

TACTICS OF THE MOVEMENT OF THE LIBERTARIAN LEFT Supplement 1

MLL Pop Fronting: When, Why & How To Do It

MLL Central Cell, P.O. Box 1748, Long Beach, CA 90801-1748

Individuals who hold membership in **MLL** are free to associate as they will. **MLL** cells and locals have considerable discretion in their tactical choices. Still, even they may find the following tactical discussion of association with other groups useful in their decision-making. They describe the guidelines for **MLL** Central Cell forming short- and long-term coalitions. Recent political history on the Left developed the concept of Popular Front around the turn of the century, usually a coalition of Popular or "people's" aligned groups against the Establishment. (The term was stolen by some Establishment government coalitions, especially that of France in the 1930s *Bloc Populaire*). By the 1960s, "Pop Front" was simply a generic term, usually describing *ad hoc* coalitions opposing War and other salient issues. We use the term in that manner here.

Why Form Pop Fronts?

Divide and rule is a statist axiom since Julius Caesar. An alliance of groups opposed to the State is more likely to succeed, even with great differences. Libertarian analysis runs counter to many Left positions on Pop Fronts. For example, socialists prefer to homogenize their coalitions as much as possible. Libertarians, considering Division of Labour the basic reason for all social action, prefer heterogeneity and always oppose restricted membership, purges and forced schism.

Libertarians tend to be both more idealistic and more practical. We are more idealistic in that we will not compromise for the sake of the Pop Front (see below) but we also will tend not to ally if we do not perceive a pay-off. (In contrast, socialist groups will Pop Front for the sake of the Pop Front itself, attempting to take it over and rule it, even at the expense of the Front's goal.) Those differences dictate our decisions on When and How to Pop Front.

When To Form/Join Pop Fronts?

1. The Pop Front must be issue-oriented. There are variations and mixed combinations, but basically there are two kinds of Pop Front, defined by purpose. One has a number of issues with member groups giving and taking and is aimed at gaining the power of the State. This kind is usually overtly political but not always. Sometimes Pop Fronts are organized extra-parliamentary to force changes in the State coalitions or in the programmes of incumbent statists. The other kind is issue-oriented, that is, a single issue or one issue with a few closely related other ones, is put forward. The political Pop Front is often open-ended, and usually somewhat ambiguous in its many goals (useful for political trade-offs). Issue Pop Fronts have a specific, well-defined goal (or goals) which, when achieved (or irretrievably lost), dissolves the Front. Only Issue Fronts have any anti-political and hence Libertarian use, and not all of them.

2. The Pop Front's issue must be Libertarian even if the members are not. "End The War," "Abolish The _____ Tax," "Free _____" (from State imprisonment), and "Imperial Troops Out Now" are issues that **MLL** can almost always join.

3. The goal must be clear and specific. "Free Draft Resisters from Prison" is clear and specific; "Support Draft Resister's Rights" is not. The Pop Front may be satisfied with Draft opponents getting equal treatment under the law which a Libertarian could care less about. "Support Women's Rights" or even "Fight For Women's Rights" is absurdly vague. "Free The Four Midwives" is concrete, and counter-economically useful in the bargain.

4. The Pop Front Must Be Open. If it isn't, we're licked before we start. Those who have the power to close the group have the power period. The moment an open Front becomes

closed, **MLL** walks with the expelled group *even if* they are the most odious and statist (which, currently, is the LP). The Front is now useless and the best payoff in terms of image and recruitment is to show staunch principle adherence by acting immediately.

5. The Parliamentary Option is closed. This is the one point on which we may be perceived as divisive and petty. Nonetheless, it is non-negotiable. Remember, though, we only care about *objective* results. Hence, tabling or delaying indefinitely endorsements of apparently sympathetic political candidates is sufficient for our purposes. One diplomatic method for preserving an otherwise valuable Pop Front is to have a "Political Action Committee" or whatever *spun off* from the Pop Front, perhaps urging practical reasons such as freedom from having to report internal matters to Election Commissions. Then we pointedly ignore the spin-off group and push for tactics independent of whatever the endorsed candidates find helpful in their power-seeking.

This leads naturally to the care and feeding of the Pop Front and its other members.

How To Pop Front?

Joining a Pop Front is no great difficulty, and if it is, forget it (point #4 above). The best thing to remember on a minute-to-minute basis is that you are the closest thing Agorists have to diplomats in such a situation, so act diplomatically.

- **Don't pick fights.** Always stand on principle but only when it is relevant to what the Front is actually doing. Save the polemics and arguments for the bullshit sessions at the bar or coffee shop after the action meetings.

- **Don't push **MLL** and its positions.** When it's relevant, it will come up naturally. You *always* have a better reception when you are asked for your group's view. Then the others feel it incumbent to at least politely listen.

- **Don't hide anything either.** A diplomat never forgets his or her purpose. Don't pass on a tough resolution statement because it becomes inconvenient or may strain a good working relationship so far.

- **Neither a workhorse nor a shirker be** (says Anarcho-Polonius). Taking on workloads on behalf of the Front is a good way to get power (standard CP tactic) but you may cause friction precisely because that is well known. Correspondingly, no one likes talkers who are not doers. Use your agorist judgement: something needs to be done; first, point it out and if someone else volunteers, fine. Otherwise, offer to act on it. If someone objects, let them do it *unless* they then back off. At that point finally, assertively take on the task.

Always fulfill any contracts—but that goes without saying to **MLL** members.

- **Always view objectively.** What other members of the Pop Front say is nearly irrelevant. Watch what they *do*. While *your* actions should match your rhetoric, neither expect nor require that others follow that creed. (It would force some of them to dig too deeply into their premises for their own faith to hold.) But Partyarchs spout libertarianism while acting statist and professed social-statists often act inconsistently in Left Libertarian ways.

Nothing beats your own hard-won experience, but feel free to ask **MLL** Central Cell what our experiences have told us about other groups, individuals, and long-running Pop Fronts.

And have no fear if this policy statement falls into the hands of non-libertarians; I cannot imagine it doing anything but making us look good—especially if we're living up to it. —SEK3