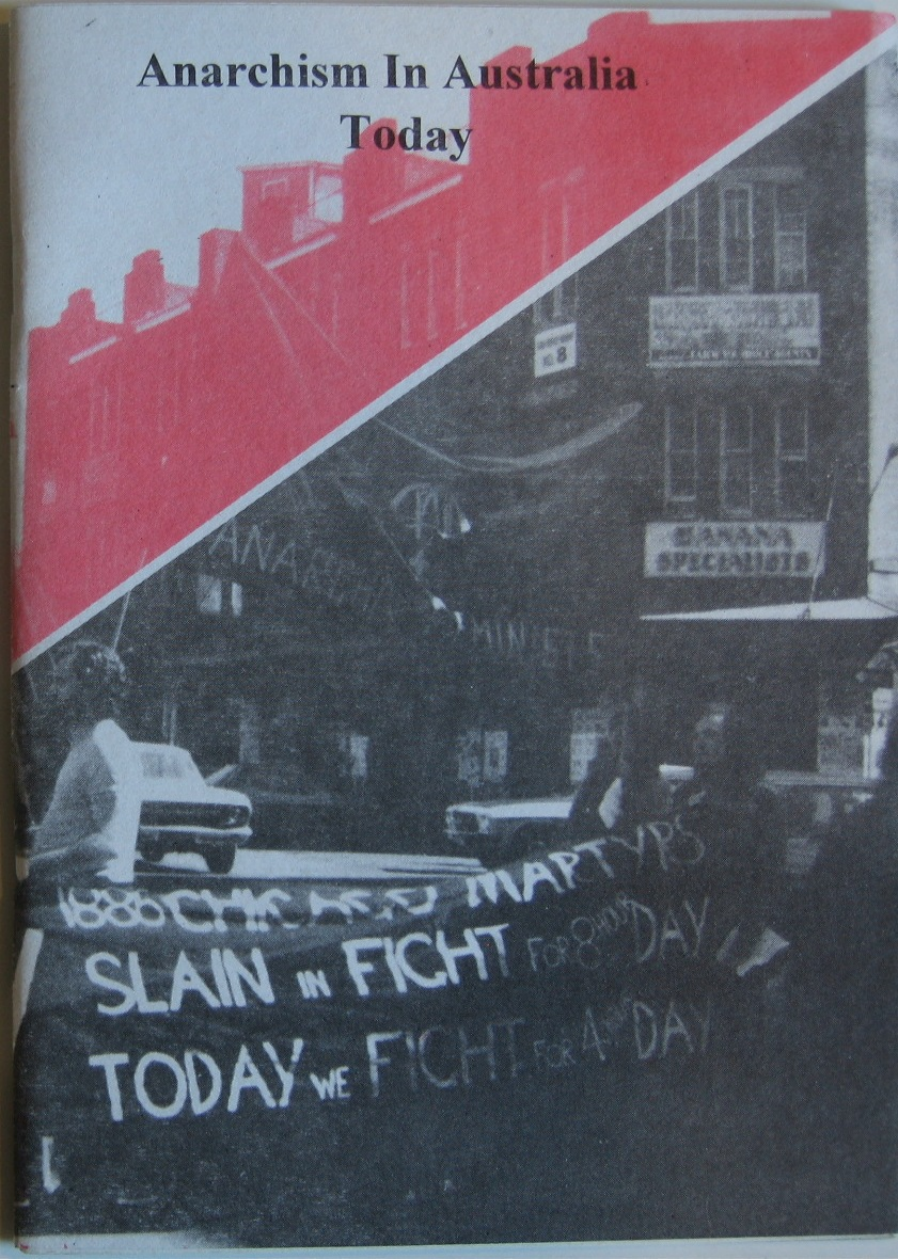


# Anarchism In Australia Today



# Anarchism in Australia

*A survey of current debates in the Australian anarchist movement*

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## PREFACE

This pamphlet was originally published as 'Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism in Australia Today' in April 1986. Although it was written and published by members of the Melbourne group of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation, it was not an official ASF publication. In the same year, it was reprinted in serial form by *Black Flag* magazine in London and as a pamphlet by the Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland. It was also translated into Spanish and appeared in *CNT* magazine. This second edition has been updated to take into account the last ten years.

## INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet is intended as a means of stimulating some much needed debate in the Australian anarchist movement with regards to the questions "What is Anarchism?" and "What is Anarcho-syndicalism?" It is also seen as a means of dispelling certain misconceptions about anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism which are currying favour in the broader anarchist movement. This debate is vital to the development of anarchism in Australia. It is not attempting to draw lines or write people off—this is a debate of ideas. What is sought here is the basis for taking action together to bring about what we want—an anarchist society.

During the course of discussion from which this pamphlet grew, it appears that the pressing issues confronting us are the following: Power and class analysis; non-violence and direct action; organisation and the individual; internal and external confrontation and education, organisation and action. Further, it seems there is widespread misunderstanding about anarcho-syndicalism in Australia. Briefly, that anarcho-syndicalism is irrelevant, that it ignores or has ignored questions relating to gender politics and ecology, and that anarcho-syndicalist organisation is only a shade away from some sort of leftist vanguard party. Others believe that anarcho-syndicalism is concerned only with the workplace and that class issues are the only issues of any relevancy. These misconceptions are not just confined to the broader anarchist movement. There are currents in the anarcho-syndicalist movement who labour under such confusions.

Because of this, a definition of anarcho-syndicalism in the context of anarchism is needed. Anarcho-syndicalism is an anarchist strategy for bringing anarchist ideas, organisation and social relations to the workplace and the community through the formation of industrial associations and local community groups on the basis of federation and equal decision-making. It is hoped that this pamphlet brings into focus more clearly the nature of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism.

## PACIFISM

Many anarchists assert that anarchism is essentially pacifist that 'to reject pacifism is to be involved with violence, and violence is the tool of the state'. This idea is particularly popular amongst anarchists involved in the struggle to defend the environment. According to the dictionary definition, one is a pacifist if one believes it is desirable and possible to settle disputes by peaceful means. However, this is contingent upon both parties agreeing to do so! Unless we can imagine some mass laying down of arms, a defection from the ranks of power (history convinces us this is highly unlikely) how do we achieve the desired anarchist society?

The view of pacifism as a strict moral rejection of violence is the prerogative of those in a relatively passive (peaceful?) country, where the violence of the state is not experienced by most people. This type of moralist pacifism can also be seen as fear of strong emotions such as anger, passion and the desire to resist the violence of others. These moral justifications of pacifism are not so easy for those who are the victims of the arbitrary violence of the police, the state and the factory owners—workers in industrial accidents, squatters harassed and beaten by the police, the harassment and arrest of workers on picket lines and indigenous Australians who have experienced the attempted genocide of their people.

Non-violent resistance is a tactic of direct action and has, as Gandhi stated, more to do with war than

with peace. Implicit in non-violent direct action is the threat of escalation. Thus, if the general strike, the closing of the shops, civil disobedience and sabotage do not work, and if the army threatens or commits violence, do we all go home, back to work, to school, to prison, and wait until we can fulfill our desires peacefully?

Rather than use violence, a word used by the state and the media to discredit our actions, these activities are better described as resistance, direct action, and self-defence. Anarchists have always taken and maintained the right to defend themselves against attacks.

## INDIVIDUALISM—ANARCHY MEANS DOING WHAT YOU WANT.

One characteristic of the anarchist 'movement' in Australia is tendencies toward an individualist view of anarchism and individualist behaviour. This seems to take two main forms.

First is the view that "anarchy means doing whatever you like", or it means the individual liberty to be spontaneously self-expressive. This is running the risk of two things—being individually irresponsible (violating another's rights) and imagining that anarchy is what *you* make it. Anarchy entails equal rights and equal responsibilities and not the individual liberty to act arbitrarily. Anarchy is a form of social organization which implies that

individuals govern themselves, that is, that they accept within themselves their personal and social rights and responsibilities. In this sense it does not mean total freedom, but an individual and collective awareness of what freedoms are possible. To take a belief in individual liberty to its logical conclusion is to say that everyone has the right to do as they wish. This is the justification right-wing libertarians (sometimes known as 'pan-anarchists') use for a laissez-faire economy and minimal government interference in people's lives. This is not anarchy as anarcho-syndicalists understand it. Anarchy is not what you or I individually make it, but what we collectively make it. Thus decisions are made through discussion, negotiation, and mutual agreement. This is not to say that anarchy is a set of rules nor is it to say that anarchy implies collective regimentation. It implies an awareness of self and others. An awareness of who makes the mess, and who does the cleaning up.

The second position seems to be from people who may have an understanding of anarchist history and theory—but are reluctant to work with others. This seems, in part, to come from a desire to keep their ideas 'pure' and 'unsullied'. Therefore a reluctance to work in groups in case this means the confrontations, and at times compromises, of group processes and practices challenging their positions, or putting their ideas or their bodies on the line. Because these people tend to work in only ones or twos, it limits the type of action they can take. For

example, producing newspapers and journals. Behind this type of individualist anarchism are assumptions similar to the "doing what you want" individualists, that if enough people "change their heads" then society will change. These assumptions do not take into account the real interests that are threatened by anarchism or provide a mechanism by which these changes occur. That mechanism is struggle. People change through the struggle to change society.

Anarchism is a form of socialism that has the same roots in the early labour movement and utopian socialist thought as do state socialism and communism, trade unionism, social democracy, and revolutionary syndicalism. What has been important has been the similarities (class analysis and the struggle of working people) and the differences (power analysis and the rejection of the state). Anarchism is not a brand of individual belief or a mere set of ideas. It has been sustained and developed by the thinking and action (praxis) of groups and federations of anarchists.

## POWER ANALYSIS

Many anarchists now believe that class analysis is no longer relevant and a pure power analysis is sufficient to explain the forms of exploitation and domination we experience today. Power analysis suggests that it is domination that is the main basis

and form of oppression in this society. It's proponents suggest that it is somehow beyond class analysis. Anarcho-syndicalists believe that class analysis has a place for anarchists—because class and power are inextricably linked. Class analysis does not ignore power. It is clear that power, in all its forms, serves the interests of those who benefit most from society as it is.

This benefit can be direct or indirect. The sexist organization of domestic work in the family, for example, benefits men directly—but also benefits class society through the division of men and women, developments of concepts of domination and passivity and through the reproduction of capitalist society. It provides the material base for keeping the worker in the workplace as well as for the rearing and acculturation of children and commodity consumption.

The problem of class analysis is not that it is irrelevant, but that in some anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist writing, it hasn't been updated from its original nineteenth century formulations. Anarcho-syndicalists acknowledge the contribution by some feminist (especially some socialist-feminist), situationist, anti-racist, ecological, and modern socialist thought to developing the analysis of power and class. The developments made showing the importance of the relationships between gender, sexuality, culture, technology, and power are invaluable.

But a pure power analysis has many limitations.

It seems to suggest a generalised and disembodied domination that we must struggle against in our individual lives, but seems to play down the social basis of this power or the social struggle against it. It is not true that class analysis is essentially Marxist and therefore un-anarchist. Peasants and workers knew they were peasants and workers long before Marx walked into the British Museum. This is because we experience class (exploitation, powerlessness, prejudice) in our everyday lives.

Some people suggest that western societies are now "post-industrial" societies and that class analysis is therefore no longer relevant. That is, that the "working class" (the traditional industrial proletariat) have sold out to materialism and that workers have all become middle class. There is some truth in this—yet it cannot be universally applied. Some sections of the industrial workforce are very conservative—yet some others are quite militant despite substantial material benefits from the system (eg. the Builders Labourers, Tramways and Railways workers, nurses, airline pilots). Unemployment has led to the intensification of the exploitation of some workers, especially young people, recently arrived migrants, women and part-time workers, illegal immigrants and others in the cash economy. This in turn has led to pressures to reduce incomes and worsen working conditions for the industrial workforce and we are yet to see the effects of these developments. The passivity of recent years may be more apparent than real.

While "post-industrial" critics of class analysis point out the increasing importance of a small number of technical, scientific, and managerial workers, another of the effects of this process is the de-skilling of many areas of employment. There are significant numbers of workers who find that their position (income, industrial bargaining power and sense of trade identity) is under threat. This creates the potential for a new, large "proletarianised" section of the workforce with much less commitment to supporting the existing system. For example, the growth in the number of "outworkers" such as migrant women in the textile industry who work long hours in their flats for low piece rates with no guarantees of regular income, holiday pay or sick leave, workers compensation, industrial health and safety protections, maternity leave, etc. The burgeoning tourism and hospitality industry is another example of where "hyper exploitation" through casual employment of young people, students, women and migrants shows that economic exploitation is not a thing of the past in Western economies.

Many workers have been "de-skilled". Railway station staff, for example, who ran all the activities at the station now find parcels and goods, ticketing, rosters, etc. have all been centralised and computerised and they have become passive train watchers and ticket checkers. This makes them much more vulnerable to sacking or "redeployment" on the bosses terms! As capitalism develops new forms

of exploitation develop. The desire for the latest consumer gadget keeps the worker going to work allowing the continuing extraction of profit despite most basic material needs having being met for workers in Western countries. Recent times have seen great strides in the creation of new "needs"—VCRs, computer games, compact disc players and other products are examples of the commercialisation of leisure time.

Some of the coming of "post-industrialism" in the west has to do with the shifting of western industries "off-shore" to countries where, owing to poverty, workers are less organized. Industrial based class society hasn't disappeared—indeed for many people in the world it is becoming the new form of exploitation. The class nature of these societies is very clear, especially in free-trade zones and under a range of authoritarian governments. Class relations may *appear* to becoming outmoded for some people in the west, but with an international perspective they are a common form of exploitation and oppression.

We acknowledge that it is not easy any more to determine *strictly* who profits and who doesn't from systemic exploitation. Who is an order giver and who is an order taker? Many people are both beneficiaries and victims of this system, they both control and are controlled. This is not necessarily an argument against class analysis. An analysis of class explains some of the particular nature of power relations in this society. Class analysis allows us to choose a

strategy—helping anticipate the likely development so capitalism and the state and have a chance to counter them.

Not all power relations in a capitalist society can be understood in terms of simple economic exploitation—but the whole nature of the current capitalist society allows us to understand the links between, for example; opposition to Aboriginal land rights and mining and grazing interests; the position of women in the home and marriage and their exploitation as factory 'hands' and outworkers; between advertising, mass media culture and the consumerist ethic; between industrialism and progress as ideologies and protection of the environment. It is still possible to determine who benefits the most—materially-economically, power-politically, emotionally-psychologically—from society and the world as it is. There are some people in whose interest it is to change it. A pure power analysis, on an individual basis, implies that it is in everybody's interest to change society. If this is the case why hasn't society changed? What power analysis fails to do is to provide an explanation of how change comes about—or a strategy for achieving change. It doesn't go beyond people rejecting power in their own lives and joining with others who share the same particular oppression. If this was effective then the movement politics of the last twenty years would've brought about more revolutionary changes than it has. The fact is that movement politics has not been a revolutionary force and has been used to

propel some people to positions of greater power or profit making within the existing system.

Class analysis, on the other hand, implies an allegiance to others in the same class—and the existence of an opposing class. It explains the real opposition and retaliation when class interests are challenged by revolutionaries. The ability to identify who we are struggling with and who we are fighting against has important implications in the struggle against Capital and the State.

## MOVEMENT POLITICS

Groups involved in 'movement politics', be they third world solidarity, peace, women's, animal rights, environmental—tend to have a number of characteristics in common. Firstly, links between them are rare, small scale or incidental. This reduces possibilities for development of co-ordinated responses to the state and capitalism. The focus of single issue or area of concern reduces the possibility of developing a coherent analysis of the causes of these social, political and environmental problems. The anti-conscription campaigns during the Vietnam war, for example, presented opportunities for consciousness raising about "the system", but most of these analyses were imported to the movement from Marxist-Leninist, Maoist or libertarian politics. When conscription, then later the war itself, ceased so did most of the activity of the movement. In Australia



military or the state. These types of actions are very different to real direct action—the sit-in strike that stops scabs being used, the mass-picket or blockade where there is a commitment to stay put regardless. Of course there are a handful of movement politics groups that do have a broader analysis, that aren't compromised by government funding, that are genuinely democratic and that take empowering direct action, but these are not characteristic of movement politics groups in general.

#### "ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM IS OBSOLETE"

Some anarchists now see anarcho-syndicalism as obsolete and workerist. This has much more to do with their own perceptions of society and of anarcho-syndicalism than has to do with the real nature of anarcho-syndicalism.

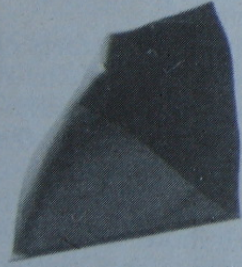
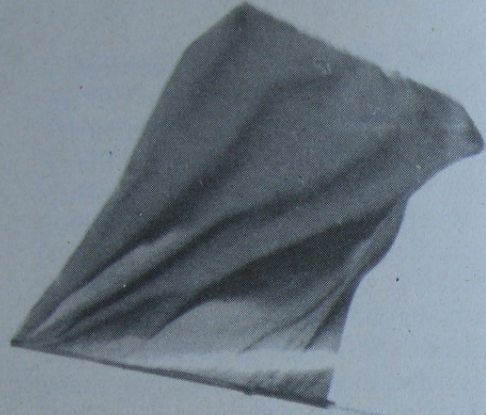
Industry is still a dominant force in western societies and is becoming increasingly important in third world societies. The workplace is a vital site for struggle against exploitation, as well as for the preservation and improvement of the working and living conditions of workers. It is also vital for the setting up of the structures that can create revolutionary change through taking over, self-managing and transforming production for real social needs. With the increased complexity of modern societies and the huge increase in the role of the state in economic and social life (eg: subsidisation

of business, 'welfare', environmental 'controls', public housing and transportation, etc.) it is increasingly difficult to separate purely industrial struggles from broader community struggles. Many anarcho-syndicalists see much value in addressing the relationship between these sorts of struggles. This is discussed in greater depth later in this pamphlet.

Anarcho-syndicalist groups and union have always included un-waged workers—unemployed people, houseworkers, pensioners, prisoners and others. Anarcho-syndicalists recognise that these people have to, or have had to, labour to live. They are part of the reserve labour force to be used when economies are expanding and to be used against already employed workers where economies are contracting (strike-breaking, attempts to reduce conditions and wages, etc). Anarcho-syndicalists seek to break down the artificial distinctions between 'worker' and 'non-workers' created by the state to divide the revolutionary movement.

In Spain in the 1930's unemployed members of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT were among the most militant and active. In Spain, too, many anarcho-syndicalists were also involved as anarchists in the broader libertarian movement that involved the affinity groups of the FAI, rationalist schools, women's organisations and much more, as well as anarcho-syndicalist cultural activities and centres ('Ateñeos'). Many members of the CNT rejected state and church involvement in their personal lives, preferring to live in a committed relationship with

May Day 1986 Anarchist Centenary Celebrations



their 'compañera' or 'compañero' in the villages of 1930's Catholic Spain! At the 1936 Congress of the CNT, a broad sweep of issues from the collectivisation of heavy industry to the community responsibility for the care of children were discussed with regard to the coming revolutionary society.

Many anarcho-syndicalists today recognise this as an important part of anarcho-syndicalist history, and believe it proves that anarcho-syndicalism is neither obsolete or workerist. The bullshit pushed by the newspaper editors that workers (especially when they are on strike!) are somehow outside and against 'the public' should be emphatically rejected. With 40% of the people in this country in the paid labour force (and with many more people relying on their income) the workers are the public are the workers.

## SUMMARY

Are these positions, outlined above, doing anything for anarchism in Australia? The lack of organisation, and its attendant sporadic activity, is a result of action and confrontation with what oppresses us. This lead anarchists to turn in on themselves creating divisions and mutual suspicion. Groups stagnate and then disappear through attrition by 'burn-out' and cynicism—and an 'everything's fucked' attitude. These positions also tend away from a sense of external struggle to a sense of internal struggle as a primary objective.

When social struggle is not on an equal footing with personal struggle, struggle becomes unbalanced. They should work hand in hand. Social struggle and personal struggle together help us to understand how to take control of all life's processes.

## CLASS ANALYSIS

Class analysis shows us in who's interests it is that society is maintained and in who's interest it is to change society. The question of the nature of the economic system we live under is recognised not just by the traditional workforce—usually said to be the 'constituency' of anarcho-syndicalism. Women recognise the importance of their economic position in calling for economic equality. Environmentalists recognise the direct relationship between industry and ecological destruction.

Anarcho-syndicalists believe that class analysis allows us to go beyond the linking of exploitation and individual oppression to a single source, as in movement politics, and look at the social and economic bases—and therefore what can be done. Given the changes in the nature of work in Australia—a decreasing organised workforce, increasing unemployment and a growing cash economy, automation and computerisation, it is now more important that those workers who remain in the organised workforce recognise their real allegiances. It is also important that those in the new,

de-skilled workforce and the cash economy—who are exposed to lower wages longer hours, more unsafe conditions with no job security—organise to protect their interests.

Anarcho-syndicalists have historically supported industrial unionism because of the failures of trades and labour based unions, as well as the possibilities they offer for controlling and transforming production. The original trades unions emphasised the differences between workers on the basis of their trades skills, even in the same industry—tilers, plumbers, plasterers, painters and carpenters all in their own unions. They looked down on the unskilled labourers. Later the labourers organised themselves forming labour unions. The bosses have always exploited these differences—attacking one union while trying to buy off others with 'differentials' between different types of workers. Despite attempts to counter these divisions in combined union shop committees (in workplaces) and Trades and Labour Councils (locally), but mostly these divisions have limited the growth of the consciousness of workers of their common interests. They have undermined the practical solidarity between workers against the company.

Unions based on all the workers in one industry—industrial unions—create the possibility of fighting the bosses hard—when the factory is not producing, the stockpile can't be moved, the invoices aren't sent out, the cheques aren't cashed, and the managing-director's directives aren't typed then

management is more likely to talk than when one group is on strike and the rest are still on the job! Industrial unionism also creates the possibility of workers taking over and running industries in a revolutionary situation. All the expertise is there and the workers are used to working together in the one union. The aim is not, as may anarchist critics of anarcho-syndicalism would suggest, to merely take over the industry and run it as before. 'The Workers' Atomic Energy Plant'? 'The Collectivised Useless Plastic Crap Factory'? Not bloody likely! But who better to transform an industry than the workers who know it and who turn out to also be members of their local community that is determining what its real needs are!

It seems that some of the rejection by anarchists of involvement in industrial struggles involves fear of involvement with people who may not share the anti-sexist, anti-racist, and environmental positions on the 'non-industrial left' This seems to arise from a fear of confronting these issues and experiences with such people. Anarcho-syndicalists believe people can and do change through struggle. But this involves confrontation, first in in our own organisations and then in the wider society.

Class analysis is linked to the question of organisation. Anarchists in Australia are avoiding the questions of how we stop capitalism (and state capitalism) and how we will organise the meeting of needs into the period of revolutionary change. Anarcho-syndicalists believe that is important that

we are involved in the labour force. Workers are the people who still create most of what we need—despite sophisticated machines, which are only an accumulation of our labour after all. They also produce a lot of what we don't need. In the present it is workers who, to earn a living, are put in a position where they must put chemicals in food and build freeways. But workers in these industries have the potential power to change that. They have a vital contribution to make to the transformation of society by taking control of their workplace.

Given the work economic organisation, not to have a class analysis in a country like Australia, where class consciousness might appear to be waning, is to betray those workers in places (some not 2000 kilometres from here) where 19th century working conditions (12 hour day, child labour, frequent, crippling, uncompensated injuries, workers sleeping under their machines, are daily reality. A modern class analysis recognises that ideology and culture (the ideas a society has of itself and the way people live in that society) are material forces in the reproduction of that society. The concepts embodied in language and experience of domination and exploitation are intimately part of, and have developed out of, the long history of class societies. As anarchists we believe we must create the concepts and culture of opposition in our daily lives capable of contesting the structures and the people that exploit and oppress us.

Anarcho-syndicalists have always recognised the

importance of understanding power relations. For example, Rudolph Rocker, one of the early theoreticians of anarcho-syndicalism and an activist involved in the founding of the International Workers Association, is also the author of a major study of culture and power—*Nationalism and Culture*. Anarcho-syndicalists are still keenly aware of the use of power by the state and the effects of domination and passivity in all aspects of our lives. The last half of the 20th century has seen the expansion of the commodification of culture. Artists, musicians and film-makers are now occupying positions of economic and cultural power. More recently, sports stars have undergone this change in status with the old arguments about amateurism disappearing under the weight of the onslaught of pay-TV. Rupert Murdoch's recent victory in the High Court to establish "Super League" represents the triumph of Capital over culture. Nevertheless, the failure of the forced merger Australian football clubs Hawthorn and Melbourne show the threat that culture poses to the ideology of Capital that sees sport as only a "business".

## INTERNATIONALISM

Oppression is international. Governments cooperate tacitly or otherwise to isolate any mutual threat. The 'Non-Intervention Agreement' between the governments of Britain, France, Germany and

Italy during the Spanish Civil War is a good example. 'Democratic' Britain and France recognised the what was happening in Spain was a revolution, not just a civil war. To protect their commercial interests in Spain and to protect against the influence a successful social revolution in Europe might have on their own workers, they signed a pact with the fascists in Italy and Germany. This allowed them to refuse to support the Spanish people while ignoring the massive amount of troops and arms Hitler and Mussolini's governments were directing toward supporting the fascist, Generalissimo Franco.

Capital is organised internationally, eg: General Motors 'World Car Concept' where components are produced in third world countries where labour is cheap, shipped elsewhere for assembly, then shipped for sale in affluent Western countries. The threat of taking factories and businesses 'off-shore' is used as a big stick to threaten workers in western industrialised countries to accept cuts in pay and conditions. In Australia and elsewhere, workers are constantly exhorted to change their "workplace culture" in order to compete with workers in countries where low pay and bad conditions are maintained by military dictatorships. Since the end of the Second World War, the organisation of capital has transcended the nation state to the economic trading bloc. In 1949, France and West Germany entered into an agreement called the European Coal and Steel Union. Later, this agreement was expanded into the European Economic Community (EEC) now

known as the European Union (EU). When Britain applied to join the European Union in the early 1960's, it meant an end to the preferential trade and tariffs policy that Australian primary producers enjoyed. When the United States responded to the EU trading bloc by initiated and established the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Australian capital found itself out in the cold. It was the Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke who initiated and pushed hard for the establishment of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation agreement (APEC).

We have already seen many examples of strikes being undermined by multinational companies shifting production elsewhere in the world, getting raw materials from alternative suppliers overseas, etc. In 1984 Britain imported coal from Poland—where workers lived under martial law—in an attempt to starve out the British miners. States, while apparently supporting nationalist ideology, and rivalry between nations in sport, trade, diplomacy and war, in fact act together in highly coordinated ways in areas of vital interest. The Australian government has given up much of its so-called sovereignty to allow U.S. bases to operate here—completely outside its control. The police and security forces of many counties have a high degree of co-operation—sharing information about political activists, techniques of surveillance, torture, destabilisation, disinformation and other forms of political control. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO—Australia's internal security

police) were set up by Britain's MI5 (although the man in question may have been a KGB double-agent!) and the CIA has trained the Victoria Police in 'crowd control' tactics!

In order to combat State and Capital in one country must combat State and Capital everywhere. Therefore we must organise internationally wherever possible and our perspectives must be international. Anarcho-syndicalists are concerned to raise the standard of pay and conditions to the highest level possible for all workers. That the State is developing another level above the national to the economic trading bloc or "superstate" precludes the possibility of anarchy in one country in isolation.

## WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY

Anarcho-syndicalists see the workplace and the community intimately intertwined, and organises on the bases of local groups and industrial associations. This is a logical consequence of our dual aim—to struggle for better conditions within existing structures and to build now the structures necessary for the establishment of an anarchist society. Anarcho-syndicalists clearly see the need to have workplace activity supported in the community, and community activity supported in the workplace. Either without the other is ineffective. For example, how can environmental issues be promoted successfully in the community without the assistance

of the workers in the industries that are environmentally destructive.

During the 1970's, community groups that organised to fight the development of parks working-class residential areas into shopping centres and office blocks had little success until the support of the workers involved had been won. The 'green bans' movement initiated by the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) saved many parks, buildings and other sites of value to the community from the developer's juggernaut. In the 80's and 90's, Melbourne ASF Groups formed groups to support workers engaged in industrial disputes. These 'support groups' actively engaged in a number of disputes in the health, building and public transport industries. During the 1990 Tramways dispute, the ASF support groups operated from within the depots occupied by the trammies and further broke down the false division between the workers and the community. The support groups are a good example of anarcho-syndicalist practice and its attendant lessons contributing to the development of anarcho-syndicalist theory.

There was interesting example of this attempted co-operation between the community and the workplace during the Roxbury Downs uranium mine protest. Workers didn't mind having the road blocked on the way to work, and were pleased to be paid for standing around talking, but they did mind if the road was blocked on the way home. Stealing the bosses time is fine, but stealing the workers

time...?

In the future anarchist society the emphasis will be on the production of socially useful commodities. Workplace and community co-operation is an essential element in this possibility/vision.

## MILITANCY

In our attempts to achieve world wide social revolution there will be violent resistance to our desires. Thus we must face the fact of violence, and retain the option of retaliation, of self defence, of resistance. To think otherwise is to not accept the ramifications of our desire for a different society, which means contesting the power of those who control society now. Of course it is easier to believe that if we all just change our minds...

This does not mean that we desire or glorify violence. It simply means that we resist violence, and continue our activities in the face of violence. our actions then become a question of tactics—when it is this action most useful, what is the best way to intervene or respond to a situation?

A belief in pacifism and non-violence is in fact a desire to avoid confrontation (by labeling it violence and rejecting the use of physical force) and a failure to come to terms with fear. Torture in South America for example affects political process in Australia just as much as the jailing of Tim Anderson does. Direct action put your body on the line. To not

be afraid of that is suspicious, and to not talk about it is evasion. Non-violence and pacifism are not the same, and non-violence has little to do with being passive, submissive or cowardly. However the equating of violence destruction of property, civil disobedience and non-cooperation is simply to avoid one's own fear. It is a question of practice. There are many who want a different society, one that is anarchist. But to concentrate on all the 'nice' aspects of this future society (co-operation, mutual aid, ecological awareness, a living community) can blind us to the realities of struggle here and now.

## ORGANISATION

Most of our experiences of organisations in this society are negative ones—school, work, sporting clubs, political groups, movements, even 'anarchist collectives' Hence organisation is easily equated with regimentation and loss of identity. There is in a rejection of organisation a fear of losing individual freedom and identity, the fear of being submerged and dominated, which in turn stems from an underlying lack of trust in our own personal strength.

This society alienates ourselves from ourselves. A fear of others is what drives the individualistic and competitive elements of our culture. We are all encouraged to believe that co-operation and mutual activity is only possible within the confines of a



hierarchy. Anything else has no chance of success because, after all, 'people can't be trusted'.

Co-operation with others through federation, assemblies and delegation implies a trust in ourselves and others, while providing the mechanisms whereby this trust can be realised. Everything about our culture attempts to destroy both of these—trust in ourselves and our own strength and trust in others (and ultimately trust in others to consider our equal voice and equal rights).

## FEDERATION

Briefly, federation is a form of organisation that allows large numbers of people to organise on the basis of equal decision making and genuine participation. This is the preferred form of anarchist, and therefore anarcho-syndicalist, organisation.

In a federation power remains at the base, in the assemblies. The assembly is the place where discussion occurs and agreements are made in a face to face situation, with all those involved being able to raise issues, have their voices heard and take an equal part in the decision making process. The decisions of the assembly are carried through or taken to other groups by a delegate. The delegate is given a specific responsibility by the assembly. They are not an executive or a representative. They cannot make decisions on the assembly's behalf, instead they carry out the tasks delegated and report back to the

assembly. When a delegate is sent to a meeting of delegate from other assemblies, she or he presents the position or positions (often decided from a previously circulated agenda) and any relevant information.

The delegates discuss the information and positions from the assemblies, then come up with a synthesis of the positions of the assemblies, or a number of options. These decisions and information from the other delegates then is brought back to the assemblies by the delegates for further discussion and ratification of decisions. Thus information and decisions pass both ways between the different constituents of the federation from local assemblies, through regional meetings of delegates to continental and international congresses, and back.

Collective action achieves more than individual action. Organised activity implies a threat to power in society. Individuals and small, isolated groups need never face the ramifications of their beliefs precisely because they never become a threat. Ultra-leftist violence is often the result of being small, ineffectual and isolated with no community support. Genuine anarchist organisations are the place where empowerment and equality are possible, where divisions can be transcended, where attitudes and practices such as sexism and racism are confronted and surmounted. If anarchist organisations are not confronting these, then they aren't anarchist. Anarcho-syndicalists consider that we cannot organise the future society without

organisation—assemblies, delegation, federation—where equal decision making is possible. This organisation will have to, and can, cope, for example, with the concentration of large numbers of people in cities. The prospect of a world of small communities of like-minded people does not come to terms with this actuality. Anarcho-syndicalists believe that people begin to exercise their full potential in a human community based on equal power, participation and federation.

### CONCLUSION

What anarcho-syndicalists are seeking is a basis for taking action with other anarchists to bring about what we want—an anarchist society. Anarchism is a body of ideas—a theory of a possible social organisation. Anarcho-syndicalism provides a method for achieving anarchy, and a way in which it is possible to practice anarchy along the way, in the present. Through organisation, federation, assemblies, and delegation we can practice anarchist decision making and collective action. This what we want and this is why we are anarcho-syndicalists.


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