

Anarchism, socialism and freedom

Thinking about Anarchism

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ANARCHISM IS a much maligned and misunderstood set of ideas. It has come to symbolise, to many people, a society of destruction and disorder. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Anarchism has been deliberately slandered and misrepresented, not only by those running this society but also by most on the Left. Deliberately, for the reason that its uncompromising and radical critique of society and how to change it poses a challenge that can not be met except by slander. Its roots and association with the working class of all countries tells the real truth.

Anarchism views society, what it is and how it should be, on the basis of two fundamental pillars. These are the economic nature of society and the manner in which political power is organised. We believe that the economic system under which we presently live must be abolished. We also say that the political institutions of capitalism, which are hierarchical and authoritarian, must go too. These institutions serve the employer class and will have to be replaced with ones based on mass participatory democracy and freedom.

WORKERS COUNCILS

In the new economic order the workers of the world will own and share all the wealth they produce. Decisions will be made through workplace and community councils which will be federated at all levels and centrally co-ordinated. Thus political power will not be organised in a hierarchical manner, where a central government tells everyone else what to do.

Those socialists who follow the ideas of Lenin hold that such a society can only be built by using the State structures, albeit a “workers state”, under the leadership of their Party. Anarchists reject this since both the State and Party are hierarchical and authoritarian. They are diametrically opposed to the aims and organisation of the new society.

STATE CAPITALISM

Rather than building a real socialist society where both economic and political power would be everyone’s possession and nobody’s property, these people end up building societies that are no more than State Capitalism like Russia was and China still is. In these countries ordinary people do not have any say in how things are run or in the decisions that effect them. They are ordered about and exploited just as happens in the “free world”.

Anarchists predicted this long before it was confirmed by the betrayal of the Russian revolution, when the workers’ soviets and factory committees were suppressed by the Bolshevik state. After all, the means you use and what you end up with are connected. Thus, if the structures used to build socialism are hierarchical and undemocratic you should not be surprised if the society you end up with is hierarchical and undemocratic. This scientific law seemingly escapes some self-proclaimed followers of “scientific socialism”.

FREEDOM

The question of freedom is not just a subject for some mere philosophical debate. It is at the very heart of revolutionary change and socialism. A successful revolution is not just a shift in economic power from the employers to the workers.

It is a time of real freedom. It is a time when the shackles of the old oppressive order are thrown off and the workers movement explodes into a reactivity as it copes with organising every facet of society so that the needs of all are met. Everyone can get involved, through their assemblies and delegate councils, in decision making and planning that used to be the sole concern of central government. Freedom of ideas, criticism and input will not only be a practical reality but a necessity.

Capitalist society is organised in a top-down way. Orders come from the top and those at the bottom obey them. The institutions by which the bosses rule, the Government and the State, are built so that the rule of a minority over the majority is possible. Control of political freedom, ideas and information is fundamental to their working. Participation is strictly limited so that most people never have any say.

WORKERS STATES

That is why we wish to abolish these structures. They can never be used to create socialism but instead will actively sabotage the workers' cause. The "workers states" advocated by the Leninists for the transition to socialism have proven to be its greatest enemy. Only workers' councils can form the basis of the new society.

We stand uncompromisingly for a new world. One which will be owned and managed by all those who work. It will be organised from the bottom up and production will be to meet peoples' needs, not for the private profit of a few. Anarchist society will make real the old call "from each according to ability, to each according to need". Every individual will enjoy complete control of her/his life with no limit on their freedom as long as they do not encroach on the freedom of anyone else. Now, isn't that something worth struggling for?

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