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Debunking Nonsense in the Anarchist Movement

2010

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they don't support a proposal, but don't see it as a crisis if is is passed by the group.

Correcting misconceptions and misinformation promoted by anarchists

A political tendency such as anarchism is fairly wide open to newcomers and people who alter the philosophy in new ways. One of the strengths of anarchism are the many interpretations of the many facets of its politics, theory and practice. However, there are more than a few misconceptions and false ideas passed around by anarchists. Some of them repeat this "nonsense" and misinformation out of ignorance, while other promote it to further their own selfish sectarian aims. As Infoshop is a site for all anarchists and adheres to an ethic of "big tent" anarchism, we provide this page to debunk this misinformation in our movement.

Lifestyle anarchism

Lifestyle anarchism is a phrase used sometimes by anarchists to criticize apolitical hangers-on in the movement. That is, people who dress the look or live in certain ways, but who don't really act on the basic tenets of anarchism. Normally, this common use of this phrase is something that anarchists casually use, but in recent years a small faction of anarchists has employed this phrase for sectarian ends. In their view, any anarchist who isn't a "class struggle" anarchist is a lifestylist. By their definition, over 90% of anarchists are not anarchists! You can see why this is a silly use of the phrase and why it causes needless divisions between anarchists. The proponents of using this phrase to condemn most anarchists point to a book by Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*, which they claim is an articulate criticism of the so-called "lifestyle anarchists." A quick reading of the book reveals, not a cogent description of a movement within anarchism, rather a bitter rant against all of his critics by Bookchin.

Individualism

There are some anarchists who like to call other anarchists "individualists" as a way to marginalize and divide them from what they see as "true" anarchism. In fact, most anarchists do not identify as individualists and given the projects that most anarchists organize, the label is even more absurd. There is a long tradition of anarcho-individualism, but the adherents of this tendency comprise a small minority of anarchists. It should be noted that liberals, leftists, and others have routinely dismissed all anarchists as "bourgeois individualists".

Conflation of Primitivism with Post-Left Anarchism

There are some anarchists, including the author of this page[1] who believe that primitivism and post-left anarchism are the same thing or have something in common. While there are some writers such as John Zerzan who could be described as being in both tendencies, primitivism and post-leftism are two separate things (with the latter being more of a critique than a movement). The anarchists who conflate these two things employ a logical fallacy called "guilt by association." They point at individual writers such as Zerzan who write about both subjects and insinuate that both are related. These irresponsible anarchist sectarians are more interested in demonizing the people and ideas involved with the two tendencies, instead of either debating them or accepting them as parts of anarchism.

"The Tyranny of Structurelessness"

One of the more ignorant things promoted by anarchists as anarchists is an essay titled "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" which was written

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[1] anarchism.ws

by feminist activist Jo Freeman in the early 1970s. The anarchists that promote this essay often do so out of frustration with small groups, which are often controlled by disorganization and the unfamiliarity of anarchists with anarchist group process. The problem with this essay is that Freeman was an authoritarian leftist who wrote the essay to attack the anarchistic consciousness-raising groups being organized by feminist women at that time. Freeman was in favor of building mass parties in the Leninist mode and was alarmed at the anarchist ideas taking hold among radical women. An anarchist named Cathy Levine wrote a response, "The Tyranny of Tyranny," which defended small anarchist groups. The irony, of course, is that contemporary anarchists are using an anti-anarchist essay to criticize problems in their groups and organizations! It is far better to actually talk about group process problems than to wave a decontextulaized essay over people's heads.

Attacks on consensus decision-making

One of the more disturbing examples of nonsense in the anarchist movement is a recent effort by some anarchists to demonize consensus decision-making, which is an inherently anarchist process used by thousands and thousands of groups around the world. Real democracy is a messy process, often requiring meetings that drag on for hours. Consensus is a form of participatory democracy which empowers individuals to be involved in the decision-making process of groups. The anarchist critics of consensus advocate forms of process that are basically authoritarian and anti-democratic (such as majority vote) and turn around and call consensus undemocratic! These critics often repeat verbatim anti-consensus rhetoric that liberals and leftists often spout to keep coalition groups from using consensus.

An example of the misinformation promoted by these people is that consensus demands "unamity" to work. In other words, every person at the meeting has to agree with a proposal. In actual consensus process, there are many opportunities for participants to talk over the merits of a proposal. Proposals are voted down in consensus and they can be tabled for a future meeting. Actual votes allow for people to "stand aside" if