Larry Gambone
Sane Anarchy
1995

Retrieved 11/30/2021 from
https://archive.org/details/lantern-library_20200604_1726/
Published by Red Lion Press, 1995

**theanarchistlibrary.org**

# Sane Anarchy

Larry Gambone

1995

# Contents

Taken in isolation, none of these measures are particularly radical, all have been suggested by someone else, and all are in line with what people seem to want. But these eight suggestions, if enacted, would completely transform and revolutionize society. The vast majority of the population would have control over their lives by having the power to limit the state, the bureaucracy and big business.



## IT'S A FACT. *NOBODY* LIKES THE STATE

The polls and surveys show it. The majority of the population have no faith in government. They dispise bureaucracy and stifling regulations. They want decentralization of political power and more say in the workplace. They are also concerned about the environment, the equality of the sexes and the growth of poverty. Perhaps never in history have people been so radical in their opinions. Think only of the 1960's — the small minority of new leftists were denounced as "stop the world I want to get off" types or Communist dupes for thinking similar thoughts. Ironically, the left has never been in worse shape. As a result, the chief beneficiaries of the unrest have been the populists and free-market liberals. (conservatives in American political parlance) These forces combine decentralist, direct-democratic impulses with conservative social issues or free-market economics.

## WHERE ARE THE ANARCHISTS?

Harder to fathom than the failure of the left, is the absence of anarchism or "traditional libertarianism".[1] There seems to have been a marked decline in anarchist activity from a high point in the mid to late 1980's. How to explain this paradox? Blaming the media is not the answer — other groups have been subjected to unfair media attention, or worse no attention at all, and this has not prevented them from becoming a significant force in society — think only of the Women 's Liberation Movement and the trashing it got and how influential feminism is today. *The fault can only lie with the anarchists themselves.*

[1] "Traditional libertarianism" — that of European anarchists from Proudhon to Colin Ward, American Individualism as exemplified by Josiah Warren and Benjamin Tucker, and Syndicalism, sees abolition of the state as an ultimate goal. Much of modern so-called "right wing" libertarianism is a form of limited state liberalism.

## ANARCHISM AND THE NEW LEFT

Who are the anarchists and where did they come from? It is necessary to point out, in North America at least, little connection existed be- tween the old pre-WW2 or "classical" anarchist movement and the group of people who came to reestablish anarchism in the late 1960's. By the 1950's there was no longer a libertarian movement, but a number of isolated individuals.[2] Those who formed the new anarchism came out Of the New Left, people dissatisfied with the Stalinist takeover of the movement, who saw anarchism as the logical outgrowth of their beliefs. What was in reality a neo-anarchism, synthesized traditional anarchism with ideas taken from the New Left. Both the New Left and neo-anarchism (also called anti-authoritarianism) influenced the "New Movements" (Feminism, ecology, anti-nuke) of the 1970's and 1980's, and anarchism was in turn' influenced by these movements.

## NEW LEFT ELITISM

Certain attitudes derived from the New Left and the so-called counter-culture. permeated neo-anarchism and had a deleterious effect upon it. Chief among these was elitism. It was the common belief among the New Left that the majority of the population were "co-opted", "sold-out", "racist" and "sexist". For the hippie-left, most people were considered to be beer-swilling, short-haired rednecks. Much of this youthful hostility was directed against their parents and hence was more of an expression of adolescent rebellion than political insight. With the exception of those who opted for anarcho-syndicalism, most neo-anarchists carried this

[2] One should not underestimate the importance of these individuals — such as Sam Dolgoff, Murray Bookchin, Dorothy Day, Paul Goodman, George Woodcock and Art Bartell — they were a positive influence upon the early New Left and neo-anarchism.



placed in the pension fund of their choice. All workers to place a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20% of their income in a pension fund with 100% tax deductability. Workers too poor to afford the mini-mum may receive assistance in making their payments. Ideally, pension funds should be democratically controlled in the manner of credit unions, so the investors have some say over what happens to their money. All pension funds should be insured (like bank accounts) so no one will be left destitute, should a fund go bankrupt. Pension funds have an added advantage, for within no time they would own all of the large companies and the division between worker and owner would dissappear.

### 7. Megaprojects

Never more must the state have the right to fund or subsidize these costly, wasteful and useless projects. Canada is littered with railroads to nowhere, dams that export electricity below cost, unnecessary bridges, city destroying freeway systems, superfluous airports, Tar Sands Projects that never produced a drop of oil and billion dollar stadiums with retractable roofs that don't retract. This corruption on a scale undreamed of by Roman emperors can be stopped. All large scale expenditures should be subject to referendum with a required 2/3 majority. NIMBY could be used, any area subject to possible development would require consent of the area afflicted (2/3 majority again) and the right of immanent domain abolished.

### 8. Reduction of Work Week

Encourage work—sharing and allow employees to contract a four-day work week. Spread the jobs around so everyone can have one. With every week end a long week end there will be a boom in volunteer and "leisure time" activities. This will give a further job-creating boost to the economy.

(other than being more efficient than government) is that doctors are employees, rather than getting paid on a per visit basis. Health care should be turned over to mutual aid societies and those people who are too poor to afford the premiums should have the state pay the fees to the mutual of their choice. Hospitals should be owned outright, controlled and funded by mutual aid societies or the community. The situation must never again arise where the state can tell a neighborhood hospital that it must close.

### 5. Unemployment Insurance

Trade unions once had their own unemployment insurance, in fact, this was a major reason for their existence. Government control certainly extended coverage to those who were not not union members, but typically, the system has gone into crisis. UI must be taken away from the state and handed over to those who actually use the fund. There is no reason why insurance co-operatives run on credit union lines could not be organized. Workers should pay the entire premium themselves to avoid having to involve employers in the running of the fund (and creating conflict). This may seem a bit steep, but this would not be a problem if it was 100% tax deductable.

### 6. Pensions

The same idiots who conjured up school consolidation must have divised the government pension schemes. Rather than taking pension payroll deductions and investing them (as any person with a grain of intelligence would do) the federal government *spent* the money. Pensions must come out of general revenue and therefore, when the baby-boomers retire, the state will be unable to pay up. Solution -abolish the present pension system, "grandfathering" those who are already collecting or are near to retirement age. Give everyone else their share of what they have already paid — to be



contemptous attitude with them. The majority was written-off as hopelessly corrupted and this attitude still continues today; Such contempt is in complete contrast to classical anarchism, which even at its most vanguardist, saw itself as only a catalyizer or spokesman of the masses.

While rejecting the majority, they became infatuated with minorities. The New Left, scorning workers, turned to racial minorities and the "poor" as possible agents of social change. Native people, prisoners, dropouts, homosexuals, all have been given a high profile, virtually to the exclusion of the rest of the population.[3]

## A CULT OF THE THIRD WORLD

Another aspect inherited from the New Left was the obsession about the Third World and Western imperialism. Many neo-anarchists, while paying lip service to anarchist critiques of Leninism, actually supported so-called national liberation groups. Some lauded the Vietnamese NLF, others whitewashed the Castro regime. Many swallowed the Leninist propaganda that the West, in particular the US, was completely responsible for the Cold War. So too, the view that "we live off the Third World" — at a time when developed countries mainly invest in each other. These positions which are nothing more than a cover-up for Stalinist atrocities, have been recycled through neo-anarchism and the Peace and Green movements, right up to the present day.

With the love of "liberation movements" came a glorification of violence. As "representatives of the oppressed" planted bombs on

[3] No doubt someone will accuse me of wanting to ignore minorities. Put in plain English, this is NOT the case. The problem lies not in taking up their various causes but that of totally ignoring the majority of the population. There is also the problem of looking at minorities in at reductionist fashion. Does a black PHD have more in common with the ghetto underclass or other university educated people regardless of race? Such things as class, education, income, culture and ideology are usually thicker than blood.

airliners, machine-gunned tourists and threw grenades into pubs and theatres, neurotic or disillusioned New Leftists decided it was time to move beyond apologetics and take action. Some so-called anarchists gave support to terrorist gangs like the French *Action Direct* and the Stasi-infiltrated Red Army Faction.[4] Naive souls on the fringes of the anarchist movement like the Angry Brigade and the Canadian Direct Action did take up arms and wasted a good portion of their young lives in prison.

## MISRABILISM

But the New Left wasn't the only influence. Throughout the '60's there had been a cross-fertilization with ideas derived from the ultra-Left or council communism. Some of this was positive, most especially with the followers of Paul Mattick or Castoriadis' *Socialism ou Barbarie*. However, with the break up of the Situationists and the continuous schisms within councilism, some very strange "theories" began to make the rounds. Modern (Western) society was "written off as completely totalitarian with Capital having complete autonomy over humanity. Others proclaimed the whole of civilization evil and-told us to abandon technology (and even agriculture) and go back to hunting and gathering.

Such "theories", *marxism in its decadence*, found an airing among a section of North American neo-anarchists during the rise of the anti-nuclear and environmental movements. (Its ultimate product being the "Unabomber") For everyone else such ideas are total lunacy. Any normal person picking up a journal espousing such views in the name of anarchy will dismiss anarchism as the ideology of crackpots. (And they will be right) Marxism in its decadence has taken its concerns with real or imagined evils to an ultimate extreme — to the point where it can be considered an ideology of *misrablism*.

[4] Such as *Black Flag* and *Open Road*.



ment to regulate house construction — other than in the areas of safety, fire, health and environmental regulations. (Furthermore, these regulations must be reasonable.) People could band together in housing construction co-operatives to buy property, building materials and help each other in construction.

### 3. Land Reform

Governments (state, provincial and federal) are the largest landowners. Much of the land is restricted from settlement or sale which artificially inflates the cost of real estate, making it harder for poor people to become homeowners. (This is particularly true in the West.) The state bureaucrats have instead, giver or leased at a very cheap rate, land to their friends for the building of railroads, mines, dams or logging operations. The ownership of all this real estate naturally gives the state a great advantage over the local community. All state land should be immediately turned over to the municipality, village or county. There should be a covenant with environmental provisos. To prevent possible corruption at the local level, all sales or leases of community lands should be overseen by an elected board and all large-scale alienation subject to a referendum with a required 2/3rds majority. This is also a way of settling Native land claims — by simply turning government lands in the vicinity of Native communities over to them.

### 4. Health Care

We hear a great deal about the health-care crisis. Seems there isn't enough money to go around. No surprise with any institution run by the state. Sixty years ago most people in Great Britain were covered by hospital insurance systems set up by trade unions or other non-profit associations. Health care in present day France is largely in the hands of non-profit, democratically controlled mutual aid societies. Part of the cost-control of these associations

## SOME PROGRAMMATIC SUGGESTIONS

### 1. The Education System

One of the most stupid ideas ever to enter the authoritarian mind was consolidating and centralizing the schools. That students drop out and that alienation and delinquency exists in the huge factory-like schools is no surprise. Schools must be returned to a human scale. One possibility is the voucher concept which allows parents to use their share of the school taxes as fees to place their children where they wish. This also allows parents and teachers to create their own, self-funded schools. The Education Departments of the provincial, state and federal governments must be abolished as they are a waste of money and the source of all the crack-pot concepts such as consolidation.

Another possibility would be to maintain the public school system but return it to the community. Primary and secondary schooling would be the full responsibility of the villages and neighborhoods. No school should have more than 250–300 pupils and they should be able to walk there.

### 2. Housing

Back in the fifties a poor person bought a cheap piece of land outside town and put up a plywood cabin. The savings in rent or mortgage payments would be converted into construction materials for a real house. While travelling in France a few years ago I noticed suburban houses advertised which were only 400 square feet and because of this size were at a cost that all but the very poorest could afford. Neither of these alternatives are possible in North America because they are against the municipal by-laws. These by-laws are the biggest obstacle to allowing the poor to have their own homes. The alternative offered by the state is subsidized or state-owned housing, which is very expensive and of which there is never enough. The answer is to take away the power of govern-



The average person's life is neither unending suffering or mindless joy. Only the minority is in misery, the majority are discontented but not wretched, we may dislike the government or the boss but these things are not our entire life. We have our families, our friends and our personal interests and it is here that our real lives begin and end. Thanks to the mass media, even though the images are greatly distorted, people are well aware of the misery in the world, what's needed is less moan and groan and more of a *positive vision.*

## NEO-ANARCHIST AUTHORITARIANISM

Rooted in the Leninist notion of the "correct line", and further developed by feminist and black nationalist extremism, Political Correctness has plagued neo-anarchism like fleas on a dog.[5] How anyone can reconcile censorship with anarchism is hard to imagine, yet this is precisely what some "anti-authoritarians" have done to the point of fire-bombing video shops that sell pornography.

The obsession with "correctness", the harshness engendered by violence fetishism and the love of obscure and extreme ideologies leads naturally to sectarianism. It isn't enough that all libertarians desire the abolition of statism, corporatism and authoritarianism, and that they have far more in common with each other than with those who don't hold these opinions. No. Hairs must be split and those closest to your position are often treated as the worst of enemies.

Contempt for the masses, misrablism, sectarianism, Third Worldism, political correctness and the love of violence are all aspects of authoritarianism hidden behind the libertarian mask. The so-called anarchists are just members of one more authoritarian leftist sect, the only difference being they pretend to be anti-authoritarianism — a kind of soft-core Leninism, if you will.

[5] For a more developed criticism of PC, see *Laughter Is Bourgeois.*

## AWAY WITH THE LEFTIST FRAUD

The left is the vanguard of the state bureaucratic corruption of society.[6] It is not without reason that "socialism" is a curse-word for the majority of people. Injustice, exploitation, poverty, discrimination," hunger, and ignorance were and are still real problems facing the world, and almost everyone agrees that this is so. But the left sought to remedy these ills through the state, and in so doing, merely recreated these evils in a new form. Rather than allowing various contending groups to freely arbitrate, the state became the *supreme arbitrator*. Rather than allowing people to rise out of misery through a combination of individual effort, solidarity and mutual aid, the state became the *source of social security*.

Today we live in a kind of liberal corporate state[7] — business and farmers are subsidized by the government, so too, culture, the poor, minorities, in fact, every sector of society fights for its place at the trough and all these aspects have become highly politicized. This porking has to be paid for by the working population. Each year the debt piles up higher and everyone wonders why.

The left is also corporatism's guard dog. Any attempt to attack this system is reviled as "right-wing" and the various populists, anarchists, free market libertarians and small 'c' conservatives are libeled as fascists, reactionaries and racists. There is nothing new

[6] If the state is the enemy and is the origin of capitalist inequality (the traditional anarchist viewpoint) what there is the left but part of that enemy? But it also goes without saying the vast majority of leftists are sincere people who genuinely wish to help the poor and oppressed. The problem is, they cannot conceive of any way of doing so other than through government.

[7] I do not like the term "corporatism" applied to a democratic state since it really applies to fascism. However the term does contain more than a grain of truth if stripped of its black-shirt. In the '70's the far left used to throw the word around in reference to social democracy as a means of implying that it was some how fascistic. (Whereas Stalinism was not, of course) These same people today are at the forefront of defending "corporatism"- with the same hysteria they once used to attack the moderate left. This only shows what liars and hypocrites they are.



in the capital city. The populations in the former Stalinist regimes have shown us the way. Tyranny was overthrown in Poland, the former Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the former East Germany virtually without violence. This proves that if more than 90% of the population is actively opposed to the state, there is little the bureaucrats can do to maintain their rule. We aren't that far off from the 90% figure and the main task is to create an active and non-violent opposition. That the movement must be non-violent cannot be emphasized enough. Violence plays into Leviathan's hands. We have seen with *attentats* of the 19th Century anarcho-terrorists to the Oklahoma bombing, that such actions only serve to discredit and divide a revolutionary movement.

## A NON-VIOLENT REVOLUTION

A non-violent revolution might develop in this manner -People begin taking control at the local level, developing or reinstituting forms of self-government and ignoring the state. Certain politicians at the national level become cognisant of the anti-statist sentiment, and for genuine or opportunist reasons, will help prevent the regime from attacking the decentralists. They may also pass certain "defanging" legislation which will weaker the state. Demonstrations accompanied by mass strikes will occur on an almost daily basis in the capital cities in support of the local movements and as a means to keep up the pressure on the politicos. Links with anarchists and decentralists in other countries will also be developed to insure a massive outcry should the state choose to repress the libertarian upsurge. The outcome will be the development of genuine federal institutions.

proach is needed. However, few people are really attempting to deal with the diflicult problems arising from the debureaucratizing of society. What does one do with thousands of former government workers? How does one change a welfare state into a mutual aid system? How can one best introduce self-management? There is also a pressing need for indepeident economic and social research rather than relying upon the usually dishonest leftist sources, as most anarchists do at present. Such a group could be international, corresponding through the Internet and publishing a journal, pamphlets and studies on various topical subjects.

## TAKING ON THE STATE

Anarchists should organize at the local level, ie., neighborhood, village, municipality or county, around issues that effect the population. The areas of popular discontent discussed above should all be part of the libertarian "program". At the city level, Murray Bookchin's concept of libertarian municipalism is worth consideration. A city-wide organization could fight to decentralize the city government to the neighborhood level and gain greater autonomy for the municipality.

But try as much as you like, you can't ignore the big one — Leviathan — the central state. Eventually it must be tackled head on and this can only be done by a nation-wide mass movement. This does not mean an opposition between local organizations and the larger movement, on the contrary, the latter must be based upon the former. *This must be a single issue movement, uniting everyone with a grievance against the state* into a movement for the decentralization of power. It must not be allowed to be bogged down by secondary and therefore divisive issues, these can be dealt with by other groups.

Methods could include mass demonstrations in the nation's capital, mass strikes, occupation of government offices, both local and



in this tactic, a variation on the Stalinist labeling of socialists as "social fascists" and anarchists as "anarcho-fascists" in the 1920's.

When left means statism and right anti-statism, "left" vs. "right" is an archaism we can do without. The real divisions within society are between authoritarians and anti-authoritarians, centralists and decentralists and between the political and the anti-political. Leftism and libertarianism areincompatable, for the former stands for statism and centralization and the latter for decentralism and opposition to state power.[8] Anarchists should sever their ties with leftism and strike off on their own, free of this authoritarian umbilical cord. *This does not mean sectarianism.* It goes without saying that we should unite with the left (or any other group) when common needs or policies arise, but we should not be ideologically beholden to so-called "left-wing" ideas.

## THE LEFT'S LITTLE BLACK TAIL

Whatever positions the left takes on issues, one finds anarchists who adopt them. They end up as apologists for the left's cult of bureaucracy and statism. There are many examples of this. Take welfare. Anyone who criticizes the welfare state, *for whatever reason*, is deemed "against the poor". One finds anarchists going along with this, even though there is a very strong anarchist case against the welfare system.[9]

[8] This was not always the case. In the 19th Century most socialists (including Karl Marx) wanted an economy based on workers' co-operatives. About 100 years ago this began to change into state ownership. Contemporary people who call themselves "left-wing anarchists" are harkening back to the earlier era — a time when a mass anti-statist left no longer exists.

[9] Welfare, while certainly better than starving, is actually a new form of Oppression. Anarchists have traditionally favored full employment by work-sharing and the operation of social security through mutual aid, as humane alternatives to. dumping people on the dole. Furthermore, no 19th Century socialist *ever* favored paying able-bodied people not to work. They would be outraged at such a notion.

## YOUTH REVOLT — A LOST CAUSE

Its a demographic fact. In the developed world there are fewer and fewer teenagers and young adults and hence less and less reason to base a strategy on a youth revolt or counter-culture. What is needed is a middle-aged and "grey-power" anarchism, for this is where you find the vast majority of the population. The present anti-state mood is also related to middle-aged concerns, of which a perfect example is taxation.

## ARCHAISM OF TRADITIONAL ANARCHISM

While neo-anarchism is plagued with contradictions, some traditional anarchists also have a problem. While identifying with working people (what a relief) they suffer from *archaism*. It is as though nothing has changed since 1910 — workers are still poor, beaten-down wretches and society is controlled by a band of fat-bellied, t0p-hatted capitalists who manipulate the elections and control all the media. That the economy is largely institutional, that society is bureaucratic and that the majority of workers are, in spite of technology and down-sizing, well off by any standard you can measure, has completely missed them. Some anarcho-syndicalists don't seem to realize that work doesn't occupy the position it used to. To organize solely around work is to ignore 3/4 of a person's life. Nor do trade unions tend to excite many people, most of whom see the union as one more bureaucracy imposed upon them. (Even though they like the high wages) Syndicalists well-intentioned attempts to appeal to the regular person fail, since blinded by an out-of-date world view, they also don't know or understand Joe Average.

---

What they sought was a progressive reduction of labor time and employment for all who were capable of working.



Back in the late '70's anarchists began to produce free weekly or bi-weekly newsheets. In itself, this is a good idea and should be reexamined, but these free sheets were completely mired in the leftist counter-culture and ignored the population at large.

One method of outreach is through existing weekly and community newspapers. Such papers are always looking for new material and if well written, articles and book reviews containing libertarian ideas will get far more publicity than any anarchist magazine. Some communities do not have their own paper. Here is an opportunity for erterprizing anarchists to start their own community paper, externally no different than any other weekly, yet containing a subtle libertarian message.

Every large city has its entertainment weekly often controlled by leftists. Should anyone start writing articles that address the needs of the majority, the public will pick up on this and start reading that persons column or by-line. Hence these papers could be a useful outlet. There is also the possibility of creating an anarchist controlled entertainment weekly.

College and community radio, television and pirate radio have had some anarchist attention paid to them, but not usually in the most accessable manner. Having a weekly "Anarchist Hour" is not the answer, nor is ever having a specifically anarchist radio station. Once again, you are largely preaching to the converted. Few people are interested in ideology, most want information. A better alternative would be to have a program that cannot be typecast, yet has an anarchist bent to it.

One should not ignore computer bulletin boards and the Internet since these are quickly becoming major sources of communication. Here it is necesary to create two different types of groups; one specifically anarchist for more high-falutin in-group discussions and those that are more general, but have an anarchist orieltation.

Anarchists need a think tank or anarchist versibn of the Fabian Society. It is easy to toss around rhetoric about abolishing the state. One can make programmatic suggestions, but a more intensive ap-

chism. *This must be the first thing to look for.* Stating the need for a personal anarchism does not imply that it is easy to accomplish or that we need wait until everyone is emotionaly healthy to do anything. Rather, we must become aware of the need for these changes and work toward them.

To re-emphasize the point, here is a list of the traits that we must develop:

1. Tolerance.
2. Faith in the average person.
3. Skepticism — not just to the elite's viewpoints, but to *all* ideologies, *especially one's own.*
4. Honesty — to the point where it hurts.
5. Responsibility.

## INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

This is the area where anarchists have had the greatest success, one need only think of individual research projects, bookshops, journals, radio (pirate and legit.) and action committees. But there is still room for improvement and new ideas.

### Communication

There will always be a need for specifically anarchist journals-those which talk directly to the committed, but more is needed than this. When anarchism was popular it had a press which spoke the language of the workers and artisans and addressed their concerns. Today, many supposedly anarchist journals speak a leftist jargon and address the concerns of the writers and editors.



One also finds an elitist tendency among the traditionalists. Anarchism grew out of a revolt against society's overwhelming authoritarianism and the popular acceptance of it. Anarchists are used to being a tiny minority "crying in the wilderness" and have not been able to adjust to a situation where the majority of the people accept many anarchist ideas. The tendency is to think and act as though the majority still idolized their masters, when, in fact, what is needed is not to convince people of the iniquities of the system, *but to find a way to build a society that is human scale.*

## THE DANGERS OF UTOPIANISM

In seeking to create a society that has greater freedom and humanity, we must not fall into the utopian trap. Few ideas have caused more suffering than this delusion. Utopians dream up schemes for "the perfect society" and then try to force everyone into that mold. If people won't go along with the fantasy, they are called "backward", necessitating the use of force. The ultimate end of utopia is the gulag and the gas-oven.

The liberal and socialist utopias would only work if people were angels, but they are not. Humanity is imperfect and any social system we divise must take that into account. Thomas Jefferson understood this and hence sought to limit the power of the state as much as possible. Pierre Joseph Proudhon, the Father of Anarchism, had a similar awareness and demanded not just the limitation, but the *abolition* of the state. For if we are all imperfect — capable of greed, envy, ignorance, neurosis etc. — why should we place a small minority of such imperfect creatures in charge of all the others? Who is ultimately better than anyone else?

Anarchists should not seek utopia, but the *minimalization* of the authority of one person over an other and therefore the rejection of all utopias. Such a society will never be perfect, but at least will allow us imperfect human beings an attempt to work out our

grievances on a face-to-face basis and come up with practical solutions to many social and economic problems.

## NIHILISM IS TODAY'S PROBLEM

One does not need to read Nietzsche to realize that the problem in the developed world is not so much traditional authoritarianism, but nihilism. The most noticable aspects of nihilism, shouted at us by every newspaper and TV newscast are the breakdown of the family, drug addiction, crime and delinquency. But there are also ideological aspects. The campus fad, Deconstructionism, for which history is bunk, and an over-stressed multiculturalism fragmenting society and destroying commonality are two of these. So too, Political Correctness with its extreme cultural and moral relativism. Nihilism is "anything goes" up to the point where those seeking or capturing power impose their arbitrary rules in place of the old morality. (Truth is whatever The Party says it is) Nihilism is therefore the new form of authoritarianism, one far more dangerous than the old variety, since it pretends to be anti-authoritarian and liberatory.

Anarchists are wrong to attack authoritarianism as though nothing has changed in the last 100 years. The real threat lies in its new nihilist form. The best way to combat nihilism is with *anarchist ethics*. Genuine anarchists have never believed in "anything goes". Here lies a way-to approach the average person. Most people are deeply concerned about today's nihilism, and as a response there is a partial return to "traditional morality". This should not shock or unnerve anarchists, for conservatism and anarchism have this in common — *both confront amorality with a strong ethical stance*. Nor need there. always exist a great divergence of opinion on what constitutes desireable ethics. Conservatives stress family and community, and such values as honesty, work, responsibility and autonomy. Turn of the century French syndicalists hated capitalism



## WHAT TO DO

The first thing that must be done is that anarchists have to become *real libertarians*. The residual authoritarian leftism must be shed. It must also be realized that to be an anarchist means more than adopting an anti-authoritarian rhetoric and ideology. It means a transformation of the personality — the rejection of personal authoritarian traits and their replacement with libertarian ones. As long as you are an elitist, you are only a skin deep anarchist. So too, an anarchist who is intolerant of others and their opinions. And an anarchist who lies and slanders other groups and individuals is a fascist poorly disguised.

Far too many people are attracted to anarchism by the erroneous idea that anarchy means being able to do what ever you want. That freedom comes at a cost, a cost too great to be born by the immature and the authoritarian, is forgotten. That cost is *responsibility*. It is a cost a genuine anarchist gladly shoulders, for it is our link with other human beings, and in fact, helps make us human. Our relationship with others should not be one of dominance or parasitism. The basis of freedom is one of *reciprocity*, the foundation of all notions of justice, solidarity, and autonomy. Something without which society cannot exist.

This personal anarchism must be the bedrock upon which the movement is founded. Today, the mark of an anarchist is the ability to say the right things about certain issues. One can learn such a "party line" in a matter of a few days. The mark of being a real militant super-anarchist is to heat up ones rhetoric or start mouthing off about violence. Anybody, no matter how stupid (*especially* the stupid) can do that. Another mark of an anarchist is the ability to quote "scripture" on any occasion. This takes a good deal longer than learning the anarchist "party line", but any pedant can do it.

Personal changes are a good deal more difficult than such superficiality. What we must look for when someone says "I am an anarchist" or "I would like to join your group", is personal anar-

## FOR AN UNHYPHENATED ANARCHISM

Read even the most superficial book on anarchism and you will discover that many forms of anarchism exist — anarchist-communism, individualist-anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism, free market-anarchism, anarcho-feminism and greet—anarchism. This division results from people taking their favorite economic system or extrapolating from what they see as the most important social struggle and linking this to anarchism. On the one hand, it is good they have made these linkages, but on the other, it seems unnecessary and can result in serious problems. Anarchism, as a theory of liberty, is from the beginning opposed to the domination of women, and with its concept of reciprocity and responsibility, anarchism is ecological. Anarchism is not opposed to free exchange nor *voluntary* communism and has always bee) in favor of workers organizing themselves. It is simply unnecessary to hyphenate anarchism with anything else, because anarchism includes *all*.

The hyphenation presents a danger. Like it or not, everyone, without exception, compromises, modifies or softens their beliefs at some point. Where they compromise is what is important. Do they give up on the anarchism or the other aspect? You can be assured that most hyphenated anarchists will prefer to drop the libertarian side of the hyphen. There are plenty of examples of this occurring. Immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution, thousands of anarcho-communists and anarcho-syndicalists flocked into the Communist Party. Many anarcho-feminists came out in favour of censorship and some environmental anarchists are quite happy to support strong state intervention. Certain free-market libertarians idolize Margaret Thatcher or Ronald Reagan. The only way to avoid these unfortunate compromises is to cut out the hyphen and emphasize *anarchism*.



because it destroyed the family and community.[10] The values they stressed were sobriety, frugality, world education and mutual aid.

Nihilists would write these anarchists off as reactionaries.[11] But these are some of the the values making a society possible. Without them you have a "dog eat dog" situation.

## BACK TO THE PEOPLE

When anarchism was a mass movement 75 to 100 years ago, it spoke the language of the artisans, peasants and industrial workers and immersed itself in their causes and struggles. While anarchism spoke for the majority of society, it also exhorted them to overcome chauvinism, corporatism and other divisive practices and stood up for minorities. But these aspects were not the sole content of their propaganda. In the main, the militants were concerned with the needs and desires of the "masses".

Today, things are very different. The left seeks to impose an ideology upon the people, telling them what to believe, rather than listening to them. Rather than being an agency of the people, the left is the spokesman for a host of petty bureaucrats "who claim to rep resent minorities, the poor and workers. Whenever any of these bureaucracies are criticized, for any reason what so ever, the left sets up a hysterical chorus of "racism", "blaming the victim", "anti-worker", "sexism", etc. Unfortunately, some anarchists go along with this.

It is time to go back to the old ways of anarchism, to abandon the elitist's view that the people are the enemy, and sit down and listen to them.

[10] "Family" does not have to mean *patriarchy*. Most leftists and anarchists rejected the family because of the authoritarianism of the patriarchal variety. In doing so, they threw the baby out with the bath.

[11] I remember 25 years ago thinking how old Wobblies and Spanish anarcho-syndicalists seemed like such Puritans in comparison with the hippie left. We could have learned something from them.

Not that it is hard to hear what they are yelling. Do I really need to tell you what their concerns are?

## WHAT PISSES PEOPLE OFF

- Taxes — An average worker pays 40% his/her income in taxes. Even someone on minimum wage gives one day a week to the government.
- Government Inefficiency — We pay more taxes and the state grows, yet its programs solve nothing — more people are poor, line-ups grow in hospitals, nothing works as it is supposed to."
- Over-regulation and Bureaucracy. Everything requires a licence or permit, everything is regulated beyond reason. Example -try building your own home and see how many expense-adding by-laws you must obey.
- Social Engineering — the governing minority forces moral reforms upon a population which has not asked for them. Example — quota systems for employment.
- Centralization — Higher levels of government dominate the lower and thereby make decisions to the detriment of the citizen.
- Work — the lack of good paying jobs, the lack of any jobs for the poor, the lack of job security and the undemocratic way most work-places are managed.
- Social Breakdown — schools that don't teach, family break-up, crime, a general lack of a sense of responsibility and respect for the individual.
- Policians and Other Authority Figures — seer as self-serving, dishonest and hypocritical.



## WHAT DOES ANARCHISM MEAN IN PRACTICE?

There are a number of aspects integral to anarchism which work together in synthesis. These seven points also form the basis of an anarchist ethics.

1. Individualism — The individual is the ultimate social unit, no human creation should stand above the individual other than what he or she freely grants. An absolute minimum of coercion in society.
2. Mutual aid — Individuals or the communities of which they are members, unite to help each other in activities that they cannot accomplish by themselves.
3. Reciprocity — Through an innate sense of justice, or by freely arrived contract and agreement, individuals or groups, formally or informally, freely exchange goods or services.
4. Decentralism — Political and economic power is broken down into natural human scale units such as workshops, families, villages, neighborhoods, counties and regions.
5. Autonomy — to make individuals and groups as autonomous as possible, which also implies a very high level of personal and intra-personal responsibility.
6. Self-management — all units are run democratically by the members of those units.
7. Federalism — the decentralized units unite around common need. In a true federation the power always flows from the bottom up.