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There will always be communication problems in any social-political movement. The more diverse and larger a milieu becomes, the more factions there will be that quite naturally develop to express differences in perspectives, values and goals. This much is to be both expected and welcomed, especially in the anarchist milieu where most participants maintain a great appreciation for individual and small group spontaneity, creativity, and uniqueness.

I won't suggest that anarchists have any more problems communicating than do other large, diverse groups whose members run across the spectrums of gender, race, religion, politics, ethnicity, and class. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if anarchists aren't more open and have fewer problems than many or most other disparate groups of similar size and diversity. But there are still obvious problems within the anarchist milieu, indicated by, if nothing else, the number of times people call for more civil communication and more respect for differences of opinion.

The impression I get from my own experience as a long-time editor of this magazine as well as from historical reading is that there has always been a whole range of conflict within the many past and present anarchist milieus varying from petty to deadly, frivolous to principled. And our current situation is no different.

While contemporary anarchists are probably as fragmented and diverse as at any time in the past, this shouldn't be an unexpected phenomenon. Given the unprecedented nature of the current ultra-globalization and super-domination of capital, along with its accompanying mass social alienation, demoralization and despair, we should expect that there will not be any unanimity of response. Such a massive, complex and successful system of domination quite naturally discourages the formation of a single, unitary vision of resistance. With no easy way out in sight, there will be many people following up the implications of the many different institutional strands of the modern state and capital (economic, environmental, social, political, educational). There will be many people exploring past formulations of social resistance (syndicalism, socialism, councilism, individualism, liberalism). There will be many people focusing on practical techniques of opposition (civil disobedience, black blocs, non-violent resistance, refusal of work, illegality & riot). There will be many people focusing on utopian ideologies (pacifism, deep ecology, social ecology, communalism). And there will be many people deeply confused about rudimentary elements of social critique (anarcho-capitalists, social-democratic anarchists, etc.).

Of course, where there are genuinely irreconcilable differences, we shouldn't have any expectations that discourse will remain cordial. However, probably most differences within the anarchist milieu are far from irreconcilable in the sense that those holding different positions most often maintain an underlying agreement on the most fundamental anarchist demands: abolition of the state and abolition of capitalism,

along with respect for individual and communal autonomy and self-determination. The ultimate meaning of these fundamental demands will always be contested and debated, but the nature of this debate doesn't have to be as rancorous and self-defeating as it has recently become. And, if nothing else, we can definitely improve the way we present our positions and criticize those of others, something which doesn't require any agreement, even on anarchist fundamentals.

To improve the current level of anarchist discourse I have a simple set of five suggestions which, if widely implemented, might make a difference in the tenor of debate in the anarchist milieu.

1. Read or listen before you react.
2. Think out your position before you write or speak.
3. Argue for ideas and practical actions, not for ideologies and morals.
4. Criticize people for where they stand, not for positions you invent for them. Especially avoid irrelevant name-calling.
5. Ignore demagogues and anti-anarchist provocateurs whenever possible, and when it's not criticize or ridicule them unmercifully.

1. How many times have each of us read an article, a leaflet, an e-mail message, or a letter to the editor in which it became quickly obvious that the author never really heard an important part of what was said by the person or group to which he was responding? How many times have each of us been guilty of this ourselves? The next time we each respond to a position with which we disagree, why not improve our response by taking an extra

moment to make sure we understand what has been said first?

2. A problem which seems to often accompany the first, is the tendency to blurt out responses to questions, statements or criticisms before fully thinking out the implications of what we want to say. I find this most annoying when people make statements that are obviously untrue on their face—such that even the person making the statement would realize this if she or he would just take the time to think about what is being said! The examples are legion in just about any anarchist periodical.

3. When we argue for particular ideas or actions, we are almost forced to come up with logical (or at least plausible) reasons for our positions. However, when it comes to arguing for particular ideologies or morals, communication too often gives way to emotional, irrational rhetoric which disguises the actual meaning of what is being said.

4. How many times do people attribute positions to others in order to cut down straw men? Way too many. This is such a tiring waste of time that I am sometimes surprised at how frequently people resort to it. Why not give it a rest!

5. People who are only out to get a rise from you don't deserve the time of day. Why bother engaging them when they never wanted to initiate a genuine dialogue in the first place? Demagogues who only want to stir people up in order to manipulate them, deserve to be ignored as well. It is only when they actually succeed in their manipulations that they need to be exposed—and then without mercy.

I invite those with further suggestions to improve anarchist discourse to write letters which I'll include in upcoming issues!