

An Unconventional Report

Strategies for shutting down the Democratic & Republican conventions

anon.

2007

AN UNCONVENTIONAL REPORT-BACK FROM THE PRE-NC (WWW.UNCONVENTIONALACTION.ORG)

Note. One sunny day in late August we found ourselves standing on a midwestern highway. Delirious and drenched in sweat, we did our best to keep our consciousness for just one more ride. Fifteen hundred miles later, we arrived in Minneapolis/St. Paul for the Pre-NC, a gathering hosted by the RNC welcoming committee with the purpose of developing a large-scale direct action strategy to shut down next year's Republican national convention. This gathering was the culmination of six months of networking, propagandizing, and strategizing in our own region.

WHY ORGANIZE EARLY FOR THE CONVENTIONS? WHY ORGANIZE FOR THEM AT ALL?

There is wisdom in the critique that political party conventions are largely symbolic gatherings, where most of the major decision-making has already happened. However, it could be applied to just about any single protest or event. The point of any single, coordinated day of action is to prove to the broader public, as well as ourselves, that we do in fact have the power to interfere with the rich and powerful on our own terms.

In 2008 disillusionment with the endless war and the party system that refuses to end that war will reach a peak. Many issues that anarchists work on locally will intersect with the diverse struggles of non-anarchist folks at these protests, and more people will be drawn to direct action than in years past. We believe it is crucial that anarchists organize early on to set the tone for this direct action, in order to avoid being eclipsed by the authoritarian politicking and liberal marches of the last few years. Moreover, Denver (DNC) and St. Paul (RNC) have promising strategic vulnerabilities unsurpassed in recent years of mass mobilizations.

THE STRATEGY

Over 100 anti-authoritarians from around the country gathered together to distill their schemes and dreams into a formal stratagem. Working groups focused on nationwide communications, food/medical/legal infrastructure, media, coalition building, and action strategy. Pouring over maps, timetables, and photographs of the city, this last group hammered out the specifics of an action plan: On the first day, maximum disruption will be caused by a three-tiered direct action strategy. The tiers are, in order of priority:

Tier One: Establish 15–20 blockades, utilizing a diversity of tactics, creating an inner and outer ring around St. Paul's Excel Center, where the RNC will be held.

Tier Two: Immobilize the delegates' transportation infrastructure.

Tier Three: Block the five western bridges connecting the cities.

People plugging into this strategy will be free to shape their actions as they see fit, using tactics they find appropriate. As the specific blockade sites develop, there may be a system of delegating some sites as “red zones” (more rowdy, will fight back), “yellow zones” (feisty but peaceful), and “green zones” (non-arrestable) so as to accommodate a wide variety of creative tactics. Soon locals will be identifying the most strategic blockade sites, and will be available to answer questions about measurements, geography, etc. So get your comrades together, print out some maps, and start thinking about which site you want to cover now. Over the next six months groups will begin adopting specific intersections, streets, on-ramps, or bridges as their own. The pReNC is calling for local and regional groups to organize their own planning consultas over the next few months, to be ready to reconvene in Minneapolis in summer 2008. They are also calling for a series of local actions against oppression and electoral politics leading up to and building momentum and experience for the RNC and DNC. More information on calls for local actions are in the works.

EYE TO THE HORIZON, EAR TO THE GROUND

On October 5–7, radicals converging in Denver for the annual anti-Columbus Day marches will have held their own Unconventional Consulta to develop the strategy of direct action for the Democratic National Convention. The finalized strategies for both conventions will be published in a newspaper to be distributed throughout the country, and Unconventional Action groups will be doing road shows to publicize both strategies and facilitate direct action training. The website www.unconventionalaction.org will serve as an info point, networking tool, and research hub. While planning what roles you wish to play, be sure to start fundraising; the RNC Welcoming Committee estimates that it will need as much as 50,000 dollars for a two-month-long convergence center, legal costs, and other necessary expenses. Undoubtedly similar funds will be needed in Denver. We have one year to prepare for the most extravagant offensive in this war on exploitation, one year to study maps, prepare blockades, climb fences, craft disguises, find press credentials, and most importantly, gather those close to us and devise our own plans. The political parties will rally their support with all the bells and whistles that can be expected from a class that cares more about appearances than human life. But we envision a different outcome. We will be here to ensure that when the CNN cameras pan the Xcel center on the first night of the RNC, not one seat in the entire stadium is filled. We are going to shut the convention down. Get ready — a year goes faster than a root beer float in August!

fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #376, Halloween, 2007

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