

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)  
Anti-Copyright



# Shut up about 'dual power', tool

ziq

October 25, 2021

Dual power was coined<sup>1</sup> by the Russian socialist and eventual head of government Vladimir Lenin in his essay *The Dual Power* to describe two powers (the Soviets and the existing government) temporarily coexisting with each other and competing for legitimacy with the ultimate goal of the Soviets expelling the other power and seizing control of the state, in order to install state capitalism and a one-party dictatorship.

It's tragic I even need to write this, but a staggering amount of people have been equating dual power with anarchy lately, seemingly without realizing they're parroting authoritarian Leninist ideology.

Dual power has nothing whatsoever to do with anarchy. Anarchists are not and have never been advocates of dual power. Anarchists are not a political party. We are not interested in competing with other political parties for power. Anarchists are not interested in granting legitimacy to a government or

ziq  
Shut up about 'dual power', tool  
October 25, 2021

<https://raddle.me/wiki/dualpower>

**[usa.anarchistlibraries.net](http://usa.anarchistlibraries.net)**

---

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, Vladimir. *The Dual Power*. [www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/09.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/09.htm).

its institutions or claiming there can ever be such a thing as the legitimacy to rule people.

Anarchists are not interested in seizing control of the state to install a "people's dictatorship" or any other kind of government. Anarchists are not interested in building power in any way.

Anarchy is concerned with resisting, negating, severing the power of those who rule us. Anarchy is the driving desire to reclaim our lives from the piercing claws of the power-elite. Anarchy is not a plan to join the ranks of the power-elite or to supersede them as the new "legitimate" government as Lenin's Bolsheviks did.

Anarchists are also not interested in a democratic form of dual power whereupon we plead with the states / banks / corporations to be nicer to us, begging the people in power to afford us certain rights and privileges, while also participating in charity work.

This is what Yates McKee, the self-described "nongovernmental activist"<sup>2</sup> and art critic who introduced the dual-power concept into the modern Anglophone political dialogue proposes in the essay *Art after Occupy – climate justice, BDS and beyond*<sup>3</sup> for the nonprofit media organization *Waging Nonviolence*.

Yates McKee:

(Dual power) means forging alliances and supporting demands on existing institutions – elected officials, public agencies, universities, workplaces, banks, corporations, museums – while at the same time developing self-organized counter-institutions.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Center for the Humanities. *Profile of Yates McKee*. [www.centerforthehumanities.org/programming/participants/yates-mckee/](http://www.centerforthehumanities.org/programming/participants/yates-mckee/).

<sup>3</sup> McKee, Yates. *Art after Occupy – climate justice, BDS and beyond*. [wagingnonviolence.org/2014/07/art-after-occupy/](http://wagingnonviolence.org/2014/07/art-after-occupy/).

out of billions of people: Enslaves, incarcerates, poisons, genocides, invades, bulldozes, acidifies, desertifies and burns every corner of the planet, you have abandoned any claim to anarchy you may have once held. You are not an anarchist. You are just another clink in the state's ever-expanding armor, devoting your pathetic little activist life to legitimizing, and thus shielding the state from those brutalized by it.

Your dual power tales are as useful to anarchists as the charity galas where you rub elbows with the robber barons you expect us to beg for table scraps.

Three points:

1. Anarchists are not interested in "forging alliances" with functionaries of the government or otherwise participating in the state/capital mechanism, period. Despite the turgid assertions of the anarcho-Democrat sect, anarchy isn't entangled with the left wing of government. Anarchy rejects all wings of all governments.
2. Anarchists aren't a lobby group that pressures politicians to do our bidding. Politicians will never work for us because their interests are not our interests.
3. Anarchy is not a program to set up a shadow government in the hopes of one day replacing the current government.

McKee then proceeds to quote several other theorists talking about prefiguration, in order to equate prefiguration (which actually has some anarchist underpinnings) with dual-power (which absolutely doesn't).

The attempt to whitewash authoritarian Leninist lingo and feed it to self-proclaimed anarcho-leftists who don't know any better should be met with ridicule for the sordid manipulation it is. Manipulation that really ought to be expected from someone who insists on referring to themselves as a nongovernmental activist because the word "anarchist" would presumably be too extreme.

Soon after McKee wrote the essay, USA leftists calling themselves anarchists latched onto the new revisionist version of the term, while reactionary Lenin-acolytes continued using the term according to its original, unadulterated definition. Since these two (theoretically) wildly at-odds groups of people all mingle in the same spaces for some peculiar reason, the leftists soon saw themselves enthusiastically nodding in agreement with the conservative Leninists who appeared to share their

ideas, allowing the Leninists to flood these so-called "left-unity" spaces with even more authoritarian power-machinations such as their proposal for a dictatorship of the proletariat.

It's incredibly aggravating that so many left-wing USA Democrats identifying as anarchists insist on brandishing authority-laden entryist concepts like direct democracy, justified hierarchy, legitimate government, lesser-evilism and now dual-power while claiming they want anarchy.

Anarchy is not democratic government, not socialist government, not progressive government, not counter-government, not the people's government, not decentralized government, not libertarian government, not minimized government, not green government, not cybernated government, not blockchain government and not dual government.

Anarchy is, always has been and always will be a loud and firm proclamation of *no government*. No authority, no social hierarchy, no power-elite. Anarchy is the outright rejection of every frenzied power machination of every petty tyrant the world over. It's saying no to all authority, however fresh, empowering or woke the authority purports to be.

We don't politely ask the corporations to stop polluting. We don't ask the banks to stop printing and distributing the currency that upholds the class system. We don't plead with our bosses to stop exploiting our labor. We don't petition politicians to stop serving their corporate benefactors. We don't ask coal to stop staining our fingers. We don't ask sandflies to stop biting our necks.

Anarchists know better than to plead with our oppressors to stop oppressing us. Anarchists, if nothing else, have a shared understanding of the workings of power and authority. We know we can only get back from our rulers what we take from them by force. What we pry from their cold, dead fingers. Because authority doesn't compromise with its servants any more than a bear compromises with a fish in its jaw.

Anarchy is having the prudence to perceive the corrupting force of all power. Anarchy is seeing through each of the pretty new masks the power-elite crudely crafts and slaps on to dupe us into compliance with their cruel and dangerous program.

When you prop up state/capital, work to further the legitimacy of its agents, while also embedding yourself into the system in order to "change it from within", the theoretical "counter-institutions" you claim to also support are effectively negated because — guess what? People who work for the state are not countering the state in any way that counts.

Functionaries of the state and capital (whether lobby groups, campaigners / canvassers, political committees or "progressive" politicians standing in elections) are not able to mount real opposition to the state or capital because they have been successfully absorbed by the state and capital and now do the bidding of the elite class, in one way or another.

Anyone claiming they're entering the belly of the beast so they can somehow tame the beast is either deluding themselves or willfully lying. The acid in that belly will melt away any anarchist inclinations they may have held in seconds. The system is designed to absorb all threats to the system. Anyone who claims they can work within the system to counter the system is nothing more than a willing tool of the system.

It's endlessly frustrating to me how often authoritarian ideology like dual power is absorbed by clueless red anarchists and then clumsily promoted as anarchist praxis every single day.

Anyone claiming to be anti-authority while going out of their way to organize collective action (e.g. the USA's DSA) to further the authority of politicians / a political party / the state is a liar and a coward.

You will not reform authority. Authority will reform you. Into a tool of authority.

Once you ingrain yourself within systems of authority, specifically within the system that exploits the living shit