Anarchism & The Platformist Tradition

Platformism is a current within the anarchist movement putting forward specific suggestions on the nature which anarchist organisation should take.

The origins of the Platform lie in the Russian anarchist movement's experiences during the Russian Revolution and the resulting civil war. One group of anarchist exiles, the Dielo Trouda (Workers' Cause) Group, came together in 1926 and published *The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*, since known as 'The Platform'. They wrote the pamphlet to examine why the anarchist movement had failed to build on their successes before and during the revolution.

The Platform was an analysis of the disorganisation of the anarchist movement at the time, and was an attempt to push it in a more organised, class struggle direction. The Platform was not an attempt at writing an anarchist manifesto. It was a discussion document and the authors never claimed to have all the answers.

The Platform was written because of what was going on in the international anarchist movement at that time. However, it remains relevant today in its insights on how anarchists should organise.

The Platform argues that to create a well-organised anarchist movement, we need a "grouping of revolutionary worker and peasant forces on a libertarian communist theoretical basis (a specifically libertarian communist organisation)" and "regrouping revolutionary workers and peasants on an economic base of production and consumption (revolutionary workers and peasants organised around production)".

Though they provided no extra insights on organising around production, their ideas for organising anarchist federations was something of controversy amongst many in the anarchist movement. To combat the disarray the movement was in, they suggested forming a "General Union of Anarchists" based on four basic principles: *theoretical unity*, *tactical unity*, *collective responsibility* and *federalism*.

Theoretical Unity means simply that if you don't agree with someone, don't be in a political group with them! This doesn't mean that everyone has to agree all the time (they won't) but there does need to be a certain amount of ideological unity. Everyone being 'anarchists' or 'libertarian' isn't enough. If half the group believe in class struggle while the other half don't, then both sides would benefit from having two smaller groups rather than one big group which spent all its time arguing.

Tactical Unity means that the members of an organisation should struggle together as an organised force rather than as individuals. Once the collective has agreed on a strategy, all members should work towards ensuring its success, saving resources and time concentrating in a common direction.

Collective Responsibility means, "the entire Union will be responsible for the political and revolutionary activity of each member; in the same way, each member will be responsible for the political and revolutionary activity of the Union." This means that each member should take part in the collective decision-making process and respect the decisions of the collective.

Federalism is an organisational structure based on "the free agreement of individuals and organisations to work collectively towards a common objective". All decisions are made by those effected by them as opposed to centralism, where decisions are made by a central committee for those effected by them.

Though Platformism had a shaky start with many prominent anarchists denouncing them as trying to 'Bolshevise' anarchism, it has now been taken on by many anarchist communist groups across the world such as the *Workers' Solidarity Movement* in Ireland, *Northeastern Federation of Anarchist-Communists* in North America and the *Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation* of Southern Africa.