

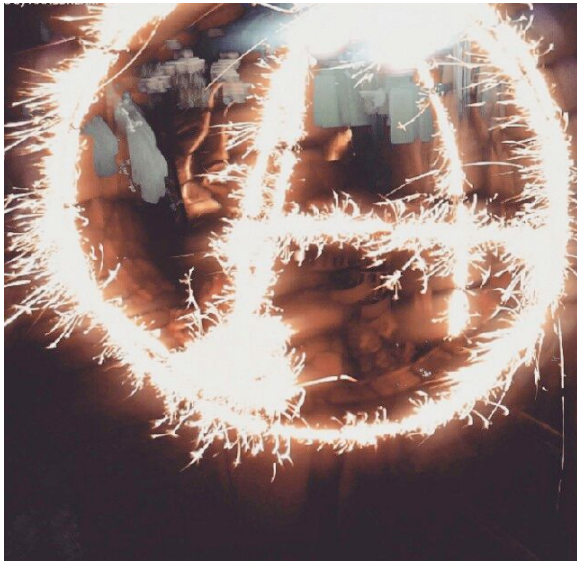
SOLIDARITY

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Newsheet of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement

AWSM

HAPPY NEW YEAR?



It's clear that 2020 was not a happy year for many, but nor was 2019, 2018, 2017, and all the years before that for many Kiwis. In fact, we would say that every year is a bad year for the working class under capitalism.

Foodbank use, unaffordable housing and homelessness have continued to climb in New Zealand, and, as we approached Christmas, it was reported that Work and Income were issuing over 4,000 emergency food grants a day. Yet, shortly before Christmas, the caring and kind Jacinda Ardern flatly rejected the widespread community call for benefits to be

substantially increased and suggested that beneficiaries should be grateful for the most recent increase - \$25 - an amount she called substantial but would be loose change to her. Also, just before Christmas, Ardern could be found tripping around various media outlets happily telling fawning radio and television presenters about how much she loved Christmas and how she loves on-line shopping for presents. We wonder how much she thought about the 50,000 families who, despite having members in employment, still live below the poverty line and struggle to put food on the table.

Hunger in the midst of plenty is the distinguishing mark of the capitalist system of production. This is one of the reasons that AWSM has always contended that capitalism needs to be abolished. It is a system that sees a very small number of people amass massive wealth while the majority of the people are deprived of a secure standard of living.

Sadly though we expect that capitalism and poverty will continue throughout 2021 no matter how hard we wish one another "Happy New Year". The page on the calendar flipping over, and saying you are glad to see the back of 2020, does not mean things will get better.

We do have the power to change the world and the ability to run it in the interests of the

human race. That is our New Year message to all the working class, but it is up to us to make it happen. So our New Year's resolution will be the same as every year. We will keep on trying to make working people aware that poverty, insecure work, poor and expensive housing, is not normal or natural, but they are a result of a system that is organised to ensure the wealth of a few and the poverty of many. We will keep on saying that we all have it in our own hands to be able to change things and to turn our backs on politicians promising the world and delivering nothing of any substance.

AWSM though is a small group of anarchist communists, and being a small group limits us in what we can do as an organisation. So if you are interested in making the world a better place, then we always want new people to get involved with our organisation and help us in our activities. So if you think you can help in any way get in touch via our email address - awsml@riseup.net

The time has never been more ripe for change. With increasing inequality and

insecurity, climate collapse and mass extinction, the present system is fast nearing its end. Let's make 2021 as the year in which we commenced to do something about putting things right.

AWSM have regular
online meetings most
weekends. If you would
like to attend give us a
shout
awsml@riseup.net

AA

WHY WE DIDN'T VOTE

As anarchists, we didn't vote in the recent election, and these were our reasons.

Electoralism ensures that everything is seen in terms of state intervention and following the decisions of the leaders, which has always proved deadly to encouraging a spirit of self-management and self-help —

the very keys to creating real change in a society.

Politics shouldn't be a specialised activity in the hands of so-called experts (i.e. politicians) but should instead lie in the hands of those directly affected by it in the process of participation, direct action and

self-management. Those that channel any “political” conclusions into electoral politics distort discussions into only what is possible within the current system.

I know I will get told that “If you don't vote, you have no right to complain about the outcome”, but I consider the opposite to be true. It is those who have voted, agreed to the rules, and agreed to be governed by the winners who can't complain. Those who don't participate have a right to complain about the outcome more than anyone else.

We get told that voting does change things, but I deny that. Voting attempts to provide the population with the illusion of change while in reality it reinforces the current system. A policy here and there may



change, the faces may change, but the system of a wealthy minority ruling a poorer majority remains. Before going any further, it is important to clarify that I am for

democracy. What I am against is a system that allows for us to tick a box every few years for candidates that are selected for us, and policies that are chosen for us, which allows whoever received the most Xs to make decisions that affect our lives in all ways.

Much of our so-called “democracy” is bogus and undemocratic, as many of the hundreds of thousands of Kiwis who don't vote understand. Even many who do vote do so simply against the other candidate. They vote for what they perceive as those who will do the least harm, but are inevitably disappointed as they get to face the same problems under their chosen leaders.

Before going to cast your vote remember that there is a real limit to what governments can do anyway — winning an election is not taking power. The real decision-making takes place in the boardrooms of corporations, not in Parliament. Political parties, even in a majority government, can only do what capitalism allows them to. MPs are little more than the committee for managing the affairs of capitalism.

Voting is a lottery, your preferred candidate may not get elected, and all the time and energy put into supporting them is wasted. Also, voting is only possible when election time comes around. Relying on electoralism means you can only address whatever topics are current in the political agendas of candidates. If we ignore this system and make things happen for ourselves you can be sure that your work will offer some kind of results, and the experience you gain, the lessons learnt, cannot be taken away from you.

By making the principled choice not to participate in the election, I am using the

opportunity to raise the question of the acceptance of the status quo, and to say that there are better, more meaningful ways to achieve a fairer, freer, more meaningful life — and raise the option of choosing to

rule ourselves, to organise with others in our workplaces and communities to fight for something you cannot vote for: a new society, a society that works for everyone, and not just an elite few

Voting? There's a better way!

**VOTE
HERE**



Reefer Madness



AWSM Note: *Here is an opinion piece by our long term contributor **Pink Panther**. It looks at the recent cannabis referendum. We do not necessarily endorse its entire perspective but offer it to initiate discussion on the subject.*

If one thing characterised the recent referendum on whether or not marijuana should be legalised in Aotearoa/New Zealand it was the amount of emotive

rhetic that dominated the arguments. It really was a case of reefer madness driven by pseudo-science, conspiracies and lies.

The referendum was framed around a proposed law that was a cumbersome attempt to please everyone. The outcome was a very narrow vote for the “No” campaigners with the final results being 50.7% No and 48.4% Yes. The result brought out predictable responses from the political parties. (Quotes below are from RNZ, November 6th, 2020.):

Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister, remarked that legislation was progressing “in line with the will of the people following the release of the final result”. In other words, she simply fobbed everyone off with a bland statement.

James Shaw, co-leader of the Green Party, responded with “Actually some of the people who voted against it actually aren't against drug law reform they're just against

what was on the table, so when you look at it that way the question then is what is a sensible way forward.” While there is some truth to this comment it’s foolish to assume that this was the driving factor behind the No vote.

Media darling Chloe Swarbrick, who won Auckland Central for the Greens on October 12th, and who is also the Greens’ drugs spokesperson put even Shaw to shame with her condescending response.

Swarbrick commented that many people were on board with drug harm reduction but “didn’t necessarily make the leap to thinking to progressing it through this quite narrow, quite niche and obviously quite complex piece of legislation.” Translation: those who voted No were stupid.

Nick Smith, the National Party’s spokesperson on drug reform, merely stated that they would not support any move to make marijuana more readily available.



The response of academia was typified by Victoria University Criminologist Fiona Hutton who was upset about the result “because the people who are the most harmed by our drug laws are those who exist on the margins, are Maori, are young people...”.

For me, the result didn’t say much about the population’s attitudes towards drugs. It was more a reflection of their attitude towards proposed drug laws that try to please everyone. It didn’t go far enough for those who support drug legalisation, but it was too much for opponents. This was something I picked up in many debates about marijuana during the course of the referendum.

I also gathered that neither side in the campaign used facts to back up their arguments. Instead, they relied upon pseudo-science, conspiracies and emotive arguments based on ignorance. Below are some of the more stupid arguments used by both sides and what the facts actually state.

Keeping marijuana illegal will protect our children by reducing their access to it. Sorry, but that is laughable. Evidence shows that most children and teenagers who use marijuana get it from family members and friends rather than tinny houses and drug dealers. Sound familiar? It should: it’s also how most young people are introduced to alcohol and cigarettes.

It funds the gangs. For the most part, marijuana has fallen out of favour with the gangs. According to the Stuff website article “The Detail: New Zealand’s rampant drug culture” (September, 20, 2019) New Zealanders spend around \$1.4 million on methamphetamine a day. This is what funds the gangs these days, not the green stuff.

Marijuana cures cancer. Conspiracy theorists have been claiming that Big Pharma has been suppressing the news that cancer can be cured by marijuana. This is hogwash. According to the article “Does cannabis cure cancer? We asked an expert.” by David Robert Grimes of Queen’s

University in Belfast (theconservation.com, May 24th, 2018) cancer is a very complex family of diseases that can't be cured by one drug. As for suppressing the so-called "research" that "proves" marijuana cures cancer? Hardly! Whoever discovers that marijuana is a scientifically proven cure for cancer will become very rich so why suppress it?

Marijuana legalisation will result in more users. The Auckland University's Alcohol and Public Health Research Unit estimates around 1.5 million working age adults here have used marijuana and about 400,000 people use it regularly. This situation is unlikely to change. Those of us who have no desire to use marijuana aren't going to start using it just because the state tells us we can.

Marijuana is a "gateway" drug to harder drugs. This is partially true: according to the research paper Using Marijuana May Not Raise the Risk of Using Harder Drugs by Andrew R. Morral, Daniel F. McCaffrey, Susan M. Paddock in 2002 marijuana use doesn't lead to harder drug use, but they did state that those who do go onto hard drugs initially used marijuana. Statistics from the U.S. Institute of Medicine backs this up but points out that for every 104 Americans who use marijuana only one uses hard drugs. Around 1 in 10 Americans regularly use marijuana (which is similar to local numbers) and most of them stop using marijuana by their mid-30s.

Also ignored during the debate was that the Misuse of Drugs Act, which governs how drug laws are enforced, was amended to allow medicinal use of marijuana and to give discretion to the police not to charge people in possession of small amounts of the drug.

In practice, arresting people for marijuana possession is usually only done if other charges are laid as well.



Some Anarchists oppose legalisation of marijuana and other drugs. Much of this opposition stems from the idea that once the drugs become legal they become just another commodity that's regulated and taxed by the state. Instead of the money from them going into the pockets of those who need it or local neighbourhoods (as was the case in Christiania in Copenhagen, Denmark) the money ends up in both corporate and state hands.

This is the argument put forward by M K Lords in his article "*The Anarchist Case Against Cannabis Legalisation*" in the Daily Anarchist dated November 21st, 2014. It's worth repeating what Lords stated:

Decriminalization vs. Legalisation

This language is problematic to anarchists, no? Those little words "taxed" and "regulated" leave the law open to tampering, and the creation of more laws. The law does not decriminalize cannabis in any way; it's simply re-categorizing criminality.

Overturning the law that makes the substance illegal would be preferable, but let's be real; the state won't consider legalisation of any kind unless it benefits the state apparatus. Decriminalizing cannabis provides no benefit for the state. That is why

you see its boot licking cousin “legalization” instead. Legalization at the state level happens in stages once the bureaucrats figure out how they and their friends in certain industries can benefit from it.

Democrats want to tax and regulate because it will generate revenue, but what is the revenue for? In Escambia County, the poorest county in Florida, as of 2012, 49.3% of taxes went to the county sheriff’s office, whose deputies frequently harass the homeless population. When the county cops aren’t busy slashing tarps and tents, the city police are stealing their blankets. I don’t want any money going to an increasingly militarized police force, or a county sheriff’s office under investigation by the DoJ for inhumane jail conditions. Unlike Democrats, I don’t want a more efficient government, nor do I think throwing more taxpayer money at it will make it more ethical.

Militarization of the Police? Not in My Legalisation!

Legalisation of marijuana would strengthen these irreparably corrupt police departments, and that is something no anarchist should support. Militarizing the police with increased tax revenues (and don’t pretend that revenue wouldn’t go directly to law enforcement) is the unseen consequence of legalisation.

If we look at the bigger picture, legalisation has boosted revenues for local and state governments in Washington, Colorado, and California. Even the District of Criminals legalized the plant for recreational use to get in on this cash crop. Do you really think it’s because they want to reduce the amount of people in jail?

D.C. has a piss poor track record of police brutality. If we take into account that a large percentage of federal taxes go to war, how counter-productive is it to support a law that increases funding for the warfare state?

Suppose that tax revenue goes to barbaric agencies like the DEA, who will continue the drug war on the federal level. Who do you think cops use their second hand military weaponry on? The answer hardly requires imagination.

Speaking of military weaponry, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 19% of taxes went to warfare spending in 2013. That is \$643 billion. An anarchist of any stripe should be against boosting the funding of the war machine. Taxes already support the spread of the massive empire, and I see no reason to encourage that kind of antisocial behaviour.

The extract sums up two of the most compelling arguments against legalisation: (a) it would be used to further the aims of the government of the day and (b) it will also benefit corporate entities.

However, it’s largely irrelevant whether drugs are legalised.

Despite bans on drugs like marijuana and similar drugs people are using them. Most of the problems resulting from them relate to drugs being illegal rather than the drugs themselves.

Drug use should be based on informed decision-making. This means listening to the science and being aware that all drugs have side effects that could result in violent mood swings, unpredictable behaviour and/or impaired judgement or reaction times

in many people. It also means that we are ultimately responsible for whatever happens while we are under the influence.



We don't need a referendum or the State to tell us whether we should be able to use drugs. That is up to the individual. If our drug use is having negative consequences

on ourselves or other people we'll find out soon enough from those whom we associate with. If we're smart we'll get help to address those concerns raised by others but if we're not it's up to our peers, families and our grassroots community to intervene, not a cop or a lawyer.

The 1936 movie **Reefer Madness** was full of ridiculous claims about what smoking marijuana could lead to. The claims being made about marijuana during the marijuana referendum in 2020 were just as ridiculous. Unfortunately, people on both sides of the debate relied too much on emotive rhetoric and pseudo-science rather than on the facts



In Memoriam: David Graeber

Are You An Anarchist? The Answer May Surprise You!

This is one of our favourite pieces written by David Graeber, the anarchist anthropologist who passed away in September 2020.

Chances are you have already heard something about who anarchists are and what they are supposed to believe. Chances are almost everything you have heard is nonsense. Many people seem to think that anarchists are proponents of violence, chaos, and destruction, that they are against all forms of order and organization, or that they are crazed nihilists who just want to blow everything up. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. Anarchists are simply people who



believe human beings are capable of behaving in a reasonable fashion without having to be forced to. It is really a very simple notion. But it's one that the rich and powerful have always found extremely dangerous.

At their very simplest, anarchist beliefs turn on to two elementary assumptions. The first is that human beings are, under ordinary circumstances, about as reasonable and decent as they are allowed to be, and can organize themselves and their communities without needing to be told how. The second is that power corrupts. Most of all, anarchism is just a matter of having the courage to take the simple principles of common decency that we all live by, and to follow them through to their logical conclusions. Odd though this may seem, in most important ways you are probably already an anarchist — you just don't realize it.

Let's start by taking a few examples from everyday life.

If there's a line to get on a crowded bus, do you wait your turn and refrain from elbowing your way past others even in the absence of police?

If you answered "yes", then you are used to acting like an anarchist! The most basic anarchist principle is self-organization: the assumption that human beings do not need to be threatened with prosecution in order to be able to come to reasonable understandings with each other, or to treat each other with dignity and respect.

Everyone believes they are capable of behaving reasonably themselves. If they think laws and police are necessary, it is only because they don't believe that other people are. But if you think about it, don't those people all feel exactly the same way about you? Anarchists argue that almost all the anti-social behaviour which makes us think it's necessary to have armies, police, prisons, and governments to control our lives, is actually caused by the systematic

inequalities and injustice those armies, police, prisons and governments make possible. It's all a vicious circle. If people are used to being treated like their opinions do not matter, they are likely to become



angry and cynical, even violent — which of course makes it easy for those in power to say that their opinions do not matter. Once they understand that their opinions really do matter just as much as anyone else's, they tend to become remarkably understanding. To cut a long story short: anarchists believe that for the most part it is power itself, and the effects of power, that make people stupid and irresponsible.

Are you a member of a club or sports team or any other voluntary organization where decisions are not imposed by one leader but made on the basis of general consent?

If you answered "yes", then you belong to an organization which works on anarchist principles! Another basic anarchist principle is voluntary association. This is simply a matter of applying democratic principles to ordinary life. The only difference is that anarchists believe it should be possible to have a society in which everything could be

organized along these lines, all groups based on the free consent of their members, and therefore, that all top-down, military styles of organization like armies or bureaucracies or large corporations, based on chains of command, would no longer be necessary. Perhaps you don't believe that would be possible. Perhaps you do. But every time you reach an agreement by consensus, rather than threats, every time you make a voluntary arrangement with another person, come to an understanding, or reach a compromise by taking due consideration of the other person's particular situation or needs, you are being an anarchist — even if you don't realize it.

Anarchism is just the way people act when they are free to do as they choose, and when they deal with others who are equally



free — and therefore aware of the responsibility to others that entails. This leads to another crucial point: that while people can be reasonable and considerate when they are dealing with equals, human nature is such that they cannot be trusted to do so when given power over others. Give someone such power, they will almost invariably abuse it in some way or another.

Do you believe that most politicians are selfish, egotistical swine who don't really care about the public interest? Do you think

we live in an economic system which is stupid and unfair?

If you answered “yes”, then you subscribe to the anarchist critique of today's society — at least, in its broadest outlines. Anarchists believe that power corrupts and those who spend their entire lives seeking power are the very last people who should have it. Anarchists believe that our present economic system is more likely to reward people for selfish and unscrupulous behaviour than for being decent, caring human beings. Most people feel that way. The only difference is that most people don't think there's anything that can be done about it, or anyway — and this is what the faithful servants of the powerful are always most likely to insist — anything that won't end up making things even worse.

But what if that weren't true?

And is there really any reason to believe this? When you can actually test them, most of the usual predictions about what would happen without states or capitalism turn out to be entirely untrue. For thousands of years people lived without governments. In many parts of the world people live outside of the control of governments today. They do not all kill each other. Mostly they just get on about their lives the same as anyone else would. Of course, in a complex, urban, technological society all this would be more complicated: but technology can also make all these problems a lot easier to solve. In fact, we have not even begun to think about what our lives could be like if technology were really marshalled to fit human needs. How many hours would we really need to work in order to maintain a functional society — that is, if we got rid of all the useless or destructive occupations like telemarketers, lawyers, prison guards,

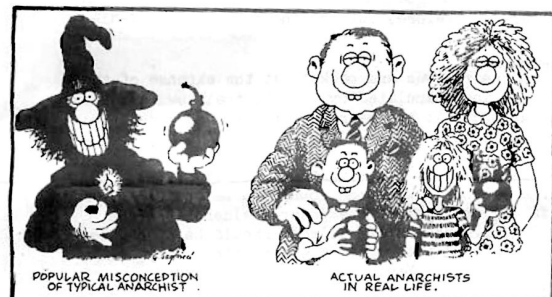
financial analysts, public relations experts, bureaucrats and politicians, and turn our best scientific minds away from working on space weaponry or stock market systems to mechanizing away dangerous or annoying tasks like coal mining or cleaning the bathroom, and distribute the remaining work among everyone equally? Five hours a day? Four? Three? Two? Nobody knows because no one is even asking this kind of question. Anarchists think these are the very questions we should be asking.

Do you really believe those things you tell your children (or that your parents told you)?

"It doesn't matter who started it." "Two wrongs don't make a right." "Clean up your own mess." "Do unto others..." "Don't be mean to people just because they're different." Perhaps we should decide whether we're lying to our children when we tell them about right and wrong, or whether we're willing to take our own injunctions seriously. Because if you take these moral principles to their logical conclusions, you arrive at anarchism.

Take the principle that two wrongs don't make a right. If you really took it seriously, that alone would knock away almost the entire basis for war and the criminal justice system. The same goes for sharing: we're always telling children that they have to learn to share, to be considerate of each other's needs, to help each other; then we go off into the real world where we assume that everyone is naturally selfish and Wouldn't that be the greatest gift to one's children one could possibly give?

competitive. But an anarchist would point out: in fact, what we say to our children is right. Pretty much every great worthwhile achievement in human history, every discovery or accomplishment that's improved our lives, has been based on cooperation and mutual aid; even now, most of us spend more of our money on our friends and families than on ourselves; while likely as not there will always be competitive people in the world, there's no reason why society has to be based on encouraging such behaviour, let alone making people compete over the basic necessities of life. That only serves the interests of people in power, who want us to live in fear of one another. That's why anarchists call for a society based not only on free association but mutual aid. The fact is that most children grow up believing in anarchist morality, and then gradually have to realize that the adult world doesn't really work that way. That's why so many become rebellious, or alienated, even suicidal as adolescents, and finally, resigned and bitter as adults; their only solace, often, being the ability to raise children of their own and pretend to them that the world is fair. But what if we really could start to build a world which really was at least founded on principles of justice?



Do you believe that human beings are fundamentally corrupt and evil, or that certain sorts of people (women, people of colour, ordinary folk who are not rich or

highly educated) are inferior specimens, destined to be ruled by their betters?

If you answered “yes”, then, well, it looks like you aren’t an anarchist after all. But if you answered “no”, then chances are you already subscribe to 90% of anarchist principles, and, likely as not, are living your life largely in accord with them. Every time you treat another human with consideration and respect, you are being an anarchist. Every time you work out your differences with others by coming to reasonable compromise, listening to what everyone has to say rather than letting one person decide for everyone else, you are being an anarchist. Every time you have the opportunity to force someone to do something, but decide to appeal to their sense of reason or justice instead, you are being an anarchist. The same goes for every time you share something with a friend, or decide who is going to do the dishes, or do anything at all with an eye to fairness.

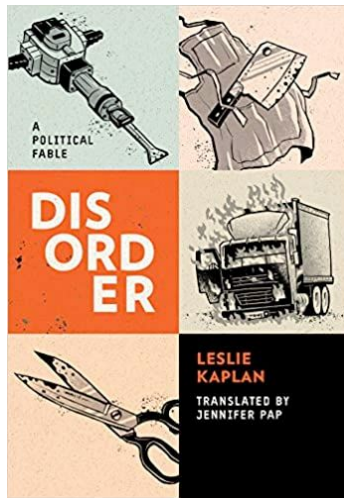
Now, you might object that all this is well and good as a way for small groups of people to get on with each other, but managing a city, or a country, is an entirely different matter. And of course there is

something to this. Even if you decentralize society and put as much power as possible in the hands of small communities, there will still be plenty of things that need to be coordinated, from running railroads to deciding on directions for medical research. But just because something is complicated does not mean there is no way to do it democratically. It would just be complicated. In fact, anarchists have all sorts of different ideas and visions about how a complex society might manage itself. To explain them though would go far beyond the scope of a little introductory text like this. Suffice it to say, first of all, that a lot of people have spent a lot of time coming up with models for how a really democratic, healthy society might work; but second, and just as importantly, no anarchist claims to have a perfect blueprint. The last thing we want is to impose prefab models on society anyway. The truth is we probably can’t even imagine half the problems that will come up when we try to create a democratic society; still, we’re confident that, human ingenuity being what it is, such problems can always be solved, so long as it is in the spirit of our basic principles — which are, in the final analysis, simply the principles of fundamental human decency.



**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE
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AWSM BOOK REVIEWS



'DISORDER'
Leslie Kaplan
(Author);
Jennifer Pap
(Translator)
Publisher: AK
Press

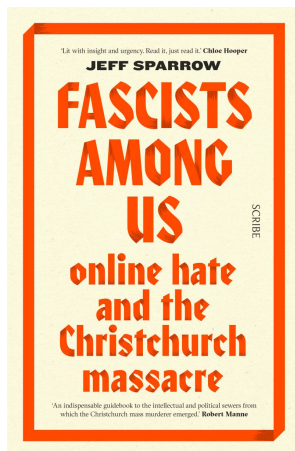
Political fable as a genre can go in two directions. You can place the action in an entirely

fictionalised environment. This offers universal appeal while in some cases avoiding censorship. On the downside, its catholic nature can make such writing blunt and undercut its own intentions. In short, something that explains everything, explains nothing. Another approach is to place fictional events in a recognisable landscape. You can make explicit reference to real places and allusions to actual occurrences. The trouble is that while there is enough generality retained, those not familiar with the genuine specifics will lose out.

DISORDER is a short piece that goes down the path of the second option. It charts the fictional occurrence of murders in contemporary France. Each murder is inflicted by a social victim upon his/her oppressor using an instrument appropriate to the site of oppression. Each is located in an actual place. The distancing from reality comes in the absolutely apposite choice of avenger and weapon. In real life, murder

tends to be far less wrapped up in a bow. At times, the choice is almost comical, as when a long-term model bank employee suddenly drops a safe (thus in English at least, undermining the name itself) upon the head of a bank manager. It's the sort of thing that is very emotionally appealing but as the serial nature of occurrences goes on throughout a fictional year, it becomes a bit too smoothly monotonous. What should save the story at this point are the allusions to reality which would bring things back into sharp focus. Unfortunately, unless you are French, have read the original or are an especially close follower of events in France, you won't know where the generalities end and the particular references begin. To rescue the reader, there is an Afterword by translator Jennifer Pap. She does an excellent job of pointing out there are references to comments and actions by Macron, Sarkozy and Louis XVI. The best advice is therefore that in future editions the publisher either converts the Afterword into a Foreword or simply that the reader be encouraged to begin by reading the Afterword before embarking on the main text.

One of the strongest aspects of DISORDER is the way it doesn't offer easy explanations for the actions it portrays. In fact, it presents fictional (often learned, academic) reactions to the events, then counters them by pointing out the difficulty of such analysis to fully grasp the phenomenon. This leaves it all open-ended and thus empowers the reader to think of his/her own reaction and meaning behind the narrative. This ultimately makes for a satisfying read.



Fascists Among Us by Jeff Sparrow, Scribe Publications

Whenever a terrorist incident occurs somewhere in the world, a tell-all book or movie-of-the-week is sure to follow. Mostly it's an exploitative response that is shallow and

adds nothing to anyone's understanding of the phenomenon. **Fascists Among Us** by Jeff Sparrow is not such a book. It covers the Christchurch mosque attack but eschews such approaches as pseudo-first-person narrative or lurid descriptions of events by on-the-scene observers. Rather, it makes an honest attempt to get into the motivations behind the attack. The most commendable aspect of this being the rejection of superficial psychological explanations, in favour of acknowledging the political impetus behind events. For example, Sparrow argues Brenton Tarrant's manifesto "...expresses-with stark clarity-a distinctive political program." (p.10). He references the term 'autogenic' to describe massacres driven by psychopathology or personal problems but explicitly notes that the murderer says in his document on the killings that they were "...a politically motivated terrorist attack" but "...he used them to rewrite the massacre script, injecting political content into an apolitical form" (p. 73).

Any book with the word 'Fascist' in the title should not shy away from attempting a definition of what is a notoriously difficult

phenomenon to pin down. Sparrow tackles this with reference to some of the acknowledged academic experts in the field such as Paxton, Griffin and Mosse as well as quotes from Mussolini, Hitler and Mosley. He is then careful to place Tarrant's own words into the mix, showing undeniable links to these ideological predecessors.

The author recognises that despite radical sounding elements, it is the reactionary nature of classical fascism that ultimately defines it. For anarchists, it is welcome recognition that one element of this reactionary politics is its emphasis on the creation of "...an authoritarian regime based on supposed natural hierarchies" (p.43). Sparrow again places the shooter within that tradition, condemned by his own words, quoting from his manifesto 'Diversity is unequal, hierarchies are certain' (p.13). This highlights two important points. Firstly, that while others may waver in their opposition to fascism, anarchists always have been and always will be their most consistent opponents. Wishing to establish a world of social and economic equality and our implacable rejection of hierarchies as an organising principle puts us in existential opposition to fascism in ways that other political movements are not. Secondly, it shows the bankruptcy of some on the conservative Right who erroneously define fascism as a Left-wing movement.

Despite the very real continuities with the past, it's also important to look at the factors that have aided the contemporary fascists. On a macro scale, this has included the primacy of Islamophobia as a bogeyman that works better as a motivator than the lingering traditional anti-Semitism. Sparrow spends a chapter showing how the fuel of US state actions post-9/11 has created an environment where 'Islam' "...has become

for many an essentialised, almost biological, term” (p.29). One of Tarrant’s obsessions as outlined in his screed was the birthrates within ‘Islam’ being higher than others and the threat, he saw this having to those he identified with.

Another more recent and obvious influence has been the rhetorical enabling the Trump administration has had upon the fascists. The writer is careful to show that despite being odious in his own right, the fascist label doesn’t apply to Trump. In his chapter on this, Sparrow also outlines how different tactical options were explored that took internet traffic in the direction of street activism. The culmination being the Fascist riot in Charlottesville in 2017 and the death of Heather Heyer. In the end, this was a dismal failure for the fascists and goes some way to explaining the attraction of non-net-based lone wolf actions rather than internet shitposting, incel whining, or LARPing.

Add to the above an interest in eco-fascism and accelerationism, combined with personal experiences in both Australia (where fascists targeted Anarchist social locations) and Europe, and you get some taste of the eclectic toxic political brew Tarrant created for himself. Sparrow does a good job in outlining all of this and clearly separates out different strands of thought that do or don’t apply in this case.

In the conclusion the author criticises sections of the mainstream media who argued that it was wrong to publish extracts from Tarrant’s manifesto. They said that just mentioning he was radicalised in Europe was enough. Sparrow rightly takes them to task for this by pointing out “He was ideologically committed to fascism, a movement that is consistently handed

propaganda victories by a mass media unwilling or incapable of understanding it.” (p.116). An excellent point.

It feels necessary to take issue with Sparrow though on a related informational issue. He chooses early in the book to consistently refer to Tarrant as ‘Person X’. The two central explanations being that by naming Brenton Tarrant it somehow diminishes his victims and that since he was anonymous prior to the attack and that there are others similar to him out there, such a pseudonym makes him emblematic of future such operators in the future (pp. 4-5). There are a few problems with this no doubt well-meaning sensitivity. Firstly, this book isn’t about the victims, but the perpetrator. A book that examines the lives of the victims would be a worthwhile project, but this isn’t it. Secondly, by allowing Tarrant to retain his anonymity it if anything lets him off the hook for personal responsibility for his actions. Yes, he is a ‘type’ but not just an abstraction. He is a living individual who did something. Thirdly, the excellent analysis provided describing how Tarrant became Tarrant applies *to him*. Future fascist terrorists will not be carbon copies of him, in the same way that he was inspired by, but was not a direct copy of others. Fourthly, Sparrow sensibly adopts the usual journalistic and academic convention of footnoting. Fine except the writer explicitly names Brenton Tarrant and the title of his manifesto in the very first footnote of chapter 1 of the book! This undermines the moral high ground attempted in the explanation of the Introduction and makes ongoing use of ‘Person X’ redundant. Also, if Sparrow has no problem mentioning Hitler, who surely had a far more devastating and lasting impact than Tarrant, the reader should be able to handle seeing

the name of the latter. Lastly, there's a bit of an air of fundamentalist Christianity to it, as if invoking the name will somehow empower Satan. Given Sparrow's worthwhile quest to inform, including the perpetrators name just would've made more sense.

Jeff Sparrow has done a mostly solid job of showing what (if not who) lay behind the Christchurch massacre. It's a text that can

be recommended to anyone who wants to understand the political poison of Fascism, how it began and how it has morphed across time. For anarchists, it is a reminder that we can never afford to let others do the work of Anti-fascism for us and must remain eternally vigilant and active in pursuit of a better world. No Pasaran!

AA



Aotearoa Workers' Solidarity Movement (AWSM) are an Anarchist-Communist group in Aotearoa/ so-called New Zealand.

Since 2008 we have promoted the creation of non-hierarchical grassroots democracy and classless, stateless societies here and internationally.

We exist so our ideas can be more widely known, understood and adopted by working people. We see this theoretical knowledge and its application as essential in the struggle to replace the dominant economic system of capitalism.

Therefore, we have the ultimate aim of becoming a direct action organisation that is physically engaged in daily struggles.

We encourage sympathisers to join us and help contribute to this process.

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