

ANARCHIST ORGANISATION OF WORKERS

Workers in revolutionary struggle reflexively create anarchist forms of organisation, where power and initiative is kept soundly in the hands of each worker. Where people have an equal share in power and want to continue sharing power, anarchist organisation is required.

Anarchism describes a particular style of organisation in both political and economic affairs, in which instructions and directives originate from workers and are co-ordinated to best suit the needs and conditions of each worker. Larger organisations are made up of recallable delegates and remain the instrument of workers. Delegates are responsible to the workers who elected them, not to others up a hierarchy. Their mandate is limited and they can be recalled when they fail to carry out instructions. Ideas and instructions move up to the organisers, not down.

The details of anarchist organisation vary from group to group. An anarchist discussion group can be very loosely organised: people may come and go, there is no special commitment to attend or do work. There may not be clearly defined membership rules.

Other anarchist groups may need to be more tightly organised. An anarchist group involved in political activism will need to have a number of clear rules of organisation: members need to be able to trust each other; members need to be able to make sure each can work with the others; members need to share some theoretical standpoints so they can act effectively. Rules of inclusion are closely defined: there will be clear rules about membership, joining, expulsion, conflict resolution. This will be especially important as the group comes under attack from the state. If there is "gate-keeping" done, it is according to processes that everyone knows and accepts.

People organised in an anarchist framework are empowered because each can decide what is needed and how it can be achieved, and there are structures that enable them to direct the wider organisation to act in line with their needs. Each worker takes pride in their own work and is interested that her work is distributed and used in the best and most efficient way possible.

Anarchist organising principles are under question today. How often we hear of anarchist organisations failing and folding; some say that collective decision-making doesn't work. Housing collectives, women's collectives, intentional communities become the butt of jokes, exemplifying, so it is said, indecision, powerlessness, ineptitude. Some lose faith in the ability of human beings to organise anarchically, co-operatively, democratically. They doubt as they watch our intentional communities labour and fail, our housing collectives fold, our alternative schools quarrel internally and lose pupils and funding. Some lose sight of those inspiring revolutionary examples set in times and places of struggle: Paris 1821, Kronstadt 1921, Spain 1936.

And yet how consistently it is that our collectives fail because of pressure from the wider capitalist society including the specific actions of the state to persecute

them: money is not distributed evenly among the workers; people cannot survive financially in their anarchist structures but must inhabit the capitalist world to make money; bureaucratic hurdles in the form of immense volumes of paperwork are created by the state. The people are inexperienced with consensus, and the skills needed to support collective decision making take time, practice and effort to acquire. Those interested in engaging in anarchist organisation will find very few such organisations available, which limits their freedom to move between them. The state within capitalism does not allow anarchist organisations to function effectively.

Is hierarchy the most efficient way of organising workers, as so many claim today. Of course not. As every worker knows, hierarchies act at all points to advantage those in power and keep them in power, rather than to produce or service efficiently. Directives are issued by the few at the top and enforced via a chain of command. Workers may have a say in generating instructions, but not necessarily. While there may be a show of "consultation" with workers in the process of generating directions, the process of hierarchy separates workers from wider decision-making processes within the organisation. Workers are under pressure to act in ways that enhance their job security, rather than improve the quality of the work they do. "Mission statements" serve to remind all within the hierarchy of what they are there for, because the underlying function of the organisation can be easily lost in the competition for approval from superiors, promotion, and job security. Everyone's business is the grabbing of as much power as possible, and the most successful individuals will make a grab for that position right at the top of the hierarchy.

Societies where power and wealth are unevenly distributed will tend to encourage or enforce hierarchical forms of organisation, because those with more power have an interest in silencing the voices of the dispossessed. The capitalists, either directly or through various strategies of regulation and funding, control all our organisations and foster hierarchical structures where power and profits are removed from the hands of the workers. Within capitalism hierarchies are self-perpetuating: those at the top of the hierarchy want to preserve their positions of power at all costs.

But in fact anarchist organisation far surpasses other forms of organisation in its efficiency. Anarchist organisation can be used to co-ordinate a community, a workplace, a society: whenever and wherever people come together to make a decision together, to organise together. Anarchist organisation is a straightforward and effective way of organising. In populous, highly complex societies where each receives according to her need and contributes according to ability, anarchism is the necessary organising principle. Only anarchist organising can achieve efficient organisation, where workers have both freedom of choice and variety of choice, where goods are distributed according to need, and work according to ability, where health care goes to those who need it and efficiently too, where good decisions are made about allocation of resources with less waste and fairer distribution.

Anarchist organisation often arises when people must work together to survive because the money supply is inadequate and government is absent or ineffective

(consider parts of Russia and Argentina in recent years). Just imagine how well anarchism would thrive if there were no money and no government.

It is the job of the revolutionary anarchist group to convince workers that the organising principles the workers themselves have devised in the heat of the struggle are important. The anarchist methods of organisation that they use are not to be thought of as some temporary arrangement to be abandoned after the revolution, when new rules will come along. Anarchist organisation is the life and blood of the new world, the heart and the arteries. Anarchist organisations will supply the food, manage the transport, co-ordinate workers, set priorities, provide health care, and so on. The means not only guarantee the ends of the new society, the means are the ends in the new world.

It is up to the revolutionary anarchist group to describe anarchism clearly and loudly enough that people recognise anarchist principles in the own organisations and recognise their key importance. Other spontaneously formed struggle groups may not recognise that their organisation is anarchist in style and might not describe themselves as anarchist. Once people fully understand the central importance of anarchist organising they will be ready to resist all government, all states, all hierarchy, all coercion. They will be encouraged to reject all private property and money and welcome instead the post-revolutionary society of liberty, equality, and peace.

Be realistic! Demand the impossible!