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Fernand Fortin

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Anarchist Unity or Linkage?

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From all sides there are nothing but calls to Unity. Syndical unity. Unity of socialist-communist action. United front. “Common front” giving way, in order to attract the radicals, to the “Popular Front,” which tomorrow — in order to defend the famous “republican liberties” and attract the more timid — will perhaps be commonly known as the “Republican Front.” Opposite, the “National Front,” grouping together the elements of the “right.”

Right against left. Whites against reds.

But the anarchists? Them? They quarrel—when they do not fall flat on their faces. There are indeed some anarchic behaviors. Certain of their papers cry out for the “unity of the anarchist press” and the “unity of the anarchists;” on this subject, I have read articles emanating particularly from comrades Grandjean and Lecoin. The first formula being a function of the second, I will only concern myself with the latter. These articles show one thing very clearly: *we seek one another*.

But there are the tendencies. The communist anarchists desire unity — but on their terms, naturally. The anarcho-syndicalists are very concerned, for their part, with syndical unity or autonomy. As

for the anarchists of the individualist tendency, if they do not give much indication (which is easy enough to understand given their ideology), they do not appear to be very interested in the question.

In the end, nothing changes. And that is explained easily enough: *anarchist unity is not accomplished for the good reason that is impracticable.*

The anarchist rainbow is too broad, anarchism includes elements too disparate for anyone to unite them. There are not two anarchists worthy of the name — among those who think for themselves — who have exactly the same conception. It is no longer a question of political parties where all the individuals are cast in the same mold. No one has a monopoly on anarchism. While one comrade has, I believe, recently wiped the individualists from the map of anarchism, yet they exist. And often even do active work.

The comrades of the “Union anarchiste,” for example, certainly have no ambition of representing all the anarchist elements. (Not even *all* the anarchist-communist elements.) The anarchist individualist associations do not gather all the anarchists. (Not even *all* the anarchist individualists.) I say this on the basis of simple observations and with no desire to shock comrades with whom we often sympathize.

Let us not demand of the *compagnons* — of whatever tendency they may be — that they renounce the idea that is dear to them and the mode of propaganda that appears most effective — and, above all, that *best suits their temperament.*

Indeed, the partisans of unity would be rapidly disillusioned: either they would form a faux-party with brains all in line — and we would draw away from anarchism — or they would not succeed.

But isn't there anything that can be done? Yes. And, in the absence of that unity that is *impossible to accomplish*, there is an aim that we can achieve.

Obviously, anarchism is divided into three very distinct tendencies (without speaking here of the sub-tendencies) Some believe

in a future society (the anarchist-communists); others see the solution in a sort of syndicalist-federalist combination (the anarcho-syndicalists); others, finally, think it is preferable to live from now on without awaiting a problematic future society (the anarchist-individualists.) Personally, it is because, isolated, I see more objectively, but I think that these names are often superfluous. Above all the tendencies there is *anarchism tout court*, the rest being only a reflection of each individual temperament. We all have points held very much in common, if only the struggle against the State and religion, if only the defense of the individual. At base, there are, from this point of view, only two categories of individuals: the *anarchists* and *the others*.

Let each militate according to their tendency (in the *Union*, in the *Entente anarchiste*, in the *centrale syndicale*, in the individualist associations or in isolation). But, above the tendencies, without this being the great embrace, without renouncing discussion, let a *linkage* [*liaison*] be established.

I have intentionally not used the term *synthesis*,¹ and idea that was developed in the past, particularly by Sébastien Faure and Voline. The idea of synthesis supposes that of a composite body, of a bloc. Now, I do not believe that we can make a very homogeneous composite body of such diverse simple bodies. We would obtain chitchat without a clear conclusion — each remaining in their position — but, at the end of the day, that would be chaos. The method can be excellent in chemistry; but on the anarchist plane, it seems to me to lose its value.

Now, there does not exist that linkage that could be made — without wishing to compete with an organism that has its uses — in the image of the valiant, old “Comité de Défense sociale,” but enlarged, rejuvenated, refined, reinvigorated. It frequently happens

¹ It is not a question here of the group bearing that name.

that a comrade may be in prison, in the hospital, in the greatest need and the others are unaware.²

So let the sincere militants of all tendencies stay in close contact, let them stick together and get to know each other better — *especially on the eve of events that could be very important.*

For that, no need of the cards or dues that, among the rebels that we are, have too often proved themselves... by discouraging the most valiant. No: goodwill accompanying a certain moral uprightness. And we could, to a greater extent, *spread anarchist ideas, facilitate the sale of journals, gain a respectful hearing in meetings and, especially, more effectively defend the individual.*

That linkage is the most that we could obtain in order that the anarchist family should find one another. And that would already be a great deal! *To an impracticable unity, let us oppose an achievable linkage.*

And if this linkage does not interest or if, instead of bringing together anarchist comrades of all tendencies, some prefer to ally with the politicians of “the left” in order to defend “republican liberties,” well, have at it. I would not be the one to press and insist further.

But I will feel a bit more sadness and bitterness.

² Even the C. D. S. cannot, oftentimes, defend comrades because of the ignorance where it is kept through this lack of connection.