

Black Flag

FOR ANARCHIST
RESISTANCE



Anarchy or Chaos?

We live in a world marked by massive inequalities of wealth and power. Those few lucky enough to escape material impoverishment face the mental and emotional impoverishment of a world racked by narrow selfishness. Our planet's resources, which could be used to benefit all, are being sold off to the highest bidder. Our environment is being killed to create more profits.

Imperialism and war stalk the world. Fascism and xenophobia are rising, used by the powerful to get us to blame others for the problems we all face. Problems created by an unsustainable system which places profits and power above people and planet.

The gap between what is and what could be has reached new heights. The choice facing us is either the chaos or anarchy. Between a system built on authority and a society based on freedom. Between self-destructive competition and self-empowering co-operation. Between despair and hope. Between capitalism and freedom.

“Anarchism, the no-government system of socialism.” (Kropotkin)

Anarchy is a free society of free individuals working together as equals to meet their needs and desires. Anarchy is the simple idea that people are at their best when they are free, managing their own lives and not being bossed about. It means we are able to decide ourselves the right way to do things whether in our work, our communities, our regions and, ultimately, our planet.

It means ending the power of the state,

organised religion and capitalism. Whether it is a boss or politician, priest or bureaucrat, all are based on subjecting the many to the power of a few. This harms those subject to such authority. Their potential is crushed under the dead-weight of authority while the few in charge accumulate wealth and influence at their expense.



The sources of power are many, but private property and the state are the two main ones. That is why anarchism is anti-state and anti-capitalist. But we are against all forms of oppression, including sexism, racism, homophobia and religious bigotry. Anarchism is about creating a world free for all. A world free from oppression and exploitation, where decisions are made by those affected by them. A decentralised society where power lies with the people and not in centralised authority or hierarchical bureaucracy.

Anarchism is simply the theoretical expression of our capacity to organise ourselves and run society without bosses or politicians. Anarchism allows working class people to become conscious of our power as a class, defend our immediate interests, and fight to revolutionise society as a whole.

“It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience, and through rebellion” (Oscar Wilde)

Anarchism is no abstract philosophy. Anarchist ideas are put into practice everyday. Wherever oppressed people stand up for their rights, take action to defend their freedom, practice solidarity and co-operation, fight against oppression, organise themselves without leaders and bosses, the spirit of anarchism lives. Anarchists simply seek to strengthen these libertarian tendencies and bring them to their full fruition.

Anarchists have been at the heart of the anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation movement. At the Battles of Seattle and Prague as well as elsewhere anarchist principles were used to great success. Anarchists are actively involved in workers' struggles, their trade unions, anti-sexism and anti-racism struggles, land rights, in community resistance, animal liberation, environmental struggles, prisoner support, disability rights, and other struggles.

Anarchists see social struggle as the only means of changing society. We need to organise collectively in our communities and workplaces to make real change. Only direct action and solidarity can create a power capable of not only resisting current oppression but also of changing society.

“The only limit to the oppression of government is the power with which the people show themselves capable of opposing it.” (Malatesta)

Some say that direct action is not needed because we live in a democracy. Anarchists reject this. Voting gives an illusion of sovereignty and accountability but it's a con. How much “say” can you have

putting a cross on a bit of paper every four or five years? Look at the Iraq war. The vast majority of the population opposed it, so what did our elected representatives do? Go to war!

This came as no surprise. The state does not exist to represent the people, it exists to repress them. It is an instrument for ensuring the rule by elites, little more. The state is part of the problem, not the solution.

The best known anarchist saying must be **“if voting changed anything, they’d abolish it.”** This means that elections cannot bring radical change. Rather than change the world, they change the party. Progressive parties tone down their policies in order to get elected and then tone them down even more to keep the wealthy happy – look at Lula in Brazil. And if the politicians do pursue anti-elite policies, then the real power in the system come into play: the power of big business and the state bureaucracy undermines the government and, if that does not suffice, then there is always a military coup.

Real change comes from direct action, solidarity and struggle, not from voting once every four or five years. That is why anarchists are anti-parliamentarian. We argue that we must organise independently and outside of bourgeois politics by means of federations of workplace and community assemblies. Only such collective mass struggle can win significant improvements in the here and now. Only this can tame the arrogance of governments, left or right, and make them listen to the people.

“If I can’t dance it’s not my revolution” (Emma Goldman)

But anarchism is not just about reforms or protest. Anarchism aims to change the world, not just make existing society less oppressive. We take part in such struggles to argue for far-reaching change, for revolution.

Anarchists believe that the world will only be changed through revolution. The world is split between the ruling and working classes. The ruling class control all the power and wealth. They oppress us, exploit us, control us. Only the direct action of the working class will change this and overthrow capitalism.

It is possible. It has worked. During the Russian Revolution, millions of workers and peasants practised anarchism and defended their freedom against both Red and White dictatorship. In Spain in the 1930s large parts of the country, including large cities like Barcelona, were run along anarchist principles. Fifty years later the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico declared *“a network without a central head or decision maker, no central command or hierarchies.”* The popular assemblies and occupied workplaces in Argentina are another example of large-scale anarchism in action.

“Creating not only the ideas but also the facts of the future itself” (Bakunin)

Direct action also creates the framework of the

society which will replace capitalism as working class people have to organise themselves to resist oppression and exploitation. Collective class struggle creates anarchism. Anarchy would be based on the working class people’s own combat organisations, created in their struggles within, but against, capitalism and the state.

Anarchy, therefore, is not some distant goal but rather an aspect of current struggles against oppression and exploitation. Means and ends are linked, with direct action generating mass participatory organisations and preparing people to directly manage their own personal and collective interests. The struggle against oppression is the school of anarchy. It teaches us not only how to be anarchists but also gives us a glimpse of what an anarchist society would be like, what its initial framework could be and the experience of managing our own activities which is required for such a society to work.

“We are learning to know in Russia how not to introduce communism” (Kropotkin)

Most Marxists agree that we need a revolution. Anarchists reject Marxism as a path to freedom. Marxism in power has simply proven anarchist criticisms of it right! Social democracy became a reformist as anarchists predicted. Bolshevism quickly became the dictatorship **over** the proletariat.

Working class people are capable of organising and running society directly. We do not need vanguard parties to seize power and govern in our name. Unlike Marxists, anarchists do not want power for ourselves. We think that power is too important to leave in the hands of a few people. We believe in real democracy. Not freedom for the few or the majority but freedom for everyone.

Real socialism, anarchism, will be created and run from below. We reject the simplistic Marxist idea that the state is “an armed machine.” This fails to address the real issue, namely that of power. Anarchists know that a revolution needs defending. The real question is who has the power. Is it the working class, in its own class organisations, or will it be a “revolutionary” government, a handful of leaders at the top using the state machine to impose its own concept on socialism onto the masses?

“Be Realistic — Demand the Impossible!” (Paris, 68)

Our goal is freedom, equality and solidarity. All three are interdependent. Without equality, freedom is meaningless. And equality must be political as well as economic. There can be no equality between those in government and those subject to it and so equality without freedom is impossible. Anarchists, therefore, are the most logical and complete socialists, since we demand for every person not just their part of society’s wealth but also their portion of social power.

Anarchists do not have a blue print for the future. Unlike Marxists anarchists think that people will be able to take responsibility for their own lives and organise in the ways they see fit. Without the state, bosses, leaders or parties. Real democracy is impossible without the active and permanent participation of all the members of a group, something centralisation, by its nature, excludes. So a revolutionary organisation must reflect this, being run from the grass-roots upwards, directly democratic and co-ordinated by mandated, recallable delegates. Only self-management today can ensure freedom and equality after the revolution.

We aim to replace the state and capitalism with a free federation of the directly democratic organisations created in the class struggle. These organs of class power will be the framework of a free society. Capitalism can only be destroyed when workers expropriate their workplaces directly, using direct action to kick out the bosses. Once under workers’ management, socialism is achieved by them federating together. The state will be destroyed by a federation of community assemblies. In both cases, decisions flow from the bottom-up by means of mandated and recallable delegates. Such a system is no impossible dream, it has existed in every popular revolution.

Only such mass participation can create a world fit for human beings, one where freedom means more than picking a boss or politician; one where resources are used to improve our lives while protecting the planet and not the balance sheets of corporations; one where useful work replaces mindless toil.

What is it to be? Anarchy or Chaos? The choice lies with you!



Interested in finding out more?

Black Flag, BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX

Freedom (fortnightly anarchist paper) and **Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High St, E1 7QX (Aldgate East Tube)**

Anarchist Federation, c/o Freedom Bookshop

Solidarity Federation, PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester, M15 5HW