

The Federationist Manifesto

Lilly May

07/28/2020

Contents

The Federationist Manifesto	3
Preamble	3
What is Federationism?	3
What is Anarchism?	3
Why is Change Necessary?	4
The Failure of the State	4
The Failure of Capitalism	5
The Failure of Reform	6
Why Federationism?	7
Against Hierarchy	7
Against Capitalism	8
The Historical Successes of Anarchism	9
The Unification of Social Anarchism	11
The Alternatives	13
Why Not Marxism?	13
Why Not Individualist Anarchism?	14
The Pillars of Federationism	15
Social Anarchism	15
Communism	15
Syndicalism	16
Social Ecology	16
Flexible Formalized Institutions	16
Prepared Revolution	17
Triad of Praxis	18
Rights	19
Gender Liberation	21
Racial Liberation	21
Queer Liberation	22
Decolonization	22
A Call for Federationism	24

The Federationist Manifesto

Preamble

The world has been set on fire by the sparks of a revolution. Across the globe, from villages to cities, from the factory floor to the farm, there has been a revolution underway for longer than humanity has been able to write. This revolution has been a revolution for fairness and dignity, a revolution for cooperation and self-governance, the revolution for liberation.

What is Federationism?

Federationism is a movement to synthesize previous and currently existing movements in order to achieve a template for liberation, taking elements from each. Federationism additionally adds new ideas, to form a practical tool for the empowerment of all people. Federationism is inherently and inextricably anarchist in nature. It further is the distinct idea that humanity is capable of unifying together, and addressing all of its grievances at once in an organized fashion. Based on the principles of radical democracy, universal liberation, and mutual aid.

What is Anarchism?

Anarchism has been defamed for centuries as being the collapse of society, a breakdown of morality, the world turning against itself. These accusations are nothing but myths used to silence those who would oppose tyranny. Anarchism is the continuous movement to oppose oppressive hierarchies. Oppressive hierarchies are those which are coercive, involuntary, and unjust. Unjust hierarchies being those which have power concentrated unnecessarily, and are easily abusable and unaccountable. Involuntary hierarchies being those which involve people who did not give explicit consent to partake in, and have no recourse to leave or substantively change said structures. While coercive hierarchies being those which use either violence, or other means of force to generate compliance to said structures. Principle among the hierarchies that anarchism seeks to abolish is the state. The state is a separate entity from a government, and is the institutions and organizations in a society through which coercive and involuntary hierarchies are maintained.

Why is Change Necessary?

The current set of affairs and conditions around the globe are demonstrating that representative “democracy” is entering into a stage of degradation. States around the world are turning to outright authoritarianism, dictatorship, and are welcoming the resurgence of fascism with open arms. These conditions have rendered the current status quo inoperable, and have also made any attempts at mere reform utterly impossible. Radical change is the only way in which true liberty, true freedom, and true democracy can be saved from these conditions, rather than the facades which are currently held up as “liberty, freedom, and democracy”.

The Failure of the State

Principle in the contribution to this authoritarianism is the fact that around the world the state is what reigns over people. As the state is the institutions which create and enforce coercive and involuntary hierarchies, there is little to wonder as to why such institutions create and exacerbate oppression and authoritarianism. The ultimate form of the state is fascism which is characterized by its worship of the state, to such an extent that the state begins to co-opt and then subsume religion and religious worship into itself.

One may wonder why rulers don’t understand how to solve problems in ways that ordinary people are sure they could do better. One may wonder why rulers act in such greedy and self-destructive ways, while ignoring long term consequences. This is because while power seems to give people the ability to act however they want, in reality power acts upon those who wield it, and selects for those who will be able to wield it for the longest.

Through the state, liberation can never be achieved, as by the very nature of what a state is it can only use oppression to achieve its aims. It creates a violent distance between the people and rulers. No matter how the rulers come to power, the power of the state will exercise brutal violence against the people. This is due to the incentives of the state, as it fundamentally runs on the principle of “might makes right”. Some potential leaders may promise to not use the powers of the state for ill, or (as is more often the case) will promise to “reform” the state to be “not as brutal”. However, these potential leaders in the long term will be beaten out by those who have no such qualms, who will brutalize, lie, cheat, steal, and do whatever it takes to hold onto the reins of power that stem from the state.

Power is derived from one’s ability to make others act on their behalf. The military, infrastructure, resource collection, laws, and so on are what make a society work. And as such a ruler must gain the favor of those who control these vital systems. In dictatorships the number of people who control vital systems is few, in representative “democracies” it is many, with a wide range in between. No matter the number, those who control these vital systems which make society run are the ones that hold power. In order for a ruler to keep power, they must control resources and allocate enough of them to the systems, groups, and individuals who enable their reign.

The inherent incentive structure of the state leads to two extremes, the most stable dictatorships where the resources are not based on the productivity of the people they rule over (often called the “resource curse”), and the most stable representative “democracies” where the wealth is based almost entirely on the productivity the people ruled over. In between are the various regimes which are less stable and more prone to revolt. As such, representative “democracies” are at extreme risk of dictatorial coups when there is a massive deposit of a valuable resource which outstrips the productivity of the populace, or the productivity of the populace falls enough that the country becomes poor. While it might seem the case that the opposite would be true for dictatorships, this is where unstable regimes come in. Resources spent on increasing productivity of the populace are resources that rivals can promise those who control the systems which make society work, which make coups far more likely.

Benevolent dictators it is clear are not possible for any real length of time, as the incentives of power will always allure malicious actors. Additionally, the longer those in positions of power stay there, the less their interests intersect with those they rule over, making the creation of a ruling class inevitable under a state. Within representative “democracies”, politicians are incentivized to engage in corruption in order to make deals with powerful interests, and ignore giving resources to voting blocks which don’t secure their power as those resources can instead be funneled to those powerful interests. It is clear then that the state will always trend towards oppression. No matter how prosperous a country, eventually the bountiful times will end and the allure of power will pull in the ambitious and ruthless to move the country towards dictatorship.

Additionally, no matter how noble the revolutionary, once they utilize a state they are doomed to fall into these same traps. Revolutions are bloody affairs, and at the end of them rarely will the newly estate regime have full control. As such new leaders will cull their old supporters and bring in bureaucrats from the old regime, which while it seems counter-intuitive is how power works. The people who help win power are not the same ones who will help keep it, and to keep them around is just asking for rivals to the ruler and their vision. This can be seen in the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks back stabbed their comrades of the Free Territory once they outlived their usefulness, purged the cabinet, brought in bureaucrats who worked under the former Tzar, and created a system which ultimately became more authoritarian than that of the Tzar.

The only way to avoid the oppression of the state is to spread out the power in society as much as possible, so that power can only be exercised if the people want it to be, not based on the whims of petty rulers.

The Failure of Capitalism

The second largest hierarchy which has led to the disastrous conditions around the world is capitalism. Capitalism is built upon the extraction of surplus value from workers to generate profits, capitalism is also built on the assumption of infinite growth in order to sustain this generation of profit. As such capitalism must seek to ruthlessly expand and take ever more value from workers around the world.

Once capitalists had grown tired of exhausting the value of only Europe they then utilized colonialism in order to extract the wealth from all other regions around the world. However, the infinite growth of capitalism is unsustainable. There is only so much mineral wealth that can be mined, only so hard one can make people work for an ever diminishing amount of pay, before

the system can no longer grow or profit. Capitalism simply can only last for so long before it collapses, and as that time nears ever closer the regular collapses of capitalism's market system will trend to grow ever more harsh before the market system simply can't recover at all.

Global capitalism is built upon the oppression of countless regions it has made poor, extracting as much surplus value as it can from the region. While the age of old colonialism may be dead, neo-colonialism has taken its place, using "soft" power such as economic and diplomatic pressures in order to force poorer regions to accept global capital to pillage their resources and talents. Neo-colonialism gives the facade of being a "voluntary exchange" however is anything but voluntary. All the "soft" power exercised in these regions is backed up by the "hard" power of global empire, the threat of coups, the threat of "needing to restore order" from the unrest created by the poverty inflicted on the region by global capital, and so forth. Further, due to the instability of capitalism and its reliance on the state, means that it will always ultimately feed into the trend towards the authoritarianism of the state.

Capitalism needs the state. Throughout history capitalists have relied on the state to use its institutions to protect them and their ill gotten loot from the workers it has subjugated. Capitalists rely on the state to break strikes, to enforce its right to private property, and to generally do the unprofitable dirty work required to keep the population productive and complacent enough to have its value extracted. Capitalism is a system based upon the assumption of coercive institutions that will protect the interests of the wealthy elite from the interests of all others.

The Failure of Reform

Reformism is the idea that institutions are not fundamentally unworkable for the benefit of all. The idea behind reformism being if certain things are changed that the larger institution as a whole can be salvaged. However, it has been demonstrated that this is impossible. The inherent nature of the state and capitalism mean that there is an unchangeable trend towards authoritarianism, oppression, and exploitation. Reforms can and will always be undone, it may take time but it always occurs. A few decades may be a long time, but in the large scheme of the centuries of capitalism and the nation state it is merely a short detour from the inevitable progressions of these institutions.

Reformists believe that through reform society can break away from these oppressive institutions. However, the institutions in practice have numerous ways to stifle and dilute reforms to be ineffective. In addition, in places where large steps towards breaking away from these institutions were made, they were swiftly followed by coups and assassinations. The interests of the state and of capital will stop at nothing to maintain their grip over people, any real opposition to them will be met by the swift use of violence to reinstate the status quo. Rendering reform as a way to escape the state and capitalism impossible. This can be seen perhaps no better than the Chilean coup in 1973, when the military ousted the democratically elected socialist president, who had attempted to swiftly make large reforms towards creating a fully socialist economic system. It is clear that should reforms ever start making enough progress, the institutions which uphold the state and capitalism will act to decisively crush these reforms and roll back not only the reforms instituted, but earlier reforms as well which had impeded the power of the state and capitalist institutions.

Why Federationism?

It can be said with certainty that radical change must be brought about in order to save the people around the world suffering under the oppressive systems which bind us, strip us of our humanity and dignity, and extract our value like leeches. The way in which people are able to rise up and organize themselves in opposition to oppressive hierarchies must be carefully considered, and it must be holistic. Historically revolutions have focused on only one or a few ways in which oppression must be opposed and overthrown, while freeing some they left others to their bondage. Federationism seeks to rectify this, by addressing all the ways in which oppressive hierarchies must be identified and utterly abolished, creating true liberation for all.

Against Hierarchy

Hierarchy is the birthplace of oppression and inequality. Without the unjust, coercive, and involuntary hierarchies that exist, it is impossible that oppression and inequalities could manifest in society. As such, in order to achieve a society which not only lacks these horrendous conditions, but is incapable of producing them. The system of such a society must be staunchly against hierarchies where they are unnecessary, are violent, and are forced upon people.

Further, one must understand the extent of hierarchies and how they taint not only societies, but the ways in which people are able to conceive of the world. The state and capitalism represent clear examples of oppressive hierarchies, but so too do racism, sexism, queerphobia, environmental degradation, and more. These hierarchies presuppose that there are lesser beings that exist, and that as lesser beings they are not deserving of being treated fairly or with dignity, or that what they are deserving of is some lesser subjugated position to that of the “superior” or majority elements of society. With federationism an interconnected and intersectional understanding of hierarchy is strictly necessary. The hierarchical societies that can be found around the world did not spring forth all at once. First came the subjugation of nature to the wills of humans, then the subjugation of women, and then the subjugation of those who are different than the increasingly entrenched idea of who and what is “normal”, as that idea shifted from “normal” to “superior”.

Perhaps one of the most insidious forms of hierarchy that many will not recognize is that of hegemony. The culture that surrounds each and every one of us every day, things which we take for granted because “that is just how things are”. The assumptions one has about the world depend almost entirely based on what one is taught and told to expect, from this phenomena such as “group think” emerge where people uncritically support positions because it is expected of them to do so. For example, people invested in party politics may decide how they feel on certain issues based entirely on what the party they belong to says about it. Hegemony exists as a hierarchy which attempts to push out those who think differently and are different from what society in general expects and does, with threat of ostracization or even violence. Hegemony can easily become oppressive, as well as is a powerful tool by those in positions of power that

know how to use it to their advantage. Historically, hegemony has been used to frightening effectiveness by conservatives and reactionaries in order to block social progress.

Hierarchy works its way into all levels of society, interactions between individuals, and even the very thoughts of individuals. It creates the impossibility of a just society while it is allowed to persist, and as such federationism recognizes the need to reject unjust, coercive, and involuntary hierarchies.

Against Capitalism

Capitalism as has already been discussed is a form of hierarchy which brings with it many forms of oppression within societies, including to those which don't participate in it. Federationism opposes capitalism on these grounds, as well as based on the economic realities that it is not only an undesirable system but an unsustainable one as well.

The system of capitalism is built upon the accumulation of wealth. In order to do this capitalists must have produced for them products or services with a value which consumers will pay for. In order to create a profit a capitalist must factor in the cost of the materials required to produce their goods or services, and the cost of the labor that their workers must be paid for. As such a capitalist who wishes to stay in business must reduce costs as much as possible, pay their workers as little as possible, and charge as much as possible for their goods or services. This inherently means that capitalism is inherently parasitic. A capitalist must pay the workers a minuscule fraction of the value of what they produce, and then turn around and charge consumers more than the value of what has been produced, taking for themselves the surplus value, the value extracted from their workers which exceeds what they have been paid. A capitalist which is able to stay in business must therefore leech off not only their workers but their customers, pay one less than their value, while charging the other more than the value of what they are purchasing.

In addition there is the factoring of the cost of the materials which the workers will use to produce goods or services which create the surplus value for capitalists. It is far cheaper for capitalists to spread out the production of goods into as specialized roles as possible. This creates large supply chains within capitalism in which workers will do the same repetitive tasks over and over and over. Alongside relegating workers to repetitive tasks, they are also denied the full value of their labor which creates alienation. Workers are alienated from the fruits of their labor, either being unable to see the products they create, unable to receive the value of what they have produced for others, or both. This alienation creates within workers an angst, frustration, and exhaustion, significantly reducing the quality of life for workers. At the same time capitalists thrive, only having to work far less to earn the cumulative surplus value of their workers which generate far more money for them. Despite at most having them only providing an initial investment for the business while the actual work of running and maintaining production, which is the lifeblood of any business is handled by those who are alienated.

This angst produced by the alienation of capitalism if left unattended by the capitalist ruling class will turn to anti-capitalist sentiment, class consciousness, and eventually to revolt and revolution. The ruling class having a vested interest in maintaining their parasitic lifestyle must prevent this. Capitalists turn to three main tools; the state, hegemony, and bigotry to address this. The state is relied on to violently suppress any attempts by workers to organize or rise up against their oppressive conditions, keeping workers fearful of attempting to change the systems

which oppress them. Hegemony is used to ingrain within workers loyalty to the ruling class, reliance on hierarchical systems, and general complacency with the status quo, creating conditions which make it difficult for workers to conceive of challenging oppressive institutions. And bigotry while not created by capitalism is maintained by it, directing the angst that comes from alienation of the workers at each other and causing infighting in order to distract workers from who and what are the true source of their suffering.

Capitalism represents a refinement of the long history of oppressive hierarchies, creating an amoral system which is centered around the deification of collecting money, which is a stand in for power. Additionally, unlike previous systems, as money is so ubiquitous in capitalism it gives the illusion that everyone has a little power and that anyone could gain more power. As such it creates an obsession with the procurement of more and more power in society, which is most consistently obtained through the oppression of others, creating perverse incentives to mentally devalue the lives of people in order to control them.

The Historical Successes of Anarchism

Often anarchism is portrayed, when not outright defamed, as a utopian pipe dream. One is told Anarchism is nothing but wishful thinking, and that its tactics and theories offer no tangible benefits or routes to success. Such accusations are patently false. Additionally, such accusations ignore the fact that the tactics and organizational structures that anarchism utilizes are the same as those that would have to exist under communism. If such accusations are levied by those who consider themselves to be communists they are neglecting to consider how their ultimate goal would actually function, to their own detriment.

To demonstrate the successes of anarchist praxis four examples will be put forward: the CNT-FAI in revolutionary Catalonia, the EZLN in Chiapas, the AANES in Syria, and the CHAZ in the United States.

The CNT-FAI was the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), which was composed of militant anarchist affinity groups within the National Confederation of Labor (CNT), a confederation of anarcho-syndicalist labor unions in Spain. During the 1936 Spanish Civil War, CNT-FAI revolutionaries based primarily in the region of Catalonia rose up against the Nationalists and agreed to an uneasy coalition with the liberal Republicans and Soviet Union backed communist groups such as the PCE. These groups went on to later betray the anarchists in a counter-revolution which cost the coalition a total defeat to the Nationalists in 1939. However, during that time the CNT-FAI and other anarchist groups made considerable gains both to the war effort and in building socialism. The CNT-FAI in areas it controlled were able to achieve an approximately 75% rate of worker ownership and direct control of businesses and firms, the highest of any region during the civil war. Businesses were run by worker committees, and agrarian areas had the land collectivized and shared between previously independent farmers who organized into communes. The collectivization of farm land, and the communal system to organize life in rural areas, resulted in harvests that ranged from about 30% to 50% larger than before the civil war. Reports also indicated that industrial production had nearly doubled compared to before the civil war. These boons allowed for the CNT-FAI to distribute goods in accordance with decentralized planning and according to the communist principle of 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their need'. Additionally, in some places money was able to be eliminated and

replaced by a voucher system, while some areas were able to outright abolish the use of any currency, which for a time meant in those areas communism had effectively been achieved. Though it is fair to note, such achievements did not apply everywhere under CNT-FAI control, and the communism enjoyed by some at that time was an outlier compared to the more prevalent anarchist socialism. The CNT-FAI stands as arguably the most successful attempt at an anarchist revolution in history.

Moving forward in time to 1994 is the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) often shortened to the Zapatistas. To begin with, it is important to note that while the Zapatistas incorporate some anarchist theory and praxis into their ideology and systems, the Zapatistas do not wish to be labeled by outsiders, and instead only want to be considered as following the thought and praxis of Neozapatismo. Neozapatismo draws inspiration from many sources and defies being labeled as anything other than Neozapatismo, and as such should have that be respected. That being said, there are important lessons to learn from their application of thought which was inspired by anarchism. The Zapatistas occupy the majority of the Chiapas region in Mexico. The Zapatista uprising began as a protest against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which placed the Zapatistas in a de facto state of war with the Mexican state. Since the uprising failed to spark a further revolution against the Mexican state, in 2001 after many years of armed conflict a peace agreement was brokered between the Zapatistas and the Mexican state. The peace agreement has allowed the Zapatistas to focus more heavily on increasing autonomy and prosperity in the region without having to fight an unfavorable war for independence. The conflict has shown how anarchist means of organizing armed revolution, and a decentralized means of governance are effective. The decentralized and highly accountable nature of the Zapatistas' armed forces has shown that when organized in accordance with principles shared by anarchists allow for much smaller forces to adequately defend themselves from larger militaries which would seek to crush revolutions.

Going even further in time to 2012 brings one to the Autonomous Administration of North and Eastern Syria (AANES), which is colloquially referred to more commonly as Rojava, the region which first gained de facto autonomy in 2012 due to the Syrian Civil War. The AANES is an anarchist autonomous region operating under the ideological system of democratic confederalism. It is important to note that democratic confederalism is not strictly speaking fully anarchist, as it is based on the ideology of communalism which synthesized marxism and anarchism. However, the parts of democratic confederalism which don't follow anarchist ideology are part of its pre-revolutionary praxis, principally its willingness to actively participate in elections prior to a revolution. That being said, all of democratic confederalism's stances on revolutionary activities and how to organize society fall in line with anarchist principles, as such the AANES is effectively operating as an anarchist revolutionary society. The AANES is, at the time of writing, involved in the ongoing Syrian Civil War. It gained de facto autonomy in the region of Rojava in 2012. By 2014 it had expanded considerably into other regions and its subdivisions known as cantons all declared autonomy from the Syrian government. In 2016 the cantons announced a formal autonomous federation. And in 2018 a new administration for the federation was declared at which point it received the new official name of the AANES (from 2012–2018 the autonomous region underwent various changes in official names). At the time of writing the Syrian Civil War is still being fought, and it is unclear what will be the ultimate fate of the autonomous region. However, in the midst of the turmoil engulfing the Middle East, the AANES has stood out as a beacon of what might hopefully win out. The AANES has made massive strides in implementing

a system of direct and semi-direct radical democracy, through a series of communes and councils which federate to form cantons, which in turn federate with each other to form the federation as a whole. The region due to the anarchist ideas of democratic confederalism has been able to tackle many oppressive hierarchies. Of particular importance to the AANES is ending sexism and gender discrimination, the revitalization of the region's ecosystems, and ending ethnic tensions. The AANES has excelled at their goals through systems of empowering localities through directly democratic communes, as well as a system of rehabilitative and restorative justice. With a population of over two million people at the time of writing, the AANES is the largest currently existing anarchist society, and one of the largest to ever exist. The AANES admittedly has fallen shorter in terms of economic development in comparison to other anarchist societies, though this is mostly intentional. The AANES in order to address ethnic tensions and prevent infighting has decided to commit to not expropriate or collectivize land or businesses except by voluntary means, and incentivize voluntary collectivization through a series of economic advantages given to those who choose to do so. So while the AANES has moved at a slower pace to institute socialism and communism than comparable anarchist societies, it is still making steady progress towards that goal as more and more land and business owners voluntarily hand property over to be collectivized. It has shown how effective stateless decentralized militias and community defense committees are at protecting anarchist societies from outside threats and internal crimes, with the AANES being responsible for the vast majority of on-the-ground fighting and victories against the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant which had started its first offensives after declaring itself a "Worldwide Caliphate" in 2014. Additionally, the AANES has resisted military advances by the Syrian state, as well as the Turkish state, much larger and better equipped forces which have found little success against the AANES, further demonstrating how effective anarchist militia tactics can be.

Finally, in 2020 during a new round of Black Lives Matter protests against the United States' police force and government, in parts of the Capitol Hill neighborhood of the city Seattle, a self-proclaimed autonomous zone was created. The autonomous area has been called primarily the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ), as well as Free Capitol Hill, and the Capitol Hill Occupied Protest (CHOP). The CHAZ lasted only a few weeks, and was largely ineffective at being truly autonomous, but it presents something far greater. It is clear the United States is nearing the final stages of complete decay and will likely fall apart in the relatively near future, and it is the anarchist organized CHAZ which is signalling to people within the core of the most powerful imperialist state in history that anarchism is a viable alternative. Following the implementation of the CHAZ several other protesters around the United States attempted to form their own autonomous zones to varying degrees of success. The CHAZ signaled that anarchism can work and is a viable alternative to the brutal police state of the United States. It demonstrates that as global capitalism is falling apart, a better future is possible anywhere. It will be the people themselves who will usher in that better future, rather than some charismatic leader or politician or political party that wishes to enforce some other form of oppressive hierarchy.

The Unification of Social Anarchism

As seen in the brief overview of just some of the historical successes of anarchism there are in fact a great many forms of anarchism and anarchist inspired ideologies and movements. There

are two broad categories for anarchism, social anarchism which sees mutual aid and more formal yet decentralized federations as the cornerstone of its theory and praxis, and individualist anarchism which emphasizes individual action and more informal and temporary methods of social organization as the center of its theory and praxis. Federationism seeks to unify schools of social anarchist thought, in order to reduce infighting as well as provide a more cohesive ideological basis for social anarchists which broadly agree on most things or who may find picking between the different schools challenging due to various parts of different schools appealing to them. Federationism believes in the implementation of more formal though still flexible institutions. This being due to informal institutions being more readily able to be abused and taken advantage of to consolidate power, and as such formal rules and limits must be placed upon institutions and positions of power so that they can't be abused. For example, the President of the United States is a position not well defined, and has over the past few centuries despite it originally being intended as the weakest branch of the government has become by far the most powerful. With various presidents throughout the history of the United States wielding near dictatorial powers, and scholars referring to the modern era of the presidency as "The Imperial Presidency" despite none of the formal powers of the position having changed. It merely consolidated informal powers as the position has very little in the way of formal restrictions.

Federationism, while committed to formal institutions and systems to prevent corruption and abuse of powers, firmly opposes inflexible institutions and systems, as they violate the anarchist principle of opposing involuntary hierarchies. People must be able to alter and change institutions and systems that affect them in ways they do not like, and it must be relatively easy to do so assuming popular support for the changes. Federationism therefore supports flexible formal institutions specifically, as any worthwhile ideology must be flexible to changing or unpredicted conditions, and be capable of implementing a diversity of tactics in order to achieve its goals.

The Alternatives

There are two main alternatives that one might consider in comparison to federationism, those being marxism and individualist anarchism. Marxism is a staple among leftist thought, and influences a variety of schools of thought including anarchism to a degree, as well as has its own multitude of different schools of thought. Individualist anarchism as previously gone over is a different branch of anarchist thought than social anarchism, and contains a vast amount of diversity in thought and praxis.

Why Not Marxism?

Marxism has a long history, and arose to be the most prominent form of leftist thought in the early 20th century. However, there is a particular flaw which makes marxism a non-viable method of seeking liberation, that being its insistence on the use of a “transitive state”. Marxism conceives of history as a series of developments that occur through a process of dialectics, which are the contradictions in the material realities of society. When the contradictions grow large enough social change occurs through a synthesis of ideas to replace the old system. Marxism then points to events in history in which the changing from one hegemonic system to the other had transitional phases.

Marxism conceives of the transitional phase from capitalism to socialism as requiring a “transitive state”, wherein there will be a ‘weak’ state apparatus led by the working class which will slowly dissolve itself over time as the transition to socialism makes more progress. This conception is however wrong, while anarchists agree that a transitional phase is necessary, the use of a transitive state not only jeopardizes the achievement of socialism but actively obstructs it. As has been gone over previously, the state apparatus is only capable of reinforcing its powers. This is why in every marxist revolutionary attempt in which a transitive state has been achieved, the so-called transitive state became a permanent fixture, and took on more and more power rather than relinquishing it.

The states which attempted a marxist version of the transitive phase include but are not limited to: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the People’s Republic of China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and the Republic of Cuba. All of the states which have attempted to transition to socialism have instead only consolidated state power and over time moved increasingly closer back towards capitalism, as the corrupting power of the state dictates.

There are those which defend some or all of these states, claiming that the state is necessary for defense from outside invasion and internal subversion, and as such socialism cannot be achieved until a critical mass of countries around the world have also had a revolution. Such an assertion is incorrect however, as gone over in the section on the historical successes of anarchism. Stateless anarchist societies have shown to be completely capable of waging war, defending territory, and warding off reactionaries just as well as any system which utilizes a state. Stateless societies have

also consistently made more progression towards socialist and communist economies than those with states.

It then follows that the dialectical conversation Marx started on the state actually needs to be continued further. It is clear from a materialist analysis of history that the most likely way in which to achieve socialism and communism will need to be through a stateless transitional phase. Thus the only way to achieve a successful revolution will be through methods outlined by anarchists, through a rejection of the state, centralization, and oppressive hierarchy generally.

Further, marxism places too much emphasis on a purely economic analysis of society. There is nothing particularly wrong with the analysis itself, however the focus of the ideology is almost purely economic. The marxist analysis neglects the various other oppressive aspects of society if they aren't tied to economics, oppression of women and queer gendered people, oppression of different races and ethnic groups, oppression of minority sexualities, and so on. With so many forms of oppression which do not directly relate to economics they cannot be fully addressed by an ideology based around economics. Only through a holistic anarchist analysis of hierarchy and oppression can these issues be adequately faced and addressed.

Why Not Individualist Anarchism?

Individualist anarchism is the counterpart to social anarchism, while not opposites the two branches have significant differences. Individualist anarchism emphasizes individuals and their ability to exercise their wills over external entities and constructs, such as traditions, groups, ideology, and society in general. The praxis of individualist anarchists either falls in line with that of social anarchism due to that being the desire of those particular individuals, or focuses on actions that individuals can take on their own. The reason why individualist anarchism is not a viable path towards revolution is that revolutions inherently require a large amount of people organizing together, which is clearly at odds with a focus on individual actions.

In contrast to marxism, individualist anarchism frequently takes on the character of not focusing enough on economics. While this is far from true of all forms of individualist anarchism, it is the case that various schools of thought within it do not have a solid anti-capitalist foundation. Particularly of note in this regard is mutualism, which posits that the problem with capitalism is the existence of bosses. That is neglecting that capitalism and market economies more generally are predicated on the impossible notion of infinite growth due to the need for producers to get some sort of a profit. Such issues cannot be resolved by the individualistic oriented reforms that are proposed by these schools of thought.

Further, some individualist anarchists in this vein even reject the idea of revolution, and instead propose what they call insurrection instead. Insurrection being the idea that an undermining of hierarchies can be achieved by enough individuals refusing to participate under them. This idea being woefully unfounded, as in the history of movements for social change, individual action has never brought about significant change. It further ignores that one of the primary purposes of the state is to use violence to force participation to the systems it enforces. Individualist anarchism does provide a valuable ideological foil to social anarchism, and pushing it to consider things from different points of view. However, it ultimately is unable to bring about change through its individual oriented praxis, its general aversion to organization, and rejection of more formalized institutions causes it to fall short.

The Pillars of Federationism

Federationism is an intrinsically intersectional ideology. It recognizes, incorporates, and synthesizes different theories and movements in order to truly address all oppressions, and to end them all. As such, these are the pillars of federationism, and what are at the heart of its mission of liberation.

Social Anarchism

Anarchism is fundamental to federationism, the total abolition of oppressive hierarchies is the only path towards true liberation for all peoples. Core to social anarchism is the principles of mutual aid and decentralized federations.

Mutual aid is a voluntary and reciprocal exchange of resources and services for the mutual benefit of all parties involved, without concern for profiting over the other parties.

Decentralized federations are a stateless model for administration which are based upon a voluntary federation of local communities, which in turn have those federations voluntarily federate with other such federations, and so on and so forth. In decentralized federations powers are concentrated at the very bottom in the local direct democracies which make nearly all decisions. If an issue arises that requires the cooperation of more than what localities are equipped to deal with it is handled based on the principle of subsidiarity.

Subsidiarity being the principle that with the consent of lower levels of administration, higher levels of administration may act to address an issue, this being necessary due to the nature of the issue requiring the pooled resources from more than just one locality to handle. With the goal to flatten hierarchies as much as possible so as to prevent the concentration of powers away from the direct democracies of the people.

Social anarchism offers a way in and of itself to escape the hierarchical mindsets which enforce oppression in one's life, and offers a viable alternative administration to the state, which is infinitely scalable and can completely replace the use of the state and oppressive hierarchies.

Communism

Communism is the ultimate form of anti-capitalist and anti-hierarchical economic systems. It ensures a fair distribution of goods and services based on what people actually need, rather than what is profitable for a handful of parasitic individuals. It creates a sustainable economic system, which does not alienate laborers. Communism rejects hierarchical organization, and exists to liberate people from the drudgery of working for the benefit of someone else who does not care for them in the least. Federationism therefore embraces communism as it provides the ultimate economic framework for the economic liberation of all people.

Syndicalism

Syndicalism is an ideology which seeks to create a decentralized federation of unions called syndicates, based upon which industry each union belongs to, and use this system as a basis for the decentralized planning and allocation of resources. Federationism includes this ideology as it allows for the faster enabling of socialism and then communism, as was shown by the CNT-FAI in Revolutionary Catalonia.

However, federationism advocates for a supplemented version of syndicalism, which includes participatory decision making. Participatory decision making would allow for individuals, groups, and communities with a stake in the outcome of the decision to be a part of the process of decentralized planning, allowing them to voice their interests and ensure that the planning is able to accommodate their needs.

As such syndicalism should be used as the system to bring together people in their capacity as workers, in order to better enable the development of communism. By including syndicalism in the system federationism proposes, it becomes possible to fully and properly address economic oppression. Syndicalism being used to synthesize with anarchism and communism, addresses the issues of overemphasizing economic oppression to the detriment of other aspects of oppression, and underemphasizing economic oppression which prevents addressing the vast wealth disparities in society.

Social Ecology

Social Ecology is the study of the interdependence between people, groups, their environment, and the institutions in their societies. Social Ecology provides a holistic approach to the environmental issues which face humanity, while connecting them to humanity's understanding of their environment, their institutions, and interpersonal interactions. It posits that the domination and destruction of nature by humans is in fact the result of the domination and destruction of humans by other humans, and that the only way to solve environmental issues is to solve the issues of domination between humans.

Social Ecology reimagines the environmental destruction that humanity has brought upon the world and itself as another form of a social problem. Through unification and mutual aid between people humanity will be able to address ecological problems and reverse the damage that has been brought upon nature. For nature is not a separate being from humanity, and is certainly not its opposite, rather it is one interconnected whole.

Flexible Formalized Institutions

Formalized institutions are utilized by federationism because they provide clear outlines of what institutions are and what they have the ability to do. In this way anyone can understand any administrative or organizational institution they encounter. Additionally, no person can claim powers that they do not have, and were not given to them by the community, this prevents the concentration and abuse of power.

As previously stated just because institutions should be formal, does not imply they should be inflexible. Institutions must also be flexible to adapt to changes in situation and to the desires

and needs of the community, provided that there is enough support from the community and it is not the will of those who have ambition for more power.

Prepared Revolution

The principle of prepared revolution is something unique to federationism. Simply stated, the theory is as such that the goal of pre-revolutionary organization is to create the conditions for which at any time the population can rise up in revolution and have immediately in place the core systems of that new revolutionary system. This comes from the idea that a revolution is by definition not just a change or transfer of political (and sometimes socioeconomic) power or control, but a radical transformation of the whole society and its systems.

What this would entail is the drafting of a simple set of universal rules for the population which would clearly set the tone for liberation of the people, basic provisions for the day to day maintenance of a society, as well as provisions for the sort of governmental system people would be using under the revolutionary society that we wish to establish. These rules would then be immediately in place upon a popular revolution, making clear revolutionary intentions, providing a sense of direction, and immediately setting the foundations of the revolutionary society which we shall create.

The reasoning for this is two fold. First, by coming to a consensus of such things before the revolution it will dramatically reduce any possible infighting on such topics, allowing focus on further securing the revolution. Second, is the fact that throughout history the tone for the outcome of an uprising is set by the means by which the movement conducts itself during the struggle. The Continental Congress of the fledgling United States, while not an entirely efficient body, did lay down the foundations for the sort of oligarchic republic that the United States would become. Conversely, there are dozens if not hundreds or thousands of examples of revolutionaries with large promises, some of which may have meant to keep them, but during the struggle to assert the revolution ruled by a de facto “might makes right” mentality. Subsequently those societies once secure in their position were left with a system in which the ideals of liberation were not upheld. Instead those strong men continued to govern in the same fashion as they had fought the enemy, in turn meaning their revolutions had failed in their mission as soon as they had begun.

There are four foundational elements of a prepared revolution that federationism proposes as absolutely necessary for any revolutionary attempt. First, is creating directly democratic communes, comprising up to about 150 households. These communes will be able to set their own additional rules that don’t conflict with the universal rules, and will handle the general affairs of the community.

Second, is creating local assemblies which represent the communes of an area such as in a town, city, or rural area. These assemblies will be composed of recallable delegates to discuss issues facing the area, however assemblies will lack the ability to make any decisions or actions without the direct democratic consent or ratification of the people in the communes. Each commune will send three delegates, one woman, one man, and either someone who is either transgender or non-binary if possible, or the position will alternate each term between being held by a woman or man. Delegates may not serve consecutive terms, and the terms will last for no more than three months in order to encourage full community participation. Additionally, federations of these assemblies will be created which will form into larger and larger assemblies until all communities

are represented in a general assembly, with each assembly receiving three delegates from each constituent area it represents using the same system as communes sending delegates to local assemblies.

Third, is creating worker syndicates which will have parallel levels to the assemblies. Syndicates will be divided based on the different industries, and will consist of councils to coordinate the economy within industries and specific professions. The various levels of syndicates will work with their corresponding assemblies in order to address the needs of the communities they serve.

Fourth, is the creation of councils which will focus on specific groups and tasks that will assist in the dismantling of oppressive hierarchies, there will be parallel councils to each level of assembly. These councils will be the Defense Council for community defense through teaching all willing and able community members community defense, self defense, and de-escalation techniques. The Ecological Council which will manage and restore local ecosystems. The Education Council which will manage the education of students. The Health Council for providing medical care and education. The Labor Council which will help coordinate the economy of the assembly region between industries. The Peace and Justice Council for resolving disputes in a restorative and rehabilitative manner. The Disability Equality Council which will work towards the empowerment of disabled people and creating full accommodations for disabled people. The Gender Equality Council which will work towards empowering women, transgender, and non-binary people and creating equality between all genders. The Racial Equality and Reconciliation Council which will work towards empowering people of color and ending the legacies of racism and colonialism through reconciliation. The Queer Equality Council which shall work towards empowering queer people and creating equality between queer and non-queer people. The Youth Council for organizing and amplifying the voices of young adults. And the Elder Council for organizing and amplifying the voices of elderly adults.

Triad of Praxis

The issue of praxis has been hotly contested within leftist circles since the very beginning. Opinions range from reformist to revolutionary, from a scattershot method to an intensely focused application of resources, from working in groups to acting on one's own. Federationism takes the stance that praxis must be fully revolutionary in intention, is best done in groups, and should focus on a triad of tactics.

The first tactic is community outreach. No revolution can truly take place without the mass support of the people. As such federationists should strive to endear themselves to the community, by providing tangible help and resources. This tactic was utilized to great effect by the Black Panther Party in the United States, and by democratic confederalists in Rojava. By providing communities with resources outside of the parameters of the state, communities will become more self-reliant. It also makes communities more interested in listening to the ideas of federationism. Examples would be the creation of a free breakfast program for children, creating a community garden to reduce the amount spent of food by the community, checking simple things on motor vehicles to avoid expensive breakdowns or traffic tickets, holding community meetings, and so on.

The second tactic is building dual power. Dual power is the creation of institutions which operate outside of capitalism, the state, or both. Examples of this would be the creation of co-operatively run businesses focused on providing for the community, radicalizing trade unions, community crime watch, and even creating community assemblies to address matters that the local government does not. This allows for the undermining of the state, and the education of communities on directly democratic systems, mutual aid, and the lack of necessity of the state.

The third and final tactic is demonstrations, strikes, and protests to undermine the state both physically and in the minds of the populace. Reforms that come through elected officials will have the opposite effect and instead only reinforce the power and imagined legitimacy of the state. However, immediate gains and concessions which improve the conditions for the people are important. Making conditions worse, or just letting the conditions flow without making them worse or better are both not viable paths as they limit the revolutionary abilities and potential of the populace due to the populace needing to spend more energy on basic survival and less on being able to organize against oppressive hierarchies. So instead of reformism or ignoring the present conditions, federations must instead focus on direct action and organizing demonstrations, strikes, and so forth in order to force the state to hand over concessions. This will serve the purpose of both improving immediate conditions to aid in furthering the goals of the movement, as well as demonstrate that there are viable alternatives to electoralism in order to achieve social progress.

Rights

The liberal conception of rights acts as a form of concession to the people in order to reduce resistance to the state, and following the western tradition replaced the “divine right of kings” in order to lend legitimacy to the state. So long as people’s rights are respected that they have no grounds on which to replace the government or state except through systems which the state has rigged to maintain its power. Rights under liberalism are solely protective from the actions of others, which contribute to the atomization of individuals as not connected to others.

However, rights as an abstracted concept of what individuals and groups are entitled to are not inherently harmful. Federationism posits a different theory of rights, rights are those which individuals and groups are entitled to as they promote and facilitate the participation of individuals and groups within society and making decisions, to the full form and scope that those individuals and groups wish to participate. These rights are both protective and empowering.

Rights for federationists are not used as they are in liberalism, where they are virtual replacement for the “divine right of kings” to rule. Rather they are an understanding of what constitutes creating a fair and just society, as well as what gives people dignity. As such it is important to note that the rights of individuals supersede the interests of any administrative body, and further that it is the duty of all people and all administrative bodies to prevent and stop the violations of the rights of individuals by any other person or administrative body.

As such the non-comprehensive list of rights which federationism recognizes as universally applicable is:

1. Right to freedom of expression
2. Right to culture and religious beliefs

3. Right to a clean, sustainable, and healthy environment
4. Right to freedom of the press
5. Right to assembly
6. Right to freedom from occupation of armed forces
7. Right to personal property
8. Right to a fair and public trial
9. Right to freedom from involuntary servitude in any and all forms
10. Right to freedom from cruel or strictly punitive punishment
11. Right to freedom from being deprived of one's life
12. Right to the termination of a pregnancy at any time
13. Right to freedom from involuntary termination of pregnancies
14. Right to expression of sexual orientation
15. Right to expression of gender
16. Right to freedom from non-consensual relationships
17. Right to consensual interpersonal relationships
18. Right to privacy
19. Right to freedom of movement
20. Right to a fully adequate standard of living
21. Right to healthcare, both physical and mental
22. Right to food and water
23. Right to adequate clothing
24. Right to adequate housing
25. Right to high quality and accurate education
26. Right to leisure
27. Right to full accommodations of disabilities
28. Right to participate in decision making processes that affect one's self
29. Right to self defense

30. Right to self-determination
31. Right to freedom from discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, culture, religious beliefs, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or voluntary relationship status
32. Right to consider the ramifications of a decision on at least the next three future generations
33. Right to a free association of producers
34. Right of any government to not use force when alternative actions are available
35. Right to overthrow any system of administration which violates the will of the people by any means necessary, except in the case of the administration enforcing rights
36. Right to a flexible system of governance
37. Right to the inclusion of more rights should they become necessary

Gender Liberation

So often when speaking of liberation, one thinks of scrappy young revolutionaries taking up arms, fighting jackbooted soldiers, and overthrowing the evil empire. However, that is just one form of liberation, and often is to the detriment of considering the ways in which individuals perpetuate oppression in their own lives. One of the most omnipresent ways in which this sort of oppression rears its head is in the form of gender discrimination. As Abdullah Öcalan stated, women were the first colony. Domination on the basis of gender is a near constant across cultures, with women receiving the majority of this oppression, oftentimes denied personhood altogether. Those with queer genders as well have been the victim of this oppression, rejected on all fronts as not even people. This has carried over into the modern day, while women are generally given equal theoretical status as men, this is rarely the case in practice. In practice men will have ingrained the subliminal lessons passed down to them by a male dominated society, that all other genders are lesser and ought to be subservient to them, that others are nothing but objects for their control. This sort of thinking must be stamped out, just as much as any tyrannical government or evil empire.

Federationists must remove their preconceived notions of gender, and adjust their own thinkings and actions to allow for true liberation of gender. The toppling of the patriarchy is as much a revolutionary and necessary act as toppling the dictator. Emma Goldman wrote “true emancipation begins neither at the polls nor in courts. It begins in women’s souls”. Oppression cannot be overcome simply through symbolic victories. Only through the concerted efforts of those dedicated to emancipation is liberation possible. Liberation must come from education and rectification in attitudes and beliefs, just as much if not more than from the replacing of governments.

Racial Liberation

The oppression of people based on race and ethnicity is one that goes back to the early days of humanity. Racism is a tool of division, to attribute falsehoods and lies to those whose skin or face look different than one’s own. It is a tool to keep people angry with each other rather than their

mutual oppressors, focusing on superficial differences rather than shared injustices. Historically, this can come together with the idea of colorism, which is the oppression of others in proportion to how dark their skin is, the darker one's skin the more oppression they are subjected to. Darker skin becomes associated with the hard labor forced upon people, and soon they are likened to animals. Darker skin becomes associated with the lack of education, of which they were denied, and then are likened to barbarians. And so on and so forth, oppressors plundered a wealth of experiences and lessons, turning them into material wealth through subjugation, division, and lies of races and ethnicities they have deemed for their own purposes to be inferior.

Federationists must come through against the attitudes taught to them by an oppressive society, and unite with those who are different from them. It is imperative to learn from and accept the differences of others, and grow with them. Not merely imagine that there is no difference between people, but embrace that diversity as a strength. As said by Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin "[the Black Liberation movement] must ultimately unite its forces with similar movements like Gays, Women, radical workers and others who are in revolt against the system. For example, in the late 1960s the Black Liberation movement acted as a catalyst to spread revolutionary ideas and images, which brought forth the various opposition movements we see today". It is not enough to merely topple the tyrant, and release only the women from their drudgery, it is just as important to set free every race and ethnicity.

Queer Liberation

Queer people are those who do not fall into the neat artificial boxes of society, those who are not born into either sex, those who do not love in the same way as most people, those who love different people than most others of their gender, those who are not the gender they were assigned by society, and any combination of those things. To be queer is to be different that the expectations of society. And throughout history queer people have been discriminated against for that difference, for going against the values of their society, for defying the roles of their society, for refusing to conform to what they "ought" to be, and so on and so forth. This once again is a form of oppressive hierarchy that must be opposed, the oppression of queer people is inherently rooted in the attempt to violently maintain power structures. Everyone must be in their place as determined by those in power, or they become a threat to their control.

Federationists must accept that there is no single type or small set of people. The expression of the human experience cannot be contained to rigid boundaries of what those who are in power feel is normal. As simply put by J. Rogue "[t]here is a significant amount of coercion employed by these institutions to police human experiences, which applies to everyone, trans and non-trans alike". Humanity must be allowed to exist as it is, not as one should expect it should, if one is not free to express their very personhood then the act of removing the despot, smashing the patriarchy, and emancipating all races, will have been for not.

Decolonization

Colonization was one of the great evils that formed the basis of modern society. Across the globe there are hundreds of countries, and tens of thousands of groups of peoples who even centuries after the colonization of their homes, ways of living, ecosystems, and so much more

had supposedly taken place, are still subjected to the reverberations of the centuries of brutal theft. Colonialism was the act of powerful countries using violence and coercion to extract from around the world resources and people, and use them as tools to enrich themselves. These actions have not ended but have merely taken on different forms known as neocolonialism, as well as gained something new, denial. The descendants of colonizers deny their history, and the histories of those they robbed. They continue their conquests by other names, while denying they ever did it to begin with, making their lies on stolen land in buildings made of stolen resources.

Federationists set about to rectify these conditions, it is not merely enough to oppose the oppression that you may yourself not face, true liberation comes through taking on the struggles of others and making them your own as well. Decolonization does not take the form of colonizing the colonizers, but through education and reconciliation, ending the way in which peoples around the globe are still subjected to the legacy of colonialism and boot of neocolonialism. It is not enough to merely be an ally to those who seek decolonization, one must become an accomplice, as stated by the group Indigenous Action “[t]he risks of an ally who provides support or solidarity (usually on a temporary basis) in a fight are much different than that of an accomplice. When we fight back or forward, together, becoming complicit in a struggle towards liberation”. Decolonization is the uniting of colonized peoples and their former colonizers turned accomplices, restoration of the land, respecting self determination and sovereignty, and growing together as a united people. Decolonization and reconciliation is just as important as any other form of overthrowing oppression, without it the actions to oust authoritarians, raise all genders to an equal status, crush racism, and embrace queerness, will have not been enough to ensure a truly liberated society.

A Call for Federationism

All across the world, people are crying out. People are demanding freedom, not just escape from one oppressor to be swapped in with another, but true liberation. Every single voice is calling out to end the suffering under the yoke of capitalism, the jackboots of the state, the drudgery of sexism, the bondage of racism, the hate of queerphobia, the erasure of colonialism, and all the denials of decency and justice. The oppressed of the world must rise up, together as one community.

It is time to do away walls and barriers, with hate, with greed, and with intolerance. You the people have the power to make a better world. A better world is possible when we unite not in spite of our differences but because of them. A better world is within our grasp.

A BETTER WORLD WILL COME WHEN WE LIBERATE OURSELVES!!!

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Lilly May
The Federationist Manifesto
07/28/2020

Retrieved on 07/29/2020 from <https://link.medium.com/9e07fccXu8>

theanarchistlibrary.org