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New ABC Fed Forms

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On May 6–7, there was a conference organized by three ABC collectives—Claustrophobia ABC from DC, Nightcrawlers ABC from NY, and New Jersey ABC. The conference was hosted by Claustrophobia ABC in DC, and was also attended by members of Baltimore ABC, 4th World ABC from New Jersey, and other anarchist prison activists from Pennsylvania and New York.

The purpose of the conference was to solidify a new regional ABC federation that had informally begun with the three sponsoring collectives in Dec. 1994. We left the conference with unforeseen results, well beyond what we had initially set out to achieve.

We decided against forming a regional federation, instead opening it up to any ABC groups in North America who agree with our federation's politics and criteria for membership. Instead of basing our membership on a particular region, we united on common political activities and a structure to accomplish it. There are ABC groups in our region who will not participate in this federation because of differences of opinion about the politics and structure of such an ABC federation. So in actuality this federation would not include

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all the groups from our region anyway, such as Brooklyn ABC or 4th World ABC.

A Discussion Bulletin was produced about a month prior to the conference, which included 2 proposals for how to build ABC. One proposed by Nightcrawlers was fairly general, proposing that we be thorough in outreach and follow-through to people who show interest in ABC, and proposing a regional speaking tour. The other proposal, from NJ ABC and Ojore Lutalo (a New Afrikan Anarchist Prisoner of War), was a detailed structure proposal for a new federation. This is the proposal that we ended up mostly talking about, and it is what we adopted, with a few minor changes.

The PAC / Lutalo proposal was controversial within all the other groups before the conference. At least some members of each group had strong reservations with it. But after discussion all day Sunday around the proposal, everyone there agreed to adopt the proposal, with only a few minor changes. The proposed structure reflected a lot of thought about how to deal with many of the problems facing ABC groups, and it seemed that most of the concerns people had with the proposal were more about how things were said or about potential dangers, not concerns about what the actual proposal said.

The proposal seems clearly designed to “draw a line” of demarcation between ABC groups who are able to make a long- term commitment to revolutionary politics and action, versus groups that don’t last very long or are inconsistent. It also caters to a very specific definition of what constitutes “revolutionary politics,” which put off some people. The way the proposal was presented in the discussion bulletin included vague attacks on some other ABC groups, which also probably caused some of the initial skepticism toward the proposal. But once we all got to talk through it face-to-face, it became clear that we had the unity needed to start the new ABC Federation.

The new federation is organized like this: ABC groups will be organized in a two-tier system. Branch Groups will be those groups who have been together consistently for a year, who file regular reports to the ABC Bulletin, who contribute money monthly to the War Chest (a fund to provide financial assistance for political prisoners and POWs), and who agree to function according to Lorenzo Komboa Ervin’s 15- point and Lutalo’s 4-point programs regarding prisoner support work. Support Groups consist of new groups or those groups who, for whatever reason, cannot meet the criteria to become a Branch Group.

Prisoners are also structured into the new federation. A five-member Committee of Prisoners, consisting of political prisoners or POWs, will offer guidance and direction for the ABC Federation. Members of this Committee will have one-year terms. As of the conference the membership of the Committee had not been finalized, although Ojore Lutalo and Sundiata Acoli have volunteered to be on it. Prisoners who are not POWs or political prisoners who want to be part of the ABC can form “Prisoner Solidarity Committees” which support and work with the activities of the federation, but don’t necessarily have to be anarchist. We also left open the possibility that organizations or collectives of prisoners can become Branch Groups if they meet the same requirements as groups on the outside.

Since the conference, Baltimore ABC and Brew City Anti-Authoritarian Collective have decided to become Support Groups in the new federation. It still remains to be seen how other ABC groups will decide to relate to this new federation. Those of us who have joined the federation believe it will help to create consistency, reliability, and increased effectiveness among ABCs, qualities most ABC groups have been notoriously lacking in the past.