

Info Shop

# DIY

# ANARCHISM

This pamphlet is by no means the definitive and last word on organising. Look upon it as a 'living' text, something we hope your experience will enrich and further contribute to. The revolutionary road is an arduous road. Organisation can make it less so, and hasten the day of a new dawning for humanity.



"The emancipation of the working class is the work of the working class itself"



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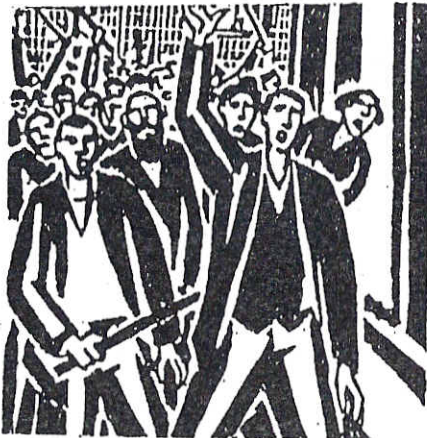
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## CONCLUSION

The few ideas that have been presented in this brief pamphlet are nothing more than the barest outline of possible approaches to operating in a hostile political climate. There is no substitute for innovation, originality and imagination, backed up by consistent effort. From small beginnings we can build a strong revolutionary anarchist movement in Britain.



## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation exists to extend and deepen revolutionary ideas, values and ways of acting within the working class and oppressed and exploited sections of society. We think we have something useful to contribute to the revolutionary movement and as a result aim to be as effective as possible. Experience has shown that effective anarchism is organised anarchism. It is to improve our effectiveness that this simple, brief pamphlet is published. To be an anarchist is not enough, we have to act as anarchists to spread our message.

At the moment the ACF is small. We have a large number of single members who are spread over the country with little contact with each other or other anarchists. The idea behind this pamphlet is to suggest some ways we can simply and effectively as possible break out of the isolation which surrounds many of us. Some people who read the following pages will be new ACF members who have little, if any, contact with other anarchists in their communities. Experience tells us that lone anarchists often become disillusioned anarchists after a short while. There is a lot that can be done to break free of our political isolation. Even if our efforts bring no immediate results (for we live

in a hostile environment) given commitment, every anarchist can play an active part in the long term process of preparing for an anarchist communist revolution.

The following few pages contain no magical solutions but are based upon years of practical experience which should be shared. Hopefully, the information they contain will be of some value.

### Making an Impact in the Community

A single determined and dedicated activist can have a significant impact. Suddenly, towns that from a revolutionary viewpoint seem politically dead are covered all over with anarchist propaganda. Stickers are found everywhere, empty shop windows are covered with our posters, people appear in town centres selling and distributing literature, and so on.

By yourself, or with a little help from your friends or comrades, you can with a bit of effort get anarchist ideas noticed. And, with a bit of luck, someone out there will be interested, get in touch and eventually, help you.

Obviously, the first thing to do is get hold of propaganda. You can produce this yourself or it can be obtained from the ACF. Posters,

of which stickers are a mini form, are a good way of reaching a lot of people and spreading the message. Make sure that they include a contact address, ACF material will have the Secretary contact address which is useful. You could get a local Post Office box number but these cost about £40 a year and are not really worth while unless you are expecting a lot of interest.(1)

A general point about security, don't give out your personal address or telephone number to any organisation or person unless you are pretty sure about them. Apart from the local police, who monitor "extremist" activity, you might come to the attention of fascists or almost as bad, recruiters for the Socialist Workers Party!

Leafleting sometimes brings results and has the advantage that you can talk to people directly if they are interested in the contents of the leaflet. Leafleting in public can be a bit daunting. So, initially, give yourself a fixed time period for it, say half an hour. Putting leaflets through letter boxes is time consuming and experience tells us that generally it is not very profitable.

When writing a leaflet, it is usually sensible to stick to one main subject eg., local factory closures, racism etc. You should try, however, to draw revolutionary conclusions, placing the subject within the wider context of capitalist exploitation, the way forward etc.

A more ambitious project would be to write a local

newsletter covering current affairs and local issues. Newsletters take a while to research, write, print and distribute but they can be quite influential, especially if they deal with local council cock-ups, corruption, cuts etc. Such a publication could consist of just two sides of an A4 sheet. Keep the articles short, snappy and to the point. Remember to add a contact address and perhaps ask for contributions for future issues.

One free way of reaching a large audience is to write a letter to your local newspaper from an anarchist communist viewpoint. Local newspapers are often desperate for material and so the chances of your letter being published are quite high. One comrade in an average sized town succeeded in having a half page article devoted to anarchism in the local rag after sending in a letter. Anarchy can be news! One problem with sending in letters to newspapers is that you are usually expected to give an address which you might not be too keen on.

Those with the talent and facilities might consider music as a way of getting ideas across. One ACF member persuaded a number of bands to donate tracks for an ACF benefit tape. Politically motivated songs do inspire people, so if you can persuade a local band to do a benefit gig, you could create a real spectacle. Also, music can make money, always in short supply in the ACF.

quite well, especially if you use an offset printer, rather than a photocopier. Unscreened photos and coloured screened ones do not copy well but the former can be screened, after a fashion, by using Letratone LT21 or screens supplied with some photocopying machines.

Remember, go for quality. A naff illustration will spoil your work. Avoid acres of text, nobody will read it. For the best quality results try to get your material printed on an offset litho machine. For long runs, eg over 500 copies, this method is usually cheaper than a photocopier, though you'll probably have to go to a commercial printer.

Posters can be printed on photocopiers, generally up to a maximum of A3 size. Screenprinting is another good method of producing posters, though you need to learn how to do it and acquire the basic equipment.

The above information is very basic. If you want more, read the clear and simple "The Alternative Printing Guide" which you should be able to get hold of through your local library. It was published by Penguin in 1983 and written by Chris Treweek and Jonathan Zeitlyn - very useful.

(1) Beware, the Post Office can reveal a box holder's name and address to any enquirer.



As far as printing methods go, for individuals and small groups, a duplicator or photocopier is the most appropriate. Duplicators are fast becoming extinct and you can buy them very cheaply, though ink, stencils and paper are becoming in short supply. Duplicated leaflets are the cheapest to make but the process can be messy and you are restricted in your illustrations virtually to line drawings.

Photocopying can produce outstanding results and is free if you can get it done at work. It can, however, prove expensive, so shop around for the best price. Like all printing, long runs work out cheaper, per copy, than short ones.

The text, if typed, should be laid out in columns. It is easier on the eye to read narrower rather than wide columns. Look how narrow newspaper columns are. I suggest, that once you have decided on the column width, you draw on your blank sheet a column grid (in light blue pencil which will not photocopy). See below.

Whether you use narrow or wide columns, make sure that you leave a 10mm gap around the edges and between columns. This allows for a degree of error when the paste-up is printed. The pre-typed columns can be pasted onto the marked sheets, using the blue pencil line guides for positioning. If you use Prit Stick, be very careful how you lay down the columns, illustrations etc., as they are almost impossible to remove if stuck down wrongly. Back-up photocopies of text etc., are useful in the case of cock-ups.

Finally, photocopy the paste-up. This will probably show "shadow lines" on the column edges which can be covered up with Tipp-Ex. Remember, in the preparation/paste-up stage, use a good photocopier for sharp reproduction.

Your work will probably look better with the use of illustrations. Near photo quality pictures can be printed by using pictures from magazines. These photos are already broken up into tiny dots which print

## A LOCAL ACF GROUP

A long term aim of the ACF is to set up an organisation of groups in every town. In line with this goal we must draw people into the ACF and, where possible set up active and functioning groups in the localities and the workplaces.

The minimum number for an ACF group is three members. Someone should volunteer/be elected as secretary and another member should take prime responsibility for looking after any money that is collected through membership dues, fundraising etc.

You should think about what the purpose of a group would be. Factors that you might want to take into account include spreading effective political propaganda, involvement in local and national issues and campaigns, antifascism, developing your political awareness and understanding, fundraising, paper sales and involvement with the ACF as part of a national organisation.

In our experience it is best that the meetings are run on a fairly formal basis. A free-for-all discussion usually means that the quietest or least assertive members do not have a voice. So, elect a different chairperson (or ask for a volunteer) for each meeting, as this too will tend to inhibit the same dominant person from taking over. The chairperson should ensure that everyone gets a proper turn to air their views in the fairest order.

An agenda sheet is passed around at the beginning of the meeting to allow everyone to

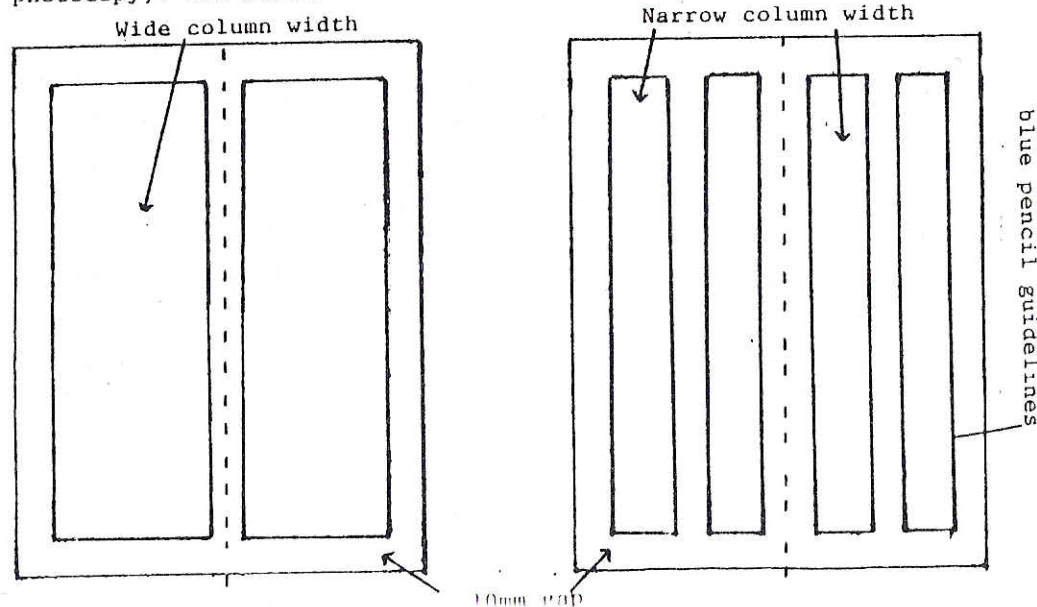
add items for discussion. It is sensible to keep a minutes book to record decisions and the previous week's minutes should be read out at the start of every meeting to allow for continuity and recall of decisions made.

A programme of activities, topics for discussion etc., should be planned to prevent 'drift' and also to maintain a sense of direction. Members should pay regular dues, if they can afford them. Without money there is a limit to what a group can do. So, fundraising including the unglamorous jumble sales and bootsales etc., are an important part of every group's activities. Remember to send regular amounts of money to the national treasurer to help pay for Organise! and other shared propaganda material.

One way of keeping down costs is to "borrow" stationary, photocopying, stamps, telephone calls etc., from richer organisations such as employers.

The ACF is a federation of members and groups which, through a system of conferences, delegate meetings, internal bulletins etc., acts in a co-ordinated manner throughout the land. This unity of purpose and action can only be achieved through the active participation of groups. So, attending national meetings etc., should be given a high priority.

NB. Often it may not be possible to form an ACF group, even though you are in contact with other anarchists. A second





best approach under these circumstances is to help form more broadly based groups. At least you can debate ideas and carry out joint activities, though without a generally agreed core of ideas, the process can be uneven, contradictory and chaotic.

## ORGANISING IN THE WORKPLACE

Despite what some lefties say about the importance of industrial struggles, these groups almost without exception have very little workplace presence. The reason for this is simple, it is not easy to operate in an overwhelmingly hostile environment. Your chances of success are affected by a whole range of factors. Small workplaces offer less opportunities than large ones. Shops and catering are extremely difficult. Established firms with traditions of militancy offer more opportunities usually, than newly established ones. White collar workers have different priorities than manual workers, and so on.

Despite the difficulties, workplace organisation can deliver some spectacular opportunities including sabotage, occupations, strikes, go-slows and expropriations! However, a sobering feature of organising at work is that management intimidation can lead to the loss of livelihood. So, unless you couldn't give a toss, some degree of caution is advisable.

Organising at work does have the advantage over other areas of activity insofar as issues tend to be clearer. In all sectors, private and public, there is a whole range of issues which continually arise and are significant. In times of recession, when the employers are under pressure to hold on to markets and unemployment is high, issues such as redundancy, increasing output (i.e., the rate of exploitation), wage cuts, tougher work conditions, job evaluation etc., come to the fore. In periods of economic upturn, short, sharp conflicts often arise when workers take advantage of their strengthening positions to win back what has been lost in the previous period. Generally, then, there is usually no shortage of issues to take up.

Comrades should be aware of an often unseen difficulty arising out of work-place organisation. There is often a tendency to see such struggles as separate and isolated from what is going on in the outside world. There is the ever-present danger of not seeing the wider context of each particular struggle. The tendency towards "economism", i.e., putting bread and butter issues outside of and before wider economic and political issues, tends towards a sharp narrowing of vision.

It is useful to have a bookstall with ACF and other anarchist literature on sale after the meeting. It is also a good idea to pass around a note pad asking for the names and addresses of people who are interested in finding out more about the ACF.

If all of the above seems too daunting, then a public meeting could be based around a video. The ACAB video on the Poll Tax Riot comes to mind, or you could copy a suitable programme from the television. A discussion afterwards, chaired to bring out the main points is necessary.

## INTO PRINT

What follows are a few basic ideas about printed propaganda which may be of use. A first principle is to go for the best quality production you can afford. Badly reproduced scrawl knocked out on a clapped out old photocopier will be unreadable and unread. Bearing in mind the wealth and power of the capitalist mass media, our propaganda has at least to be readable.



A photocopied hand written leaflet is O.K. for a jumble sale announcement or rally if it is clearly written in big letters but to get some sort of argument across something better is needed. A typewritten (especially electric or electronic) text, headed with Letraset bold type face can look very good and can be used for leaflets, pamphlets, broadsheets etc.. Typeset work is even better as the columns can be "justified" which means that the right hand edge of the column forms a straight line like the left. This effect can also be achieved on a word processor but if you haven't got any of these, you will usually have to pay for the work to be done by professionals.



## PUBLIC MEETINGS

If you are feeling ambitious, then a public meeting can be an effective way of making an impression. The benefits of a public meeting is that you can possibly attract a large audience and have a good discussion. The downside is that nobody might turn up or sections of the audience could be hostile if they do.

To overcome any likely difficulties, a public meeting should be well planned and properly organised. Firstly, choose a topic that will have appeal, will be interesting and will allow us to get an anarchist communist message over.

The meeting will have to be well advertised. This might mean producing and fly-posting an interesting and fully detailed poster, distributing leaflets and so on. It may make sense to target a particular audience e.g. young people, students, etc., depending on your interests and abilities. The meeting should be held in a room which is as central as you can possibly afford. There is no point holding a meeting miles away from the intended audience. They won't turn up.

The speech itself should be well thought out. It may be wise to write it out in full, leaving a line between sentences, emphasising key points, numbering paragraphs, using different coloured pens and so on. You should rehearse the speech a few times - is it too short, too long, is it being spoken too quickly? If you are confident enough after a few rehearsals, use only notes as mental guides. A speech read from a detailed text can be boring, on the other hand, a properly written out talk can help to calm the nerves and boost confidence.

On the point of nerves, if you are well prepared a degree of nervousness can be a good thing - it gets the adrenalin flowing and helps to produce a fiery speech. It is best not to have an alcoholic drink beforehand especially as more than one pint of beer seriously reduces effectiveness.

Keep the talk fairly short. Twenty five minutes or less is long enough, especially if you have something controversial to say which will stimulate discussion.

The meeting will require a chairperson to introduce the speaker, maintain order and control how the discussion goes. A good chairperson finds a balance between allowing debate and questions and letting some windbag or disrupter in the audience from taking over. Firm but fair chairing is vital.

The anarchist communist militant must make the wider connections. Redundancies, wage cuts etc., are part of a whole economy process, and this needs to be understood. Company, industry wide and even international solidarity can sometimes win struggles when isolated actions seem hopeless. Part of our role is to make workers aware of divisions of skill distinctions, racism, sexism and so on. We must explain that our employers are doing us no favours by paying for our work and that, in fact, exploitation is taking place.

The reactionary nature of trade unions is a difficult issue to tackle as workers (despite being continually disappointed) see them as defenders of their interests. Often, the best militants, who may also be totally reactionary in other respects, identify the unions with the class struggle. This false perception must be patiently and carefully argued against, both theoretically and with examples arising from the abundant evidence available of official union sabotage of real struggles.

Some comrades may be tempted to become union representatives/shop stewards. This may arise because of frustration with a low level of militancy, a desire to replace moderate stewards and a desire to offer some revolutionary leadership. Such temptation should be resisted. The acceptance of an official union position necessarily means being bound by union rules and regulations. The workplace representative rather than being the workers tribune actually ends up playing the role of mediator between workers and management. Collective bargaining on behalf of workers means colluding with the process of exploitation and if a shop steward does try to maintain some revolutionary credibility s/he faces isolation and, ultimately, the sack.

Revolutionaries in the workplace, like everywhere else, are in a tiny minority. Since our goal is revolution the form of anarchist organisation best suited for persuing that goal is the workplace anarchist group which will advance revolutionary ideas and forms and methods of struggle. Such groups and individuals must use industrial conflicts to tear off the mask of illusion that conceals the exploitative reality of capitalism and the inadequacy of trade union and sectional approaches.

In day to day practice, ideas can be spread through casual conversation. More serious and detailed revolutionary effort might involve meetings of like-minded comrades, the production of leaflets and, perhaps, workplace bulletins, and of course, the selling of ACF literature. Given the totalitarian nature of many workplaces, the distribution of propaganda should be done with care. Comrades who are not employed in the workplace can hand out leaflets etc., outside the premises and, if the literature is well researched, effective propaganda can be carried out.

Do not use the works photocopier to print anti-employer material, it might get you sacked. Similarly, don't hold meetings on company premises - enemies abound!





Spreading anarchist ideas among students can be relatively easy compared to some other areas of work. Some students are open to radical ideas and, within reason, all ideas compete on a more or less equal footing in the academic marketplace. A word of warning, although there is usually a sprinkling of anarchists in higher education, quite a few of them will turn out to be unreliable wallies.

One of the best starting points is the Freshers Fair which many colleges run for new students every September. This is a good opportunity to advertise your existence. A few leaflets, pamphlets, posters etc., can be spread out and should draw some attention. Try to sign up supporters straight away and try to get them to help you immediately.

If you feel confident enough, try to set up an anarchist communist association. This may just require a few friends signatures and should give you access to student union facilities like photocopying.

However, assuming that a more general anarchist grouping is more viable, go for that, bearing in mind that the membership will tend to be unreliable and floating. Nevertheless, despite having interminable debates with Stirnerites and individualists, you can gain from a sense of belonging to a wider group than just yourself.

Don't be afraid to make the most use of student union facilities. This might mean typing and other office support, cheap printing, rooms for meetings etc. Whether you are on your own or part of a larger group, you should be able to get hold of materials and facilities. Armed with these you can bring out consistent anarchist propaganda and help contribute to the distribution of libertarian ideas.

Students on teacher training courses have the advantage that there exists a large and well established libertarian approach to learning. Advocacy of the teaching methods of people like Ferner could be a subtle and legitimate way of finding openings for a wider debate on anarchist communism.

One of the downsides of being an anarchist student is that the authoritarian left will either discount you, ridicule you or attack you, depending on their level of arrogance and enthusiasm. So be prepared to defend your politics and undermine their confidence. The standard question aimed at you by the ignorant SWP'er is, "How can you be an anarchist and a communist?" You have the opportunity to either tell them to fuck off or put your views across.

The ACF can provide you with a certain amount of support. An important aspect of this involves simply feeling part of an organisation of people who share common beliefs and goals.

If members attend delegate meetings, conferences, day schools etc., this can break down the sense of isolation that effects individual comrades. These events are not all work and no play, though they do often take up quite a bit of time. They are, as well, often full of humour and there is a social side too which helps to reinforce group solidarity and identity.

The internal bulletin also helps members to involve themselves in ACF debates. The I.B. is entirely the product of the membership, so it becomes much more interesting if everyone sends in contributions. Groups and individuals who send in reports of their activities give encouragement to others.

Members are encouraged to contribute to the ACF in whatever ways they can. We are always in need of articles for **Organise!** If you have something to say, why not send in an article, though bear in mind that it should not contradict the basic ideas as laid out in the ACF Aims & Principles.

Similarly, we need writers for Active Resistance, leaflets, pamphlets etc. If you can turn out decent graphics, then you can help design covers for our publications, posters etc. Those with video/audio equipment could also help spread the ACF's propaganda into new areas.

The National Secretary of the ACF should be able to supply you with our publications, posters, stickers and leaflets etc. Contact the National Secretary if you want someone to speak at a meeting. Whilst time, distance and costs sometimes make it difficult for speakers to visit your locality, it is surprising the lengths ACF members will often go to, to support members. Members could also turn up to help you fly-post, leaflet or do a Saturday paper sale. All you have to do is ask.