

What is the Social General Strike?

Haven't strikes had their day?

One of the central ideas of the anarchist workers movement (anarchist unionism or 'anarcho-syndicalism') is the 'Social General Strike'. In one form or another, it is the only foreseeable means of bringing about a successful revolution... that being the achievement of a free and equal society.

Belief in the necessity of the Social General Strike is the difference between those 'socialists' who believe that the seizing of state power is necessary to establish a socialist society; and those who believe that the state must be abolished before a libertarian communist society can be organised.

For anarcho-syndicalism, the Social General Strike is the 'Declaration of Independence' of the working class. It can only be brought about by the direct actions of working people. All independent direct action by workers contributes by inexorable logic to the process of the Social General Strike.

Acts of resistance and disobedience must be the first steps in the process of breaking the chain of command and of dismantling hierarchy.

The General Strike as a means of changing society is older than anarcho-syndicalism. It can be traced back to the 'Grand National Holiday', first suggested by William Benbow in 1832. The idea then was that, on a certain day, the workers would down tools and go on a picnic. As industry came to a halt, the capitalist class would realise that they would have no choice but to capitulate.

Later, anarcho-syndicalists developed this first simple idea into a more sophisticated strategy. It was recognised that capitalists and the state will not sit idly by while working people take over industry. The state will intervene to break the strike with armed force. Secondly, the idea that the Social General Strike can be



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planned to start on a certain day is naive - the state would be prepared and take preventative action.

The Social General Strike is likely to come after a series of labour strikes and social unrest, during which tension will mount and generally intensify. No doubt the state will respond with greater repression and, hopefully, the reply of working people will be to step up resistance. A revolutionary situation will develop when the Social General Strike becomes imminent.

Workplaces, transport and communications will come under the control of people who work in them. The community will organise the distribution of food and other goods and services. Militias will be organised to defend the revolution - not consisting of the soldiers of the state, but instead, groups of directly democratically elected and controlled workers.

Anarchists see the necessity of organising to bring this about. Revolutionary organisations are necessary, not only to help conduct our important everyday economic and social struggles, but also to prepare for a future libertarian communist society. Rather than following political parties intent on taking state power, anarchists are intent on the dissolution of state power. Politics and political activity are necessary, but professional politicians and political parties are of no use - irrespective of whether they claim to be 'reformist' or 'revolutionary'.

***the Social General Strike is the
'Declaration of Independence' of
the working class***

The Social General Strike will involve Mass Civil Disobedience, in many ways like civilian mutiny. Working people will no longer obey their managers and the chains of command will be broken. The orders of the bosses will be ignored, and equality and real order will be established. Power will no longer be concentrated in the hands of the bosses, but will be dispersed throughout society. The direct action methods of the Social General Strike that will bring about a revolutionary situation will also be the methods by which the revolution can be maintained and defended.

The Social General Strike is civil disobedience in the context of the world of work and community. Violence on the part of the bosses cannot be ruled out, and this will require firm defensive action. However, the main thrust is the establishment of a new social order and new social relationships.

Why not organise constructive indiscipline to the demands of your bosses?!!

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