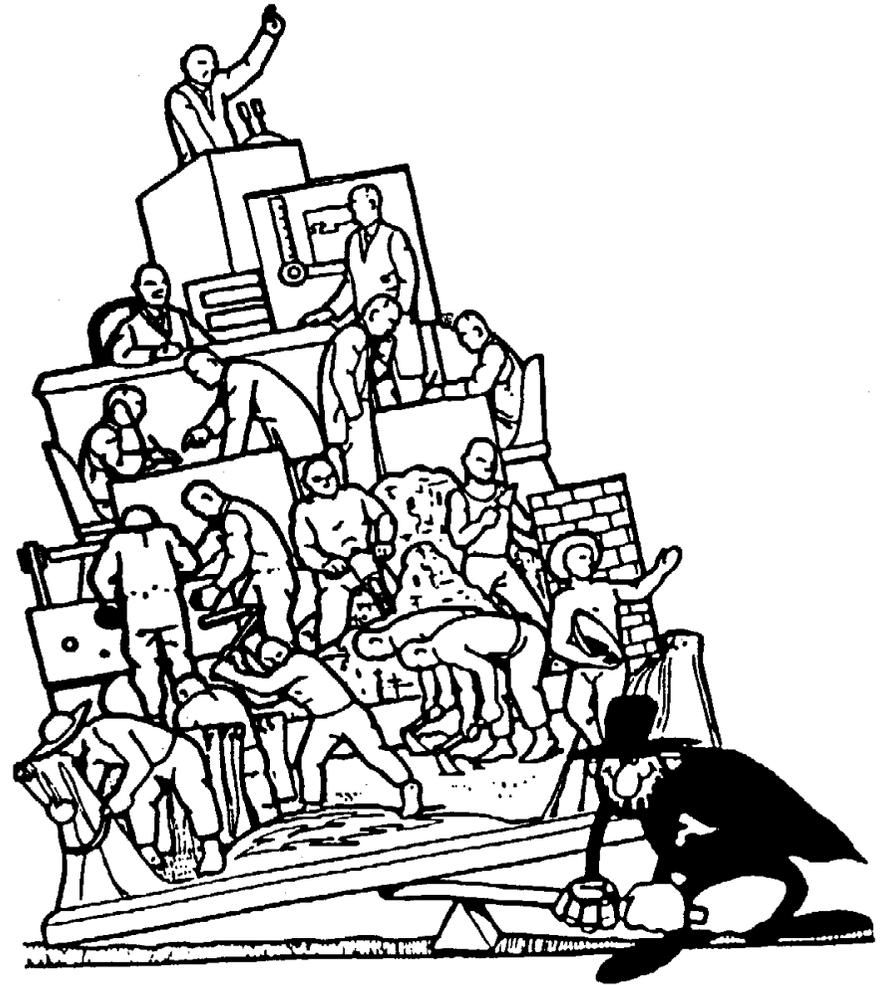
Post: Postnet Suite 116, Private Bag X42,  
Braamfontein, 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa

E-Mail: [zabalaza@union.org.za](mailto:zabalaza@union.org.za)

Website: [www.zabalaza.net/zababooks](http://www.zabalaza.net/zababooks)

# Democratic and Equal

## *The Case for Anarchist Organisation*



Self-activity is the reconstruction of the consciousness (wholeness) of one's individual life activity. The affinity group is what makes the reconstruction possible because it defines individuality not as a private experience but as a social relation. What is important to see is that work is the creating of conscious activity within the structure of the affinity group.

One of the best ways to discover and correct anti-work attitudes is through self-criticism. This provides an objective framework that allows people the space to be criticised and to be critical. Self-criticism is the opposite of self-consciousness because its aim is not to isolate you but to free repressed abilities. Self-criticism is a method for dealing with priggish behaviour and developing consciousness.



# THE CASE FOR ANARCHIST ORGANISATION

*By Floyd, Group of Anarchist Editors, Buenos Aires, Argentina*

Not surprisingly we have heard the claim that organisation is not compatible with anarchist philosophy, and that the co-ordination and distribution of tasks is in contradiction with anarchism. Our position is quite different.

**Organisation is the goal of anarchism, end and means.**

We believe in horizontal and voluntary organisation of groups and communities by means of freely established contracts. We are not anti-organisationalists nor have we been; we do not oppose the co-ordination of tasks, but rather all structures that make possible any form of oppression and exploitation.

Throughout our history we have demonstrated that it is possible to organise ourselves for the most complex tasks - from production and distribution to prolonged popular war - in a free, anti-authoritarian manner, totally free of coercion.

The only limitation of freedom that we accept and consider legitimate is that of **self-limitation**, which implies a free contract agreed to in an equality of conditions between members of a group.

When a liberatory organisation, because of the environment in which it operates, needs to avail itself of mechanisms of immediate, practical action (for example, a guerrilla during combat), there is no reason for its members to create authoritarian positions or organisms. In fact, the only reason to create such structures would be if it were impossible for the individuals involved to think and decide for themselves.

That is to say, there is no organisational reason to obligate a specific group to submit themselves to any person, as though they needed the blind obedience of the majority before the unlimited decision-making faculty of the minority. This is not compatible in any way with the work that anarchists hope to carry out and with the organisational forms that we imagine and have applied for action.

Throughout history, the mechanisms of immediate practical action have been applied with robust success by revolutionary anarchist organisations. Even in the most terrible and adverse conditions, they are created according to the model of free contract: the individuals, in an equality of conditions, convene in an assembly or conference and designate one or more spokespeople, delegates, or co-ordinators who, according to the tactical or strategic lines and the rules which have been established by the members of the group in question, co-ordinate the action during the moments in which the general assembly meeting is not possible.

These co-ordinators or delegates don't have anything more than a relative and provisional authority (because they are following the limitations of the assembly), and they are elected because their comrades consider them to have appropriate skills for the tasks that they are charged with. At the same time, they are perma-

nently removable and any decision that they make can be reversed by the agreement of the group or cell in which they act, and the comrades never owe them blind allegiance.

All authority that requires this type of obedience (that is, all authority that we know of) is shit and highly destructive to the social organism. Institutionalised authority, authority sustained through exploitative and oppressive structures, authority of the generators of conscience who are the wardens of theology, the authority of all of those that determine knowledge and the way in which it must be learned by children, that authority is the one that we, the anarchists, have proposed to destroy and that blow by blow, death by death, we will destroy.

Is it possible to believe, then, that organisation or the designation of co-ordinators is a contradiction to anarchism?

No. Definitely not. These would be the contradictions of individualism poorly understood and even more poorly practised, the very means of Darwinist egoism, but not at all dialectical anarchist problems.

Individualism that opposes all kinds of organisation is not compatible with the social anarchism that we propose. We believe that personal sovereignty is the first guarantee of liberty and freedom of the individual before his/her comrades. And it is by interweaving this infinite web of freedoms and solidarity as individuals associating mutually that we construct a new society based on justice.

We hold, as anarchist-communists, that individualism ostracises. Those that hope to find freedom in the isolation of people can only hope to achieve alienation, misery, inequality, and uniform mutual aggression, an essentially capitalist chaos, but with less forethought.

Dissociating the voluntary union of selves and nuclei of free selves is to leave the social organism in the most criminal and negligent defencelessness; it is to socialise misery as perversely as it is already in this society.

Our objectives? Liberatory organisation as a revolutionary tool, the abolition of capital and salaried (paid) work, the abolition of authoritarian structures of classes, popular self-defence by means of the creation of militias, built out of the oppressed classes, that guarantee free communism and socialist self-determination.

Our movements will grow. We will organise ourselves as anarchists, for a world without countries and without authority.



### SELF-ACTIVITY

Bad work habits and sloppy behaviour undermine any attempt to construct affinity. Casual, sloppy behaviour means that we don't care deeply about what we are doing or who we are doing it with. This may come as a surprise to a lot of people. The fact remains: we talk revolution but act reactionary at elementary levels.

There are two basic things underlying these unfortunate circumstances: (1) people's idea of how something (like revolution) will happen shapes their work habits; (2) their class background gives them a casual view of politics.

A lot of problems that affinity groups have can be traced to the work habits acquired in the (mass) movement. People perpetuate the passive roles they have been accustomed to in large meetings. The emphasis on mass participation means that all you have to do is show up. Rarely do people prepare themselves for a meeting, nor do they feel the need to. Often this situation does not become evident precisely because the few people who do work (those who run the meeting) create the illusion of group achievement.

Because people see themselves essentially as objects and not as subjects, political activity is defined as an event outside them and in the future. No one sees *themselves* making the revolution and, therefore, they don't understand how it will be accomplished.

A short span of attention is one telltale symptom of instant politics. The emphasis on responding to crisis seems to contract the span of attention - in fact there is often no time dimension at all. This timelessness is experienced as the syncopation of over-commitment. Many people say they will do things without really thinking out carefully whether they will have the time to do them. Having time ultimately means defining what you really want to do. Over-commitment is when you want to do everything but end up doing nothing.

The numerous other symptoms of casual politics - lack of preparation, being late, getting bored at difficult moments, etc. are all signs of a political attitude that is destructive to the affinity group. The important thing is recognising the existence of these problems and know what causes them. They are not personal problems but historically conditioned attitudes.

Preparation is another part of the process that creates continuity between meetings and insures our own thinking does not become a part-time activity. It also combats the tendency to talk off the top of one's head and to pick ideas out of the air. Whenever meetings tend to be abstract and random it means the ideas put forward are not connected by thought (i.e. analysis). There is seldom serious investigation behind what is being said.

What does it mean to prepare for a meeting? It means not coming to a meeting empty-handed or empty-headed. Mao (Zedong - famous Chinese communist leader (Ed.)) says, "No investigation, no right to speak." Assuming a group has decided what it wants to do, the first step is for everyone to investigate. This means taking the time to actually look into the matter, sort out the relevant materials and be able to make them accessible to everyone in the group. The motive underlying all preparation should be the construction of a coherent analysis.

administration. Do you wonder why the subject is shunted aside at large meetings? Because it fundamentally challenges the repressive nature of large organisations. Small groups that function as appendages to larger bodies will never really feel like small groups.

The affinity group should not be larger than a band - no orchestras or chamber music, please. The basic idea is to reproduce the affinity group, not expand it. The strength of the affinity group lies in its social organisation, not its numbers. Once you think in terms of recruiting, you might as well join the army. The difference between expansion and reproduction is the difference between adding and multiplying. The first bases its strength on numbers and the second on relationships between people.

Why should there be a limit to size? Because we are neither superwo/men nor slaves. Beyond a certain point the group becomes a meeting and before you know it you have to raise your hand to speak. The affinity group is a recognition of the practical limits of conversation. This simple fact is the basis for a new social experience.

Relations of inequality can be seen more clearly within an affinity group and dealt with more effectively. A small group with a "leader" is the nucleus of a class society. Small size restricts the area that any single individual can dominate. This is true both internally and in relation to other groups.

Today, the mode of struggle requires a durable and resilient form of organisation that will enable us to cope with both the attrition of daily life and the likelihood of repression. Unless we begin to solve problems at this level collectively, we are certainly not fit to create a new society. Contrary to what people are led to think, i.e. united we stand, divided we fall; it will be harder to destroy a multitude of affinity groups than the largest organisation with centralised control.

Size is a key to security. But its real importance lies in the fact that the affinity group reproduces new social relations - the advantage being that the process can begin now.

The limitation on size raises a difficult problem. What do you say to someone who asks, "Can I join your affinity group?" This question is ultimately at the root of much hostility (often unconscious) toward the affinity group form of organisation. You can't separate size from the affinity group because it must be small in order to exist. The affinity group has the right to exclude individuals because it offers them the alternative of starting a new affinity group, i.e. sharing the responsibility for organisation. This is the basic answer to the question above.

Of course, people will put down the affinity group as being exclusive. This is not the point. The size of an affinity group is essentially a limitation on its authority. By contrast, large organisations, while having open membership, are exclusive in terms of who shapes the politics and actively participates in the structuring of activities. The choice is between joining the mass or creating the class. The revolutionary project is to do it yourself. Remember, Alexandra Kollontai (prominent "left oppositionist" in the Bolshevik Party (Ed.)) warned in 1920, "The essence of bureaucracy is when some third person decides your fate."

# FORMS OF HORIZONTAL ORGANISATION

Below are some possibilities for horizontal organisation with respect to different environments in which action develops and the different types of action that can be taken:

## FACTORIES

Workers' councils and technicians charged with co-ordinating the production and maintenance of the factory, as well as co-ordination with other production and distribution units.

## CENTRES OF STUDY

Student councils on teaching that determine in common the forms and subjects of study, with a relationship of solidarity with other organisations in the community and with other centres of study.

## NEIGHBOURHOODS AND CITIES

Building, street, neighbourhood councils and general assemblies, in increasing order. These councils are charged with the maintenance of living spaces, communal centres and all of the infrastructure that contributes to the well-being of the population, works of engineering, distribution of consumable goods according to different needs and existence's, recreation, ecology, civil defence, cleaning, etc.

## GUERRILLAS OR MILITIAS

Organisation is strictly bottom-up, or periphery to centre. Groups of no more than 20 combatants as a basic unit of war and organisation. Successively, groups form centuries, centuries form assemblies, assemblies form columns, columns form bodies of the militia army, etc.

Each organisational unit has a spokesperson or delegate responsible for: co-ordinating action during combat; taking general directives of the base assemblies to the other organisational organisms; preparing along with others the plans to achieve the tactical objectives; responding always to the strategic decisions that the base assemblies determine; co-ordinating the joint work of supply and logistics; making known the proposals that arise from the base for the better-achieving of objectives; co-ordinating the tasks of intelligence and information gathering; making known to comrades the decisions that are made and the course to follow; always maintaining a fluid and free discussion not hindered by authoritarianism. This comrade (or group

of comrades) can be removed from his/her function if circumstances demand the participation of others more able or prepared. Additionally, the assembly can divide functions according to the work to be done, which allows for the formation of logistical assemblies, tactical assemblies, communications assemblies, intelligence, supply, transport, etc.

### **TRADE UNIONS OR SYNDICATES**

The councils of technical workers make up special commissions or designate spokespeople who, united in assemblies that group together the representatives of different activities related to a particular branch of production, co-ordinate and relate the activities of the production units. Trade unions or syndicates create new branches of work and new units of production, establish and maintain relations between the union and other popular organisations, improve and modify to the necessary degree the techniques and the models of work, ensure the well-being of the workers, etc.

### **OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

The same model for the free-functioning of any hierarchical governing body, based always on the base councils that guarantee the rights of all individuals to confront opinions in conditions of equality with other individuals. Guaranteed in this way, freedom and true equality of every person before her/his equals, and organised in the same form as a network of mechanisms suited for every action in every context, the sane and efficient functioning of the social organism is assured.



# **ANTI-MASS**

## ***Methods of Organisation for Affinity Groups***

### **PRIMACY OF THE AFFINITY GROUP**

The small group is the coming together of people who feel the need for collectivity. Its function is often to break out of the mass - specifically from the isolation of daily life and the mass structure of the movement. The problem is that frequently the group cannot create an independent existence and an identity of its own because it continues to define itself negatively, i.e. in opposition. So long as its point of reference lies outside of it, the group's politics tend to be superimposed on it by events and crises.

The small group can be a stage in the development of the affinity group, if it develops a critique of the frustrations stemming from its external orientation. The formation of an affinity group begins when people not only have the same politics but agree on the methods of struggle.

Why should the affinity group be the primary form of organisation? The affinity group is an alternative to the existing structure of society. Changing social relations is a process rather than a product of revolution. In other words you make the revolution by actually changing social relations. You must consciously create the contradictions in history.

It is imperative that any people who decide to create an affinity group know exactly who they are and what they are doing. That is why you must consider your affinity group as primary because if you don't believe in the legitimacy of this form of organisation, you can't have a practical analysis of what is happening. Don't kid yourself. The struggle for the creation and survival of affinity groups at this moment in history is going to be very difficult.

The dominant issue will be how affinity groups can become part of history - how they can become a social force. There is no guarantee and we should promise no easy victories. The uniqueness of developing affinity groups is their definite break with all hierarchic forms of organisation and the reconstructing of a classless society.

The form of an affinity group is its practice. The affinity group is opposed to the mass. It contradicts the structure of the mass. The affinity group is anti-mass.

### **SIZE OF THE AFFINITY GROUP**

Most people cannot discuss intelligently the subject of size. There is an unspoken feeling that the problem should not exist or that it is beneath us to talk about it. Let's get it out in the open. Size is a question of politics and social relations, not