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[Prefatory note: March 2017. This brief critique needs to be expanded, qualified, and rewritten with more nuance. I still hope to do that. Maybe I will, but if I don't, here it is as it was read out during my ***Imagining Anarchy*** *talk at the Wooden Shoe Book Store in Philadelphia on October 15, 2010. That talk is available on YouTube. As I declared firmly immediately after reading it, the critique does not mean that I am against organizing at the workplace. It is just that I think the focus should be on establishing assemblies at the workplace and then networking these assemblies across workplaces, thus bypassing unions. So this separates my critique from Murray Bookchin's strident rejections of anarcho-syndicalism, which practically eliminated any role at all for workplace organizing. My position also puts me at odds with groups like the Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland, and with the strategy of the Wobblies, both of which concentrate on building revolutionary unions.– jh]*

1. Anarcho-Syndicalism locates decision making in the wrong place, exclusively with workers, rather than with people in general in their autonomous communities

2. It locks the revolution into the capitalist division of labor. There is no way for workers in a given enterprise to decide to dismantle the operation, because their livelihoods are connected to it. They have no way to live without that income. Anarcho-syndicalism does not provide a way out of this – that is, it does not create other sources of support for those workers. This could only be done through community.

3. It fails to take into account how the content of work has changed over the past half-century. Vast millions of people are now engaged in absolutely worthless work. This is work that should be abandoned not seized.

4. It has no way to deal with a new, massive, change in the capitalist labor market – temp work. These workers are not attached to any particular workplace, but move frequently amongst many. They are thus not in a position to seize anything, nor would they ever want to.

5. It cannot escape the capitalist commodity market. Even if all workplaces in the entire nation were seized each enterprise would still be dependent on selling to the market in order to survive. All we would have would be a nation full of worker-owned capitalist firms. They would have no way to, nor incentive to, launch and pursue a society wide de-commodification program, including the de-commodification of labor and the transition from waged labor to cooperative labor, which could only be done on the community level.

6. It has failed to take into account our improved understanding of capitalism, namely, that capitalists, over the past centuries, have managed to turn the entire society into the means of production, into a social factory, for the purpose of accumulating more capital. Thus, seizing particular workplaces doesn't in fact amount to seizing the means of production. (Hence the emergence of a Wages for Housework campaign.)

7. It mistakes what needs to be seized, thinking that it is the means of production, whereas in fact it is all decision making that

must be taken away from the ruling class and relocated in our communities.

8. It encourages wage-slaves to identify themselves as workers. Thus it perpetuates, and in fact fosters, this false identity. It tries to bring into being a class consciousness based on work, a working class consciousness. This is needed in order to seize workplaces, syndicalists think. But the original goal of the communist revolution was to abolish wage-slavery, abolish workers as workers, abolish the proletariat, abolish that whole class. That is, wage-slaves were to abolish themselves as wage-slaves. As it has happened, hardly anyone identifies with their work anymore. Nor should they. They know they are more than just workers. Their identities lie elsewhere, with family, friends, avocations, leisure activities (i.e., playing), and community. They are human beings with many interests and identities. They have given up the identity of worker (if they ever had it) but still have to keep doing the job in order to live. But that's all it is, just a way to make a living. Wage-slavery can only be abolished by converting to cooperative labor. Trying to foster "working class consciousness" is no way to do this. It can only be done in communities.

9. It keeps the revolution focused mistakenly on the struggle between commodified labor and capital, thus blocking the struggle to reestablish non-commodified labor, use-value labor as opposed to exchange-value labor. The return to useful labor cannot be done within an anarcho-syndicalist framework, but only within an anarcho-communist framework.

10. It leaves out huge swaths of people – the unemployed, old people, sick people, young people, students, housewives. These people can only serve as support troops in a revolution defined as seizing the means of production, which in turn is defined as seizing factories, offices, stores, or farms. The idea that only people with jobs can play a direct role in revolution is seriously mistaken.

11. It has the wrong attitude toward the peasants and the petty bourgeois (small business families, small farmers, self-employed

professionals and trades people). These categories of people tend to be seen as enemies rather than as potential allies. And indeed, in the anarcho-syndicalist model, there is no role for them in the revolution.

12. It is based on a form of representative democracy (federation, that is, delegates to regional and national assemblies), rather than on direct democracy. It has thus nowhere overcome this bourgeois hierarchical structure or procedure.

13. It is often closely linked with unions which are organized outside workplaces. These unions can, and often have, betrayed the working class when the crunch comes. Two significant cases were the CNT in the Spanish Revolution, and Polish Solidarity in the Polish revolution of 1980-81.

14. The dual power structure which anarcho-syndicalists establish is static with regard to the capitalist state. How exactly is it possible to ever move from a dual power structure to a single power structure, that is, to the elimination of the state? The strategy is not equipped to do this, and is thus silent on the question. (And it has never been done.)

15. It has no way to deal with counter-revolutionary parties that are organized outside the structure of the federated workers councils. Thus the Bolsheviks were able to destroy the Soviets, Franco was able to destroy collectivized Spain, and Social Democrats were able to destroy the workers' and soldiers' councils in the German revolution of 1918-1919. It could attempt to organize its own army, but this couldn't be done within the structure of federated workers councils.

16. Anarcho-syndicalism derailed, for over a century, the original goal of all 19th century anti-capitalist radicals, whether communist, socialist, or anarchist, of restoring power to local communities, and of establishing a Commune of Communes, without markets, money, wage-slavery, or states. It sidelined anarcho-communism. Instead, an artifact of capitalism itself, the capitalist workplace, was

taken as the main organizing arena of the anti-capitalist struggle. This strategy has failed through over a century of trials.