

# **Anarcho-syndicalism: an outline of constructive anarchism**

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It is no longer possible to take up a negative role with regard to the world revolution. The exigencies of modern capitalism demand that we give up any consideration of “should there be a revolution?” etc., for monopoly capitalism cannot continue without some form of social change either towards totalitarian State control or towards workers’ control.

The question today is: “On which *side* in the revolution?” We have frequently outlined the dangers of totalitarianism, whether capitalist, fascist or “communist”: the State is not a fit instrument for the liberation of the masses. To this we will allude again. Our point now is to consider the alternative: workers’ control. Not merely to consider the negative role of the revolution (the destruction of capitalism and State) but the creative role of the revolution.

It is not practicable to say, with a wave of the hand, “the workers will decide when the time comes.” Our job is to consider the methods that the workers do take at such times, since only by that way can we hope for a unification and strengthening of the revolutionary movement prior to that time. And as John Most said, “Revolutions cannot be made, but they can be prepared for.”

## **The Struggle For A Free Society**

The economic organisation of the working class is the only way in which we can struggle against capitalism, totalitarianism and the State. Considering Britain today and the conditions peculiar to it, we would say that a rebirth of the militant shop-stewards’ movement as in the last war, *would be the first step*. (Councils of workers struggling for economic concessions. in the factories and workshops, which in 1917–19 began to link into Soldiers and Workers’ Councils).

Such councils, imbued with a revolutionary anti-war spirit, could be joined according to industry, each council becoming a branch of its industrial union. Such industrial unions, freely federated, would be the nucleus not only of the struggle against capitalism and for immediate concessions, but for the taking hold of the places of work. All social functions in the new society would be controlled by the organisms thus set up – thus, directly, by the workers themselves, and not by any political party or group aspiring to power.

Through a revolutionary labour movement we could prepare the new society.

## **Economic Re-organisation**

These Shop-committees, originally the means of assemblage of the workers for strike purposes would take over the new function of control when the bosses had been locked-out. Then economic control would be directed by the workers at the factory, pithead, minefield, mill, ship, etc. Through representation directly responsible to that meeting, would be formed regional federations (and eventually national and international federations) which, from unifying labour to resist capitalism, would take over the function of controlling industry in general. Around these industrial federations, specialised technical departments would develop in detail, but with direct responsibility to the industrial workers at the point of production, in order to prevent any possibility of technocratic bureaucracy. Production would thus be regulated by the producers themselves. Each industry would be run by the workers in that industry.

## Social Re-organisation

Social reorganisation would be carried on by what would approximate to the modern borough or county council, composed, however, not of councillors but of the directly responsible representatives of the workers at their shop-meeting, (and changed or retained at each meeting). The council would be, in effect, a chamber of labour (a “cartel”) and, under capitalism, would have the approximate duties of a revolutionary syndicalist “trades council.” As the direct representative, then, of the producers (who would also be the consumers), it would have the say in all local matters, as distinct from the local unions in their regional federation, which would organise production. Co-operatives of consumers would take the function of supplying the demands of the consumers.

Local public works being the responsibility of the local “commune,” national public works would be the responsibility of the federation of communes. Similarly internationally, but with the growth of the free society internationally, such internationalism would be replaced by cosmopolitanism: i.e., the “nation” would be the world, or such part of it as was free *and federated* with the revolution.

## Public Order

Clearly at first some form of public order must be taken along with public works. “Fifth Columnists,” recalcitrant capitalists, public nuisances, etc. must be stopped from wrecking the workers’ society. We would have no police force, for in the last analysis this would be a repressive force: a relic of the old capitalism. What then? The best answer is given from Spanish experience: a system of *workers’ patrols* directly responsible to the commune, not a standing police force, but a force recruited from the workers at the point of production. Some of its functions (traffic-directing, etc.) would become the work of a standing body: not the function of security however.<sup>1</sup> Such a system of workers’ patrols would be a direct heir to the workers’ “militia” which would have to be recruited in such a manner during the revolutionary period. And its difference from the capitalist police force, guardian of property rights, is clearly seen. It would be in effect, the people themselves: being composed simply of able-bodied volunteers from the direct ranks of the industrial community. Its aim would not be repressive, but “conductive” and for the purpose of public security.

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<sup>1</sup> Why not a standing force? Because such a body, particularly if armed, could be the beginning of a force towards military dictatorship. The militarist army could become the instrument for military dictatorship. A popular force could only be subjected to the same “ebb and flow” as the administrative posts. No militarism is the one, no bureaucracy is the other. Moreover, the workers’ patrols would only be needed to act on certain occasions of crisis. Let us compare them with the product of capitalist war – voluntary A.R.P.[Air Raid Precautions] wardens! Allowing for considerable differences (1) of function; (2) of recruitment (arming direct from industry), the method of forming workers’ patrols and workers’ militia can be seen. (Moreover, to prevent the “tin-hat dictatorship,” the right of any citizen to complain to the community of any patrol would have to be recognised).

Standing non-repressive bodies with functions usually taken by police can be seen even to-day by such examples as the A.A., R.A.C., [Both motoring organisations] etc. Police work of the purely administrative nature could easily be taken over by such a new organisation.

Crimes of robbery, etc. would disappear with the profit system. Most criminals would be psychological, etc. and headed by the patrols to an appropriate body.

## Administrative Works

Thus it is seen that social works are the responsibility of the commune. They are carried out by the union concerned (e.g. teachers would run the schools, just as miners would run the mines). It can be seen, though, that certain forms of national administration are necessary: statistical, technical, etc. Here in fact, is where the danger of bureaucracy arises, and has to be guarded against. A continual “ebb and flow”, therefore, into administrative posts is necessary: no officials in the new society nor in the movement that has built it. Some permanent administrative (technical especially) posts are necessary: these workers must be members of a separate union, and treated as members of any other union, thus being on terms of equality with everyone else.

## Agrarian Society

The fields would be controlled by the farm-workers in the same way that the industries were controlled by the industrial worker. The peasant problem (not affecting Britain, but all other European countries) would not be solved, practically nor desirable by liquidation: but by free co-operation. The peasant would be at liberty to associate on the general farm collectives. If he did not wish to, no forced collectivisation as in Russia, but the recognition of the peasants status: the peasant to continue with his own field, being given exclusive use of the field by the community provided that it was enough for him to live on (and did not entail his exploiting someone else to work on the field for him, although that would probably not arise in a free society with the chance of working in associated control and not under domination). Co-operation between peasant-farmer, labourer and townsman is essential: there is, in effect, nothing to divide them in a free society. In the same way we could trace the operation of all industries and other professions, taken over by the workers from the capitalists, or from the State (Post Office, etc.). The wage, money and profit system would be quite unnecessary.

We have traced here the outline of an anarchist society, seen from its creative side, the syndicalist reconstruction of society. Gradually the decentralised forms of control would become even more freer: the need for any form even of workers’ patrols disappearing. All wealth would be in common: the masses would be the masters of their own destiny. Could this become a form of majority oppression? No: to consider that would be to take too gloomy a view of human desire for liberty. Tyranny springs out of the unfree social soil: in a free community it would be a thing of the dark past.

Even before the commencement of the revolution, we will have dispensed with all forms of authoritarianism. As before the revolution, we rejected a *party* as a means for social emancipation, so after the revolution we reject a *State* as a means of running a society. It is neither necessary nor desirable.

All economy to the syndicates (workers’ unions as outlined above), all social administration to the communes. The abolition of the political oppression of man by man because of the economic exploitation of man by man.

This, then, is what we mean by Anarchy, the very name of which throws our hypocritical politicians into a state of abject terror. So far from our being reduced to chaos if we do not have the politicians, the police, the State, the bureaucrats, the capitalists, the rich, the authoritarians,

the state of the world today (suffering from an excess of governmentalism) shows how we shall be reduced to chaos if we retain them. This outline shows the alternative if we neglect them.

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