

SDS Call to Action: Endorse and Participate in Shutting Down the RNC

Friday, March 28 2008 @ 01:09 PM PDT

Contributed by: activate

Over the past year, organizing against the 2008 Republican National Convention (RNC)--which will take place from September 1 through 4 in St. Paul--has grown at a considerable pace. At our 2007 national convention, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) passed a proposal endorsing the work of groups organizing against the RNC and encouraging folks within SDS to organize against both the RNC and the DNC.

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Over the past year, organizing against the 2008 Republican National Convention (RNC)--which will take place from September 1 through 4 in St. Paul--has grown at a considerable pace. At our 2007 national convention, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) passed a proposal endorsing the work of groups organizing against the RNC and encouraging folks within SDS to organize against both the RNC and the DNC.

Since that time, ACTIVATE (Grand Rapids SDS) has grown increasingly excited about the prospect of achieving a significant victory at the RNC and thereby giving our movement a much needed influx of new energy, tactics, and experiences. Across the country, groups have been talking--and talking seriously--about shutting down the RNC via one of the largest direct action protests in years. The RNC is shaping up to be an event that we won't want to miss.

For SDS, the call to shutdown the RNC offers a tremendous opportunity to plug into what will likely be a major mobilization. Under the direct action strategy being discussed, SDS chapters can participate in this shutdown by selecting and utilizing the tactics with which they are most comfortable. The direct action framework will allow SDS chapters to work with those engaging in similar tactics, both within and outside SDS. Finally, chapters are free to theme their actions how they see fit and there could conceivably be SDS actions highlighting everything from the occupation of Iraq to the rising cost of tuition. Regardless of the themes and tactics chosen, imagine the excitement that we would all feel if SDS held down a few intersections and played a key role in shutting down the RNC...

To that end, we are calling on SDS chapters to both endorse and participate in a three-tiered system for disrupting the RNC on its opening day. At a gathering of over 100 anti-authoritarians from around the country in August of 2007 (facilitated by the Twin Cities based RNC Welcoming Committee), the following direct action strategy was adopted to shut down the RNC:

"Tier 1: Blockade the Xcel Center - Establish 15-20 blockades utilizing a diversity of tactics, creating inner and outer rings around St. Paul's Xcel Center.

Tier 2: Immobilize Delegates' Transportation - Immobilize the delegates' transportation

Exhibit A-7(c)

infrastructure, including buses, bus depots, etc.

Tier 3: Block Connecting Bridges - Block the five western bridges connecting the cities.

Those plugging into this strategy will be free to shape their actions as they see fit, using the tactics they consider appropriate. As the specific blockade sites are established, some sites may be designated "red zones" (prepared for self-defense), "yellow zones" (peaceful but assertive), and "green zones" (no risk of arrest) so as to accommodate a wide variety of creative tactics. The RNC Welcoming Committee is currently considering these zones and laying out specific blockade sites. Once these details are finalized they will be made public, and locals will be available to provide specific information and pictures of intersections, bridges, and other relevant locations to people that would like them."

We are calling on SDS chapters to endorse this strategy and to begin planning how they will fit into this strategy--if they chose to participate--by familiarizing themselves with the Twin Cities and building their skill set by hosting direct action trainings, skill shares, and thinking strategically about how their chapter can be involved in shutting down the RNC.

Finally, we are encouraging SDS chapters to act in solidarity with calls put forth by the RNC Welcoming Committee and Unconventional Action by undertaking actions in the lead-up to the convention against the electoral process, the RNC/DNC, and individual candidates. These actions should be used to build the skills, relationships, and solidarity that will allow our movement to both successfully shutdown the RNC and grow beyond the RNC protests.

To endorse the direct action strategy, please send an email to centrahmc@unconventionalaction.org

To endorse this call to action, please send an email to sds@activategr.org

For more on organizing against the RNC, visit:

<http://www.nornc.org> <http://www.unconventionalaction.org>

Finally, an updated list of endorsers will be available at:

<http://www.activategr.org/organizing/rnc-dnc/sds-rnc-call/>

With a New World in our Hearts,
- ACTIVATE (Grand Rapids SDS) - www.activategr.org

[1 comments](#)

<http://www.infoshop.org/inews/article.php?story=20080328130926247>

RNC Welcoming Committee pReNC 5.3 ReportBack

Friday, May 23 2008 @ 07:38 PM CDT

Contributed by: RNC-WC

The pReNC 5.3 was the second national gathering for radical planning against the 2008 RNC. This meeting functioned as a spokescouncil, welcome to all representatives organizing within the framework that came out of the first pReNC, with the major action strategy being one of blockading delegates from the convention site. The consulta was well attended, with over 100 spokespeople representing about 40 organizing bodies from all corners of the country.

pReNC 5.3 REPORTBACK

This reportback is divided into two parts- an abstract which summaries the major decisions and opinions of the group and an in-depth section which describes the meeting in much more detail.

Abstract

The pReNC 5.3 was the second national gathering for radical planning against the 2008 RNC. This meeting functioned as a spokescouncil, welcome to all representatives organizing within the framework that came out of the first pReNC, with the major action strategy being one of blockading delegates from the convention site. The consulta was well attended, with over 100 spokespeople representing about 40 organizing bodies from all corners of the country.

The idea behind this meeting was two fold, one to clarify what it is we want to see at the RNC (September 1st in particular) and secondly to figure out how to make that happen. To do this first we assessed where we were in terms of filling the tiers of the three tiered plan that was created at the first pReNC. From this we decided to focus on tier one for that day, blockading downtown St. Paul, although we did not exclude the possibility of tiers two and three also happening.

The discussion of scenario for September 1st ended up with all of the proposals on the table being supported. All of the proposals worked well together with the end goal of using a huge diversity of tactics to blockade the delegates out of the Xcel center. The idea that was discussed most was the "Swarm, Seize, Stay" model. Swarm Seize, Stay (3S) is a 'big picture' to direct all of our collective energies towards on September 1st. Basically, 3S means:

1. Move into/around Downtown St. Paul via swarms of varying sizes, from multiple directions, and with diverse tactical intentions.
2. Seize space through both hard (e.g., lockboxes) and soft (e.g., congestion), fixed and mobile, blockading methods.
3. Stay engaged with the situation in downtown St. Paul as long as necessary.

It was stated that this proposal would allow for greater participation since it doesn't require the same level of expertise or experience as exclusively relying on technical blockading. There was also a proposal for a "Mobile Blockade Brigade" which could function similarly to a critical mass with the

Exhibit A-7(e)

goal of disrupting traffic flow, and would fit well with the tactic of "Swarm, Seize, Stay." Overall, no comprehensive scenario was consensed on, but the general momentum was for both hard, technical blockades, and softer, more mobile blockades.

The two things discussed around the how of September 1st were colored zones and dividing the city into regions (Note: In the future, these will be referred to as "sectors"). There were strong feelings throughout the meeting that having "green zones," places where police confrontation would be absolutely minimal (recognizing that we don't control the police), was important, but there were mixed feelings about the merits of having planned yellow and red zones. There was also a feeling that as opposed to having a group (such as the Welcoming Committee) come up with zones, or prescribe them, it might be better if they were more descriptive as to what actions had been publicly planned for different areas and what types of confrontation those actions were prepared for. From these descriptions people could make informed decisions about where different actions would be appropriate.

The idea of dividing the city into regions (sectors) was a large topic of discussion. The proposal was that the city be divided into regions (sectors) based on it's topography and that these regions (sectors) be used to coordinate different actions. Clusters could take on a region, or groups planning public activities could coordinate with other actions in their region. Although there were many concerns about the regions (sectors), specifically with how they might interact with colored zones, a breakout session continued this discussion and it was concluded that this would be a viable way to move forward. A group (such as the Welcoming Committee, a sub committee, a spokescouncil working group, or some other outside organization with knowledge of the downtown St. Paul landscape) could create the regions (sectors) and publish descriptions of each, as well as help facilitate coordination between different groups within them.

Another focus of the meeting was furthering support roles for the RNC, such as food, housing, transportation, legal, medical, media, etc. Updates from groups taking on these roles were given at the beginning of the meeting, and most also had a breakout in which people working on them could network and move forward.

A post 5.3 meeting of around 30 people from around the country took some of these ideas and attempted to get them to a place where they could actually be implemented. In terms of regions (sectors) it was thought that around 4-6 would be an ideal number. Clarity around what the word "stay" meant in terms of the "swarm, seize, stay" proposal was sought, with the conclusion being that it didn't mean necessarily staying put in one space but rather staying engaged with the situation downtown, remembering the goal of blockading. It was put fourth that affinity groups should begin forming clusters, calls for swarms would be useful, and that it would help to facilitate filling in the regions (sectors) if groups with public plans announced where those would be as soon as possible.

****In Depth****

The day kicked off with a hearty breakfast provided by the local Food Not Bombs and then jumped right into what was to be an 8 hour meeting. Introductions, including preference for gender pronouns, were given, followed by an update from the local organizers and hosts of the event, the RNC Welcoming Committee. This summarized the work they had been doing since the last pReNC. Included in this was the continued search for a convergence space. Some space has been found but a space closer to downtown St. Paul is proving elusive. Finding a space near downtown is, however, a high priority of the Welcoming Committee. The Welcoming Committee has kept up its' organizing with other local and national groups planning against the RNC, with the culmination of that being organizing points dubbed "the St. Paul principles." This simple set of agreements are meant as a platform for successful resistance to the RNC amongst the diverse goals, strategies, and tactics of different groups. Other local organizing

has included the co-hosting of town hall meetings as a forum for networking amongst people planning around the convention as well as addressing concerns of those that will be effected by the protests, and a now stalled door knocking campaign. The Welcoming Committee also did a national anti-RNC tour to spread the strategy and bring back ideas and feedback to the twin cities. It has continued gathering intelligence about the RNC as well as serving as an informational clearinghouse for all things RNC related. It also is still coordinating or in touch with groups coordinating all infrastructure for the RNC (legal, medical, food, housing, medics, media, comms, etc.). The Welcoming Committee also stressed it's lack of funds and asked for national help with fundraising.

Next on the agenda was updates from some of the logistical support roles. Northstar health collective is a new group in the twin cities and is coordinating medical support for the RNC protests. They are looking to pool resources from med students and professionals, provide lots of trainings (especially in August), and provide a wellness clinic and trauma center during the RNC. They are encouraging all affinity groups to have at least one person trained in basic first aid.

Coldsnap legal collective is also a newly formed group in the twin cities and will be organizing legal support for the RNC and beyond with other groups such as midnight special. They will be providing know your rights trainings leading up to the RNC and are encouraging all affinity groups to have someone within them doing legal work. Coldsnap emphasized that there role is not to decide on a legal strategy but to provide legal support for whatever strategy people choose.

An update from "basics," included how food, housing, and transportation is coming along. Food is being spearheaded by seeds of peace as well as local twin cities groups. They are currently planning on serving 5-6,000 people 3 meals a day during the RNC. People working on housing are making an "adopt an anarchist" campaign for the protests, as well as a housing board, looking for larger spaces for people, and providing camping and squatting resources. In terms of transportation, locals are hoping to provide about 500 bicycles, and are asking people to bring their own bikes or locks.

The media update was given by someone from twin cities indymedia, which is hoping to get up a new website before the RNC. They are planning on using textmob to be on top of media work as things are unfolding. They are now collecting equipment and looking for space.

Next on the agenda was a review of the first pReNC goals and strategy. A link to that reportback can be found [here](#).

After that was a reading of the St. Paul principles, which have been agreed to by the Welcoming Committee and many groups in the Protest RNC 2008 coalition and the Coalition to march on the RNC and stop the war. They say:

1. our solidarity will be based on respect for a diversity of tactics and the plans of other groups.
2. the actions and tactics used will be organized to maintain a separation of time or space.
3. any debates or criticisms will stay internal to the movement, avoiding any public or media denunciations of fellow activists and events.
4. we oppose any state repression of dissent, including surveillance, infiltration, disruption and violence. we agree not to assist law enforcement actions against activists and others.

Next a tier strength assessment ensued, in which the room was broken into regions (sectors) and an estimation of actions coming out of each region was given. It was decided that for today we would focus

on tier one, although that did not rule out the options of deciding to implement tiers two or three later in the summer or there being tier two or three actions anyway.

Subsequently an intelligence update was given to start off a discussion of scenario for September 1st. The GOP has announced that the RNC will commence at the Xcel energy center sometime between 9 am and 7 pm on September 1st. The schedule won't be released until August. The opening days of the past two RNCs have had a morning session starting at 10am and lasting no longer than 2pm, and then an evening session starting at 7pm. The march coalition is planning a rally for 11am at the capital and has requested a 2 pm step off time for the march. They have received a permit for gathering on the grounds of the capital all day and a permit to leave the capital for the march, though no time nor route yet [as of this writing the march has been issued a route, but they are challenging it in court]. They have been told, however, that they will be allowed within sight and sound of the Xcel. 200 buses as well as rented cars will be used to transport delegates.

Many police will be equipped with tasers, though it has been publicly stated that they are not for use on non-violent protesters. Police have been in touch with police forces of many European countries studying their crowd control tactics.

A speculative hard perimeter was given, though it was stressed that it was too early to know. The perimeter will be announced 6 weeks ahead of time.

The discussion moved into the scenario proposals. Many proposals had been submitted prior to the meeting, and they were summarized as follows:

A "Swarm, seize and stay" model: in addition to hard blockades this would incorporate overwhelming numbers of people, allowing them to be more mobile and offer support to blockades as needed. This model is easier for people without previous plans to plug into the days events.

"Mobile Blockade Brigade" would look like clusters of affinity groups being mobile to support hard blockades.

"Blockades" would look like a bunch of stationary blockades, but would organize them completely publicly, with groups signing up for different intersections.

"Color in" proposal incorporates zones colored green, yellow, and red according to the risk of arrest.

"Rename the streets" is a proposal to rename streets in St. Paul, which could be a way to claim space as our own.

Another proposal was for an anti-capitalist block within the permitted march, which is being organized by the IWW. Combined with the swarm, seize and stay model, this would allow for people to be directed out of the march to hot spots that need reinforcement.

There was also a proposal that the city be divided into quadrants based on its topography. This ended up being the main topic of discussion. The idea is that people work within smaller organizing groups and sign up for regions (sectors) of the city without being specific as to where they are planning their action. This would allow for autonomy within the regions (sectors) and yet break down the city so everywhere would be covered. This proposal caused a lot of questions, confusion, and conflict. A main concern was that the regions (sectors) could conflict with the concept of color zones and that people may end up not knowing where they were in terms of danger zones. Also, this model could make it difficult for people to plug in, since there could be confusion as to who was coordinating a region and what the

communication and coordination would look like. A straw poll was taken and around 1/3 of folks had outstanding concerns about regions (sectors).

With little time remaining for the scenario discussion it was realized that the regions (sectors) proposal was really a proposal for how to coordinate the blockades (a separate agenda item) as opposed to a proposal as to how the scenario would look. Attention was refocused on more scenario concentrated ideas, primarily the Swarm, Seize, Stay proposal.

Timing was a big point of discussion. If they have some sort of morning session should we try to blockade that? And then the evening as well? If they don't, how early will they be transporting to the excel center? One idea was to have comms scouts at many of the major hotels keeping abreast of the buses while people are in position to put up blockades when it seems appropriate. There was also an idea for a wave of soft blockades to stall traffic while the hard blockades were being put up. The notion that swarms could be used to put up hard blockades was also liked.

After lunch it was decided that generally all of the strategy proposals were liked and support for all of them was consensed on. It was emphasized that they all go together quite well.

Following the scenario agenda item was a discussion about how to coordinate the blockades. This mostly consisted of talking about whether we wanted colored zones, if those would be descriptive or prescriptive, and what they would signify (level of conflict or types of tactics). It was generally agreed that green zones, or at least green actions (such as the march) are important. There was much more support for descriptive versus prescriptive zones, i.e. that as opposed to a group carving up zones for everyone they could describe in what areas different types of public activities are planned for and if the planners of those actions have requested that they be a certain color. Generally also there was support for any colored zones being about level of engagement / conflict with the police as opposed to a grouping of tactics. It was decided that this discussion would be continued in a breakout.

The next agenda item was on the ground communications for September 1st. It was decided that since most people present didn't know anything about the technical aspects of comms and trusted the comms team to come up with the best systems, comms will act as it's own affinity group.

The following agenda item was strategy recruitment. It was decided that this wasn't really something that this group had to deal with and that local communities would be better equipped to recruit in their communities.

Next someone from Bash Back presented a trans jail solidarity proposal that came out of the Bash Back convergence. The proposal was not explicitly to call for jail solidarity but, rather, to redefine jail solidarity- were it to be called for- to include trans solidarity, which could include actions such as refusing to be separated by gender and giving gender neutral names when remaining anonymous (such as Jessie Doe). There were questions about how this would actually play out, and concerns as to whether it would actually be an affective form of solidarity, as well as support for it. No decision about this proposal was consensed upon, but it was decided that this would be kept in mind in discussions around jail solidarity.

The last agenda item before breakouts was communication between may and September. It was decided not to have another spokescouncil until the time just before the RNC. Instead organizing would continue regionally. Information will keep being disseminated by the Welcoming Committee.

Breakouts were decided on and the reportbacks from each of those follows:

Medics: Close to ten medics met to discuss plans. We had folks representing locally, from Chicago, Madison and Iowa City. We reviewed what was said during the update and got out the map to talk about clinic locations and where the trainings were going to be offered. We discussed distance, accessibility and the preferred number of clinics. Because of the layout of downtown St. Paul we might end up with 1-3 smaller trauma clinics with a larger space and/or clinic further away (no more than 2-3 miles). We are committed to providing a wellness clinic as well - possibly within the convergence space, but also potentially it's own separate location.

There was a lot of interest in providing trainings that would cover the issue of consent and we talked about the difference between consent as a medical professional and a street medic. Within the group there was interest and capacity to offer rape and sexual assault trainings as well as yoga and other healing arts at the wellness clinic. Many were interested in receiving more action medical training. We talked about focusing on training affinity medics as the key for on the ground medical access. We talked about the 3 national conference calls that have already occurred, with 7-10 people on each call - you can get in on those by subscribing to the convention-medical listserv.

We closed the breakout discussing the need for medics needing medical care (trauma and/or wellness). This need might be found during the RNC - we would like to designate some space for medics to receive care. We'd also like to be able to offer a space for medics to decompress after the RNC - possibly in a space in Madison or Chicago, although North Star might be able to find a space closer to the Twin Cities (the idea being out of the cities in a rural, quiet location).

No one had any experience with medic comms, but we agreed that medic comms need to be at the RNC and need to start being organized. We also talked briefly about fundraising and agreed it was a local thing.

People were encouraged to stay in touch via the listserv which people can gain access by emailing - northstarhealth (at) gmail (dot) com - or to keep updated via the website - www.northstarhealth.wordpress.com

Comms: A group is working on the technical issues, as well as how to receive, process and disseminate information. Space needs to be found.

DNC to RNC : This is a caravan going from the DNC to the RNC. It will take 2 days from Denver-leaving on Thursday with a stop over in between for a festival of music, fun and puppets. They are in need of vehicles, especially buses.

Media: The media breakout focused on setting up an outreach comms system during the RNC. This would function much like an internal comms system however, runners and other participants would be focusing on getting news, information, photos and videos out to the general public (both locally and nationally) and not just the independent media or affinity groups. This would be set up by establishing minute by minute updates from the ground during the RNC through media-based affinity groups interchanging between the three tiers.

To begin this process the media breakout folks set up a list serve to ask for support with media work and materials from around the country, providing a video server to put video on the internet (but censoring incriminating material), working with medics for documentation trainings on police brutality, publishing a clear media plan, setting up wireless mesh networks and other things that make it easy for people to participate, possibly reaching out to the international media and setting up decentralized information points where RNC news can be distributed widely during September.

Media folks will work in conjunction with the convergence space that is set up specifically for the RNC, but also want to have another media specific hub with other decentralized locations serving as several "drop off" points for RNC news.

Legal : The legal breakout discussed using an affinity group model for legal support where each group has a assigned member (who might be better if they weren't at the action) with your personal information in case you are arrested. They would be in contact with coldsnap. Coldsnap will also be working with people without affinity groups. Coldsnap passed around info sheets about legal support and an arrestee information sheet. There will be an office and a street team during the RNC. Coldsnap will be doing trainings and trainings for trainers in the lead up, and the NLG is doing trainings for videographers as well. Coldsnap is coordinating legal support from around the country- they can be reached at coldsnap (a) riseup.net.

Outreach: There is interest in talking to truckers that have recently done blockades and driven into downtowns to protest rising gas prices, continued door knocking, connecting more with others such as the poor peoples march and having info packets (with translations). Outreach should be done on many different media such as radio, print, independent TV, and you tube.

Green Zones: This was a breakout to discuss creating spaces and activities for people that feel themselves unarrestable. There was a desire expressed for the radicalization of green zones and wanting to find ways that different people could plug into them.

Scenario: This breakout focused on waves, something that was also talked about in a post-spokecouncil meeting with different conclusions. There could be waves of certain actions but keep the different waves diverse to spread out police both geographically and tactically. The coalition march will integrate people from the march who want to get involved. The 1st wave would depend on a critical mass of delegates based on scout reports as opposed to having a specific go time. People would beforehand have an idea of when the want to participate, in the early, middle or later part of day, and could come and go if they choose. An emphasis on being prepared for anything.

Coordination of Blockades: The discussion focused mostly on the proposal to coordinate the blockades through dividing the city in regions (sectors). These regions (sectors) would be strictly geographically based and would be separate, although could work in coordination with, any color zones. A map of 11 rough sections of the city was presented with the idea that these could be combined to end up with less. The topography of each region was presented so that people could get a sense of what might be different about the different regions (sectors). It was thought that if the Welcoming Committee could not itself coordinate actions within the zones, it could find someone to do that.

After the breakouts reportbacks from each was shared with the large group and the meeting concluded.

****Post 5.3 Meeting****

Following dinner that night there was a discussion with around 30 people about how to move forward with what came out of 5.3, specifically around regions (sectors). Although not a decision making body, this group came up with some more specific ideas of how regions (sectors) could function and how the Swarm, Seize, Stay model could work.

It was thought that around 4-6 regions (sectors) would be a good number. This would allow for there to be more autonomy within the regions (sectors) than if there were more but still divides the city into manageable sizes for a large cluster or a few groups to take on.

“Stay” was clarified to mean not necessarily staying put (like sitting) but rather staying in downtown and staying invested in keeping the delegates out.

The idea of people coming to the blockades in waves was also talked about. It was thought that we might not have the numbers right now to have multiple waves, and that it might be just as good to have everyone be there from the beginning. Rather than attempting to hold the space for an unrealistically long amount of time, we would focus all our numbers on disrupting the most important time of delegate transportation. Having people come from the march / rally (which could be considered a wave) would be separate and still important.

It was stated that a good way to move forward would be to begin organizing into clusters and by making calls for swarms

See you in September

RNC Welcoming Committee

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Comments (5)

Infoshop News

<http://news.infoshop.org/article.php?story=20080523193857785>

RNC Welcoming Committee

Crash the Convention! Sept 1-4, 2008
Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

• Who We Are

The RNC Welcoming Committee is an anarchist / anti-authoritarian organizing body preparing for the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota.

• Cash to spare?

Donate to all arrestees' Legal/Jail Support through the Coldsnap Legal Collective



Donate to RNC Welcoming Committee's (RNC8) Legal Support:



Donate to the Welcoming Committee's Logistical Work and Followup:



• Announcements List

Stay in touch! Add yourself to our email list and get announcements and updates on the 2008 RNC by sending an email: rncc08-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

• Legal Support

If you want to get involved in legal/jail support efforts, check out [Cold Snap Legal Collective](#). If you need jail/legal support, call the Cold Snap Hotline, (651) 356-8635. These people are amazing.

• TC Indymedia

Media created by everyone can be found at tc.indymedia.org along with an [Event Calendar](#) with all local happenings tagged RNC.

CRASH THE CONVENTION

2008 Call to Action

On September 1-4 of 2008, the Republican Party is coming to Minnesota to celebrate their latest conquests in global domination and exploitation. We of the RNC Welcoming Committee want to make sure that this time the fear-mongers will be met with their own biggest fear: people mobilized, organized, and taking the future back into their own hands.

For those of you who abhor the rapid growth of racist militarized borders across stolen lands, the raids and deportations, destruction and commodification of our shared and living earth, police brutality and prison industry, fear propaganda and subjugation, exploitation and robbery of peoples worldwide, and all forms of injustice and oppression - we ask you to be prepared for 2008. This will require new alliances, strong networks, the awakening of those who've given up, as well as the mobilization of those who've never before taken action. Let's use this opportunity to make the changes we thirst for manifest and take root before us, making the Republicans/Democrats (whatever you want to call them) obsolete.

Labor Day weekend of 2007, anarchists and anti-authoritarians from across the country gathered in the Twin Cities to develop goals and plans for the RNC 2008. This is what we've come up with:

What we want (the goals):

1. Build Our Capacity – A new reality will not emerge by simply stopping the 4 day spectacle of the RNC. We need folks with an alternative vision to come to the Twin Cities and turn their dreams into reality. Start something new, be creative, and come ready to build sustainable alternatives worth fighting for and defending. The new skills that we teach, learn, and put into practice here will allow us to return to our communities stronger, smarter, and more empowered.

2. Crash the Convention – We didn't get an invitation, but we're showing up anyway. This party will be what we make of it. We don't want to confine our potential by imposing a single vision of what success will look like. We recognize that there will be a lot of people coming with their own agendas and carefully laid plans and want to be open to the diverse tactics that will be necessary to accomplish our many goals. Together, we can derail the purely ceremonial show of this repressive system and remake it with our own hands and according to our own visions.

How we get there (the strategy):

1. Start Strong – Throw all of our energy into the first day. We'll kick this off right and stretch the militarized police state out so far that it can no longer contain and suppress our voices and desires.
2. Transportation Troubles – This includes blockades downtown (at key intersections), on bridges (10 bridges over the Mississippi River in the metro area), and other sporadic and strategic targets (busses, hotel and airport shuttles etc).
3. Respect, defend, and be prepared for autonomous self-sustaining alternatives – Lasting projects and spaces will be born out of our actions and will need to be protected. We also won't knowingly bring the hammer down on existing long-term community projects. It doesn't matter if we win the RNC battle, if the war for our lives is lost.
4. Be inclusive of local communities and respect alliances – We are all on the same side of the barricades and are trying to build lasting bonds for future mutual aid. We may not agree with each other on all of our tactics, but that doesn't mean there aren't venues for us to work together and build on the trust and community that already exists.

What the Welcoming Committee is doing:

1. Logistical support – We will organize legal support, housing, food, transportation, and a convergence space as well as anything else you may need to make our collective actions successful.
2. Framework coordinating – We will map out key points and layouts and gather intelligence to help you plug into the bigger picture. Let us know your needs, desires, and capacities.
3. Local outreach – We are building alliances with local groups and communities to help build our collective support. We encourage you to do the same.
4. Networking – We're hooking y'all up with each-other so that you can work with people you might not already know, strategize, and share a glass of some good old mutual aid.

What we are calling for:

1. Get it together – Have regional consultas, organize in your communities, and form your affinity groups. We are expecting people to come with concrete plans for action that they have devised and the capacity to carry them through.
2. Lead up actions – Practice makes perfect. Use this entire year leading up to the RNC to develop and practice your own tactics and strategies that step things up a notch and build true alternatives. Resistance doesn't start and end at 'the next big protest'; it is a way of life.
3. Fundraising – We're not saying to let your community projects flounder, but we're going to need some serious cash to help arrange legal support (we're still looking for a lawyer dumpster), a convergence space, and a thousand other logistical puzzles. Pass the hat at every regional consulta and meeting you attend, hold fundraisers, and send a chunk of it in our direction!
4. Communicate – Maintain strong security-culture values, but let us know your capacities and what you will need. If you want a single point person to communicate with, we can arrange it. What you say you can do and will need shapes the course that we take.
5. Come to the Twin Cities – Come early and come often! Take advantage of that "Minnesota Nice" and come long before the convention to help make things happen. Also, put May Day weekend (May 1st - 4th 2008) on your calendars to send a representative or two from your group to the Twin Cities for our next networking and strategizing event (more info TBA).

September 1st, 2008, we, the RNC Welcoming Committee, invite all anarchists and anti-authoritarians, all radicals and rabble-rousers, all those who are fed up with government lies and spectacles to show up ready for action and ensure that we leave no place for these expired politicians. What we create here will send the convention crashing off course into insignificance.

*From the occupied territories of Minnesota,
The RNC Welcoming Committee
normc.org*

Strategy endorsed by:

ACTIVATE (Grand Rapids, MI Students for a Democratic Society - SDS)
 Anarchist Black Cross Para-Legal Services (twitchon@hotmail.com)
 Animas SDS (Colorado)
 Anti-Authoritarians Anonymous (Milwaukee)
 Asheville Rising Tide
 Athens, OH SDS
 Attentat Collective
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 Campus Anti-war Network
 Chicago Anarchist Black Cross (PO Box 1544, Chicago, IL 60690)
 CrimethInc. Far East
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Blockades and Lockdowns

There are many sites that can be blockaded: highways, factory and shopping mall gates, business districts, the front doors of restaurants that are to host corporate dinners or party delegates. Intrepid blockaders can lock themselves to the equipment that is to destroy a forest, or lock authorities out of a building that has been occupied in a political action. One of the most common implements for blockading is the lockbox.

Locking Down with Lockboxes

When it comes to blockading, lockboxes are very useful, assuming you are willing to be arrested. The design described here has been used in several cities, including some in which the police are experts at "handling" protests, and all the same it can take police hours to move blockaders who use them from a busy street. It is one of the simplest designs; there are many other possibilities. You can make lockboxes with 90-degree angles in them that accommodate both arms of one individual, so one person can comfortably lock down to a gate, a truck axle, or even a railroad track. For serious engagements, you can make big concrete barrels with lockboxes fitted inside them, or dig a hole in the ground and build a vertical one-way lockbox into it with concrete and rebar, or drive a junker car into place, disable it, and lock down to it.

Lockdowns can be used to stop movement into and out of an area, providing a spectacle perfect for attracting media or other attention. They can stall traffic to allow support teams to hold an awareness-raising rally, and distribute leaflets to or otherwise engage drivers stuck in traffic. After blockaders are removed from the area, police generally block the area for another hour or more themselves, lengthening the impact of the action. Lockdowns can appeal to the public by showing that people are dedicated enough to put their bodies on the line; they are descended from a long heritage of nonviolent civil disobedience that many civilians find less threatening than other brands of direct action.

Ingredients:

- Metal or plastic tubing or piping, such as PVC pipe
- Bolts and nuts—at least one bolt and one nut for each box
- Chain or rope
- Carabiners
- Glue—optional, but encouraged
- Hacksaw
- Drill
- Bolt cutters—optional
- At least one person ready to put their body on the line

A lockbox is a piece of pipe by which a person can be locked securely to another person or object. The average lockbox accommodates two people; with several lockboxes and people, you can form a human chain.

Lockboxes utilize the width of your torso and arm-span to take up space. To lock

down, you attach yourself to a mechanism inside a piece of pipe; in order for a police officer to unlock you, he would have to get his arm into the pipe as well, but as the pipe fits snugly around your arm, this is impossible. Should police attempt to pull you apart, the strain will be on the metal chain and bolt, not your shoulder joints, assuming your box is built correctly. By using a carabiner to connect to a bolt within the pipe, you are able to detach from the box immediately whenever you choose. With lockboxes, a group of people can swiftly move into a space, block it, and defy the efforts of police officers who would remove them.

Scouting the Target, Planning the Action

The first step is to scout the area you want to blockade. There is a wide variety of environments in which you might choose to apply lockboxes, but for the purposes of this introduction we'll assume that you will be operating in an urban environment. You could blockade the entrance to an event or business, or an entrance to a tunnel, highway, or access ramp. The first step is to figure out where the traffic, whether it be car, foot, or other, can best be bottlenecked. Often, if you block one street successfully, you can snarl traffic in a large area. Look for streets that lead to main roadways, and watch the traffic patterns. If you are planning to block a road, listen to traffic reports; determine which roads gridlock easily and which roads feed major transportation routes. Note all the details of your target, including the length of traffic lights, which lanes are open at certain times, and which directions the majority of cars turn.

Once you have found the location that best serves your purposes, you'll need to determine how many people it will take to block it. If you have a well-chosen target, but you do not have enough people, traffic will still be able to pass, and you will simply be a nuisance, not a blockade; if you cannot create a "complete circuit" with your human chain, connecting it at either end to immovable points, it may be easy to move you out of the way even if the lockboxes between people are secure. To measure distances quickly and subtly, you can count your steps heel-to-toe across an area, or run string or yarn across it. You'll also need to take into account the sizes of the lockboxes you are making and the people locking down. If a street is 20' wide and your lockboxes are 3' long, you'll probably need five or six people.

Plan your formation carefully. If you are locking down in a line, the two people on the ends can be locked to stationary objects—with bicycle U-locks around their necks, for example, or by a less secure means such as chain locks. If you use bicycle locks or any other locks that require keys, have an accomplice to spirit the key away quickly, or be prepared to hide it where the sun doesn't shine. For a less durable blockade, you could leave the ends of your formation open and sit or lie down. Alternatively, you could close the formation at both ends, locking down in a circle, or form two lines crossing each other in an X.

When planning, take into account the strain of being locked in place for a long period. If the lockboxes are not supported by something, those locked together will quickly be worn out by holding them up. There are also the matters of food and blood circulation to consider.

Gathering Materials

Once you have worked out your plan, the next step is to gather materials. These can

be expensive, so look around for places to acquire them freely. PVC pipe can be found at construction sites; chain can be cut from a locked dumpster; tools can be borrowed or stolen. If you do not want to draw attention, you may want to buy the supplies at multiple locations. While purchases of bolts, carabiners, and glue will not attract attention, a septum-pierced revolutionary may raise eyebrows if she brings thirty feet of PVC pipe to the counter. Rumor has it that before and during mass mobilizations, store employees are told to look out for such purchases. Use the same care you would for buying spray-paint, crowbars, bolt cutters, or glass etching solution. Do not use a credit card if you do not wish to create a paper trail.

Design, Construction, Adaptation, and Fortification

Summary:

1. Cut the pipe to the appropriate length
2. Drill a hole all the way through both walls of the pipe at its midpoint (or thereabouts, depending on the differing armspans of the two who will be using it)
3. Pass a bolt through both holes
4. Secure the bolt
5. Cut a length of chain to fit around your wrist and reach up to the bolt
6. Fasten a carabiner to the chain by which to secure it to the bolt
7. Repeat steps 5 and 6 for the person who will share the lockbox with you
8. Fortify the lockbox

The construction of lockboxes can be a fun group activity. Make sure the people who are going to use the boxes try them on and modify them according to arm length and other variables. How much of your arm goes inside a lockbox is a matter of preference and tactical strategy, but on average your pipe should be about 4' in length. The more of your arm is covered by the PVC pipe, the more of your body is safe from police action. For example, if your bicep is exposed, the police could attempt to use pain compliance there to force you to unlock yourself; if your entire arm is in the pipe, this is impossible.

Everyone's arms are unique. If you are locking down, you need to be able to put your arm far enough into the pipe to grab the bolt, so you can easily connect and disconnect your carabiner. If the people who are to use the box can be present during the construction, measure their arms and custom-fit the pipe. If this is not possible, build the box to a length that almost anyone can use—say, between 3' and 4'. If you are using PVC pipe, it can easily be cut with a standard hacksaw. For more long-lasting lockdowns, use more durable piping.

It's important that your pipe be the right diameter; you should be comfortable sliding your arm in at least to your bicep. Unless your arm is extremely small or large, the pipe should be between 4" and 6" in diameter.

After the pipe is cut so that both people who are to use it can put their arms in as far as they want and touch fingers, secure a bolt at the point where their fingers touch. The length of the bolt should be longer than the diameter of the pipe; if you use 5" pipe, make sure your bolt is at least 5.5". Stay away from bolts with sharp threads or a sharp point on one end, unless you are prepared to modify them for safety and comfort. Your bolt should be thick and difficult to cut; it will probably be the

weakest link in the chain, so you'll want to be careful to make sure it's as secure as possible.

Drill a hole all the way through one wall of the pipe and out the other. If you have to drill the top hole first and then flip the pipe to drill the bottom hole, make sure the holes line up! Put the bolt through both holes. It should be slightly off-center in the pipe, so the person locking to it can fit their fingers around it and have space for their knuckles. Now use nuts to secure it in place; these can go inside the pipe, or outside it, or both. You can use powerful glue to strengthen the bolt; better yet, if you have the means, weld it into place. You could include multiple bolts in your design, to make it harder for the police to know where to start. If you have more than one bolt, you can also experiment with attaching yourself to all of them.

Now you have to build the chain bracelet that secures you to the bolt inside the pipe. Cut a length of chain that can loop around your wrist at one end, and attach at the other end around the bolt in the pipe; it will be in the shape of a P. Experiment with chain length until you have a comfortable fit. Make the clasp that holds the chain around your wrist permanent and durable; use a carabiner to clasp the chain around the bolt, so you are able to unclasp from the lock box in an emergency.

Attaching the chain to the central bolt with a carabiner is a very secure and safe option, but there are others. For a simpler, though weaker, variation, skip the central bolt entirely and run a length of chain through the tube to attach your wrist to the wrist of your partner. This option might be useful if you have limited time and funding to prepare for the action. A benefit of the central bolt is that when you are pulled, the bolt absorbs some of the force, and gripping it can provide some control; if you are connected to another person by a chain directly, and one of you is pulled or dragged, both of you will bear the brunt of it.

Once the device is assembled, the holes drilled, the bolt secured, and the chain attached, make sure it all fits comfortably. Put some padding around the chain at your wrist, and pad the entrance to the tube if need be. If nothing else, wrap the chain in an old sock or two, and sand down the edges of the pipe to prevent it from cutting your arm.

The final step is to fortify your creation. Many police departments now understand how lockboxes are constructed and know how to disassemble them. This does not mean locking down is ineffective, since it still takes the police time to react, retrieve the necessary tools, and cut apart each lockbox; but it is worth brainstorming about how to stay ahead of their technology. The police are likely to try to cut the pipe to expose your hand and the carabiner, or attack the box at the bolt. Consider ways to slow this process. You could wrap the lockbox in materials that dull saw blades, for example, or wind layers of duct tape and wire around it, or cover it in viscous tar and sand, or weld rebar armor to it—or do all of these! The more layers of material that require different forms of cutting technology, the better. For heavy lockboxes that can anchor you in place, you could put a layer of concrete around your pipe, and a layer of plastic or aluminum drain tubing around that.

Practice and Transport

After all of the boxes are constructed, practice locking in and out of them. Do this alone until you have it down, then try it with a partner, locking at once into both

sides of a box. Before an action, practice for speed and organization with everyone who will be involved, so things will go smoothly on the big day. To prevent confusion, you can label each end of each lockbox, and plan out which direction each person will face and the order in which people will lock together. It can help to have individuals involved who do not actually lock down on the line; not only can they help get things together quickly at the beginning, they can also provide food and water to the people who cannot move their arms, and help deal with police and others.

It can be a challenge to get all the lockboxes to the site of the lockdown. You could hide them nearby in advance, or bear them there in a march, disguised as puppets or banners. If you have access to a car, you can use it to drop off all the lockboxes at the very moment your group suddenly converges at the chosen site. If you are doing a long line, you have access to several cars, and speed is of the essence, pairs could get locked together in vehicles before driving to the area, then all be dropped off at the site and link up in a matter of seconds. A large group of people walking any distance with bulky lockboxes will probably attract the wrong kind of attention, especially if the authorities are on the lookout for civil disobedience, although you could come up with clever ways to camouflage them in a pinch.

As in all blockading, if you are blocking a road or highway that is in use, it is very important to stop traffic first. This can most easily be accomplished by another group working in concert with those who lock down; it is a lot to ask of a small group that they stop traffic, then lock themselves properly together while holding it at bay. Angry drivers can be even more dangerous than police under these circumstances; be careful not to give them the opportunity to do anything stupid.

Once You're Locked Together

The people who have come with you to play supporting roles can complement your blockade with a rally, street party, or outreach event. If you are blocking a street, there will be drivers to witness street theater or receive pamphlets; if you're blocking the entrance to an official event, there may be reporters to record you issuing your statement. Either way, there will be curious passersby who deserve to be told more about what's going on and why, and perhaps to be entertained in the bargain. If your lockdown is going to create a traffic jam, and you are concerned that the action might be misinterpreted as an attack on civilian drivers, consider distributing peace offerings such as homemade brownies.

Those locking down can be dressed in symbolic or expressive garb—or, for that matter, in nothing at all—or draped in a banner explaining the reason for the action. If your human chain is not connected to anything at the ends, you could conceivably move from one point to another while locked together, but this will not be easy or particularly safe. If you are planning on moving at all, you should practice in advance, and perhaps designate coordinators to talk everyone through certain movements or count off marching steps. Whether you expect this to be an issue or not, it is wise to prepare a basic communication and decision-making structure in advance, if there are more than a couple of you planning to lock down together.

Police Reactions, Legal Consequences

Ultimately, there is no way to predict for sure how the police will react, so limit the hours you spend debating it in your group. It is important to have a police liaison

present to negotiate with the authorities or at least make sure they understand the situation, and reporters or other witnesses to temper or at least document their behavior. If they start to do something that seems dangerous, calmly inform them that your arm is inside the tube and that you are unable to remove it, and that a team of crack lawyers eagerly awaits the chance to sue them into oblivion. Police will always try to intimidate you; call their bluff, while maintaining your composure. In a worst-case scenario, they may use pepper spray or a similar weapon on you—but remember, this will cost them a lot in the public eye, especially if you bear this persecution courageously.

If your line is anchored at each end, they may begin by trying to disengage the people in the anchoring roles. If they can move the entire line out of the way and work on you once you are no longer blocking traffic, they probably will, but this will be difficult if you are seated or supine. If they can't move you all, they will work lockbox by lockbox, cutting the line into smaller, more moveable sections. The method the police use to cut you out will depend on how experienced they are. No police department wants a lawsuit, so they will probably be careful not to injure you. If you hide the location of the central bolt, they will have no way of knowing where your hands are inside the tube; this will prevent them from simply cutting the tube in half. Often, the police will call in the fire department to use special tools designed for removing people from wreckage. Last time I locked down, the police brought special wooden frames to support our PVC pipe lockboxes, then slowly dismantled the boxes with wire cutters, saws, and various other tools.

It is also difficult to predict what your charges will be when you are arrested at the end of your lockdown. In this author's experience, among others, the charge has been "incommoding," the same charge you get for blocking a street or similar conduit with your body. The use of lockboxes is not a separate crime, though the police may make threats or try to tack on additional charges such as "possession of implements of crime" (PIC). In both the lockdowns in which I participated, the police told us that because we used the lockboxes we would be charged with an additional PIC offense, but of course, as police are wont to do, they were lying. PVC pipe, chain, and carabiners are not implements of crime, no matter how you slice it. Regardless, you should have a group ready to provide immediate legal support.

Committing to a lockdown is a serious matter; you must be prepared for the ordeal of interacting with infuriated police officers over a protracted period of time, while being unable to move freely; this will be followed by the further ordeal of being arrested and spending time in jail. Embark on a lockdown in a state of inner peace and resolve, properly fed and hydrated, prepared to weather storms of danger and drama—and if you think you might be there for a long time, wear an adult diaper!

Other Blockading Methods

There are many other ways to create blockades. An individual who desires to lock herself to something or someone can do so by putting a bicycle U-lock around her neck, though this requires the same support infrastructure that a traditional lockdown does. The most traditional is to build a barricade. Extremely experienced and prepared groups can build tripods and suspend individuals from them, taking the civil disobedience of lockdowns to another level. Dirt roads can be blockaded by digging ditches into them; fencing, metal or wood poles, cables supporting such poles, or other materials can be planted in them, too. If police become anxious or confused enough, they may block off an area for you.

When blockading a busy thoroughfare, it is important to slow traffic to a safe speed first. A bicycle parade can slow to a stop, becoming a blockade in itself and offering the opportunity for more permanent blockading to take place. Old bicycles, perhaps outfitted with extra metal, could be locked together and abandoned as a blockade by such a parade. Individuals dressed as construction workers can put out traffic cones and barrels and wave down cars; for that matter, giving drivers a spectacle of any kind to stare at will slow them down. A banner drop over a busy highway can slow traffic significantly, potentially creating a traffic jam which might itself constitute a blockade of sorts—nothing obstructs cars like more cars! Speaking of, you can drive old junker cars into place and disable them; be sure to buy them with cash from people who won't remember anything useful about you if the authorities come asking. They can be loaded with barricading material, which can be deployed from them; people can even lock down to them. Once traffic is slowed or stopped, you can stretch cables or fencing across highways and affix it to telephone poles, light posts, or guardrails.

Don't forget that quick-drying concrete can effectively seal many gates, and other means of access. Mix nuts and bolts or other material into it for greater durability. For a humorous effect in a low-risk environment, you can brick up the door of an office or business. Pick a quiet night, so the mortar will have enough time to dry.

When blocking off both ends of a street or bridge, make sure you leave an exit. You don't want to let traffic in, but you also don't want to trap civilians—or yourself. Always make sure that you are not blocking access to a hospital or similar establishment.