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Anarchist Revolutionary Strategy

James Herod

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Contents

<i>European Historical Antecedents</i>	5
<i>US Antecedents in the 18th, 19th, & 20th Centuries . . .</i>	5
<i>Preliminaries – Mainstream Political Currents in the US</i>	6
Conservatism	6
Liberalism	7
Leninism	8
Social Democracy	9
<i>Contemporary Anarchist (and related) Currents (and publications) in the United States</i>	11
Anarcho-Syndicalism, Anarcho-Communism, and Cousins	11

Ways to Begin Gutting Capitalism
General Comments on the Strategy
Ways to Finish Gutting Capitalism
Further Discussion
Some Comments on the Literature
Appendix: Draft General Agreement

A printed edition will be available in the summer of 2006. It will be distributed by AK Press.

A 2004 edition is available on the web at:

http://site.www.umb.edu/faculty/salzman_g/Strate/GetFre/index.htm

The 2006 printed edition has been expanded a bit and copy-edited and so is much improved over this last 2004 internet version. You might want to wait for the printed book if you are thinking of reading it..

Starhawk, *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising* (New Society Publishers, 2002)

Kevin Danaher, and Roger Burbach, editors, *Globalize This! The Battle Against the World Trade*

Organization and Corporate Rule (Common Courage Press, 2000)

Trent Schroyer, editor, *A World That Works: Building Blocks for a Just and Sustainable Society* (Bootstrap Press, 1997)

Naomi Klein, *Fences and Windows: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Globalization Debate* (Knopf, 2002)

Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith, editors, *The Case Against the Global Economy and For*

A Turn Toward the Local (Sierra Club Books, 1996, 549 pages)

David Solnit, editor, *Globalize Liberation; How to Uproot the System and Build a Better World*. (City Lights Books, 2004, 497 pages.)

Eddie Yuen, editor, *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches from a Global Movement*. Soft Skull Press, 2004, 410 pages.

Postscript

20. A Proposed Strategy

James Herod, *Getting Free: Creating an Association of Democratic, Autonomous Neighborhoods*

Table of Contents:

Introduction

An Awareness of How We Do Not Want to Live

A Notion of How We Might Want to Live

Basic Agreements of the Association

Obstacles

Strategies That Have Failed

The Strategy Described Abstractly

Outline, Notes, and Sources for a Workshop Presentation at the 'We Are Resisting' conference in Lawrence, Kansas, June 30-July 4, 2004, entitled "Strategy Implications of Various Anarchist Currents in the United States."

Revised and expanded for a workshop on "Anarchist Revolutionary Strategy," presented at the New England Anarchist Book Fair in Boston on April 22, 2006.

European Historical Antecedents

Radicals of the German Peasant Revolts of 1525

Radicals of the English Revolution of 1640

Sans-Culottes in the French Revolution of 1793-94

Utopian Socialists

Anarcho-Syndicalism and Anarcho-Communism

The Cooperative Movement

The Paris Commune

Communist goal of a society without states, classes, markets, wages, or money

Experiences with Workers Councils – Russia, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Poland

Spanish Revolution

Nineteenth & Twentieth Century European radical social philosophy in general

US Antecedents in the 18th, 19th, & 20th Centuries

Radical Currents in the American Revolution of 1776

The Anti-Federalists

US Communal Experiments

The Anarchist Movement, 1880-1920

The Industrial Workers of the World

Anti-authoritarianism and participatory democracy of the New Left in the 1960s

The US's rich tradition of emancipatory social thought

Preliminaries – Mainstream Political Currents in the US

Conservatism

The dust had hardly settled on the revolts of the sixties before the counter-revolution began, a class war to ensure that in the future capitalists would control absolutely everything. This counter-revolution brought with it a new right wing ideology, to replace the traditional conservatism, an ideology that came to be known worldwide as neoliberalism, which was capitalism without the veneer, a brutal, zero tolerance capitalism. This initiative called for the privatization of everything, that is, ownership by capitalists and corporations. Every last thing on earth was to be turned into a commodity and source of profit – water, hospitals, schools, social services, parks, libraries, science, mass media, even war, and the government itself. Nothing public was to be left standing. Everything was to be sold off, and turned over to profit-taking corporations, usually at bargain basement prices. These policies were imposed relentlessly and successfully all over the world, resulting in a fabulous enrichment of the ruling class. They were also implemented domestically in the United States. So this is the face of modern conservatism. There remains of course a tiny assortment of right wing libertarians, who believe in small government, the Bill of Rights, and rugged individualism, but these people have no power, even though this philosophy probably expresses majoritarian sentiment in the US. As of 2006, capitalist domination of American society (the USA, that is) could hardly be more complete.

Keith Melville, *Communes in the Counter Culture* [of the '60s]: *Origins, Theories, Styles of Life*. (1972)

A few years ago there was an attempt to establish an Anarchist Communitarian Network, but I believe all the chapters are now defunct, although the New Jersey Collective still has a web site up at: http://www.geocities.com/acn_njc/collective.html

See also the web site for Intentional Communities at: <http://www.ic.org/>

19. Global Justice Movement

There are pronounced anarchist tendencies in the Global Justice Movement, including a commitment to direct democracy on the local level in many cases, a serious disillusionment with national representative government, extensive horizontal networking among various groups and projects, a refusal to set up a hierarchical, bureaucratic governing structure for the overall movement, a discrediting and rejection of the old Leninist strategy of capturing state power, many attempts to link the global movement to local struggles, and many innovative experiments toward sustainable self-sufficiency on the community level. Regrettably, there are also strong reformist elements in the movement. The World Social Forum, as of 2006, may already have been NGOed (or so claims Arundhati Roy).

Reources:

Notes from Nowhere, editors, *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism* (Verso, 2003)

William Fisher and Thomas Ponniah, editors, *Another World Is Possible: Popular Alternatives*

To Globalization at the World Social Forum (Zed Books, 2003)

Arundhati Roy, *The Cost of Living* (1999), *Power Politics* (2002), *War Talk* (2003)

Tom Mertes, editor, *The Movement of Movements: A Reader* (Verso, 2004)

Cooperative Housing, online at: http://www.housingforall.org/index_co-ops.htm

Richard Siegler and Herbert Levy, "Brief History of Co-operative Housing," online at: <http://www.coophousing.org/HistoryofCo-ops.pdf>

18. *Intentional Communities*

There is a rich tradition in the United States of communal experiments. The nineteenth century was littered with them, representing a wide variety of philosophies and structures. The New Left of the sixties gave birth to a whole new generation of "communes", both urban and rural, many of which embodied anarchist principles. Today, the country is covered with dozens of "intentional communities." Most of them are 'new age,' and are based on religion. But there are some which are more secular. Some are democratic, and to the extent that this democracy is direct, these communities therefore represent an actually existing bit of (partial) anarchy (not many are anti-capitalist) scattered across the landscape of America. There should at least be a campaign by anarchists to try to win these communities over to full anarchy.

Resources:

Mark Holloway, *Heavens on Earth: Utopian Communities in America 1660-1880* [1951]. (Dover, 1966, revised edition, 246 pages.)

Laurence Veysey, *The Communal Experience: Anarchist and Mystical Communities in Twentieth-Century America*. (University of Chicago, 1978, 495 pages.)

Robert Fogarty, *All Things New: American Communes and Utopian Movements 1860-1914*. (University of Chicago Press, 1990, 286 pages.)

Edward Spann, *Brotherly Tomorrows: Movements for a Co-operative Society in America 1820-1920*. (Columbia University Press, 1989, 354 pages.)

Critiques:

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. (Oxford, 2005, 247 pages.)

Noam Chomsky, *Profits over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order*. (Seven Stories Press, 2004, 175 pages.)

Chip Berlet, and Matthew Lyons. *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort*. (Guilford Press, 2000)

James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked: Imperialism in the 21st Century*. (Fenwood, 2001, 183 pages.)

Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States*. (Guilford, 1995, 445 pages.)

Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. (Metropolitan, 2004, 306 pages.)

For left wing research on the right see the work of Political Research Associates, at their web site, The Public Eye, at: <http://www.publiceye.org/index.html>

Liberalism

After the New Left's attempt (by its liberal wing) to break into national electoral politics was smashingly defeated in the 1972 McGovern campaign, what emerged out the fiasco is what came to be known as 'progressive populism.' Traditional liberalism, along with traditional conservatism, died (or were killed off) during the sixties. Progressive populism is the face of contemporary liberalism in the United States. It is represented by figures like Ralph Nader, Molly Ivins, Jim Hightower, and Medea Benjamin. Most of the widely recognized faces in the independent media on the so-called left (but not the left as defined by neocons) are progressive populists, or greens. They are liberal because they are not anti-capitalist. They may rant and rail against giant corporations, but they sing the praises of small town businesses. They believe in the US

constitution. They believe that the United States used to have a democracy and they want to get back to it by building a grassroots citizens movement.. They think that we can go back to the welfare state, and reestablish it. They are firmly committed to representative government, with its elections, and its Congress. The tendency is represented by a weekly newspaper out of Iowa, the *Progressive Populist*, among other publications. Progressive populists may number a million or two, as evidenced for example by the Nader vote, but they are far from being a mass movement.

Resources:

John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Good Society: The Human Agenda*. Houghton Mifflin, 1996.

Ralph Nader, *The Ralph Nader Reader*. (Seven Stories Press, 2000, 640 pages.)

Critique:

Immanuel Wallerstein, *After Liberalism*. (New Press, 1995, 288 pages.)

Preliminaries – The Two Failed Two-Stage (statist) Strategies of the Left

Leninism

Leninism, the strategy of capturing the state apparatus through armed struggle and revolution, has been one of the two-stage strategies for overthrowing capitalism – first capture the state, and then move to build a free society (variously called communism, socialism, anarchism). The strategy was applied not only in Russia but throughout the colonial world in national liberation struggles. Even though numerous revolutionary parties came to power, nowhere was capitalism overcome. Thus the strategy now stands as a proven failure, through more than a century of trials. Even hard-core Marxists are abandoning the goal of seizing the state.

16. Radical Democracy

There is not much in this body of literature in the way of concrete strategy proposals or concrete sketches of social forms, but there is a lot of useful theoretical clarification about the meaning of real democracy.

Sources:

C. Douglas Lummis, *Radical Democracy*. (Cornell UP, 1996)

David Trend, editor, *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship, and the State*. (Routledge, 1996)

Anthony Arblaster, *Democracy* (Minnesota UP, 1987)

C. George Benello and Dimitrios Roussopoulos, eds., *The Case for Participatory Democracy: Some Prospects for a Radical Society* (Grossman, 1971)

Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (1970)

Christian Bay, *Strategies of Political Emancipation* (Notre Dame UP, 1981), especially Ch. 6, “Toward a World of Natural Communities”

Bringing Democracy Home, a pamphlet from the Institute for Social Ecology, by Cindy Milstein,

Chaia Heller, Peter Staudenmaier, Jay Driskell, Arthur Foelsche, Amoshaun Toft, and Andrea Del Moral

17. Cooperative Housing Movement

[There are hundreds of housing co-ops. My research into this topic, however, is not far enough along to know whether there is any potential here for anarchist initiatives. The existing co-ops seem entirely mainstream, but I’ve only started looking.]

Resources:

National Association of Housing Cooperatives, online at: <http://www.coophousing.org>

Cooperative Housing Coalition, online at: <http://www.chc.coop/>

true, pure anarchism. Self-described post-left anarchists reject workplace organizing as 'workerist'. They reject neighborhood organizing. In fact, they are against 'organization', as well as several other abstractions with which they seem to be obsessed, and which they constantly attack, including 'work', 'collective', and the 'left'. Their arch-enemy, "leftism," is entirely fabricated, a product of their addled brains, as there has never been any such thing. They have failed to get beyond the specious individual/collective dichotomy, yet they deny that they are individualists. Their only strategy, that I can see, other than incessantly attacking 'leftism', that is, everyone in the anti-capitalist movement outside their own narrow circle of true believers, is to attack the system in whatever way they can, and to protest.

Sources:

Bob Black, *Anarchy After Leftism* (C.A.L. Press, 1997)

Jason McQuinn, "Post-Left Anarchy" (reprinted in *Anarchy*, #57, 2004)

Critiques:

Peter Staudenmaier, "Anarchists in Wonderland: The Topsy-Turvy World of Post-Left Anarchism," *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*.

Online at: <http://www.anarchist-studies.org/article/articleprint/45/-1/1/>

Eugene Plawiuk, "Post-McQuinn Anarchism," *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*.

Online at: <http://www.anarchist-studies.org/forum/message/18/>

Iain McKay, several articles on Bob Black and Post-Left Anarchism

Online at: <http://anarchism.ws/writers/anarcho.html#movement>

Other

Unfortunately, there are still moribund, remnant leninist groups active in the United States, all of which are striving to build a vanguard party to seize state power. Two of the most prominent are: International Socialist Organization, which publishes the weekly paper *Socialist Worker*, and the bi-monthly magazine, *International Socialist Review*; and Revolutionary Communist Party, which publishes the newspaper *Revolution*, and operates bookstores around the United States.

Critiques:

Herman Gorter, *Open Letter to Comrade Lenin: A Reply to 'Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder'* [1920]. (Wildcat, London, 1989, 41 pages.)

Anton Pannekoek, *Lenin as Philosopher: A Critical Examination of the Philosophical Basis of Leninism* [1938]. (Merlin Press, London, 1975, 132 pages.)

Paul Mattick, *Anti-Bolshevik Communism*. (M.E. Sharpe, 1978, 231 pages.)

Emma Goldman, *My Disillusionment with Russia* [1923], and *My Further Disillusionment with Russia* [1924]. (The Dover edition of 2003 reprints both books unabridged, 263 pages.)

Ron Taber, *A Look at Leninism*. (Aspect Foundation, New York, 1988, 104 pages.)

Francois George, "Forgetting Lenin," *Telos*, No. 18, 1973-74, pp 53-88.

Social Democracy

Social Democracy, primarily in Europe, was the strategy of capturing the state apparatus through elections. This two-stage strategy can also now be seen as a massive failure, since even though socialist parties have been in power in many European countries, sometimes for decades, capitalism has gone rolling on. What has thus been established is that we can't get to a free society (anarchy/communism, that is a society without a state or capitalism) by getting control of the state apparatus. This is

why the anarchist strategy, of bypassing the state altogether, is once again back on the front lines of the class war.

Of course, small social democratic parties are still active on the USA scene. The largest is the Democratic Socialists of America. They organize the annual Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City, publish a magazine, *Left Turn*, and regularly run candidates for public office. A smaller organization is the Socialist Party USA, whose official magazine is *The Socialist*.

Critiques:

Peter Kropotkin, "Representative Government," Ch. 13, pp. 118-144, in Kropotkin's *Words of a Rebel* (Black Rose Books, 1992, 229 pages.)

Andrew Flood, "Why Parliament is a Fraud."

Online at: <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2419/elect.html?200613>

Iain McKay, *Don't Vote, Organize!* (pdf pamphlet, Zabalaza Books, at www.zabalaza.net.)

Wayne Price, "None of the Above: The Anarchist Case Against Electoralism."

Online at: <http://nefac.net/node/1209>

James Herod, "Reject and Campaign Vigorously against Representative Government."

Online at: http://site.www.umb.edu/faculty/salzman_g/Strate/Discus/2005-07-31.htm

or small collective. The workplace and the neighborhood, as sites for struggle, are completely off their radar screen.. They say that "the root of anarchism is the simple impulse to *do it yourself*." They believe that since there is no god and no master there is no morality, and you can do whatever you please. They are strongly influenced by primitivism, and constantly rail against civilization. They see the good society as an aggregate of autonomous individuals.. It is a philosophy of 'do your own thing.' This is the politics of the 'traveler kids' who live off theft and out of dumpsters (and the generosity of their friends who haven't quit their jobs). They exhibit no understanding whatsoever that humans are social creatures, intersubjective beings. Nevertheless, in spite of their horrible politics, I sort of perversely enjoy these writings, expressing as they do such a total, almost poetic, revolt against the existing society.

Sources:

Fighting for Our Lives (pamphlet, by Crimethinc)

Days of War, Nights of Love (2001, Crimethinc Free Press)

Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook, A Movable Feast. (Crimethinc Workers Collective, 2005, 621 pages.)

Web site: <http://crimethinc.com>

Critique:

Ramor Ryan, "Days of Crime and Nights of Horror," *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*, Fall, 2004, Vol. 8, No. 2.

This is a comparative book review of Galeano's *Days and Nights of Love and War*, and Crimethinc's *Days of War and Nights of Love*.

On the web at: <http://www.anarchist-studies.org/article/articleprint/81/-1/9/>

15. So-called Post-Left Anarchism

Jason McQuinn, Bob Black

This is a sectarian current which is attempting to draw a narrow boundary around individualistic anarchism as the only

and to use them for insurgencies, and to live free (for a while). The social form is the band; it is seen as a festival; it practices psychic nomadism. There is a primitivist thread, in that Hakim Bey (Peter Lamborn Wilson) advocates “the refusal of all mediation”, and other primitivist themes. This is a basically individualistic tendency. Later, Bey extended the strategy to encompass ‘permanent autonomous zones.’ However, these are seen mostly as already existing zones of ongoing duration which the ruling class has somehow overlooked. No strategy actually is ever advanced for defending these zones against attacks by the oppressor, nor is much attention paid to defeating capitalists in general. We certainly must do better than to try to find a few overlooked niches in the Empire where we can breathe a little more freely, whether temporarily or permanently. We must get free from capital and empire completely. Nevertheless, there are many insightful suggestions in these writings.

Sources:

Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (Autonomedia, 1985)

Hakim Bey, *Immediatism* (AK Press, 1994)

Hakim Bey, *Millennium* (Autonomedia, 1996)

Hakim Bey, “Permanent TAZs,” at: <http://www.hermetic.com/bey/paz.html>

Hakim Bey’s web site: <http://www.hermetic.com/bey>

14. *Crimethinc*

This is yet another (peculiarly American) highly individualistic political initiative. They hate meetings. Democracy is a dirty word for them. Their attitude toward work is: don’t do it; quit your job. The chapter on “unemployment” in their book of resistance tactics, *Recipes for Disaster*, is about how to *become* unemployed, and stay that way. They have a strong belief in the absolute autonomy of the individual. They are intolerant of any social cooperation that goes beyond the affinity group

Contemporary Anarchist (and related) Currents (and publications) in the United States

Anarcho-Syndicalism, Anarcho-Communism, and Cousins

1. *Workers Solidarity Alliance*

This tiny group is the closest there is to a pure anarcho-syndicalist organization in the United States. Their strategy focus is on workplace organizing, with an eye to eventually seizing the means of production. For what happens after that, they subscribe to the standard vision of federated workers councils to challenge and eventually overthrow the state and capitalism. WSA is the U.S. member of the International Workers Association, founded in Berlin in 1922.

Sources:

Ideas and Action magazine, #1-17, 1981-1997

web site: www.workersolidarity.org

There is a vast literature on anarcho-syndicalism, workers control, and workers councils, seeing that this was the main anarchist strategy for decades, guiding many of the 20th century’s greatest revolutions. Two classics are:

Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* [1938], (Pluto Press, 1989)

Anton Pannekoek, *Workers Councils* [1950], (Ak Press, 2003) (Has a useful bibliography.)

See also:

Sam Dolgoff, editor, *The Anarchist Collectives: Workers’ Self-management in the Spanish*

Revolution 1936-1939. (Black Rose Books, 1974, 192 pages.)

Branko Horvat, editor, *Self-governing Socialism: A Reader*. (International Arts & Sciences Press, 1975, two volumes)

Andy Anderson, *Hungary 1956*. (Black and Red, 1976, 138 pages.)

Maurice Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control 1917-1921: The State and Counter-Revolution*. (Solidarity, North London, 1970, 89 pages.)

Critiques:

Murray Bookchin, "The Ghost of Anarcho-Syndicalism."

Online at: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/ghost2.html

2. *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review*

ASR is the main magazine for anarcho-syndicalism in the United States. Its strategy focus is on the 'revolutionary union'. Revolutionary unions are to be built with the aim of seizing the means of production, establishing workers councils, which will then be federated into a dual power structure to eventually overthrow capitalism.

Sources:

ASR magazine, #1-38, 1986-2006 (issues 1-24 as *Libertarian Labor Review*)

web site: www.syndicalist.org

3. *Wobblies (The Industrial Workers of the World)*

The IWW strategy is to build 'one big union', to defeat capitalism, with a strong emphasis on direct action. There is considerable stress on building a revolutionary working class counterculture. Beyond this though it is probably the syndicalist vision of federated workers councils that provides the backdrop, although wobblies deny that theirs is an anarcho-syndicalist organization.

Sources:

Industrial Worker (newspaper of the Industrial Workers of the World)

unmediated existence. They seem blind or unconcerned about the enormous suffering and loss of life that their analysis so calmly contemplates. This current is essentially individualistic. However, many people who now identify as primitivist do not necessarily endorse all the extreme views pushed by Zerzan.

Sources:

John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal* (Left Bank, 1988), *Future Primitive* (Autonomedia, 1994)

Running on Emptiness (Feral House, 2002), *Against Civilization* (editor) (Feral House, 2005)

Green Anarchy, #1-present

Fifth Estate (until quite recently)

Web site: <http://www.primitivism.com>

Critiques:

Brian Oliver Sheppard, *Anarchism vs Primitivism* (a See Sharp Press pamphlet)

Andrew Flood, *Civilisation, Primitivism, and Anarchism*, available online at: <http://struggle.ws/andrew.html>

Aufheben, "Civilization and Its Latest Discontents." (No. 4, Summer 1995).

Online at: http://www.geocities.com/aufheben2/auf_4_perlman.html

Wayne Price, "Class War, Industrial Capitalism, and Civilization."

Online at: <http://www.infoshop.org/inews/article.php?story=04/11/02/3560638&mode=print>

Iain McKay, seven articles at: <http://anarchism.ws/writers/anarcho.html#Primitivism>

13. *Ontological Anarchism*

Hakim Bey, *Temporary Autonomous Zone*

"TAZ is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, *before* the State can crush it." This strategy seeks to identify "spaces" (physical, social, cultural, mental) which are not yet completely controlled by the oppressors,

11. *Libertarian Socialism*

Libertarian socialism is quite close to the anarchist tradition. It is probably only because anarchism was so thoroughly excluded from the political arena for so long by the hegemonic marxism-leninism that this tendency evolved independently of anarchism. There is much from each tradition that might be useful to the other.

Sources:

Maximilien Rubel, and John Crump, editors, *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth And Twentieth Centuries* (St. Martin's Press, 1987)

David McNally, *Another World Is Possible: Globalization and Anti-Capitalism*. (Arbeiter Ring, 2002, 280 pages.)

Individualists

12. *Primitivists*

John Zerzan, Green Anarchy

This current, as articulated by John Zerzan, seeks to overcome alienation (i.e., humans once were one with nature, but are now separated) by abolishing agriculture, language, math, art, culture, technology, industry, the domestication of animals, the division of labor, and all symbolic thought. Primitivists seek the destruction of civilization, and do whatever they can to assist in this, although they believe that civilization is going to collapse of its own accord anyway. Their main strategic thinking is about how to survive this collapse, and about how to live as hunters and gatherers after the big die-off (they assume that they will be among the survivors). They don't actually have a political program and pay scant attention to attempts to change or improve the world because they believe that civilization, all civilization, in its entirety, is destructive and alienating and based on hierarchy and therefore must end. They seek a so-called

Joyce Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology* (Charles Kerr Pub Co, 1988)

Paul Buhle and Nicole Schulman, editors, *Wobblies! A Graphic History of the Industrial Workers of the World*. (Verso, 2005, 205 pages.)

Steve Kellerman, "Annotated Bibliography of Books on the Industrial Workers of the World," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review*, #27, Winter, 1999.

4. *Northeastern Federation of Anarchist-Communists*

Their strategy is to build a revolutionary organization to intervene in, and radicalize, working class struggles over work, housing, and community control. They "envision an international confederation of directly democratic, self-managed communities and workplaces." This is a very activist organization. They have participated in numerous labor fights, are regulars on the picket lines, have worked with the unemployed, and are organizing an anarchist workers network. They founded the Boston Angry Tenants Union. And of course they also participate in demonstrations and street protests. Nefac is a member of the International Libertarian Solidarity network. Other federations with much the same purposes and organization as Nefac have been established recently in the Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Midwest, with varying degrees of success.

Sources:

The Northeastern Anarchist, #s 1-10, 2001-2006

Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968* (AK Press, 2002)

The classic statement of anarchist communism is by Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, 1913 (many subsequent printings).

5. Situationists

This was a French current, from 1957 to 1972, which helped trigger the revolution of 1968 in France. The Situationist International broke with the old left and orthodox marxism and sought to redefine the radical project across the board. They incorporated the effects of mass media and the culture industry into their analysis of capitalism. Debord, in *Society of the Spectacle*, restored workers councils to the center of the revolution. But situationists also sought to extend the council system, into “neighborhood, city, regional, and international councils”, that is, to “generalized self-management”. The main proponent of situationism in the US has been Ken Knabb in Berkeley. His essay, “The Joy of Revolution” (1997) is an insightful synthesis of workplace and community emphases, as well as other currents. It is a good exposition of “generalized self-management.”

Sources:

Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*

Ken Knabb, *Public Secrets* (including “The Joy of Revolution,” pp 1-88)

Ken Knabb, editor, *The Situationist Anthology*

Rene Vignet, *Enrages and Situationists in the Occupation Movement, France, May '68* [1968]. (Autonomea, 1992, 158 pages.)

Dark Star Collective, editors, *Beneath the Paving Stones: Situationists and the Beach, May 1968*. (AK Press / Dark Star, 2001, 120 pages.)

Simon Ford, *The Realization and Suppression of the Situationist International: An Annotated Bibliography 1972-1992*. (AK Press, 1995, 149 pages.)

6. *Grassroots Economic Organizing and the Cooperative Commonwealth*

Frank Lindenfeld, Len Krimerman, and the GEO (Grassroots Economic Organizing)

10. Autonomous Marxism

This current takes its name from the autonomous movement of Italy's New Left of the 1970s, and the theoretical output of that movement. Also included are: the Johnson-Forrest Tendency in the US (Raya Dunayevskaya and CLR James), Council Communists, the *Socialism or Barbarism* group in France, and the Midnight Notes collective in Boston. Also usefully and reasonably included, I believe, is western marxism in general, that is, anti-bolshevik communism, hegelian marxism, and the Frankfurt School of critical theory. All this represented an updating and refurbishing of marxism, without the vanguard and statist strategy. It was a break with both Leninism and the orthodox marxism of the Second International.

Sources:

Harry Cleaver, *Autonomous Marxism: An Annotated Course Syllabus and Bibliography*

(On the web at: [[<http://www.eco.utexas.edu/facstaff/Cleaver/387Lautonomistmarxism.html>]][<http://www.eco.utexas.edu/facstaff/Cleaver/387Lautonomistmarxism.html>])

Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically*. (Texas University Press, Austin, 1979, 209 pages.)

C.L.R. James, *Facing Reality* (Bewick Edition, 1974)

John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power* (Pluto Press, 2002)

Midnight Notes, #1-11 (See especially #10, *The New Enclosures*).

Antonio Negri, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-first Century* (Polity Press, 1989), and *Revolution Retrieved: Selected Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis And New Social Subjects 1967-1983* (Red Notes, 1988)

Russell Jacoby, *The Dialectic of Defeat: Contours of Western Marxism* (Cambridge UP, 1981)

Dick Howard and Karl Klare, editors, *The Unknown Dimension: European Marxism since Lenin* (Basic Books, 1972)

9. Surrealism

Chicago Surrealists

Although keenly supportive of workplace and labor struggles, as well as the goal of reestablishing community, these aspects are not explicitly spelled out by Chicago Surrealists in their manifestos. The main items of the surrealist outlook as outlined by Paul Garon and the Rosemonts in 1996 are: revolt and revolution; poetry as praxis; psychoanalysis as a subversive activity; love above all; anti-miserabilism; the exaltation of play; free territories of the imagination; the marvelous against religion; abolishing whiteness; undermining patriarchy; black music now and forever; dialectic x dialectic x dialectic; alchemy, by any means necessary; the emancipation of wilderness; humor. Their strategy and practice is to intervene relentlessly in the major struggles, especially cultural ones, and they have done so. They claim a strong affinity with the IWW.

Sources:

Arsenal: Surrealist Subversion, issues # 1-4, 1970-1989

Franklin Rosemont, editor, *The Forecast is Hot! Tracts & Other Collective Declarations of the*

Surrealist Movement in the United States 1966-1976 (Black Swan Press, 1997)

Ron Sakolsky, *Surrealist Subversions: Rants, Writings and Images by the Surrealist Movement in the United States* (Autonomedia, 2002). This book contains a long introduction on the history of the Chicago Surrealist group and its relation to anarchism.

Ron Sakolsky, "Surrealist Desire, Anarchy, and the Poetry of Revolt" (*Anarchy*, #56)

Penelope Rosemont, *Surrealist Experiences: 1001 Dawns, 221 Midnights* (Black Swan, 2000)

Franklin Rosemont, *Revolution in the Service of the Marvelous* (Charless Kerr, 2004)

In May 2004 the founding conference was held for the National Federation of Worker Cooperatives and Democratic Workplaces. Len Krimerman, Frank Lindenfeld, and their friends, have been reporting on this movement for the past twenty years. They ferret out actual experiments in workplace democracy all over the world and publicize them in their newsletter. They have published a national directory of such experiments for the United States. Last I heard, there are about 1500 worker-owned businesses in the United States. The GEO collective fosters networks of worker co-ops, organizes conferences, and plugs into the international movement for self-managed workplaces which holds a conference every couple of years or so. They say that "GEO has assisted our movement in becoming conscious of itself." They believe that the seeds of a cooperative commonwealth are already present in the existing worker and consumer co-ops, community development financial institutions, and barter networks. As these increase in number, and federate, they may reach enough of a critical mass to transform the entire society. A broader anti-capitalist political movement will also be needed though for this to happen. This transformation will not be achieved however by seizing the means of production outright, but through legislation which will enable the construction of a cooperative commonwealth, after the mass movement has gained majorities in Congress through elections. So ultimately, although its focus is on worker-owned workplaces, this tendency is social democratic in nature.

Sources:

Changing Work, #1-10, 1984-1989 (Predecessor to GEO)

Grassroots Economic Organizing newsletter (GEO), #1-present

Frank Lindenfeld, "The Cooperative Commonwealth: An Alternative to Corporate Capitalism and State Socialism," *Humanity and Society*, Vol 21, 1997. (Also available from GEO)

Len Krimerman and Frank Lindenfeld, *When Workers Decide: Workplace Democracy takes*

Root in North America (New Society Publishers, 2002). This book has an extensive bibliography on workers control.

GEO, compilers, *Economy of Hope: Annotated National Directory of Worker Co-Ops, Democratic ESOPs, Sustainable Enterprises, Support Organizations, and Resources*.

Web site: www.geo.coop

Libertarian Municipalism

7. Libertarian Municipalism

Murray Bookchin, Institute for Social Ecology, Alliance for Freedom and Direct Democracy

The basic strategy advocated by libertarian municipalists is for anarchists to run for office in municipal governments. Once a majority of anarchists control the local government, they will set about abolishing the electoral system and establishing in its stead community assemblies based on direct democracy. Also, they will somehow institute public (i.e., community) ownership of 'the economy'. They don't explain how they will do this. They reject organizing at the workplace. The community assemblies will be confederated. I don't think this proposal has ever advanced to the status of being an actual movement or tendency. As far as I know, it has never been tried in practice. The attempt to organize an "Alliance" (the Alliance for Freedom and Direct Democracy), based more or less on libertarian municipalist principles, was still born.

Sources:

Murray Bookchin, "Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview," *Green Perspectives*, # 24, Oct 91

Murray Bookchin, "Theses on Libertarian Municipalism," *Our Generation*, Vol 16, spring 1985

Janet Biehl, *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism*. Black Rose Books, 1998 (Contains references to other relevant Bookchin writings)

Critique:

Michael Albert, "Assessing Libertarian Municipalism." Online at: <http://www.zmag.org/lm.htm>

See also the debate provoked by this article, online at: <http://www.zmag.org/lmdebate.htm>

8. Inclusive Democracy Project

Takis Fotopoulos, and the *Democracy and Nature* journal (not a US journal)

Takis Fotopoulos' project for Inclusive Democracy emerged out of Libertarian Municipalism. But Fotopoulos reinstated workplace assemblies and combined them with community assemblies for a more comprehensive view of a self-governing society, based on direct democracy (except these local assemblies will be federated). He nevertheless still advocates trying to capture local governments through elections. He supports all struggles and projects which further inclusive democracy goals, such as local currencies and democratic credit unions. He calls for the formation of a 'party' to agitate for these objectives. He also outlines a radical epistemology compatible with direct democracy which avoids the relativism of most post-modernism and the objectivism of orthodox science and mechanical marxism. As far as I'm aware, Fotopoulos' proposal has found almost no resonance in the anarchist movement in the United States.

Sources:

Takis Fotopoulos, *Toward an Inclusive Democracy* (Cassell, 1997, 401 pages)

Democracy and Nature (democracynature.org)

Major Related Currents