

# **A “Political” Program For Anarchists**

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## INTRODUCTION

In **On Community**, a recent pamphlet on Gustav Landauer, Larry Gambone suggested the need for an “antipolitical movement” to dismantle the state, in order to eliminate obstacles to non-statist alternatives. It was no longer possible, he argued, merely to act outside the state framework while treating it as irrelevant. To do so entailed the risk that “you might end up like the folks at Waco.” In an earlier work, **Sane Anarchy**, he suggested a few items for the agenda of such a movement. I now submit a list of my own (after a few pages of preferatory comment), as a basis for discussion.

Many anarchists oppose in principle such use of the political process for anarchist ends. It is unethical, they say, for anarchists to participate in the political process. Voting entails selecting a representative to exercise coercive force in our name; and appealing to such representatives for action is in effect a recognition of their legitimacy. This is a view shared by many varieties of anarchists. At the left end of the spectrum, anarcho-syndicalists prefer to ignore the state; hence the Wobblies’ split with De Leon and the elimination of the “political clause” from the IWW Preamble. Many individualist anarchists, voluntaryists, and right-libertarians (Wendy McElroy, for instance) also take this position. The only acceptable course is to withdraw all consent and legitimacy from the state, until “the last one out turns off the lights.”

The problem with this line of argument is that the state is an instrument of exploitation by a ruling class. And exploiters cannot, as a group, be ethically “educated” into abandoning exploitation, because they have a very rational self-interest in continuing it. If most ordinary people simply withdraw consent and abandon the political process altogether, the ruling class will just drop the pretense of popular control and resort to open repression. So long as they control the state apparatus, a small minority of dupes from the producing classes, along with well-paid police and military jackboots, will enable them to control the populace through terror. A majority of Italian workers may have supported the factory occupations of 1920, but that didn’t stop the black shirts, paid with capitalist money, from restoring the bosses’ control.

But I’m not calling for “anarchist politicians” to run for office and exercise political power, like those who served the Generalitat in Catalonia. Our involvement in politics should take the form of pressure groups and lobbying, to subject the state to as much pressure as possible from the outside.

The answer, then, is active engagement to dismantle the interventionist state, without which exploitation would be impossible. This can be done only by broad-based, ad hoc coalitions, formed on an issue-by-issue basis. A good example is the ACLU-NRA alliance against Janet Reno’s police state. The congressional opposition to the Reichstag Enabling Act (oops—USA Patriot Act) of 2001 includes elements as disparate as Paul Wellstone and Bob Barr. Keith Preston argues that a viable anti-state movement will have to get beyond obsession with right and left.

*An entirely new ideological paradigm needs to be developed. One that rejects the traditionalism and economic elitism of the Right and the statism of the Left. One that draws on the best and most enduring elements of classical liberalism, libertarian socialism and classical anarchism but adapts these to contemporary circumstances within a uniquely American cultural framework that appeals to the best within our libertarian and revolutionary traditions. Political and economic decentralization should be our revolutionary battle cry..*

*The original principles of classical anarchism—elimination of the authoritarian state, control of economies of scale by cooperative partnerships of producers, individualism, genuine liberation of outcast groups, resistance to war and imperialism, decentralization, voluntary association, intellectual and cultural freedom, mutual aid and voluntary cooperation—remain as relevant as ever in today’s world.*

Karl Hess argued a long time ago that the flower of liberty should not be disregarded because its petals are red and black, instead of red white and blue. That, in turn, brings to mind David De Leon’s remark in **The American as Anarchist** that an anarchist movement genuinely native to the United States might prefer the Gadsden flag over the Red-and-Black.

We must also remember that “solidarity” is not something we reserve for our ideological clones. Recently a reader poll at **Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed** asked, “which of the following should we give solidarity to?” and then listed a number of groups—as if solidarity were some kind of special favor, and not something we were ethically bound to. We must show solidarity for any victim of injustice, when they are in the right, regardless of their overall position. If more of the left had expressed outrage over Ruby Ridge and Waco, it might have been the beginning of a coalition of right and left libertarians against the police state.

But there is a whole cottage industry of obsessive anti-rightists devoted to preventing such cooperation. I recently forwarded, to a Marxist discussion list, an article about a 15-year-old kid who beat a drug rap because of the prosecution’s ignorance of the law. I posted it because I thought the story was inspiring, not because I agreed with (or was even aware of) the right-wing ideological background of the source. An immediate response came from an associate of Chip Berlet, who seized on the opportunity for another “Right Woos Left” screed, without even commenting on the **subject** of the post. The attitude of such people toward the libertarian and populist right, it seems, is “I agree with what you say, but I’ll fight to the death to stop you from saying it.”

The Internet has opened up exhilarating possibilities for forms of opposition based on large, decentralized associations of affinity groups. The potential for such organization is alarming to those in power. A 1998 Rand study by David Ronfeldt (**The Zapatists “Social Netwar” in Mexico**, MR-994-A) warned that internet-based coalitions like the pro-Zapatista support network could overwhelm the government with popular demands and render society “ungovernable.” This study was written before the anti-WTO demonstrations, so the post-Seattle movement doubtless has our overlords in a panic. Such forms of organization make it possible to throw together ad hoc coalitions of thousands of affinity groups in a very short time; they can organize mass demonstrations, issue press releases in thousands of venues, and “swarm” the government and press with mass mailings, phone calls and emails. This resembles the “excess of democracy” and “crisis of governability” that Samuel Huntington warned of in the 1970s—but an order of magnitude beyond anything he could have imagined then. In the case of dismantling corporate state capitalism, our allies include not only anarchists and the libertarian left, but populists, constitutionalists, and libertarians on the right.

One important feature of this decentralized form of organization is its resilience in the face of state attempts at repression or decapitation. We should strengthen this feature by organizing redundant telephone, email and Ham radio trees within each radical organization, with similar redundant communications links between organizations, to warn the entire resistance movement as quickly as possible in the event of mass arrests.

And when the state attempts piecemeal arrests of a few leaders, one organization at a time, we should spread the news not only to “radical” groups and alternative press outlets as quickly as possible, but to the mainstream press. If you belong to an organization whose activists have been targeted in this way, spread the news far and wide on the net and in print, with contact information for the officials involved. If you find such a message in your in-box, take the time to call or email the jackboots with your complaints, and pass the news on to others. I recently called a local police force to protest the illegal arrest of some demonstrators after I saw an article in a newsgroup, and was told by a harried operator that they were so overwhelmed that they had to refer callers to the state police. Every crackdown on an organization should result in the state being swarmed with phone calls, and the press being saturated with letters and press releases.

This is especially urgent in the present atmosphere. As of this writing (February 2002), the state is taking advantage of the 9–11 hysteria to see how much repression the public will tolerate. For example the jackboots forced the shutdown of IRARadio.com by threat-ening their ISP with seizure of assets for “supporting terrorism” (without need of a trial, of course). Since then, left-wing political activists have been subjected to all kinds of harassment. Nancy Oden, a national Green Party organizer, was subjected to humiliating treatment in an airport and denied passage. A group of SOA Watch activists were arrested by the US Border Patrol when they tried to enter Canada for a peaceful demonstration. The FBI has hinted in its literature that right-wing groups too “obsessed” with the constitution, or with monitoring the actions of federal law enforcement, may be added to the list of “terrorists.” As Morris Dees and Chuck Schumer have said, it’s dangerous when people don’t trust their government. Every time the state puts in its toe to test the water, it needs to be badly scalded by public opinion. How long will it be before the gestapo try to resurrect “criminal syndicalism” as a form of terrorism, and shut down the IWW?

At the same time, we must remember that our “political” strategy is only secondary. We are forced to pursue it only because the state actively interferes with our primary activity—what the Wobblies call “building the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.” This means self-organization at the grassroots level to build “alternative social infrastructure”—things like producers’ and consumers’ co-ops, LETS systems and mutual banks, syndicalist industrial unions, tenant associations and rent strikes, neighborhood associations, (non-police affiliated) crime-watch and cop-watch programs, voluntary courts for civil arbitration, community-supported agriculture, etc. The “libertarian municipalist” project of devolving local government functions to the neighborhood level and mutualizing social services also falls under this heading—but with services being mutualized rather than municipalized. (See also Brian A. Dominick, **An Introduction to Dual Power Strategy**).

Peter Staudenmeier, in a workshop on cooperatives at Ann Arbor, referred to such alternative forms of organization as “social counter-power.” Social counterpower takes the concrete forms of “prefigurative politics” and “counterinstitutions.”

*Prefigurative politics is a fancy term that just means living your values today, instead of waiting until “after the revolution”—in fact it means beginning the revolution here and now to the extent possible. This might be called the everyday aspect of social counter-power. And counterinstitutions, of which co-ops are often an example, are the structural aspects of social counter-power.*

Jonathan Simcock, on the **Total Liberty** homepage, described a vision of Evolutionary Anarchism that included

*...Worker Co-operatives, Housing Co-operatives, self-employment, LETS schemes, Alternative Currencies, Mutual Banking, Credit Unions, tenants committees, Food Co-operatives, Allotments, voluntary organizations, peaceful protest and non-violent direct action and a host of similar activities are the means by which people begin to “behave differently”, to go beyond Anarchist theory, and begin to build the elements of a new society.*

Our emphasis should be on building this society as much as possible without seeking direct confrontation with the authority of the state. But I am not a political pacifist in the sense of ruling out such confrontation in principle. No matter how industriously we work “within the shell of the old” society, at some point we will have to break out of the shell. At that point either the state will initiate force in order to abort the new society, or it will be so demoralized as to collapse quickly under its own weight, like the Leninist regimes in 1989–91. But either way, the final transition will probably be abrupt and dramatic, rather messy, and will almost certainly involve at least some violence.

On the revolutionary question, I think we should have two guiding principles. The first was formulated by Ed Stamm in his statement on the anti-WTO protests of December 1999: “any revolutionary activity must have massive popular support.” This will occur of itself if our educational and organizing efforts are successful. It will never be accomplished by vanguardism or “propaganda of the deed.” Second, it should not be attempted until we have built as much as we can within the existing structure. The birth pangs do not take place until the gestation is completed. There are some aspects of a stateless society—for example complete workers’ control of industry, or land ownership based only on occupancy and use—which cannot be fully accomplished short of final destruction of the present system of power. But we should achieve everything we can short of this before we begin the final push.

Anyway, there’s a lot we can do short of revolution. In attempting to roll back the state, we should remember that our progress doesn’t depend on converting a majority of people to anarchism. We just have to appeal to the values we share with them on particular issues. And we don’t have to segregate ourselves into an ideologically pure, separatist movement of “real” anarchists and wait for the other 99 44/100% of society to come around. Progress isn’t all or nothing. As Larry Gambone argued in “**An Anarchist Strategy Discussion**,”

*...a mass (populist) orientation requires that one search for all the various beliefs and activities that are of a general libertarian and social nature found among ordinary people. These would consist of any form of decentralism, direct democracy, regionalism, opposition to government and regulation, all forms of voluntary association, free exchange and mutual aid.*

In other words, we must approach people where they are, and make our agenda relevant to the things that concern them (see also Gambone, **Sane Anarchy**).

Anarchists belong to countless social and political organizations in which they are a decided minority. We can act within these groups to promote a libertarian agenda. That means making common cause with movements that are not anarchist per se, but aim nonetheless at pushing society in a freer and less exploitative direction. Some may be nominally on the right, like homeschoolers and gun rights people. But the divide between populism and elitism, or between liber-

tarianism and authoritarianism, is a lot more important than the fetishism of left and right. To quote Gambone again, in **What is Anarchism?**

*The future of anarchism, if there is one, will at best, involve a few thousand people, as individuals or small groups, in larger libertarian-decentralist organizations. (Some will choose to work alone, spreading the anarchist message through writings and publications.) It is imperative that such people, so few in number, yet with potential influence, should know what they are talking and writing about.*

People who call themselves “anarchists” are probably not even one in a thousand, and may never be. But names aren’t important; substance is. Huey Long said that if fascism ever came to America, it would be in the name of “100% Americanism.” If anarchy ever comes, it will probably be in the name of “decentralism,” “participatory democracy,” or “economic justice.”

But why would the ruling classes allow even a piecemeal rollback of the state apparatus? Why would they not prefer repression to even a partial loss of privilege? The answer is that they will use open, large-scale repression only as a last resort. (Even if we are in the opening phase of such a repression in the aftermath of 9–11, the state will likely keep it low-key and sporadic as long as possible). Such repression is unlikely to succeed beyond the short-term, and could well result in a total loss of power under extremely bloody circumstances. Ruling classes are often willing to make short-term bargains to preserve their long-term power. Even though the ruling elites took the initiative in creating the New Deal welfare state, for example, they did so only as a necessary evil, to prevent the far greater evil of public insurrection. And of course, we cannot underestimate the human failings of denial and shortsightedness, the desire to postpone the inevitable as long as possible. Ruling classes are as prone as anyone else to the “boiled frog syndrome.”

Whenever it is strategically appropriate, we should coordinate the political program with the non-political program of alternative institution-building. The social movement can be used to mobilize support for the political agenda and to put pressure on the state to retreat strategically. The political movement can provide political cover for the social movement and make mass repression less feasible.

Even when it is imprudent for the social movement to resort to large-scale illegality, it can act as a “shadow government” to publicly challenge every action taken by the state (much like the shadow system of soviets and workers’ committees before the October Revolution). Even though such “shadow institutions” may be unable to implement their policies in the face of official opposition, that fact in itself is an opportunity to demand, “Why are you using government coercion to stop us from controlling our own schools, community, etc.?” (This can be especially effective in pointing out the hypocrisy of the Republicans’ bogus “populism,” with their appeals to decentralism and local control). The objective is to keep the state constantly off-balance, and force it to defend its every move in the court of public opinion.

Not all reductions in state power are equally important, and it could be disastrous to dismantle state functions in the wrong order. The main purpose of every state activity, directly or indirectly, is to benefit the ruling class. The central or structural functions of the state are the subsidies and privileges by which the concentration of wealth and the power to exploit are maintained. The so-called “progressive” functions of the state (despite Arthur Schlesinger’s fantasies to the contrary) are created by the ruling class, acting through the government as their executive committee, to stabilize capitalism and clean up their own mess.

Therefore it is essential that the state should be dismantled in sequence, starting with the structural foundations of corporate power and privilege; after a genuine market is allowed to destroy the concentration of power and polarization of wealth, and remove the boot of exploitation from the neck of labor, the superfluous welfare state can next be dismantled. This should not be confused with the social-democratic “anarchism” of Noam Chomsky. I do not advocate strengthening the state to break up “private concentrations of power.” Capitalist power could not survive without the state. The only issue is what state functions to dismantle first.

Since I approach this largely (although not entirely) from Benjamin Tucker’s version of mutualism, I begin with the big three forms of statist privilege according to Tucker—the money, patent and land monopolies.

## THE PROGRAM

### BANKING.

As a minimal first step, repeal all market entry barriers to credit unions which are more restrictive than regulations for ordinary commercial banks. The ultimate goal is an end to all restrictions on the formation of mutual banks and the private issuance of banknotes, and all state-mandated backing for currency. The banking industry would no doubt heartily oppose this. Its stooges, like Phil Gramm (who normally waxes eloquent on the glories of the “free market”), would shamelessly invoke the public’s right to a government guarantee of “sound money.” As in most cases, the solution is exposure: of the hypocrisy of the New Right according to their own avowed “free market” principles, of the inequity of the privileges they support, and of the extent to which the average person is forced to labor for their benefit. Gary Elkin argued in “**Mutual Banking**” that the reform might be accomplished through the back door with LETS or barter clubs, using the pretext that they were only facilitating exchange rather than creating money.

### PATENTS.

The minimal first steps here are to end patent protections for any product or technology developed with government money, to eliminate the R&D tax credit, and to scale back patent law (including GATT IP protections) to something resembling traditional Anglo-American patent law. The latter means, among other things, significantly reducing the term of protection, and requiring the holder of a patent to work it in every country where privileges are claimed. The ultimate goal is to eliminate all patent laws.

As in the case of banking, the pseudo-“free market” hypocrites will noisily appeal to the need to reward innovation and protect every fledgling Thomas Edison from theft of his hard work. The solution, again, is to proclaim the facts and the opposition’s hypocrisy as loudly as possible. For example, in response to the alleged need to recoup research costs, we point out the high percentage of R&D that is underwritten by government spending. Or the fact that, according to business surveys, 86% of new technology would be developed without patents merely for the sake of maintaining competitiveness. Or that much of the concentration of industry results from buying up patents (for example the U.S. chemical industry being virtually created from scratch when Attorney-General A. Mitchell Palmer gave away seized German chemical patents to a handful of U.S. companies).



## LANDLORDISM.

Our ultimate goal here is an end to legal guarantees for absentee land ownership, and their replacement with property rights based on occupation and use. This is a case where the new society cannot be built until the shell of the old has been cracked open. There is only a limited amount that can be done in intermediate steps, short of a decisive and final dismantling of state power. Like the right of absentee ownership of industrial means of production, the plutocrats will not surrender the legal principle of absentee land ownership without a political Armageddon.

So long as the state is bound in legal principle to enforce property rights of landlords, any victory won by squatters will be only short-term and local, without permanent results of any significance. But the other side of the coin is that squatters are indigent and homeless people with very little to lose—after all, some people reportedly commit some minor crime around first frost every year just to get three hots and a cot until spring. If every vacant or abandoned housing unit in a city is occupied by the homeless, they will at least have shelter in the short term until they are forcibly evacuated. And the political constraints against large-scale brutality (if the squatters restrict themselves to non-violent tactics and know how to use the press to advantage) are likely to be insurmountable. In the meantime, the squatters' movement performs a major educative and propaganda service, develops political consciousness among urban residents, draws public attention and sympathy against the predatory character of landlordism, and—most importantly—keeps the state and landlords perpetually on the defensive.

Even within the existing legal framework, tenant unions strengthen the hand of occupiers against absentee owners and reduce landlords' ability to exact rent by monopolizing property. Karl Hess, in **Neighborhood Power**, referred to tenant strikes which led to the legal expropriation of the landlords. In some cities, the laws regulating collective bargaining between tenants and landlords required tenants to put their rent into an escrow account during a strike. Some slumlords were eventually forced into bankruptcy by rent strikes, and were then bought out with their tenants' escrow money! The legal branches of the movement, like tenant unions and neighborhood assemblies, can also be used to apply pressure and political cover for squatters. The squatters' and tenants' movements can escalate and mutually reinforce pressure on the state.

Some states grant homestead exemptions for average-sized residential properties or family farms. Others provide bankruptcy protections for a principal residence. Both practices should be expanded as widely as possible, perhaps through referenda and initiated acts. As in the case of all other taxation, tax relief should occur from the bottom up, by removing as many ordinary people as possible from the tax rolls.

Government ownership of land should be eliminated as quickly as possible, through a new homesteading policy. This is one case in which property rights based solely on occupation and use can be established without displacing existing proprietors. Parcels of land big enough for subsistence could be provided at no cost, but with perpetual covenants attached to the deed by which absentee ownership would be unenforceable in court, and likewise even possessory rights would be unjusticiable for more than one such parcel in the same hands. This policy may be partially qualified in a couple of instances mentioned below.

## IMPERIALISM AND MILITARISM.

The national security state, military Keynesianism, foreign imperialism, and state-promoted globalization, all interact massively not only to bolster corporate capitalism at home, but to bring the people and resources of the entire world under the control of transnational corporations. Our ultimate goal, not realizable until the final liquidation of the U.S. government, is to dismantle the armed forces and devolve their functions and resources to decentralized federations of local militias. In the meantime we must press to eliminate all foreign military obligations and limit the mission of the armed forces to defending the territory of the United States.

A military budget commensurate with this mission would be far less than \$100 billion, effectively eliminating the military-industrial and military-scientific complexes, and the system of state-planned capitalism at the commanding heights of the corporate economy. Along with it would go the imperial presidency and the whole extra-constitutional structure created by the National Security Act. Also eliminated would be the School of the Americas, the CIA's Operations Directorate, and the rest of the rabbit warren of agencies which support military dictators, secret police and death squads around the world.

The best way to promote this is to take advantage of every opportunity to expose their evil deeds. We should do everything possible to disseminate the kinds of information available, for instance, in William Blum's **Killing Hope** or the Virtual Truth Commission website, and show solidarity with organizations like SOA Watch. Every public statement by someone like Jean Kirkpatrick or Maudlin Albright, about how much the U.S. has done to promote freedom and peace in the world, needs to be challenged. The public needs to see facts—facts by the ream and by the truckload—to see for themselves the hundreds of thousands, the millions of atrocities committed on a global scale since 1945 with active or passive U.S. complicity.

Larry Gambone's scenario in **Sane Anarchy**, of mass protests in the capital providing political cover for local libertarian movements, is quite relevant on an international scale. When the U.S. government prepares to crush an uncooperative regime like Guatemala or Nicaragua, the movement here at home needs to undertake mass demonstrations and general strikes in support of the target country's independence.

Finally under this heading, the U.S. should with all deliberate speed disengage from global agencies of economic governance like the World Bank, IMF, and WTO. Third World debt should be forgiven or eliminated, as quickly as can be done without a total collapse of the banking system. International patent law accords should be abrogated, and the U.S. should scale back its recognition of international patent rights commensurate with the scaleback at home—ideally to the point of eliminating them altogether. In the absence of the U.S. role in bolstering landlord-general oligarchies and encouraging IMF pressure toward corporation-friendly laws, the ordinary people of Third World countries could take their societies in the direction of cooperative or mutualist forms of economic organization.

This is another area in which a mass movement can be used to pressure the state in the proper direction, build solidarity with foreign resistance movements, and educate the American public. The role of anti-globalization demonstrations, in drawing public attention to secret meetings and contesting the authority and expertise of the oligarchy's pet suits there is priceless. But two caveats are in order. First, the demonstrators should refrain from smashing windows and blocking streets; such tactics only reinforce the public perception that "radicalism" is at odds with the mores of the average person, and needs to be contained in the interest of "public safety."

Second, we should contest the perception of right-wing anti-globalists (think Perot and Buchanan) and AFL-CIO bureaucrats who see globalization as a benefit to the Third World at the expense of the American people. We should draw attention to the fact that globalization benefits only corporate elites, at the expense of ordinary people in both the West and the Third World. The best way to fight the “race to the bottom” is through strategic alliances between American labor and workers’ movements in the developing world.

Anarchists should also cooperate with the efforts of people in other countries to organize grass-roots, mutualist alternatives to the state and to capitalism. The collapse of communism left a political vacuum in the former Soviet bloc. The vacuum was filled by an alliance between, on the one hand, transnational corporations and the IMF, and on the other a new authoritarian state dominated by the mafia of former Party apparatchiks. The civil society of Russia had atrophied under seventy years of totalitarian brutality, and there was no tradition of grass-roots organization to replace the authoritarian system.

In society after society, from the Soviet bloc to South Africa and Indonesia, the old authoritarian system of power crumbles only to be replaced by a new form of authoritarianism. The reason is that there is no alternative libertarian system capable of challenging the state. In Argentina right now, the left is calling for the creation of workers’ councils, for a federation of such councils with delegates recallable at will, and for a workers’ militia to defend the councils. But that is the kind of thing you organize the nucleus of in the twenty years **before** the central government collapses, not afterward. Once a conventional nation-state government is established, no matter how “progressive,” the nation has a new spokesman on whom the transnational corporate order can exert pressure. We can be sure that representatives of the IMF and the U.S. State Department have already met behind closed doors in Buenos Aires, and threatened (as they did Allende thirty years earlier) to “squeeze the Argentine economy until it screams” if it repudiates the neoliberal agenda.

The anti-globalization movement here must aid those in the Third World trying to organize unions, peasant cooperatives, and other grass-roots organs of empowerment. Americans today, as in Tocqueville’s day, are an unusually ingenious people when it comes to spontaneous, voluntary forms of social organization. One vitally important aspect of such activity is to encourage the development of intermediate, human-scale technology that can increase the economic productivity and self-sufficiency of peasant communities. A shared set of **Appropriate Technology Sourcebook**—an indexed collection of 150,000 pages available on fiche or CD-ROM for \$495—is probably the best single thing that a cluster of Third World villages could have. (Except for sending all the landlords and generals to Boot Hill—but one thing at a time).

## **POLICE STATE.**

We must fight to restore an absolutist understanding of the due process guarantees of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Amendments, and to dismantle the police state that has grown up in the name of fighting drugs, terrorism, gangs, and other crime. Fighting for an absolutist interpretation of the Bill of Rights is much more important than repealing the substance of drug prohibition, because procedure is generally more important to liberty than substance. I’d much rather live under the substantive drug laws of Turkey or Singapore, enforced according to the ACLU’s standard of due process, than the reverse.

At the highest level, this means eliminating Operation Garden Plot and the entire infrastructure of executive orders providing for martial law and domestic surveillance of “subversives.” It means overturning Jackboot Schumer’s unconstitutional “counter-terrorism” legislation and the USA PATRIOT Act.

It means cutting off the head of civil forfeiture (a doctrine borrowed from the prerogative law of bodies like the admiralty courts that so offended the Revolutionaries) and cauterizing the stump. No one should ever forfeit property to the state without being convicted of a crime, period. This should apply not only to drug law, but to all other forms of regulatory enforcement by “administrative bodies” like the IRS, EPA, etc.

Under the heading of the Fourth Amendment, this means prohibiting “no-knock warrants” merely to prevent destruction of drug evidence; no “sneak-and-peek” searches in which suspects are unable to prevent the planting of evidence; no snooping of bank accounts, email or internet usage without a warrant from a **local** judge. It means the citizen must be guaranteed a “reasonable expectation of privacy” against warrantless searches by flyovers, infrared or other high-tech means, etc. It means an end to public surveillance cameras mated to biometric technology, along with all attempts to make writing checks and other daily activities dependent on some form of biometric identification system. Court rulings must be overturned that make it unlawful to resist even an unlawful invasion or arrest.

An absolutist reading of the Bill of Rights also means restoring the principle of posse comitatus against domestic police action by the National Guard, and prohibiting cooperation between local police and Delta Force, military intelligence, or other regular military assets. It also means restoring the power of free juries to decide questions of law as well as fact, and to refuse to enforce unjust laws. The erosion of jury rights, like that of much of the rest of our civil liberty, reflects the loss of the Eighteenth Century Commonwealth, or Anglo-republican, understanding of common law due process, and its replacement by a Blackstonian/Mansfieldian/prerogative law framework.

There are several grass-roots movements that could cooperate fruitfully with anarchists. One is the anti-drug war movement, including state level movements to decriminalize cannabis entirely or only for medical purposes. The cannabis front is especially smart tactically, because the feds depend on states and localities (through “joint task forces”) for the overwhelming bulk of enforcement. Since most drug arrests and seizures are for pot, these state initiatives can throw a monkey-wrench into the gears of the drug war even if pot remains illegal at the federal level. Another tactic is to pressure local police forces not to participate in federal jackboot thuggery—for example, the Portland PD’s recent decision not to cooperate with Ashcroft in racial profiling of Middle Easterners and South Asians. Finally, cop-watch programs of all sorts are a way to serve notice to the police that the public eye is on them, and to expose issues of abuse of power to a wide audience. In all these projects, we can find much common ground with organizations like the Fully Informed Jury Association, the ACLU, and the National Lawyers Guild.

## **TRANSPORTATION.**

Our goal is to end all state subsidies to highways, trucking, airlines, railroads, and merchant marines. All infrastructure spending should be funded by user fees, assessed pro rata according to the cost imposed on the system. The state power of eminent domain should be abolished.

These policies underwrite the cost of shipping freight, and thus subsidize the centralization of the economy.

This centralization leads to great inefficiency, and could not occur unless it were subsidized. Most factories operate at several times maximum economy of scale. Even when they operate at peak efficiency in terms of unit cost, this is offset (according to Borsodi's Law) by increased distribution costs. Specialists in economy of scale like Walter Adams estimate that peak efficiency for most firms of manufacturing are reached by plants serving about one percent of the U.S. market. According to Barry Stein, this scale could be reduced by two-thirds with only about a 5% increase in unit cost of production, more than offset by reduced shipping costs. Kirkpatrick Sale believes that most kinds of light consumer goods could be produced by factories of fewer than fifty workers, and that communities of a few thousand could be self-sufficient in everything but the most capital-intensive items. Eliminating the transportation subsidy alone would take us a long way in this direction.

## **SYNDICALISM.**

Full-scale worker control of production, like land ownership based on possession, cannot be achieved until the state is finally dismantled by some dramatic and revolutionary process. These are the last bastions of privilege, which the ruling class will never surrender until the final extremity. But much can be done to reduce exploitation, even under formal capitalist ownership. Exploitation of labor—i.e., the extraction of surplus value—is impossible without state intervention. Every system of exploitation has involved a ruling class that controlled access to the means of production, in order to exact a tribute in the form of unpaid labor. In the case of American capitalism, banking laws enforce an artificial scarcity of credit and keep workers in debt slavery—both powerful forms of labor discipline. As a result, workers are forced to sell their labor in a buyer's market. But without such restrictions on access to cheap capital, and without other forms of exploitation like patents, taxes, etc., the availability of abundant cheap credit would drastically alter the balance of power between capital and labor, and wages would approach value-added.

In such an improved bargaining position, unions can likewise achieve a measure of de facto veto power over decisions affecting the production process. One impediment to such control, however, is federal labor law. All restrictive labor legislation, but most particularly Taft-Hartley, should be dismantled, leaving in effect only Norris-LaGuardia, which removed federal troops and court injunctions from labor disputes altogether. This would mean an end to the federal role in supervising certification votes and guaranteeing the right to organize, true enough. But it would also mean an end to restrictions on secondary sympathy and boycott strikes, general strikes, sit-downs, and other forms of direct action. All these tactics, by which the labor victories of the 1930s were won, are now illegal—a loss for which the paper guarantee of a right to organize is pretty sorry compensation. It was probably easier to organize a union in the 1930s by entering a plant in a flying squadron, and telling workers to “shut her down,” than it is today to persuade people in cold blood to risk their jobs and spend years jumping through all the NLRB's hoops.

For labor to wage a successful class war, it must think in terms of war, not “rights” or “the law.” The mainstream unions are psychologically addicted to the legacy of the New Deal “social compact.” Their inability to think outside the limits of the NLRB process is a severe handicap. Labor must think in terms of war, using all the means at their disposal, limited only by strategy and by their own sense of justice, without regard to “established procedures.” One of the most

effective things we could do would be to send a copy of the Wobbly pamphlet “How to Fire Your Boss” to every union that has just lost a strike. It’s at that point, when they’ve been kicked in the teeth for playing by the bosses’ rules, that they might be interested in learning how to play by their own rules. Instead of organizing and striking according to the bosses’ labor laws (and giving the bosses a chance to break the union and replace them with scabs), workers need to do what works—unannounced one-day strikes at random intervals, “good work” strikes, “open mouth sabotage,” working to rule, etc.

All legislative barriers to union-controlled pension funds, and to investment of pension funds in company stock, should be repealed. Corruption and fiscal accountability are indeed issues; and some union rank-and-file may understandably be afraid to put all their eggs in one basket (Enron, obviously). But control of a major voting bloc of shares is one way for workers to exert control over corporate policy, if they can effectively control the union officers. In some cases, such a bloc of shares might make an employee buyout more feasible.

Most existing “employee-owned” companies don’t go nearly far enough. The shares aren’t equal, managers have more voting power, and shares can be marketed so that the cooperative nature of the enterprise decays. Such enterprises are often organized along the same centralized, top-down lines as capitalist enterprises, only with the board elected by employees. But any step in the right direction is better than what we have now, and we can encourage new forms of cooperative organization with department self-management, election of managers, non-marketable shares, etc. And a union local is a lot more amenable to genuine, grass-roots democratic control than the state. Apologists for capitalism like to crow that we already live under “pension fund socialism,” because workers own so much of the means of production through pension fund stock. Let’s make them crow out the other side of their mouths.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY.**

J.K. Galbraith moralized on the theme of “private opulence and public squalor,” but failed to recognize it as resulting from the very nature of “public” property. State property inevitably becomes squalid because it is administered by bureaucrats; in the absence of private or small group proprietary interests, nobody has any personal reason to take care of it. Most environmental damage takes place on government property. All the despoilation of “public” land by the oil, mining, timber and cattle industries is done by businesses that use their political influence to get access rights or leases far below market value. If the land is auctioned off instead of just leased at sweetheart prices, the bidding is open only to companies in the industry that wants the resources. Just another form of crony capitalism.

But imagine, for example, if the lumber companies actually had to buy the land where the giant redwoods grow. The government would sell the land in publicly advertised auctions, accepting bids over several months by mail and over the Internet. Bidding would be open to all interested parties, including environmental groups, not just a handful of lumber companies. It would hardly be profitable in these circumstances to destroy the trees for lumber at their market price. A similiary policy regarding oil industry access to ANWR would make the issue of pollution a moot point.

The status of government land with such resources complicates the issue of homesteading policy. Until large timber or mining companies completely disintegrate under the effect of dismantling subsidies and privileges, such valuable land can hardly be open to ownership based on

possession; it would amount to giving it away free to the present despoilers. (Of course, ownership could be awarded to the actual human occupiers working the land, rather than to the fictitious corporate entity; but this would probably be politically impossible so long as the corporate elite retained any sizable amount of power.) Such land might instead be auctioned off to industry at market prices before any general homestead policy was implemented. Covenants could be attached providing that ownership would be based only on immediate possession and use after the property changed hands for the first time. When workers finally established labor self-management, these resources would become the cooperative property of those working them.

This would still leave the problem of economic rent, with producers cooperatives which controlled valuable land being in a position to extract excessive prices. But I imagine that, in a system of property ownership based on possession, local associations for mutual defense would develop some way to regulate ownership of especially productive land in an equitable way.

### **FEDERAL DEBT.**

Although I would prefer to repudiate the federal debt, this would probably be politically impossible in the short run. By the time a majority was convinced of the justice of such a policy, the state would be on the verge of collapse anyway—and that's a lot of interest to pay in the meantime. So the immediate policy should simply be to retire the debt as fast as possible with budget savings. Short of renouncing the debt entirely, it might be possible to take some intermediate steps along lines advocated by populist and antifederalist groups in the 1780s. For example, some restrictions might be placed on honoring bonds at face value if they were sold to third parties. A distinction might also be made between small-scale bond holders and large scale holdings by the wealthy and by banks and corporations.

### **TAXES.**

Military spending, police state spending related to consensual crimes, corporate tax loopholes, and interest on the national debt, probably amount to half of federal revenue. All such savings should be translated into tax reductions. Since the wealth of the plutocracy results from state policies that allow them to live off the labor of producers, the producers should be the first to benefit from tax cuts, and the plutocrats should be the last. All targeted corporate tax exemptions and credits should be eliminated, and the corporate tax rate then lowered to be revenue neutral. All personal income tax cuts should take the form of increases in the personal exemption. This would eliminate the income tax for the overwhelming majority of the population, and let the coupon-clippers pay the full price of their "executive committee." As the market effects of eliminating state capitalist subsidies are fully felt, the ranks of the plutocrats will quickly thin out. And the differential effects of applying tax cuts from the bottom up, in improving the relative competitive position of those on the bottom, will act as a partial remedy for past wrongs.

### **DECENTRALIZATION AND MUTUALIZATION OF "PUBLIC" SERVICES.**

Police, utilities, health and welfare services should all be devolved to the community or neighborhood level, and run whenever possible on a cooperative basis with control by the "customer." At the same time every population unit of a few thousand people—small towns and urban

neighborhoods—should organize government on the pattern of direct democracy, with public meetings and boards of selectmen, to exercise control of such government functions.

City-wide school boards should be eliminated, and each school turned into a consumers co-op, with the principal and staff becoming “selectmen” responsible to the parents. I tried to figure out the minimal tuition for a quality education, on the assumption that the parents of twenty or thirty kids pooled their own money to form a cooperative school. Taking into account things like renting a house for class space, and hiring teacher(s), the annual expense wouldn’t be over \$1500 per pupil. Existing “public” schools, on the other hand, spend upwards of \$6000. Most of the difference lies in the proliferation of parasitic bureaucrats with prestige salaries, and the fact that the state’s aura of majesty requires specially designed Stalinist architecture on the most expensive real estate in town.

This is a common pattern. When you try to figure out how much it would cost to organize a service for yourself, from the bottom up, and compare it to what you’re paying now, it’s stunning. Where does all the money go? It goes to support parasitic centralized bureaucracies with no incentive to economize. It’s amazing how creative and thrifty ordinary people can be when they’re spending their own money, instead of stolen loot.

“Public” and municipal hospitals should be made public in fact and organized on a cooperative basis, with the trustees directly responsible to those who use them. I’d like to see the reaction of white-collar bureaucrats, who ooze smarmy platitudes about “public service,” when they find out the public really **is** the boss.

But the issue of control is only a first step. Ultimately, we have to get away from our blind worship of authority in a white coat, and our belief that the “experts” reside in a big glass and steel building. As with schools, decentralization to the neighborhood level would result in massive savings in overhead. And taking responsibility for our own health would reduce the demand on hospitals significantly. I envision a clinic in each neighborhood, owned by its clients, with a minimal staff of MDs and a lot more primary care done house to house by nurses and paramedics. Sort of a cross between the Berkeley Cooperative Clinic and the Chinese “barefoot doctors.” As much as possible, emphasis would be shifted to prevention, and integration of allopathic with naturopathic and nutritional medicine. When such methods were not enough, members of local clinics would have access to more specialized, high-tech equipment owned jointly by all the neighborhood co-ops in a region. The medical school curriculum would resemble something set by Andrew Weil, instead of by the drug companies.

The ultimate goal in every case is to organize these services on a voluntary, cost basis, funded by user fees and dues rather than taxes, and thus eliminate the distinction between state and society. But the feasibility of doing this in the short term varies from case to case, and in some cases must await the final liquidation of the state. Some things, like education, cannot be done on a voluntary, cost basis until the liquidation of privilege results in a more egalitarian distribution of wealth. One candidate for immediate reorganization on a cost basis is utilities. Much of the incentive to urban sprawl lies in the fact that inhabitants of older, central areas are forced to pay higher rates to subsidize those in new developments (along with zoning codes against neighborhood grocers and other mixed-use development, which should also be abolished). The elimination of subsidies to fossil fuels and nuclear power, and to utility companies, along with control by rate-payers in small decision-making units, will be a powerful incentive to conservation and the use of alternative energy. Many will choose to leave the grid in part or altogether, and dig their own wells, generate their own power, or compost waste.



In the case of police and fire service, the trend should be toward incorporating citizen-volunteers in the regular organizations. In a way, this resembles the practice in some co-ops of requiring members to perform services themselves to avoid the creation of a separate caste of wage-workers. The encouragement of widespread firearm ownership as a deterrent is a way to reduce as much as possible the need for an organized police force. The encouragement of armed neighborhood watch organizations, at the expense of “official” police forces, is another step in the right direction. At some point such voluntary organizations should be merged into the “public” organizations, with the posse comitatus entirely supplanting professional law enforcement. Combined with free local juries empowered to judge both law and fact, and with popular militias, this would be in many ways a return to the anglo-republican libertarian ideal of the Eighteenth Century.

Local government and social services are an area in which grass-roots “counterinstitutions” can be especially effective in coordination with the political movement. Neighborhood assemblies, cop watch/ neighborhood watch organizations, tenant unions, etc., are an excellent way to form the nucleus of a future non-statist form of local community organization. Such organizations can coordinate their activities with neighborhood co-ops, mutual banks, and LETS; they can undertake projects in energy and self-sufficiency. Earlier experiments like the Berkeley co-ops, the Black Panther school milk program, or the Adams-Morgan Organization (detailed in Karl Hess’ **Community Technology**) are excellent models to build on. There is a very broad area in which the decentralist, populist politics of Karl Hess overlaps with that of Lorenzo Komboa Ervin; it is far too broad a front for the state to suppress, if the community strongly supports it.

## **AN END TO PROFESSIONAL LICENSING AND OTHER FORMS OF REGULATORY CARTELIZATION.**

This means no more use of medical licensing boards to enforce the drug industry’s “standards of practice” and stamp out alternative medicine. That means no more artificial inflation of doctors’ and lawyers’ fees through market entry barriers. That means an end to cartelization of the broadcast industry, and the replacement of the FCC licensing system with something resembling the common law of riparian rights. Such a system would allocate the broadcast spectrum on the basis of “first come, first serve.” The burden of proof would be on the offended party, rather than the accused.

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