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reading group
the unions
INTRODUCTION TO THE ARTICLES FOR THE READING GROUP

These articles have been selected to give readers the broadest possible overview of revolutionary views on the unions.

(1) UNIONS: BAD OR GOOD FOR THE WORKING CLASS?
(a) The first two articles are by the British group the Anarchist-communist Federation (ACF). These articles basically argue that unions always lead to a mess of hierarchy and sellouts. Instead they call for the formation of revolutionary workplace networks and groups that can smash the capitalists.

(NOTE: the articles call this view "anarchist-communist," but it is more like council communism, which was a left wing Marxism that emerged in the 1920s and was opposed to all unions)

(b) The next article is a direct reply to the ACF-type of view. This is by Dave Douglass of Class War, who says that the unions, even if bureaucratic or reformist, is an important combat organization of the working class. Anarchists should therefore support them. The ACF's reply is also included.

(2) UNIONS: REFORMIST OR REVOLUTIONARY?

Even if the unions are worthwhile, does this mean they can be revolutionary? Four articles deal with this view.

(a) The first one gives the Leninist view. It says the unions are important and MUST be supported, but are subject to a lot of problems, and can NEVER be revolutionary (their solution: the vanguard party).

(b) The second article is by the Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM), an Irish anarchist group, who say that the unions are defense organization, not revolutionary movements. The article says that the unions are the most important mass movement of the working class even though they suffer from problems like bureaucraty.

(c) The third and fourth articles argue for anarcho-syndicalism. Rocker says that the trade unions can not only defend the workers in the here and now, but ALSO make an anarchist revolution. But to do so they need a non-bureaucratic, non-hierarchical structure, as well as a revolutionary spirit. Rocker also attacks the reformist and vanguardist socialists. Meltzer clearly shows how anarcho-syndicalism is able to avoid the criticisms of orthodox trade unions. (NOTE: when Meltzer says "trade union" he is clearly referring to orthodox or mainstream and reformist trade unions).

(d) There are two other articles in this section: one gives a look at anarcho-syndicalism's history: the other one gives the principles of the IWA (anarcho-syndicalist international).

(3) IS ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM A WORKABLE STRATEGY?

But is anarcho-syndicalism really revolutionary?

(a) The first two articles are by the WSM and say that while anarcho-syndicalist unions are more progressive than reformist unions they CANNOT be revolutionary. This is for three reasons: (i) they do not pay attention to workers' reformist ideas (ii) because they are unions they recruit workers regardless of their politics, and so always have reformist tendencies that can split or lead to "confusion" the union in a revolutionary situation (iii) they are "ap political", meaning that they are only interested in seizing the factories etc. and believe the State will collapse by itself when this has happened. Instead of anarchist unions we need anarchist POLITICAL groups with clear politics to work throughout the working class to win the majority over to anarchist ideas. This is the real anarchist-communist or "platformist" critique.

(NOTE: the first of these two WSM articles makes the crucial point that anarchists aim to organize the WORKING CLASS, including women, youth, neighborhoods etc.

(b) The next article defends anarcho-syndicalism against these criticisms. It says that "platformism" and anarcho-syndicalism are both absolutely essential for revolution and argues that anarcho-syndicalism argues that anarcho-syndicalists do not want to use reforms to win the majority over to the revolutionary class.

(c) The next article is taken from Rebel Worker, the paper of the Australian Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation. This defends anarcho-anarcho-syndicalism against claims that (i) the working class has disappeared; (ii) anarcho-syndicalism is unnecessary in a future society; (iii) factories are unchangeable; (iv) the workplace is dehumanizing and so cannot be a locus for liberation.

(NOTE: this article also takes on an old criticism by some anarchist-communists which rejects anarcho-syndicalism as "too narrow." According to this view, all the oppressed and not just those who are organized into unions at the workplace must make the revolution. And so it looks to the commune (the free city) rather than the revolutionary trade union to make the revolution and run the anarchist society. By contrast, this article shows how the free city and the union are both necessary components of anarchist society.

(4) COSATU

Finally, there is one article on COSATU just for interest sake. Although its from a trot magazine, its author was criticized in a subsequent issue for implying that unions could be revolutionary.

(5) SYNDICALISM - WHY?
Organising in the Workplace

As an Anarchist-Communist we cannot accept the world as it is. We must change the world as we change ourselves. Anarchists are not just passive observers of change, but active agents of change. We believe that the traditional union structure would compromise any attempt at change as it would lead to hierarchical forming, alienation and submissiveness. We have to find ways of organising outside of the unions.

Outside

Only by working outside of unions can we do this. Unions are by their very nature administrative, but they do have a revolutionary tradition. It may be possible to set up a network of trade unions, if only by using their existing apparatus in a more flexible form of the existing class. We should begin to organise outside of the unions.

The strength of our activity depends on the mass.

The movement starts from the idea that workers' struggles are a natural part of the class struggle. The network should reflect all the workers' experiences and the experiences of the people who are not skilled workers. The network should be structured on the basis of the network itself as a communication network. The network should be a means of communication and not just a means of communication. The network should be a means of communication and not just a means of communication.

Starting

The network's starting point is the identification of the workers involved in the network. The network should not be limited to the people in the network, but should include all the workers involved in the network. The network should be a means of communication and not just a means of communication.

There are, unfortunately, problems with openly dismantling traditional organisations as such, which will not be seen kindly on this side and when in a position of weakness it may be necessary to arouse a network to carry out the work to avoid exploitation. Daycare services can also provide a network of support. This outside help could come from within the network as workers could organise networks and be organised networks, with the help of people outside.

When it becomes possible a paper could be produced to be used to inform and influence, which will be very important in any development of a network.

A group can also have an emotional role, and it can move towards change in a struggle. A group can also have an emotional role, and it can move towards change in a struggle. A group can also have an emotional role, and it can move towards change in a struggle. A group can also have an emotional role, and it can move towards change in a struggle.
WE ARE OPENING THE pages of Organise! to debate on the unions. Included are the text of a leaflet handed out at a recent Socialist Movement conference on the unions, a letter sharply attacking the leaflet, a letter from a DAM member in reply to the article in Organise! 27 on the unions and an editorial reply.

Text of ACF (London) leaflet

CONSTANT government-employer atta- eks on workers' rights and conditions coupled with the illegality of any useful workers' actions have been met with total compliance by the unions. It has always been so, to one degree or another, but now union strategies are based on the acceptance of total defeat.

Some proposals to counter this are: Elect a left-wing leadership...the Labour Party should back the unions...The union leaders should lose their fear of the Labour Party. Historically, Labour has always been for 'worker friendly' capitalism. This, of course, is a contradiction. Labour governments have also suppressed strikes on occasion even using police to defend the Empire against independence movements, brought in the Prevention of Terrorism Act, attempted wage freezes and have been responsible for the Social Contract and the 9.6% wage freeze as well as the introduction of monetarism. This was when the Labour Party still talked about socialism. Now they have dropped all such pretences.

All such proposals are simply a waste of time. Unions have always been compliant with the ruling class. Today, their collaboration is overt. In previous years they had to be a bit more subtle.

Starting point

If you want social justice for the working class of the world, a general starting point is anti-capitalism. Unions have never been anti-capitalist (although many union members are). The job of the union is to alleviate the sufferings of workers within the present system. This has developed into things like legal help, pension funds, various deals with management over wages, hours and conditions. Sometimes the union may even call for a strike in defence of all the workers, but only if workers are really pushy in their demands. All these are not in themselves bad aims. But it stands to reason, that to truly serve the cause of the workers, this requires total and ceaseless hostility to the system based on the naked expropria- tion of our labour.

Trade unions have tried to have it both ways. In the past they may not have 'liked' capitalism very much (today they are staunch supporters of it) but at the same time they knew that they had to be legally recognised by the bosses. It is this legality which has been the kiss of death to any revolutionary movement. At the same time legality has allowed the growth (and now decline) of a reformist workers' movement.

Unions love the law, they will bend over backwards to ensure their members obey it. Increased anti-union laws, se- 

Left-wing leadership

"We need left-wing leadership." The history of the labour movement as related with sincere socialists who, once in power, have turned out to be just as bad, if not worse, than the rightists. These leftists have tried not to compromise their ideals or achieve nothing for the workers. One-time idealists are accused of 'selling-out', but in truth, can it really be any other way? After all, what has a union leader got in common with a shop floor worker? To the worker, the union bureaucrat is pretty indistinguishable from the boss. In fact, many union leaders see themselves as being part of the same clique as the bosses. For workers, any meaningful chance for real change has to come from below. Real workers' power lies in our own hands.

A way forward

One positive step would be the creation of a strong rank and file movement. In the past, such movements tended to put pressure on union leaders, democratise the unions, create left-wing unions or have been vehicles for getting rank and file workers into positions of power. Such tactics have always led to stagnation and betrayal.
Letter in reply from Dave Douglas

DEAR COMRADES.

Just a line to say how utterly bad [name] correctly characterised your "What's to be Done about the Union?" leaflet. Actually describing yourself as an anti-trade union certainly puts you in the same camp as the Tories and big business.

To be anti-union is simply anti-working class in this and many other sectors of the economy.

You could have no credibility among workers in any workplace I know with an anti-union position.

In fact you'd just be regarded as a strike breaker, a scab or a 'non' which is a scar waiting to happen.

Look around you — 100,000 workers on strike at one time — all at one time — unions are combat organisations, albeit often deformed, betrayed or distorted by bureaucracy but it is within unions that people as work fight to take up the cudgel with the boss.

I refer you to my extended examples of this in the current edition of The Haymarket Staff, "Charge of the Left Brigade".

I'm afraid comrades, your enthusiasm to be radical and "join it all" has carried you over the class line at least as far as this pathetic leaflet is concerned.

I suggest you urgently and thoroughly rethink your positions:

a) Where is the Class?

b) How does it fight when it fights?

c) Where do we stand while that fight is ongoing?

Obvious you believe the answer to it all is outside telling the workers how "you've got it all wrong again".

We are such imitations.

Revolutionary greetings.

Dave Douglas
National Union of Mineworkers
Bloody Proud of It.

EDITORIAL REPLY: Hardly surprising to receive such a letter from you, Dave. In an anarchist circle you put yourself over as the fainthearted worker whose job and the worker. When in fact you are heavily implicated in the NUM structure as a full-time official (vice-chair of South Yorkshire NUM panel) and have your own column in the Daily Worker newspaper of the fiercely vanguardist Communist Party of Great Britain. Here you talk about the "self-serving slogans" of various Trotskyist groups which keep them on the fringes of most workers' perceptions. Perhaps you should read this to the PCGB.

Isn't being a full-time union official and a supporter of a Trotskyist organisation in contradiction to being a member of Class War?

Anyway to get to the point. First the hysterical and abusive language you employ. To call someone a scab or strikebreaker is a very serious charge. No one in the ACF has ever been guilty of this. We have enthusiastically supported all workplace struggles.

Many of us did active solidarity work in the last miners' strike, some of us in the previous two. We also actively worked in solidarity action for P&O and Silent Night strikers, the Wapping Printworkers, the list is long. This shows your mean

Organise! No. 29 Jan-Mar 1993

Sabotage

No, you're wrong. Many workers are on different levels aware that the unions are incapable of defending their interests.

The history of class struggle in the car factories points to this.

Just look at the declining membership of the unions. Workers aren't leaving or failing to join the unions because they lack class consciousness. They see clearly that it is a waste of time and money putting an organisation that does not defend their interests.

On the underground, on the rail, in the docks, the unions have worked consistently to sabotage any action by workers organising themselves. In the recent wave of strikes in Greece and Germany, the unions successfully stymied independent workers action.

In Italy (see elsewhere in this issue) the working class moved outside and against the unions. In the next wave of class struggle throughout the world, workers will increasingly move outside the unions, creating new forms of organisation.

This will be the reality. Those people still in love with the unions will either have to re-think, or be left in the dust.

'Thanks to Trotsky' for info on Dave Douglas
The trade union bureaucracy

by Lebohang Matete

There are many kinds of trade unions. They change all the time. Their nature is determined by the conditions in which they operate. Those that develop in revolutionary situations tend to be very radical, and in conditions of downturn tend to become conservative.

The relative strength of the external and internal forces bearing upon the union shifts and fluctuates. In certain periods the pressure from below is of overriding effect; in others the pressure from the capitalists and the state predominates.

This is true in South Africa, in which the trade union movement was more radical about eight years ago than it is today. Today we see the fight for socialism, which was prominent in the middle eighties, being pushed back by notions of reconstructing the capitalist economy.

Role of unions

This is because trade unions exist within the capitalist system. Their task is to defend workers’ interests within the system. The union exists to improve the terms on which workers are exploited, not to put an end to the system.

Unions tend to unite workers into distinct groups and keep each group apart from one another. Unions themselves are divided, even when different workers are under one umbrella union.

For example, there is no way in which the same negotiations with employers can cover miners and teachers. Hence there is no place for miners in a teachers’ union, or vice-versa.

Why bureaucracy?

The emergence of the trade union bureaucracy is rooted in the narrow economistic and sectional nature of the unions. Because of the unevenness of struggles in the working class, the union bureaucracy plays a role in mediating between capital and labour.

An important reason for this is that trade union struggles are, by their very nature, partial struggles waged within capitalism. This means that, at the end of the day, some agreement must be reached between labour and capital.

A division of labour emerges between the mass of workers and those (the bureaucracy) who spend their time bargaining with employers. Their role reinforces them as authority figures within the union movement.

They are increasingly removed from the people they represent on the factory floor, and from the immediate conflicts with management, into the environment of an office.

Their wage ceases to depend on the ups and downs of capitalist production. They are not involved in working overtime nor are they vulnerable to short time or retrenchments. Because of this, they develop an interest in maintaining the organisation for its own sake, rather than seeing organisation as a tool for enhancing the class’s ability to struggle.

This means that lengthy strikes begin to threaten the financial and organisational stability on which the union bureaucrat survives. As a result, they come to see negotiations, compromises, and the reconciliation between capital and labour as the very stuff of trade unionism.

Mediator

The trade union bureaucracy presents two faces. It balances between the employers and workers.

At points, it holds back and controls workers’ struggle. But at the same time it has a vital interest not to push the collaboration with the employers to a point where it makes the union completely impotent. The bureaucracy has to make sure that it does not stray too far into the bourgeoisie’s camp, because otherwise they will lose their base.

They will also have to check workers who are active and rebellious by relying on those who are more passive. They hate pressure from both the workers and from the employer who doesn’t recognise the union. Their interest is to keep the union going.

The bureaucracy is not homogeneous. Union officials are not the same, they are divided between left and right. But at the end of the day, all bureaucrats belong to a conservative social stratum.

At times of revolutionary social crisis, these bureaucrats, whether from right or left, generally seek to curb and control workers’ militancy. The divisions between them are rendered secondary.

Challenge

It may be difficult to push the bureaucracy into action through pressure from below. This challenge is, however, essential. Trade unions are important organisations for uniting workers to fight collectively.

But they embrace workers with different sorts of ideas. And the masses will only become consciously revolutionary at times of revolution. The task of the revolutionary is to work within workers’ organisations, including trade unions, and to try to influence the course of struggles.

At the same time, revolutionaries must maintain their organisational independence, especially from the union bureaucracy. It is only this independent and revolutionary organisation, which must be rooted in other workers’ organisations, that can put an end to bureaucracy and capitalism once and for all.

Deals with the bosses start to replace struggle on the ground
THE NATURE OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

2.1 From their early beginnings back in the 1880s one thing is very clear - for a worker to join a trade union means having to recognise, in some degree, that he or she has different interests from the boss. There is no way to explain the survival of the unions other than the reality that there are different class interests, and workers have understood that to promote their own interests they have to organise on class lines. No amount of conservatism, bureaucracy or backwardness within the unions can obliterate this essential fact. The very existence of the unions testifies to the existence of some level of basic class consciousness.

2.2 Trade unions are not revolutionary organisations. They were formed to defend and improve the lot of workers under capitalism. Trade union struggle is an absolute necessity. In the course of these struggles workers begin to see their potential power, they can be radicalised and can be brought into the revolutionary movement.

2.3 After all, what is anarchism? When we get down to basics, it is workers collectively running a free society. Instead of taking orders from the boss and serving his/her mad rush for profit at any cost, it is about working together for the common good. This doesn't mean that strikers set out with clear anarchist goals in mind. They don't. But collective action is the only way to win a strike - so the logic of the workers' position: collective action in production, collective action in struggle; takes us in an anarchist direction. And once in struggle peoples' ideas can change. They gain confidence, a sense of their ability to take control of their own lives. This is why many workers who go on strike with faith in the "impartiality" of the police or with sexist ideas (to give but two examples) can find these ideas challenged by their experience in struggle. That is why we in the WSM get involved in workers' struggles, though it is not the only reason - we also act from a position of solidarity with other members of our class. It is in struggle that large numbers of people can be won to anarchist politics. As our forerunners in the First International said "the emancipation of the working class can only be brought about by the working class themselves".

2.4 Central to our politics is the position that the working class will lead the fight for anarchism. It is only the self-activity of masses of workers that is capable of mounting, an effective challenge to the bosses and their state. The trade union movement is the most important mass movement the working class has built and no matter how progressive or reactionary the attitudes of its members, no matter how conservative they can become, it does not alter the fact that they are the most important mass organisations of the working class. For the WSM, as anarchists, activity within them is our most urgent ongoing activity.

THE BUREAUCRACY

3.1 The unions are dominated by a bureaucracy, a collection of (usually elected) full-time officials who have too much power and undue influence. They are not responsible to the membership except in the most formal way, not in any real sense. They may take the side of their members but the point is that they do not have to.

3.2 These people do not usually lead strikes but sometimes will, when employers are refusing to negotiate or the negotiation procedures are being threatened. Most of the time, however, they will go in almost any length in order to cobble together a deal - any deal, rather than opt for industrial action.

3.3 These people are not nasty individuals. They behave as they do because they have too much power and are unaccountable, in any real way, to their members. Power corrupts, no matter who you are. This behaviour is inevitable, no matter how radical or left-wing they are at the beginning, their role sticks them into the business of conciliation. Furthermore they have to be able to control their members - which usually means stopping them fighting the bosses - if they are to have anything to bargain with at the negotiation table. This may sound odd but the point is that the union official has to sell the employer labour discipline and freedom from unofficial strikes as part of the bargain.

3.5 It is self-evident that the more power, initiative and control that lies with the bureaucracy - the less it will lie with the rank & file membership on the shopfloor.

3.6 As a whole, the bureaucracy swings between the position of mediator and that of open defender of the status quo. But as a grouping they can not go over completely to defending the bosses' interests, to some degree they have to respond to their members' demands because they are working in workers' organisations. Likewise they cannot be totally responsive to their members' demands as that would see the end of their role, power and careers. There are individual exceptions to this but, as a collective grouping, this remains the case.

3.7 This bureaucracy, not just because of the individuals in it but because of its objective position in relation to the membership, has to be opposed to workers' self-activity on most occasions. It is, by its nature, authoritarian.
UNIONS AND REVOLUTION

11.1 Trade unions will not become revolutionary organisations, they were never set up to be that. However from within trade union struggle will arise the embryo of the workers' councils of the future. The early beginnings of this are seen wherever workers create their own rank & file organisation (without mediation of "all-knowing" leaders) to pursue their class interests.

11.2 Towards this end we push as hard as we can for independence from the control of the bureaucracy.

11.3 The role of the WSM within these struggles is to unify the different sectional struggles into an awareness of the overall struggle between the classes; to act as a "collective memory" for the movement (i.e. able to explain the lessons of past struggles); to take on the politics of reformism and revisionism within the movement; to explain and popularise the anarchist communist idea. Essentially our role is that of a "leadership of ideas" as opposed to a leadership of elitist individuals.
Socialism and Anarcho-Syndicalism in France

Modern Anarcho-Syndicalism is a direct continuation of those social aspirations which took shape in the bosom of the First International and which were best understood and most strongly held by the libertarian wing of the great worker's alliance. Its development was a direct reaction against the concepts and methods of political Socialism, a reaction which in the decade before the first world war had already manifested itself in the strong upsurge of the syndicalist labor movement in France, Italy and especially Spain, where the great majority of the organized workers had always remained faithful to the doctrines of the libertarian wing of the International.

It was in France that the opposition against the ideas and methods of the modern labor parties found a clear expression in the theories and tactics of revolutionary Syndicalism. The immediate cause for the development of these new tendencies in the French labor movement was the continual split of the various socialist parties in France. All these parties, with the exception of the Allemanists, which later gave up parliamentary activities com-
completely, saw in the trade unions merely recruiting schools for their political objectives and had no understanding for their real functions. The constant dissensions among the various socialist factions was naturally carried over into the labor unions, and it happened quite frequently that when the unions of one faction went on strike the unions of the other factions walked in on them as strike breakers. This untenable situation gradually opened the eyes of the workers. So the trade union congress in Nantes (1894) charged a special committee with the task of devising means for bringing about an understanding among all the trade union alliances. The result was the founding in the following year of the Confédération Générale du Travail at the congress in Limoges, which declared itself independent of all political parties. From then on there existed in France only two large trade union groups, the C.G.T. and the Fédération des Bourses du Travail, and in 1902, at the congress of the Montpellier the latter joined the C.G.T.

One often encounters the widely disseminated opinion, which was fostered by Werner Sombart in particular, that revolutionary Syndicalism in France owes its origin to intellectuals like G. Sorel, E. Berth and H. Lagardelle, who in the periodical Le Mouvement socialiste, founded in 1899, elaborated in their way the intellectual results of the new movement. This is utterly false. None of these men belonged to the movement, nor had they any appreciable influence on its internal development. Moreover, the C.G.T. was not composed exclusively of revolutionary syndicates; certainly half of its members were of reformist tendency and had joined the C.G.T. because even they recognized that the dependence of the trade unions on political parties was a misfortune for the movement. But the revolutionary wing, which had had the most energetic and active elements of organized labor on its side as well as the most brilliant intellectual forces in the organization, gave the C.G.T. its characteristic stamp, and it was they who determined the development of the ideas of revolutionary Syndicalism. Many of them came from the Allemannists, but even more from the ranks of the Anarchists, like Fernand Pelloutier, the highly intelligent secretary of the Federation of the Labor Exchanges, Emile Pouget, the editor of the official organ of the C.G.T. La Voix du Peuple, P. Delesalle, G. Yvetot and many others. It was mainly under the influence of the radical wing of the C.G.T. that the new movement developed and found its expression in the Charter of Amiens (1906), in which the principles and methods of the movement were laid down.

This new movement in France found a strong echo among the Latin workers and penetrated also into other countries. The influence of French Syndicalism at that time on larger and smaller sections of the international labor movement was strengthened in great degree by the internal crisis which at that period infected nearly all the socialist labor parties in Europe. The battle between the so-called Revisionists and the rigid Marxists, and particularly the fact that their very parliamentary activities forced the most violent opponents of the Revisionists of natural necessity to travel along the path of Revisionism, caused many of the more thoughtful elements to reflect seriously. They realized that participation in the politics of the nationalist states had not brought the labor movement an hair-breadth nearer to socialism, but had helped greatly to destroy the belief in the necessity of constructive socialist activity, and, worst of all, had robbed the people of their initiative by giving them the ruinous delusion that salvation always comes from above.

Under these circumstances Socialism steadily lost its character of a cultural ideal, which was to prepare the workers for the dissolution of the present capitalist system and, therefore could not let itself be halted by the artificial frontiers of the national states. In the mind of the leaders of the modern labor parties the alleged aims of their movement were more and more blended with the interests of the national state, until at last they became unable to distinguish any definite boundary whatever between them. It would be a mistake to find in this strange about-face an intentional betrayal by the leaders, as has so often been asserted. The truth is that we have to do here with a gradual assimilation to the modes
and thoughts of the present society which necessarily had to affect the intellectual attitude of the leaders of the various labor parties in every country. Those very parties which had once set out to conquer political power under the flag of Socialism saw themselves compelled by the iron logic of conditions to sacrifice their socialist convictions bit by bit to the national policies of the state. The political power which they had wanted to conquer had gradually conquered their Socialism until there was scarcely anything left but the name.

The Role of the Trade Unions—Anarcho-Syndicalist View

These were the considerations which led to the development of revolutionary Syndicalism or, as it was later called, Anarcho-Syndicalism in France and other countries. The term worker’s syndicate meant at first merely an organization of producers for the immediate betterment of their economic and social status. But the rise of revolutionary Syndicalism gave this original meaning a much wider and deeper import. Just as the party is, so to speak, a unified organization with definite political effort within the modern constitutional state which seeks to maintain the present order of society in one form or another, so, according to the Syndicalist’s view, the trade unions are the unified organization of labor and have for their purpose the defense of the producers within the existing society and the preparing for and practical carrying out of the reconstruction of social life in the direction of Socialism. They have, therefore, a double purpose: 1. To enforce the demands of the producers for the safeguarding and raising of their standard of living; 2. To acquaint the workers with the technical management of production and economic life in general and prepare them to take the socio-economic organism into their own hands and shape it according to socialist principles.

Anarcho-Syndicalists are of the opinion that political parties are not fitted to perform either of these two tasks. According to their conceptions the trade union has to be the spearhead of the labor movement, toughened by daily combats and permeated by a socialist spirit. Only in the realm of economy are the workers able to display their full strength, for it is their activity as producers which holds together the whole social structure and guarantees the existence of society. Only as a producer and creator of social wealth does the worker become aware of his strength. In solidary union with his followers he creates the great phalanx of militant labor, aflame with the spirit of freedom and animated by the ideal of social justice. For the Anarcho-Syndicalists the labor syndicates are the most fruitful gems of a future society, the elementary school of Socialism in general. Every new social structure creates organs for itself in the body of the old organism; without this prerequisite every social evolution is unthinkable. To them Socialist education does not mean participation in the power policy of the national state, but the effort to make clear to the workers the intrinsic connections among social problems by technical instruction and the development of their administrative capacities, to prepare them for their role of re-shapers of economic life and give them the moral assurance required for the performance of their task. No social body is better fitted for this purpose than the economic fighting organization of the workers; it gives a definite direction to their social activities and strengthens their resistance in the immediate struggle for the necessities of life and the defense of their human rights. At the same time it develops their ethical concepts without which any social transformation is impossible: vital solidarity with their fellows in destiny and moral responsibility for their actions.

Just because the educational work of Anarcho-Syndicalists is directed toward the development of independent thought and action, they are outspoken opponents of all centralizing tendencies which are so characteristic of most of the present labor parties. Centralism, that artificial scheme which operates from the top towards the bottom and turns over the affairs of administration to a small minority, is always attended by barren official routine; it crushes individual conviction, kills all personal initiative by lifeless discipline and bureaucratic ossification. For the state, centralism is the appropriate form of organization, since it aims at the
greatest possible uniformity of social life for the maintenance of political and social equilibrium. But for a movement whose very existence depends on prompt action at any favorable moment and on the independent thought of its supporters, centralism is a curse which weakens its power of decision and systematically represses every spontaneous initiative.

The organization of Anarch-Syndicalism is based on the principles of Federalism, on free combination from below upward, putting the right of self-determination of every union above everything else and recognizing only the organic agreement of all on the basis of like interests and common conviction. Their organization is accordingly constructed on the following basis: The workers in each locality join the unions of their respective trades. The trade unions of a city or a rural district combine in Labor Chambers which constitute the centers for local propaganda and education and weld the workers together as producers to prevent the rise of any narrow minded factional spirit. In times of local labor troubles they arrange for the united co-operation of the whole body of locally organized labor. All the Labor Chambers are grouped according to districts and regions to form the National Federation of Labor Chambers, which maintains the permanent connection among the local bodies, arranges free adjustment of the productive labor of the members of the various organizations on co-operative lines, provides for the necessary coordination in the work of education and supports the local groups with council and guidance.

Every trade union is, moreover, federatively allied with all the organizations of the same industry, and these in turn with all related trades, so that all are combined in general industrial and agricultural alliances. It is their task to meet the demands of the daily struggles between capital and labor and to combine all the forces of the movement for common action where the necessity arises. Thus the Federation of the Labor Chambers and the Federation of the Industrial Alliances constitute the two poles about which the whole life of the labor syndicates revolves.

Such a form of organization not only gives the workers every opportunity for direct action in the struggle for their daily bread, but it also provides them with the necessary preliminaries for the reorganization of society, their own strength, and without alien intervention in case of a revolutionary crisis. Anarcho-Syndicalists are convinced that a socialist economic order cannot be created by the decrees and statutes of any government, but only by the unqualified collaboration of the workers, technicians and peasants to carry on production and distribution by their own administration in the interest of the community and on the basis of mutual agreements. In such a situation the Labor Chambers would take over the administration of existing social capital in each community, determine the needs of the inhabitants of their districts and organize local consumption. Through the agency of the Federation of Labor Chambers it would be possible to calculate the total requirements of the whole country and adjust the work of production accordingly. On the other hand it would be the task of the Industrial and Agricultural Alliances to take control of all the instruments of production, transportation, etc. and provide the separate producing groups with what they need. In a word: 1. Organization of the total production of the country by the Federation of the Industrial Alliances and direction of work by labor councils elected by the workers themselves; 2. Organization of social contribution by the Federation of the Labor Chambers.

In this respect, also, practical experience has given the best instruction. It has shown that the many problems of a socialist reconstruction of society cannot be solved by any government, even when the famous dictatorship of the proletariat is meant. In Russia the Bolshevist dictatorship stood helpless for almost two years before the economic problems and tried to hide its incapacity behind a flood of decrees and ordinances most of which were buried at once in the various bureaus. If the world could be set free by decrees, there would long ago have been no problems left in Russia. In its fanatical zeal for power, Bolshevism has violently destroyed the most valuable organs of a socialist
order, by suppressing the Co-operative Societies, bringing the trade unions under state control, and depriving the Soviets of their independence almost from the beginning. So the dictatorship of the proletariat paved the way not for a socialist society but for the most primitive type of bureaucratic state capitalism and a reversion to political absolutism which was long ago abolished in most countries by bourgeois revolutions. In his Message to the Workers of the West European Countries Kropotkin said, rightfully: “Russia has shown us the way in which Socialism cannot be realized, although the people, nauseated with the old regime, expressed no active resistance to the experiments of the new government. The idea of workers’ councils for the control of the political and economic life of the country is, in itself, of extraordinary importance... but so long as the country is dominated by the dictatorship of a party, the workers’ and peasants’ councils naturally lose their significance. They are hereby degraded to the same passive rôle which the representatives of the Estates used to play in the time of the absolute Monarchy.”
TRADE UNIONISM is an association of workers for the betterment of their conditions. While its pressures for wages and job security cause it to form political alliances, these differ from country to country. In the USA union leaders tend to make deals with the capitalists, often for the immediate cash and security advantages of their members, sometimes for the leadership; in this country, union leaders have formed the Labour Party, are less inclined to deal with capitalism, or nationalism.

ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM, which does not differ from country to country except in the degree to which workers find it applicable to their immediate needs and interests, is concerned with the taking over of industry by the workers, and therefore superceding any political alliance; it does seek, by direct action, to improve pay and job security, but its main aim is revolutionary change and workers control.

TRADE UNIONISM tends to become a division of the working class separating employed from unemployed/unwaged, and creating job categories to which one is very often bound for life. It is sometimes, in the English system certainly, impossible to get a job unless you have a union card and impossible to get a union card unless you have a job.

ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM is based on the unity of all the workers in the region, grouping all — employed, unwaged, unemployed or self-employed (such as home minders), in the local workers centre, and sorting out what jobs are available and providing entry regardless of 'category'.

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TRADE UNIONISM in many countries looks to a closed shop to defend the workers interests, which — while it means on the one hand the union can obtain limited reforms or increases for all — also means that the union is dependent, more on parliamentary action than industrial action, and that the leadership becomes all-powerful since once it exerts its right to expel a member, that person is out not only of the union, but out of a job.

ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM rejects the closed shop and relies on voluntary membership, and so avoids any leadership or bureaucracy. One or two paid officials suffice for a membership of thousands, and sometimes even that much is considered unnecessary.

TRADE UNIONISM is generally for State intervention, unless it is (as in the USA or West Germany) entirely sold on private enterprise. Its highest aim is to influence or control the State.

ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM fights private enterprise and State control alike. Its aim is to abolish the State, its lowest aim is to circumvent it.

On the whole workers prefer Trade Unionism when it is delivering the goods in the form of cash payments and job security; and so long as they can criticise its shortcomings, they fatally accept that its leadership is fairly immovable and inevitably bound to considerations other than the welfare of their members.

The workers prefer Anarchosyndicalism when they need a tough union, and when they are imbued with libertarian ideas as against accepting authoritarian ideas or taking their ideas from the media.
Professor Felix's Brief History of Anarchism

Part 4: ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

THE LUMBERMEN'S MOVEMENT

1900 - 1940

Few people are aware of the size and impact of the lumbermen's movement which was so widespread in North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These workers sought the benefit of the trees, the forests, and the lumbering industry, but were denied the fruits of their labor. They turned to ideas of collectivism which offered the ideal of social organization for the benefit of the workers, and the conditions of work. In Canada, they formed a militant opposition within the lumbering industry, demanding better working conditions and higher wages. In the United States, the movement was even more radical, as the lumbermen fought for the right to organize and strike for better working conditions. The lumbermen's movement was a significant factor in the development of the labor movement in North America.

The statistics for the lumbermen's movement are as follows:

- **Argentina**: 50,000
- **Canada**: 100,000
- **Mexico**: 50,000
- **United States**: 200,000

The lumbermen's movement was a significant factor in the development of the labor movement in North America, and its influence can still be seen today in the struggle for better working conditions and workers' rights.
few thousand working-class unionists, unions and radical organisations within business unions. The false duality of the 1920s was a myth. Most of these groups were further, leading only the Socialist and some from sympathetic organisations as the only functioning bodies in the 1930s. The major hostility towards the class-unionists was not to their political affiliations, but to the class-unionists was too narrow for the broad and diverse nature of the working class. The unions would look to the working class, not to the class-unionists, for the leadership of the industrial movement. The class-unionists would be federated into one group which would represent the entire working class.

The syndicalists set about organising a new level of activity. The culmination of this organisation was the formation of the One Big Union. The One Big Union was to be the banner union of the Federation and the nucleus of the industrial movement.

In conclusion, the libertarian workers movement was a form of socialist utopia, not through 'societal', but through the intervention of the syndicalist movement. The syndicalists and their unions played a significant part in the industrial movement. The One Big Union was a symbol of the syndicalist movement, but not able to eliminate the class.

This document provides information on the history of the libertarian workers movement, including the formation of the One Big Union and the syndicalist movement in Australia.

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DECLARATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF REVOLUTIONARY SYNDICALISM


1. Revolutionary syndicalism is the movement of the working classes founded on the basis of class war, which serves for the union of manual and intellectual workers in economic fighting organizations, in order to prepare for and realize their liberation from the yoke of wage-slavery and state oppression. Its goal is the reorganization of the whole of social life on the basis of free communism through the collective revolutionary action of the working classes themselves. It takes the view that only the economic organizations of the proletariat are appropriate for the realization of this task and turns to the workers in their capacity as producers and generators of social value, in opposition to the modern political labour parties, which for conservative economic purposes do not come into consideration.

2. Revolutionary syndicalism is the unqualified opponent of all economic and social monopolies, and strives for their elimination by means of economic and administrative organs of industrial and field workers on the basis of a free council system, which is subordinate to no political power or party. Against the policies of states and parties it sets the economic organization of labour, against the governments of states, the administrations of things. For this reason it does not appeal to the conquest of political power, but the elimination of every state function from the life of society. It is of the opinion that together with the monopoly of property, the monopoly of power must also vanish, and that the state in every form, even in the form of so-called 'Diktatschaft of the Precariat', can never be an instrument for the liberation of labour, but always only the creator of new monopolies and new privileges.

3. The task of revolutionary syndicalism is two-fold: the one hand, it introduces the daily revolutionary struggle for the material, intellectual and moral improvement of the workers within the present social order; on the other, its principal goal is to prepare the masses for the independent administration of production and for the division and takeover of all sectors of social life. It is its conviction that the organization of an economic order, which is founded in no unsure of the producers, cannot be regulated by government resolutions and state decrees, but only by an alliance of all manual and intellectual workers in each separate branch of production, through the assumption of the administration of every individual operation by the producers themselves, specifically in the form that the individual groups, workshops and production operations, are autonomous members of the universal economic organization that mechanistically shapes the whole of production and general distribution on the basis of reciprocal agreements and in the interest of the general public.

4. Revolutionary syndicalism is the adversary of all centralizing tendencies and organizations, which are borrowed from the state and the church, and which systematically serve independent interests and individual goals. General Strike is the artificial organization from the top down, which transfers as a whole the repression of the affairs of all to a few individuals. By this means the individual becomes a puppet and controlled from above. The growth of the general public must cut the field for the benefit of a few individuals, variety for uniformity, personal responsibility for lines of discipline, discipline for training. For this reason revolutionary syndicalism stands upon the basis of federalism, that is, upon an organization structured from the bottom up of the voluntary federation of all free citizens on the foundation of mutual interests and common convictions.

5. Revolutionary syndicalism repudiates all paramilitary activity and all collaboration in legislative bodies. Not even the most possible foreign can secure a group of representatives in modern society, the representative system has as its sole purpose to lend the appearance of legality to the rule of the rich and of social injustice, and to induce the slaves to impair the seal of the law upon their own slavery.

6. Revolutionary syndicalism repudiates all arbitrary drawn political and national boundaries and sees in insurrection in the interest of the oppressed classes. It represents only natural regional differences and demands for every minority the right to be able to regulate its own affairs in peace agreements with all other economic, regional, or national associations.

7. On the same grounds revolutionary syndicalism opposes militarism in every form and considers anti-militia prepositions to be one of the most important tasks of the struggle against the existing system. Persuading that new are above all the refusal of the individual to participate in the military service of the state, and especially the organ of refusal by workers to produce military equipment.

8. Revolutionary syndicalism stands upon the basis of direct action and supports all struggles of the people which are not in conflict with its goal of the abolition of economic monopolies and the demilitarization of the state. It repudiates the strike, boycott, sabotage, and so on, as weapons. Direct action finds its highest expression in the social general strike, which syndicalism sees simultaneously as the prelude to the social revolutions.

9. Although syndicalism are the enemies of all organized violence in the hands of any revolutionary governments, they do not fail to recognize that the struggle against the capitalism present and free communism will not occur without conflict. They accordingly recognize violence as a means of defense against the violent methods of the ruling classes in the struggle for the possession of the State and the fields by the revolutionary people. Just as the representatives of the workers and the land must in practice be elected and corrected on the pain of violent recognition by the revolutionary economic organizations of the workers, so also the defense of these revolution has encouraged us to the masses themselves and their economic organizations, and not left to any other organization, that stands outside the economic associations.

10. Only in the revolutionary economic organizations of the working class lies the means for the liberation, and the mature energy for the realization of a society in the direction of free communism.
SYNDICALISM

5.1 Syndicalism, and especially anarchosyndicalism, has been an important current in many countries - particularly in Southern Europe and Latin America. Its basic ideas revolve around organizing all workers into the "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 their 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 their unions is such that it takes the initiative away from the rank & file. Their alternative is to organise all workers into the "one big union" in preparation for the revolutionary general strike. They 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.

5.2 Syndicalism does not create a revolutionary political organisation. It creates industrial unions. It is a-political, arguing that all that is necessary to make the revolution is for the 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.

5.3 Because 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 tendency always appeared that were reformist.

5.4 Syndicalists are quite correct to emphasise the centrality of organising workers in the workplace. Critics who reject syndicalism on the grounds that allegedly it cannot organise those outside the workplace are wrong. Taking the example of anarchosyndicalism 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, the ‘Mujeres Libres’ (Free Women), and the neighbourhood organisations.

5.5 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 anarchosyndicalist organisation and achievement. Because of their apoliticalism 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), and 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, was 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).

5.6 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 die of asphyxiation". History teaches us different. In a situation of dual power it is very necessary to smash the state.

5.7 In contrast to this the Friends of Durruti were clear that "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. A-political 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".

5.8 The syndicalist movement, organised in the International Workers Association and outside it, 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, they are doomed to repeat it (should they get a chance).

5.9 We recognise that the syndicalist unions, where they still exist, are far more progressive than any other union. But the anarchist-communist organisation will organise within its ranks and everywhere else workers are organised. We will not liquidate our specific politics and organisation into the apoliticalism of syndicalism.
Thinking about Anarchism

Anarchist Organisation

Anarchist Organisation

The lessons of the Russian anarchist movement, its failure to build a presence within the working class movement big enough and effective enough to counteract the tendency of the Bolsheviks and other political groups to subsume themselves within the working class.

The Platform states for example that it is ludicrous to have an organisation which contains groups that have mutually antagonistic and contradictory definitions of anarchism. It also says that we need formal agreement covering written policies, the role of officers, the need for membership dues and so on; the sort of structures that allow for effective and at the same time large democratic organisation. And it says that we must have fully worked out and agreed policies that we can argue for as an organisation. We need to become a "leaderless of ideas".

These views are in contrast to the anarchist-syndicalist view which is that all that is needed is one massive revolution. The problem with that view is that people with widely differing views are in the union and so when a crucial decision comes up there will be a split at least conclusion as to what way to go.

The best example of this is the action of the National Confederation of Workers (CNT) in the Spanish revolution who, while supporting the revolution of the working class Spain had no plan of what to do. They ended up fighting against the military instead of pushing the state, and they did not have any worked out policy of how the workers could defend themselves from the backstabbing attacks of the Bolsheviks directed by Stalin.

We should keep in mind that the basic outline of the Platform is "Platformism" organisation.

Anarchist Organisation

education and development of all members must be encouraged. People must develop the confidence to speak at public meetings. The ability to question someone else’s ideas only comes if you know enough about the subject being talked about.

Books must be circulated and read, a library of left wing newspapers, articles and policies written by all. On the more physical side, all must be willing to do their fair share of the dusty work. Participating in meetings, preparing and distributing leaflets and picketing. The day to day running of the organisation will be done by the whole organisation; branch meetings must be attended, membership dues paid, etc.

The best way to avoid an internal elite is to get everyone stuck in and knowing what is going on. The situation where some people do the "intellectual" stuff like writing articles and others do the "manual" stuff like giving out leaflets and yet another one burns out and don’t do anything, must never be allowed. If that does happen it can be fought so that the organisation is wrong, politically, with an organisation.

As anarchists we do not believe that we are the PARITY with the TRUTH. We are quite happy to work with other anarchist groups as long as there is a basic level of agreement. So in the "organisation" of anarchists we expect that there would be many ideas, groups and factions, the only condition necessary would be to agree on the aims and policies of the organisation. Factions would have to support the major position but would have their own internal bulletin and the organisations journals to argue their ideas.

The ALTERNATIVES:

No.1 - PARLIAMENT

No other political groups organise in this way. Any parliamentary party is run on a hierarchical basis. The higher you are the more control you have. Real decisions are made by the elected TDs over the heads of the party. The most important decision is made by the leader of the party and a couple of cronies.

Their way of organising reflects their politics of "leave it to us all to do". They encourage people to allow the bigger questions that affect their lives to be

controlled from the USA. It has to be said that the US Congress has now opened a formal investigation against Jesse Ventura under the Speaker of the House.

This formal leadership does the "intellectual" side of the business while the majority are left to carry the paper and going to branch meetings for their weekly orders. In these organisations a leader can be a leader for life. Look at Lebron James, Skitts or Kerr Healy (English Leenstal leader) for example.

As far as education goes, most members are brought up on a diet of their own party literature which limits them to a very small discussion about other peoples ideas. Unless you are being trained for leadership there will be very little effort to develop debating or writing skills.

This ties in nicely with their elitist and cynical view of politics. Namely gaining control of the working class sometime in the future.

As anarchists we are committed to our democratic ideals. We are members of the organisation and will debate and disagree. Because we want to win the battle of ideas and fight for the control

and self-management of society by the working class. We are in an organisation because we are part of the political history, we have more "resources as an organisation", be better able to put a principled and consistent view and can combine our forces in the struggle to build an anarchist society.

If you like our ideas we want you to find out more about us, and think seriously about joining us. We encourage everybody to find out more about anarchism, its ideas and its actions.

Andrew Blackmore
IN DEFENSE OF ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM: A REPLY TO THE PLATFORMISTS

In this article we will respond to the criticisms which have been made of anarcho-syndicalism by "platformist" groups, like the Irish Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM). Obviously, a defense of anarcho-syndicalism is made difficult by the fact that there have historically been a lot of different forms of anarcho-syndicalism, meaning that it's difficult to speak with absolute certainty about the anarcho-syndicalist position on this or that issue. In any case, we do not intend to defend forms of anarcho-syndicalism which are guilty of the problems that the WSM points to. In any case, we want to argue that anarcho-syndicalism is a valid revolutionary strategy, and that the WSM's criticism is based on a large and inaccurate generalization.

(1) The argument that all that anarcho-syndicalism does is address the issue of union structure (thus ignoring the role of ideas) misrepresents anarcho-syndicalism.

There is some truth to the view that anarcho-syndicalists do look to a anarchistic union structure to infuse a spirit of revolution into organized workers. But still, at the very least, just by advocating decentralized and anti-bureaucratic structures, anarcho-syndicalism poses an implicit criticism and rejection of capitalist-state ideas (i.e., leaders, centralization, control from the top down). Secondly, the view that anarchist union structures do help workers to break from capitalism does have some basis in fact: according to JM Maura's study of Spanish unionism, the structure of the National Confederation of Workers (CNT - the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union) prevented it from hijacked from the state because of working class control over working class categories, and allowed scope for militant initiatives on the ground. (pp75-6, in Apter and Joll (eds) Anarchism Today). Rocker himself argues elsewhere that it was the fighting spirit infused by anarcho-syndicalism similar to that of working class initiatives in the Spanish Civil War that lay behind the Spanish working class's willingness to resist fascism by force of arms when it sought to seize power in 1936; he contrasts this to the willingness of German reformist socialism to let Hitler take power in Germany.

Thirdly, anarcho-syndicalists do take up the battle of ideas. For example, it is based on the argument that revolution and a free socialism can only come through unions, not parliament. This marks anarcho-syndicalism as a distinct system of distinct revolutionary ideas. By contrast the vanguardist Marxists rejected this idea by saying that workers should be guided by the Party, go beyond bread and butter issues; the parliamentary socialists were even more hostile, raising the slogan "the General Strike is general nonsense."

This leaves open the question of how these ideas will be spread amongst the working class. Critics of anarcho-syndicalism could still claim that the anarcho-syndicalists believed that different union structures would do the trick. But it is interesting to note that, on the one hand, syndicalist unions, associated with unions, who argued in favor of revolutionary unionism and for stateless socialism (i.e., a common tactical and ideological line). The French syndicalists, who originated the theory of anarcho-syndicalism, who originated the theory of anarcho-syndicalism, believed that the most revolutionary elements among the masses should be organized into definite groups called noyaux which would work inside the broad trade unions, and it was, in fact, through the noyaux that syndicalism won over the French trade unions (Pomer, The Industrial Workers of the World, pp417). On the other hand, as we have just indicated, these propaganda groups were (at least in most cases) working within non-anarchist unions, that is, to say, unions that were bureaucrat-ridden, divisive, and moderate. This was, for example, how the French syndicalists operated. They became an anarcho-syndicalist union, and was called "boring from within". In these circumstances, even something as simplistic as a change in union structure could only be instituted by first winning arguments at the level of ideas. That is to say, by arguing with workers that unions could and should be revolutionary forms of workers power, and should be anti-hierarchical to boot. Such debates could only be resolved by winning a majority of workers into the unions to the ideas of anarcho-syndicalism. Even if the need for structural change was put forward, it would in all likelihood be tied with the ideas of anti-parliamentarism, free socialism etc. Where unions did become anarcho-syndicalist, this was reflected in their structure, this is true, but also in the ideas represented in the union constitution. The Principles of Revolutionary Syndicalism (IWA), representing the views of international anarcho-syndicalism, clearly show that anarcho-syndicalist ideas (i.e., the ideas that they sought to win), had more to them than the need for anti-bureaucratic structure and the like.

At this point its worth returning to the ideas of the Platform. This argues that anarchists, organized in groups with clear principles, must make anarchism into the most popular idea in the working class. A later Platformist pamphlet, The Manifesto of Libertarian Communism states that this will be achieved in two ways: firstly, direct propaganda (meaning magazines, campaigns, public meetings etc.), and secondly, work in existing trade unions. Again, anarcho-syndicalists argue that work in a union winning the leadership to anarchism would leave you with a revolutionary trade union and a decentralized structure. And isn't this exactly what anarcho-syndicalism is? To look at this issue from another angle: if anarcho-syndicalists take up the battle of ideas, and attempt to win the leadership of the anarchist idea, were they not operating as Platformist/anarchist communist groups? A third point is that if Platformists are to win the leadership of ideas in the working class's mass organizations, then they should logically aim to set up anarcho-syndicalist unions, particularly where they believe that trade unions are the most important organizations of that class, and where they are opposed to bureaucracy in the unions. What we are arguing is that Platformism and anarcho-syndicalism are actually two sides of the same coin, not two opposing views as some would like to claim.

(NOTE: the issues just discussed suggest important tactical points for anarcho-syndicalists. They suggest that they should work within the existing trade unions, rather than secede to form "pure" and brand-new revolutionary unions. For if the revolutionary leaves the mass organizations and set up their own organization, they will really be setting up a Platformist group, and not an anarcho-syndicalist union. Obviously where no union exists, the anarcho-syndicalist must try to set one up and try to win her or his ideas in that union).

(2) The argument that reformist tendencies emerge in anarcho-syndicalism does not show that anarcho-syndicalist unions cannot be revolutionary.

Obviously an anarcho-syndicalist union cannot just turn away, workers that disagree with its politics, if it is to function as an organization advancing the workers in the workplace, and obviously this opens up the door to the emergence of reformist tendencies. This cannot be avoided. Yet
all this points to is the need for the active advocates of anarcho-
syndicalism to keep up the fight for the leadership of the anarchist idea,
to tackle reformism and other illusions whenever they raise their ugly
heads. Obviously this can only take place at the level of ideas (not, for
example, central ideological committees which would impose its ideas on members). It does not mean that reformist tendencies
are unstoppable; it only points to the need for the anarcho-
syndicalist propaganda group (or, if you prefer, the Platformist organization) to continue to be an active force in the life of the revolutionary union.
The need to combat reformism was historically recognized by anarcho-
syndicalist militants: for example, the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI)
was set up in Spain in 1927 "primarily to ensure the CNT's commitment to
Anarchist principles" (Bookchin, The Spanish Anarchists, p213).

As we have indicated, if these revolutionaries act in a democratic
way, and the union is also democratic, then a union that is openly
anarcho-syndicalist in policies and structure can only be one where most
members do to some extent agree with Anarchist ideas. It follows that if
reformist tendencies in the union involved more than a minority this would
surely be reflected in the union's activities, statements and structure. As such, if an anarcho-syndicalist union splits in a revolutionary
situation, the effect would not be to severe as most of the members would
stay loyal. Furthermore, if a union has an Anarchist majority "confusion"
will be unlikely to arise. Whatever decision was made would to some extent
be based on Anarchism; to call this decision "confused" (eg. the decision
of the Spanish Anarchists to ally with the government in 1936) just
because it turned out to be mistaken in some aspects, or based on an
incorrect analysis is just insulting. And, furthermore, there is no way
that these sort of mistakes can be pinned on the reformist minority.

A final point: where the union is genuinely anarchist, it can itself act
as a propaganda or Platformist group in the wider union movement and
the working class as a whole. In other words, its influence can extend way
beyond its formal members. This was a role explicitly recognized by the
French syndicalists (Thorpe, The Workers Themselves). Rocker writes
elsewhere that the CNT "controlled thirty- six daily papers, among them
Jardidad Obrera ..., the largest of any paper in Spain ... [and] has
published millions of books and pamphlets and contributed more to the
propagation of the masses than any other movement in Spain." Similarly, 5-7
million people took part in the collectivisations of land and factories in
Spain in 1936, whereas the CNT never had, many more than two million
members.

A final point on the issue of reformist tendencies. Even if a
revolutionary union is open to all, it is more than likely that it only
attract a limited number of hardline reformists. This is because there is
almost always a number of different unions organizing in any one place.
Reformist would probably find a more comfortable home in softer and more
reformist unions eg. the CNT's main rival in Spain was the UGT (General
Workers Union), a reformist socialist union. Claims that workers in
anarcho-syndicalist unions join just because these are the most militant, or the most effective unions are sometimes made, for example by the WSM, and by Richards' book, The Lessons
of the Spanish Revolution. But these writers often provide absolutely no
evidence for these claims. In any case, why should the unions always be
more effective than other unions? And why would militancy, and the
sacrifices and repercussion this brings be attractive to hardline
reformists, who could in any case find a home in moderate unions on better
terms with the boss?

(3) The argument that anarcho-syndicalist unions content themselves with
gaining land etc. but ignore the need to attack and smash the State is
definitely not true of all anarcho-syndicalist unions.
It is true that the early anarcho-syndicalists believed that all you
needed was a "General Strike" and the ruling class would surrender to the
workers demands in weeks if not days. This view is obviously ridiculous;
the ruling class has a lot more resources to sustain it than the workers,
and the State, if left alone, will quite probably do everything possible

...
Rethinking the Fall of State Communism

by Graham Purchase

Why anti-systemic "skeptics" such as me think a little more clearly about the fall of state-communism in the Russian Federation.

The rise of a wide variety of non-orthodox groups, such as the green and sexual liberation movements, and the anti-establishment question or simply ignore the potential of industrial syndicalism as a means of overthrowing capitalism, and in the process create a better social and more sustainable world.

Others, for example Murray Bookchin, regard syndicalism not only as an alternative but also as a positive threat to the realisation of a socialist-anarchism. Those who were "against" the state-communist working class no longer exist," "industrial syndicalism is unwieldy," "the factory hierarchy is intransigent," and that "the workplace can never be a forum for liberation," All of these assumptions are absolutely false. Let us examine them in turn.

The Working Class as an Expanding Anti-systemic "Skeptics" in America and Australia, observing the decline in manufacturing and heavy industry in their own countries, have universally failed to appreciate the potential of the industrial syndicalists who have moved off-shore. Capitalism rather than going into workers' caravans for higher pay and better conditions in America and Australia, has chosen to move its manufacturing and service industries to "newly industrialising" countries in South East Asia and elsewhere. In some of these countries the state-communist push to industrialise has led to mass exodus of labour in search of wages and the appalling abuse of women and child labour. The trade union movement, because of its usurpation (both by the state-communists and by state-communists alike), is no longer perceived as a force and at home when compared to the American labor-classe organisers regarded "disappears" or are given long prison sentences.

In Thailand the factory owners highlighted the absolute conditions that many people are forced to work under. Billions of people and children slave in sweat-shots in these "newly industrialising countries" and in doing so move to exploit the conditions of the "industrialised world." The capitalists tell us at home that: "labor costs are too high, the ability to provide wages and conditions to compete, and to increase employment prospects in other areas." It is this that is being used to undermine the relevance of trades-unionism at home and the idea that things are different in these unfortunate countries is used and the co-optation of our schools are assigned to take this process one step further.

Industrial syndicalism is not a "true syndicalism.

Everything that I have ever heard about syndicalism is that it is an" anti-democratic movement to gain greater autonomy and power. The" actual ruling of unions in the world is however shows evidence of an authentic anti-systemist of the fact that the syndicalist-state will go to any lengths to prevent this from happening. Developments within the social sector are also likely to be dominated by crosses and the destruction of the "ocial order." However, it is clear that the anti-systemists have only just difficulties in what was once a vital part of the socialist economy. The community as a whole must be organised and the co-operation of our schools are assigned to take this process one step further.

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lists are being inspired by a vision of a cleaner earth. The mass produc- tion of new and potentially environmentally safe processes and products multiplies with every passing day. In the coming years, we will herald the mass production of green, bio-based plastic products. These are able to break down into harmless substances in a couple of weeks. Golf tees, take away food containers and those irritating little ties on packaged leaves of bread will be the first of such products to reach the marketplace. The potential uses of starch based plastics seems endless. Experiments with both new and old agricultural products are also showing much promise. The little known guayule, a plant in the future almost certainly be used to produce a wide range of industrial oils and plastics that may replace toxic tars, resins, plastic and rubber. Its use in the production of green, bio-based plastics shows great promise.

In the future, the use of guayule may be expanded to include the production of rubber, plastics and other materials. The plant is drought-resistant and can grow in a wide range of climates, making it an attractive option for farmers and manufacturers. Its use in the production of bio-based plastics could have a significant impact on the environment and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

The idea of using guayule as a source of natural rubber has been studied for many years, and recent advances in biotechnology have made it possible to cultivate the plant in a variety of environments. The guayule plant is well-suited to arid conditions, making it an ideal choice for farmers in regions with limited access to fresh water. It is also highly productive, with some estimates suggesting that a single acre of guayule can produce over 2,000 pounds of rubber per year.

Guayule is a versatile plant that can be used in a variety of applications, from tires and other rubber products to biofuels. Its use in the manufacturing of green, bio-based plastics could have a positive impact on the environment by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and decreasing our carbon footprint. It also has the potential to provide a new economic opportunity for farmers and rural communities.

In conclusion, the use of guayule as a source of natural rubber and its potential for the production of bio-based plastics is an exciting development for the future of the rubber industry and the environment. Further research and development in this area could lead to significant advances in sustainable materials and a more resilient and environmentally friendly future.
The collapse of the Stalinist regimes of eastern Europe has been a great ideologi- cal victory for many in the trade union movement who mistakenly saw them as socialist. This, coupled with a drive to- wards marketisation in South Africa, un- derscored COSATU's leadership's increasing reformist approach.

COSATU's formal adoption of a re- construction accord, recently, which some of its leaders admit would involve com-promise on workers' interests, and the release of twenty key leaders to stand for parliament on the which the ANC, reflects the predominance of nationalism and reformists within its ranks.

**Contested**

However, the hegemony of nationalist and reformist views within COSATU are not uncontested. These views only came to the fore in the mid-1980s, as workers sought a decisive fight against the racist regime. The ANC, through the United Demo- cratic Front (UDF), was the only organi- sation to lead that fight. It was a fight grounded in rank and file militancy within COSATU.

It was a far cry from the illusion of the parliamentarians who thought that the nomination of 20 union leaders to a future parlia- ment represents.

It was workers who voted in favour of this at the recent COSATU conference. However, the rank and file continues to argue and debate alternative ways of fighting racism and ending the capitalist system. It also challenges leadership to sustain the tradition of militancy.

Formerly in November 1985, COSATU was a milestone in the history of the black working class. COSATU is an anachronism on its forefathers, SACTU in the 1950s, and FOSATU of the early 1980s.

It has been able to combine a tradition of trade union intervention in wider black struggles with the building of industrial organisation on the basis of strong shop floor structures.

COSATU's immediate forebears, FOSATU, was critical of the national liberation movement. It argued for a so- cialist alternative to the national libera- tion movement, resting on the organised working class.

However, FOSATU failed to translate this perspective into a decisive challenge against the regime. It tended to avoid open support for populist organisations, like the UDF, that were struggling against the regime.

COSATU's formation marked a posi- tive turning point. It saw the need for organised workers to engage actively in struggles against apartheid and take the lead in the struggle for liberation. The tone of the movement became one of openly confronting the regime.

**Strategic alliance**

In the pursuit of the objective of engaging workers in the fight against the regime, COSATU moved towards a strategic alli- ance with other organisations in the UDF. It was a genuinely militant alliance.

Within the first year of COSATU's formation, South Africa experienced the highest level of strike activity seen in ten years. COSATU became the leading force behind the wave of mass struggles in the late 1980s.

With a successful two day stayaway against the whites only election which brought De Klerk to office in 1989, COSATU proved to be the leading force in a defiance campaign which pushed De Klerk to release Mandela, unblack political organisations and start negotia- tions.

However, without a genuine socialist current leading the fight against the racist regime, COSATU increasingly adapted to the politics of the nationalist movement. An early sign of this was its adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1987 against strong proposals from NUMSA, for a Workers' Charter. Compromise was needed when both charters were adopted in 1989. By then, however, the nationalist current had gained ascendency.

The release of Mandela was marked by an upsurge in political and industrial militancy, including the living wage campa- gnia and a campaign against the Labour Relations Amendment Act (LRA) which sought to undermine the right to strike.

In May 1990, COSATU formalised its alliance with the ANC and the SAPC. Again, it was a strategic alliance, with each organisation retaining its independ- ency and right to campaign on other issues separately from their alliance part- ners.

COSATU's independence within the alliance is undoubtedly real. However, its leaders have tended, in public, to downplay the organisation's independence because they are themselves active members of the ANC and SAPC, sharing the overall objectives of these movements.

COSATU's leadership has become obsessed with developing a sound eco- nomic policy strategy, in the face of eco- nomic crisis and ideological confusion. It wants an economic policy which involves a radical restructuring of the economy, but without a working class challenge to the capitalist system.

As articulated by NUMSA's Geoff Schreiner and Adrienne Bird in 1992, it is assumed that restructuring would mean the piecemeal institution of "socialism" through negotiations rather than revolu- tionary seizure of power by the black working class.

Rank and file struggle has become secondary to the leadership's programme. Rather, they have made efforts to gain more say over the running of the capitalist economy, through structures such as the National Manpower Commission and the National Economic Forum.

This new perspective was put clearly by John Gomomo, then COSATU vice president, at COSATU's May 1991 eco- nomic policy conference. According to Gomomo, "We are moving from resistance to reconstruction."

Despite having pushed the govern- ment back in 1990 to back down over amendments to the LRA, COSATU's quest for restructuring the economy, through negotiations, has come to over-ride mass struggle around to day demands.

**Restructuring**

COSATU's quest to restructure state institutions has come with the idea that black workers will gain from mass re- restructuring. With the ANC and the SAPC, it has campaigned against the National Par- ty's attempts to unilaterally restructure the economy along Thatcherite policy lines such as privatisation and deregulation.

The government is, however, unwill- ing to back down on this approach. In the absence of a clear strategy of consistent mobilisation of workers as it did in the 1990s, and in order not to embarrass its alliance partners in negotiations, COSATU's challenge to national re- structuring has been extremely low key.

Rather than take up struggle, the fed- eration has sought assurances from the ANC that, after a series of elections, the ANC will commit itself to a reconstruc- tion programme intended to overcome the legacy of apartheid - involving plans for job creation, education and welfare serv- ices.

**Parliament**

It is on this basis that COSATU has re- leased twenty of its leaders to stand on the ANC ticket in elections. According to COSATU president, John Gomomo, this move is intended to ensure "that workers' rights are not taken for granted in the constitution that we are creating."

Effectively, however, there is no mechanism by which such a guarantee will be secured, because the 20 nominees would not be directly elected by the trade union federation from which they emerged. Instead, they will be account- able to the ANC and its programme.

In the short term, the nomination of trade unionists to parliament could bolster workers' illusions in parliamentary poli- tics and further undermine their confi- dence in struggle.

The presence of the twenty trade unionists poses an threat to the objective interests of the ANC and an attack on black bourgeoisie. However, it seems, many in the ANC perceive it as a threat. Hence their wavering on earlier guarantees around the twenty seats.

In the process, the COSATU leader- ship has realized that it cannot rely on the ANC or the parliament to protect and advance workers' interests.

As a clear demonstration of their in- dependence, COSATU's leadership de- clared their intention to engage workers in mass action over aspects of the interim Bill of Rights and other compromises made at negotiations.

Had the ANC not wavered on its side of the bargain with regard to the nomina- tions, it is likely that the union leaders would have overturned the urgency for struggle around the Bill of Rights.

What prompts them to declare action, how- ever, is the rank and file of the militant tradition of the eighties. Thus, in a mildly critical appraisal of the path forward, CWU shopsteward Zex Ximba said recently that, "We are facing right the practice of democracy, accountability and workers' control."

"Indeed instead of workers responding directly through industrial action, we now have a series of complicated and often confusing procedures and 'cooking-off' periods. This weakens our mili- tancy."

Workers are also increas- ingly aware of the potential limitations of the tripartite alliance would have on their struggles if it continued beyond the limited goal of ousting the racist government.

A number of COSATU affiliates, not- ably NUMSA, have argued that the alli- ance must end once the ANC is in govern- ment. Moses Mokh webi, articulating the position of workers at the NUMSA con- gress this year, explained the thinking behind this.

He referred to the eastern European regimes under Stalin "where the trade unions were merely conveyors of the government's will". He also mentioned workers' desire to maintain a "long standing tradition in NUMSA and COSATU, of pro- moting union independence from govern- ment."

In a clearly militant critique of the tripartite alliance, the South African Democ- ratic Teachers' Union, at its con- gress sponsored affiliates to COSATU.

This would be un the case that COSATU dealt with SADTU's concern that the fed- eration's alliance with the ANC might affect its independence as a union, as an employer, once it is in government.

In many countries where workers' militancy has been compromised by the reformist path of union leaders, the unions have been affected by a severe decline in their membership as workers see their wage gains being swept away through social cuts and other compromises.

COSATU's membership, however, continues to grow despite its recent ten- dency to hook back mass struggle resulting in several defeats for workers and an overall decline in wage increases.

This growth has been the result of the continuing tradition of struggle established in the 1980s. COSATU's continued growth relies on its affiliates NEWAOU and SAMWU in particular, which organise in the state sector where union mili- tancy has been continuously high since 1990.

It is such rank and file militancy that will decide the fate of workers' struggles seen in the 1980s, and ensure the strengthening of COSATU, enabling it to fight effectively in its members interests and contribute to the demise of capitalism.
World anarchists News

SPAIN

Fourteen trade union organisations sent delegates to the European meeting of ‘Alternative Unions’ to better co-ordinate their work. The 130 delegates came from unions which are either explicitly anarchist or where anarchism is the major influence. Unions that have had bureaucratisation problems accept that a revolutionary overthrow of capitalism is necessary to secure liberty and socialism.

The three day conference was hosted in Barcelona by the Spanish CTT (an anarcho-syndicalist union). The Workers Solidarity Movement sent an observer who reports: “As the delegates filed in the first day it became clear that anarchism enjoys a lot more influence within the European working class than is often acknowledged.”

This was a conference of ‘revolutionary unions’ organised by an ‘anarchist’ union. Any organisation sending delegates knew what they were supporting - anti-bureaucratic, militant, libertarian politics.

“At the first the two days gave us some new information about the struggles engaged in by the different participants and, for no apparent reason, a lot of generality that everyone could agree with. Of particular interest, however, were the speeches of the Russians. The Solidarity union was set up last year out of the co-ordination for strike committees, having broken from the Sovietsprop organisation to pursue a more libertarian path.

“Their report of a growing number of strikes as workers move against their bosses, old and new. According to them, Talian is losing support as people who considered themselves his followers find their listing standards falling rapidly. And the hopes of becoming self-employed have faded as everyone now realises that only the Stalinists and the Mafia have the money to set up so-called co-operatives. The EAS-KEC told us of the new labour legislation in the Ukraine that allows workers to be sacked for union activity, even collecting money for strikers.

“The third day they got down to work, but what sort of co-ordination between the different unions should be formed. After much discussion it decided not to elect any co-ordinators from the conference but to ask each union to appoint a delegate who will then continue to the international bulletin sought by the original members and to see that the finished bulletin is circulated (and not just left in someone’s office as happens in unions like SIPTU).

A list of phone and fax numbers of each union present was made and distributed to facilitate calls for urgent solidarity action. Finally it was agreed to hold a full conference again in 1982.

“At it all ended we wandered into the hotel bar where anarchist songs played over the tannoy. I wished that the political know-it-alls who tell me that anarchism is dead could have been there to see a living, vibrant libertarian workers movement...and then swallow their words.”

The organisers hope that other libertarian unions like the Dutch OTB and the Italian metal workers (FMU) will join this initiative. Of course this is still very much a minority movement within European trade unionism, but it is one that is growing. The collapse of Stalinism and the behaviour of social democrats in governments in much of Europe have seen many more workers look to anarchism. This growing libertarian union movement is a reflection of the increasing influence of anarchist ideas.

Revolutionary union movements are not enough to change society. We have to organise throughout the entire working class. We must challenge the ideas that justify class society with its division into rulers and ruled, we have to build an anarchist political organisation.

Organisation in the workplace is, however, a vital precondition. It is where we have the most power. This new European movement is closest to the real revolutionary anarcho-syndicalism that has been suppressed, now adopted logically to our time and the circumstances in which we live.”

Letter to Umanita Nova (weekly paper of the Italian Anarchist Federation).

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