

# Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group, Statement of Shared Positions



This document is to be read as a supplement to the Aims & Principles of the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group. Agreement with the positions in this document is a condition of membership.

1. The social revolution will be the act of the working class, organised in the workplace. Other classes (e.g. the peasantry) and social strata (e.g. students) in society may support the workers in this struggle, but cannot substitute for them. The workers have a unique role because of their numbers, their role in production which means that they are able to remove the economic power of the capitalists by organising under their own initiative, and the fact that the experience of social co-operation in production tends to produce the values that promote solidarity in the struggle against the employer. One corollary of the fact that the struggle will be decided in the workplace is that it will not be decided by street brawls with the cops. While it is certainly necessary to defend ourselves against police attack, capitalism's achilles' heel is in the workplace and our strategic orientation must be there.

2. We stand for the complete equality of the sexes and oppose all forms of oppression of women. The liberation of women from patriarchy will not be achieved without the overthrow of capitalism and the destruction of class society. The overthrow of capitalism will not be achieved without the full participation of working class women in the struggle. It is therefore in the interests of male workers to support all struggles for equality and freedom for women, even if these are at the expense of male privileges. The solidarity of the male and female halves of the working class can only be built on the principle that an injury to one is an injury to all. We support the right of women to organise autonomously within the wider working class movement and also within

Anarchist organisations.

3. We oppose the oppression and dispossession of indigenous people in Australia. This means that indigenous people have the right to equal treatment within Australia (i.e. no racial discrimination, whether from the State or in society) and have the right to remain indigenous (i.e. retain their lands and culture, without pressure for assimilation into the dominant culture). Indigenous people in Australia have never ceded sovereignty and have never sold their land. We acknowledge the desire of indigenous people in Australia for a treaty to recognise their prior occupation and continued rights, but believe that no such treaty can be negotiated on just terms for indigenous people while capitalism and its State endure in Australia. We believe a just settlement for indigenous people can only be achieved after a revolutionary transformation of society, including crucially the abolition of capitalist real estate.

4. We are internationalists, opposing the division of humanity into conflicting nation States and supporting working class solidarity as the one force which is capable of being an axis of effective counter-mobilisation against nationalism and racism. We therefore support open borders as a principle that will be implemented under Libertarian Communism and in the meantime will support struggles which provide opportunities to move in that direction. In particular, we support the struggle of refugees for asylum in Australia and oppose both immigration detention and deportation.

5. We oppose both pacifism and terrorism. Instead, we support the right to use reasonable force in self defence.

Pacifism is the principled refusal to meet physical force with physical force. Terrorism is the strategy of using violence, or the credible threat of it, in order to create a climate of fear for personal safety in the civilian population of a society, or a definable sub-group of it, to achieve a political end.

The problem with pacifism is that it assumes that there is a degree of humanity at work amongst the capitalist class and its State and that there are limits to their ruthlessness. The history of the last hundred years, however, provides plentiful evidence to the contrary. In the face of totally non-violent resistance, a sufficiently ruthless force, even if a tiny minority, could impose its will on the rest of society.

The problem with terrorism is that it is a strategy which marginalises the mass of the working class politically and drives it into the arms of the State for protection. Even if used in the pursuit of supportable goals, therefore, its political effects are inevitably reactionary. The callous and instrumental attitude to humanity necessary to use terrorism is completely antithetical to the principles of Anarchism and thus to resort to this would be to betray our philosophy.

Our position is that we recognise the right to use reasonable force in self defence. We are consistent on this point and thus we repudiate the State's proclamation of a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Rather, we insist that we do not lose the right to self defence

when we enter the field of political struggle. Workers thus have the right to use reasonable force to defend themselves against police or thug attack on the picket line or on demonstrations.

We oppose the use of force beyond what is reasonably necessary for self defence. This would contradict the humanitarian values of the society we wish to create. The working class, being the immense majority in industrialised societies, has the advantage of the weight of numbers and the ability to use economic force to press its cause. We therefore have no need of violence, beyond what is necessary to defend ourselves against those who themselves would use violence to prevent us achieving our goals non-violently. We also believe that the use of unnecessary violence would alienate sections of the working class and make it harder to break them from authoritarian ideologies. In particular, it would strengthen the position of authoritarian groups active within the working class.

We believe that Fascism provides an example, unique in advanced capitalist democracies at present, of a specialised application of the principle of reasonable force in self defence. A Fascist group is not a debating society, but a permanent conspiracy to murder. It is an open threat of violence against women, immigrants, indigenous people, all other minorities and ultimately, to the working class and its organisations. Defence against Fascism is therefore necessarily, in many cases, pre-emptive. Fascist groups should be defeated and broken up, if possible, whenever they show their faces. We emphasise that this position is unique to the issue of Fascism and does not apply to Right wing populists, where the ordinary use of the principle of self defence would apply when fighting them.

We recognise the possibility that, in revolutionary situations, self defence may require pre-emptive action against forces of the State. This is not a pretext, however, for abandoning a principled opposition to offensive violence. The situation must still be assessed using the criteria of whether the use of force is both necessary for defensive purposes and of a reasonable degree given the threat.

We reject any attempt to equate property damage with violence. Property has no rights and damage to it must be assessed in the light of its impact on people. Damage to nuclear weapons, therefore, is the complete opposite of damage to a worker's home.

6. "Free thought, necessarily involving freedom of speech & press, I may tersely define thus: no opinion a law — no opinion a crime." — Alexander Berkman

We therefore oppose State bans on any opinion, even ones with which we passionately disagree. Any such bans would end up being used, in the end, against the working class and its organisations.

We also, therefore, recognise complete freedom of conscience. We support the right to believe in any religion or none, to practice any religion or none and to preach any religion or none. In the Australian context, this includes a special responsibility to defend the right of people to be Muslims.

In addition, freedom of conscience is a right of every individual person and is not restricted to religious leaders. Adherence to religious precepts must therefore be entirely voluntary. Attempts by religious leaders or denominations to compel adherents to conform to their teachings or discipline must be resisted and we resolutely reject any attempt to give them State backing.

7. A libertarian communist society will be one that is ecologically sustainable. Even if capitalism were just and supportable on other grounds, it would fail the test of sustainability. We need to reject the instrumental thinking inherent to capitalism and realise that part of nature – a conscious and creative part, but a part. As such, nature is not something to be dominated, but to be protected – and particularly to be protected against human damage.

In building a sustainable society, it is essential to end the use of non-renewable resources – or develops ways of making them renewable. In the short term, this means a rapid transition away from burning fossil fuels and towards renewable energy. In the medium term, we need to restructure our existing cities for a preponderance of medium density living and decentralise into a considerably larger number of smaller cities. And in the long term, we need to phase out mining before the exhaustion of accessible mineral deposits at practical grades forces us to abandon it involuntarily.

A commitment to ecological sustainability does not, however, mean enforced poverty in living standards and even less so does it require a return to a hunter-gatherer society. We therefore reject Malthusians of all varieties and especially in their primitivist manifestation. Production of a wide variety of goods and services needs to be increased, not decreased, in order to abolish poverty and want from the face of the Earth. We hold that it is capitalism, not human nature, that is responsible for the wanton environmental destruction which has occurred in the last two centuries and is threatening the very liveability of the planet which we inhabit.

Further, the fact that technology has been developed under capitalism does not irretrievably contaminate it. Different technologies have capitalist relations embedded into them to different degrees and in some cases development of a particular technology has been slowed because it doesn't fit well with contemporary capitalism. Nuclear power is an example of a technology which will have to be abandoned as anti-social, while solar power is an example of a technology which, on the whole, undermines the power of the great capitalist corporations.

A libertarian communist society will resolve the current conflict between the need to increase production and the need to limit the environmental damage that capitalist production imposes by:

- (a) Producing for rationally determined needs, rather than for wants generated by advertising;
- (b) Producing quality goods which last, rather than shoddy ones which break down

quickly;

(c) Using only renewable energy;

(d) Using closed loop manufacturing processes, with 100% material recycling and zero waste;

(e) Rationally planning the satisfaction of social needs in the most energy and resource efficient manner;

(f) Using the most modern technology to institute efficient small-run production of a wide variety of goods, thus eliminating a large part of the need for long distance transport and

(g) Planning cities, and the means of transport within and between them, on ecologically sustainable and energy efficient lines.

Finally, we believe that the current so-called “population crisis” is an illusion caused by the inefficient, unjust and unsustainable practices of capitalism. While there is a natural limit to the carrying capacity of the planet, we believe that this limit is impossible to determine until after capitalism has been abolished and its destructive practices eliminated. If population reduction is called for after the planet's carrying capacity is established, it can be achieved gradually through social consensus.

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