

# Statement on GOP and Democratic Conventions

## Anarchists

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### Centerfold insert

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“We make war upon the State as the chief invader of person and property, as the cause of substantially all the crime and misery that exist, as itself the most gigantic criminal extant. It manufactures criminals faster than it punishes them. It exists to create and sustain the privileges which produce economic and social chaos. It is the sole support of the monopolies which concentrate wealth and learning in the hands of a few and disperse poverty and ignorance among the masses to the increase of which inequality the increase of crime is directly proportional. It protects a minority in plundering the majority by methods too subtle to be understood by the victims, and then punishes such unruly members of the majority as an attempt to plunder others by means too simple and straightforward to be recognized by the State as legitimate, crowning its outrages by deluding scholars and philosophers...into pleading, as an excuse for its infamous existence, the necessity of repressing crime which it steadily creates.”—Benjamin R. Tucker, 1882

Some of you may be wondering why a bunch of anarchists would grace the Republican and Democratic national conventions with our presence, even as protesters. Aren't we just legitimizing these clownish coronation ceremonies?

The short answer is that we're here to highlight the real issues—the outrages ignored by our two-party system and the tweedle-dee, tweedle-dum candidates it spawns. Like racism, sexism, homophobia, neoliberalism, the prison industrial complex, “welfare reform,” the war on drugs, and the death penalty.

But to tell the whole truth, the clownishness has its attractions. Where better than at these overexposed summit meetings of the office holders and their corporate patrons can we spotlight our repressive political system at its most phony and hypocritical—when “the people” choose “their” candidates for the highest political office in the State? Nowhere else is the myth of popular representation so clearly revealed than at these huge, hollow exercises in “democracy.”

Because the dirty secret is that NONE of the injustices mentioned above can be solved within the framework of the State or of the present American political system—not racism, not neoliberalism, not the death penalty. “Reforming” the campaign finance system, passing tougher rules against corporate greedsters, electing Ralph Nader president—none of these changes will salvage a “democratic” system that is run fundamentally for the benefit of a politico-corporate elite of hacks, hucksters and the propertied few. Because this system will never be a democracy.

We're coming to Los Angeles and Philadelphia to voice our demand for what we understand to be the elements of a real democracy: real freedom, real self-determination, and public decision making that involves each and every individual and every community, not just a privileged, self-selecting elite. Because only a cooperative society built on mutual aid and the principle of nonhierarchical decision making, where folks don't have to depend on elected “representatives,” bought and paid for by the powerful, to articulate their desires, can solve the problems that Bush, Gore, and the fat cats who picked them are paid to ignore.

## Seven myths about American “democracy”

### **Myth #1: Exercising his/her right to vote gives the ordinary citizen ultimate control over the political process.**

Fat chance. The propertied elites that control our political institutions have an arsenal of sophisticated techniques for controlling public opinion. We call it manufacturing consent. Its tools include—but are not limited to—advertising, corporate control of major media, and the two-party system. When folks get suspicious and start looking for the truth behind the curtain of obfuscation, they’re derided as “conspiracy theorists.”

Elections give you the power to choose between two sides of the same coin. They DON’T empower you to change the system, to participate directly in society’s decision making process. Political candidates serve up phony agendas for change while taking their marching orders from corporate patrons behind the scenes. They ALL do this: black, white, gay, straight, male, female. To place your trust in the electoral process is to trust a symbol to become a person who identifies with you. It won’t happen.

As an alternative, we suggest direct action. Going on strike gives you a real voice. Demonstrating in defiance of police orders gives you a real voice. Working within your community to build cooperative alternatives to society’s megalithic political/economic structures gives you an active role in creating a better world. That’s not just politics, that’s Revolution. As Martha Ackelsberg wrote, “Direct action [means] that the goal of any and all these activities [is] to provide ways for people to get in touch with their own powers and capacities, to take back the power of naming themselves and their lives.”

Or, as Gil Scott-Heron rapped, “The Revolution will put you in the driver’s seat.”

**Myth #2: The state is our friend.** It gives Medicare, Social Security, cheap housing loan—the social safety net. And didn’t government give us civil rights?

These good things came about because millions of people, pushed to the end of their rope by the Great Depression and centuries of oppression, demanded them. The U.S. government only began to embrace social welfare—in the form of Social Security, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, cheap housing loans and other such benefits—when it appeared that the alternative was revolution.

The Cold War soon followed, creating a new rivalry between the U.S. and another political system that promised better living—and greater equality: Soviet Communism. So the benefits kept on coming for a few more years: the G.I. bill, Medicare, disability insurance, the civil rights laws.

But today, the Soviet threat is no more. America is the only remaining superpower. And our elite proclaims the “end of history,” with market capitalism” the only remaining legitimate ideology. So the same elite that put the social safety net in place is now busy dismantling it. Disability has been gutted; AFDC has been gutted. Social Security and Medicare are next.

Anarchists and labor leftists in the 1930s warned the workers against depending on the state to provide benefits the workers should be providing for themselves, because one day the state will decide to go back on its promises.

They were right. To depend on government to nurture a more equal society is to set yourself up for betrayal.

**Myth #3: Capitalists love small government.** The present system keeps them under control.

Capitalists LOVE big government! Let’s put this in perspective: Corporations, like the State, are legal entities whose charters are written by powerful people. These people’s interests are to keep their kind in power.

Large corporations couldn’t exist without large expenditures, subsidies and tax breaks on research and development—courtesy of the State. Corporations couldn’t crack open new markets in the developing world without the muscle supplied by the Office of the US Trade Representative. Corporations couldn’t act with impunity against their employees and anyone else who attempts to hinder their progress without compliant judges, bureaucrats and politicians. In fact, corporations would never have grown into the monoliths they now are without the vast edifice of legal protections that their cronies in Congress and the states have built up over the last hundred years.

The State created this monster. Don’t look to the State to dismantle it.

**Myth #4: The state protects us against violence and vigilantism.** Wouldn’t gun control and international peace-keeping be impossible without the rule of law?

The State is a hardened, compulsive, habitual killer! The legal codes of the U.S. and the various states sanction and institutionalize the death penalty. The U.S. military, in its various roles, has spread death and desolation in de-

veloping countries all over the world (think Vietnam, Iraq, Yugoslavia), and has allied itself with tyrants and thugs who promote America's agenda through violence. Worst of all, it was State policy that commanded the creation of nuclear weapons—the greatest instruments of mass destruction of all time.

Whatever feeble efforts the U.S. government may make in the direction of controlling small, personal firearms can't begin to make up for the actual and potential damage its own policies and methods of violence have perpetrated.

There's only one way to disarm the killers: Abolish the State.

**Myth #5: The US Constitution is one of the great milestones for personal freedom.** The Bill of Rights protects us from tyranny.

Tell that to death row denizens who have had their right of habeas corpus effectively taken away. Tell that to union members whose right to organize has been steadily eroded. Tell that to people of color whose rights are supposedly protected by the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments. Tell that to women who have been trying in vain to pass an Equal Rights Amendment for almost 100 years. Tell that to protesters in Seattle, Washington, DC, and innumerable other places who have been gassed, clubbed, denied their right to peaceful assembly, and held illegally in overcrowded jails. Tell that to homosexuals who, for no legal reason, have been consistently treated as less than full citizens by the military and other State institutions.

Shall we go on?

Bottom line: the State's so-called legal protections apply only to the powerful. Not to you.

**Myth #6: "Democracy is the worst system of government ever created—except for all the others."** —Winston Churchill

Churchill got it wrong. Folks have been organizing themselves successfully into non-hierarchical, self-directed communities for hundreds of years. Examples include pirate republics in the Caribbean during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Ukrainian peasants during the Russian Revolution, the peasants of Andalusia and the working class population of Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War. These were not just failed experiments. They were vital, functioning societies based on principles of equality, that were attracting recruits from other oppressed groups and therefore had to be put down—by the State.

**Myth #7: Everything would be OK if we could just elect a socialist or social democratic party to power.** Then we could have a humanistic system of government.

The common denominator of all socialist or social democratic parties—from New Deal Democrats in the U.S. at the most moderate end to the European Social Democratic parties with their cradle-to-the-grave public welfare programs—is that they pin their hopes for creating a better society on the State. Yet every regime that can vaguely be described as social democratic—from New Deal Democrats in the U.S. at the most moderate end to the European Social Democratic parties with their cradle-to-the-grave public welfare programs—has systematically betrayed their commitments to the people over the past decade.

They have privatized industries, cut pension benefits, and otherwise 'torn up the social safety net that they themselves put in place. Why? To stay "competitive." To attract the very corporate investors who are promoting the destruction of State-run welfare in the U.S. To attract donations from those investors. To put in place a neoliberal, free-trade agenda that the people had no place in creating and no interest in supporting.

Socialism that depends on government—on the State—is not real socialism.

What next?

R2K/D2K are our chance to let the whole country know that the State isn't the answer. That the State has failed the people. That it's time for us to build a better society without the State.

The next step is for us to return to our communities and continue our struggle against the instruments of the State the military and prison industrial complexes, the machinery of the death penalty, the legalized bandits known as corporations, the secret institutions (CIA, FBI) that exercise a hidden tyranny over us, and the unjust laws that perpetuate poverty and inequality. Don't vote—ACT! Work within your community to directly demand an end to these institutions, and to create cooperative mechanisms to carry on the positive work of society.

As anarchists, we believe that only a cooperative society based on mutual aid will allow each and every one of us to live in abundance and harmony, to express our desires freely, and to create a community that saves the earth

rather than destroying it. We can start to achieve these goals now, through direct action. But until we smash the State, we will only have made a beginning.



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