



THE ANVIL



MACG

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Free

WOMEN'S ORGANISING

The makeup of workers' organisations is an indication of their strength. Unless women are present, along with other oppressed groups, capitalism will not be defeated.

Recent campaigns of transgender women and intersex people have clarified the gender issues at stake for feminist women. All women and intersex people demand the freedom to depart from gender stereotypes. All those who identify as women, whether they have a uterus or not, join in struggle with other women workers in their rallies and their campaigns. The women's movement has become more gender diverse.

Feminist movements such as #metoo have been effective in claiming the right of all women to respect and equal opportunity. They have suffered backlash from men as expressed in the #notallmen campaign. #notallmen arises from the indignation of sexist men who take women's demands for justice and equality as personal attacks on themselves. They decry the most notorious abusers and the most heinous murders, but in a way which diverts attention from the more mundane misbehaviour which is far more widespread but creates the environment in which the worst crimes are possible.

In this climate of #notallmen backlash,

there has been sensitivity about women's right to organise as women, even as they demand equality. Is women's organising for women an attack on men? Is it sexist to allow only women to participate, as might be the case if only men attended a particular rally? Does organising specifically for women workers weaken the workers movement as a whole? Certainly a large part of the workers' movement answers yes to all these questions. For example, for some years cis men have taken part in Melbourne IWD rallies.

But no, women's particular history has made it imperative that organisations specifically for women are available to encourage and strengthen women. While they welcome the support of men, and acknowledge the contribution of pro-feminist men to advances in the feminist cause, women have the right to organise autonomously. They have the right to women-only spaces, both as organisations and events.

The ongoing struggle of working women has put them in a place where they may need encouragement to experience themselves as effective and powerful, to experience other women as powerful and supportive, to unlearn deference to men, and to step up to roles of responsibility and leadership.

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NON-VIOLENT ACTION: DIRECT & "DIRECT"

As more people realise that climate change is happening, and there's no mainstream political call to stop it, they are starting to look beyond conventional political tactics. Writing to politicians, canvassing for votes and having a protest march from A to B won't cut it. The peace and environment movements have a long tradition of adopting Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA) when other tactics fail, without clarifying just what this means.

It is generally agreed that NVDA attempts to achieve aims by peacefully taking action that either directly reaches the goals or blocks the government or corporation from conducting business-as-usual (BAU). These are very effective tactics. Indeed, it can be seen that a strike is a primary example. Workers withdraw their labour and refuse to conduct BAU until the boss makes an adequate offer. Direct action gets the goods.

In practice, though, there is more to NVDA than meets the eye. While the peace and environment movements in Australia are almost totally united in supporting this approach, there has been much debate around how to go about it. Big campaigns over the Franklin Dam in the 1980s and Jabiluka in the 1990s were riven by conflicts over this issue. With the climate movement gearing up to wage an NVDA campaign to #StopAdani, the MACG believes it's important to understand NVDA a little better.

Sometimes NVDA really is what it says on the tin. People come together to take action that achieves their goals directly. On other occasions, however, what

occurs is Non-Violent "Direct" Action. The participants go through the forms of Direct Action, without the substance. The action is symbolic and the intent is to achieve its aims indirectly, through traditional channels.



Though many examples of such "Direct" Action have occurred in Australia, it is best illustrated by a particularly egregious case in the United States. Democracy Spring is a progressive organisation in the US trying to improve voting rights and limit the ability of rich people to use their money to influence elections – worthy objectives, but very limited ones. In April 2016, this organisation conducted a march from Philadelphia to Washington DC, culminating in a blockade of the Capitol Building, the Parliament House in the US. Over the course of a week, more than 900 people were arrested. An impressive display of Direct Action, it appeared.

Appearances, though, were deceiving. The "blockade" of the Capitol was a highly choreographed affair, conducted in close co-operation with the police. There was no serious attempt to impede access to the building. The arrestees were not

even charged, something which would have clogged up the courts. Instead, they were released after paying \$50 each to a fund that goes to the Washington DC police. This was "Direct" Action as a mere ritual, a symbol of determination, with the real objective of getting TV coverage that mentioned "a record number of arrests". It was a media strategy based upon deception.

The difference between NVDA and NV"D"A is usually apparent in the media strategy. In Direct Action, the primary function of the media strategy is to draw more people into the action and to deter State violence. In "Direct" Action, its primary function is to generate mass media attention that affects the mainstream political process. Direct Action empowers the participants, while "Direct" Action treats them as a stage army, to be wheeled on and off according to the judgment of the leadership.



The difference between Direct Action and "Direct" Action can also be seen in their very different treatment by the police. Police in liberal democracies are often quite willing to collaborate with "Direct" Action as a symbolic spectacle, provided everything is negotiated properly beforehand and it is understood that there is no actual attempt to prevent BAU. The

police are almost always very hostile to Direct Action. They are the armed thugs of the State and their job is to uphold an unjust social order. Direct Action puts the State in the position of either being forced to concede, or to use police violence to defeat the movement. The larger the Direct Action is, the more violence the State would require and the more it would be discredited by its response, sparking wider resistance. It is thus a challenge to the State, something no police force can tolerate.

Now that Adani have announced they intend to build their coal mine and railway line without borrowing from the banks, the probability of it actually starting work has increased. If the climate movement wants to #StopAdani, it will have to defeat the opposition of the Queensland Government. NVDA will be called for. The movement needs to be clear, though, that "Direct" Action is different from Direct Action.

When a government is firmly in the pocket of the mining companies, it will not be swayed by a few weeks of TV stories showing pictures of people passively sitting and waiting to be taken away by the cops. What is required is a movement that knows the police are the attack dogs of the enemy and they are to be resisted with all the strength and intelligence we can muster. We need a movement that wants to #StopAdani directly, a movement that will create facts on the ground that the Government cannot ignore. And this movement, in challenging the State, will inevitably look beyond it, to a new society with no State and no cops, and where capitalism is no more.

STOP ADANI

Women's organising continued from page 1

While the decision as to whether to organise solely with other women or together with men is a judgment call to make based on the particular circumstances, to deny women workers the right to organise as women is to deny them their own paths to resistance. Organising for women does not discriminate against men, nor does it attack them, except insofar as they defend patriarchal social structures. Women's organising is to support women in their struggle, by allowing women to have their own voice and to set their own priorities. In fact, for campaigns such as for safety and against killing of women by men in the domestic sphere, the participation of men in solidarity actions is vital, and expected.

Unless women have access to their own organisations, workers will only ever achieve surface uniformity, not unity. This uniformity is achieved by silencing oppressed groups within the working class. This unity maintains existing divisions within the working class and repels many who are not white, cis men.

Women have the right to organise as women within the wider working class movement and within anarchist organisations. It is the responsibility of the whole working class to fight sexism (along with racism and all other oppressions), but this does not deny the right of oppressed groups to organise autonomously. For the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group, this right does not need any special dispensation, but rather rises from Anarchist theory and its commitment to autonomy and consistent federalism. Within the diverse working class, it is only when each perspective is represented that common goals can be identified. That is when unity will be achieved, on the basis of:

TOUCH ONE
TOUCH ALL



What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is a social philosophy based upon the principles of liberty, equality and solidarity. It is the political dimension of a free society.

What is Communism?

Communism is the principle of "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need". It is the economic dimension of a free society.

What is the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group?

The MACG is an organisation of class struggle revolutionary anarchists who share political positions, articulated in theory, strategy and tactics. We aim to encourage struggle by the working class for its own interests and, within that struggle, we aim to advance Anarchist ideas as its necessary philosophical basis.

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