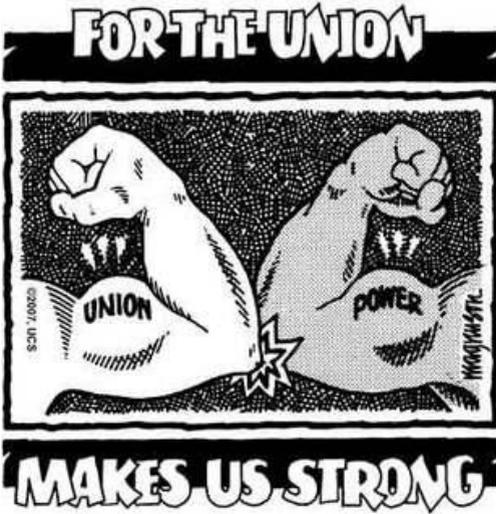




Combat UNIONISM &
ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM





To most people, a Trade Union is an organisation of workers created to defend and improve its members' conditions with respect to things like pay, pensions and benefits.

This is partially accurate, but definitely far from the whole story. It leaves out the other side of trade unionism: the backroom deals, the cuts in pay and conditions presented as a "victory", the strikes called off pending endless negotiations,

Labor party careerism, comfy salaries, the members told to break the strikes of other unions, the union activists disciplined and exploited by their own unions...

Time and again, union leaders - even left-wing ones - disappoint us. And just like with politicians, every time they do, there's always another one telling us it'll be better next time if we elect them. The problem, however, is deeper than having chosen the wrong person for the top-spot.

Today, most people's understanding of unionism is very limited. For some, unions act as an organ for self-defense from employers, which is seen as separate from workers expressing their *political* will. For others, unions act as labour cartels, taking dues money from hard-working people to squander on political lobbying and the lavish lifestyles of the union's top officials. Of course, there are interpretations of what unions are that lie everywhere in between. But all these views share the assumption that unions are inherently *alien* to the workers – something that operates *above* and *over* them.

Those who work for trade unions themselves will often say; "We're not the union, the union is the workers! We can't do anything if the workers don't want to!" - but this ignores the tension within the organisational form itself.

It is thus taken for granted by most on both the Right and the Left that ‘The Union Question’ begins not with workers’ *self*-organization, but with a *particular organisational form*, i.e, a *bureaucratic interest group servicing one subset of workers or another*. They conform to legally-sanctioned representative institutions that are run by professionals who specialise in “union” work. Anarcho-syndicalists have a very different vision of what a union can be.

The Pledge ★

Though unionism can take on many forms, for anarchists it comes to life at the most basic level when two or more workers band together to struggle in their common interest. Here the base “concerted”, or collective aspect of the workers’ activity is *foundational*. In this scenario, workers themselves act together to address common concerns. No one acts in their stead. Unionism is here not merely passive enrolment into a representative labour institution, but a practice of solidarity and struggle. It is an at times unspoken pledge of solidarity amongst each other. A union with this as its *content* is a whole different kettle of fish than the aforementioned Trade-Union.

Now, two or more workers engaged in workplace struggle is not on its own necessarily building a union per se. Where an instance of self-activity could dissipate or pass, unionism for anarchists is the practice of consolidating workers into an organisation that acts to advance their interests on an ongoing basis –an ongoing dialogue.

In recent decades, trade-unionism has meant that representatives do the “protecting” in the form of negotiating with management on the workers’ behalf, thus “unions developed a life independent of their membership and began to operate **over their heads**”. Anarchists call this tendency the *representative* function of unions as we know them now, in contrast to the *associational* function of workers relating **directly to each other without the mediation of an entrenched bureaucracy**.

This distinction is useful as it demonstrates that unions can have diverging trajectories, leading to them playing **very different roles** in society. While many on the left take the representational function of unions for granted (understandably portraying unions as backwards institutions who have a stake in maintaining capitalism), clearly there have also been many workers' organisations throughout the history of capitalism that *have* retained their associational function and represented a genuine threat to capital.

Whether we call it a council, a union, or anything else doesn't change the fact that it is possible to create and maintain "an organisation of workers formed to protect the interests of its members" – and that such a formation can retain its autonomy from the State and its allied institutions, can win improved conditions for workers under capitalism, and, further, can facilitate the development of a revolutionary politics from the base upwards amongst the people. The fact that such formations must come up against limitations under this system does not render them irrelevant, ineffective, or "infantile".

Bureaucracy ★

Trade Unions of any reasonable size have a paid staff, and are organised like a company. You have six-figure salary earning executives, appointed middle-managers enforcing decisions from the top and a career ladder into social-democratic political parties, think-tanks, government departments. Through BSN we've met people who work for trade unions that '*needed a union*' because their conditions were being screwed over!

In the workplace unions are run day-to-day by workers who volunteer to be representatives, and often suffer personal costs in terms of victimisation for their troubles. However, union members and their lay reps in the workplace can also come into conflict with the union's paid bureaucracy.

This is because the *rank and file* - the base of the union - have different interests to the people who work for and run the union. Union leaders have to put the needs of the union as a legal entity above those of the union as a group of workers fighting for their own interests. This is

because their jobs and political positions are dependent on this legal entity continuing to exist. It's a perpetual cycle of inaction and disempowerment - it gets to the stage where supporting any action which could get the union in trouble is just not on the cards for union leaders. Is it really any wonder that the majority of people ask for a lawyer's number instead of the unions?

Lay rep or shop steward posts - often taken by the most militant workers - can be complicated. Unlike full-timers, they still work on the shop floor and are paid like those they work with. If bosses cut pay, their pay is cut too. And as a workplace militant, they can be victimised by their bosses for their role. However, they must also balance between shop floor interests and the union bureaucracy's interests. For example, a union rep may be furious that her union is recommending workers accept a pay cut, but she will still have to argue for workers not to leave the union. If they put workers' interests ahead of the bureaucracy's they can find themselves under attack not only from their bosses, but also their trade-union.

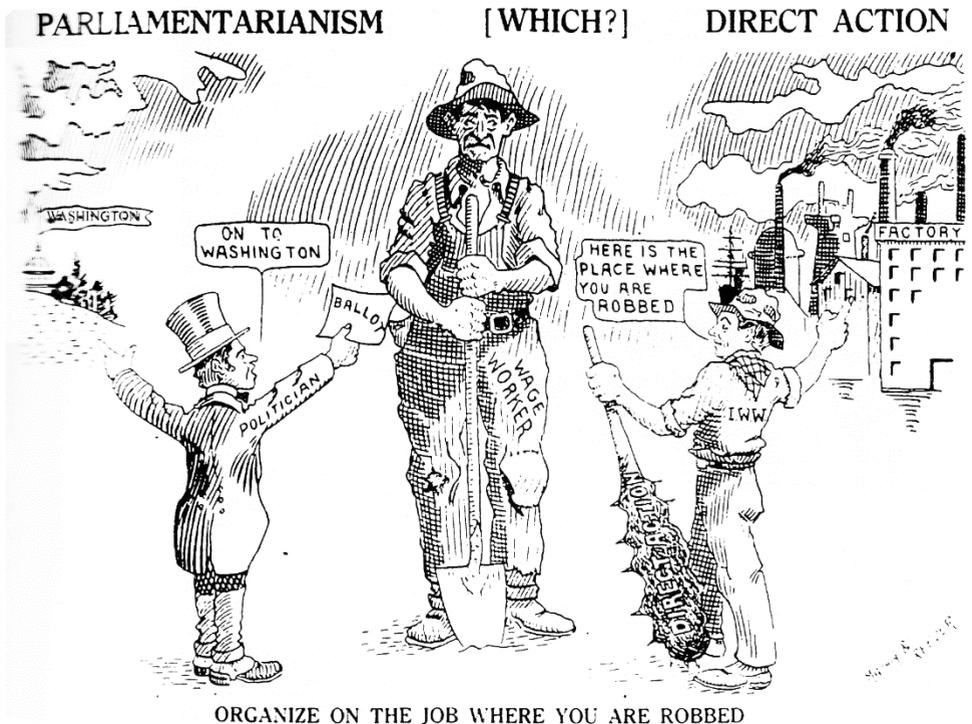
Even at regional and local levels, full-timers don't share the interests of their members. This isn't to do with their ideas or intentions (lots of full-timers are ex-workplace militants who want to help workers organise beyond their own workplaces), it's about their material interests. A win for a worker is more money, longer breaks, better benefits. A win for a full-timer is often a spot at the negotiating table with management.

In this way open conflict between employers and workers could be minimised, and the actual say workers would have could be drastically limited by creating complex legal structures through which our official "representatives" would speak on our behalf. And similarly the way in which we can have our say could also be regulated within a legal framework overseen by the state.

This process has taken place in different ways in different countries and different stages in history, but the net result is similar. Across much of the West we can join unions freely but the actions we can take to defend ourselves from employers are limited by the web of industrial relations laws. Big barriers are placed in the way of taking effective strike action, in particular by banning any action which is not directly related to particular union members' terms and conditions and any kind of

solidarity action. The unions have to enforce these anti-worker laws on their own members, as if they did not they would suffer financial penalties and asset seizure - and therefore cease to exist.

Furthermore, once unions accept the capitalist economy and their place in it, their institutional interests become bound to the national economy, since the performance of the national economy effects the unions' prospects for collective bargaining. Instead of 'union' values like solidarity, dignity and anti-capitalism, they want healthy capitalism in their country to provide jobs so they can continue to play their role. It's not uncommon therefore for trade unions to help hold down wages to help the national economy, as the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) did in the 1970s, or even assist their national governments in mobilising for war efforts, as unions did across Europe in World War I, or as the militant US United Auto Workers (UAW) did in World War II, signing a no strike pledge.



Selling peace in the workplace ★

One thing which many radical and left-wing union members often argue for is 'reclaiming the unions' or, sometimes, building new trade-unions without bureaucrats at all. The thing is, unions don't function how they do because of bureaucrats; it's that bureaucrats are created by how unions function (or want to function) in the workplace.

The trade-union's role is a tricky one: in the end, they have to sell themselves twice, to two groups of people with opposing interests (i.e. bosses and workers). To sell themselves to us, they have to show that there are benefits to union membership. This sometimes means they can help us take action to force management to maintain or improve our conditions, especially if they are trying to gain recognition in a workplace for the first time. Through getting us to join, they show management that they are the main representative of the workforce. But equally, they also have to show that they are responsible negotiating partners.

Management need to know that once an agreement is reached, the union can and will get their members back to work. Otherwise, why would management do any deals with a negotiating partner that can't honour the agreements it negotiates?

It is from this desire to be a recognised negotiating partner that unions end up acting against their own members. It shows them up in front of management as not being able to control their members. This is why in the UK in 2011 you get a Unite union negotiator calling a rank and file electricians' group "cancerous" just as in 1947 a miners' union official called for legal action against wildcat striking miners "even if there are 50,000 or 100,000 of them". Similarly, at highpoints in the US union movement in the 1940s and 1970s, the UAW got its own members disciplined and fired for striking unofficially.

So when unions 'sell us out' it's not just them 'not doing their job properly'. They might do one side (ours) badly, but they're doing the other side really well. After all, they need to be able to control struggles in order to represent them. And this is why the efforts of the so-called "revolutionary left" over the past 100 years to "radicalise" the unions by



electing the right officials and passing the right motions have ended up in a dead-end. Indeed, rather than radicalising the unions, the union structures have more often de-radicalised the revolutionaries (similar to NGO's and activism!).



Fit for purpose?

The last 30 years have left our communities in a bad state. Unfortunately several decades of defeat, whether it be around war, conditions or the environment, has left very unhelpful attitudes such as an expectation of attack coupled with an expectation of defeat. Residents and Tenants Associations, where they exist, are often co-opted by council's and are weak or disorganised. We've seen huge attacks on humanity's living conditions and drastic changes to the job market. Since the 80s Casual, temporary and agency work have become increasingly common, with workers changing jobs regularly. In the West, many of the traditional industries of the trade union movement have closed down and been replaced by those historically less organised like retail, hospitality and the service sector.

This new reality undermines traditional trade unionism as building union branches with a stable membership becomes much more difficult. However, rather than trying to keep members by helping militants organise in the workplace, the solution for the unions has been in mergers and in offering supermarket discount cards and cheap insurance as perks of membership.

Equally, the international nature of the job market has further undermined the official unions. Workers can be employed in one country while working in another and companies themselves can move factories and offices to where labour is cheaper.

For instance, in 2011, Fiat workers in Italy were encouraged by their unions to accept worsened contracts under threat of having the work moved to Poland. Meanwhile, Polish workers themselves were struggling against Fiat. However, in neither country did the unions try to forge international links between workers.

Not only do most unions now openly declare their role as mediation and negotiation—an integral part of business and the legal system— all registered unions now, if they did want to take action, are forced into taking a stance of negotiation to survive - why risk a stable job (which the union is) or a \$25,000 fine? Campaigns (often single issue) spring up and disappear, occasionally win, but lessons are lost and mistakes are repeated. With strike action basically illegal in Queensland there is not much opportunity for learning from progressive builds in struggle. Working class power has been smashed. Old centres of militancy in the mines and car plants have been shut down and/or off-shored. Service sector militancy is more a hypothetical concept than a successor. In terms of organising, this sounds bleak.

The world has moved forward, of course, but for many people in the working class we have moved backward. When we look at historically significant working-class fighting organisations (like the CNT and IWW back in the early 20th Century) we have to look at how they developed. At present our tasks are much like the tasks of the people in the early 1900's. Workers are not organised, we don't have a fighting organisation and our links where they exist are very loose. We may be involved in addressing all sorts of issues – housing, the environment etc – what's needed to complement this is a practice that sees the links between these issues and out of which can emerge a relevant and coherent critique – one that can pull together a truly transformative project – a process of social mobilisation from below. As a first step toward that process, we need more confident, capable, committed organisers. We are at the early stages of picking winnable fights through whatever networks we're involved with, involving people beyond our existing milieus, organising on the basis of shared material interests, building a capacity for collective action and hence power to take on employers, landlords, temp agencies etc. And doing all this together autonomously from trade unions, political parties and without relying

on the legal system.

Breaking the rules together ★

Whereas the trade-union's representative function makes dealing with the trade union bureaucracy extremely slow and draining for those in them, these changes to the job market have made them more or less irrelevant for many workers outside of them.

When industrial disputes come up, non-union workers feel they can't do much to support them while even those striking may feel they are just going through the ritual of official strike action: management put forward a terrible offer, the union is 'outraged' and calls a one-day strike (maybe a few), negotiations restart and strikes are called off, management come back with a very slightly less terrible deal and union bosses declare victory and recommend it to their members. Even this is considered 'radical' by most trade-union standards.

However, it does not always have to work like this. The important thing – whether we are members of a union or not – is that we go beyond the limits set by the official unions and restrictive labour laws. Instead of

voting for different representatives or passing motions in stale union branch meetings, we need to organise together with our co-workers at the base, to break their rules and stick to our own:

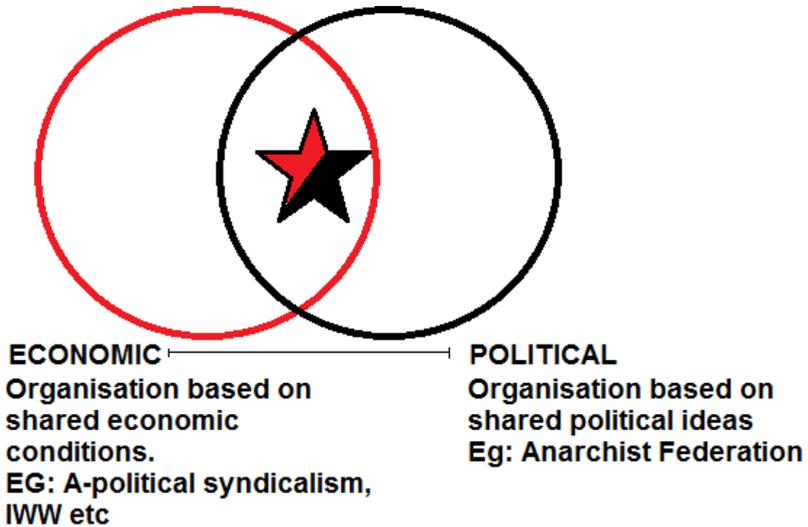
- Workplace meetings need to be open to all workers, regardless of what job they do, which union they're in (if any) or what kind of contract they're on.



- We need to respect each others' picket lines. Too often workers go on strike only to see their colleagues in other unions go into work. This makes all of our strikes weaker and only by sticking together can we shut down our workplaces and beat our bosses. For instance Shell tanker drivers won above inflation pay increases in 2008 when drivers from other companies refused to cross their picket lines.
- We rely on direct action and collective strength to get what we want, whether covered by industrial relations law or not. In 2008, bin workers in Brighton (UK) fought back against management bullying, winning after barely two days of wildcat action. Another wildcat later that year confirmed their willingness to strike, with or without official union backing. So in 2009 when management tried to cut their pay by up to \$8000 (per year, per worker), they forced management to back down just two days into a week-long official strike.
- Strikes need to be spread. Often issues don't just affect one workplace but whole industries and even across industries. We need to make links between our workplaces so we can come out to support each other. In 2009, when oil company Total tried to sack 51 workers, everyone walked out in support. Total responded by sacking over 600 workers for taking unofficial action. However, strikes spread across the energy industry and in just over a fortnight everyone got their jobs back.
- Solidarity needs to be as international as our employers. Instead of blaming immigrants taking jobs or undercutting wages, or foreign workers when factories are moved overseas, we need to support migrant workers and workers in other countries struggling to improve their pay and conditions. This will not only benefit them directly but will also mean that employers will no longer be able to use them to undercut wages of native workers either.

These are not new ideas. These are things which workers – both in formal unions and out – have done throughout history and, in doing so,

have often come into conflict not just with their bosses but also their union bureaucracy.



ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM ★

The only unions which have resisted the downward trend have been those that have intentionally taken a *political-economic* focus, and have specifically *refused* to take a disempowering representative role, like the historical IWW in the USA, FORA in Argentina and the modern day CNT in Spain. This refusal has cost them in reduced membership numbers, state repression, or both.

Anarcho-syndicalist organisations like these aim to promote solidarity in our movements, workplaces, neighbourhoods and beyond, encouraging movements to organise independently of government, bosses and bureaucrats to fight for our own interests as a class. Instead of our movements being based on top-down representatives, often this has taken the form of a system of decentralised councils made up of recallable delegates from workplaces and communities. Examples of self-management like this point the way towards revolutionary anti-capitalism and the goal of a stateless, classless society.

As an alternative to top-down bureaucratic hierarchies anarchists talk a lot about autonomy & federalism - a 'bottom up' way of organising that is literally the opposite of a hierarchy. Where hierarchies use 'representatives' who give orders from the top, anarchist-federalism starts at the bottom with the base, and uses systems of direct democracy and rotating, re-callable delegates to carry out mandates (binding decisions) who return to the assembly of people in all spheres of social life - whether that be in a workplace, in a social-movement or in a neighbourhood. Popular control, along with a culture of solidarity and mutual-aid, means that organisations carry out the will of the people. It gives weight to ensuring that movements can't be sold out or demobilised from above –or used as springboards for bureaucrats and career politicians.

EXAMPLE: THE CNT IN PUERTO-REAL



The recent struggle in and around the shipyards of Puerto Real, Spain, in both workplace and community, against threatened closure witnessed the anarcho-syndicalist union CNT playing both a prominent and decisive role.

The CNT's involvement meant that the methods of organising and the forms of action taken departed from those common to reformist unions –with dramatic consequences.

When the PSOE government (socialist in name, but Thatcherite in practice, announced a programme of 'rationalisation' at

the Puerto Real shipyards, the workforce came out on strike. The CNT was at the forefront in spreading the action to the surrounding

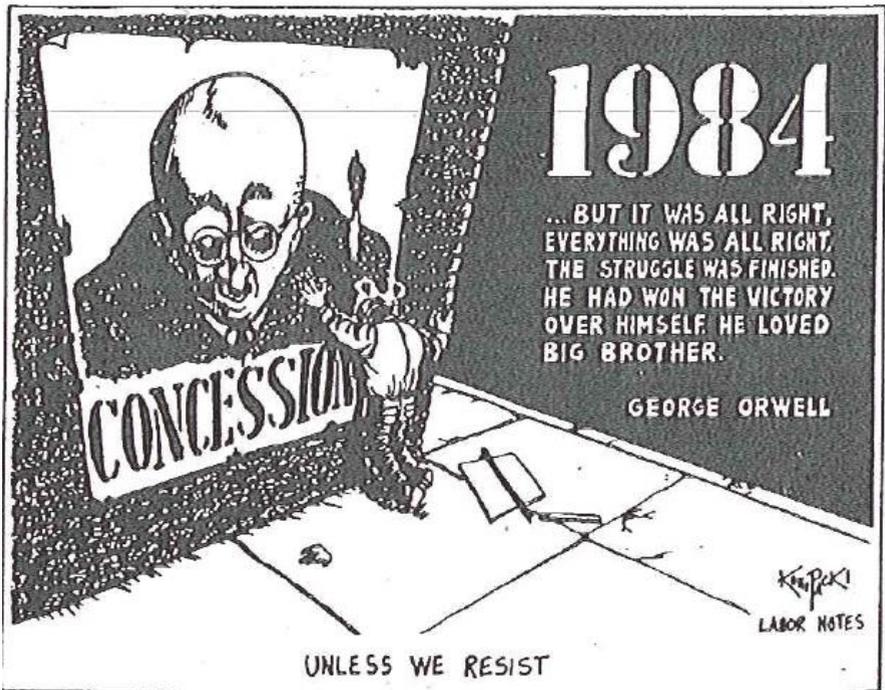
population. Not only was the government defeated, but a number of pay and condition improvements were secured.

In this not only did the great determination and ingenuity on the part of the workers bring results, but that of the communities too. Mass assemblies both in the yards and surrounding localities involved workers, their families, neighbours and all supporters. Initiating and maintaining entire communities' involvement in mass assemblies alone was fine achievement.

By all accounts the work of the CNT in and around Puerto Real established direct democracy as an inherent part of local political culture and resistance - people deciding for themselves, rejecting control by unaccountable politicians, union officials or 'experts', ensuring control remains in the workplace and locality. Not imposed unchallenged from above, be it by boards of directors or government, local or national.

"Contracts=Contractualism. A century of contractualism has established no-strike clauses, management rights clauses and disempowering grievance procedures as the norms. I would argue that after the point in which it is obvious the union has won or is going to win, these are the most important issues for the employer, exceeding wages and benefits. To exclude these things in a contract would take serious organization within the workplace. If you do have the capacity to impose these sorts of demands, which are expected minimum norms for contracts, then why have a contract at all?"





Most unions take the easier road, helping to ensure peace, at our expense, in the workplace. They kick our problems into the long grass of grievance procedures, casework forms and backroom negotiations, divide us by trade and adopt NGO-style campaigning over workplace & political organising. And employers love it. As a manager at a multinational in South Africa once said when asked why his company had recognised the workers' union: *“Have you ever tried to negotiate with a football field full of militant angry workers?”*

Of all the areas that the unions seek to have influence in by far the most important is its dealing with management, for it is from this area that all their power flows. They must retain the right to negotiate wages and conditions with management. It is by having the power to negotiate on behalf of workers that they retain their influence within the workplace and ultimately attract and retain members. In turn it is having that control and influence in the workplace that they are of use to the boss class. The unions offer stability in the workplace, they channel workers anger, shape and influence their demands and, if need be, act to police

the workforce. The problems with union bureaucracy are well known to militant workers. But unless we couple syndicalist methods with the clear revolutionary perspective there's a well-worn path back to bureaucracy.

Bureaucratisation is a one way process. Or rather, while it could theoretically be reversed by a strong enough rank and file movement, it would be a misdirection of energy to pursue union reform at the expense of direct action

Whatever energy and self-organisation it would take to dislodge entrenched bureaucracies, backed by the state, would be far better spent organising struggles directly, and regrouping workers into organisations based on the principles we espouse – revolutionary unions. This does not mean we should tear up our trade union cards, but rather abandon any pretensions to reforming the existing union structures, and regardless of trade union membership seek to pursue an anarcho-syndicalist strategy.

An argument commonly raised against revolutionary unionism is the numbers game. Unions, it is said, are 'mass organisations', which far exceed the scale of what it's possible to organise along revolutionary lines. Thus, we are told, you can be revolutionary, or you can be a union, but never the twain shall meet. This gives rise to a reformist argument masquerading as 'pragmatism', that we must drop our 'ideological' opposition to reformist methods – works councils, full time officials, representative functions, state funds, compliance with the law and so on – in order to grow into such a 'mass organisation'. This may be the way to 'build', but build what?

We have no interest in building new bureaucracies, which is the sure fire result of building a union on anything other than clear anti-capitalist and anti-state principles. In the 'post-political' neoliberal world, we should be wary of anyone denying ideological motivations. The denial itself is the surest sign of ideology! Reformist ideology always presents itself as post-ideological 'pragmatism', as if this somehow makes its

embrace of class collaboration any less ideological. Sure, revolutionary unionists are starting out as a tiny minority of the working class. That doesn't mean we can't organise class conflicts beyond our limited numbers, and win workers over to revolutionary unionism through the victories we win in the school of struggle.

Against the social order that demeans our human dignity, we need more and better organisers, and we need the confidence and support to make attempts where in the past we have laid down and been walked over. At the same time we need to make attempts at forming the organisations and infrastructure necessary to build a healthy culture of working class hospitality, decolonisation, resistance and sustenance.

Anarcho-syndicalists are trying to build a culture of resistance, a culture where people are empowered to run society and take control of their lives, a culture where top-down organisations that take power out of the people's hands cannot use grassroots struggles as springboards into political careers, electioneering and party politics that demobilise/disempower people from above and sell them out down the river due to the necessity of compromise and mediation that it creates.

Anarcho-syndicalists unite the political and the economic because it reflects the realities under capitalism. The working class is at one and the same time oppressed and exploited. If we are ever to be truly free, we must challenge both capitalist exploitation and the power capitalism and the state have over us. The coming together of exploitation and oppression can be clearly seen in the smallest of workplace or community actions.



When workers organise they challenge the management's 'right' to manage. When tenants

organise they challenge the Landlord's 'right' to their private property. It matters little whether this takes the form of a fight for increased wages, or reduced rents, or a fight to resist attempts to impose new working or residency conditions. In fighting one we fight the other; the economic and the political cannot be separated. Should the workers win a strike for increased wages, their power to win better conditions improves and vice versa. The revolutionary union unites the political and the economic, seeking to organise collective direct action in the here and now, not waiting to follow the lead of reformists or for struggles to arise spontaneously

When we talk of organising direct action, what most immediately springs to mind is the strike. But in truth, a strike requires significant organisation to pull off, and often we may find ourselves setting our sights on other forms of action. Generally speaking, the fewer the number of participants, the less direct economic pressure we can bring to bear, and thus the more we rely on moral pressure. This could be as simple as shunning the boss, such as the members of a team refusing all non-essential communication, perhaps all verbal communication full stop, until their concerns are addressed. This type of action can certainly be organised by individuals, and any propaganda organisation capable of bringing out a newspaper can surely orient itself to such practical activity as well as, or indeed instead of, propaganda activities. Doing so and shouting about it has been, in our experience, a way to attract more militants of a similar persuasion.

Conversely, the greater the number of participants, the more economic pressure we can bring to bear and the less we need rely on moral pressure. At this end of the spectrum is the insurrectionary general strike.

squatting works.



For anarcho-syndicalists, theory grows out of practice and as such, should be seen as an aid to organising workers struggle and not, as so often is the case, a means of dominating and controlling it. And as capitalism is dynamic with conditions constantly changing, so must the methods used by workers to fight it. Engaged in this daily struggle we are best placed to ensure our theory keeps pace. As anarcho-syndicalists, we oppose all forms of political parties. We reject the notion that governments act in the interest

of the working class. They may bring forward minor improvements in order to make electoral gains, but fundamental change can only come about through the power of organised labour. For anarcho-syndicalists, direct action is much more than a tactic to be employed against capitalism. Through the use of direct action, we seek to build a culture of solidarity and mutual aid in direct opposition to the dominant capitalist culture, based on narrow self-interest and greed.

But neither should the anarcho-syndicalist union be seen as a monolithic organisation that seeks to organise every aspect of human activity. Our aim is to build a revolutionary culture of solidarity & self-organisation that can form the basis for society. And this revolutionary culture will be as rich and diverse as humanity itself. It will comprise of countless groups and interests, formal and informal, that will operate both in and outside of the union. The role of the union is to bring this diversity together on the basis of class in opposition to capitalism and the state. At the heart of the anarcho-syndicalist union is the Local, which aims to be at the centre of community and workplace struggle in the surrounding area. But the role of the Local goes beyond that. It provides the physical space where a diverse range of groups, such as oppressed, cultural, and education groups can organise. The Local acts as the social, political, and economic centre for working class struggle in a given area. It is the physical embodiment of our beliefs and methods,

the means by which workers become anarcho-syndicalist not just on the basis of ideas but activity.

The Local aims to be a hive of working class self-activity in the area, inside and outside the union, a catalyst for workers' self-activity, an infrastructure and tool of struggle for the working class. It's a base not only to organise against capital and state, but for all sorts of marginalised and oppressed groups to organise. If we're serious about prefiguring a libertarian communist society, we must challenge patriarchy, racism, colonial thinking and bigotry of all forms within society and within our own ranks too. So long as we don't have our own premises, we can use drop in sessions in whatever venues are available, we can use picket lines, or hold regular stalls, to discuss organising with workers. And out of these we're likely to find fights to pick with capital and the state. In the early days, these fights are likely to be small, attempts to collectivise individual grievances. We can only bite off what we can chew. But by taking on instances of wage theft, stolen deposits, and the other everyday little attacks, we can both win concrete demands but also start to build a culture of direct action, and normalise the idea of standing up for our interests, of fighting for ourselves.

Negotiations are simply meetings between workers and the enemy, whether management, the letting agent, or whoever. The factor that determines the nature of negotiations is who is doing the negotiating. Our approach to negotiations is to see them as part of class struggle. Negotiations should be done en masse, or by delegates mandated by all the workers taking action. The revolutionary union does not negotiate on behalf of workers, workers negotiate for themselves, but we don't shy away from being delegated. We don't seek negotiations looking for a "just" or "fair" result, but rather to demand as much as possible in any given circumstance. If an action has management on the run, then we do not limit ourselves to the original demand but rather, we seek to press home our advantage and make as many gains as possible. Revolutionary practice consists of the relationship between means and ends. It is the use of direct action to win immediate demands in such a way that builds the confidence, solidarity, and culture needed for further struggles, and ultimately, revolution itself. Revolution is a matter of deeds not words, in our everyday struggles as well as the future upheaval.

Hierarchy is not merely a social condition, it is also a state of consciousness, a sensibility towards phenomena at every level of personal and social experience. Many societies throughout history, such as many Indigenous societies, existed - and still struggle to exist - in a fairly integrated and unified form based on kinship ties, autonomy, relationships of obligation & responsibility, ritual etc. Their high sense of internal unity and their egalitarian outlook extended not only to each other but to their relationships with all life.

Conclusion ★

We often see unions as an organisational framework that gives us strength. And certainly, this is partially true. What we don't always acknowledge (or at least don't act upon) is that the strength a union gives us is actually just our own strength channelled through - and therefore limited by - the modern Trade Union structure. It is only by acknowledging this and taking struggle into our own hands - by ignoring union divides and not crossing each others' picket lines, by not waiting for our union before taking action, by taking unsanctioned action such as occupations, go slows, economic blockades and sabotage - that we can actually use our strength and start to win.

“So long as the immense majority of the populations are dispossessed of property, deprived of education and condemned to political and social nonbeing, so long as labour continues to be the slave of private property, the State and of capital, so long as human society continues to be divided into different classes as a result of the hereditary inequality of occupations, of wealth, of education, of privilege, and of rights, there will always be a class-restricted government and the inevitable exploitation of the majorities by the minorities, with all the social dysfunction that this entails.”

— Mikhail Bakunin



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This work was compiled from & inspired by the following:

Anarchist work groups & 1-3 organising
BSN Workplace & Community organising guide
Squatter's handbook

Anarcho-syndicalism in Puerto-Real

Anarchism in Action [Film]

Fighting for Ourselves (Solidarity Federation)

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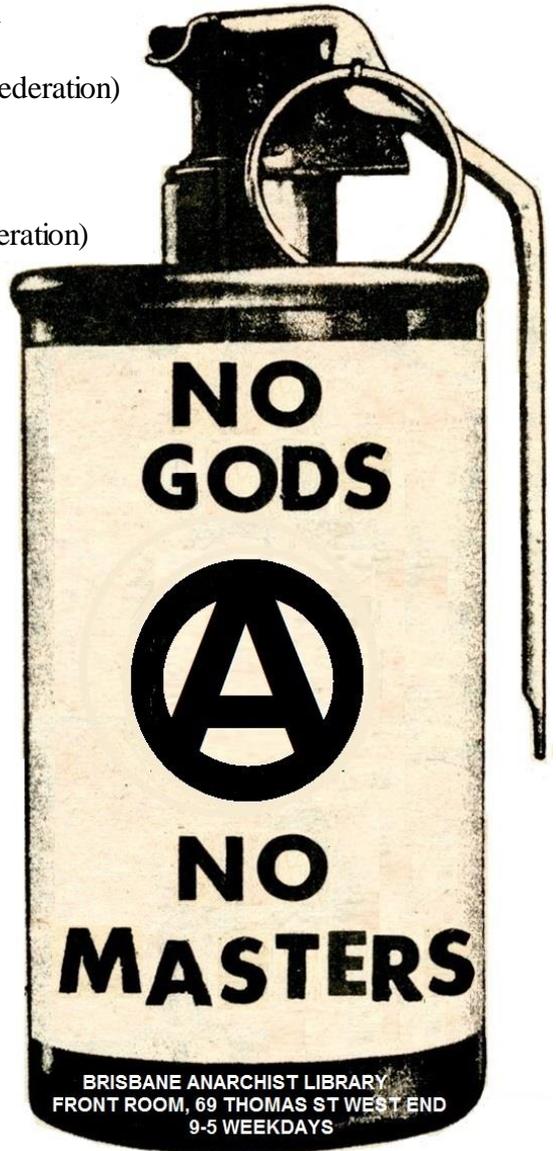
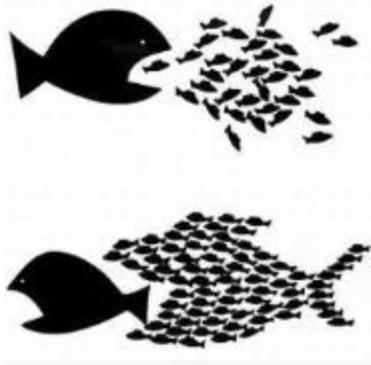
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DON'T FIGHT ALONE!

GET WHAT'S YOURS!



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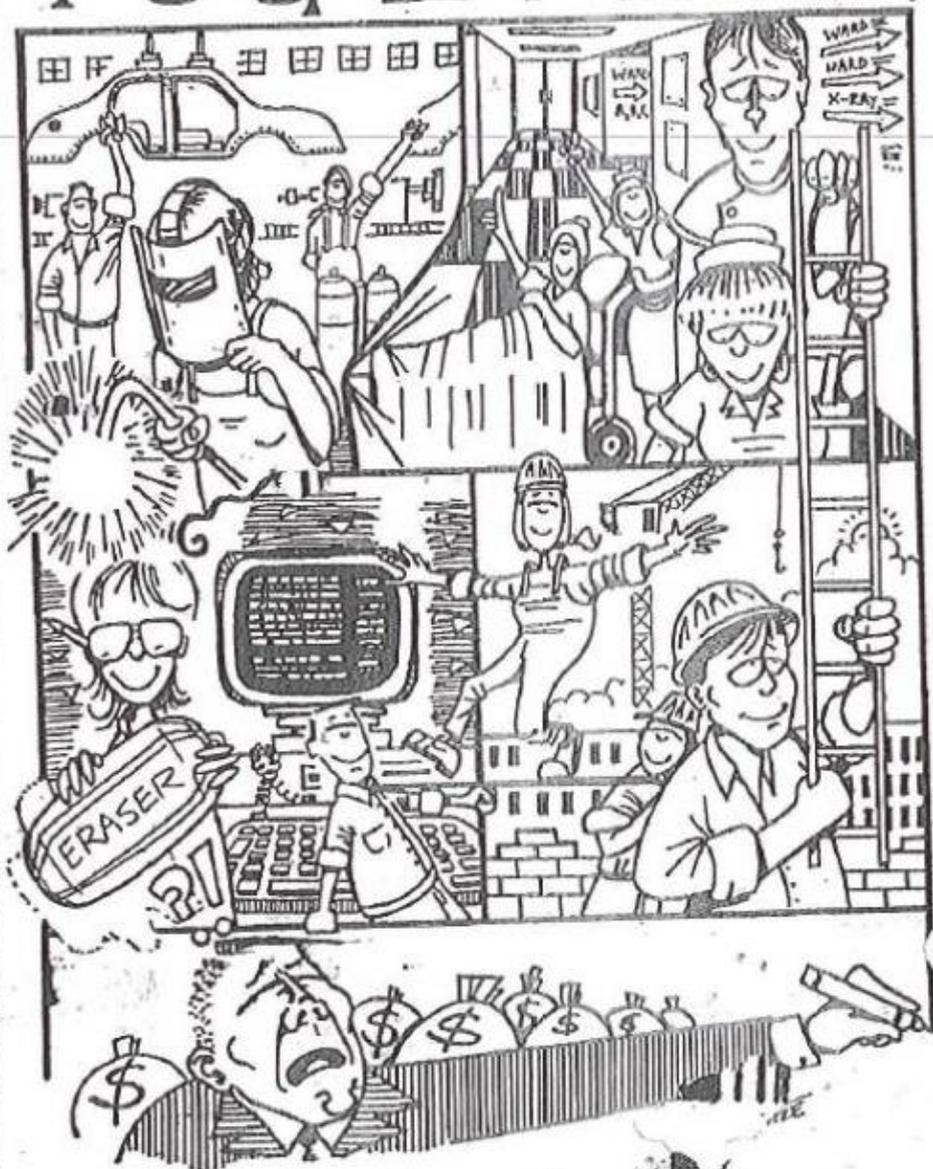
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TRADE UNIONISM ISN'T ENOUGH ANYMORE.....

WE NEED TO STICK TOGETHER



BETWEEN WORKPLACES. ACROSS INDUSTRIES.
IN OUR COMMUNITIES.  AROUND THE WORLD...