

# Anarchism

*Its Aims, Principles and  
Methods Explained*



**Zabalaza Books**

*"Knowledge is the Key to be Free"*

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All these essays were written by members of the *Workers Solidarity Movement* in Ireland except the chapter *Racism and Class Struggle*. Some were talks given to meetings of the WSM while others were articles that were written for the WSM's journal, '*Workers Solidarity*'. The chapter *Racism and Class Struggle* was written by a South African comrade from the ex-*Workers Solidarity Federation* for the WSM's journal *Red and Black Revolution* (No. 4). They have been edited and revised slightly to make them more relevant to us here in Southern Africa. If you like what you have just read then why not get involved? *Unite with us and together we can break the chains!*



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# Anarchism

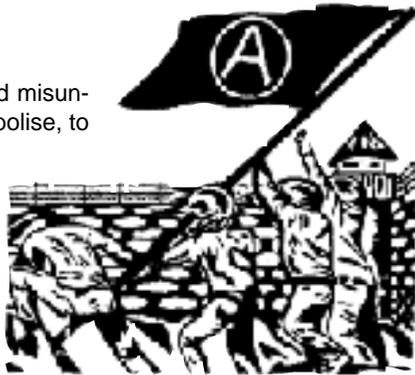
## *Its Aims, Principles and Methods Explained*

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## ★ Anarchism, Socialism and Freedom

ANARCHISM IS a much-lid about and misunderstood set of ideas. It has come to symbolise, to many people, a society of destruction and disorder. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Anarchism has been deliberately slandered and misrepresented, not only by those running this society but also by most on the Left. Deliberately, for the reason that its uncompromising and radical critique of society and how to change it poses a challenge that cannot be met except by slander. Its roots and association with the working class of all countries tells the real truth.



Anarchism views society, what it is and how it should be, on the basis of two fundamental pillars. These are the economic nature of society and the manner in which political power is organised. We believe that the economic system under which we presently live must be abolished. We also say that the political institutions of capitalism, which are hierarchical and authoritarian must go too. These institutions serve the employer class and will have to be replaced with ones based on mass participatory democracy and freedom.

### WORKERS COUNCILS

In the new economic order, the workers of the world will own and share all the wealth they produce. Decisions will be made through workplace and community councils that will be federated at all levels and centrally co-ordinated. Thus political power will not be organised in a hierarchical manner, where a central government tells everyone else what to do.

Those socialists who follow the ideas of Lenin hold that such a society can only be built by using the State structures, albeit a "workers state", under the leadership of their Party. Anarchists reject this since both the State and Party are hierarchical and authoritarian. They are diametrically opposed to the aims and organisation of the new society.

### STATE CAPITALISM

Rather than building a real socialist society where both economic and political power would be everyone's possession and nobody's property, these people end up building societies that are no more than State Capitalism like Russia was and China still is. In these countries, ordinary people do not have any say in how things are run or in the decisions that affect them. They are ordered about and exploited just as

who get together, the more we can achieve. However organisation has to be more than like-minded people coming together. We also need a strategy, a way to link up all the different progressive struggles into a common battle to get rid of the present set-up and to replace it with socialism, with real democracy, with control over our lives and futures.

One local struggle, no matter how determined or daring, won't overthrow the system. On the other hand, a network of struggles, supporting and encouraging each other, can spread and grow to be capable of just that. It is the role of an anarchist organisation to bring all the facets of opposition together.

But this on its own is not enough, nor is it enough to simply explain the anarchist alternative. We also have to build up confidence among our friends, neighbours and workmates in their own ability to start fighting for themselves, to start taking back control over their destinies.

That means combating the ideas and practices that reinforce passivity and dependence. We do this by getting people involved as participants rather than mere spectators in their own struggles. Today it can mean small but concrete things like at work arguing for having rotating shop stewards so that the skills are spread, for regular elections so that we don't come to rely on the one 'expert', and lunchtime meetings to mandate our stewards.

In local struggles we don't do things for people, we do it with them. Share the skills and knowledge. When we win a victory everyone who was involved should feel it is their victory. They should feel strong and confident, capable of taking on a bigger opponent the next time.

Without that sort of confidence we will never break down the division between rulers and ruled, and while we may be able to change the faces of those who boss us around, we won't be able to stop there being bosses. Most of us will only take risks, stand up and fight if we believe there is a good chance of succeeding. This sort of self-confidence doesn't grow on trees - it grows out of winning. Not out of watching someone winning for us, but out of knowing we played our part in getting that victory.



## ★ Getting organised locally

We live in a world where we are encouraged to be passive. We can either accept things as they are or, at best, we can ask someone else to do things for us. That someone can be a politician, a 'community leader', or even a full-time union official. The 'experts' will look after the important stuff and we can stay at home feeling dependent and powerless. Just as there are bosses and workers, there are also leaders and led; and we are supposed to accept it as somehow natural.

That's the theory. But sometimes there comes a point where many of us decide we are tired of sitting on the sidelines. We would like a say in the things that affect us. A fairly recent example was the campaign that forced the government to abolish water charges in Ireland.

At the beginning most people believed the politicians when they said "vote for us and we'll abolish them". But after the politicians and their parties all did the exact opposite as soon as they got our votes, a lot of people began to see the need to start taking matters into their own hands.

This was a big step. There was no super leader or ready made big organisation to sort things out. It started with a handful of anarchists and socialists writing a leaflet and putting it in the doors on their estates and calling local meetings. In some areas up to eighty turned up for the first meeting, in others nobody at all showed up. *But from tiny acorns do mighty oak trees grow*, and from a handful of people with a good idea grew a non-payment movement involving tens of thousands.

So, we have no doubt that local organising in a militant fashion is not only desirable but is also very possible. In a less dramatic way, it happens year in and year out all over the world. We don't always hear about it, it's not exactly the sort of thing that media bosses want to put on page 1 of their newspaper.

What campaigns like these show is that most people want a direct say in decisions that are going to effect them, and, when the 'proper channels' fail them, are willing to get together with others and fight for their interests.

Nobody in their right mind wants to spend the rest of their life fighting a succession of single-issue struggles, and that is where revolutionary organisations come in. The problems we face are down to a system that puts the interests of the rich and their profits way ahead of the interests of ordinary people and divides us into rulers and ruled.

Capitalism is a big, worldwide system. We need to organise on a big scale too. Clearly the more of us



happens in the "free world".

Anarchists predicted this long before it was confirmed by the betrayal of the Russian revolution, when the Bolshevik State suppressed the workers' soviets and factory committees. After all, the means you use and what you end up with are connected. Thus, if the structures used to build socialism are hierarchical and undemocratic you should not be surprised if the society you end up with is hierarchical and undemocratic. This scientific law seemingly escapes some self-proclaimed followers of "scientific socialism".

## FREEDOM

The question of freedom is not just a subject for some philosophical debate. It is at the very heart of revolutionary change and socialism. A successful revolution is not just a shift in economic power from the employers to the workers.

It is a time of real freedom. It is a time when the chains of the old oppressive order are thrown off and the workers movement explodes into creativity as it copes with organising every facet of society so that the needs of all are met. Everyone can get involved, through his or her assemblies and delegate councils, in decision-making and planning that used to be the sole concern of central government. Freedom of ideas, criticism and input will not only be a practical reality but a necessity.

Capitalist society is organised in a top-down way. Orders come from the top and those at the bottom obey them. The institutions, by which the bosses rule the Government and the State, are built so that the rule of a minority over the majority is possible. Control of political freedom, ideas and information is fundamental to their working. Participation is strictly limited so that most people never have any say.

## WORKERS STATES

That is why we wish to abolish these strictures. They can never be used to create socialism but instead will actively sabotage the workers' cause. The "workers states" advocated by the Leninists for the transition to socialism have proven to be its greatest enemy. Only workers' councils can form the basis of the new society.

We stand uncompromisingly for a New World. One that will be owned and managed by all those who work. It will be organised from the bottom up and production will be to meet peoples' needs, not for the private profit of a few. Anarchist society will make real the old call "from each according to ability, to each according to need". Every individual will enjoy complete control of their life with no limit on their freedom as long as they do not encroach on the freedom of anyone else. Now, isn't that something worth struggling for?

## ★ Class

WHY IS THE concept of class so important to anarchists? Why are we constantly talking about classes and class struggle? Some of our opponents accuse us of living in the past; they claim the working class is dying out. After all you don't see too



“So long, partner!”

many workers wandering around in donkey jackets, cloth caps and heavy boots. So that settles the question, doesn't it? No, it doesn't, so let us get away from silly caricatures and get down to basics.

The modern world, like the societies that came before it, does not consist of a single group of people who have more in common than they have dividing them. Sadly there is no single 'Humanity' not yet. In every country there is still a division of people into classes that have conflicting interests.

Classes are defined by their relationship to the means of production; their relationship to the factories, machinery, natural resources, etc. with which the wealth of society is created. Although there are groups such as the self-employed and the small farmers, the main classes are the workers and the bosses. It is the labour of the working class that creates the

wealth. The bosses, through their ownership and control of the means of production, have legal ownership of this wealth and decide how it is to be distributed.

### STOLEN WAGES

Only a part of this wealth is returned. Some is paid as wages, some as the "social wage" (hospitals, schools, public services, and so on). The rest is creamed off as profit. But labour creates all wealth. An apple on a tree is worth nothing until someone picks it; coal in the ground has no use until someone mines it. What is known as surplus value or profit is stolen wages. The working class is the majority in the world today. All who work for a wage, salary or commission are in its ranks. It consists of all who have to sell their ability to work to those in control. It makes no difference if you work in a factory, office, school, hospital or shop. It makes no difference if you work with your hands or your brain, whether you wear overalls or a suit, whether you earn 'good' or bad wages.

### WHAT ABOUT THE UNEMPLOYED?

The unemployed also form part of the working class. Unemployment Insurance

society is organised right now. Religion generally sees society as god given and inevitable. Almost all world religions claim that the poor will be rewarded in the after-life for passively accepting their position in this one.

Religion is by its nature authoritarian, whether to a greater or lesser extent. It is based on 'faith' and obedience. The reality we face is of churches that are involved in the repression of women, of gay people and all of those who seek to change the face of the traditional (nuclear) family. It is no coincidence that fundamentalists of all religions seek to push back the progress made by women in the workplace and the sexual revolution.

### CHURCH POWER

As anarchists we oppose this authoritarianism. We are fighting to break the power of the church. This power is immense.

However it is not enough just to oppose the churches' power. As Anarchists we must offer a real practical alternative analysis of society. The stronghold that the church has is not simply a result of historical circumstances; it offers something that people want. It offers an explanation of all sorts of natural and personal disasters, by saying that they are "the will of god". It offers hope in a world where misery, poverty, ignorance, frustration and alienation are endemic.

To break this stranglehold, we need a strategy that unites our vision of a better world in the here and now with struggles that bring people into conflict with clerical power and show up religion as a prop for the status quo, that stands in the way of their needs and desires.

### CHURCH AND STATE

The question that often arises is "surely as Anarchists you are against the state as well?" The simple answer is that we are but we are also fighting for improvements to people's lives in the here and now. Breaking the stranglehold of the church would ease the way for divorce, reproductive rights including abortion, along with stopping church control of schools.

For us religion is a private matter. It should enjoy no special privileges, tax relief's etc. We expect members to be involved in the struggle against the power and control exercised by the churches. Nonetheless members can hold religious beliefs provided they fully accept this aspect.

In short we fight religion by fighting its root causes. We are fighting for an anarchist society where people will come to realise that they have no need for religion or other mystical ideas. We challenge religion in a practical way by showing where it obstructs social progress and by leading the challenge to it at every opportunity.

drove tens of thousands with no formal claim to land into the cities. Conditions in the city at this time were horrific with the death rate exceeding the birth rate.

Today a similar phenomenon is witnessed in many 'third world' countries where huge areas of land are allowed to lie fallow while landless peasants are forced to move to the city slums and eke out a living in next to impossible circumstances. In short we should not forget that capitalism has teeth and both in the historic past and, outside of the 1st world it is not at all shy at using them if it needs to force people into work.

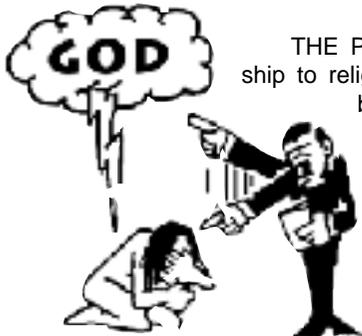
More fundamentally though many workers will not wish to choose the life style associated with dropping out. We enjoy the consumerist comforts of capitalism. I'm a great fan of the Sony Playstation for instance and such items can only be produced in advanced industrial societies. I'm willing to fight for a society where as a class we decide what to produce and whether the benefits of production outweigh the environmental damage caused by production. I'm even willing to recognise that for a time at least we may decide that producing charcoal burning stoves is more important than producing Playstations. I'm willing to fight for a society where people can choose their own lifestyles.

But I'm not going to fight for a society that limits itself to small communes and low-tech industry.

At the end of the day this is the core plank of an anarchist analysis of the environment. In a society where we democratically control production we will decide not to pollute, or to limit pollution to a level that can be absorbed. We also recognise the need to fight against harmful activity in the 'here and now' and to link up such fights with other issues in a fight to change society.

We defend peoples rights to be different in the here and now, to choose their own lifestyle, sexuality, musical preferences, whatever. This position automatically makes us allies of the radical end of the green movement and anarchism provides a way of moving from the politics of permanent protest to the politics of permanent change.

## ★ Anarchists and Religion



THE POPULAR STEREOTYPE of anarchists' relationship to religion is that we are all priest-killers and church-burners. This is, as is usually the case with mainstream representations of anarchism, almost completely false. It is useful in the wake of the clerical paedophile scandals and the general stranglehold that the church exerts on society to give a truer explanation of our position.

Anarchists are materialists. We understand that there is a real and concrete basis for the way

(UIF) is paid for a short time to those who have worked. Needless to say, the partners and children of workers are also part of the same class, as are the retired.

The interests of the working class (wages, working conditions, jobs, useful public spending, etc.) are in constant and inevitable conflict with those of the boss class. They seek to maximise their profits and gain an advantage over their competitors at the expense of the workers.

## NONSENSE

Anyone who talks about 'social partnership', about labour and capital working together for the benefit of all is talking nonsense. What rights we have, and gains we have made, have been the results of long and often bitter struggles. The bosses only give such rights and concessions as they are forced to. In times of recession, such as now, they try to make workers pay through job losses, cuts in real wages, cuts in public spending, productivity deals, etc. for the crisis that is a periodic and inevitable product of capitalism.

Although capitalism oppresses people on many different levels, race and sex, to name but two, it is the exploitation of our labour that is fundamental to the system. It is on this front that the fight for a new society will be won or lost. If we can reclaim that aspect of our lives, the system can be overturned and replaced with something much better.

## TAKING OVER

The working class are brought together in large towns and cities. At work we cooperate with others. Each person has to do their bit so that the person at the next stage of production can do theirs. In the services it is the same, in hospitals, schools and offices. This means that the working class can be a force capable, not only of rebelling against injustice but of taking over and recreating society in its' own interests.

As a class we have to think and act collectively. In a strike you need the support of your co-workers and of the workers in supplier firms. Individual action won't get you very far. *We have to work together!* The same applies to the mammoth task of creating a new society. We cannot divide up an office or factory between all the workers there. We act as a group or not at all. This collective nature that is part and parcel of our class provides the basis for the solidarity and mutual aid we will need to get rid of the old society and build a truly free and equal one on its remains.

## POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

However, just because someone is a worker, it does not always follow that he or she will think of themselves as a worker, or realise the potential for change that the working class collectively possesses. We all know of workers who sometimes identify with their boss, or unemployed people who become demoralised and totally isolated from any sense of belonging to the working class. And there are plenty of ignorant academics running around talking rubbish about a new 'sub-class' and a 'natu-

ral conflict' between those with jobs and those without.

Class-consciousness, an awareness of our common interests and the potential we have for real change, needs to be encouraged and strengthened. This is one of the tasks of an anarchist organisation.

The struggle between the classes will only come to an end when the boss class and the state that protects their privileged position are overthrown. Nationalisation or state control of the means of production would not mean an end to class society. It would simply mean the replacement of individual capitalists by a bureaucratic state capitalism. Like their predecessors they would be in control and would have the final say about what happens to the wealth we create. Whether they like it or not this would be the logical outcome of the statist politics of any Workers Party, Trotskyist Party or the SACP.

### THE WAY TO FREEDOM

Only the direct control and self-management of production by the working class ourselves can end the class division. *A classless society is not possible without this!*

Everyone affected by a decision should have a say in making that decision. An elected workers' council in each workplace would manage production in an anarchist society. Planning on a higher level would be subject to the agreement of delegates from the councils, delegates who would be subject to a mandate from their members and instantly recallable if they don't do the job they were elected to do. In such a society the wealth would be created and managed for the benefit of all. There would be no elite of bosses or rulers.

*This is the vital precondition for real freedom.*

## ★ Anarchism and Leaders

A CYNICAL EYE is directed at anarchists whenever we speak of organisation. Is not anarchism the opposite of organisation? The simple answer is NO. Is it then the opposite of large or complicated organisation? The answer is equally simple, NO. So where do such mistaken ideas come from?

We Anarchists want an end to the present system and its replacement by a socialism that is inseparable from freedom. Being just as realistic and practical as anyone else, we know that the bosses are well organised and have the forces of the



interests are the private ruling classes of Western Europe or the state bureaucrats who previously ruled Eastern Europe and still control large sections of the economy on the global level.

To summarise, as anarchists we are aware we are dependant on the environment in order to exist, we are aware that 'the Power', be it industry or state based, is willing to locally destroy large parts of the environment in pursuit of power and profit. Finally we are aware that the only way to stop 'the Power' is by direct action against its projects in the short term and a revolutionary change of society in the long term.

However there is another common element to the radical or progressive wing of the environmental movement. For many involved, the tactics used also represent a way to escape some of the day-to-day misery of life under capitalism. This attitude, which is often referred to in anarchist circles as lifestylism, is something we also need to consider. The protest camps of the anti-road movements in Britain and Ireland represented more than a way of stopping unnecessary road projects and questioning transport priorities. To many they also represented an alternative model of how we could live - one without hierarchy and more in commune with nature.

Articles originating from within these camps often portrayed them as islands of escape from capitalism and alongside thus sought to develop a theory of how people could live self-sufficiently in and between them, in some instances even trying to escape dependency on state welfare (the dole etc). The creating of colonies to 'escape capitalism' is not a new phenomena, it too has historical parallels associated with anarchism. In the 1920s for instance this was expressed by the growth of communes in the USA.

I'm going to be critical of this tendency but let me start off by moderating this criticism by saying as anarchists we should defend peoples right to choose whatever life style they desire under today's society. And in a future anarchist society we should be clear that people will choose to live in a wide variety of ways. I like cities and the cultural diversity that comes with them, so I certainly believe cities will exist in the future but we should also be clear that some people will choose to live in much smaller communes, in ways they consider to be more in contact with nature. Providing people are free to choose in what manner they live we not only should have no problem with this but look forward to such a society. One in which people could move between different ways of living and different communities as it suited them, without the attendant economic disadvantages and political repression that accompany such choices in today's society.

What I do want to criticise however is the idea that this sort of choice can change society or more fundamentally that if everyone conformed to such a lifestyle change a revolution would come about because capitalism could no longer function.

Fundamentally this under-estimates the willingness of capitalism to force people to work. Capitalism, when faced with shortages of workers, has little hesitation in driving people off the land and facing them with the choice of working in the factory or starving. Historically this was, at least to some extent, what the Enclosure acts in 17th century Britain were all about. The division of the land into clearly marked units

implied in the slogan 'neither left nor right but green'.

*A simplified understanding of the range of green ideas can be gained if we imagine two opposites of environmentalist theory and practise:*

- a) Organisation tactics: direct actionist to leader/parliamentary
- b) Motivation: misanthropic mysticism to humanist materialism

The intersection between leader/parliamentary tactics and misanthropic mysticism is currently and historically useless at best and all too often dangerous in giving cover to deeply reactionary political trends. In Germany in the 1920's for instance, a mass organisation called Blood and Soil existed which represented just such a combination. Their 1923 recruitment material include *"In every German a forest quivers with its caverns and ravines... it is the source of German inwardness, of the German soul..."*. By 1939 60% of the membership of the main 'nature protection' organisations had joined the Nazi party (as compared with 10% of the entire male population).

Even as late as 1942 Himmler could use 'environmentalism' as a justification for the annexation of Poland writing "The peasant of our racial stock has always carefully endeavoured to increase the natural powers of the soil... and to preserve the balance of the whole of nature. ... If, therefore, the new Lebensraum are to become a homeland for our settlers, the planned arrangement of the landscape being close to nature is a decisive prerequisite". This is not of course to suggest environmentalists are fascists, far from it, but it cannot be safely assumed that all are automatically progressive.

Sections of today's Green Movement in Germany have resurrected some of the 'Blood and Soil' theory, more details on this can be found in the AK Press pamphlet "Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience". This is not to claim that all environmentalists are or will become fascists, far from it but it should be clear that one cannot assume that the label of "environmentalist" is any sort of guarantee of progressive politics in other areas.

The wing of environmentalism that is most open to anarchism is the opposite intersection, that of Direct action and humanist materialism. It is based around an understanding that the environment is important because it is where we live.

So we cannot escape the consequences of environmental degradation. This understanding is coupled with action to protect the environment based on mobilising numbers in direct action against pollution etc. rather than relying on 'green taxes' or other new laws to make the earth safe.

Many of these environmentalists are already using the label anarchist to distance themselves from the respectable reformism of the Green Parties. But others have come to anarchism because there is a distinct and powerful logic drawing them towards us.

Anarchism brings to environmentalism an understanding of why the environment is degraded. That it is the pursuit of profit by powerful interests over which we exercise little control in current society. It matters little to an anarchist if these powerful

state at their disposal. To bring about such a fundamental change will require a very high degree of organisation. So where do the accusations that anarchists are incapable of organisation come from?

It is not just that our opponents will tell lies about us. Of course that happens, one only needs to read the papers of Leninist groupings that take great delight in using the word 'anarchy' to describe chaos. These groupings do not have the excuse of ignorance; their misrepresentation is a case of petty and childish slander. But this hardly explains the confusion, as their readership is not exactly massive.

However similar misrepresentations in the mainstream papers, on radio and TV do have such an effect that the anarchism = chaos idea is widely accepted by those who have not yet met an anarchist.

### ARE RULERS NECESSARY?

This is not to claim that there is a conspiracy by broadcasters and newspaper editors to tell lies about anarchists. That would be quite an absurd proposition to put forward today. Our numbers do not yet inspire so much fear in the ruling class that they would go to such lengths. The reason is that anarchists reject the view that there must always be a division of people into rulers and ruled. The rich and powerful (and those who would like to be rich and powerful) cannot accept this. In their eyes, because of their own sense of superiority and self-importance, to live without rulers could only lead to chaos. The working class, they believe, are too stupid to run their own lives, let alone the whole of society. They are absolutely convinced that the absence of a small ruling group can only lead to disorder.

So then, what type of organisation should we seek to build? Two forms are possible. The first is the one we are all used to whether it be Parliament, in our trade union or even in a campaigning group. This is a structure where the decisions are made at the top and most of the electorate/members have no effective say in the decision-making process. We are expected to simply obey. Though the handful of people at the top may have been elected we have no real control over them. In no way are they really accountable to the rest of us.

### PACK OF LIARS

In the beginning the ANC made a tot of promises that it has not kept. As soon as they got their arses onto cabinet seats they proceeded to savage all our gains, breaking all their election promises. And when trade unionists and concerned individuals take to the streets in protest we are told that our behaviour is "selfish", that we should listen to our "comrades in Government".

Anarchists always oppose organisation based on a small leadership telling everyone else what to do. We have no desire to be ruled, ordered around or dictated to. But is this not an unrealistic position that takes no account of the real world? Back in 1912 miners in South Wales began a discussion\* about structures in their union. They looked at both sides of the leadership issue. Although that was a long

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\* The Miners Next Step, Unofficial Reform Committee. Tonyandy, Wales. 1912.

time ago, what they found still provides food for thought today and it is worth quoting from. (The language of their document reflects both the sexist ideas of those times and the lack of women in the mining industry).

### **THE GOOD SIDE OF LEADERSHIP**

#### **1. Leadership tends to efficiency**

One decided man, who knows his own mind, is stronger than a hesitating crowd. It takes time for a number of people to agree upon a given policy. One man soon makes up his mind.

#### **2. He takes all responsibility**

As a responsible leader, he knows that his advice is almost equivalent to a command, and this ensures that his advice will have been carefully and gravely considered before being tendered.

#### **3. He stands for Order and System**

All too frequently, 'What is everybody's business is nobody's business', and if no one stands in a position to ensure order and system, many things are omitted which will cause the men's interest to suffer.

#### **4. He affords a standard of goodness and ability**

In the sphere of public usefulness there is a great field of emulation. The good wishes of the masses can only be obtained by new aspirants for office showing a higher status of ability than the then existing leaders. Thus tends to his continued efficiency or elimination.

#### **5. His faithfulness and honesty are guarded**

Hero worship has great attractions for the hero, and a leader has great inducements on this side, apart from pecuniary considerations to remain faithful and honest.

### **THE BAD SIDE OF LEADERSHIP**

#### **1. Leadership implies power**

Leadership implies power held by the leader. Without power the leader is inept. The possession of power inevitably leads to corruption. All leaders become corrupt, in spite of their own good intentions. No man was ever good enough, or strong enough, to have such power at his disposal, as real leadership implies.

#### **2. Consider what it means**

This power of initiative, this sense of responsibility, the self-respect that comes from expressed manhood, is taken from the men, and consolidated in the leader. The sum of their initiative, their responsibility, their self-respect becomes his.

mainstream media, in chat shows and newspaper articles. However, any of our new freedoms are very much dependant on the economic conditions of the day.

So, while in the booming sixties, American women won limited access to abortion, now in recession those rights are being pushed back inch-by-inch. When the reality is weighed up equal education & job opportunities and equal pay are limited without free 24-hour nurseries and free contraception & abortion on demand. While a small minority of women can buy control of their own fertility, for the majority family and childcare is still - as it has always been - the largest problem faced by women workers. In this argument capitalism won't concede, it must be defeated.

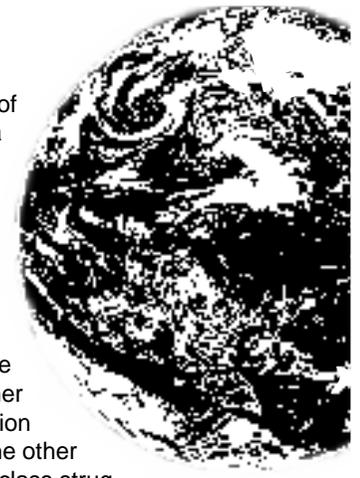
## **★ Anarchism and the Environmental or Green Movement**

THE MAJOR PROBLEM with any discussion of the 'Green Movement' is that it does not exist as a single body of ideas. Instead, both individuals and organisations hold a range of positions from anarchism right across the political spectrum to ideas influenced by fascism. Any of the terms, environmentalist, ecologist etc. are very vague definitions of wide bodies of ideas and practice, probably even wider and vaguer than socialism.

Therefore we should not create a false choice between anarchism and environmentalism but rather ask what sort of environmental theory and action should anarchists favour on the one hand and on the other explain why any environmentalist should also be a class struggle anarchist.

There is a good argument that some of the early anarchists, in particular Kropotkin, were the originators of some of the core ideas common to today's radical environmental theory. Similarly some anarchists today like Murray Bookchin have a widespread influence in modern environmental theory. This historical and current connection is probably why many radical environmentalists already describe themselves as anarchists.

On the other hand there are people who call themselves environmentalists with whom we have nothing in common and whom we should dislike just as much as other reactionary politicians and movements. A major problem with the green movement is that the progressive elements often fail to seriously distance themselves from the reactionary elements. This can be contrasted with the deliberate distancing



alter domestic arrangements greatly. Without these changes, it is conceivable that many useful forms of work flexibility that might be offered to women - such as job sharing, career breaks, special sick leave or term-time working - might reinforce rather than lessen the formidable level of occupational divisions based on gender, to women's longer-term disadvantage.

The authors of the survey note that as long as responsibility for childcare rests with the women they will remain trapped in the family. They also point out that benefits to women in the world of work often result in women being pigeon-holed into less well paid jobs. This already happens in regard to part-time workers who are paid a lower hourly wage than full-time workers do. They point out that men have to square up to their responsibility as fathers. The key they emphasise is a change in men's attitudes. However what was not mentioned is that no matter how attitudes change, men are as powerless as individuals in regard to their working conditions as women are. With all the good will in the world they cannot change their employer/employee relationship, they cannot adjust their working hours to suit childcare just as women cannot. A more fundamental conclusion would be that society at the moment, capitalism, does not want to accommodate any of the problems of childcare, preferring to leave it up to the individual to make their own arrangements as best as they can.

### CONTROL OF OUR BODIES

It is for this reason that the issue of women's' ability to control their own fertility is a key in obtaining women's liberation. That is the fight for abortion rights, for freely available contraceptives, for 24-hour quality childcare.

Women will remain as second-class citizens as long as they are relegated to an inferior position in the work force. They are now in that position because, to the bosses, they are an unstable workforce, likely to want pregnancy leave, likely to come in late if a child is sick, likely to require a crèche or want to work part time. It is because men in society are seen as the breadwinners that they have slightly more secure, slightly more dependable jobs. It's a vicious circle, because men are in reality better paid, it makes more sense within the family to assign the role of main earner to the male and the role of carer to the female. The only way to permanently get out of this circle is to change the system. In a society organised to make profits for a few, women loose out.

In a society organised to satisfy needs, women's' fertility would no longer be a limiting factor.

### INTO THE MAINSTREAM

Women can of course win gains at the moment. In South Africa women are no longer forced to stop working upon marriage (though lack of childcare can make it impossible to continue). Attitudes have changed considerably in the last thirty years. Most importantly, the position of women is now an issue. Whereas before it was only addressed by the few anarchist, socialist or women's' groups; now it's taken up in the

### 3. The order and system

The order and system he maintains is based upon the suppression of the men, from being independent thinkers into being 'the men' or 'the mob'. Every argument that could be advanced to justify leadership on this score would apply equally well to the Tsar of all the Russia's and his policy of repression. In order to be effective, the leader must keep the men in order, or he forfeits the respect of the employers and 'the public', and thus becomes ineffective as a leader.

### 4. He corrupts the aspirants to public usefulness

He is compelled, in order to maintain his power, to see to it that only those who are willing to act as his drill sergeants or coercive agents shall enjoy his patronage. In a word, he is compelled to become an autocrat and a foe to democracy.

### 5. He prevents solidarity

Sheep cannot be said to have solidarity. In obedience to a shepherd they will go up or down, backwards or forwards as he and his dogs drive them. But they have no solidarity, for that means unity and loyalty. Unity and loyalty, not to an individual, or the policy of an individual, but to an interest and a policy that is understood and worked for by all.

Finally he prevents the legislative power of the workers. An industrial vote will affect the lives and happiness of workmen more than a political vote. The power to vote whether there shall or shall not be a strike, or upon an industrial policy to be pursued by his union will affect far more important issues to the workman's life than the political vote can ever touch. Hence it should be more sought after, and its privileges jealously guarded. Think of the tremendous power going to waste because of leadership, of the inevitable stop-block he becomes on progress, because quite naturally, leaders examine every new proposal and ask first how it will affect their position and power. It prevents large and comprehensive policies being initiated and carried out which depend on the understanding and watchfulness of the great majority. National strikes and policies can only be carried out when the bulk of the people see their necessity, and themselves prepare and arrange them.

### LEADERS OR IDEAS?

Clearly the bad side of 'leadership' outweighs the good. The strong leadership or rule of individuals stifles self-activity and creates passive dependence. This is not to deny all forms of leadership. Anarchists do seek to become a leadership, a leadership of ideas rather than one of 'prominent personalities' or unaccountable representatives. We seek to make anarchist ideas the most widely accepted and supported within the working class.

A rejection of the 'leadership' idea does not mean that there is no co-ordination, efficiency or organisation. Neither does it deny that some people will know more about particular issues, be better speakers or have more forceful personalities. Anarchists work for 'bottom-up' forms of organisation, which is with the rank and file membership involved in taking decisions.

Such a form of organisation excludes the possibility of a 'leadership' emerging that would make decisions "on behalf of the members". When decisions are taken, accountable delegates should be appointed by the rank and file to implement these decisions. This means that the organisation remains under the control of the members, and not under the control of any leadership, no matter how well-intentioned they may be at the outset.

### PARTY OR CHURCH?

Some "socialists" operate with the idea that there is a "crisis of leadership", that the working class needs a leadership that will, of course, be the Party of these "socialists". Without the Party they can't change anything. The Party is to be the brains, the vanguard of the class. Within the Party the 'best' members make up the Central Committee, and the 'best' of these becomes the leader.

The process leads to a strict hierarchy in which policies and instructions come from the top. Democracy gets pushed into the background, if it doesn't get lost completely (as happened in the Communist Parties and many of the Trotskyist ones).

This sort of set-up will lead workers nowhere except to more exploitation and dictatorship as it did in Russia and China. Anarchists reject the 'top-down', or capitalist, form of organisation because we know that the means you use will determine what you end up with. A hierarchical and authoritarian organisation can only result in a hierarchical and authoritarian society.

Those who would dismiss our objections as 'nit picking' and our alternative as 'inefficient' or 'unworkable' usually do so because they regard their 'leadership' as all-important. They pay lip service to Marx's statement that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself but either don't understand what he said or they disagree with it but won't say so because to disagree with Marx is regarded as a type of heresy in many left wing circles.

Anarchists have no objection to organisation. We are all for it. We were a major force within the first international socialist organisation, the *International Working Mens' Association*. We were the driving force behind building trade unions in many countries including the USA, Argentina, France, Italy, Portugal, Korea, Russia, Switzerland, Poland, here in South Africa and many others. More books have been published about the Spanish Civil War than any other, so how is it that Leninists still claim that anarchists have never been capable of organising when each and every one of those books will tell you that the anarchist CNT union had over one million members? Surely this would not have been possible without a high degree of organisation!

All right, says the cynic, but what about today? Things are more complex and complicated and anarchist forms of organisation could no longer work.

We only have to look across the sea to Spain once more. The *National Confederation of Workers* (CNT-AIT) with several thousand members, the *General Confederation of Workers* (CGT) with at least 20,000 members, the CEEP, better known as *La Co-ordinadora* which organises 80% of the *Dockers and the Agricultural Labourers Union* (SOC) with about 20,000 members all operate on anar-

### ISOLATION

This led to women having no input into the decisions affecting society. A woman's place was in the home. A second effect of women's position in the family is that they are often isolated from each other and from society in general.

Unlike a paid worker they have little opportunity of meeting and sharing experiences with others in the same situation on a daily basis, and to do something about it. They, on their own, have little power to change the conditions they find themselves in. Today the family is a trap for women as much as it was for women at the beginning of the industrial revolution. Women are paid on average 2/3's of the wage that men are paid, so within any partnership, it obviously makes more sense for the woman to undertake responsibility for the care of children.

It is for this reason, common sense rather than sexism, that the vast majority of part-time workers are women, juggling two jobs at the same time.

Having said that, why is it that women are among the lower paid in society? Is it necessary for capitalism to exploit women workers to this degree? The simple answer to that is sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't. The only important difference between a male and female worker is that the female has the potential to get pregnant, that is the potential to want maternity leave and need crèche facilities. In other words they are slightly more expensive to employ than men are.

So when women are asked (illegally!) at job interviews if they intend to marry, such discrimination has a material basis. An employer isn't interested in the good of society at large but in getting the cheapest most reliable workforce possible.

### DISPOSABLE WORKERS

Historically women have been encouraged to work and have been accommodated when it suited capitalism. When there was either a shortage of male labour due to war as during the 1st and 2nd World Wars or an expansion of industry as in the dawn of the industrial revolution or the 1960s. When times are tough, when recession sets in, women are encouraged back into the home. The conclusion for most socialists is that women's liberation can only be lastingly obtained with the overthrow of capitalism. This is not to say that reforms should not be fought for at the moment, but to recognise that some of the gains may be short-term ones that can be withdrawn. This conclusion isn't accepted by everyone concerned with women's liberation, and certainly is rejected by large sections of the feminist movement. A good example of the alternative analysis can be seen in the following extract from the British Survey of Social Attitudes (a survey carried out regularly by an independent body).

### WHO MINDS THE CHILDREN

It found that the availability of childcare was one of the disadvantages preventing women from working. Their conclusion was that in the absence of changes in men's attitudes or working hours outside the home or in their contribution within the family it seems unlikely that even a greater availability of childcare outside the home would

began when man began to acquire wealth in the form of land, food and animals. If a rich man wants to ensure that his offspring alone inherit his wealth, he must be sure that his wife is only mating with him. Thus, he has to be in a position of control over her. He needs to portray this as part of the 'natural order'. To accommodate this need, society, through the use of religion, developed a rationale to justify the inferior position of woman.

## GOD'S CHOSEN RULERS

Rulers have always been good at rationalising unfair practices, take for example the idea of the 'divine right of kings'. Popular for centuries, the church and state argued that kings and queens were appointed by God. The status quo was natural and good; any opposition to it was evil and doomed to eternal hell.

These day's kings don't have much power. In much the same way, it was necessary to have women inferior to men to ensure inheritance rights. In order to keep women in this position a whole mythology of women as second-class humans was developed. It was the accumulation of a surplus and the desire of a minority to monopolise it that lead to the class division of society and to the oppression of women. Now we've established the motive and the cover story, but of what relevance is the status of women in early history to their status today.

As capitalism evolved it built on the existing model of the family, adapting it to suit it's own interests. Assurance of inheritance rights isn't as necessary today, however the family provides other services which capitalism does require.

Initially, when the industrial revolution first began men, women and children were drafted wholesale into the factories.

## DEATH IS NOT ALWAYS ECONOMIC

Quickly, however, the bosses realised that this was not the most economic way to run the system. The labour force was weak and the children who were to be the next generation of workers were dying in the mills and mines. The solution was to be found in the family. Before the rise of capitalism, society was based around a system of slaves/serfs and kings or lords. The problem with slaves or serfs is that the owner must provide food, basic health care and subsistence in old age, i.e. maintain the slave at a cost for those times when he or she is not productive. A much more cost efficient way to keep a workforce is through the nuclear family. In this scenario, it is up to the family to provide itself with food, shelter, healthcare, look after the elderly and young (who will provide the next crop of workers). Within this family unit it is normally the woman who fulfils the functions of housekeeper, nurse, childminder and cook. There are two knock-on effects of women staying at home minding the family. Firstly they are not financially independent. They do not earn any money and are dependent on income received from their partners. Because nobody gets paid for rearing a family, it's status as an occupation is at the bottom of the ladder and because women are financially dependant on their husbands it means they, in the past, have had little input into the major decisions affecting the family.

chist organisational principles. They have found no need to abandon these principles. Neither has the 15,000 strong *Central Organisation of Workers* (SAC) in Sweden, nor have the anarchist-influenced unions in other countries.

## ★ Direct Action

IN A WORLD where we are taught to leave most of the important decisions to bosses and leaders, it can seem quite novel to suggest that we make up our own minds and carry out our own decisions. When people first began to talk of 'self-activity' and 'direct action', near the end of the last century, it meant stopping putting trust in 'better' politicians who promised to change things from above.

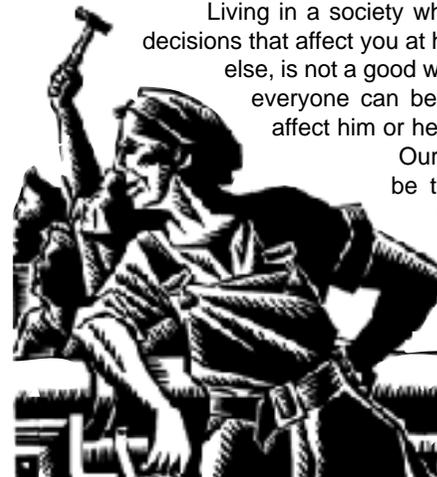
In the workplace today it means using work-to-rules, strikes and occupations to win claims rather placing our trust in the Labour Relations Act, Labour Court or any other supposedly impartial body. In the community it means civics & residents associations organising the non-payment of water charges or rent instead of trusting the local politicians to get rid of them.

What those with authority don't like is that by involving everyone who will be affected, it rejects the idea that most people are stupid and powerless, and so must leave the important decisions to someone else. Most major improvements were not just generously handed to us by bosses and governments. Most had to be fought for, even things as basic as having the weekend off work or being able to buy a condom.

For anarchists, capitalism is not only about rich and poor; it is also about order-givers and order-takers. There is a pyramid of power and the lower down you are the less control you have over your own life. Anarchists hold that control over one's life ought to be a basic right of every person and group of people.

Living in a society where you can be bossed around, where the decisions that affect you at home and at work can be made by someone else, is not a good way to live. Fundamental to anarchism is that everyone can be involved in making the decisions that will affect him or her.

Our goal is a free society where production will be to satisfy human wants and everyone can have their say in how their job and community is run. Means and ends are connected; the means used must be ones that increase confidence and that encourage participatory democracy. When people challenge the order-givers at work or in their area, anarchists argue for those effected to take control of their own struggles, to decide how their struggle is to be



conducted.

This is the cure for apathy, for what apathy often signals is not a lack of interest but a lack of belief that anything can be achieved. Encouraging real involvement in day-to-day struggles builds up people's confidence and belief in their own ability to change things for the better. By showing people their potential power we help to politicise them, and make them see that they can have the main role to play in changing society.

This emphasis on self-activity stands in marked contrast to most other socialists. Rather than encouraging people to use their ability to change things, they seek instead to encourage dependency. Trust the politician, the party, the leader... *trust a minority to make the rules for everyone else.*

If one wants to do away with the division into workers and bosses, why not also the division into rulers and ruled? Perhaps a great many socialists do not believe that ordinary working class people can run their lives, can run a modern industrial country? One of the craziest results of this was when Lenin and the Bolshevik Party deciding during the Russian Revolution that the working class was not capable of running industry.

The problem for Lenin was that in factories, on railways, in mines and lots of other industries, workers had taken over, elected their own factory committees and were showing they were more than capable of managing their own workplaces.

Not about to let reality get in the way of a good theory, the Bolshevik government outlawed the committees.

Absurd in their arrogance, they still hand down a useful lesson for us today.

The Bolsheviks did not start out as self-seeking despots. They had ideals, though not enough of them. We learnt there is no pre-condition more important for a successful revolution than working class self-confidence. If there is not enough of this the running of society will be taken over by whoever can sell the image that they are the most 'expert' and 'professional'.

When this happens you can forget about socialism. A minority is running things. At first they convince themselves that it is a 'temporary' measure, but a 'necessary' one. But rather than handing away their power they begin to develop into a group with its own interests, and then into a fully-fledged ruling class.

This is what happened in Russia, and every single time a minority has been trusted to rule a country after a revolutionary upheaval.

Only a self-confident, active and politically aware working class can create the true democracy that will prevent this happening. We start getting that confidence through taking direct action.

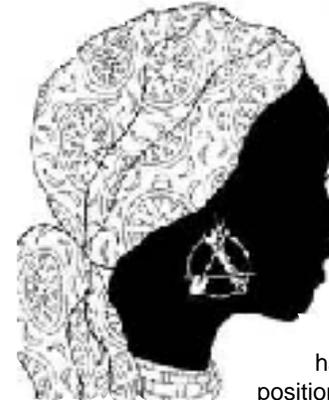
## ★ Private Property

"ABOLISH PRIVATE PROPERTY" has been a slogan used by Anarchists since the dawn of the industrial age. It's a pity they couldn't have found a better way of

## ★ Why Women are Oppressed

APPROXIMATELY 14,000 YEARS AGO the first agricultural communities, and with them human civilisation, were founded.

Humanity is 600 generations old. We hold the position of 'most successful species' because unlike animals we have been able to modify our environment to suit our needs. To early humans, nature was a powerful and frightening force, the bringer of plagues, storms and droughts.



Nowadays we control our environment to such an extent that nature is no longer a demon spirit or an instrument of the wrath of god. In much of the world nature is way down on our list of worries, it is more likely to fear us. As the capability to control the world around us has increased from the first primitive farmers to the high-technology multi-nationals, the way we see the world around us has also changed. So has the way we see each other.

One thing, however, that has remained constant throughout this time is that in the majority of societies

half our species (women) has been held in an inferior position to the other half (men). Why is this the case? The answer to this question should explain two things. It should

explain why today with all our equal rights legislation women are still second-class citizens, and secondly it should indicate the mechanisms and tactics we have to use to achieve women's liberation. If we know what the problem is, we can find a solution.

### CIVILISATION DAWNS

Early humans were hunter/gatherers living in nomadic communities, living from hand to mouth. The discovery of agriculture led to huge changes in the organisation of humanity. Agriculture was the point at which civilisation began. This is because there are a number of ways in which an agricultural community is different from a hunter/gatherer clan. Communities remain in the same spot. Agriculture can support more people than hunting/gathering so communities get larger. Farming leads to the development of new technology. New skills lead to a greater division of labour. Individuals specialise in certain types of work, be it tool making, leatherwork or defence. However the key difference is that farmed land becomes a valuable resource. Land provides a surplus, that is land provides more food than is necessary for day-to-day survival. More importantly, land will provide this resource in the future, for the next generation. None of this is true of the herd of wild animals pursued by the hunter-gatherer. The concept of ownership developed. So civilisation

struggles and campaigns, including work alongside non-Anarchist forces (without, of course, surrendering our political independence), and by continual propaganda against racism in our publications, workplaces, unions and communities.

The workplace and the union are particularly important sites for activity: it is here that capitalism creates the greatest pressure for workers' unity across all barriers, and it is here that the workers' movement stands or falls on the basis of its ability to address the needs of its whole constituency.

We can approach these tasks by raising, on the one hand, demands that apply equally to all workers (better wages, full union rights, opposition to social partnerships etc.), and by raising, on the other, demands which specifically address the needs of racially oppressed segments of the Working Class (equal schooling, equal housing, no to colour bars in industry etc.). Thus, we should fight for "*Better Housing for All! No to Segregation!*" to take one example. The target of such demands would, of course, be the bosses, although in no case whatsoever should the tiniest concession be made to racial prejudices on the part on any workers.

There is no contradiction between the class struggle and the struggle against racism. *Neither can succeed without the other.*

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1. Eric Williams, 1944, *Capitalism and Slavery*. Andre Deutsch, p. 17. See also Peter Fryer, 1988, *Black People in the British Empire*. Pluto Press, chapter 11.
  2. Williams does not take sufficient account of the institution of life-long slavery among Whites.
  3. Williams, p. 14
  4. Williams, p. 10
  5. Leo Huberman, 1947, *We the People: the drama of America*. Monthly Review Press, p. 161.
  6. Williams pp. 18-19, 23-29
  7. Bill Freund, 1984, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: the development of African Society Since 1800*, Indiana University Press, p. 51.
  8. Fryer, p. 64.
  9. Williams, pp. 23-26; Huberman, p. 167-168
  10. Huberman, p. 167.
  11. See Freund for a discussion of the African experience.
  12. Fryer, pp. 61-81; Freund.
  13. And not to workers as Fryer claims, pp. 54-55. These arguments are criticised in greater detail in the WSF Position Paper on "Anti-Imperialism", online at <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/africa.html>.
  14. Programa del la Liga Pan-Americana del Trabajo in *Articulos de Combate*, p. 125, cited in D. Poole, "The Anarchists and the Mexican Revolution, part 2: Praxedis G. Guerrero 1882 - 1910, *Anarchist Review*, No. 4. Cienfuegos Press.
  15. For example, Ricardo Flores Magon and others, *To the Workers of the United States*, November 1914, reproduced as Appendix A, in Colin Maclachlan, 1991, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: the political trials of Ricardo Flores Magon in the United States*. University of California Press, p. 123
  16. Al Szymanski, 1976, "Racial Discrimination and White Gain", in *American Sociological Review*, 41.
  17. N. Chomsky, 1994, *Keeping the Rabble in Line*. AK Press, pp. 105-6
  18. See on this point, "Race, Class and Organisation: the view from the Workers Solidarity Federation (South Africa)", 1997, *Black Flag* No. 212. (online at [http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/africa/wsfoter/bf\\_race\\_org.html](http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/africa/wsfoter/bf_race_org.html))

wording it. Anarchist views have become so misrepresented by defenders of the existing order that some people think it means that we would take away their house, their car, or even their TV.

It's nothing like that. It has nothing to do with the personal possessions that we all should be able to have. When that slogan was first used 'private property' referred only to private ownership of productive property. It was - and still is - about denying anyone a 'right' to own factories, big farms and the means of distributing products, such as railways, airlines and road haulage fleets.

Anarchists are opposed to such private ownership because we are opposed to exploiting people. There are those, usually of the ruling class, who will deny that there is exploitation in South Africa in 2002. All that stuff belongs to the bad old days... *or does it?*

In the distant past things were a lot more obvious. A worker had to work many hours a day overtime in the bosses factory but got hardly any or no payment for it. It was as clear as day that part of the fruit of that workers labour had been stolen by the boss.

Now workers are paid for all the hours they put in. Some may be underpaid by current standards, but they don't have to give their boss a set number of hours without pay. So how can anyone claim they are being exploited in the sense of having to work for nothing so that some parasite can benefit?

Under the present economic system - Capitalism - goods are produced in order to be sold. Most of us do not have products to sell. We do, however, have something else to sell.

We have our ability to work, our labour power. Wages are the price we get for our labour power. Without labour power nothing can be produced. Even an apple on a tree has no value until it is picked, it is the labour used to pick it that gives it value. Otherwise it could not be eaten, it would just rot on the branch and be of no use to anyone.

It all seems simple and straightforward. We work (if we are "lucky" enough to have a job), our work creates value, and we get paid for it. So what's the problem? It is that our wages never add up to the full value of our work.

The difference between what we get in wages and what the product or service is sold for (after allowing for expenses) is what bosses call profit. This is their source of income. This is the basis of capitalism, a small minority living off the unpaid wages of the majority.

Anarchists are working for a future where the ownership of industry will be taken away from the bosses and instead will become the property of society as a whole. Its control and management would be held in bodies democratically elected by the workers themselves.

The world of work



would not be geared to generating profits for a class of rich idlers like Tony Leon, Thabo Mbeki or Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Instead, decisions about what to produce, and what to invest in, improvements and new processes, would be taken on the basis of what is socially useful. Production would be geared to meet people's needs rather than to satisfy the greed of a tiny minority. That would be the end of 'private property'.

## ★ Smash the State!

ONE OF THE best-known catch phrases of Anarchism has got to be "Smash the State". It's also one that's easily open to misunderstanding. Particularly in South Africa, where we have the Orange "Free State", many see state as meaning the geographical area of a country. Anarchism's opponents have also misrepresented this slogan as meaning opposition to all forms of organisation and decision-making. Obviously neither of these is what we mean, but what exactly is the state and how do we smash it?

Anarchists see the state as a mechanism by which a minority imposes its will on the majority of the population. To maintain its hold of power, the state forms whatever armed forces and judicial apparatus they think are necessary to keep the level of dissent manageable. This is different from how most Marxists define the state, concentrating on the mechanism by which the state stays in power (bodies of armed men) rather than the function of the state. It is the characteristic of minority rule that defines the state for anarchists, the 'bodies of armed men' serve to protect this minority rather than defining the state in itself.



*This distinction has some important consequences.*

The state apparatus cannot maintain a permanent separation from the ruling economic power. In fact most of the time its function is carrying out a crude expression of the wishes of the ruling class. It represents the limited ability of this class to control and plan the economic life of a country. In advanced capitalism the state is used to regulate the level of exploitation of the workforce through various labour laws.

### THE 'CARING' STATE

At the outbreak of World War 1, Britain found that a huge percentage of the working class had been so exploited that they were unfit for military service.

Although the almost unhindered exploitation had been good for individual bosses up to that time, in the war, when it came to using the working class to win colonies

ideology. It follows that the struggle against racism can only be consistently carried out by the Working Class: the only forces capable of overthrowing the capitalist system. The overthrow of capitalism however, requires the unification of the Working Class internationally, across all lines of colour and nationality.

In addition, the crushing of capitalism and the establishment of libertarian socialism will allow the vast resources currently chained to the needs of profiteering by a rich few to be placed under the control of the working and poor people of the whole world. Under libertarian communism it will be possible to use these resources to create social and economic equality for all, thus finally enabling the disfigurements of racial oppression to be scoured from the face of the earth.

However, this essay is on no way arguing that the fight against racism must be put off until after the revolution. Instead, it is arguing that on the one hand, only a united Working Class can defeat racism and capitalism; on the other, a united Working Class can only be built on the basis of opposing all forms of oppression and prejudice, thereby winning the support of all sectors of the broader Working Class.

Firstly, it is clear that racism can only be fought on a class basis. It is in the interest of all workers and poor people to support the struggle against racism. Racism is a Working Class issue because it affects the conditions of all workers, because most people affected by racism are working class, and because, as indicated above, it is the working class members of racially oppressed groups who are the most severely affected by racism.

Working Class unity is also in the interests of racially oppressed segments of the Working Class, as alliances with the broader Working Class not only strengthen their own position, but also help lay the basis for the assault on capitalism. Without denying in the least the heroism, and, in some cases, radicalising, role played by minority movements, it is quite obvious that a minority of say, 10 percent of the population lacks the ability to overthrow the existing conditions on its own.<sup>18</sup> Such unity is particularly vital in the workplace, where it is almost impossible for unions of minority workers to function.

Secondly, working class unity can, however, clearly only be built on the basis of a resolute opposition to all forms of racism. If other sections of the Working Class do not oppose racism, they create a situation in which nationalists can tie racially oppressed segments to Black and other minority capitalists in the futile games of 'Buy Black' campaigns and voting blocs. Class-based and Anarchist alternatives must present a real workable alternative if they are to win support.

### OUR TASKS

Anti-racist work should occupy a high priority in the activities of all class struggle Anarchists. This is important not simply because we always oppose all oppression, and because Anarchists have long been opponents of racism. It is also because such work is an essential to the vital task of unifying and conscientising the Working Class - a unity without which neither racism nor capitalism can be given over to the history books.

At a general level, we can approach these tasks by active work in anti-racist

support for the essentially irrational ideas of racism?

The answer is that there are very real material forces in capitalist society which operate to foster support for these ideas.

The first factor is capitalist control over ideas. Capitalists do not simply rule by force, they also rule by promoting a capitalist world-view. Here we must consider, as Praxedis argued above, how *"the dominating classes, the keepers of education and the wealth of nations"...* *"feed the proletariat with the belief of stupid superiority and pride"*: the role of the schools, the media, literature and so forth. The impact of this propaganda cannot be underestimated.

The second factor is the material conditioning of the Working Class itself. Under capitalism, the Working Class suffers poverty, alienation and misery. In the same way that workers may take solace from religion, they may also seek the imaginary compensation of supposed racial superiority, *"the belief of stupid superiority and pride"* (in Praxedis' words).

In addition, Working Class people are locked in bitter competition for a limited amount of jobs, housing and other resources. In this situation, they may blame other groups in the Working Class for their plight. Where the other groups are culturally or physically distinct in appearance, this resentment and competition may be expressed in racist terms. Hence the view, for example, that 'they' are 'taking our jobs'.

### THE OPPRESSED DIVIDED

From the above, it is clear that racism is a product of capitalism, and fundamentally against the interests of the Working Class.

Are capitalists from oppressed groups reliable allies in the struggle against racism? The short answer is, NO, they are not.

The effects of racism are fundamentally mediated by class position. Taking the case of the United States: although national averages of White and Black incomes show a vast gulf between the two, when class is taken into account the material inequalities between White and Black workers are shown to be limited; taken from another angle, the gap between the conditions of both sets of workers, on one side, and those of the upper class, on the other are yawning.<sup>17</sup>

Michael Jackson may still face racism, but his wealth and power as a capitalist shield him from the worst effects of racism. Private schools, lawyers, high incomes - all these factors cannot be ignored.

Perhaps more importantly, the class interests of such elites tie them into supporting the capitalist system itself. Black police chiefs, mayors, and army officers are as much defenders of capitalism as their White counterparts. Such strata will readily compromise with the powers-that-be if it will give them a chance to be 'in the racket and in the running'.

### FIGHTING RACISM

It is capitalism that continually generates the conditions for racist oppression and

and markets, it turned out to be against their collective interest. At the end of the war revolutions and army mutinies swept across Europe.

To defuse the level of class struggle and prepare for the next war the bosses used the state apparatus to impose limitations on themselves and the level of exploitation they could use. It also started to use it to divert part of every worker's wage to form a new social wage that would be used for the education of workers and limited social security. In this it hoped to head off future periods of struggle.

The state is the collective body through which the bosses keep themselves in power. Its judiciary and police force protect each boss from his own workers; intervening where necessary to smash strikes, criminalise activists and censor critics. This is its most direct and obvious intervention but through its control of the education system and its ability to criminalise social behaviour that goes against the bosses wishes it intervenes into every aspect of our lives.

### SCAPEGOATS & SAFE CHANNELS

In its scapegoating of single mothers, whites/blacks or immigrants it directs the anger of workers away from the real causes of their poverty. It ensures that much of the care for the sick and the raising of new generations of workers is kept cheap by keeping it in the home. It is therefore hostile to non-family relationships, or even family relations that might challenge the prevalent ones and thus pose an indirect threat. This is why the state is so opposed to single parent families or families where both parents are of the same sex.

The state in modern capitalism provides safe channels for dissent. Through the use of elections it creates a veneer of ordinary people being in control while the decisions are being made elsewhere. By pretending neutrality it can set up and arbitrate on disputes between workers and bosses through the use of bodies like the CCMA or Labour Court. All these are methods to defuse and control social unrest.

The state can also be the organ of transformation and creation of a new ruling class. With positions in the state hierarchy come powers over both people and goods. Well-placed individuals can make a fortune in bribes. After the Russian revolution a minority, in the shape of the Bolshevik party, came to control the state.

### 'STATE SOCIALISM' - A CONTRADICTION

Their distrust in the ability of workers to run the economy themselves was to result in armed force being used against the very workers they claimed to be liberating. From that point on the party attracted power seekers, within a short period of time this resulted in a new ruling elite. Socialism cannot be built through use of the state structure; the existence of such a structure will lead to the development of a new ruling elite.

The anarchist rejection of the state as an organ for the transformation of society is often deliberately misrepresented. Leninists, for instance, typically try to confuse undemocratic and unaccountable state regimes like those of the Bolsheviks with democratic bodies like workers councils or 'soviets'. In general it is implied that anar-

chism is against all forms of organisation.

This says a lot about the people making such arguments. Do they believe that the only form of organisation that is feasible is one where the mass of society is told what to do by a leadership? Anarchists say socialism can only be created by mass democracy, that's why we define the state as being an unaccountable leadership capable of forcing its will on society. We explicitly reject any form of running society that relies on such methods.

Against the statist, we propose decision-making at the lowest possible level: election of recallable, mandated delegates for decisions that cannot be made by mass assemblies, and for all delegates to remain part of the workforce where possible. Where this takes them away from their workplaces, their positions should be held for short periods only, and without any special privileges. This, a society based on mass democracy, is our alternative to the state. It's not just our aim to achieve such a society after the revolution but also to use such methods now in our struggle for such a society. We argue for such methods in our unions, associations and campaigning groups.



## ★ Democracy

ANARCHISM is about individual freedom. But it is also about building a society that has a fair system of wealth distribution. For this reason, we consider ourselves to be democrats. As anarchists we don't believe that other people can bring about the changes that we need - we believe that we must do it for ourselves. This means putting in place a type of decision-making system in which all people can participate in - this is the best way to ensure equality.

Take one example - work. Under anarchism, the workplace would be democratic. Unlike now, workers would decide on the main matters in their own workplace: What type of work should be done? Where and how? Under what type of working conditions? Where should the profits from work go?

In today's world, it is done the opposite way. Most decisions about any place of work are taken by the management. These management bodies, in turn, are usually appointed by shareholders - people who do not work. This situation would not be tolerated in an anarchist society. Matters concerned with the workplace are for the workers alone to decide on. Under anarchism it will be the workers' assembly and not the (elected) manager who will be the supreme authority in any workplace. This will be one of the major contrasts between today's world and a future anarchist society.

of an impoverished and oppressed minority of African-American workers who can be used to undercut wages, and working and living conditions.

In addition, racist attitudes make it very difficult to unite workers against the capitalists to challenge the overall distribution of wealth and power in society. Racism has been used again and again to break workers' struggles.

The more the Working Class is divided, the worse its overall condition will be. This point, which was repeatedly made by the classical anarchist movement,<sup>15</sup> has been confirmed in a study by an American sociologist who set out to test the proposition that white workers gain from racism.<sup>16</sup>

Comparing the situation of White and Black workers in all fifty US states, he found, firstly, that the less wage discrimination there was against Black workers, the better were the wages that White workers received. Secondly, he found that the existence of a substantial nationally oppressed group of poor workers reduced the wages of White workers (but did not affect the earnings of middle and upper-class Whites very much). Finally, he found that the more intense racial discrimination was, the more poverty there was for lower-class Whites.

Such facts fly in the face of political strategies that claim that majority population workers receive material benefits from racism. The logic of this argument is that these privileges must be "*renounced*" before working class unity is possible. Such an argument assumes that capitalists would adopt a strategy that systematically benefits the majority of workers, a most unlikely (and as we see above, unsustainable) notion. In addition, this argument implies that the immediate political task is a redistribution of wealth amongst workers as opposed to a class struggle against capitalism. That is to say, it calls on the majority of workers to fight on principle for worse conditions.

Finally, this approach mixes up two very different things: oppression and privilege. While it is not obviously true that some workers do not directly experience racial oppression, it does not follow that they benefit from it. The two terms are distinct: while it is oppressive to be subject to low wages, it is not a privilege to have a living wage.

## WHY RACIST IDEAS ARE ACCEPTED

None of the arguments so far in this essay deny the possibility that minorities of the Working Class may receive temporary benefits from racial oppression in specific circumstances. A case in point would be the small white Working Class in South Africa between the 1920's and 1980's, which received real benefits from apartheid. But, as a general rule, racial oppression is fundamentally against the interests of the majority of workers of all colours.

To recognise the primary role of capitalist Ruling Classes (aided by their States) in promoting and benefiting from racial oppression is not to deny that many working class people often support racism. Racism is often very widespread. However, such support for racism is an example of working class people acting against their own interests, rather than evidence that workers benefit from racism.

However, if racism provides no benefits for workers, how can we explain such

"super-exploited", providing high levels of profit for capitalists. In times of capitalist crisis (such as today) these segments are most readily deprived of political and social rights, the first to fall in the overall assault of the Working Class that takes place.

Secondly, racism allows the capitalist ruling class to divide and rule the exploited classes.

Across the planet, billions of workers and peasants suffer the lashes of capitalism. Racism is used to build divisions within the Working Class to help keep the Ruling Class in power.

Praxedis Guerrero, a great Mexican Anarchist, described the process as follows:<sup>14</sup>

*"Racial prejudice and nationality, clearly managed by the capitalists and tyrants, prevent peoples living side by side in a fraternal manner..."*

*A river, a mountain, a line of small monuments suffice to maintain foreigners and make enemies of two peoples, both living in mistrust and envy of one another because of the acts of past generations. Each nationality pretends to be above the other in some kind of way, and the dominating classes, the keepers of education and the wealth of nations, feed the proletariat with the belief of stupid superiority and pride to make impossible the union of all nations who are separately fighting to free themselves from Capital..."*

*If all the workers of the different nations had direct participation in all questions of social importance that affect one or more proletarian groups these questions would be happily and promptly solved by the workers themselves."*

It happens between majority populations and super-exploited minorities, but also between the working classes of different countries. Workers are told to blame and hate other workers - distinguished by culture, language, skin colour, or some other arbitrary feature for their misery. A classic example is the scapegoating of immigrants and refugees for "taking away jobs and housing".

In this way, workers anger is deflected onto other workers (with whom they have almost everything in common) rather than being directed against capitalists (with whom workers have nothing in common). An appearance of common interest is created between workers and bosses of a given race or nation.

### WHO BENEFITS?

Racism does not benefit any workers. Even workers who are not themselves directly oppressed by racism lose out from racism because it divides the Working Class. White American workers, for example, in no way benefit from the existence

### SIMPLE

For some people, this general emphasis on democracy sounds like a tall order. Many people agree that anarchism is a good idea, but a lot of people don't accept that it is a practical option in today's world. Some people argue that society is getting more complex all the time. Consequently the problems facing society are too large - and getting larger - for your ordinary person on the street to understand, let alone solve. Anarchist style democracy simply wouldn't work, it is argued.

Anarchists recognise these criticisms. While being advocates of democracy, we are not blind to the problems of human society, or to the fact that a new society will bring with it new problems. Our belief in human capacity is very strong, but we would be the first to accept that a revolutionary society will have some problems similar to now - competition between different individuals, or between factories or, even, between localities over the allocation of supplies. These differences will have to be accommodated and sorted out, most importantly, in a peaceful manner.

Another problem is that lots of people and areas must co-operate to provide some of the basic services that we depend on today. For instance, a modern health service relies on hospital workers, on the ambulance service and on nurses and doctors. But, also, it relies generally on drugs and equipment that come from outside the immediate locality. A revolutionary society will have to provide these services too. In many ways it will have to provide them in a better way than they are provided now - given the general problems of inequality and poverty that cut access to services under capitalism. How then do anarchists propose to solve such issues?

### REVOLUTION

We can learn a lot from past experience. Already, in the last one hundred years, there has been a good number of revolutions and near revolutions. Workers have had to face problems such as these before.

*Past experience tells us this:*

The operation of most industrial enterprises or social services is generally understood by the vast majority of its constituent work force. For instance, the operation of a citywide transportation service is known to the drivers, mechanics, etc. who drive and maintain the service. There is nothing particularly complicated about it. Workers operate them now and, as is often the case, they have plenty of ideas on how to improve these services further. Moreover, past experience shows that revolutions usually release a great deal of human ability and talent that capitalism mostly shuts out or doesn't bother to use. This can be a major bonus in a revolutionary society.

A problem area concerns matters traditionally covered by management under capitalism: co-ordination of work, future planning, financial budgeting, etc.

Under capitalism, workers are often excluded from these important areas. This can be a major problem in a revolutionary society - particularly so in the early, transition period when it is important to provide the essentials of life.

## THE BEST PLACE

So, there are two problems. The first one is running the service, whatever that may be. The second is running it in a democratic way. After the revolution, more people will be involved in decision-making, more people will have a say. Consequently more interests will have to be taken on board when decisions are taken. It will no longer be a case of saying: "This is the way things are going to be done and you're fired if you don't agree". Those days will be over for good - thankfully.

What do anarchists propose? Our solution to inexperience is to try and get as much experience as possible - confidence in one's ability can only be built in that way. This is why anarchists are such strong advocates of democracy in the here and now. The best place to gain experience about organisations and organising is along the road to change. Here there will be plenty of opportunities to learn.

In past times this is exactly what has been done - by workers, by students and by all those fighting back. Building unions, building for strikes, organising community groups or building for campaigns is all about working with people and taking decisions - the very areas that we need to get experience in. This work requires planning, administration, budgeting, etc. in abundance. For reasons of experience alone we should conduct them in a democratic way. That is what anarchists say.

Not all problems, of course, can be ironed out on this side of a revolution, but this is one area in which we can make inroads now. Just as importantly, it raises the issue of democracy and what democracy should be about in a world that mostly ignores it.

## ★ Anarchists and the Trade Unions

TRADE UNIONS were founded to defend the interests of workers, but today have become more and more dominated by an unaccountable, and often unelected, bureaucracy. Trade unions - or at least their leadership - have been co-opted into becoming partners with Capital, and see their role as managing their members, controlling difficult situations rather than leading struggles. You are much more likely to see a trade union official selling the management's latest "productivity package" or "restructuring deal" than to



*"What do you mean? He's a human being just like us!"*  
*Good God man, he's a trade unionist!"*

once created, later developments in capitalism would sustain and rear this creature of the Ruling Class.

The extension of capitalist power over Africa and Asia took place largely from the 17th century onwards in the form of imperialism.<sup>11</sup> In the beginning, imperial conquest was often done directly by large corporations such as the British East India Company (in India) and the Dutch East India Company (in South Africa, among other places). Later capitalist governments took a direct hand, notably in the conquest of most of Africa from the 1880's.

Imperialism in this period was driven by the search for profits: at first, profits from control of trade, later by big corporations' need for cheap sources of labour and raw materials, and by the need to find new markets to sell manufactured goods.

Racist ideas were again pressed into service to justify the process of imperial conquest and rule. Imperial control was justified on the supposed grounds that Africans and Asians (and for that matter other colonised peoples) were unable to govern or develop themselves, and needed to be ruled by external forces - namely the ruling classes of Western Europe and Japan.<sup>12</sup> Equal rights were not seen as even being possible in this world view.

Empire did not benefit workers in the colonies nor in the imperialist countries. The profits of empire went to the capitalist class.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, the methods and forces of colonial repression were deployed against workers in the imperialist countries (most notably, the use of colonial troops to crush the Spanish Revolution), whilst lives and material resources were wasted on imperial adventures. Today, multinational companies cut jobs and wages by shifting to repressive Third World client regimes.

## RACISM TODAY

Clearly, capitalism gave birth to racism. Racism as an idea helped justify empire and slavery. Racism as a form of discrimination or oppression facilitated high levels of exploitation, and has thus been an important factor in the development of capitalism.

Today, both slavery and the formal empire have been overthrown - this has largely been the result of struggles by millions of workers, peasants and slaves against oppression. Slave revolts are part of the history of class struggle against capitalism. Peasant and worker resistance to colonialism are equally so, although it must be noted that most anti-colonial struggles were prevented from reaching their necessary end - social revolution - by the determination of local elites to reach a deal with capitalism and imperialism.

However, although these struggles removed the formally racist structures of slavery and empire they have not buried racism.

Racism - as an idea and as a practice - continues to serve two key functions under capitalism.

First, it allows the capitalists to secure sources of cheap, unorganised, and highly exploitable labour. Key examples are immigrants and minorities. Subject to racist discrimination, they form a part of the Working Class that has been described as

and sold into bondage.<sup>2</sup>

Conditions on the "*Middle Passage*" (the trip across the Atlantic) for these indentured servants and slaves were, in Williams' words, so bad that they should "*banish any ideas that the horrors of the slave ship are to be in any way accounted for by the fact that the victims were Negroes*".<sup>3</sup>

More than half the English immigrants to the American colonies in the 16th century were indentured servants<sup>4</sup>, and until the 1690's there were still far more unfree Europeans on the plantations of the American South than Black slaves.<sup>5</sup>

Racist ideas were developed in the context of the slave trade of the 17th, and 18th centuries. In this period, African people came to be the main source of slaves for the plantations.

The systems of social control established for American and European unfree labour was now applied to Africans.

The main reason for this shift to African slaves was that such slaves could be got cheaply enough, and in sufficient numbers to meet the expanding needs of the plantation capitalists.<sup>6</sup> African ruling classes played a central role in the highly profitable slave trade: "*The trade was... an African trade until it reached the coast. Only very rarely were Europeans directly involved in procuring slaves, and that largely in Angola*".<sup>7</sup>

It was in the 17th century that racist ideology began to be developed for the first time by such groups as "British sugar planters in the Caribbean, and their mouth-pieces in Britain" who fastened onto differences in physical appearance to develop the myth that Black people were sub-human and deserved to be enslaved: "*here is an ideology, a system of false ideas serving class interests*".<sup>8</sup>

Racism was used to justify the capture and perpetual enslavement of millions of people for the purposes of capitalism. The enslavement of Native Americans had been justified as being on the grounds of their heathen beliefs; European servitude was justified as being the lot of inferiors; Black slavery was justified through racism.

Once developed, racist ideas came to be used more broadly as a justification for oppression. Jewish people, for example, came to be oppressed as a racial minority rather than as a religious group.

The people who benefited from slavery were not Europeans in general, but the capitalist ruling classes of Western Europe. African ruling classes also received major benefits. There were of course the vast numbers of Europeans indentured or enslaved. There were also the sailors on the "*Middle Passage*" whose conditions, according to Williams, were themselves scarcely distinguishable from slavery. Finally, there were vast numbers of "poor White" peasant farmers of the Americas (some of whom were former indentured servants) who were out-competed and driven to the margins by the giant slave plantations.<sup>9</sup> The vast majority of Europeans never owned slaves: only 6 percent of whites owned slaves in the American South in 1860.<sup>10</sup> There were also African-American and native American slave-owners.

## RACE AND EMPIRE

Racism was thus born of the slavery of early capitalism. However, having been

hear him/her calling for an occupation of a plant to avoid its closure, or for industrial action to fight retrenchments.

Given this, one might wonder why anarchists spend so much time talking about and working inside the trade unions. To write off trade unions, however, is to ignore the basic fact that for a worker to join a trade union means having to recognise, to some degree, that he or she has different interests to the bosses.

Trade unions are certainly not revolutionary organisations. But if you accept - as anarchists certainly do - that the emancipation of the working class can only be brought about by the working class themselves, then you must also accept that the most important mass movement the working class has ever built cannot be ignored. This is true no matter how progressive or reactionary the attitudes of its members at any given time.

As anyone who has ever been on strike will know, indeed as anyone who has followed the struggles of any workers will also know, strikes depend on collective action for their success. It is the ability to collectively stand together - either in defence of working conditions or fighting for improved pay or conditions - which gives trade unions their strength. When the boss looks for that bit too much sweat, the knowledge that if we all say no together, s/he is relatively powerless, is a powerful weapon indeed.

This is not of course to claim that workers taking strike action are only one step away from rallying to the cause of revolution. But the message is there nonetheless - collective action in production, collective action in struggle leads us in an anarchist direction. And once in struggle, people's ideas can change - often very rapidly. Those directly involved in the liberation struggle in the 1980s needed no lectures on the partiality of the state's police force. They experienced it directly, usually with the brute force of a rubber bullet, to beat the lesson in.

On a less dramatic scale, workers in various state and private enterprises all over the world have seen the true nature of our "friends in management", as restructuring deals, workplace partnerships and whatever other way more exploitation can be dressed up has been rammed down their throats.

Furthermore, workers in struggle gain confidence in their collective strength, and in their own ability to take control of their lives. The establishment of strike committees, explaining their case to passers-by, even arguing with the trade union official for decent backing - as often has to happen - all contribute to this growth in self-confidence. A self-confident worker who realises that 'Unity is Strength' is more than just a slogan will, at the very least, be more open to revolutionary ideas.

This is one of the reasons why anarchists get involved in workers' struggles. It is not the only one however. We also act from a position of solidarity with other members of our class, remembering and putting into practice the maxim that 'an injury to one is an injury to all'. We offer this solidarity; however, from a position of acknowledging that it is the workers in struggle themselves who must retain control of that struggle.

The hand of solidarity is offered in support of the struggle, not with any intention of using it for our own ends. Strike support groups in which we become involved

must be just that - support groups, with the strikers themselves retaining a veto over any proposed actions.

Through involvement in struggles, we learn the lessons of the class struggle. We see which tactics are successful and which should not be tried again. After all, none of us have all the answers. We also aim to take the lessons of these struggles and apply them in new situations. Too often the victories of groups of workers and the lessons of those victories for the rest of us are only known by those directly involved. This is why we must aim in our papers and in our other publications to highlight these victories - to be, as it were, a memory bank for our class.

In conclusion, the unions may appear monolithic. Sometimes work in them can be boring and appear to be a waste of time. But if we manage to wrest control from the bureaucrats currently strangling them they will prove to be one of our best weapons in furthering the battle for a free and equal society.

## ★ Anarcho-Syndicalism: its strengths & weaknesses



SYNDICALISM is the largest organised tendency in the libertarian movement today. It has built large workers' unions, led major struggles, and been the popular expression of anarchism in many countries. To understand the anarchist-communist view of syndicalism we have to look at its roots, its core beliefs and its record.

In the 1860s the modern socialist movement was beginning to take shape. The International Working Men's Association, better known as the First International, was becoming a pole of

attraction for militant workers. As the movement grew, points of agreement and of disagreement between the Marxists and the Anarchists about what socialism meant and how to achieve it were becoming clear. This led to the Marxists using less than democratic means to expel the Anarchists.

In 1871 the Paris Commune came into being when the workers of Paris seized their city. When they were finally defeated seven thousand Communards were dead or about to be executed. A reign of terror against the Left swept Europe. The Anarchists were driven underground in country after country. This did not sit well for a rapid growth of the movement. In response to the terror of the bosses, their shooting down of strikers and protesting peasants and their suppression of the anarchist movement, a minority launched an armed campaign, known as propaganda by the

aganda groups. Sometimes they are able to take on union functions in particular localities.

3) A good introduction to this period is Eddie Conlon's *The Spanish Civil War: Anarchism in Action*.

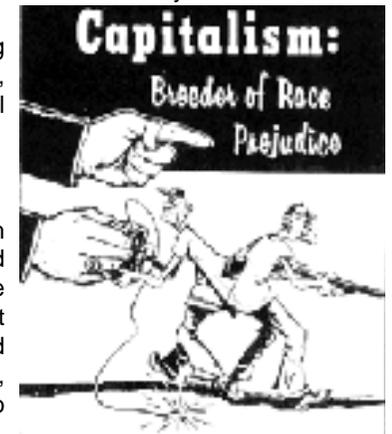
4) In workplace elections in Spring 1994 their vote in the post office rose from 4% to 18%, and in Telecom from 2.5% to 7.5%.

## ★ Racism and Class Struggle

### HOW CAN RACISM BE DEFEATED?

An answer to this question needs an examination of the forces that gave rise to, and continue to reproduce racism. It also needs a careful analysis of which social forces benefit from racial oppression.

By racism is meant either an attitude denying the equality of all human beings, or economic, social and political discrimination against racial groups.



### THE ROOTS OF RACISM

Capitalism developed as a world system based on the exploitation of workers, slaves and peasants black, brown, yellow and white. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the young capitalist system centred mainly on Western Europe and the Americas. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Africa and Asia were brought increasingly into the circle of capitalist power.

In the Americas, vast plantation systems were set up. Based on slavery, they were capitalist enterprises exporting agricultural goods.

It was in the system of slavery that the genesis of racism is to be found. In the words of Caribbean scholar, Eric Williams, "*Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery*".<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning, the slave plantations were not organised on racial lines.

Although the first slaves in the Spanish possessions in the Americas were generally native Americans, slavery was restricted (at least officially) to those who did not convert to Christianity.

The native Americans were succeeded by poor Europeans. Many of these workers were only enslaved for a limited period, as indentured servants serving contracts of up to ten or more years. Others were convicts sentenced for crimes such as stealing cloth or prisoners of war from uprisings and the colonisation of areas such as Ireland and Scotland. However, there was also a large number of life-long European slaves, and even amongst the indentured, a substantial number had been kidnapped

## SPAIN

The weakness of syndicalism is rooted in its view of why workers are tied to capitalism, and its view of what is necessary to make the revolution. Spain in 1936/7 represented the highest point in anarcho-syndicalist organisation and achievement. Because of their a-politicism they were unable to develop a programme for workers' power, to wage a political battle against other currents in the workers' movement (such as reformism and Stalinism). Indeed, syndicalists seem to ignore other ideas more often than combating them. In Spain they were unable to give a lead to the entire class by fighting for complete workers' power.

Instead they got sucked into support for the Popular Front government, which in turn led to their silence and complicity when the Republican State moved against the collectives and militias. The minority in the CNT, organised around the Friends of Durruti, were expelled when they issued a proclamation calling for the workers to take absolute power (i.e. that they should refuse to share power with the bosses or the authoritarian parties).

The CNT believed that when the workers took over the means of production and distribution this would lead to "the liquidation of the bourgeois State which would be the of asphyxiation." History teaches us a different lesson. In a situation of dual power it is very necessary to smash the state. No ruling class ever leaves the stage of history voluntarily.

In contrast to this, the Friends of Durruti were clear that, and this is a quote from their programme 'Towards a Fresh Revolution', "to beat Franco we need to crush the bourgeoisie and its Stalinist and Socialist allies. The capitalist state must be destroyed totally and there must be installed workers' power depending on rank & file committees. Apolitical anarchism has failed." The political confusion of the CNT leadership was such that they attacked the idea of the workers seizing power as "evil" and leading to an "anarchist dictatorship."

The syndicalist movement, organised in the *International Workers Association* and outside it, still refuses to admit the CNT was wrong to postpone the revolution and enter the government. They attempt to explain away this whole episode as being due to "exceptional circumstances" that "will not occur again." Because they refuse to admit that a mistake of historic proportions was made, there is no reason to suppose that they would not repeat it (should they get a chance).

Despite our criticisms we should recognise that the syndicalist unions, where they still exist, are far more progressive than any other union. Not only do they create democratic unions and create an atmosphere where anarchist ideas are listened to with respect but they also organise and fight in a way that breaks down the divisions into leaders and led, doers and watchers. On its own this is very good but not good enough. The missing element is an organisation winning support for anarchist ideas and anarchist methods both within revolutionary unions and everywhere else workers are brought together. That is the task of the anarchist-communists

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1) It was known as the Industrial Workers of Great Britain.

2) Some, like the Italian USI and German FAU, have been re-founded but exist only as relatively small prop-

deed, and killed several kings, queens, aristocrats and senior politicians.

Though very understandable, this drove a further wedge between the bulk of the working class and the movement. Underground work became the norm in many countries. Mass work became increasingly difficult. The image of the madman with a bomb under his arm was born. The movement was making no significant gains.

By the turn of the century many anarchists were convinced that a new approach was needed. They called for a return to open and public militant activity among workers. The strategy they developed was syndicalism.

## THE BASIC IDEA

Its basic ideas revolves around organising all workers into one big union, keeping control in the hands of the rank & file, and opposing all attempts to create a bureaucracy of unaccountable full-time officials. Unlike other unions, the belief is that the union can be used not only to win reforms from the bosses but also to overthrow the capitalist system. They hold that most workers are not revolutionaries because the structure of the unions is such that it takes the initiative away from the rank & file. The alternative is to organise all workers into one big union in preparation for a revolutionary general strike.

Syndicalists established their own international organisation with the founding of the *International Workers Association* in Berlin in 1922. Present at that conference were the *Argentine Workers Regional Organisation*, FORA representing 200,000 members, the *Industrial Workers of the World* in Chile representing 20,000, the *Union for Syndicalist Propaganda* in Denmark with 600, the *Free Workers Union of Germany* FAUD with 120,000, *National Workers Secretariat* of the Netherlands representing 22,500, the *Italian Syndicalist Union* with 500,000, the *General Confederation of Workers* in Portugal with 150,000, the *Swedish Workers Central Organisation* SAC with 32,000, the *Committee for the Defence of Revolutionary Syndicalism* in France [a breakaway from the CGT] with 100,000, the *Federation du Battiment* from Paris representing 32,000. The Spanish CNT was unable to send delegates due to the fierce class struggle being waged in their country under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. They did, however, join the following year.

During the 1920s, the IWA expanded. More unions and propaganda groups entered into dialogue with the IWA secretariat. They were from Mexico, Uruguay, Bulgaria, Poland, Japan, Australia, South Africa, Paraguay and North Africa. Syndicalist unions outside the IWA also existed in many countries such as the *Brazilian Workers Regional Organisation* and the *Industrial Workers of the World* in the USA (which soon spread to Canada, Sweden, Australia, South Africa, and Britain)<sup>1</sup>.

## DECLINE

The success of the Bolsheviks did great harm to the workers movement outside Russia. Many were impressed by what was happening in Russia, Communist Parties sprang up almost everywhere. The Bolshevik model appeared successful.

Many sought to copy it. This was before the reality of the Soviet dictatorship became widely known.

Nevertheless the syndicalist movement still held on to most of its support. The real danger was the rise of fascism. With the rule of Mussolini, the Italian USI, the largest syndicalist union in the world, was driven underground and then out of existence. The German FAUD, Portuguese CGT, Dutch NSV, French CDSR and many more in Eastern Europe and Latin America were not able to survive the fascist and military dictatorships of the 1930s and 40s.<sup>2</sup>

It was at the same time that the Spanish revolution unfolded, which was to represent both the highest and lowest points of syndicalism.<sup>3</sup> More about this later.

The Polish syndicalist union with 130,000 workers, the ZZZ, was on the verge of applying for membership of the IWA when it was crushed by the Nazi invasion. But, as with syndicalists elsewhere, they did not go down without a fight. The Polish ZZZ along with the *Polish Syndicalist Association* took up arms against the Nazis and in 1944 even managed to publish a paper called *Syndicalista*. In 1938, despite their country being under the Salazar dictatorship since the 1920s, the Portuguese CGT could still claim 50,000 members in their now completely illegal and underground union. In Germany, trials for high treason were carried out against militants of the FAUD. There were mass trials of members, many of whom didn't survive the concentration camps.

One point worthy of mention about the Spanish CNT shows the hypocrisy of the British government, which called itself anti-fascist. Not only were Italian anti-fascist exiles interned on the Isle of Man but CNT members whose underground movement assisted British airmen, Jews and anti-fascists to escape through Spain to Britain were repaid at the end of the war when their names were handed over to Franco's secret police.

### THE RUMP

By the end of WWII, the European syndicalist movement and the IWA were almost destroyed. The CNT was now an exile organisation. In 1951 the IWA held their first post-war congress in Toulouse. This time they were a much smaller organisation than the great movement that existed at their first congress. Nevertheless they still represented something. Delegates attended, though mostly representing very small organisations, from Cuba, Argentina, Spain, Sweden, France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Britain, Bulgaria and Portugal. A message of support was received from Uruguay.

Things were not looking good for the re-emergence of Anarcho-Syndicalism. In Eastern Europe the Stalinists allowed no free discussion, strikes or free trade unions. *Certainly not anarchist ones!* In the West massive subsidies from the US and the Catholic Church went to tame unions controlled by Christian Democrats and Social Democrats. Meanwhile Russia did the same for their allies who controlled the French CGT, the Italian CGIL and others. The IWA, in its weakened state couldn't compete for influence. In the late 1950s the Swedish SAC withdrew from the IWA. There was now not a single functioning union in its ranks.

It staggered on as a collection of small propaganda groups and exile organisations like the Spanish and Bulgarian CNT's. Some wondered if it would live much longer. But suddenly in 1977 Franco died and his regime fell. The CNT blossomed. Within a matter of months its membership leaped from a few hundred activists to 150,000. [Problems later developed within the CNT and a split occurred which left us with two unions whose combined membership today probably does not reach 30,000, though this is still a significant number.] The growth of the CNT put syndicalism back on the anarchist agenda. The IWA now claims organisations that function at least partly as unions (in Italy, France and Spain) and propaganda groups in about another dozen countries.

Outside the IWA are syndicalist unions and organisations like the 16,000 strong SAC in Sweden, the OVB in the Netherlands, the Spanish CGT, the Solidarity-Unity-Democracy<sup>4</sup> union in the French post office, the CRT in Switzerland, and others. Some are less anarchist and more reformist than others.

Say what we will about them we must recognise that syndicalism is today the largest organised current in the international anarchist movement. This means it is especially important to understand them.

### SOME PROBLEMS

Anarchist-Communists do have criticisms of their politics, or more accurately lack of politics. Judging from their own statements, methods and propaganda the syndicalists see the biggest problem in the structure of the existing unions rather than in the ideas that tie workers to authoritarian, capitalist views of the world.

Syndicalists do not create revolutionary anti-political organisations. They want to create industrial unions. Their strategy is apolitical, in the sense that they argue that all that's essential to make the revolution is for workers to seize the factories and the land. After that it believes that the state and all the other institutions of the ruling class will come toppling down. They do not accept that the working class must take political power. For them, all power has to be immediately abolished on day one of the revolution.

Because the syndicalist organisation is the union, it organises all workers regardless of their politics. Historically many workers have joined, not because they were anarchists, but because the syndicalist union was the most militant and got the best results. Because of this, tendencies always appeared that were reformist. This raises the question of the conflict between being a trade union or a revolutionary anarchist organisation.

Syndicalists are quite correct to emphasise the centrality of organising workers in the workplace. Critics who reject syndicalism on the grounds that it cannot organise those outside the workplace are wrong. Taking the example of Anarcho-Syndicalism in Spain it is clear that they could and did organise throughout the entire working class as was evidenced by the Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth, and the neighbourhood organisations.