

WEST MICHIGAN ANARCHIST FEDERATION



**ROT
ALL
RULERS**

REJECTING POWERLESSNESS

An Introduction to Class Struggle and Anti-State Politics



WEST MICHIGAN ANARCHIST FEDERATION

The text within is a slightly edited version of *Libcom.org: An Introduction*. The text has been edited by the *West Michigan Anarchist Federation* in order to better reflect our ideology. The original version can be found at <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/libcom-org-libcom-introductory-guide>

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munications technology and workers' councils with mandated and recallable delegates.

And as we can organize our struggles, we can also eventually organize society ourselves, as the working class has done before at times. For instance, during the 1956 Hungarian uprising, workers' councils were set up to organize the running of society as workers demanded a socialism based on working class democracy. And more recently, since the uprising in 1994, the Chiapas region of Mexico has been run independently from the state through direct democracy with no leaders and where public servants' terms are limited to two weeks.

Studies show that money is not an effective motivator for good performance at complex tasks. People having the freedom

and control to do what they want how they want, and having a constructive, socially useful reason for doing so is the best motivator.

Things like the free software movement, too, demonstrate how non-hierarchical, collective organization for a socially useful goal can be superior to hierarchical organization for profit and that people don't need wages to be motivated to produce.

And without the profit motive, any technological advancement which makes a work process more efficient, instead of just laying workers off and making those remaining work harder (like happens at present), we can all just work a little less and have more free time.

LIBERTY
EQUALITY
SOLIDARITY

And in fact can do so better than hierarchically organized workplaces.

Without a state

In our introduction to the state we define government as "an organization controlled and run by a small minority of people... [with] the ability within a given area to make political and legal decisions — and to enforce them, with violence if necessary."

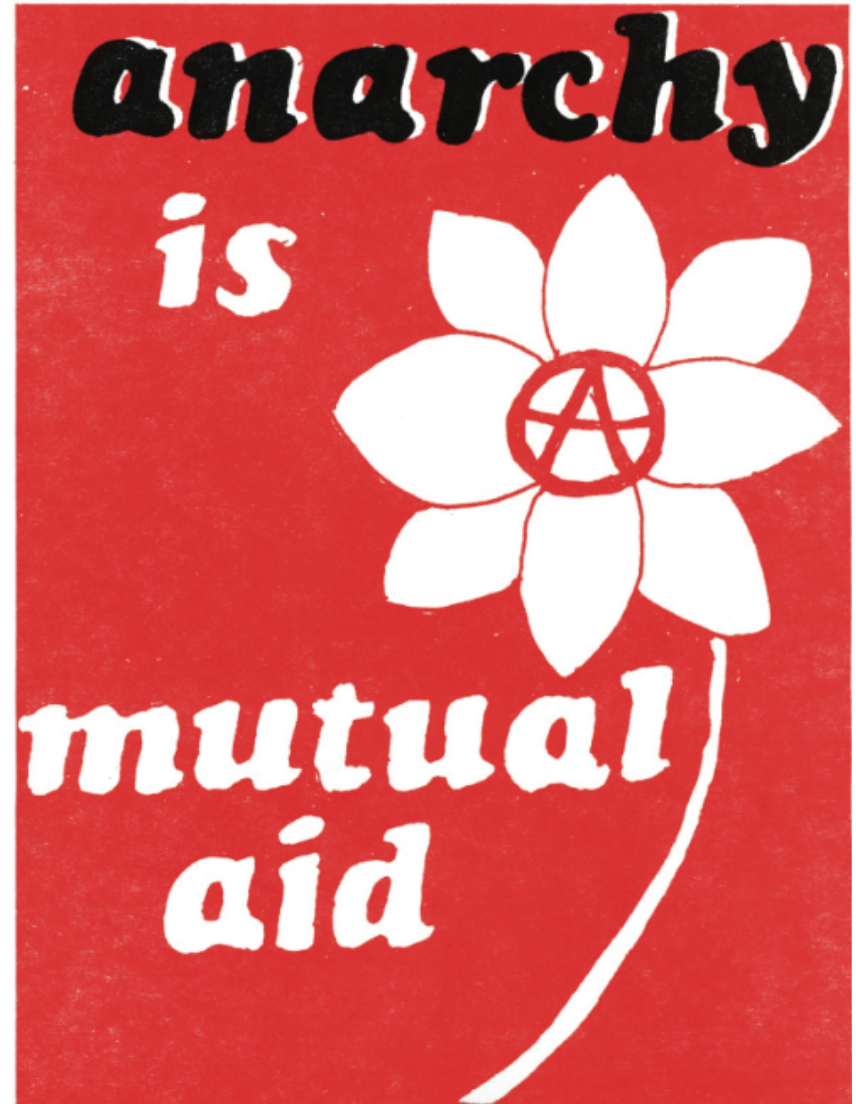
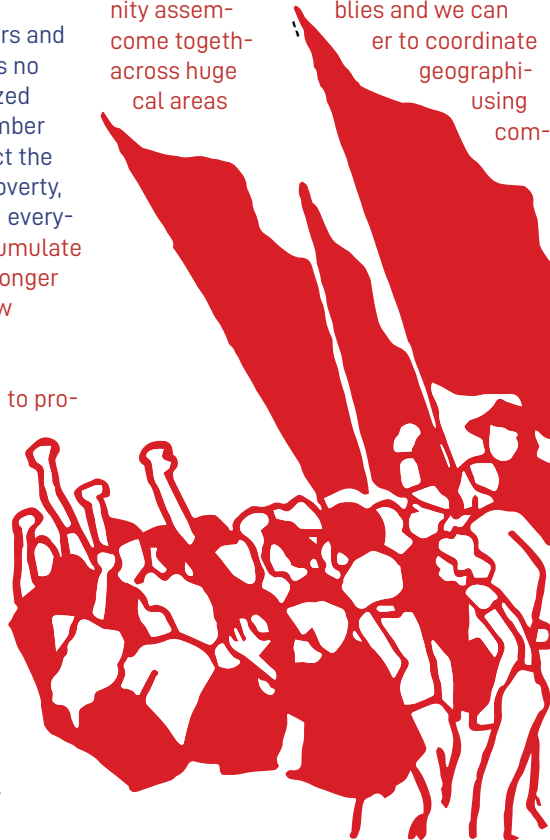
With no division between employers and workers, and rich and poor, there is no longer a need for a body of organized violence controlled by a small number of people, like the police, to protect the property of the rich and enforce poverty, wage labor and even starvation on everyone else. And with no need to accumulate capital or make profit there is no longer the need for armies to capture new markets and new resources.

Of course there will still be a need to protect the population from anti-social or violent individuals. But this can be done in a localized and democratic way, by a mandated, rotating and recallable body, rather than by an unaccountable police force whose brutality and even murders almost always go unpunished.

To make collective decisions, instead of "representative democracy" which

governs most countries at present we propose direct democracy. True democracy is more than the right to elect a handful of (often rich) individuals to make political decisions for us for a few years, while other decisions are made unaccountably in corporate boardrooms led by the "tyranny of the market".

We can control our struggles ourselves, from our groups of workmates up through workplace and community assemblies and we can come together to coordinate across huge geographical areas using com-

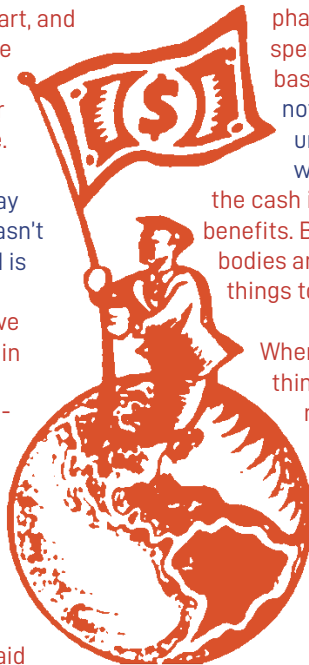


The Problem

We wake up every day to go to work, taking orders from a manager. We sit at work counting down the minutes until we go home, counting down the days until the weekend, counting down the weeks until our next holiday, wishing our lives away. Or worse, we can't find a job, so we have to scrape by on benefits. We worry about paying the bills and making rent and we always seem to have the same bank balance at the end of every month. We wonder if we'll be able to put anything by to one day start a family, and think maybe next year. We get angry about the latest war the government's decided to start, and they're ignoring us again. We watch the latest news on climate change and wonder if our children have a future.

The problem is that every day we recreate a world that wasn't built to serve our needs and is not under our control.

We are not human beings, we are human resources, cogs in a machine that knows only one purpose: profit. The endless pursuit of profit keeps us stuck in boring jobs, or looking for them when we're out of work. It keeps us worrying about the rent or mortgage payments every month when our homes were long since built and paid



for. It keeps the planet on course for an environmental disaster as climate change accelerates and world leaders pontificate.

In this world, everything has its price.

Every day, more and more things enter the market. A century ago it was automobiles, today even DNA and the Earth's atmosphere have a price. For those things which we enjoy most in life — friendship, love, play — the idea of giving them a price is absurd or even obscene. The idea strikes us as absurd because the market does not work by the same principles we do.

'Market forces' leave hundreds of millions starving in a world with surplus food. Millions die of preventable diseases while pharmaceutical companies spend more on marketing than basic research. **The market does not recognise human needs unless they are backed up with cash.** The only way to get

the cash is to work for a boss or claim benefits. By working for a wage, our own bodies and minds enter the market as things to be bought and sold.

When we work, we create more things which can be sold on the market. **But we don't get paid the full value of what we create,** otherwise there would be nothing left over as profit for the bosses. If the company can't make big enough profits, it will shut down, we will be made redundant and the money

To Each According To Need...

There is no shortage in the world of politicians or political groups claiming to have ready-made blueprints for creating a fairer society. However, this is not something which can be decreed into being by political parties or individual politicians but **must be created, through mass participation and experimentation, by workers ourselves.**

Without bosses

Instead of ownership or control of the means of production — land, factories, offices and so on — being in the hands of private individuals or the state, a communist society is based on the **common ownership and control of those means.** And instead of production

for exchange and profit, communism means production to meet human needs, including the need for a safe environment.

Already today, it is us workers who produce everything and run all the services necessary for life. We lay the roads, build the homes, drive the trains, care for the sick, raise the children, make the food, design the products, make the clothes and teach the next generation.

And every worker knows that often the bosses hinder us more than they help.

Examples abound demonstrating that workers can effectively

tively run workplaces them-

Class Struggle

When we are at work, our time and activity is not our own. We have to obey the alarm clock, the time card, the managers, the deadlines and the targets.

Work takes up the majority of our lives. We may see our managers more than we see our friends and partners. Even if we enjoy parts of our job we experience it as something alien to us, over which we have very little control. This is true whether we're talking about the nuts and bolts of the actual work itself or the amount of hours, breaks, time off etc. Work being forced on us like this compels us to resist.

Employers and bosses want to get the maximum amount of work from us, from the longest hours, for the least pay. We, on the other hand, want to be able to enjoy our lives: we don't want to be over-worked, and we want shorter hours and more pay.

This antagonism is central to capitalism. Between these two sides is a push and pull: employers cut pay, increase hours, speed up the pace of work. But we attempt to resist: either covertly and individually by taking it easy, grabbing moments to take a break and chat to colleagues, calling in sick, leaving early. Or we can resist overtly and collectively with strikes, slow-downs, occupationsetc.

This is class struggle. The conflict between those of us who have to work

for a wage and our employers and governments, who are often referred to as the capitalist class, or 'bourgeoisie' in Marxist jargon.

By resisting the imposition of work, we say that our lives are more important than our boss's profits. This attacks the very nature of capitalism, where profit is the most important reason for doing anything, and points to the possibility of a world without classes and privately-owned means of production. We are the working class resisting our own existence. We are the working class struggling against work and class.



will be invested elsewhere. The bosses' interests are not the same as ours. The problem with the market is not that prices are too high or supply too short. The problem is not too much regulation or too little. The problem is that everything has a price. In the world of the market human needs only feature if those humans happen to be rich enough to satisfy them. The world's governments all work to uphold this order, sometimes with the carrots of democracy and welfare, sometimes with the sticks of dictatorship and warfare. This is not our world.

Every day, ordinary people are fighting back. Workers organise, strike, occupy and revolt, standing up for human needs in an inhuman world. This site is for them. You. Us. Those of us with nothing to sell but our labour power and nothing to lose but our chains. Those of us whose lives this deadening world sucks dry like a vampire. When we stand up for our needs, we foreshadow a different world, a world based on the principle 'from each according



to ability, to each according to needs.' A world of liberty and community — libertarian communism.

The State

The primary function of the capitalist society is to maintain the capitalist system and aid the accumulation of capital.

As such, the state uses repressive laws and violence against the working class when we try to further our interests against capital. For example, bringing in anti-strike laws, or sending in police or soldiers to break up strikes and demonstrations.

The "ideal" type of state under capitalism at the present time is liberal democratic, however in order to continue capital accumulation at times different political systems are used by capital to do this. State capitalism in the USSR, and fascism in Italy and Germany are two such models, which were necessary for the authorities at the time in order to co-opt and crush powerful working-class movements. Movements which threatened the very continuation of capitalism.

When the excesses of bosses cause workers to fight back, alongside repression the state occasionally intervenes to make sure business as usual resumes without

disruption. For this reason national and international laws protecting workers' rights and the environment exist.

Generally the strength and enforcement of these laws ebbs and flows in relation to the balance of power between employers and employees in any given time and place.

For example, in France where workers are more well-organised and militant, there is a maximum working week of 35 hours. In the UK, where workers are less militant the maximum is 48 hours, and in the US where workers are even less likely to strike there is no maximum at all.

In a capitalist society, the success or failure of a state depends on the success of capitalism within it. Therefore promoting profit and growth of the economy is the key task of any state in capitalist society.

The State and the Environment

The state will not willingly enforce strong environmental protection laws against companies because it does not want to cut into their profits (and its own tax revenue).

In addition, it is often feared that strong environmental laws will make countries 'unattractive for investment'. For instance, in 1992, big business in Holland were able to block a proposed tax on carbon pollution by threatening to relocate to other countries.

As such, the environment cannot be saved by means of the state, or by electing a 'Green Party'. Green parties, like all opposition parties, always talk radical in opposition but act like the rest in power. In Germany in 2001, the Green Party were part of the government and condemned protests against the transport of nuclear waste and were jointly responsible for the mobilisation 17,000 police against protesting residents.

As capitalism is an inherently destructive system, ultimately the only real way to stop the environmental crisis is to create a new society based on human need rather than profit.

However, this does not mean nothing can be done in the meantime. The environmental crisis was generated by capitalism and so must be dealt with by challenging it. And as the state is part of this system, only mass grass-roots action can be an effective method to do so.



Rejecting 'Powerlessness'

Direct action is a rejection of the idea that we are powerless to change our conditions.

Improvements to our lives are not handed down from above. They must be (and have always been) fought for.

We are always told about how people fought for the vote. Rarely, however, is it mentioned how workers fought for the welfare state, for decent housing, health care, wages, decent working hours, safe working conditions and pensions.

But direct action is more than just an effective means for defending or improving conditions. It is also, as anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker said, the "school of socialism", preparing us for the free society many of us

strive to create.

Direct action involves collective effort, everyone working for each other and helping each other for a common end.

By using direct action, even when we make mistakes, we learn from experience that we don't need to leave things to 'experts' or professional politicians.

This course offers us nothing but betrayal and broken promises as well as that long-felt sense of powerlessness.

Direct action teaches us to control our own struggles. To build a culture of resistance that links with other workers in their struggles.

And as our confidence grows in the strength of our solidarity, so too does our confidence in our ability to change the world. And as this grows, the focus moves from controlling our own struggles to controlling our entire lives.

