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Why We're Not Members of NEFAC: Some thoughts on Anarchist Organization

Anonymous

We would like to start this out by emphasizing that we have no desire to seek rivalry with the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC). In fact, we sympathize with the intentions of many of its members. As anarchists, we share two fundamental aims: the abolition of capitalism and the state. Such agreement on certain principles, however, does not render anarchist ideologies and organizations (such as NEFAC) immune to critique.

NEFAC, as defined by *Northeastern Anarchist: The Magazine of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists* (see 'contacts' section of this zine), is an "organization of revolutionaries from the northeastern region of North America who identify with the communist tradition within anarchism. The federation is organized around the principles of theoretical coherence, tactical unity, collective responsibility, and federalism, and our activities include study and theoretical development, anarchist agitation and propaganda, and intervention within the class struggle." This consists of a theoretically non-hierarchical federation of collectives from

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throughout the Northeast who agree to adhere to a set of rules and principles outlined in the NEFAC constitution. According to their web-page, a collective interested in joining NEFAC must “send a letter of written request of adhesion to the coordinating committee.” This step is followed by a series of bureaucratic and administrative procedures: voting, review, further correspondence, etc.

In researching this critique, we found the NEFAC organization to be even more bureaucratic, confusing, and seemingly incoherent than we originally expected. Reading through their federation’s policies was almost as interesting as filing our yearly federal tax forms.

Our primary critique of NEFAC is their highly bureaucratic structure. We think anarchist organizations should be reflective of the society they are striving to actualize. Having grown up amidst the alienation of an already bureaucratic and impersonal society, we have no interest in maintaining bureaucratic structures once this society is destroyed. Therefore we find NEFAC’s insistence on the use of heavily bureaucratic organizational models to be incompatible with the society we wish to create.

NEFAC’s organizational structure rests on an adherence to the ideology of “anarcho-communism.” Without going into great detail (for such a topic could be the subject of a whole other essay) we wish to provide a brief critique of this ideology as it is presented by NEFAC.

Flipping through the pages of *Northeastern Anarchist* and other NEFAC literature, we found it difficult to figure out exactly what it is NEFAC stands for. Such publications seem to consist (as can be seen in the quote in the second paragraph of this essay) of rhetoric and played-out revolutionary clichés, with little content or actual critical analysis. NEFAC also tends to embrace the revolutionary theory of Peter Kropotkin and other anarchists from the late 1800s – early 1900s. While some of these writings maintain their relevance, they need to be updated to address the vast changes inflicted upon society by capitalism, industry, and the state over the past

100 years. By failing to do so, NEFAC remains clinging to the antiquated ideals of a bygone past.

Among NEFAC, several collectives are assigned roles such as “General Secretariat – English,” “General Secretariat – Franco-phone,” and “International Secretariat.” We are bewildered as to what practical purpose these groups serve. They seem to create an unnecessary division of labor and a possible tendency towards hierarchies. It appears to us that the primary activities of NEFAC are concerned with perpetuating its federation, rather than encouraging and participating in actual autonomist class struggle.

Having said that we do not seek rivalry with NEFAC, we nonetheless encourage correspondence and reciprocation with groups and individuals interested in ideas similar to those presented in this publication. Thus we aren’t proposing the establishment of another federation, but a series of relations and informal networks. We look forward to hearing from others and hope that this essay will encourage critical thought within the federation.