

CONTEMPORARY INDIVIDUALIST ANARCHISM: THE *BROADSIDES* OF THE BOSTON ANARCHIST DRINKING BRIGADE 1988-2000

Joe Peacott, Jim Baker, and Others



The Boston Anarchist Drinking Brigade was founded in 1986 in Massachusetts, USA.

Its aim was “[a] desire to avoid becoming a serious, committed, and humorless organization, coupled with the dissemination of individualist and other heretical ideas [that] made the BAD Brigade an object of continuous controversy within the anarchist scene.”

The Brigade is part of the ‘individualist anarchist’ tradition whose roots can be traced back to the writings and works of mid-to-late 19th and early 20th century figures such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Josiah Warren, and Benjamin Tucker.

In principle, the Brigade split in 1999. In practice, its main members have continued to produce a number of pamphlets, newsletters, and monographs. Details can be found on its website at <http://world.std.com/~bbrigade/>. The Brigade can be contacted at Bad Press, PO Box 230332 Anchorage, AK 99523-0332, USA, or bbrigade@world.std.com.

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DEREGULATING DRUG USE: AN ANARCHIST PERSPECTIVE

Joe Peacott

The debate about drug use in this country is usually framed in terms of continued criminalization versus legalization. The positions in this debate mean continued harassment, including arrests, imprisonment, theft of property, and possibly in the near future, execution of drug dealers and users, versus legal regulation of drug use and sales, similar to that of alcohol and cigarettes, including heavy taxation, and restraints on where, when and to whom drugs can be sold. Both of these positions are based on the same assumption, government has the right to tell individuals what they can and cannot do. While legalization would surely be preferable to continued criminalization, there is a third alternative: decriminalization and deregulation. Decriminalization and deregulation of drugs would mean no laws against drugs, no government regulation of drugs sales and use, no arrests, no prisons, no taxes. Eliminating drug laws, instead of simply replacing them with different laws, would produce a free market in drugs where people would be free to sell, ingest, or inject whatever they wished, without government interference.

Drug use is a voluntary, non-violent activity, and should be an individual decision, the business of no one but the user. Government has taken it upon itself to regulate drug use, just as it regulates alcohol use, restricts abortion, and registers and drafts people in order to better control people. Criminalization of drugs has produced, just as prohibition of alcohol did, an enormous amount of violent crime. Most of this crime is motivated by the need to obtain money to pay the artificially inflated price of illegal drugs. This drug-associated crime is then used as an excuse for police to indiscriminately harass young black men, stopping and searching, and frequently arresting them on the street, for no reason other than that they live in a 'high crime' area. Doing away with drug laws would dramatically lower the cost of drugs and thereby eliminate most street crime, as well as remove the excuse police use to terrorize black people.

Decriminalization and deregulation and the resultant competitive market in drugs would produce purer and safer drugs, eliminating much of the death and illness associated with drug use, most of which is caused by contamination of drugs or needles, and unreliable drug strength, not by the nature of the drug itself. Heroin is no more dangerous than aspirin if it is carefully prepared without dangerous additives and injected with a sterile needle. And aspirin overdose can kill as easily as heroin overdose, it just takes longer and feels worse. Decriminalizing needle use would virtually eliminate the transmission of AIDS among IV drug users, as has been the experience in the 38 American states which do not restrict sale of sterile needles. Needle exchange programs are not enough; there need to be more needles available to eliminate needle sharing.

Besides abolishing laws against recreational drugs, eliminating government regulation of 'therapeutic' drugs would

also benefit people. The FDA prevents many drugs from reaching the market, including treatments for AIDS, cancer and other serious illnesses. And those that do eventually become available are delayed for years by FDA rules, while thousands die. The government is currently responsible for restrictions on aerosolized pentamidine, a drug which prevents *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, the most frequent cause of death in people who have AIDS. Just as drug laws lead to deaths associated with street drugs and keep people from obtaining sterile needles to prevent transmission of AIDS, drug laws are killing people with AIDS by denying them effective treatment. Drug laws in this country are also preventing marketing of newly developed abortifacients, drugs which induce abortion early in pregnancy, freeing women from their current reliance on the medical establishment for abortion services. These drugs would put the decision about abortion where it belongs: with the individual.

Eliminating drug laws would greatly increase people's options in the areas of pleasure and health. It would also reduce crime, reduce death and illness associated with illegal drug use, and reduce deaths from AIDS and other serious illnesses. Individuals should be free to make their own decisions about drug use, and all other aspects of their lives, without the interference of government or 'the community'.

First published in November 1988 as BAD Broadside #1.

ABOLISH ALL PRISONS!

Joe Peacott

The federal, state and local governments in the US are in the business of locking up huge numbers of people. There are over 48,000 persons in federal prisons, twice the number in 1980, and 577,000 in state prisons. There are 235 prisoners for every 100,000 US citizens, with the prison population growing 15 times faster than the general population. Authorities all over the country are building more prisons and planning to lock up more and more people, with a projection of a federal prison population of 147,000 within 12 years. Despite this, violent crime, especially murders of young black and Hispanic men in large cities, is increasing daily, with an accompanying increase in police harassment and violence. Additionally, large numbers of prisoners (49% in Massachusetts) end up back in jail after they serve their time because they return to their prior activities. Locking people up does not prevent or deter crime, and does not keep those locked up from repeating their offenses.

Punishment, not rehabilitation, is clearly the mission of prisons. In prison, besides being deprived of their freedom to move about as they please, people are abused and harassed by both guards and other prisoners. They are treated as children are usually treated in outside society, and then expected to behave like responsible adults at the end of their sentences. Prisoners are forced to work for

no or minimal pay and are often coerced into working in especially dangerous, and sometimes fatal work, like fighting fires and cleaning up oil spills. Beating, raping, intimidating, enslaving and infantilizing people produces not caring, non-violent people, but angry, hostile, often violence-prone ones. Besides being ineffective in preventing crime, abusing people who commit crimes is unjust. When escaped prisoners are found years later living crime-free lives under new names, demonstrating that they have reformed, they are usually returned to prison to finish their sentences, and even have years added on as punishment for escaping. This is nothing but vengefulness on the part of cops and courts, not an attempt to protect others from criminals. Whatever offenses people have committed, it is inhuman and vicious to turn around and abuse them in turn. There are other, more just and less cruel ways to deal with people who are now locked up.

Most people in prison are there for committing offenses not involving violence, and many of these are there for activities that harm no one, or least no one other than themselves, in any way, and should not be of any concern to the government or any one else. Many people are in jail for selling, using, or transporting illegal drugs, engaging in or soliciting for sex in exchange for money, or having consensual sex with people younger than themselves, of the same sex as themselves, or in ways of which the state disapproves. These activities are non-coercive and non-violent and should not be the business of anyone but the participants. Violence is sometimes associated with some of these activities, but that is because the government has illegalized them and driven them underground. Decriminalizing these voluntary activities would solve that problem. As for those offenses involving harm to a person, but not violence, like robbery, some sort of restitution makes more sense than imprisonment.

Even for those who have committed violence against other people, prison is clearly not the solution. It does not deter murder, rape, battery, etc, and may in fact promote their repetition. The only way to prevent violent crime is to enable people to defend themselves against it. One way to accomplish this is to eliminate anti-gun laws so that people can defend themselves against others who may attack them. Relying on police has been shown to be ineffective in preventing violence against people, and the existence of these police forces has been used as a justification for disarming individuals, especially poor and/or black people. Besides this, police themselves are responsible for much of the violence against people that occurs. Handgun possession, especially by women, has been shown to be an effective deterrent to violent crime. When Orlando, Florida conducted a program where 6000 women learned to use and carried handguns and the program was widely publicized, the incidence of rape there dropped 90% at a time when rape was dramatically increasing elsewhere.

Like most statist institutions, prisons are both ineffective and unjust. The only humane way to deal with the problem of prisons is to abolish them, and allow people, as individuals or in groups, according to their own preference, to organize their own self-defense against violence and

theft.

First published in March 1990 as BAD Broadside #2.

WINNIE MANDELA, QUEERBASHING, AND THE LEFT

Joe Peacott

Several months ago a trial took place in South Africa that might have been expected to be of great interest to the progressive lesbian/gay movement. Winnie Mandela was charged with and convicted of various charges connected with the kidnapping and beating of several young men, one of whom was later killed by her associates. What makes this trial relevant to the gay/lesbian movement is that at least part of the reason for this attack was that these men were believed to be engaging in sex with other men, an activity that Mandela apparently finds worthy of punishment by beatings, and even death. Over two years ago, when this incident occurred, Mandela was severely criticized by anti-apartheid activists in South Africa. However, with the notable exception of the article, "Has Winnie Lost It?" in the May 1991 BLK, we have yet to see any criticism of Mandela by progressive lesbian/gay activists or publications in the united states, including radicals like Queer Nation or Gay Community News. A number of local lesbians even participated in the organization of a women's event in Boston in her honor last June. Apparently many radical lesbians and gay men feel that queer-bashing is okay, as long as it is perpetrated by other progressives like Mandela.

We concede that it is hard to know all the facts about what happened in this incident, but we have read nothing which leads us to doubt that anti-homosexual bias played an important role in the beatings and murder. Mandela herself admits that the presumed homosexual contact between her victims and a minister at a hostel in which they lived was the motivation for their abduction and beating. She claims, however that she was only trying to "protect" them from "sexual abuse", despite the fact the "victims" have never claimed that any abuse occurred. Like many parents who try to beat homosexual feelings out of their children, Mandela feels it is legitimate to torture those who prefer homosexual sex. If she were truly interested in protecting these men against alleged sexual abuse, why not deal with the supposed "abuser", instead of further abusing the "victims". The only abuse suffered by these young men was that inflicted by Mandela and her friends.

Such actions on the part of Mandela against her opponents should come as no surprise given her commitment to violence and bloodshed as the preferred method of dealing with problems. Mandela has been tied to three other kidnappings and assaults, as well as a disappearance, that took place within a few months of the events she was being tried for. She also has been quoted as saying, "With our matches and our necklaces, we will liberate South Africa", referring to the practice of placing gasoline-soaked

tires around the necks of those some anti-apartheid activists consider “traitors”, and lighting them on fire. Interestingly, just like Mandela’s bullying of young queers, necklacing is used only against black people.

Unlike most of their counterparts in the United States, the progressive movement in South Africa refused to keep silent in the face of Mandela’s brutality. In fact, the first reports of the assaults and killing were published by an anti-apartheid newspaper, not the press controlled by or supportive of the government. Anti-apartheid organizations in South Africa, such as the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the United Democratic Front (UDF), were quick to condemn such violence on the part of Mandela. The UDF/COSATU statement read, in part, “We are outraged at Mrs Mandela’s obvious complicity in the recent abductions and assault of Stompie.... We are outraged by the reign of terror that the team [Mandela’s body guards, also known as the Mandela United Soccer Club or the Mandela Football Club] has been associated with. Not only is Mrs Mandela associated with the team, in fact, the team is her own creation. We are of the view that Mrs Mandela has abused the trust and confidence which she has enjoyed over the years.... The Mass Democratic Movement hereby distances itself from Mrs Mandela and her actions.”

This rebuke from her former allies in the anti-apartheid movement came only five months after another challenge to her image as a well-liked opposition leader. In September 1988, Mandela’s home in Soweto was burned down by local “comrades”, apparently in retaliation for a sexual assault against a student leader by members of the “football club”. (Apparently, real sexual abuse is acceptable to Mandela and her friends, as long as it is heterosexual.) The attack on Mandela’s home appears to have been prompted as well by ill-feeling generated by Mandela’s rather comfortable lifestyle, which includes ownership of a Mercedes, in the midst of the widespread poverty in Soweto. According to a source in the anti-apartheid labor movement, the public condemnation of Mandela by COSATU and UDF was prompted by pressure on the part of Soweto residents fed up with the activities of Mandela and her associates. Prior to the killing of Stompie Seipei, opposition among other anti-apartheid activists to Mandela’s thugs had led both Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela to call on her to disband the club.

The left in the United States, hetero or homo, has never been very principled in its defense of individuals against the tyranny of progressive governments or movements. For instance, some gay/lesbian activists still defend the Cuban politicians who imprisoned queers in the past and quarantine HIV-positive people today, practices these activists would find intolerable if engaged in by the United States government or its allies. Apparently, for many leftists, political leaders like Mandela and Castro who mouth the slogans of liberation do not need to live up to the same standards of behavior as mere mortals. In a column entitled ‘Leftist cheerleaders are often wrong, but never in doubt’, Thomas Sowell discussed the mindset of Mandela’s supporters: “Long before the present ugly episode, Winnie

Mandela was justifying the hideous practice of burning political enemies alive. How could anyone have romanticized such a person? Like too many other issues, South Africa is not approached as a serious question about the fate of millions of flesh-and-blood human beings, but as a symbolic issue providing yet another backdrop for our own moral preening. Those who are preoccupied with showing that they are on the side of the angels are quick to find angels to side with. Winnie Mandela was just one of those angels.”

Just as many American leftists once ignored credible evidence that progressive leaders like Lenin and Castro were brutalizing and killing dissidents, most leftists today, including many lesbian/gay activists, continue to fawn over Mandela, despite the fact that even many of her former allies have seen her for the bully she is and have spoken out against her. People who are serious about liberation, sexual and otherwise, need to have a consistent commitment to personal freedom and be willing to speak out whenever people are unjustly attacked, whoever the attacker may be. Hypocritically covering-up and apologizing for the excesses of progressives puts into serious doubt the left’s stated commitment to a free society.

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A DEFENSE OF THE FREEDOM TO BE LEFT ALONE

Joe Peacott

We live in an invasive society. Our freedom to peacefully lead our lives as we please is severely restricted by laws, rules, and regulations instituted by governments of all sorts and their supporters among the populace. We are subject to a huge number of laws, among which are laws that: outlaw certain forms of consensual sex; ban public nudity; restrict the sale or production of sexually explicit books and films; criminalize the sale of sexual favors; prohibit ownership of handguns; require us to get notes from a physician to buy certain medicines; prevent us from seeking the assistance of another in ending our own lives; fine us for not wearing seatbelts; and attempt to prevent us from using the recreational drugs of our choice. Why do people tolerate such a level of government interference in their personal lives? Because they have been convinced that individuals and society need to be protected from the consequences of “bad” choices people might make if they were left alone.

Governments presume that they know better what is good for others than do those people themselves. These rulers seem to think that when other people make choices that they consider unwise, unhealthy, or immoral, those people are misbehaving because they are either uninformed, stupid, or physically, psychologically, or morally diseased. The state then feels justified in stepping in to

prevent the "unenlightened" from harming themselves. These busybodies fail to see that other people can freely choose to engage in activities of which they disapprove.

People like different things and have different ideas about how to lead their lives. Some prefer heterosex, some homosexual, some both, some neither. Some like coffee and cigarettes, others vodka and cocaine. Some prefer to have physicians tell them how to stay or get healthy and what medicines to take, others would prefer non-medical healers or wish to make their own choice about what drugs they wish to use. Some choose to engage in sex for free, while others are willing to pay for or sell sexual favors. These activities are the result of freely made choices and no one is affected by any of them except the individuals who voluntarily engage in them. Therefore, they should not be the business of anyone but the participants and should not be interfered with by others.

People sometimes engage in activities that are potentially harmful to them because the pleasure or benefit they derive or hope to derive from the activity is more important to them than the actual or potential harm the activity may cause them. People smoke tobacco despite the increase in lung cancer and emphysema risk associated with it because of the pleasure they get from smoking. Some people engage in sexual activity, like cocksucking without condoms, which carries some risk of causing HIV infection, because the sexual pleasure they obtain is worth the small risk of being infected and perhaps developing AIDS. Such choices should be left entirely up to the individual, since no one else is harmed. We should be free to live our lives as we please, even if we make some decisions that turn out to have been unwise.

Some voluntary activities are prohibited or regulated because they have the potential to involve others involuntarily. Since guns can be used to kill others, the argument is made that gun ownership should be regulated to prevent possible harm to others. Some harmed by guns deserve to be harmed, as when gun owners are defending themselves or their property, but sometimes innocent others are harmed by gun owners. The fact that non-invasive people are sometimes injured or killed when guns are freely available, however, does not justify restricting their availability. Non-coercive people are also sometimes hurt or die in car accidents, but few, if any, advocate banning cars for this reason. Just because a gun or car can be misused to hurt someone who has not injured the owner does not justify banning it.

Supporters of interventionist governments would argue that no or little risk is acceptable in society. However, the problem with this outlook is that lowering risk means restricting freedom. A society that values freedom will necessarily be a society which allows people the freedom to engage in risky behavior. We must make a choice: either a free, somewhat risky world, or a safe and secure, but stifling and unfree one.

Politicians of all political tendencies, rightists and leftists alike, support government intervention in other people's

lives. Conservatives and conventional liberals may be more crass and open about their interventionism, but they hold no monopoly on it. The socialist left is perfectly willing to interfere with the affairs of others, and the socialist states have an even worse record than the united states when it comes to restrictions on individual freedom. Few leftists criticize the prescription system or laws against recreational drug use, for instance, and the socialist states are notorious for persecuting people who engage in homosexual sex.

No government of any sort, no matter what its size or political orientation, will leave people alone. The nature and mission of government is to interfere with free individuals and tell them how they should live their lives. We will only be truly and completely free when people finally decide that they can live better and more freely without any government and begin the process of building a stateless society.

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AN ANARCHIST DEFENSE OF PORNOGRAPHY

Joe Peacott

Pornography continues to be a controversial issue, including among anarchists, whom one might expect to be among the strongest supporters of free sexual expression. However, many anarchists have criticized pornography and some have supported and/or participated in the anti-pornography movement, the members of which not infrequently strive to prevent those wishing to view pornography from doing so. Some anarchists in Canada even went so far as to firebomb a sex video store, an activity which many other anarchists either ignored or chose not to criticize. Meanwhile, those of us who defend pornography and freedom of expression, sexual or otherwise, are dismissed as sexists and reactionaries. Why is it that supposed lovers of freedom and sexual liberation seem to forget their principles when it comes to sexually explicit literature and pictures?

The anti-pornography movement, including its anarchist members and supporters, is not monolithic. Some dislike dirty books and movies, but support people's freedom to produce and consume such material. They rely on argument and protest in an attempt to change the attitudes of those who like porn, encouraging them to refrain from indulging in it, and do not support censorship. Others, again including some anarchists, feel that physical attacks on porn stores or government-mandated censorship are acceptable tactics in the fight against porn. While only the latter position is censorious, and therefore unanarchic, the former position, which is contemptuous of depictions of sex is also problematic in a movement which purportedly favors sexual freedom.

Pornography is simply a depiction, in words or pictures, of sexual activity. Most people find sex a good, pleasurable

activity and looking at pornography is sexually arousing for many people. Anti-porn people frequently say that the images of women in porn are degrading and offensive to women. However, while some women certainly are offended by pornographic images they find degrading, other women enjoy pornography. (See, for instance the book *Caught Looking* by Kate Ellis, et al, or *Writing Sado-Masochistic Pornography: A Woman's Defence* by Deborah Ryder.) While the anti-porn movement views women as a class, who all share the same goals and desires, women are not a mass of automatons who all think and feel alike; some are pro-porn and some are anti-porn, just like men. Additionally, the images of women in porn are no more sexist and demeaning towards women than the images of women in most literature and visual media, from novels to movies to TV to magazine ads. In a sexist society, most images of women are going to contain at least some of the sexist attitudes common to both women and men. Besides, some pornography contains women characters who are very independent, self-motivated and concerned with their own pleasure, especially in S/M porn where women are frequently on top. What bothers these people is not the image of women in porn, which is like that elsewhere in society, but its sexual explicitness; they are uncomfortable with sex.

Anti-porn activists also claim that porn, with its allegedly degrading view of women is responsible for the attitudes and actions of men towards women, and therefore is different from other forms of expression. But, as with other types of writing and pictures, porn generally shows what people want to see and are comfortable with; it doesn't plant foreign ideas in people's minds. And, even in the few cases where novel ideas are introduced to people in porn, they remain just that, ideas. Men do not rape or beat women because they see it in a movie. Sexism, rape, and beatings of women by their partners existed long before the widespread dissemination of modern pornography, and societies with little or no porn are no less sexist and violent than those where it is common.

The claim that men are made violent by porn, besides being inaccurate, is also based on a myth: that most pornography is violent. Most porn is composed of depictions of non-violent, consensual, mutually pleasurable sex. Some of it also contains S/M sex, which, while including the trappings of violence, and involving (apparent) pain, is also consensual and mutually pleasurable. There is certainly some porn which depicts rape or other coercive and violent sex, but it is a small portion of the porn produced and consumed. Moreover, like violent non-sexual movies and books, it is simply a depiction of a fantasy, made up by the author, or performed by consenting actors/actresses. Violent porn is no more real violence than are the Halloween movies. And if anti-porn people are truly concerned about the violence and not the sex in porn, why is it that they protest only porn shops or destroy porn mags and video store, while ignoring *Friday the Thirteenth* and horror magazines and books.

One aspect of the whole phenomenon of porn that is often left out of the discussion is that of homosexual porn.

Much of the pornography produced today shows men having sex with men, with a growing proportion depicting woman-woman sex. The anti-porners tend to ignore homoporn because it gives the lie to many of their arguments. If depictions of inequitable sexual encounters between men and women are degrading to women, why aren't similarly inequitable encounters between men and other men (which are very common in all-male porn, with its tops and bottoms) degrading to men? And if they are degrading to men, why isn't such porn offensive to men, especially bottom men? And, if there is S/M imagery and (pretend) violence in this porn, why doesn't this result in widespread violence against men, and even rapes of men?

A discussion of such issues never takes place, since most of the people who oppose heteroporn are unwilling to talk about, let alone criticize, queer porn because they do not want to risk being seen as "homophobic" or otherwise politically incorrect. This is due to the fact that porn has often been seen, rightly, as liberatory by homosexual men (and recently also by some homosexual women), and is a much more open part of mainstream life for queer men than heteroporn is in straight society. Because of this "politicization" of queer porn, any discussion of homoporn by the anti-porners, few of whom are homosexual men, is likely to be criticized by gay liberationists as "anti-gay", and thus effectively suppressed. This is unfortunate, since such a discussion would show the fallacies in the anti-porn arguments.

Even though it seems odd that sexual liberationists and anarchists would find porn offensive, it is certainly true that people have different tastes. Just because I like porn doesn't mean that you should. But, if one finds something offensive, one should simply avoid it, and thereby avoid the offense. However, anti-porners are not content with this strategy when it comes to porn. They feel that if it offends them, it must offend others, primarily women, and they take it upon themselves to protect these others from it. Additionally, since they feel it leads otherwise non-violent, women-loving men onto the path of violence and sexism, they feel they need to prevent men from seeing porn as well.

As stated above, anti-porners differ on the strategy they employ to achieve these ends. While those who rely on argument and protest to influence others to avoid porn are preferable to the censors, their ideas about people are problematic for those with an anarchist perspective. People are free agents who make choices and decisions based on what they observe, hear, and otherwise experience, and are responsible for the outcome of these choices. The libertarian way to deal with other free agents who choose to view or read materials of which one disapproves is to let them see these books or movies and then discuss the material with them and try to convince them of one's point of view. The issue should be debated in a free marketplace of ideas, a marketplace where all should feel free to view the images or writings under discussion, not simply taking the word of the puritans that porn contains degrading or harmful images or words. People who pressure porn dealers to stop distributing porn, and who encourage others to

avoid porn based on someone else's experience of it, while engaging in a non-coercive, and therefore acceptable form of activity, do not respect the decision-making ability of others. Nor do they trust the strength of their own arguments when up against a person's own experience of pornography. Such people feel that others need to be protected (in large part, from themselves) by those more enlightened, i.e., the anti-porn people. Urging others to restrict their experiences and rely on the opinions of others in such matters as reading and viewing preferences, including the reading and viewing of porn, while not unanarchic, is certainly illiberal.

More objectionable to anarchists, however, are the anti-porn activists who are frankly censorious. While we have not come across any anarchists who endorse laws banning porn, many anarchists support destruction of the property of porn dealers. Destruction of films and books which some people wish to sell to others who voluntarily seek to buy them is just as much censorship as any government mandated law. While sharing the views of the other anti-porners who seek to protect others from porn, these people go a step further and use coercive force to achieve their ends. This is totally incompatible with the kind of voluntary society sought by most anarchists, and should be denounced by all freedom-lovers.

Pornography, like any other form of entertainment can be good or bad, based on the individual merits of any particular work. However, as a genre of literature or film, it is no better or worse or good or evil than any other. If porn is bad or sexist, the best strategy is to criticize it and discuss it with others, and/or make good, non-sexist porn, not suppress it. Sex and its depiction are a source of pleasure for many and our freedom to indulge in both should be defended, or at least tolerated, by anarchists. Censors, including those who claim to be anarchists, are the enemies of freedom, and anarchists who support them call into question their commitment to a free society.

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ANARCHISM AND CIVILITY

Jim Baker

A generally accepted anarchist tenet is that the State can only be effectively dismantled by a voluntary, cooperative and spontaneous insurrection by the people. Authoritarian revolutions gotten up by manipulative vanguardists are rejected as inconsistent with the anarchist belief that the means must be consistent with the ends. History has plenty of examples to show that seizure of power through elitist revolt, rather than furthering the goals of the revolution, actually becomes a process for the strengthening of the State in a new and more vicious form. From an evanescent moment of exultant freedom one inevitably wakes up to the hangover of a Napoleon or a Lenin or a Mao.

Nevertheless, contemporary anarchists are often still mes-

merized by the call to arms, even when the chance of such a romantic gesture succeeding is nil. The only real revolutions occur when popular discontent causes the state to collapse under the weight of its own folly, not when some bloody vanguard, following whatever destructive fantasy its leaders concoct, meets the modern state head-on. This inevitably results in meaningless hardship for the people involved, with the greatest misery reserved for innocents who gets in the way of either side's fallacious ideology. Being a "rebel" and antagonizing the flatulent powers-that-be in a modern state can be an exciting game, but it is only bluster and puerile self-gratification when genuine revolt is implausible. In the end the most radical "revolutionaries" either end up as bitter, dead-end martyrs or become the next generations' "born-again" capitalists. Having had their fling, they come to believe in their new "realism" as solipsistically as they embraced rebellion. None of this brings us any closer to a solution to the problem of the State.

The fallacy of revolutionary adventurism is mirrored on a personal level by the intolerant and abusive discourse of identity politics. Everyone is pre-judged by their race, gender, sexual or religious affiliation, and socially compartmentalized in some politically correct egg basket. The goal of the anarchist movement is to establish a free, tolerant and cooperative society which will embrace diversity and celebrate difference. If the means are to be consistent with the ends, then how can such an abrasive and bigoted practice as identity politics possibly achieve that end? Identifying the "enemy" by birth or predilection, regardless of an individual's actual beliefs or actions, is simple bigotry. Awarding moral virtue on the same grounds is simple stupidity. Similarly, essaying to act as a unwarranted spokesperson for a diverse grouping of individuals who by chance share a single basic characteristic is the most arrogant sort of elitism. Real people, stripped of their individual identities, are thus subsumed in some hypothetical single-dimensional construct that effectively denies them any complexity of character. This isn't an answer to institutionalized racism and bigotry, but rather its mirror image.

This sort of prejudicial activity has appeal for the simple-minded. It's easy to either attack or adulate a stranger on the grounds of appearance. A similar anxiety powered the old Sumptuary laws which punished anyone who dressed above their social class -- it was too unnerving for the elite to think they might make a mistake and treat an inferior as an equal, thanks to illicit appearances. Political prejudice makes it simple to get through the difficulty of rootless modern life where there are no clear-cut exterior indications of what a person might really be like. All white males (unless, perhaps, gay) are dangerous, power-driven and bigoted. All women (unless, perhaps, Republican) are intuitive, nurturing and empathetic with Nature. Members of minorities (take your pick) are morally superior to members of majorities. Classifications and labels which assist us in making such decisions are more real (and more important) than the people they describe. Et cetera. Bullshit.

The goal of a tolerant and cooperative society of free individuals can only be achieved by those very means -- by be-

ing tolerant, cooperative and free. We must be better companions to our fellow mortals, whatever their outward characteristics. Civility, which facilitates cooperation, is imperative if anarchy is to really work. Pigheaded and self-important aggressiveness, hypercriticism and easy intolerance is a recipe for the status quo. We don't mean to suggest some sort of all accepting, "turn-the-other-cheek" bourgeois crap, either. Once you get beyond the labels, there are still unfortunately plenty of folks that it makes sense to despise. Arrogant, violent, intolerant, fanatical, bigoted, manipulative, rapacious... individuals with these characteristics must be guarded against, but they are not all found in one easily recognized group identity. These adjectives equally describe individual men, women, blacks, whites, handicapped people -- the whole gamut of the human race. Nor is anyone as morally pure as some of our new puritan idealists would insist that they be. A person is the sum of their character traits, not a distillation of the most pronounced ones. Radicals are just as prone to frailties of character as industrialists. It is by their actual effect on their community and environment that we should evaluate our fellow beings, not by some dominant virtue or fault which particularly excites us. It would be far preferable to tolerate an insensitive verbal bigot who in practice actually helped people than a pious hypocrite who mouthed politically correct platitudes and then went home and beat his lover.

Anarchism involves conscientious and responsible judgement, and the effort to see through the shucks, facades and hype of our unregenerate society. One of the most virulent traps for the contemporary Left is the aping of the knee-jerk bigotry of the Right, which involves a mean-spirited "us-and-them" prejudice through group identity. There are plenty of actual villains out there, some easily identifiable, others hidden in hypocrisy. There are equally many good people obscured by the accidents of their birth, upbringing or situation. Let us therefore focus on the individual rather than the group, and recognize that the only way we will ever really achieve the goals of Anarchy is through living those difficult precepts in the here and now, and treat each other civilly. There can be no other effective preparation for Anarchy's ultimate realization in the future.

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NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE, NO EXCUSE

Joe Peacott

Since late April, much has been written in the left and anarchist press about the acquittal of the cops who beat Rodney King and the beatings, killings, and stealing that followed shortly afterwards in Los Angeles. As could be expected most of the leftist press either endorsed or apologized for the violence committed by the residents of LA, while justly condemning that of the LA Police Department. What is more distressing, but no less surprising, is the fact that some of the anarchist press, as well, has either

supported or been unwilling to criticize the beatings and killings that took place in LA on April 29 and the following days.

During the 'uprising' or 'rebellion', as leftists and many anarchists are fond of calling the events in LA, people of many different colors were beaten and/or killed, for no reason other than hatred; hatred sometimes based on racist feelings, sometimes simply based on viciousness and lack of respect for the lives and property of others. Few of those attacked were cops and none of them were politicians, judges, or even jurors in the trial of the cops who beat King; they were primarily people going about their own business who were unlucky enough to cross the path of their attackers. The businesses, homes, and meeting places of many people, again, people of various colors, were trashed, burned and stolen from, including the Aquarian bookstore, the oldest black bookstore in the united states, and the First AME Church, the oldest black congregation in LA. These were not generally the businesses, homes, or institutions of the wealthy, but the small shops of neighborhood business people and the homes of poor people.

Is this what the revolution means to the left in the United States? Is this the kind of society anarchists wish to build?

From June Jordan in *The Progressive*, to the editor of *The Libertarian Mutualist*, to Barbara Smith and Phill Wilson in *Gay Community News*, to the anonymous anarchists who produced *LA Today*, to the writers in *The Revolutionary Worker*, leftists and anarchists have defended, and "understood," and explained, and excused this hatred and violence. They blame Reagan and Bush and racism and the courts and the cops and the firefighters for the destruction and murder in LA. Not one of them has said beating and killing other people who have not initiated or planned to initiate violence against another person is wrong, regardless of what happened in the courts earlier that day. The writers in *LA Today* were blunt enough to label the violence in LA as not only justified, but necessary, while the editor of *The Libertarian Mutualist* was moved to "commend the brave perpetrators of random violence for being right on target." Neither have any of these writers said burning down other people's homes and shops is wrong. Ayofemi Folayan, in *Sojourner*, even implicitly blamed the fire department for the fires in LA, despite the fact that firefighters were being attacked when they tried to do their job, instead of holding those who lit them responsible. They all apologize for (in the words of Anti-Authoritarians Anonymous) "the excesses committed by a population enraged beyond measure," as if rage is an excuse for murder.

When a man, frustrated by his job and life in general, beats his girlfriend, do these people call on us to understand his rage? When cops, enraged by the refusal of one of their victims to obey their orders beat the shit out of him, are we expected to understand their rage? No, of course not. In such circumstances, we are expected to hold these violent individuals responsible for their actions and condemn them accordingly. The events in LA were

no different. The haters there were no more defensible than the cops who bashed Rodney King.

The reason these writers were willing to defend the perpetrators of the violence in LA is because they apply a double standard to people, a racist and class-biased double standard. They seem to postulate that, because of institutional racism and economic inequality, black and/or poor people are incapable of making the same moral choices that non-black and/or non-poor people make, and are therefore not responsible for the violent acts that some of them engage in. On the other hand, many of these leftists consider white people universally responsible for the actions of some people who are white, and therefore, in their moral system, all white people are fair targets for the “rage” of the “oppressed.” As someone wrote in *LA Today*, “We have to realize that the conditions people of color suffer under in this country fully justify any act of resistance they choose to take, even if it “takes out” a few of our kind (“our kind” meaning whites, anti-racists and racists alike). Some of the victims may be good persons, activists, good friends or lovers, but we must be careful to lay the blame where it belongs: not on Black [sic] people but on the racist white capitalist system itself. In the blinding anger of insurrection people don’t stop to ask your class credentials or your opinions on racism: if you’re white you’re a target. This is to be expected Not fun, but expected.” Note that they say that racist murder is “not fun.” They never say it is “not good.”

Poor and/or black people, despite having fewer options in a number of areas in their lives, due both to racism and restrictive laws, still are capable of making choices about their actions, and are responsible for the consequences of their decisions, just as other people are. To think otherwise is to infantilize black people and/or poor people, to consider them less fully human than other people. Such thinking lays the basis for parentalistic interventions in their lives by the state, ensuring their continued dependence and poverty. Despite the fact that leftists blame the state and white people for the violence and destruction in LA, they turn to the state (run primarily by white people) to remedy the situation, not by leaving people alone, but by becoming more involved in people’s lives. They support government housing, government jobs, welfare, government-funded and regulated child care, government funded drug “treatment,” more black cops, and other government-centered programs and activities. If racist government is the problem, how can it be depended upon to change things to the benefit of poor black people? Getting government out of the way is the only thing that will lead to the changes that can produce an improvement in the lives of people in LA. One important first step would be abolition of laws which restrict the entry of poor and/or black people into various jobs. Taxi regulations which constrict the transportation market, licensing of hairdressers, nurses and other occupations which excludes people who can’t afford government-certified training programs or licensing fees, and zoning laws which prevent people from working out of their homes or setting up shops in some areas are all forms of government intervention in our economic life which keep many black people in poverty.

Another area where state intervention is harming poor people is housing. Government-protected titles to abandoned property prevent people from homesteading and developing empty buildings, forcing them to rely on dirty, dangerous government housing. Additionally, drug laws, which criminalize a voluntary, private activity, promote the violence and theft that devastate many neighborhoods where black people live. Encouraging people to rely on themselves instead of the state can lead to self-sufficient, independent, and, hopefully, more rebellious people; people who will rebel against the real evils in society, the government and its laws, courts, cops, and military, not their neighbors and other non-coercive people.

The events in LA pushed leftists and anarchists to show where they stand, and, unfortunately, too many of them are standing on the wrong side. Leftists have been embracing government, racism, nationalism, murder, and destruction as the means to a free society at least since 1917. Historically, however, anarchists have talked of the need for consistency of means and ends, i.e., only moral or ethical means can yield moral or ethical results. But the anarchists who produced *LA Today* and *The Libertarian Mutualist* and those who share their views, expect us to believe that murder, assault and theft today will somehow lead to freedom and anarchy in the future. The experience of the authoritarian socialist movement has put the lie to such ideas, but apparently many anarchist are slow to learn. Unless anarchists develop a critique of the welfare state, abandon their leftist racism, and encourage people to rely on themselves and assume responsibility for their lives, there will be little to distinguish them from the rest of the authoritarian left, their anti-statist posturing notwithstanding. Only by encouraging libertarian actions in the present can we have any hope of a libertarian future.

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VOTING ANARCHISTS: AN OXYMORON OR WHAT?

Joe Peacott

While historically anarchists assiduously avoided any involvement with electoral politics, in more recent times, at least in the United States, some anarchists have advocated voting. The arguments these voting anarchists put forward are generally the same as those put forward by other leftists who are unable or unwilling to completely sever their connection to the political process. They argue that voting for their candidate, usually described as a lesser evil and usually (if not always) a Democrat, is necessary to prevent united states aggression against some favored revolutionary state (like Sandinista Nicaragua), is some sort of self-defense against the more conservative candidate, or is merely better than “apathy”, as some describe abstention from voting. While one could argue against voting simply because it rarely, if ever, accomplishes any of the goals its advocates claim it can, there is a more fundamental reason for anarchists to oppose voting: voting in government

elections is an inherently authoritarian activity, and authoritarian means never yield libertarian results.

The primary reason why anti-statists should not vote, and in fact should oppose voting, is that the very act of voting is an attempt on the part of voters to delegate to another a power that they could not justly possess themselves. Government is based on coercion. While states of various sorts provide some services and benefits to residents of their jurisdictions, the institution of government also utilizes cops, courts, the military, the IRS, etc, to coercively interfere in the lives of its subjects. Anarchists argue that no one, whether in or out of government should have such power. If this is true, anarchists, who oppose political power and coercion of any sort, cannot consistently advocate voting. Individuals should not have the authority to coerce others, and therefore they should not put themselves in a position to delegate such authority to third parties, which is the essence of voting. While some argue that they vote only in self-defense, the consequence of their voting is that their candidate coerces others who choose not to participate in the process, and therefore this method of self-defense should be unacceptable to anarchists.

Besides being unethical for an anti-authoritarian in and of itself, participation in electoral politics serves to legitimize the whole political process and the existence of government. If people did not vote, the democratic theory of government would lose its legitimacy and politicians would have to justify their rule on the basis of something other than the alleged consent of the governed. This, hopefully, would make the true nature of the state more obvious to the governed. And such a revelation would have the potential to motivate people to challenge, evade, or ignore government interference and coercion.

Even if anarchists could ethically participate in voting, there is one major reason to boycott the process: any candidate anarchists help elect will implement interventionist policies and initiate coercive actions, the results of which will be incompatible with anarchist goals. While voting for a Democrat may arguably make intervention in Cuba or Nicaragua less likely, it could make matters worse in Israel/Palestine or South Africa. (Neither the ANC nor the PLO will take a position on the United States presidential election, basically because they support Bush, but are embarrassed to admit this publicly.) Voters claim that a Republican will make things worse economically for working and/or poor people in the United States; however increased taxes, which will certainly be enacted by a Democratic president, will further impoverish the working people from whom they are extorted. Additionally, while people fear a supreme court with a Republican-appointed majority, individual justices are unpredictable (like Sandra Day O'Connor), and Democratic judges are as willing to coercively interfere in our lives as are Republicans.

Besides not yielding the desired results, voting by anarchists entails another weakness. Even if every anarchist in the United States voted in the presidential election, it would not influence the outcome. There are few enough anarchists about that their individual votes are meaning-

less, since elections are decided by millions of votes. If voting anarchists seriously believe that voting can ethically be done, even by anarchists, then they should consider entering the political process fully and campaigning for presidential candidates. If it's acceptable for them to vote, it's acceptable for their candidates to hold power in a coercive government, and it's acceptable for them to encourage others to vote. I have not seen any anarchists argue for active involvement in the Democratic Party, but this is a logical outcome of anarchist arguments for voting. If these people aren't comfortable urging others to vote for their candidates, they should rethink the justifications for their own voting.

Non-voting on the part of anarchists is not a sign of apathy. On the contrary, it is a sign of rejection of the political, i.e., coercive, means of dealing with problems and living our lives. If, as anarchists, we are serious about finding new ways of living and interacting, it would behoove us to stay out of the swamp of electoral politics and maintain our traditional opposition to involvement with electoral politics in any form.

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THE POWER AND THE PROPHET

Jim Baker

There has been a great deal of criticism in the popular press and elsewhere of the government's actions in the Branch Davidian debacle in Waco. The *Quincy Patriot Ledger* (21st April 1993) classified the event as "among the worst disasters in the history of American law enforcement". The ATF and the FBI are being taken over the coals for the methods used and their failure to achieve a pacific outcome to the siege. Reno and Clinton are faulted for lacking the prescience to anticipate a disaster of the magnitude that occurred, and for letting the Feds force the issue. Why didn't they, it is asked, keep up the "sanctions" until the Davidians got tired and came out? What excuse was there for losing patience and precipitating the holocaust that occurred? Many have even asked why the ATF felt it had to invade the Davidian compound in gangbusters style at all. The Davidians were out there in the middle of nowhere not bothering anyone, and Koresh could have been seized away from the compound. Obviously the Davidians should have been quite simply left alone.

Government sources offered a number of inadequate responses, from Reno's frank acceptance of responsibility (for the failure at the end, not the whole thing) to the defensive drivel from law enforcement types who tried to lay the blame for their own bungling on Koresh, who refused to play fair. The stockpile of legally purchased small arms is cited as the reason for the initial precipitate action. Rumors of undefined "child abuse", that fashionable all-round excuse for frantic intervention, was among the reasons given for the final attack. But the real reason for the extreme nature of the siege and the attack wasn't over a

question of guilt. It wasn't what Koresh and company had allegedly done, or even what they might do as armed sex-mad religious maniacs that was the problem. It was their unrepentant challenge to the authority of the State.

Much sense inevitability about the whole thing, and in a very important way they are right. Given the authoritarian nature of both the State and the Davidian sect, once the conflict was engaged, the only way it could end was in the destruction of the offending party. It has long been an anarchistic truism that the State reserves for itself a monopoly on coercive control. As Benjamin Tucker says flatly, "Aggression, invasion, government are interconvertible terms. The essence of government is control, or the attempt to control." The State will not and cannot allow an independent authority to evade this control within its jurisdiction. Koresh et al have been denounced for futilely holding out against the government rather than negotiating. It was indeed futile, but quite possibly they were aware that there was no real "negotiation" possible. It is a cardinal principal of the State that no one (apparently not even the heads of rival States) can hold themselves "above the law"; i.e., independent of the authority of the State. Therefore the only question is how the law will be avenged, not whether it will be. The only option open was complete surrender and abasement, after which the details and extent of punitive retribution could be adjusted.

The Davidian sect assumed and acted as if it had independent authority by virtue of the dictates of Christian doctrine. They wouldn't play by the rules and give in like nice little subjects of the State. Yet anarchists should resist the temptation to identify with these victims of governmental repression. The tragedy occurred because both sides shared a fatal weakness: a hypertrophy of authority. Religion, especially the Christian religion, has long claimed an authority that transcends that of the State in certain matters, although few groups are so naive as to force the issue to its logical conclusion. As anarchists have long insisted, such authority inevitably leads to disaster. David Koresh and his followers - it is nonsensical to pretend they were all his dupes - chose to follow the dictates of their faith rather than those of the State, as other religious groups from the Pilgrims to the Mormons have in the past. And as in the past, they suffered by challenging the power of the State.

The authority of the State is maintained through the demand that its laws and regulations be acceded to without question. It customarily took an open and active breach of these laws, an actual perpetration of a "crime", to precipitate a coercive response by the government. However, it has now become the fashion to anticipate possible breaches and to move against potential "criminals" who through their beliefs and activities (such as espousing religious, sexual or political nonconformity) may at some point transgress the myriad rules and regulations the government has at its disposal for excusing coercion. Following an often brutal and intimidating experience at the hands (and feet) of agencies such as the ATF and the DEA, the social penitent is supposed to be led away to be made an example of to other would-be dissidents. When

the invaded refuse to play to the State's script by not surrendering and confessing their subjugation, they must be destroyed (socially or biologically).

By asserting their own authority over that of the government, the Davidians laid down an irresistible challenge. The State took up the challenge, and as is usually the case, won. The Davidians were attacked, reviled, humiliated, demonized in the press and finally, although inadvertently, physically destroyed. There may be considerable criticism now and perhaps some jobs will be lost or some ameliorating statutes passed, but the State itself will not be affected. As long as the criticism focuses only on the manner in which the repression was handled rather than questioning the prerogative of the government to repress at will, nothing will change.

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INSULT AND INJURY, IDEAS AND ACTIONS: AN ANARCHIST DEFENSE OF UNLIMITED FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Joe Peacott

Virtually everyone in the United States claims to support freedom of speech and expression. When debate arises around attempts by certain individuals to exercise this freedom, however, one frequently finds purported free speech advocates among those hoping to suppress the speech of others. Unfortunately, the position taken by many anarchists and leftists on this issue is no more principled than that taken by more mainstream conservatives and liberals.

In practice, most people, whatever label they use to describe themselves, support the freedom to say things with which they agree, but favor efforts to prevent the expression of ideas which they strongly oppose. Many conservatives, for instance, wish to prevent any discussion of homosexuality which does not condemn it, but advocate the freedom of college students to use racist expressions. While, on the other hand, quite a number of liberals and leftists support allowing black racists to speak on college campuses, but oppose attempts by white racists to have public rallies. And anarchists have frequently sided with those who oppose free speech, going so far, at times, as to physically attack white racists.

One argument heard from those who wish to stop others from expressing themselves is that saying or depicting something nasty is the same as doing something nasty. By this logic, racist speech is the same as physically attacking someone because of their color, or the acting out of a rape scene by performers in a video is an actual rape. This is simply untrue. But using expressions like "verbal assault" to describe name-calling tends to blur the difference between speech and action, between insult and injury. Even as children, we were taught that "sticks and stones may break our bones, but names will never hurt us." And, while it is not true that we are not in some way "hurt" by

being called names or otherwise offended by the speech of others, a clear distinction must be maintained between emotional distress and physical pain. Self-defense is completely justified when one is physically attacked, whatever the reason. But, offensive speech, while we may wish to respond to it using various non-violent methods, is something we must allow if we wish to have a free society.

Another rationale for stifling the expression of others is that, even though the speakers or writers are doing no more than propagating certain ideas, these ideas might encourage some people to engage in actions which could physically hurt others. It is certainly true that people's actions are motivated by what they think, and that their ideas may be influenced by others. Nevertheless, wherever people acquire the beliefs which motivate them, each individual is responsible for her or his own actions. If someone, after hearing a racist speech attacks someone of a different color, or destroys someone's porn magazine after reading an anti-porn article, the attacked are justified only in defending against their attackers, not the speaker or writer. Only hostile actions merit a physical response.

The way to respond to ideas with which one disagrees is to propagate different ideas. Open debate of opposing ideas is the best method of finding the truth and promoting ethical philosophies. Only those who fear that they will lose in such a debate advocate that the views of their opponents should be suppressed. Those who advocate a new kind of society where people live in freedom, but feel it is necessary to suppress the ideas of others in order to achieve this new world, might benefit from a look back at the history of the soviet union, where exactly such a philosophy was implemented. As an early critic of the Leninists said, "Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently."

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PRINCIPLES AND POLARITIES

Jim Baker

There are an awful lot of aims claimed for anarchism today—not only the destruction of the State and other institutions of authority, but the entire gamut of radical concerns: capital, environmental danger, unjust discrimination, gendered inequality, racial prejudice, imperialism and the rest. All these concerns are valid, although not to the extent that some might assert. There is however a distinct danger that the anarchist tendency will be overwhelmed with what are for anarchism, in the final analysis, secondary concerns. The real goal of anarchism is not to deal piecemeal with a laundry list of cultural iniquities but rather to secure personal sovereignty, dignity and security for all people by destroying the basic patterns of power and authority which deny these things. Certainly anarchists should work individually and with others to overcome the many particular injustices in the world, but this does not make such efforts anarchistic struggles. Without some unifying understand-

ing of what the essence of anarchism really is, that it is neither pseudo-Marxism, rightist elitism nor a punk fashion statement, there is little chance that we will ever register even as much as a pin-prick on the body politic.

The basis of anarchism is human freedom, but freedom isn't a discrete entity. Rather it is a pattern of effects that carries a heavy load of contradictions, even in the life of each individual. It becomes infinitely more complex for a society of individuals. Freedom may be best seen as a negative and positive polarity, where the negative pole is the absence of restriction, and the positive pole the possession of capacity. The former primarily values the ability to act freely and the latter the capacity for equitable achievement. Both are traditional anarchist concerns, even though they conflict with one another. While neither position ostensibly denies the rights of other people, the chance-taking doers may achieve an inordinate share of resources through luck, skill or strength while the security-minded achievers may want to redress such inequalities in achievement by forcibly limiting some people's negative freedom or impounding the resources of some to redistribute them to others. An involuntary from each according to his ability, to each according to his need approach is logically inconsistent with anarchistic independence, yet so is a dismissive, unfeeling "I'm all right, Jack, I've got mine" attitude! It would be wrong for anarchism to sanction the perpetual extortion of redistribution (i.e., forcible taxation) once historical inequities have been addressed. But on the other hand, can it morally sanction the suffering of some while others flourish? What is necessary is that a balance be achieved which would emphasize the liberty of negative freedom while recognizing the moral strictures of positive freedom.

The need therefore is to arrive at a variety of anarchistic positions staked out on the various polarities of political concern rather than to ossify into rigid and exclusionary dogmas. The authoritarian-libertarian polarity is the most relevant to anarchism. The threat to freedom comes not only from the authoritarian nature of the State but also from that of the corporate world and various coercive social and cultural influences. Countering these repressive forces is where the anarchist effort is most vital for the future of freedom and human dignity. The anarchist position must therefore lie close to the libertarian pole while avoiding the extreme, where selfishness and amorality deny the importance of social cooperation. On the other hand, the individualist-collective polarity, which has long been a familiar basis of political debate, is of minor importance to real anarchism. Anarchists have spent a lot of time and effort asserting that only the communist, or syndicalist, or individualist, posture is valid, as if it matters in the greater scheme of anarchism. In actuality, each might be valid depending on the circumstances. The real debate is whether any particular non-coercive response is suitable to the situation and agreeable to the people involved. Another spectrum to be addressed is the rational-emotive polarity. Anarchism grew out of the rationalism of the Enlightenment, but has come to recognize the value of the subjective and passionate side of the human character as well. The extremes, cold inhumane reason or mindless, danger-

ous passion, are inimical to freedom; but the central spectrum, incorporating some of each side, is not. The personal-communal property polarity, widely misunderstood and over-simplified, is another area which needs addressing. Forbidding people the right to individually possess and therefore control their own basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and association may produce equality, but it will also encourage the tyranny of the majority, and result in the dependence of the individual on the group. It is one thing to forbid unfair advantage and monopoly; it is quite another to deny the individual the security of equitable usufruct and personal possession. As Proudhon also said, "Property is Liberty."

Anarchistic theory should offer ranges of acceptable approaches between parameters beyond which a position would not be anarchistic rather than dictate fixed responses. No single system suits everyone and every situation, whether it is feminism, egalitarianism or whatever. We need to allow for varied and pragmatic responses to different situations and needs, while maintaining a clear anarchistic perspective. If we try to limit too greatly or expand too widely what we will accept as anarchistic, or deny legitimacy to any truly libertarian response, we will insure the perpetual marginalization and impotency of the world's best defense against the rising tide of coercion, invasion and destruction of personal sovereignty and economic security.

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ANARCHISM: COMMUNIST OR INDIVIDUALIST? BOTH

Max Nettlau

I have been struck for a long time by the contrast between the largeness of the aims of Anarchism, the greatest possible realisation of freedom and well-being for all-and the narrowness, so to speak, of the economic program of Anarchism, be it Individualist or Communist. I am inclined to think that the feeling of the inadequacy of this economic basis-exclusive Communism or exclusive Individualism, according to the school-hinders people from acquiring practical confidence in Anarchism, the general aims of which appeal as a beautiful ideal to many. I feel myself that neither Communism nor Individualism, if it became the sole economic form, would realise freedom, which always demands a choice of ways, a plurality of possibilities. I know that Communists, when asked pointedly, will say that they should have no objection to Individualists who wished to live in their own way without creating new monopolies or authority, and vice versa. But this is seldom said in a really open and friendly way; both sections are far too much convinced that freedom is only possible if their particular scheme is carried out. I quite admit that these respective doctrines, and these alone, give complete satisfaction and leave no problem unsolved (in their opinion). But they must not imagine that all people are constituted

after their model and likely to come round to their views or remain "unreclaimed" adversaries on whom no sympathy is to be wasted. Let them but look on real life, which is bearable at all only by being varied and differentiated, in spite of all official uniformity. We all see the survival of earlier Communism, the manifold workings of present-day solidarity, from which new forms of future Communism may develop-all this in the teeth of the cut-throat capitalist Individualism which predominates. But this miserable bourgeois Individualism, if it created a desire for solidarity, leading to Communism, certainly also created a desire for a genuine, free, unselfish Individualism, where freedom of action would no longer be misused to crush the weaker and to form monopolies, as today.

Neither Communism nor Individualism will ever disappear; and if by some mass action the foundations of some rough form of Communism were laid, Individualism would grow stronger than ever in opposition to this. Whenever a uniform system prevails, Anarchists, if they have their ideas at heart, will go ahead of it and never permit themselves to become fossilised upholders of a given system, be it that of the purest Communism.

Will they, then, be always dissatisfied, always struggling, never enjoying rest? They might feel at ease in a state of society where all economic possibilities had full scope, and then their energy might be applied to peaceful emulation and no longer to continuous struggle and demolition. This desirable state of things could be prepared from now, if it were once for all frankly understood among Anarchists that both Communism and Individualism are equally important, equally permanent; and that the exclusive predominance of either of them would be the greatest misfortune that could befall mankind. From isolation we take refuge in solidarity, from too much society we need relief in isolation: both solidarity and isolation are, each at the right moment, freedom and help to us. All human life vibrates between these two poles in endless varieties of oscillations.

Let me imagine myself for a moment living in a free society. I should certainly have different occupations, manual and mental, requiring strength or skill. It would be very monotonous if the three or four groups with whom I would work would be organised on exactly the same lines; I rather think that different degrees or forms of Communism will prevail in them. But might I not become tired of this, and wish for a spell of relative isolation, of Individualism? So I might turn to one of the many possible forms of "equal exchange" Individualism. Perhaps people will do one thing when they grow older. Those who are but indifferent workers may continue with their groups; those who are efficient will lose patience at always working with beginners and will go ahead by themselves, unless a very altruist disposition makes it a pleasure to them to act as teachers or advisers to younger people. I also think that at the beginning I should adopt Communism with friends and Individualism with strangers, and shape my future life according to experience. Thus, a free and easy change from one variety of Communism to another, thence to any variety of Individualism, and so on, would be the most ob-

vious and elementary thing in a really free society; and if any group of people tried to check this, to make one system predominant, they would be as bitterly fought as revolutionists fight the present system.

Why, then, was Anarchism cut up into the two hostile sections of Communists and Individualists? I believe the ordinary factor of human shortcomings, from which nobody is exempt, accounts for this. It is quite natural that Communism should appeal more to some, Individualism to others. So each section would work out their economic hypothesis with full ardour and conviction, and by-and-by, strengthened in their belief by opposition, consider it the only solution, and remain faithful to it in the face of all. I intend neither to defend nor to combat Communism or Individualism. Personally, I see much good in Communism; but the idea of seeing it generalised makes me protest. I should not like to pledge my own future beforehand, much less that of anybody else. The question remains entirely open for me; experience will show which of the extreme and of the many intermediate possibilities will be the best on each occasion, at each time. Anarchism is too dear to me that I should care to see it tied to an economic hypothesis, however plausible it may look today. Unique solutions will never do, and whilst everybody is free to believe in and to propagate his own cherished ideas, he ought not to feel it right to spread them except in the form of the merest hypothesis, and every one knows that the literature of Communist and Individualist Anarchism is far from keeping within these limits; we have all sinned in this respect.

In the above I have used the terms "Communist" and "Individualist" in a general way, wishing to show the useless and disastrous character of sectional exclusiveness among Anarchists. If any Individualists have said or done absurd things (are Communists impeccable?), to show these up would not mean to refute me. All I want is to see all those who revolt against authority work on lines of general solidarity instead of being divided into little chapels because each one is convinced he or she possesses a correct economic solution of the social problem. To fight authority in the capitalist system and in the system of State Socialism, an immense wave of real Anarchist feeling is wanted, before ever the question of economic remedies comes in. Only recognise this, and a large sphere of solidarity will be created.

This edited version of a longer essay by Max Nettlau was published in February 1995 as BAD Broadside #12.

RISKY BUSINESS

Joe Peacott

Our daily activities are constantly interfered with or prohibited by innumerable laws, rules, and regulations. Our choices about where we want to live, what kind of work we want to do, how we want to raise our kids, and what kind of recreation we wish to enjoy are all restricted by the

government and those who support government. Anarchists advocate a different kind of world: society without any government, a world where people are free to live as they please as long as they respect the freedom of others to do likewise. But the prospects for such a new society seem pretty dim in light of most people's enthusiastic support of government and its increasing control over our lives.

So many people seem so willing to give up their autonomy to the oversight of others, seeing this intervention as the price they must pay for a modicum of security in an otherwise unsafe world. They don't, however, seem to realize what they are giving up in their attempt to make their lives as risk-free as possible.

Risk reduction is certainly a reasonable goal, but risk elimination is an impossibility. Few of us want to get sick, injure ourselves, or die. Yet, many of life's activities, ranging from the most mundane to the most exciting, are fraught with risk, and one is put in the position of trying to balance one's desire to live a satisfying life with one's wish to avoid harm. Unfortunately, this attempt to balance our sometimes-conflicting wants can lead to difficulties for both the individual concerned and for others.

If we all genuinely wished to avoid any danger we might encounter, the world would be quite a different place. No one would drive a car, use in-line skates, work in a hazardous occupation, have a cocktail, or smoke a cigarette or joint, since all of these activities carry a risk of harm to the person who does them. Most people, however, choose not to completely avoid all such activities, as the usefulness or pleasure of engaging in them outweighs the hazards involved. One can modify the risk by driving slowly, wearing protective gear, or drinking or smoking moderately. People make these kinds of decisions daily as they live and move in this uncertain world.

Sometimes the choices a person makes about what activities to engage in may seem foolish or overly cautious to others. For instance, some people at minimal risk of acquiring an HIV infection sexually, may swear off all sexual contacts, instead of simply choosing partners and/or sexual activities carefully. But, while such people may be unnecessarily restricting their activities and denying themselves pleasure, their activity has no effect on uninvolved others and should, therefore, be none of their concern.

Problems arise, however, when well-meaning, but overly cautious people decide to seek the assistance of governments to protect themselves and others from real or imagined risks. Government intervention then forces everyone to curtail their activities in accord with the wishes of the least daring and adventuresome among us. Laws regulating housing construction, requiring occupational and institutional licensure, and restricting sales of both therapeutic and recreational drugs, are all purportedly in place to protect us from harm. But they in fact not only result in housing shortages, homelessness, unnecessarily costly health care, crime, and unemployment, but also cause a general cultural and social impoverishment. When we can-

not choose for ourselves what kind of home we want to live in, what kind of health care provider we wish to consult, who should care for our children, who can fix our hair, or what drugs we wish to take to cure us or entertain us, our lives are that much more limited, less interesting, less satisfying, and less free.

Many people become so used to government caretaking and supervision, that they see it as the only solution when bad things happen. Because people are occasionally hurt when using fireworks, many states totally ban sales to or use by individuals. And since some parents' irresponsibility led to injuries to children, there was an attempt in Massachusetts to make it illegal for any parent to leave any child under 14 unsupervised at any time. While there may appear to be some merit in these actions, the same rationale could be used to ban motor vehicles and suntanning. Is that the kind of safe, but dull and lifeless world we want?

Life is unsure, and sometimes unsafe. That is the human condition. But life can also be exciting and pleasurable. Some people are willing to give up a lot for a promise of security. That is fine as long they don't also try to prevent others from taking chances. Some of us are unwilling to trade our freedom for security and would rather incur some risks while living our lives as we see fit. And those who don't approve should mind their own business, for a change.

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INDIVIDUALISM, ANARCHY, AND COMPASSION

Joe Peacott

One of the problems that individualist anarchists have in trying to promote acceptance of their ideas among other anarchists, as well as many non-anarchists, is that they are sometimes seen as being insufficiently compassionate. Individualists envision a future where personal freedom, self-reliance, independence, and private property are the order of the day, and some believe that such a society would not provide well for those unable to work or otherwise fend for themselves. But, while an individualist society would certainly not provide aid to those in need in the same way that the welfare state or an anarchist commune would, free individuals are just as capable of being helpful to others as are the members and institutions of other kinds of societies.

Individualists tend not to emphasize the social service aspects of anarchist society, instead talking about the freedom it would provide for independent and able people to live the way they wish, collaborating or cooperating with others when and where they choose to. Collectivists, on the other hand, often concentrate on what individuals will get from the community in an anarchist future, e.g., free education, free health care, communal food stores, etc.

This difference arises from their different views of people. Individualists see people as generally capable of fending for themselves when not prevented from reaching their full potential by government and law, whereas collectivists view people as unable or unlikely to lead full and happy lives without a formal social network of responsibilities and benefits, even in a stateless world.

Individualists don't believe anyone "deserves" anything other than the full fruit of their labor, ownership of property acquired by means of this labor, fulfillment of any agreement freely entered into with others, and the freedom to be otherwise left alone. Despite this, individualists do acknowledge that some people, and perhaps most people at some time, will need assistance from others to get by because of unforeseen and/or unfortunate circumstances. And individualists do have ideas about how such people would be helped in a stateless society.

Long before the welfare state came into existence, fraternal societies existed in the United States which provided both formal and informal mutual aid in the form of life insurance, health insurance, survivors benefits, old age housing, and other social services. And these societies, such as the Masons, the True Reformers, and the Ladies of the Maccabees, consisted largely of poor working people who banded together voluntarily to take care of themselves and their fellow members. These groups, of course, were in addition to the family and churches which were primary providers of reciprocal assistance before the government began providing social security and other benefits.

Similar voluntary associations and social networks could again provide the bulk of assistance for needy individuals in an anarchist society. There would, however, need to be different provisions made for those who were permanently unable to work or take care of themselves. But, just like vast numbers of Americans, despite heavy taxation to support government benefits, also contribute voluntarily to private charities, individuals in a stateless world would also contribute to private organizations dedicated to the care of those unable to care for themselves.

There remains the question of those able, but unwilling, to provide for themselves. In an individualist society, unless those unwilling to work were able to convince some individual or group that their companionship or existence was worth the cost of their upkeep, they would have to either work or leave the community and seek more hospitable surroundings. It is unlikely, however, that even the most altruistic collective or commune would long tolerate slackers more gladly than would a group of individualists. Additionally, since the amount of work necessary to acquire the means to feed, clothe, and house oneself would probably not be nearly as much in any kind of future anarchist society as it is today, it is not unreasonable to expect everyone who is able to work for their keep.

Collectivists seem to believe that individuals and their private organizations cannot be trusted to be compassionate, and that, therefore, compassion must be socialized and administered by the community. Individualists, on the

other hand, while perhaps not motivated primarily by compassion, work towards a world where people, as free individuals, can establish voluntary, overlapping networks to provide for all their needs and those of others. When free people are confronted with a problem, individualists believe, they will rise to the occasion. Although collectivists may talk more about the social benefits of anarchist society, individualists will provide them just as well, and in a freer setting.

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DEATH AND ANARCHY

Joe Peacott

The activities of organizations such as the Hemlock Society and individuals like Jack Kevorkian and those he has helped to die have resulted in much discussion in the news media about the alleged 'right' to die. Many different positions on the issue have been put forward: from opposition to all suicides in any form to advocacy of a complicated process whereby physicians may assist others to die in certain sharply circumscribed circumstances. There are a number of differences in the various formulas which have been advanced by those who support changes in the laws intended to prevent suicide. But, there appears to be a consensus that any newly-enacted regulations intended to allow people more freedom in choosing when to die should apply only to those who are terminally or seriously ill and in their 'right' minds. All such proposed models for dealing with suicide interfere with personal conduct in ways unacceptable in a free society.

All people, as sovereign individuals, should be free to control their bodies as they see fit. This includes the freedom to continue or terminate a pregnancy, use whatever recreational or therapeutic drugs one likes, indulge in any consensual sexual acts that please one, or kill oneself by whatever means one wishes, providing one causes no physical injuries to any unwilling others in the process. Suicide is a non-coercive act which is, ultimately, the business of no one but the person who wishes to kill her- or himself. There is only one method of attempting to stop someone from committing suicide consistent with a respect for individual liberty: arguing out the issues and trying to change the other person's mind. Any legal or forcible interventions are restraints by the state or the community on the freedom of individuals to live and die in any way they choose.

When someone chooses to exit this world voluntarily, final decisions regarding when, where, and how they will do so should be left in the hands of that person alone. One does not have to be terminally ill or in chronic pain to justify such a course of action. No one can judge for another when their life is worth living and when it is not. Nor should the psychiatrists and therapists of various sorts be able to interfere with people's wish to die by labeling such desires as 'symptoms' of a 'mental illness.' The fact that

someone doesn't view or react to the world in the same way most people do, or that a person's angst is so overwhelming they feel the only escape is death, doesn't invalidate their decision-making processes. Everyone lives their life and dies their death alone with their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and perceptions, and no one has the right to dictate to another how to think or feel, or forcibly stop another's suicide.

Some people, after failing in an attempt to kill themselves, express regret about their suicidal actions and say they are grateful to those who intervened to prevent them from ending their lives. This is often taken as evidence that the person in question was somehow less able to make "rational" decisions during their suicide attempt than they were afterwards, and thus, coercive intervention to prevent suicide is justified. In at least some cases, however, this change of heart may not be genuine, since, in order to avoid incarceration in a "mental health" facility, it is necessary for people who have tried to kill themselves to recant their former desires and actions. But even in those instances where people genuinely do feel badly about what they did and have found a new appreciation for living, depriving them of the freedom to take their own lives is not defensible. People change their minds all the time, and we don't routinely assume that what we thought in the past was not as valid or rational as what we think now. People should be presumed to be in control of their faculties at all times and in all situations unless there is evidence, i.e., proof of organic brain disease, to the contrary. Suicidal thoughts or actions should not, in and of themselves, be considered such evidence.

Since suicide is non-invasive, those wishing to die should be free to enlist the aid of other people in their endeavor. If one is too weak or too timid to actually kill oneself, but can find someone else willing to do the deed for them, there is no justification for preventing this. These assistants should not be restricted to medical professionals, since the decision of someone to end their life is not a medical, but a moral or ethical one. Similarly, legal restrictions on the purchase and use of drugs of any sort should be ended, and people free to obtain the pharmaceutical means to a painless death without having to get a doctor's note or risk arrest.

The unrestricted ability to determine the time, place, and circumstances of one's non-sudden death is just as important in a person's life as the freedom to work, play, have sex, reproduce (or not), or engage in any other non-invasive act whenever, wherever, and in whatever fashion one chooses. While people will sometimes make the wrong decision in this, as in other areas of their lives, they should be free to make such mistakes here, as elsewhere. Coercive meddling in this decision by doctors, courts, family members, or police should not be tolerated by free people. Abolition of legal restrictions on suicide, assisted suicide, and access to the means to accomplish either would be one more step on the road to a world without coercion and state intervention in the lives of individuals.

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AN ANARCHIST CASE AGAINST GUN CONTROL

Joe Peacott

Anarchists envision a society without government, a world where individual people, sometimes on their own and sometimes in cooperation with others, take care of themselves, their needs, their desires. One can expect that in such a libertarian society, with no restrictions on people's freedom to engage in whatever non-coercive productive and commercial activities they choose, and the absence of oppressive political institutions and laws, there will be far fewer incidents of theft and physical attack than there are today. While changing the world to eliminate poverty and institutional violence may be the ultimate solution to the problem of violence and robbery, until that time non-coercive people need a means of defense against those who are not as peaceful as they are.

Most people now look to the armed forces of the government, whether police or military, for such protection. However, not only do police and military personnel do an abysmal job of protecting individuals, they are often themselves the perpetrators of coercive violence. In light of this, people need to look to themselves and their chosen communities for self-defense. Such a strategy of self-defense must include the freedom to own and use handguns without putting oneself at risk of arrest and/or violence by agents of the government.

Many states and cities in the United States have very restrictive laws against handgun ownership and use, under the pretext that such laws keep handguns out of the possession of violent aggressors. In fact, these statutes commonly do nothing of the sort. Their primary effect is to disarm peaceable individuals and leave them at the mercy both of hoods and cops. Aggressors, who are already violating various laws by killing, raping, robbing, etc, will not necessarily be deterred from using guns by criminalizing their use as well. If they were afraid of laws they would not be attacking other people to begin with. Gun control laws make the lives of human predators easier, by depriving their potential victims of an effective means of defense.

The other people who benefit from gun control are the police. Without an armed populace they can freely stop, search, and harass peaceable people, invade their homes, order them from and search their vehicles, and confiscate their property without any fear of reprisal. In order to combat such state-sponsored terrorism, wholesale abolition or evasion of gun control laws and widespread ownership of guns is crucial. While individual possession of firearms may deter 'routine' traffic stops and harassment of peaceful people on the street by cops, it is important that any larger-scale attempt at armed self-defense against police or other agents of the state involve more than just a few individuals. If small groups try to defend themselves against police attacks, they can expect military-style assaults on their homes, as was demonstrated in Philadelphia in the MOVE bombing and in Waco in the attack on the

Branch Davidians. Only a coordinated neighborhood- or community-wide response has a chance of preventing or resisting such an offensive.

Laws regulating handgun possession and use have helped keep people from fighting against their social and political oppressors. Bans on sales of cheap handguns, so-called 'Saturday night special', were instituted historically to keep weapons out of the hands of peaceable poor people, who often were not able to afford more expensive guns and rifles. This at one time left southern black people at the mercy of the KKK, and workers of all colors no defense against the thugs hired by business owners during strikes and industrial actions. Related militia laws helped destroy the *Lehr-und-Wehr-Verein* armed organization in Chicago in the 1800s, a group organized to defend against police attacks on rebellious workers, which included anarchists among its members. While it is certainly easier for poor people in the United States to afford more expensive handguns than was once the case, modern attempts to outlaw cheaper weapons, despite protestations of concern for the 'safety of the use', will make it harder for those most in need to purchase a gun, rendering them much less safe than they would be if they were free to defend themselves.

While all kinds of peaceable people are put at increased risk by not having the freedom to own and use firearms, some of those most victimized by legal restrictions on handguns have been women who are attacked by lovers or spouses. Such relationships are complicated. The victimized partners do not always want to or are not yet ready to force a change of behavior in, or end their involvement with, the person hurting them. In such situations nothing can be done to protect the person at risk. However, when a physically abused woman decides it is time to fight back, and goes to the police, she is routinely told to get a restraining order, which is not worth the paper it is printed on. The police are unable to protect these women even if they wished to. The only way for them to have a fighting chance is for them or their friends and defenders to have access to firearms and be prepared to use them.

Another group of people at increased risk of violence who would profit from abolition of gun laws are cabbies. While many business owners are able to get handgun permits to protect their businesses and money, cabbies are generally prohibited from carrying weapons, even though they are more isolated and vulnerable than shop owners. In Boston, the local police make the decision about who can and cannot carry a handgun, and require that applicants for permits to carry a gun for self-defense demonstrate that they are "responsible for large sums of money for payrolls, bank deposits...or the transportation of very valuable merchandise in their business." This policy has usually been interpreted as not applying to taxi drivers or virtually anyone else who seeks a gun permit for self-defense, no matter how risky their working or living situation may be. Apparently the Boston police think a storeowner's receipts are more valuable and worthy of protection than the life of a cabby (or anyone else who doesn't pass their economic test, for that matter). Boston cabbies are required, by law, to take any potential fare anywhere

they ask, and are therefore at least as likely to end up in a dangerous situation as any business owner or banker. They can then be victimized on a deserted street, by an armed thug, and yet the police won't let them have the means to defend themselves.

The police and the laws which support them tell peaceable individuals that they must rely on cops for their protection. Then they either fail to protect, or themselves victimize, those they are mandated to watch over. Even if they did a better job, however, they would still have no right to prevent people from looking out for themselves. No one is asked if they agree to turn their protection over to someone else, and the police presume to "serve and protect" the populace without their consent. Free people must be free to arm and defend themselves with the weapons they choose. While making all of society less violent, by changing the social conditions which breed various sorts of predation and abolishing political coercion, is the best way to stop aggressive acts, until then people should be able to have access to the means to defend themselves, including firearms.

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PRIVATIZATION? IT DOESN'T GO FAR ENOUGH!

Joe Peacott

It is fashionable for government officials from both major parties to give lip service to the problems associated with what they call 'big government'. While they pass more laws, enact more regulations, increase the prison population, and extort more and more money from working people, they claim to favor 'downsizing the state'. One of the measures often put forward as a way to accomplish this is privatization. Mass transit, hospitals, even prisons, are either being sold outright to private corporations, or are being managed by outside agencies while the government maintains ownership. While anarchists generally support getting more and more areas of our lives out of the hands of government, state-sponsored privatization does not, in fact, increase people's autonomy, their ability to make individual decisions about how and where to obtain goods and services and how to live their lives.

Governments, for the most part, do a poor job of almost everything. Public agencies are inefficient, costly, and slow, and 'services' are often delivered by rude and arrogant people. This is due, at least in part, to the fact that many state-run businesses are monopolies. There is little incentive to run a business better, deliver a better product, or treat customers well, if one doesn't have to compete against other people engaged in the same trade. Privatization usually does not change this, since a company buying or managing a formerly public agency is generally given a monopoly in its area, just as the state had.

When governments privatize a public transportation sys-

tem or its management, they don't open up the market so anyone can compete and provide transportation services to willing customers. They simply let a private, for-profit, entity take over the existing, monopolistic, system and run it differently. They change some people at the top, which may result in more efficient or courteous services, but this doesn't really let people choose very much more than they could before. They don't let other privately-owned companies compete with the new owners or managers, by setting up new routes or challenging the official agency on established routes, letting the customer decide with whom they wish to do business. And they certainly don't allow private individuals to use their trucks, cars, or other vehicles as buses to compete with the new owners or managers.

When a hospital is privatized, again there are changes, some of which may be for the better, but there is no substantive change in the way individuals interact with the health care system. The hospital will still be run by physicians, surgeons, nurses, and administrators certified by the government. People still can only see certain kinds of health care providers, use certain kinds of insurance, and remain unable to buy most medicines without a doctor's or nurse's prescription. Privatization of a public hospital does not mean people are now free to choose whatever kind of healer they prefer, take whatever medicine or substance they desire, or set up their own health care center or hospital without government approval and oversight.

Privatized prisons best show the minimal difference between a government-run agency, and one that has been turned over to a for-profit corporation. In these new privately-owned jails, prisoners are still abused, beaten, and raped, guards still run the smallest details of prisoners, lives, and people continue to be locked up without their consent. Private prisons are the antithesis of private decision-making and private agreement, since the "customer, in this case the prisoner, is not allowed to have any autonomous life, makes few personal decisions, and can not freely choose to stop doing business with the new company and leave. Additionally, for-profit prisons are totally dependent on the state to provide them with new 'customers' by arresting and convicting people who have violated the laws created by various levels of government. Without government action there would be no prisoners, and therefore no prisons, public or private.

Anarchists value private decision-making and private voluntary agreements between individuals. We oppose government because it interferes with these activities of non-violent, non-coercive people. Privatization sounds appealing to some anarchists, because it holds out the hope of decreasing such state involvement and interference in people's lives. But, while it does alter the way in which government interacts with individuals, it generally does not result in any increase in people's freedom to choose how to live. It doesn't give us more options, it often doesn't provide better service, and it doesn't stop government from reaching into our pockets to obtain the money to subsidize many of these new enterprises. And it certainly doesn't decrease our taxes, since governments always find

new ways to spend our money, even if privatization has resulted in some savings.

People should be free to produce and consume whatever they want, as long as they don't interfere with others, equal freedom to do so. If someone wants to transport people in their van in return for money, or a group of people wish to run a bus service, it should be no one's business but that of the parties to the exchange. If someone wants to take penicillin or Valium without getting a doctor's note, or wishes to consult a medical school graduate before making health care decisions, both options should be available. True freedom, true private life, means the freedom to live however we like, making our own arrangements with other people when and if it suits us (and them). Only the complete abolition of government will truly 'privatize' our lives. Government-sponsored privatization? It doesn't go far enough!

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THE POVERTY OF THE WELFARE STATE

Joe Peacott

As the government, at various levels, attempts to cut back on welfare and other entitlement payments to poor people and/or require people to work in exchange for their welfare benefits, anarchists in the United States have been talking and writing about what the appropriate anarchist response should be. Some have come to the position that anarchists should support state welfare for poor people and actively oppose cutbacks, arguing that poor people deserve state assistance since they are the victims of capitalist economic relations, that capitalist corporations are a greater threat to poor and working people than the state, and that forcing people to work will cause even worse working conditions for many than already exist, further impoverishing people. In addition, the argument that, since the state provides welfare to corporations and the rich, it is only fair that the poor should get some, is also made by some anarchists. While these arguments are made in good faith, and with the intent of helping poor people, anarchists should be looking into the matter more deeply and coming up with critiques of state welfare and solutions to poverty more consistent with libertarian thinking, instead of falling in line behind the modern nanny state.

It certainly makes sense to make the best of the existence of a welfare state and take advantage of the programs that have been instituted in response to the demands and movements of radical or progressive statist, but it is quite another thing to look to these programs as the preferred way to solve social problems. Calling for the dismantling of the welfare system for poor people may not be the best place for anarchists to start in the fight against the very existence of the state, but arguing for its continued maintenance "or even its expansion" as if this were the only way to help people in need, is not the right course of action

either. As we do in regard to other social problems, anarchists should be advocating non-statist solutions to the problems of poverty. While doing away entirely with government is the ultimate remedy for poverty, other measures which could be proposed and implemented under the state, such as decreased taxation to increase the wealth of the working poor, deregulation of health care to decrease health care costs, and a return to mutual aid societies in place of extortionate insurance companies, are much more in line with anarchist principles than cheerleading for AFDC.

Anarchists historically have tried to lessen the influence of government in the lives of poor and working people. When faced with poverty, anarchists have advocated self-organization of and direct action by workers to secure at least a greater portion of the fruit of their labor. When fighting battles against corporations, anarchists did not call for the government to enact labor laws, but criticized the state for using its police and military to defend corporate interests. They demanded the state get out of the way, not that it rescue the poor. And anarchists have foreseen a future where competent, independent individuals and/or groups, freed from the restraints of statist society, take care of themselves and their associates in whatever ways make sense to them. This historical anarchist vision would appear to have been lost on some in modern times.

A number of anarchists seem to have bought the idea that since government can sometimes be more responsive to the demands of poor people than private capitalists, the state can be seen as a guardian against their depredations. This is inconsistent both with the anarchist analysis that the state props up capitalism, and with the reality that in some cases private companies provide better for their employees and customers than state enterprises care for their clients and workers. At least part of the reason it is, at times, easier to squeeze concessions out of the state, is that it costs the individuals in government nothing: they will simply force working people to foot the bill for any increase in welfare benefits by increasing taxes. In the case of a private capitalist enterprise, the owners of the business are not always able to pass on the costs of better employees benefits to the consumer, and consequently may lose some of their profits if they give in to workers, demands for higher pay or other improved working conditions. But the only time either the state or capitalist businesses provide any benefits to anyone but themselves and their allies, is when they are pressured to do so. Welfare, social security, and other government benefit schemes were created in response to social movements, not out of governmental beneficence, just as good benefits in many private corporations are the result of strong labor movements which forced the owners to reimburse the workers for a greater portion of their labor than was the case previously. Governments and capitalist enterprises have largely the same interests, and both can be forced to make concessions by vigorous opposition from their subjects or employees.

While workers pressuring their employees for a better deal is simply a case of people demanding part of what is right-

fully theirs anyway, recipients of welfare payments and other benefits are asking the government to take someone else's money and give it to them. Many advocates of maintaining the current welfare system, however, correctly state that it doesn't cost very much in the greater scheme of things. State spending on weapons of mass destruction and payments to corporations are each much more costly than welfare programs for poor individuals and families. Additionally, many working people, not commonly thought of as welfare recipients do, in fact, receive such benefits, as when middle class people get Medicaid to pay for their nursing home expenses, or working people obtain free care from hospitals, the costs of which are covered by the government. While this is all true, this does not justify government theft of working people's money to give to someone else. The money raised from taxation to fund corporate welfare, AFDC, and Medicaid is stolen property, as is the money from compulsory fees on insurance companies to fund free care programs, which the insurers pass on to their customers. The rich don't pay taxes, and the very poor don't pay taxes. It is the huge number of working people in the middle who do, and who support the other two groups. And, while many in the middle get some of their extorted money back in the form of benefits, most of them pay out more than they receive, otherwise there wouldn't be any left for the rich and the poor.

The rich and their corporations are wealthy because they or their ancestors were able unjustly to acquire some of the wealth produced by others. They were able to do this only because the state and its police and military support the institutions of profit, interest, and rent which transfer money from working people to those who "own" businesses, banks and dwellings. Rich people don't deserve the wealth they already possess and certainly should not receive any of the money that is stolen directly from workers by the government, or any of the other advantages they receive at the expense of taxpayers. Among the poor people who receive money or other benefits from the state, on the other hand, there are those who are in genuine need. Some are truly the victims of circumstances largely beyond their control, and others have made bad choices and expect or hope that others will bail them out. But there are also welfare recipients who are simply parasites who feel that others should work to support them in the lifestyle to which they've become accustomed (just like the rich) Being poor does not make one virtuous or deserving. However, since at least some poor people are deserving of assistance it is preferable that tax money fund AFDC, Medicaid, and food stamps, rather than corporate welfare and the military, but none of the recipients, rich or poor, are entitled to the money extracted by force from working people.

Since such forcible transfers of money are not acceptable, we need to seek other, non-coercive means, to enable people to better fend for themselves. As mentioned earlier, tax cuts, health care deregulation, and voluntary mutual aid societies would all mitigate poverty, even if implemented in a statist society. Getting rid of the state and its protection of capitalist economic relations entirely will produce even more options for people to make their own way, re-

sulting in higher incomes; cheaper goods including health care, food, and housing; and, consequently, many fewer needy people. The end of government will mean the end of involuntary poverty, and therefore the end of the need for much of what now constitutes welfare. The small number of people unable to work who need assistance from the community can easily be helped by one form or another of mutual aid, depending on the economic structure of the community in which they live.

Anarchy is based, at least in part, on the idea that simply getting government out of the way would allow people to look at and solve their problems all by themselves. This also applies to poor people. They are generally not helpless incompetents who have no options other than having the state look out for them. In fact, poor people are victimized by corporations not because the state has failed to protect them, but because the state has prevented them from protecting themselves. Laws and other government action preserve capitalism with its profit, interest, and rent, all of which are theft from working people of all classes. Without the state and its armed thugs in the police and military, capitalism would not survive for long, since people would simply keep what was rightfully theirs and stop paying rent, do away with the banking monopoly, and work their factories and businesses for themselves. We don't need state welfare, we need state abolition.

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MULTICULTURALISM, INDIVIDUALISM, AND DIVERSITY

Joe Peacott

In multi-colored, multi-ethnic societies, and especially in the United States, much is being made of the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity. Individuals are called on to respect others' cultural values and practices, organizations are urged to become more diverse, and some people are making careers for themselves as diversity counselors. The impetus for much of this comes out of the desire on many people's part to change racist attitudes and combat discriminatory practices. However, emphasizing cultural differences and promoting ethnic identification rather than acknowledging individual differences that occur in all social groups does not promote diversity of human thought and experience. It only reinforces inaccurate preconceptions people have about those who they perceive as different in some way.

Multiculturalists tell us that we must be sensitive to the culture of other people. But, identifying a person's culture does not really tell us very much about that person. While there are some beliefs or practices that one generally encounters only and/or commonly among those from a certain country or ethnic group, not everyone in any of these countries or groups will share these. In the past it was considered insensitive to assume that people behaved or thought a certain way simply because they were white, or

black, or an immigrant from Haiti. Now, it appears that such cultural pre-judging is encouraged.

Cultural “competency” programs are used in many organizations, supposedly to encourage cooperation between various ethnic groups and promote diversity. But what is taught in such workshops and seminars is that black Americans think and act this way, Filipinos eat and worship that way, and Russians bring up their children thus. Misinformation like this encourages other people to assume that all members of these groups act and think similarly, an attitude just as likely to promote misunderstanding as older, bigoted ideas about people of different ethnic backgrounds which arose out of ignorance of how others lived. Diversity is inhibited when people view “cultural” groups in this manner and fail to appreciate the truly diverse ways of the individuals who make up these groups.

At a time when racism and nationalism on the part of white American people are roundly, and rightly, criticized, multiculturalism, instead of promoting understanding between groups, often simply strengthens group ethnic identity among people who are not white, reinforcing barriers between different groups and individuals. Multiculturalism can, at times, even be used simply as a code word for non-white, with some organizations or events which describe themselves this way including certain people and excluding others based on their skin color or ‘culture’. And once one identifies oneself as a member of a certain culture, defining how members of this culture are supposed to think and behave, it becomes possible to exclude even members of one’s own culture as well, if they don’t exhibit ‘appropriate’ cultural values. Such people can be dismissed as race traitors or castigated for not ‘thinking black’, for instance, just as some feminists have attacked pro-porn women as ‘male-identified’. Prescribing racially or ethnically correct behavior discourages diversity and hinders understanding of and interaction with people who are different in some way.

In response to such generalizing, some people promote self-identification as a “sub-culture.” While countering the stereotyping involved in defining broad groups of people as culturally the same, such refining of identity breeds exactly the same sort of stereotyping, on an even narrower basis. Creating a sub-cultural identity promotes the same inaccurate idea that people who share some superficial characteristics are all alike, embracing some people the definers wish to associate with, and rejecting others whom they would rather not be around. Examples of such self-created sub-cultural groups are Jewish lesbian daughters of holocaust survivors (this is for real) or gay and bisexual black men. Not exactly multicultural or diverse.

The problem with all of this is that those who identify themselves or other as members of a culture attach more importance to groups of people than to the individuals that comprise them. All individuals have a set of ideas, ethics, and values that are uniquely their own, even though many of these may be shared in various combinations with others. Everyone acts in unique ways, some of which, again, may be similar to those of other individuals, but

never the same. All groups are made up of some number of such unique beings, and therefore, little can be said about any group that will accurately describe all of its members. Trying to inform someone about the thoughts, feelings, or activities of another by describing their ‘culture’ is foolhardy.

Misunderstanding and intolerance are going to happen at times between people for all sorts of reasons. The best way to minimize the likelihood of such conflicts is to look at others as individuals, fellow human beings, not as specimens of a foreign culture to be studied. Believing that all non-coercive individuals are worthy of respect, tolerance, and decent behavior will lead to just treatment of others. Promoting individuality will promote a true diversity of ideas, experiences, and lifestyles. All values and actions are ultimately those of individuals, and people should be free to live their lives unbound by the cultural assumptions of others. Multiculturalism, while holding out the promise of greater understanding and tolerance, in fact only leads to more stereotyping and misconceptions, and more intolerance of individual differences.

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ANARCHISM WITHOUT HYPHENS

Karl Hess

There is only one kind of anarchist. Not two. Just one. An anarchist, the only kind, as defined by the long tradition and literature of the position itself, is a person in opposition to authority imposed through the hierarchical power of the state. The only expansion of this that seems to me reasonable is to say that an anarchist stands in opposition to any imposed authority. An anarchist is a voluntarist.

Now, beyond that, anarchists also are people and, as such, contain the billion-faceted varieties of human reference. Some are anarchists who march, voluntarily, to the Cross of Christ. Some are anarchists who flock, voluntarily, to the communes of beloved, inspirational father figures. Some are anarchists who seek to establish the syndics of voluntary industrial production. Some are anarchists who voluntarily seek to establish the rural production of the kibbutzim. Some are anarchists who, voluntarily, seek to disestablish everything including their own association with other people; the hermits. Some are anarchists who will deal, voluntarily, only in gold, will never co-operate, and swirl their capes. Some are anarchists who, voluntarily, worship the sun and its energy, build domes, eat only vegetables, and play the dulcimer. Some are anarchists who worship the power of algorithms, play strange games, and infiltrate strange temples. Some are anarchists who see only the stars. Some are anarchists who see only the mud.

They spring from a single seed, no matter the flowering of their ideas. The seed is liberty. And that is all it is. It is not a socialist seed. It is not a capitalist seed. It is not a mystical seed. It is not a determinist seed. It is simply a statement. We can be free. After that it's all choice and chance. Anarchism, liberty, does not tell you a thing about how free people will behave or what arrangements they will make. It simply says the people have the capacity to make the arrangements. Anarchism is not normative. It does not say how to be free. It says only that freedom, liberty, can exist.

Recently, in a libertarian journal, I read the statement that libertarianism is an ideological movement. It may well be. In a concept of freedom it, they, you, or we, anyone, has the liberty to engage in ideology or anything else that does not coerce others denying their liberty. But anarchism is not an ideological movement. It is an ideological statement. It says that all people have a capacity for liberty. It says that all anarchists want liberty. And then it is silent. After the pause of that silence, anarchists then mount the stages of their own communities and history and proclaim their, not anarchism's, ideologies—they say how they, how they as anarchists, will make arrangements, describe events, celebrate life, work.

Anarchism is the hammer-idea, smashing the chains. Liberty is what results and, in liberty, everything else is up to people and their ideologies. It is not up to THE ideology. Anarchism says, in effect, there is no such upper case, dominating ideology. It says that people who live in liberty make their own histories and their own deals with and within it.

A person who describes a world in which everyone must or should behave in a single way, marching to a single drummer is simply not an anarchist. A person who says that they prefer this way, even wishing that all would prefer that way, but who then says that all must decide, may certainly be an anarchist. Probably is.

Liberty is liberty. Anarchism is anarchism. Neither is Swiss cheese or anything else. They are not property. They are not copyrighted. They are old, available ideas, part of human culture. They may be hyphenated but they are not in fact hyphenated. They exist on their own. People add hyphens, and supplemental ideologies.

Liberty, finally is not a box into which people are to be forced. Liberty is a space in which people may live. It does not tell you how they will live. It says, eternally, only that we can.

This edited version of a longer essay was published in November 1999 as BAD Press Broadside #2. A slightly different version also appeared as an article in The Dandelion, Spring, 1980.

FREE TRADE IS FAIR TRADE: AN ANARCHIST LOOK AT WORLD TRADE

Joe Peacott

Many of those who oppose the World Trade Organization (WTO) advocate something they call 'fair trade', in contrast to the 'free trade' the WTO advocates. In fact, the kind of commerce promoted by the WTO is anything but free, while the alternatives defended by its opponents are in no way fair. Both the WTO and most of its critics, who range from old-fashioned right-wing nationalists to labor activists, environmentalists, and leftists of various kinds, favor continued government intervention in economic activities, whether domestic or international. And any such state-regulated trade will never be either free or fair.

All governments around the world interfere in the economies of the countries they rule and intervene in cross-border trade on a regular basis. They subsidize some businesses, like agriculture in the United States and Europe, pay for international advertising for wealthy corporations, and institute tariffs and customs rules that ban or complicate the free flow of goods between people on opposite sides of political borders. Such rules and regulations favor powerful domestic businesses at the expense of producers in other countries.

'Free trade' agreements and organizations like NAFTA and WTO may alter some of the details of this intervention, but do not challenge the principle that governments are entitled to tell their subjects what they may and may not buy and whom they may trade with. Under NAFTA, for instance, it is illegal to buy lower-priced therapeutic drugs in Canada and resell them in the United States. WTO does not propose to free up trade between individuals, either. It sets rules which the bureaucrats who run the organization feel best serve the interests of corporations favored by the various governments that make it up. It does not even take into consideration private, voluntary arrangements among individuals and groups, unsupervised by regulatory bodies, customs officials, border guards, 'public health' functionaries, coast guards, etc. It just promotes continued government oversight of people trying to engage in commerce with each other.

Most critics of WTO also advocate government supervision of economic matters. Unions urge governments to bar imports of goods which sell more cheaply than those produced by their members. Environmentalists want governments to implement regulations that protect wildlife and limit pollution. Human rights activists want governments to force businesses to allow their employees to organize to improve their working conditions. The goals of these people are admirable: protecting well-paid jobs, defending plants and animals against exploitation and death, and enabling low-wage workers to improve their economic status. However, the means advocated to achieve these goals are the same sort WTO promotes: government force. No one seems to be proposing an alternate means of achieving a better world for working people in all countries, as well as the beings with whom we share this planet.

Many have expressed concerns about the WTO weakening national sovereignty, implying that the united states government is a force for good that should be defended. They seem to forget that the federal government robs workers in this country while dispensing corporate welfare. Such critics fail to understand that the United States and other national governments routinely limit individual sovereignty, the only kind that is really important. Different levels of government may be more or less oppressive or just, depending on the specific situation and the specific interests of the individual concerned, but none have any moral justification for any of their actions. They all steal money from workers in the form of taxes, enforce laws perpetuating unfair land ownership, maintain a monopoly on the means of exchange, and defend the unjustly-gained wealth of the rich, thus impoverishing working people. And they should all be opposed.

Protesters against WTO have pointed out that it is not democratic, unlike at least some of the national governments to which it is contrasted. Granted, the governments of the united states, the European union, Canada, India, Japan and elsewhere are elected, democratic ones, but this does not mean they are legitimate, benign, or represent the interests of individual residents of the countries they rule. The democratic government of the United States, for instance, makes war on people in Kosovo and Iraq, supports the Chinese police state, subsidizes the growing of tobacco and other favored crops in the United States, and bans the domestic use of therapeutic drugs available in other countries. And this is the same government some critics of WTO seem to feel can be an advocate for the interests of the world's workers and natural environment. We need to get the various national democratic governments, as well as the WTO, off the backs of the people they push around and brutalize. If democracy, like voting, really changed anything, it would be prohibited.

Abolishing WTO and NAFTA will not benefit working people here or abroad. Abolishing government would. Stemming cross-border trade will not raise the wages of Mexican workers, improve conditions in Malaysian factories, or lighten the load of Chinese farmers and laborers. International trade has not hurt these people: international governments have, by restricting their freedoms in such a way that they have little choice but to slave away at unjust wages for wealthy others. Governments all over the world deny their working subjects economic freedom and favor the interests of the wealthy owners of land and industry, thus impoverishing the many and enriching the few, who in turn enrich the politicians.

Real free trade would look nothing like what exists now or would exist with WTO in charge. Without governments to prohibit people from living their lives as they see fit, free people could set up their own forms of money and banks to increase the availability of credit to regular people. Their money would not be stolen from them by predatory governments. They would not be disarmed by their democratic representatives and rendered unable to defend their land and property from voracious multinational corporations favored by politicians. They would not

be forced by governments to pay rent to landowners who can claim title to land and property only because governments support ownership of land neither used nor occupied by the owners. And workers would be free to take possession of the factories and other means of production which they currently use, since there would be no government to enforce the demand of the current 'owners' for a portion of the labor of others. Without having to sacrifice any portion of the wealth generated by their own labor, free workers would be affluent workers. Such people would be free to exchange goods and services with others, regardless of geographic location or ethnicity, as long as the interaction was voluntary. If trade were really free, the only exchanges that people would agree to would be fair ones. And true, unhindered competition between various worker-owners all over the world would prevent some from accumulating vast amounts of wealth at the expense of others.

Real free trade would be risky in ways that a government supervised economy would not be. There would be no state-run welfare system, no labor laws, no laws against pollution and the wanton slaughter of wildlife. But that does not mean individuals and the natural environment would be set adrift to fend for themselves. People are more than capable of forming voluntary organizations to provide for hard times, assist each other with creating jobs, facilitate direct commerce between producers, and campaign for a more humane treatment of non-human beings. People free to trade with each other would also be free to look at the ways they live and work and come up with ways to do both that are more humane and ecologically sound than those that currently exist. They have done this all through history and do it now, alongside the institutions of the warfare/welfare state.

Anarchy and free trade would not solve all problems or lead to a utopia. They simply would free up people to interact with others as they choose, to the benefit of both, or all, parties. Individuals and voluntary associations would then be free to trade fairly with each other, band together as they see fit to promote their common interests, and protect their shared environment, all without being pushed around by politicians and the economic elites they empower and defend.

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WHERE ARE THE ANARCHISTS?

Joe Peacott

An editorial in the December 4, 1999, issue of *The Economist*, referring to the events in Seattle in November, asked the question, "Why were there no anarchists among all those 'anarchists', by the way?" The question is a reasonable one for an observer to ask. While many of those who protested (and sometimes more) in Seattle were genuine, thoughtful anarchists, who felt that their actions there advanced the cause of human freedom, they failed to put

forth a specifically anarchist point of view or adequately distinguish themselves from other protestors, most of whom advocated government action as the way to improve the lives of working people and protect our natural environment.

Unlike other advocates of social change, anarchists have historically opposed the existence of government and coercion. They have argued that free people are capable of organizing their lives as they see fit without the supervision of government with its laws, police, and military, which favor those who have economic or political power at the expense of the vast majority of working people. However, in their press and their public statements, this message is often absent. Anarchist activists in Seattle, London, Washington and elsewhere have criticized “globalization” and international capitalism in terms hardly different from those of other protestors. They condemn “free trade,” the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF, but fail to present an anarchist alternative. The anarchists, by not presenting an explicit anti-government message, end up sounding like the nationalists and protectionists who lament the alleged decline of national sovereignty and advocate continued government intervention in people’s economic arrangements.

In some cases, however, this is not just the result of a failure to make one’s views explicit. Many people who call themselves anarchists are not opposed to using government as a means to promote the things they favor and see it as an acceptable and effective means of improving the lives of regular people. Noam Chomsky, perhaps the best-known and most widely-read writer associated with the anarchist movement, frankly advocates a strengthening of federal power and the political involvement of working people. He believes that criticizing the welfare state shows contempt for poor people and that it is the height of “arrogance and foolishness” for anarchists to criticize involvement in and support for statist politics. It is interesting that Chomsky’s views have had such influence among anarchists, since the idea that supporting the United States government can somehow lead to a libertarian society resembles nothing so much as the argument of Marxists that the authoritarian socialist state they advocate will one day produce an anarchist world.

In the absence of any anti-government message, the image of anarchists that most people seem to have come away with since the events in Eugene, Seattle, Washington, and London over the last year, is simply that of protestors who trash stuff and aren’t afraid to fight cops. While property destruction and fighting cops are sometimes appropriate activities, they are not what makes an anarchist and do not promote an understanding of the anarchist critique of society among non-anarchists. It has been said that recent tactics on the part of anarchists have been worthwhile because they have brought attention to anarchists and have attracted new people to anarchist events and websites. But what are these people attracted to? Streetfighting with cops and trashing the Gap or Macdonalds, in all likelihood, not the idea of ridding the world of government and freeing up working people to choose for themselves where to

shop, who to trade with, what kinds of food to grow and sell, and in general how to live their lives unencumbered by both corporate predators and politicians.

It is not the conventional news media that are to blame for the new image of anarchists. On the internet one can read anarchists happily recounting the actions of the black blocs as they confronted cops, ‘liberated’ intersections, and smashed store fronts. The protestors in Washington chose to call themselves revolutionary anti-capitalists, a label they share with Marxists of various sorts. In the lead-up to the April actions, there was no critique of government at all, just anti-corporate rhetoric that would appeal to any leftist. And in their press and internet discussions some anarchists even promote an anarchist politics of ‘municipalism’ with taxes, referenda, and all decision-making by various unions and committees which sound very much like local governments. It is hard to find any mention of government’s role in creating and maintaining this horrid economic arrangement we all live under.

While corporate capitalism is an enemy of working people, it could not wreak its havoc without the governments of the world to protect its privileges and promote its interests. The WTO is an organ of the various governments that participate in it, not a private organization. The cops so many anarchists enjoy fighting with are employees of the state, not the IMF, and are paid with money extorted from working people. Prison laborers in the United States and china are locked up and forced to work by government agents. Government polices, disempowers, and robs working people, enabling business owners, bankers, and landlords to dispossess them of the wealth they produce with their labor. Government preserves inequality and privilege and can never be the means of liberating people. This is the anarchist perspective, but it has been sorely lacking among anarchists of late.

Many anarchists, apparently, prefer to promote an image of themselves as anti-corporate activists who enjoy fighting with cops and smashing up businesses of which they disapprove, instead of putting forth a clear anti-statist position which would help others understand what makes anarchists and anarchy unique. It should come as no surprise, then, if people believe we advocate anarchy in its sense of disorder, instead of its alternative meaning of a libertarian world of free individuals and groups leading their lives in peace, without the burden of government on their backs.

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