

Chapter 1 : Anarcho-syndicalism: Theory and Practice | The Anarchist Library

Anarcho-syndicalism (also referred to as revolutionary syndicalism) is a theory of anarchism that views revolutionary industrial unionism or syndicalism as a method for workers in capitalist society to gain control of an economy and with that control influence in broader society.

Noam Chomsky on anarcho-syndicalism and libertarianism The famous linguist and political analyst Noam Chomsky describes his own political stance as that of anarcho-syndicalism and he is no fan of libertarianism. In an interview with Chomsky, Michael S. Wilson asks Chomsky what he thinks the two positions represent and why he favors the former and dislikes the latter. First up, Chomsky discusses anarcho-syndicalism. Primarily it is a tendency that is suspicious and skeptical of domination, authority, and hierarchy. It seeks structures of hierarchy and domination in human life over the whole range, extending from, say, patriarchal families to, say, imperial systems, and it asks whether those systems are justified. It assumes that the burden of proof for anyone in a position of power and authority lies on them. Their authority is not self-justifying. They have to give a reason for it, a justification. And, as I understand it, anarchy is just that tendency. It takes different forms at different times. Anarcho-syndicalism is a particular variety of anarchism which was concerned primarily, though not solely, but primarily with control over work, over the work place, over production. It took for granted that working people ought to control their own work, its conditions, [that] they ought to control the enterprises in which they work, along with communities, so they should be associated with one another in free associations, and a democracy of that kind should be the foundational elements of a more general free society. And then, you know, ideas are worked out about how exactly that should manifest itself, but I think that is the core of anarcho-syndicalist thinking. He then moves on to libertarianism and points out that in the US it has features that are somewhat peculiar, that make it quite authoritarian. The assumption is that by some kind of magic, concentrated private power will lead to a more free and just society. Actually that has been believed in the past. Adam Smith for example, one of his main arguments for markets was the claim that under conditions of perfect liberty, markets would lead to perfect equality. Anarchism is quite different from that. It calls for an elimination to tyranny, all kinds of tyranny. So why should we prefer it? Well I think because freedom is better than subordination. It seems like a transparent. That worship of private power by libertarians in the US is most visible in the Ayn Rand cult that has led to the quip that libertarians are simply right-wing ideologues who like to smoke pot. Chomsky then goes on to discuss how we might get to the kind of anarcho-syndicalist society he envisages, [In] the long run, anarchists would like to see the state eliminated. But it exists, alongside of private power, and the state is, at least to a certain extent, under public influence and control could be much more so. And it provides devices to constrain the much more dangerous forces of private power. Rules for safety and health in the workplace for example. Many other things like that. But they can come about through the use of the state system under limited democratic control to carry forward reformist measures. I think those are fine things to do. And he was thinking about far more autocratic societies than ours. So for example, worker- and community- controlled enterprises are germs of a future society within the present one. And those not only can be developed, but are being developed. I am embarrassed to say that I was not aware of the things he was referring to that are going on in my own backyard in Cleveland. I have got to look into it. He goes on to discuss the media propaganda model that he and the late Edward Herman developed in their book *Manufacturing Consent*, something that I have discussed extensively in past posts. He discusses many things there but one new to me at least thing that he said was his suggestion as to why college tuition in the US is so high, not only in comparison to other countries but also compared to its own recent past. You mentioned students before. Well one of the main problems for students today is a huge problem is sky-rocketing tuitions. Why do we have tuitions that are completely out-of-line with other countries, even with our own history? In the s the United States was a much poorer country than it is today, and yet higher education was a pretty much free, or low fees or no fees for huge numbers of people. And many developments took place after that. One of the things that happened was controlling students in fact, controlling students for the rest of their lives, by simply trapping them in debt.

Chapter 2 : What is Anarcho-Syndicalism? “ The Dialogues

Though anarcho-syndicalism is funny in the movie, only true idiots would be proponents of such a dumb system #monty python #holy grail #anarchy #syndicalism #government by Lookinglass November 21,

Traditional anarchists advocate the formation of collectives. Traditional anarchism rejects all authority, both of business and of government. Types of anarchism Christian anarchism Leo Tolstoy Christianity has been influential on some anarchists. Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy is an important figure in this trend. Like all Christian anarchists, he believed that the only authority is God, therefore government is illegitimate. To support their views, Christian anarchists quote the following passage by Paul: In a syndicalist society workers would be self-managing, and a union of all workers would take the place of government. Syndicalism is not firmly opposed to the currency or trade of capitalism like most other branches. Individualist anarchism Unlike many forms of traditional anarchism, individualist anarchism does not, in a sense, advocate collectivism. Many individualist anarchists argue that both collective and individual freedom can go hand-in-hand. Individualist anarchists differ on the issues of private property and other rights. Anarcho-capitalism For a more detailed treatment, see Anarcho-capitalism. Anarcho-capitalism is a form of individualist anarchism that favors private police agencies, security companies, and arbitration as opposed to government. Anarcho-capitalism is the most extreme form of libertarianism. Traditional anarchists argue that anarcho-capitalists are not true anarchists. Traditional anarchists argue that one cannot live without wages under a capitalist system. Anarcho-capitalists argue that all support of business is voluntary, since one can choose between companies or create their own under a capitalist system. Anarcho-capitalists reject collectives, since they focus on the community rather than the individual, which may lead to a loss of individual freedom. Green anarchism Green anarchists oppose the hierarchy, in which the human stands about the animal. Anarcho-Nihilism Anarcho-Nihilism is the view to destroy any and all forms of order and leave it in total lawlessness and lacking any restraints, especially the removal of Western order. Considered left-wing and is sometimes affiliated with Cultural Marxism. A notable example of this type of anarchism is from the Matrix trilogy. Another example is the Russian Nihilist movement. Anarchism in practice Anarchists protesting Trump on Inauguration Day Anarchism ranges through a number of different ideologies and practices. Some anarchists limit themselves to peaceful marches. Most refrain from voting. Others lead an insurrectionist lifestyle, which can include throwing rocks through Starbucks windows, yelling expletives at policemen, hacking into white nationalist or neo-Nazi websites, forming black blocs at national protests, and generally wreaking havoc on the system they are fighting against. It involved the taking over of workplaces by those who worked in them. Industry began to be organized non-hierarchically. The anarchist union the CNT did this with considerable success. Anarchists also tended to think that even the concept of the law, especially enforcing it, as well as national borders, was considered "state-sanctioned violence" and thus generally protested against it. The lack of a widely popular voice for irreligion, combined with the murder of the president by an anarchist, led to a backlash against not only anarchism but also atheism. From that point, Americans tended to see irreligion in terms of whatever ostensibly foreign ideology seemed most threatening. So for the rest of the century, we see atheism and atheists associated with anarchism, fascism , socialism , and of course Soviet -style communism. By the late seventies, secular humanism became the buzzword for a whole suite of threats not only to religion, but to Americanism. The world level of political interaction is considered anarchical, because there is no power over the sovereign states i.

Chapter 3 : What is Anarcho-syndicalism? | The Anarchist Library

The high point of anarcho-syndicalism, thus far, was achieved in the workers' revolution in Spain in With the defeat of a repressive right-wing government in elections in February , workers in Spain felt they had an opening to push forward in the development of their movement and pressing for their aims.

Terminology[edit] The term syndicalism has French origins. In French, a syndicat is a trade union, usually a local union. The corresponding words in Spanish and Portuguese, sindicato, and Italian, sindacato, are similar. By extension, the French syndicalisme refers to trade unionism in general. Revolutionary syndicalism, or more commonly syndicalism with the revolutionary implied, was then adapted to a number of languages by unionists following the French model. They apply the label to one big unionists or industrial unionists in North America and Australia, Larkinists in Ireland, and groups that identify as revolutionary industrialists, revolutionary unionists, anarcho-syndicalists, or councilists. This includes the Industrial Workers of the World IWW in the United States, for example, which claimed its industrial unionism was "a higher type of revolutionary labor organization than that proposed by the syndicalists". Van der Linden and Thorpe use syndicalism to refer to "all revolutionary, direct-actionist organizations". Darlington proposes that syndicalism be defined as "revolutionary trade unionism". According to Olssen, this understanding has a "tendency to blur the distinctions between industrial unionism, syndicalism, and revolutionary socialism". Peterson proposes the broader category revolutionary industrial unionism to encompass syndicalism, groups like the IWW and the OBU, and others. The defining commonality between these groups is that they sought to unite all workers in a general organization. According to the English social historian E. They were involved in the nationwide struggle for an eight-hour day. On May 3, , the police killed three striking workers at a demonstration in Chicago. Seven policemen and four workers were killed the following day when someone, possibly an IWPA member, threw a bomb at the police. Four anarchists were eventually executed for allegedly conspiring with the man who threw the bomb. The Haymarket Affair , as these events become known, led anarchists and labor organizers, including syndicalists, in both the United States and Europe to re-evaluate the revolutionary meaning of the general strike. They were able to gain influence, particularly in the bourses du travail , which served as labor exchanges , meeting places for unions, and trades councils and organized in a national federation in From the start, it advocated the general strike and aimed to unite all workers. Pouget, who was active in the CGT, supported the use of sabotage and direct action. In , the bourses merged into the CGT. Its base was mostly in the Western US where labor conflicts were most violent and workers therefore radicalized. French influence also spread through publications. Journals and newspapers in a number of countries advocated syndicalism. For example, sailors helped establish IWW presences in port cities around the world. Some, like the French radicals, worked within existing unions to infuse them with their revolutionary spirit. Some found existing unions entirely unsuitable and built federations of their own, a strategy known as dual unionism. In Italy and Spain, syndicalists initially worked within the established union confederations before breaking away and forming USI and the CNT respectively. Werner Sombart , a German economist and sociologist, commenting in , ascribes the rise of syndicalism to the Italian and particularly the French mentality. They are generally men who do things impulsively [Strikes increased in frequency, numbers of workers involved, and duration. According to van der Linden and Thorpe, syndicalism was only one way this radicalization expressed itself. Lenin posited that "revolutionary syndicalism in many countries was a direct and inevitable result of opportunism, reformism and parliamentary cretinism. In countries like Italy, Spain, and Ireland, which was still under British rule, parliamentary politics were not seen as a serious means for workers to express their grievances. Most workers were disenfranchised. Yet even in France or Britain, where most male workers had the right to vote, many workers did not trust party politics. The enormous numerical growth of well-organized socialist parties, such as in Germany and Italy, did not, in the minds of many workers, correlate with any real advance in the class struggle as these parties were thought to be overly concerned with building the parties themselves and with electoral politics than with the class struggle and had therefore lost their original revolutionary edge. The socialists preached the inevitability of socialism, but were

in practice bureaucratic and reformist. Newer studies have questioned this account. Such waves of proletarian insurgency, claims Screpanti, were global in reach, saw workers breaking free of the dynamics of the capitalist system, and aimed to overthrow that system. This rise took place during the Second Industrial Revolution. Two groups of workers were most attracted to syndicalism: Moreover, because of the time constraints of their jobs they were forced to act immediately in order to achieve anything and could not plan for the long term by building up strike funds or powerful labor organizations or by engaging in mediation. Their working conditions gave them an inclination to engage in direct confrontation with employers and apply direct action. The second group includes miners, railway employees, and certain factory workers. Their occupations were deskilled by technological and organizational changes. These changes made workers from the second group similar in some respects to the first group. They did not entirely result from the introduction of new technology, but were also caused by changes in management methods. This included increased supervision of workers, piecework, internal promotions, all designed to make workers docile and loyal and to transfer knowledge and control over the process of production from workers to employers. Frustration with this loss of power led to formal and informal resistance by workers. According to him, it was workers with significant autonomy in their jobs and pride in their skills who were most attracted to syndicalism. The small size of many syndicalist unions also makes observations about which workers joined statistically irrelevant. Although it had been advocated before, there were not sufficient numbers of wage workers to bring society to a standstill and they had not achieved a sufficient degree of organization and solidarity until the 1890s, according to van der Linden and Thorpe. Several general or political strikes then took place before World War I: They spread their ideas through pamphlets and newspapers and had considerable influence in a number of labor disputes. Workers who would otherwise not have had an inclination to syndicalism joined because syndicalism was dominant in their locales. Similarly, southern workers were more drawn to syndicalism in Italy. Only differences in local social and economic structures explain why some towns had a strong syndicalist presence, but others did not. Inside the unions, there is little philosophising. They do better than that: I believe in actions more than in remote ideologies and abstract questions. These writings consisted mainly in calls to action and discussions of tactics in class struggle. Sorel fancied himself the premier theorist of syndicalism and was frequently thought of as such, but he was not a part of the movement and his influence on syndicalism was insignificant, except in Italy and Poland. Workers who joined the syndicalist movement, he claims, were on the whole indifferent to doctrinal questions, their membership in syndicalist organizations was partly accidental and leaders were unable to convert workers to syndicalist ideas. According to him, leaders were very influential in the drafting of syndicalist ideas, but syndicalism was more than a mere tool of a few leaders, but a genuine product of the French labor movement. He points out that they likely understood syndicalist newspapers and debated political issues. This term was first used in 1895, by socialists criticizing the political neutrality of the CGT, although it was rarely used until the early 1900s when communists used it disparagingly. Only from 1905 was it used by self-avowed anarcho-syndicalists. This was the case in Italy and much of the Anglophone world, including Ireland where anarchists had no significant influence on syndicalism. The anarchist Iain McKay argues that syndicalism is but a new name for ideas and tactics developed by Bakunin and the anarchist wing of the First International, while it is wholly inconsistent with positions Marx and Engels took. He also sees Marxist ideas reflected in the movement, as leading syndicalists such as F. Domela Nieuwenhuis and Christiaan Cornelissen as well as much of the Australian syndicalist movement were influenced by them, as well as older socialist notions. Syndicalists held that society was divided into two great classes, the working class and the bourgeoisie. Their interests being irreconcilable, they must be in a constant state of class struggle. Tom Mann, a British syndicalist, declared that "the object of the unions is to wage the Class War". This war, according to syndicalist doctrine, was aimed not just at gaining concessions such as higher wages or a shorter working day, but at the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Nevertheless, a number of leading syndicalist figures worked in political parties and some ran for elected office. Yet, they saw the economic sphere as the primary arena for revolutionary struggle, while involvement in politics could at best be an "echo" of industrial struggle. They were skeptical of parliamentary politics. According to Father Thomas Hagerty, a Catholic priest and IWW leader, "dropping pieces of paper into a hole in a box never did

achieve emancipation for the working class, and to my thinking it will never achieve it". Syndicalist trade unions declared their political neutrality and autonomy from political parties. Political parties, syndicalists reasoned, grouped people according to their political views, uniting members of different classes. Unions, on the other, hand were to be purely working class organizations, uniting the entire class, and could therefore not be divided on political grounds. The French syndicalist Pouget explained: They were organs of struggle within capitalism for better working conditions, but they were also to play a key role in the revolution to overthrow capitalism. But this task is only one aspect of the work of syndicalism; it prepares for complete emancipation, which can be realised only by expropriating the capitalist class". Battling bureaucracy and reformism within the labor movement was a major theme for syndicalists. The Wobbler Vincent St. Similarly, syndicalist unions did not work to build large strike funds, for fear that they would create bureaucracy separate from the rank-and-file and instill in workers the expectation that the union rather than they would wage the class struggle. The IWW engaged in around 30 mostly successful civil disobedience campaigns they deemed free speech fights. Wobblers would defy laws restricting public speeches, in order to clog up prisons and court systems as a result of hundreds of arrests, ultimately forcing public officials to rescind such laws. Sabotage ranged from slow or inefficient work to destruction of machinery and physical violence. French railway and postal workers cut telegraph and signal lines during strikes in and It would be "the curtain drop on a tired old scene of several centuries, and the curtain raising on another", according to Griffuelhes. Labor unions were seen as being the embryo of a new society in addition to being the means of struggle within the old. Syndicalists generally agreed that in a free society production would be managed by workers. In such a society individuals would be liberated, both in the economic sphere but also in their private and social lives. The CNT did not admit women as members until

Chapter 4 : Anarcho-Syndicalism Quotes by Rudolf Rocker

Anarcho-syndicalism Anarcho syndicalism is the most influential branch of anarchism worldwide, partly due to the syndicalists' involvement in the Spanish Civil War. In a syndicalist society workers would be self-managing, and a union of all workers would take the place of government.

To the extent that I thought it opposed the authority of the State, I assumed that it was accountable to no authority at all. Therefore, I inferred that no individual would be accountable to any group or collective. I was wrong in drawing this inference. However, to understand why, I needed to understand that the term "Anarchism" is a roof over many different, competing ideologies. However, even this inference might be wrong. This book written in is concerned with just one of the forms of Anarchism called "Anarcho-Syndicalism". Importantly, "Anarchism" is just one limb of a hyphenated ideology. The dual term calls upon us to understand how much "Syndicalism" adds to the hyphenate. Such authority "undermines the relationship between man and man. Rocker describes this goal of Freedom in terms of "Liberalism" or what some people more recently might call "Libertarianism": It is designed to be both a fighting organization and an educational organization of labor. Thus, Syndicalism implies a level of collective action, in contrast to my preconceived notion of individualistic and uncoordinated action. In order to achieve equality, Anarchists demand " " Together and hyphenated, Anarcho-Syndicalism constitutes Libertarian Socialism. The Marxist differentiation between "Socialism" and "Communism" posits a transitional period of Socialism during which there will be a "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" and the eventual outcome of Communism during which the State would "wither away". What we know as Communism i. As early as , the Anarchist Bakunin said: The goal is Socialism and Liberalism. However, it aims to avoid the Dictatorship of the Proletariat: Lenin, in particular, regarded the Anarchists as a spanner in the works when it came to harnessing the forces necessary to effect a Revolution. He did everything within his power to establish the Bolsheviks as the controlling influence in the Revolution, then in the control of the State and ultimately in the ongoing Dictatorship of the Proletariat. When many Anarchists visited the post-Revolutionary Soviet Union, it was Socialists and Anarchists whom they found in the jails. However, these were the very people who had predicted the failure of Communism. In 12 months before Lenin died and was succeeded by Stalin , the International Congress of Syndicalists made the following declaration: As with the question of how the last stage of Communism would work, the details are vague: This assumes that people who negotiate with each other will discover a commonality of interest. It also tends to assume that they will honor their obligations, and that no version of the State will be required to enforce contracts by way of legal proceedings. State of Siege Equally importantly, this vision assumes that this new society will not be immediately subjected to a state of siege by forces that wish to overturn the Revolution. Arguably, some form of State will be necessary to defend Anarcho-Syndicalism until it is safe from external or internal threat. This is a self-fulfilling prophecy if the forces of conservatism initiate a Counter-Revolution, which would have to be inevitable now. Both ideologies use the metaphor of slavery for a worker who is paid by an employer for their labor. Because capitalism owns the product of my labor, it is supposed to own me and my person as well. As a result, they both advocate the collective ownership of the means of production. Communism as we have seen it to date Bolshevism makes the State the owner. For workers, arguably, this makes absolutely no difference to their relationship with the product of their labor. Anarcho-Syndicalism pushes ownership down to much more localized and democratic syndicates. State or No State? Two things supposedly work against the existence of a State. One is the multiplicity of syndicates. The other is the belief that the role of the syndicates is not to govern people, but to simply organise and administer labor, production, distribution and consumption. The opponents of Communism have always asserted that human nature dictates that those in power will cling to it and turn the rest of us into serfs. It makes no difference to these people whether they are in charge of government or administration. What is to be Done? Bolshevism has been tested and failed. Where it has been tested, it has quickly plunged into a state of siege. It would have to embrace dictatorial practices in order to protect its achievements. I believe that capitalism or any alternative method of production is a relationship between labor

and capital, and that the solution lies in the terms of that relationship just as it does in the case of gender relations. Joint Venturism Production like reproduction is a joint venture. Both labor and capital are essential. The one must recognise the importance of the other. Ultimately, one major role of the State should be to create an economic environment within which the two negotiate and agree on fair terms. A single employee cannot negotiate adequately on their own behalf. Therefore, inevitably a greater involvement of collective bargaining via trade unions or syndicates is required. The problem is not so much the trade of your labor for a wage. The problem is not realistically described as "wage slavery". Work and production will be required under any economic, political and social system. It is the conditions of employment that need to be changed to convert metaphorical slavery into practical joint venture. This includes a recognition that it is not capital alone that creates profit, but the relationship between labor and capital. Thus, apart from the conditions of the work environment work hours, safety, remuneration, dismissal , I think it involves profit-sharing i. The role of any State, therefore, is to facilitate joint ventures between labor and capital.

Chapter 5 : Anarchism - Conservapedia

Anarcho-syndicalism is one of the major forms of social anarchism. The idea behind anarcho-syndicalism is to combine the economic methods of syndicalism with the revolutionary politics of anarchism.

The Evolution of Anarcho-Syndicalism Chapter 1. Bakunin the Collectivist and founder of the Anarchist movement; P. Kropotkin the exponent of Anarchist Communism and the philosophy of Mutual Aid; Anarchism and revolution; Anarchism a synthesis of Socialism and Liberalism; Anarchism versus economic materialism and Dictatorship; Anarchism and the state; Anarchism a tendency of history; Freedom and culture. Anarchism is a definite intellectual current in the life of our times, whose adherents advocate the abolition of economic monopolies and of all political and social coercive institutions within society. In place of the present capitalistic economic order Anarchists would have a free association of all productive forces based upon co-operative labour, which would have as its sole purpose the satisfying of the necessary requirements of every member of society, and would no longer have in view the special interest of privileged minorities within the social union. In place of the present state organisation with their lifeless machinery of political and bureaucratic institutions Anarchists desire a federation of free communities which shall be bound to one another by their common economic and social interest and shall arrange their affairs by mutual agreement and free contract. Anyone who studies at all profoundly the economic and social development of the present social system will easily recognise that these objectives do not spring from the Utopian ideas of a few imaginative innovators, but that they are the logical outcome of a thorough examination of the present-day social maladjustments, which with every new phase of the existing social conditions manifest themselves more plainly and more unwholesomely. Modern monopoly, capitalism and the totalitarian state are merely the last terms in a development which could culminate in no other results. The portentous development of our present economic system, leading to a mighty accumulation of social wealth in the hands of privileged minorities and to a continuous impoverishment of the great masses of the people, prepared the way for the present political and social reaction. It sacrificed the general interest of human society to the private interest of individuals, and thus systematically undermined the relationship between man and man. People forgot that industry is not an end in itself, but should only be a means to ensure to man his material subsistence and to make accessible to him the blessings of a higher intellectual culture. Where industry is everything and man is nothing begins the realm of a ruthless economic despotism whose workings are no less disastrous than those of any political despotism. The two mutually augment one another, and they are fed from the same source. The economic dictatorship of the monopolies and the political dictatorship of the totalitarian state are the outgrowth of the same political objectives, and the directors of both have the presumption to try to reduce all the countless expressions of social life to the mechanical tempo of the machine and to tune everything organic to the lifeless machine of the political apparatus. Our modern social system has split the social organism in every country into hostile classes internally, and externally it has broken the common cultural circle up into hostile nations; and both classes and nations confront one another with open antagonism and by their ceaseless warfare keep the communal social life in continual convulsions. The late World War and its terrible after effects, which are themselves only the results of the present struggles for economic and political power, are only the logical consequences of this unendurable condition, which will inevitably lead us to a universal catastrophe if social development does not take a new course soon enough. The mere fact that most states are obliged today to spend from fifty to seventy percent of their annual income for so-called national defence and the liquidation of old war debts is proof of the untenability of the present status, and should make clear to everybody that the alleged protection which the state affords the individual is certainly purchased too dearly. The ever growing power of a soulless political bureaucracy which supervises and safeguards the life of man from the cradle to the grave is putting ever greater obstacles in the way of the solidaric co-operation of human beings and crushing out every possibility of new development. A system which in every act of its life sacrifices the welfare of large sections of the people, yes, of whole nations, to the selfish lust for power and the economic interests of small minorities must of necessity dissolve all social ties and lead to a constant war of

all against all. This system has been merely the pacemaker for the great intellectual and social reaction which finds its expression today in modern Fascism, far surpassing the obsession for power of the absolute monarchy of past centuries and seeking to bring every sphere of human activity under the control of the state. Just as for the various systems of religious theology, God is everything and man nothing, so for this modern political theology, the state is everything and the man nothing. Anarchist ideas are to be found in every period of known history, although there still remains a good deal of work for historical work in this field. They found expression in the teaching of the Gnostic, Karpocrates, in Alexandria, and had an unmistakable influence on certain Christian sects of the Middle Ages in France, Germany and Holland, almost all of which fell victims to the most savage persecutions. Meanwhile, it was reserved for more recent history to give clear form to the anarchist perception of life and to connect it with the immediate processes of social evolution. Godwin recognised very clearly that the cause of social evils is to be sought, not in the form of the state, but in its very existence. Just as the state presents only a caricature of a genuine society, so also it makes of human beings who are held under its eternal guardianship merely caricatures of their real selves by constantly compelling them to repress their natural inclinations and holding them to things that are repugnant to their inner impulses. Only in this way is it possible to mould human beings to the established form of good subjects. A normal human being who was not interfered with in his natural development would of himself shape the environment that suits his inborn demand for peace and freedom. But Godwin also recognised that human beings can only live together naturally and freely when the proper economic conditions for this are given, and when the individual is no longer subject to exploitation by another, a consideration which the representatives of mere political radicalism almost completely overlooked. Hence they were later compelled to make consistently greater concessions to that power of the state which they had wished to restrict to a minimum. Most important of all, he contributed to give to the young socialist movement in England, which found its maturest exponents in Robert Owen, John Gray and William Thompson, that unmistakable libertarian character which it had for a long time, and which it never assumed in Germany and many other countries. But a far greater influence on the development of Anarchist theory was that of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, one of the most intellectually gifted and certainly the most many-sided writer of whom modern socialism can boast. Proudhon was completely rooted in the intellectual and social life of his period, and these inspired his attitude upon every question he dealt with. Therefore, he is not to be judged, as he has been by even by many of his later followers, by his special practical proposals, which were born of the needs of the hour. Amongst the numerous socialist thinkers of his time he was the one who understood most profoundly the cause of social maladjustment, and possessed, besides, the greatest breadth of vision. He was the outspoken opponent of all systems, and saw in social evolution the eternal urge to new and higher forms of intellectual and social life, and it was his conviction that this evolution could not be bound by any abstract general formulas. Proudhon opposed the influence of the Jacobin tradition, which dominated the thinking of the French democrats and of most of the Socialists of that period with the same determination as the interference of the central state and economic policy in the natural processes of social advance. To rid society of these two cancerous growths was for him the great task of the nineteenth-century revolution. Proudhon was no communist. He condemned property as merely the privilege of exploitation, but he recognised the ownership of the instruments of production by all, made effective by industrial groups bound to one another by free contract, so long as this right was not made to serve the exploitation of others and as long as the full product of his individual labour was assured to every human being. The average working time required for the completion of any product becomes the measure of its value and is the basis of mutual exchange. In this way capital is deprived of its usurious power and is completely bound up with the performance of work. By being made available to all it ceases to be an instrument for exploitation. Such a form of economy makes an political coercive apparatus superfluous. Starting out from this point of view of the federation, Proudhon combated likewise the aspirations for political activity of the awakening nationalism of the time, and in particular that nationalism which found in Mazzini, Garibaldi, Lelewel, and others, such strong advocates. In this respect also he saw more clearly than most of his contemporaries. Proudhon exerted a strong influence on the development of socialism, which made itself felt especially in the Latin countries. Greene, Lysander Spooner, Francis D. Tandy, and most notably in Benjamin

R. It is the book of a conscious and deliberate insurgent, which reveals no reverence for any authority, however exalted, and therefore impels powerfully to independent thinking. Anarchism found a virile champion of vigorous revolutionary energy in Michael Bakunin, who took his stand upon the teachings of Proudhon, but extended them on the economic side when he, along with the collectivist wing of the First International, came out for the collective ownership of the land and of all other means of production, and wished to restrict the right of private ownership to the full product of individual labour. Bakunin also was an opponent of Communism, which in his time had a thoroughly authoritarian character, like that which it has again assumed today in Bolshevism. In one of his four speeches at the Congress of the League of Peace and Freedom in Bern, he said: Since he, like so many of his contemporaries, believed in the close proximity of the revolution, he directed all his vast energy to combine all the genuinely revolutionary and libertarian elements within and without the International to safeguard the coming revolution against any dictatorship or retrogression to the old conditions. Thus he became in a very special sense the reator of the modern Anarchist movement. Anarchism found a valuable advocate in Peter Kropotkin, who set himself the task of making the achievements of modern natural science available for the development of the sociological concepts of Anarchism. In his ingenious book *Mutual Aid – a Factor of Evolution*, he entered the lists against so-called Social Darwinism, whose exponents tried to prove the inevitability of the existing social conditions from the Darwinian theory of the struggle for existence by raising the struggle of the strong against the weak to the status of an iron law for all natural processes, to which even man is subject. Kropotkin showed that this conception of nature as a field of unrestricted warfare is only a caricature of real life, and that along with the brutal struggle for existence, which is fought out with tooth and claw, there exists in nature another principle which is expressed in the social combination of the weaker species and the maintenance of races by the evolution of social instincts and mutual aid. In this sense man is not the creator of society, but society is the creator of man, for he inherited from the that preceded him the social instinct which alone enabled him to maintain himself in his first environment against the physical superiority of other species, and to make sure of an undreamed-of height of development. This second tendency in the struggle for existence is far superior to the first, as is shown by the steady retrogression of those species which have no social life and are dependent merely upon their physical strength. This view, which today is meeting with consistently wider acceptance in the natural sciences and in social research, opened wholly new vistas to speculation concerning human evolution. If this were not the case even the strongest coercive arrangements of the state would not be able to maintain the social order for a single day. The consciousness of personal responsibility and that other precious good that has come down to man by inheritance from remote antiquity: Like Bakunin, Kropotkin too was a revolutionary. In contrast to Proudhon and Bakunin, Kropotkin advocated community ownership, not only of the means of production, but of the products of labour as well, as it was his opinion that in the present status of technique no exact measure of the value of individual labour is possible, but that, on the other hand, by a rational direction of our modern methods of labour it will be possible to assure comparative abundance to every human being. Mention must also be made here of Leo Tolstoy, who took from primitive Christianity and, on the basis of the ethical principles laid down in the gospels, arrived at the idea of a society without rulership. In this sense Mutualism, Collectivism and Communism are not to be regarded as closed systems permitting no further development, but merely as economic assumptions as to the means of safeguarding a free community. There will even probably be in society of the future different forms of economic co-operation operating side by side, since any social progress must be associated with that free experiment and practical testing out for which in a society of free communities there will be afforded every opportunity. The same holds true for the various methods of Anarchism. Most Anarchists of our time are convinced that a social transformation of society cannot be brought about without violent revolutionary convulsions. The violence of these convulsions, of course, depends upon the strength of the resistance which the ruling classes will be able to oppose to the realisation of the new ideas. The wider the circles which are inspired with the idea of a reorganisation of society in the spirit of freedom and Socialism, the easier will be the birth pains of the coming social revolution. In modern anarchism we have the confluence of the two great currents which during and since the French Revolution have found such characteristic expression in the intellectual life of Europe: And

so there developed the recognition that only by elimination of economic monopolies and common ownership of the means of production, in a word, by a complete transformation of all economic conditions and social institutions associated with them, does a condition of social justice become thinkable, a status in which society shall become a genuine community, and human labour shall no longer serve the ends of exploitation, but shall serve to assure abundance to everyone. But as soon as Socialism began to assemble its forces and became a movement, there at once came to light certain differences of opinion due to the influence of the social environment in different countries. Meanwhile, there have been two great currents in political thought which have been of decisive significance for the development of Socialistic ideals: Liberalism, which powerfully stimulated advanced minds in the Anglo-Saxon countries and Spain, in particular, and Democracy in the later sense to which Rousseau gave expression in his Social Contract, and which found its most influential representatives in French Jacobinism. Liberalism and Democracy were preeminently political concepts, and since the great majority of the original adherents of both maintained the right of ownership in the old sense, these had to renounce them both when economic development took a course which could not be practically reconciled with the original principles of Democracy, and still less with those of Liberalism. Anarchism has in common with Liberalism the idea that the happiness and prosperity of the individual must be the standard of all social matters. And, in common with the great representatives of Liberal thought, it has also the idea of limiting the functions of government to a minimum. Its supporters have followed this thought to its ultimate logical consequences, and wish to eliminate every institution of political power from the life of society. When Jefferson clothes the basic concept of Liberalism in the words: Within the socialist movement itself the Anarchists represent the viewpoint that the war against capitalism must be at the same time a war against all institutions of political power, for in history economic exploitation has always gone hand in hand with political and social oppression. The exploitation of man by man and the dominion of man over man are inseparable, and each is the condition of the other. As long as within society a possessing and a non-possessing group of human beings face one another in enmity, the state will be indispensable to the possessing minority for the protection of its privileges. When this condition of social injustice vanishes to give place to a higher order of things, which shall recognise no special rights and shall have as its basic assumption the community of social interests, government over men must yield the field to the to the administration of economic and social affairs, or to speak with Saint-Simon: A new art will take its place, the art of administering things. This concept, which completely mistakes the real nature of the state and the significance in history of the factor of political power, is only the logical outcome of so-called economic materialism, which sees in all the phenomena of history merely the inevitable effects of the methods of production of the time. In reality every section of history affords us thousands of examples of the way in which the economic development of a country has been set back for centuries and forced into prescribed forms by particular struggles for political power. Before the rise of the ecclesiastical monarchy Spain was industrially the most advanced country in Europe and held the first place in economic production in almost every field. But a century after the triumph of the Christian monarchy most of its industries had disappeared. What was left of then survived only in the most wretched conditions. In most industries they had reverted to the most primitive methods of production. Agriculture collapsed, canals and waterways fell into ruin, and vast stretches of country were transformed into deserts. Down to this day Spain has never recovered from that setback. The aspirations of a particular caste for political power had laid economic development fallow for centuries. And were there not considerations of political power which after the World War constantly balked any escape from the universal economic crisis and delivered the future of whole countries to politics-playing generals and political adventurers? Who will assert that modern Fascism was an inevitable result of economic development? The assertion that the state must continue to exist until class conflicts, and classes with them, disappear, sounds, in the light of all historical experience, almost like a bad joke.

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Not exactly. It's necessary to make a distinction between state and government. A state, in the anarcho-syndicalist view, is a hierarchical or top down structure of governance where the masses do not have the ability to effectively control it.

Therefore, just as elsewhere I have distinguished between politics and statecraft, I must now also point out the distinction between governments and states. All anarchists, and indeed most left libertarians, dismiss every government as a state. The fact is that no society can exist without an orderly way of administering itself, which necessarily implies administration or regulation of some kind. Not Every Government is a State All states are governments, but not all governments are states. A government is a set of organized and responsible institutions that are minimally an active system of social and economic administration. They handle the problems of living in an orderly fashion. A government may be a dictatorship; it may be a monarchy or a republican state; but it may also be a libertarian formation of some kind. But without a rudimentary body of institutions to sort out the rights and duties of its members, hopefully in a democratic way, society would simply dissolve into a disorderly aggregation of individuals. Even self-government is therefore a form of government, for under systems of self-government community members contribute to its functioning. It is possible, and indeed necessary, for human beings to govern themselves in civilized and rational institutions. In fact, institutions as such are necessary for social organization. One, in effect, cannot be done without the other. Thus if a society is to socially own or control property, if it is to produce goods to meet the needs of all instead of allow profit for a few, if it is to organize a system of distribution so that all rather than an elite share equitably in the material means of life—then clearly definable administrative institutions have to be established that not only make them workable but also constrain irrational behavior. In short, forms of authority have to be created that are meant not to exploit or oppress human beings, but rather to ensure that some human beings are not exploited or oppressed by others and to ensure the means for acquiring the good life. Such institutions must exist in a society, even a libertarian one. Their absence would lead to a prevalence of chaos, disorder, instability, and disequilibrium—none of which necessarily has revolutionary or liberatory implications. That revolutions produce instability does not mean that instability is somehow a desirable condition or that it must produce a libertarian revolution. What kinds of governments, then, are not states? They are organized institutions that serve generalized human needs, such as those of a revolutionary proletariat or peasantry, in a libertarian fashion. The end that a government serves, no less than its structure, is an integral part of its nature and definition. A state, by contrast, is a government that is organized to serve the interests of a privileged and often propertied class at the expense of the majority. This historic rise of the state transformed governance into a malignant force for social development. When a government becomes a state—that is, a coercive mechanism for perpetuating class rule for exploitative purposes—it invariably acquires different institutional characteristics. First, its members are professionalized to one degree or another, in order to separate them from the mass of the population and thereby impart to them an extraordinary status, which in turn renders them the full-time protectors of a ruling class. Second, the state, aided by military and police functionaries, enjoys a monopoly over the means of violence. The chain of command binds them together and places them at the disposal of their commanders. The tendency of anarchists to classify all governments as states is a mischievous distortion just as the tendency of anarchists to identify constitutions and laws as such with statism verges on the absurd. Both tendencies are the product of a radical ego-orientation that denies the need for any constraints—indeed, that unthinkingly sees all constraints as evil. This issue is by no means an idle discussion. It played a pivotal role during the Spanish Revolution of 1937, a history that even has profound implications for the future of left libertarian theory and practice. Libertarian Government in Revolutionary Spain In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Spain was the most important locus of worldwide anarcho-syndicalism. Here, uniquely, anarchists and syndicalists conjointly developed a mass movement that persisted for at least two generations. The National Confederation of Labor CNT, formed in in Barcelona, was by the mids the largest anarcho-syndicalist union in the world. It was a strong and vital force, particularly on the eastern coast of Spain. Despite or perhaps because of its breadth, the

CNT was based on at least two distinct ideologies that were frequently in tension with each other. The first, syndicalism, was perhaps the most highly organized of all libertarian ideologies. Syndicalism emphasized discipline and unity, and its high regard for the importance of organizing the exploited classes could surpass even that of socialism. Syndicalists would have agreed strongly with the words of Joe Hill as he faced a firing squad in Utah: Leading figures of Spanish anarchism such as Anselmo Lorenzo and Federico Urales viewed the formation of the CNT with deep suspicion, if not outright hostility. Achieving a creative union between the more madcap members of the Iberian Anarchist Federation FAI, who in fact were true to their anarchist precepts, and the syndicalists was difficult; fractious disputes often shredded the CNT and, in the early 1930s, led to an outright split. In the process, it challenged anarchism to deal with the serious question of acquiring and holding power. In the face of the conflict, the Catalan state institutions either floundered helplessly or dissolved. Something unprecedented in modern history then took place: The CNT membership proceeded to create a dazzling series of libertarian institutions. In the cities it organized a huge network of defense, neighborhood, factory, supply, and transportation committees and assemblies, while in the countryside the more radical peasantry a sizable part of the agrarian population took over and collectivized the land. Catalonia and its population were protected against a possible counterattack by a revolutionary militia, which, notwithstanding its often archaic weapons, was sufficiently well armed to have defeated the rebel army and police force. The committee structure had not been created by an elite group, such as the Bolsheviks. Notwithstanding their reputation for indiscipline, the majority of CNT members, or cenetistas, were libertarian syndicalists rather than anarchists; they were strongly committed to a well-structured, democratic, disciplined, and coordinated organization. In July they acted, often on their own initiative, to create these councils, committees, and assemblies, breaking through all predetermined ideologies within the revolutionary movement. The result was that they shattered the bourgeois state-machine and created a radically new government or polity in which they themselves exercised direct control over public and economic affairs through institutions of their own making. Put bluntly, they took power by destroying the old institutions and creating radically new ones whose form and substance gave the masses the right to determine the operations of economy and polity. The committee structure institutionally embodied the desire of most workers in the large area where it was established to take over society and manage it in the interests of the oppressed; in fact, in the interests of humanity as a whole. Never was anarcho-syndicalism in a more favorable position in its history to declare libertarian communism, their stated social goal. Many of the committees were eager to believe that the CNT would ideologically legitimate their existence and provide them with the guidance needed to achieve a libertarian communist society. The Downfall of Spanish Anarchism The structure the Catalan workers and peasants had created in fact stood at odds with the individualism emphasized by anarchism. In this situation, the anarchist ideology embraced by the CNT leadership gave them no tools to function appropriately. After all, pure anarchism has nothing to do with government—indeed it rejects government, even libertarian, popular government, on the basis that all governments are inherently states. Nonetheless, almost as a matter of course, the CNT membership gave its union leadership the authority to organize a revolutionary government and provide it with political direction. After all, for years the CNT had continuously propagated revolutions and uprisings; in the early 1930s it had taken up arms again and again, without the least prospect of actually being able to change Spanish society. Now in 1937, as its membership looked to it for coordination, the CNT leadership could finally have a significant impact on society. What did it do? Apparently it stood around with a puzzled look, as if orphaned by the very success of its working-class members in achieving the goals embedded in its rhetoric. Here the CNT leadership would decide what to do with the power that the workers and peasants had fought for in the streets and villages and then offered up to it. It could have declared libertarian communism and the end of the old political and social order. Betraying the historic trust of its class, the CNT plenary instead voted to establish a coalition government along with all the other parties in Barcelona that had opposed the military rebellion. This new body, called the Anti-Fascist Militia Committee, included the bourgeois liberals and the Stalinists. Incredibly, all these parties and unions were granted representation on the basis of parity, not in proportion to their memberships, which would have certainly provided the CNT with a commanding majority on the committee. The monumental nature of this error should be fully appreciated

because it reveals all that is internally contradictory about anarchist ideology. It was incapable of distinguishing between a worker-peasant government that the masses had created from below and a capitalist state or, even more pathetically, a Stalinist-type dictatorship carefully contrived by the bourgeoisie from above. Adding insult to injury, the CNT soon joined the Generalidad, and the power of the revolutionary workers and peasants thus passed to the bourgeois state. We could have remained alone, imposed our absolute will, declared the Generalidad null and void, and imposed the true power of the people in its place, but we did not believe in dictatorship when it was being exercised against us, and we did not want it when we could have exercised it ourselves only at the expense of others. The Generalidad would remain in force with President Companys at its head, and the popular forces would organize themselves into militias to carry on the struggle for the liberation of Spain. It could have been quite democratic, indeed libertarian, and still functioned in the interests of the working class and other oppressed strata. Structured from the bottom up, it would have been a popular power or government that could have allowed a free press, free expression, and public criticism. But this was not to be. They were blind to the fact that no bourgeois government such as the Generalidad would permit the anarcho-syndicalist movement to exercise effective power once early revolutionary enthusiasm among the masses waned. Actually, in the intervening year, the CNT leaders discovered that their rejection of power for the Catalan proletariat and peasantry did not include a rejection of power for themselves as individuals. There, they dutifully served the bourgeois state as long as they were useful, up to the closing days of the civil war. Thus did anarcho-syndicalism follow the unrelenting logic of events to the edge of the political cliff and ignominiously jump off, by its presence legitimating a state that it was committed to oppose. Aided by the Stalinists, they exhibited no qualms in accepting the power that the anarchists had donated to them. Inevitably, they used the power the workers had won to constitute their own state and systematically demolish all the strategic gains the workers had made. Under the circumstances, that process opened the door to an authoritarian Stalinist regime. Indeed, the reborn Catalan state, in order to eviscerate the power of the CNT workers, soon became a violently counter-revolutionary instrument of the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists. It finally booted the CNT out of the Catalan government, and the Stalinists had a free hand to further efface the revolution and hound its supporters. Rather than refuse the political and economic power that its own members had offered to it, the CNT plenum should have accepted it and legitimated and approved the new institutions they had already created. Instead, the tension between metaphorical claims and painful realities finally became intolerable, and in May resolute CNT workers in Barcelona were drawn into open battle with the revived Catalan state in a brief but bloody war within the civil war. Finally the bourgeois state suppressed the last major uprising of the syndicalist movement, butchering hundreds if not thousands of CNT militants. How many were killed will never be known, but we do know that before it was over, the internally contradictory ideology called anarcho-syndicalism lost the greater part of the following it had possessed in the summer of 1937.

Addressing Power Pure anarchism seeks above all the emancipation of individual personality from all ethical, political, and social constraints. In so doing, it fails to address the concrete issue of power that confronts all revolutionaries in a period of social upheaval. Rather than address how the people, organized into confederated popular assemblies, might capture power and create a fully developed libertarian society, anarchists have traditionally conceived of power as a malignant evil that must be destroyed. Proudhon, for example, once stated that he would divide and subdivide power until, in effect, it ceased to exist. Proudhon may well have intended that government should be reduced to a minimal entity, but his statement perpetuates the illusion that power can actually cease to exist. Spain revealed the inability of this anti-intellectual, anti-theoretical, and ego-oriented ideology however sincere and radical its adherents to cope with the compelling issues of power and social reconstitution. Having staged no less than three insurrections in 1936, the Spanish anarchists and their syndicalist allies seem never to have asked themselves what they would do if they actually succeeded in overthrowing the republic. As a matter of self-defining dogma, anarchism eschews the creation of institutional power. But in Spain anarchists could not tolerate even an entity that had sprung from its own loins: Power always exists, and it must always be institutionalized—whether in democratic forms like popular assemblies, committees, and councils, or perniciously, in chiefdoms, aristocracies, monarchies, republics, dictatorships, and totalitarian regimes. Confusion over the nature of popular power contributed to

popular disempowerment, and to the disempowerment of popular institutions such as the sectional assemblies of , the revolutionary clubs of , the neighborhood committees of , the soviets of , and the committees and assemblies of

Chapter 7 : Anarcho-syndicalism, Rudolf Rocker on Anarcho-Syndicalism

Anarcho-syndicalism: Theory and Practice organisations will take the place of the present government, and this representation of labour will do away, once and.

Oct 23, What is Anarcho-Syndicalism? Anarcho-syndicalism syndicalism for short is a strategy through which the working class can liberate itself from subordination and exploitation by dominating classes. Why is liberation necessary? The class structure of society is a system of unfreedom in at least the following ways: The relative monopoly of ownership of non-human means of production by the capitalists and government forces working class people to seek employment from employers capitalist firms or government. Workers are subordinated to hierarchical management regimes that control decisions about technologies, allocation of resources, hiring and firing, what products to make, design of jobs and work organization. Working people are systematically denied self-management of the work and are denied self-management of other decisions in society that affect them. Due to systematic de-skilling and concentration of decision-making and expertise under the control of fewer numbers of people, and limited opportunities for learning, working people are often denied the opportunity to fully develop their potential. Cooking meals in a restaurant, repairing computer servers, or moving people around in city buses are all work in the system of social production. Libertarian syndicalism also advocates ownership in common of the land and means of production. Libertarian syndicalism is a form of libertarian socialism. Libertarian socialism is socialist because the means of production would be owned in common by the society, but it is libertarian because 1 means of production are not owned or controlled by the state, and 2 workers have the collective power of management of the places where they work. Workers are not subject to state bureaucrats. Syndicalism refers to the strategy and libertarian socialism refers to the aim or goal. Self-management of an industry would mean that the decisions that govern work in that industry would be controlled by the workers there. Most decisions in work have a collective or social impact, from what technology to use, to when to start work, to how the work is to be coordinated. Self-management presupposes that there are face-to-face assemblies of workers that would have the ultimate power of control, through discussion and vote of the participants. Most libertarian syndicalists also believe that self-management should be applied to all forms of decision-making in society, not just to social production. Thus residents of dwellings should be able to self-manage the decisions regarding the places where they live. The English word syndicalism derives from the word for unionism in the Latin languages syndicalisme in French, sindicalismo in Spanish. At the beginning of the 20th century, the labor movement in many Latin countries had been strongly influenced by the libertarian Left and had a strong emphasis upon mass direct action and a revolutionary conception of the aims of worker unionism. This is how the English word syndicalism came to refer to a revolutionary conception of the potential of the labor movement. Although the word syndicalism did not come into common use til the beginning of the 20th century, the libertarian syndicalist political tendency can trace its lineage back to the Left-libertarians in that first International Workers Association. Libertarian syndicalists do not accept a strategy for achieving a post-capitalist economy through electoral or parliamentary politics or through the building up of a political party to gain control of a state, with the aim of implementing its program top-down through the state. Some syndicalists may believe that voting for pro-labor candidates is acceptable as a tactic, to gain concessions, but not as a strategy for transforming the society. The state itself is organized as a hierarchical structure, with work of public employees controlled by managers and top professionals, much as in the private corporations. The existence of the state as an apparatus apart from real control by the people is needed to enable the state to defend the interests of the dominating classes. Subordination of workers to such a hierarchical apparatus would imply continued subordination and exploitation of the working class. Libertarian syndicalists propose a strategy for social transformation based on the development of large-scale worker solidarity and mass actions. Syndicalists believe that a revolution in which the working class would gain control of society presupposes a process of development of class consciousness, capacity for self-organization and self-confidence within the working class. Most anarcho-syndicalists advocate ownership of the means of production by the entire society,

with a system of grassroots social planning, not a system of privately owned collectives competing in a market economy. In periods of struggle workers have at times developed forms of organization of workers themselves, based on things like general meetings of the people in workplaces and elected shop steward committees. At other times, after larger union organizations are formed and gain recognition and contracts with employers, unions have developed hierarchies of paid officials and staff whose conditions of life are not the same as people still working the job, and whose position depends on the continued safety and existence of the union as an institution. This can lead to conflicts between the rank and file of the union and the hierarchy, as the latter act to maintain their longstanding relationships with employers and avoid risks to the union institution. Worker strength in dealing with the dominating classes grows through wider solidarity and spreading struggles whereas the more bureaucratic, routinized form of unionism tends to limit struggles to particular sectors or unions. Libertarian syndicalism favors a strategy of broadening struggles, and direct control of struggles and mass organizations by the workers, without subordination to a hierarchical apparatus of paid officials. If the working class is to create a set of new social institutions through which the mass of the people control their own lives, and through which workers run the industries where they work, the process of self-management “ collective control by the rank and file ” must first emerge in the self-management of struggles in the existing society. The self-managed mass organizations prefigure self-management of social production by workers and the direct self-governance of society by the mass of the people. In the early s, syndicalism usually was based on organization at the point of production. Labor radicals in the late 19th century USA had begun to talk about building class-wide solidarity of workers. This radical labor vision was opposed by the founders of the AFL. The idea was to use their superior leverage to obtain a better deal with employers. Worker unrest and strikes in the USA between the s and World War I led a number of groups of workers to seek a different form of labor organization that could be more effective as a challenge to employers in the USA than the AFL. The idea was to seek power in numbers, based on the solidarity of all workers, irrespective of craft or race or nationality or gender. This led to the formation in of the Industrial Workers of the World called Wobblies , an important expression of syndicalism in the USA in the early 20th century. The IWW developed a significant following among lumber workers in Louisiana and the Pacific Northwest, longshoremen in Philadelphia and maritime workers on the west coast, and farm workers and miners in the western part of the USA. A failed attempt by the Communist Party to capture control of the IWW in further depleted the organization. Syndicalism also took other forms in the USA in the period after , including militant, grassroots unions like the first Auto Workers Union, formed by syndicalist-influenced socialists in . There was also the Syndicalist League, formed as a political syndicalist group in with the aim of organizing activists for efforts at broader solidarity in the AFL unions. Italy also saw various approaches by anarcho-syndicalists in the World War I era. Anarchists had formed rank-and-file direct action committees in the Italian labor movement by the early s. At the same time, there were also some anarcho-syndicalist political groups. During the mass occupation of the factories by over , workers in Italy in September, , the anarcho-syndicalists tried to influence the workers movement to transform the occupation into a revolutionary re-organization of Italian society. With the defeat of a repressive right-wing government in elections in February , workers in Spain felt they had an opening to push forward in the development of their movement and pressing for their aims. In the months after February, there were dozens of partial and city-wide general strikes in Spain, many of them initiated by the anarcho-syndicalist Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo CNT. The intense class polarization and politicization of Spain culminated in an attempted military takeover on July 18, . The military takeover attempt had been anticipated by the CNT, which had armed many of its members and set up a Workers Defense Committee to coordinate the fightback. In street fighting in Barcelona on July 19-20, the defense groups of the CNT defeated the Spanish army, with the aid of rank-and-file police and air force pilots. The CNT union federation then seized the arms and army bases of the Spanish army in the Barcelona area and built its own union militia. Each of the military divisions within the militia was self-managing, with assemblies and election of the commanding officer chief delegate of that division. The CNT set up a militia committee to run its army. The CNT metal workers union seized the Spanish motor vehicle manufacturing industry to convert it to the manufacture of armored vehicles for the union army.

Initially the union itself took over management of an industry. In the summer of more than 18, enterprises, 14 million acres of farm land, and thousands of urban buildings in Spain were expropriated by the unions. In Catalonia this included hairdressing shops, lumber mills, furniture manufacturing, the plate glass industry, dairies, bakeries, the national telephone system, railroads, public transit, the motor freight and maritime shipping industries, theaters and film-making. A socialized health care system was created for the first time in Spain, self-managed by people working in health care. The assets were seized in the name of the people of Spain. The CNT had never advocated that facilities be the collective private property of the workers working there. Regional and national worker congresses, bringing together delegates from the self-managing industries, would be another part of the planning system. To counter the efforts of the Communists to rebuild the Republican state, and replace the labor militia with a conventional top-down army, the CNT in early September proposed replacing the existing Spanish state with a working class government — a system of regional and national Defense Councils and worker congresses, and a unified militia controlled jointly by the two big labor federations in Spain, the CNT and the UGT. With the failure of the CNT to build a union-controlled political power, the armed forces fighting the fascists were re-organized by the Popular Front government into a conventional, hierarchal military. The Communist Party ultimately gained most of the officer positions in the new army. The increasing power of the Communists led to attacks on agricultural and industrial self-management, and demoralization of CNT members who made up a majority of the rank and file in the anti-fascist army. Writers such as George Orwell and Jose Peirats viewed this as a cause of the defeat of the anti-fascist side in the Spanish civil war. For a more in-depth treatment of the Spanish revolution, see: *Workers Power and the Spanish Revolution*. Originally published at www.

Chapter 8 : Anarcho-syndicalism – Freedom News

The Relevance of Anarcho-syndicalism Noam Chomsky interviewed by Peter Jay *The Jay Interview*, July 25, QUESTION: Professor Chomsky, perhaps we should start by trying to define what is not meant by anarchism – the word anarchy is derived, after all, from the Greek, literally meaning "no government."

The first secretaries of the International included the famed writer and activist Rudolph Rocker, along with Augustin Souchy and Alexander Schapiro. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), although not anarcho-syndicalist, were informed by developments in the broader revolutionary syndicalist milieu at the turn of the 20th century. At its founding congress in 1905, influential members with strong anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist sympathies like Thomas J. G. Although the terms anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism are often used interchangeably, the anarcho-syndicalist label was not widely used until the early 1930s. The Biennio Rosso English: The Biennio Rosso took place in a context of economic crisis at the end of the war, with high unemployment and political instability. It was characterized by mass strikes, worker manifestations as well as self-management experiments through land and factories occupations. In Turin and Milan, workers councils were formed and many factory occupations took place under the leadership of anarcho-syndicalists. The agitations also extended to the agricultural areas of the Padan plain and were accompanied by peasant strikes, rural unrests and guerilla conflicts between left-wing and right-wing militias. Anarchists were the first to suggest occupying workplaces. Many of the largest members of the IWA were broken, driven underground or wiped out in the 1930s as fascists came to power in states across Europe and workers switched away from anarchism towards the seeming success of the Bolshevik model of socialism. From 1917, the anarchist movement there lost most of its membership, exacerbated by further splits, most notably around the Severino Di Giovanni affair. Karl Windhoff, delegate to the IWA Madrid congress of 1922 was driven out of his mind and also died in a Nazi death camp. There were also mass trials of FAUD members held in Wuppertal and Rhenanie, many of these never survived the death camps. By its leading activists had been arrested or exiled. It survived underground with 15,000 members until January 1933, when it called a general revolutionary strike against plans to replace trade unions with fascist corporations, which failed. It was able to continue in a much reduced state until World War II but was effectively finished as a fighting union. Massive government repression repeated such defeats around the world, as anarcho-syndicalist unions were destroyed in Peru, Brazil, Colombia, Japan, Cuba, Bulgaria, Paraguay and Bolivia. By the end of the 1930s legal anarcho-syndicalist trade unions existed only in Chile, Bolivia, Sweden and Uruguay. The sixth IWA congress took place in 1935, shortly after the Spanish Revolution had begun, but was unable to provide serious material support for the section. But the international was not to meet again until after World War II had finished, in 1945. Members of the Falange attacked the strikers. The strikers responded by looting shops, and the police reacted by attempting to suppress the strike. George Orwell wrote of the nature of the new society that arose in the communities: I had dropped more or less by chance into the only community of any size in Western Europe where political consciousness and disbelief in capitalism were more normal than their opposites. In theory it was perfect equality, and even in practice it was not far from it. There is a sense in which it would be true to say that one was experiencing a foretaste of Socialism, by which I mean that the prevailing mental atmosphere was that of Socialism. Many of the normal motives of civilised life – snobbishness, money-grubbing, fear of the boss, etc. The ordinary class-division of society had disappeared to an extent that is almost unthinkable in the money-tainted air of England; there was no one there except the peasants and ourselves, and no one owned anyone else as his master. These institutions would be destroyed by the Nationalist troops during the war. The Committee held an extraordinary regional plenary session to protect the new rural organization, gathering all the union representatives from the supporting villages and backed by Buenaventura Durruti. When this proposal was declined, the CNT decided not to join the government. For the first time, three members of the CNT were also members of the government. The leadership of the CNT requested the finance and war ministries, as well as three others, but were given four posts, the ministries of health, justice, industry, and commerce. Shortly afterwards, despite the disapproval of the anarchist ministers, the capital was moved from

Madrid to Valencia. It was a revolutionary body which represented anarchists as much as socialists and republicans. Halfway through February , a congress took place in Caspe with the purpose of creating the Regional Federation of Collectives of Aragon. At a plenary session of the CNT in March , the national committee asked for a motion of censure to suppress the Aragonese Regional Council. The Aragonese regional committee threatened to resign, which thwarted the censure effort. Though there had always been disagreements, that spring also saw a great escalation in confrontations between the CNT-FAI and the Communists. Cazorla reacted by closing the offices of Solidaridad Obrera. CNT militias disarmed more than members of the security forces at their barricades, allowing only CNT vehicles to pass through. After unsuccessful appeals from the CNT leadership to end the fighting, the government began transferring Assault Guard from the front to Barcelona, and even destroyers from Valencia. On 5 May, the Friends of Durruti issued a pamphlet calling for "disarming of the paramilitary police The next day, the government agreed to a proposal by the leadership of the CNT-FAI, that called for the removal of the Assault Guards, and no reprisals against libertarians that had participated in the conflict, in exchange for the dismantling of barricades, and end of the general strike. However, neither the PSUC or the Assault Guards gave up their positions, and according to historian Antony Beevor "carried out violent reprisals against libertarians. The offices of the CNT were destroyed, and all the equipment belonging to its collectives was redistributed to landowners. At this point, many in the CNT leadership were critical of participation in the government, seeing it as dominated by the Communists. The Council attempted to negotiate a peace with Franco, though he granted virtually none of their demands. By February , the sending of aid parcels to anarchists in Germany was a large-scale operation. Rocker thought young Germans were all either totally cynical or inclined to fascism and awaited a new generation to grow up before anarchism could bloom once again in the country. Rocker wrote for its organ, Die Freie Gesellschaft, which survived until In , Rocker published another well-known work. On 10 September , Rocker died in the Mohegan Colony. It was formed in by members of the dissolved Anarchist Federation of Britain. Unlike the AFB, which was influenced by anarcho-syndicalist ideas but ultimately not syndicalist itself, the SWF decided to pursue a more definitely syndicalist , worker-centred strategy from the outset. At the seventh congress in Toulouse in a much smaller IWA was relaunched, again without the CNT, which would not be strong enough to reclaim membership until as an exiled and underground organization. A message of support was received from Uruguay. But the situation remained difficult for the International, as it struggled to deal with the rise of state-sanctioned economic trade unionism in the West, heavy secret service intervention as Cold War anti-communism reached its height and the banning of all strikes and free trade unions in the Soviet Union bloc of countries. For most of the next two decades, the international struggled to prebuild itself. The Direct Action Movement was formed in , when the one remaining SWF branch, along with other smaller anarchist groups, decided to form a new organisation of anarcho-syndicalists in Britain. Presently, the Solidarity Federation publishes the quarterly magazine Direct Action presently on hiatus and the newspaper Catalyst In a split over representative unionism, professional unionism and state-funded schemes saw the CNT divided into two sections, the CNT as it is today and the Confederacion General del Trabajo. An explosion killed three people in a Barcelona night club. The authorities alleged that striking workers "blew themselves up", and arrested surviving strikers, implicating them in the crime. CNT members declared that the prosecution sought to criminalize their organization: Contemporary times Edit After its legalization, the CNT began efforts to recover the expropriations of Since then the CNT has been claiming the return of these properties from the State. This body is in charge of the repatriation of the accumulated union wealth. The six were formally indicted on 7 December and after a lengthy trial procedure Trivunac, along with other 5 anarchists, were freed on 17 February As part of the anti-austerity movement in Europe, various IWA sections have been highly active in the " period, with the CNT taking a leading role in agitating for the general strikes which have occurred in Spain, the USI in Milan taking on anti-austerity campaigns in the health service and the ZSP organizing tenants against abuses in rented accommodation. CGT membership was estimated at around , for Theory and politics Edit Anarcho-syndicalists believe that direct action "action carried out by workers, as opposed to indirect action, such as electing a representative to a government position" would allow workers to liberate themselves. Anarcho-syndicalists seek to abolish the wage system and private

ownership of the means of production, which they believe lead to class divisions. This is compatible with other branches of anarchism, and anarcho-syndicalists often subscribe to anarchist communist or collectivist anarchist economic systems. Its advocates propose labour organization as a means to create the foundations of a trade union centered anarchist society within the current system and bring about social revolution.

Syndicalism was a radical current in the labor movement, mainly in the early 20th century. According to the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm, it predominated the revolutionary left in the decade preceding World War I, as Marxism was mostly reformist at that time.

Posted in Philosophy of Liberty 13 Comments Last week I discussed a recent interview by Noam Chomsky, where I pointed out some of his confusing views on libertarianism and anarchy. This view seems paradoxical to me, as if property is not privately held, then surely the only other alternative is some sort of central governing authority. From a article in the Libertarian Forum: Of the three major proposals for running an advanced industrial society – socialism, syndicalism, and free-market capitalism – syndicalism is the most blatantly unworkable and most rapidly disastrous. For in such a society, there must be some rational mechanism for allocating resources efficiently, for seeing to it that the proper amounts of labor, land, and capital equipment are employed in those areas and in those ways most efficient for satisfying the wants and desires of the mass of consumers. Free-market capitalism not only provides the most smoothly efficient way; it is also the only method that relies solely on voluntary inducements. This gets to the heart of the economic problem with anarcho-syndicalism. Without private property rights a free market is not able to properly function. Without a market, the only other answer is a central authority. Syndicalism, on the other hand – i. Both the free method of market allocation and the coercive method of central dictation are eliminated. And what is to take their place? In effect, nothing but chaos. Instead of a coordinating mechanism there is now only the chaotic will of groups of brawling monopoloid syndics, each demanding parity and control regardless of economic law. Does anyone think for one moment that the horse-and-buggy workers would have permitted higher wages in the budding automobile industry? Or have permitted the dismissal of workers? All one need do is to observe the arrogant behavior of unions with monopoly power to know the answer. But the problem lies deeper than bad will on the part of union syndics. Only a system of market pricing and wage rates, guided by profit-and-loss considerations for market firms, can provide a mechanism for such decisions. This word is usually used by the detractors of anarcho-capitalism to describe the breakdown of civilized society that would surely occur without a central authority at least providing for defense and legal systems check out my series on anarcho-capitalism for a refutation of this. Rothbard then relays an interesting interview that Bill Buckley had with Karl Hess, an anarcho-syndicalist. Karl, trapped in an anarcho-syndicalist framework, could only lamely reply that the workers would come to some sort of agreement. The proper and swift answer would have been that the stockholder-owners would decide, just as they are doing now. Anarcho-capitalism is an easily explainable system, precisely because its configuration would be very similar in most ways to the society that we have now. Rothbard then addresses Chomsky himself, who was touting these views long before they confounded my feeble brain: Take for example one of our most distinguished socialist-anarchists, Professor Noam Chomsky. As usual, Rothbard wraps things up with his usual dry wit: It is indeed fortunate for liberty that the left-anarchists have about as much chance of victory as some of our conservatives have to restore the Bourbon dynasty. For if they did, we would soon find that the embrace of left-anarchy is the embrace of death.