5
Nonviolent alternatives to capitalism

To develop a nonviolence strategy against capitalism, it is essential that there be a nonviolent alternative: a system for economic production and distribution, including methods for making decisions. It is no good just being *against* capitalism without an idea of what is going to be better. From a nonviolence point of view, the trouble with the conventional socialist strategies is that they depend ultimately on violence, via reliance on state power, to both end capitalism and bring about a socialist alternative.

A useful way to proceed is to spell out the principles that the alternative should fulfil and then to examine some proposals and visions to see how well they measure up. The principles in the box were presented in chapter 3, where it was noted that capitalism does not satisfy any of them.

Principle 1: Cooperation, rather than competition, should be the foundation for activity.

Principle 2: People with the greatest needs should have priority in the distribution of social production.

Principle 3: Satisfying work should be available to everyone who wants it.

Principle 4: The system should be designed and run by the people themselves, rather than authorities or experts.

Principle 5: The system should be based on nonviolence.

The principles are simply a device for helping to think about what is desirable. There are other principles that could be proposed. Principle 5 alone is quite sufficient to rule out most economic systems, real or ideal.

Actually, the first four principles can be interpreted as aspects of principle 5, interpreted in an expansive fashion. Nonviolence as a

tool for social struggle allows maximum participation, and therefore any system that is run by a few people is open to nonviolent challenge. The logical outcome of a process of nonviolent struggle over system design is a participatory system, which is in essence principle 4. If the system is participatively designed, then opportunity for satisfying work (principle 3) is almost certain to be built in, since satisfying work is something widely recognised as worthwhile. Serving those in need is an integral part of the nonviolence constructive programme, thus leading to principle 2. Finally, nonviolent action is a method for engaging in dialogue and seeking a common truth, which in essence is a process built around fostering cooperation rather than one person or group beating another.

To illustrate nonviolent alternatives to capitalism, in this chapter four models are examined: sarvodaya, anarchism, voluntaryism and demarchy. Each of these satisfies most or all of the principles, but they are different in a number of respects. In the following, each alternative is briefly described and assessed in relation to the principles, with some additional comments about background, strengths, weaknesses and implications for strategy.

Sarvodaya
The Gandhian ideal of village democracy and economic self-reliance, going under the name sarvodaya, is a fundamental rejection of capitalist economics.[1] Gandhi described it as follows:

> Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured, in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants, and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour. In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one

life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral parts. In this, there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultural human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place.[2]

In sarvodaya, ethics and economics are intertwined. The aim is an improved quality of life, and this means that increasing the material standard of living should not be at the expense of social and spiritual values.

There are a number of key concepts underlying sarvodaya: swadeshi, bread labour, non-possession, trusteeship, non-exploitation and equality.[3] Swadeshi, which can be thought of as self-reliance, can be interpreted narrowly as self-sufficiency or more broadly as the ability of a community to support itself without undue dependence on others. This rules out domination of economic life by governments or large corporations.

Bread labour is the participation by individuals in work to produce the necessities of life. It is analogous to self-reliance but at the individual rather than collective level. Work is seen as a positive activity, rather than something to be avoided or minimised.

The idea of non-possession is that one should possess only those things that one needs (as distinguished from what one might *want*), and nothing else. This of course rules out capitalist ownership. Non-possession is compatible with the principle of "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need."

The principle of trusteeship is that those who use resources look after them for the benefit of the community. This includes both material resources, such as land and tools, and people's abilities. People who possess natural talents should consider them as community resources rather than private possessions.

Non-exploitation means not taking advantage of others. Equality can be interpreted in a limited fashion as equality of opportunity or more deeply as a process by which all community resources are used to help each person achieve the greatest possible quality of life. This is compatible with diversity but implies that those with greatest needs will have a greater claim on community resources.

In sarvodaya, people are educated for social consciousness, namely to ensure that they are aware of wider obligations and connections,

and see themselves as part of and serving something greater. Discrimination is eliminated. At a political level, the basic organising principle is self-rule at the village level. Technology is chosen so that it maintains the principles of the system, including equality and useful work.

Principle 1: cooperation. Sarvodaya is based on cooperation rather than conflict. The key to getting things done is commitment, which is built through community solidarity and education.

Principle 2: serving those in need. This principle is at the core of sarvodaya: its fundamental requirement is to eliminate discrimination and serve those with greatest need. The use of trusteeship is intended to prevent private wants taking precedence.

Principle 3: satisfying work. Bread labour, namely everyone working to produce the necessities of life, has the potential of being satisfying to nearly all. However, there are other types of work that can be satisfying, such as brain surgery and computer programming (though these can also be soul-destroying if done just to make a living). These are not bread labour, so how do they fit into sarvodaya? It is not clear whether sarvodaya can be made compatible with the elaborate division of labour (that is, occupational specialisation) common in industrialised countries.

Some types of work can be satisfying to the individual but may be the basis for inequality or serving only those who are better off. Sarvodaya would need to have mechanisms to limit such work or, alternatively, to ensure that special privileges did not accrue to those doing such work.

Principle 4: participation. Being organised at a village level, sarvodaya is participatory and self-managing. There is direct democracy at the village level, with federations of villages up to the level of the state. Exactly how decisions would be made at the higher levels is not fully specified.

Principle 5: nonviolence. The essence of sarvodaya is commitment to nonviolence as a way of life and as a method of social change.

One possible clash with the principles could arise from the role of the state, which is basically a federation of village democracies. In some models of sarvodaya, the state owns heavy industry as well as all other property that is directly used under trusteeship. The state is not supposed to interfere with society. But what about the individuals with responsibility for operations at the level of the state, for example

heavy industry? Is there not a possibility that the greater power at the state level could be corrupting, and used to increase the power and wealth of officials? Since the state in current-day societies is built around violence, namely the military and police, the way in which a sarvodaya state would operate needs careful attention to ensure that a different dynamic is possible. Alternatively, sarvodaya might be reformulated without any state at all.

Sarvodaya has been the focus of considerable organising in India and Sri Lanka since the 1950s.[4] Sarvodaya adherents have gone into villages and worked at fostering self-reliance through practical means such as constructing housing and schools, installing energy systems and instituting soil conservation measures. These practical measures also serve to awaken individuals and groups to their own potentials for compassion, sharing and cooperative endeavour or, in other words, personal development and community building. Organisations and networks in what can be called the sarvodaya movement have supported such village work by recruiting volunteers, providing training and evaluating progress.

In spite of the enormous grassroots effort that has gone into promoting sarvodaya, the main path of development in India and Sri Lanka has been capitalist, to a large extent due to efforts by leading politicians. In India, national leaders have given lip service to Gandhian ideals but in practice given virtually no support to Gandhi's vision of village democracy and self-reliance. This gives added weight to the reservation about the role of a sarvodaya state: the state, being a location of centralised power, is unlikely to provide much genuine support for a decentralised economic structure.

Outside India and Sri Lanka, sarvodaya is largely unknown. In developed countries, the principle of serving those with greatest need clashes with negative or hostile attitudes towards the poor and homeless, though serving the needy is not an enormous leap from familiar traditions of welfare, charity and mutual help. The idea of village democracy would require adaptation to be relevant to urban and suburban living, but it is not so far from notions of participatory democracy and experiences of community organising. However, sarvodaya's commitment to bread labour is so alien as to be almost incomprehensible. Occupational specialisation is so elaborate in capitalist economies that bread labour appears only possible in some

reversion to an agricultural society. Therefore this component would need some revamping to be relevant to a society with a high division of labour.

As a vision for an alternative, the possibility that sarvodaya might include a state can cause some difficulty. Although a sarvodaya state, namely the culmination of village democracies, is supposed to be very different from a capitalist state, nevertheless the concept gives more credibility to existing states than a model of stateless sarvodaya.

The greatest strength of sarvodaya as both a vision and a strategy for change is its total challenge to capitalist assumptions of inequality, competition, consumerism and alienating work. To raise sarvodaya as an alternative is to question the fundamentals of capitalism. Sarvodaya as a strategy for change has the advantage of being modular: local initiatives can be taken wherever possible, immediately, without waiting for wider changes.

Several of sarvodaya's strengths are also its weaknesses. Because it is such a contrast to capitalism, it seems totally impractical in an industrial or postindustrial society. The method of local development is fine, but in itself contains no strategy for challenging the foundations of capitalism, namely the synergy of state power and corporate bureaucracy, including the influence of consumer goods, advertising and wage labour.

Anarchism

As a political philosophy and strategy for change, anarchism dates back to the 1800s, when in European socialist circles it was the major contender with Marxism. Whereas Marxism is primarily a critique of capitalism, anarchism is principally a critique of the state.[5]

While many anarchists still consider the state the main source of oppression, there has been a gradual broadening of concern among anarchists, so that anarchism has become a general critique of domination, including in its ambit the state, capitalism, patriarchy and domination of nature, among others. Given that many activists have taken on board feminist, antiracist, environmental and other causes, what continues to distinguish anarchist analysis is attention to problems with state power.

The anarchist alternative to the state can be called self-management which, contrary to the name, means direct collective control over decisions, typically at the level of workplaces and local

communities. Rather than someone else having decision-making power—elected representatives, bosses, experts—groups of people have this power themselves. In workplaces, self-management means workers directly making decisions about what is produced, how the work is done and who does what. This is also called workers' control.[6]

The word anarchy is commonly used in everyday speech and the media to mean chaos. In contrast, anarchy to anarchists means a society based on principles of freedom, equality and participation, without government or domination. Far from chaotic, it would be very well organised indeed—organised by the people in it.

Concerning capitalism, anarchism does not have its own separate analysis, but pretty much adopts the Marxist critique. Furthermore, anarchism shares Marxism's ultimate goal, "communism" in its original sense of a classless society, without a state. Where anarchism dramatically departs from Marxism is in how to achieve a classless society. Since anarchists see the state as a central source of domination, they completely oppose the revolutionary capture of state power by vanguard parties—this is the core of the historical antagonism between Marxists and anarchists—and also reject socialist electoral strategies. Instead, anarchists favour self-management as the means as well as the goal: workers and communities should take control over decisions that affect their lives. In either a gradual expansion or a rapid, revolutionary upsurge in self-management, the existing sources of state and capitalist domination would be superseded. Thus anarchists, like Gandhians, believe that the means should reflect the ends.

How an anarchist economic system would operate has not been given a lot of detailed attention, partly because it is assumed that the system would be set up by those participating in it rather than according to a theorist's blueprint. One general vision is of free distribution.[7] Self-managed enterprises would produce goods for community needs. These goods would be available to anyone who needs them, without any system of monetary exchange. In order to coordinate production, enterprises would share information. For making higher-level decisions on all issues, the organising principle would be the federation. Each self-managing group would send one or more elected delegates to a delegate body which would make recommendations for the groups to consider. Delegates are bound by their groups' decisions and can be recalled at any time, unlike repre-

sentatives who are able to follow their own whims whatever the electorate prefers. The federation structure can have many layers, with delegates from delegate bodies meeting together and so forth. Delegate bodies would not have the power to make binding decisions. The function of federation is coordination, not rule.

It is now possible to consider anarchism according to the five principles of nonviolent economics.

Principle 1: cooperation. With the system of self-management, decisions are made collectively in a participatory fashion. While there can be disagreements and disputes, the basis for economic decision making is cooperation rather than competition.

Principle 2: serving those in need. The system of free distribution is designed to provide for human needs, in accordance with Marx's principle of "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs" (a principle rejected in actual socialist economies in favour of economic reward according to contributions). Unlike sarvodaya, anarchism does not make serving those in need a central moral principle. Instead, satisfying needs is treated more as a pragmatic issue, namely as a sensible goal that ought to be built into the way the economic system works.

Principle 3: satisfying work. Through self-management, work is organised by the workers. This means that the way work is done can be designed to provide work satisfaction, though of course efficiency and production for human needs are also vital considerations. Work satisfaction might be promoted through job rotation, multiskilling, automation of unpleasant tasks, designing of production systems to offer individual challenge and group interaction, and designing of tasks around individuals' specific needs, abilities and capacities for learning.

Principle 4: participation. Self-management is a system for direct participation by people in decisions that affect their lives. Participation at higher levels is through delegates and federations, and here there may be difficulties. Although delegates are supposed to have no independent power, and delegates can be changed at any time by the groups that selected them, in practice delegates may gain considerable power. A group is likely to pick more articulate and knowledgeable individuals to be delegates and, with their experience on federated bodies, they are likely to become harder to replace. Further up the federative structure, accountability is more attenuated. Participation

is thus strongest at the group level and more problematical at upper federated levels.

Principle 5: nonviolence. There have long been two strands within anarchism, those supporting only nonviolent methods and those believing that some armed struggle by the people will be necessary. The nonviolent strand dates back to pacifist anarchists such as Leo Tolstoy, who was an early inspiration for Gandhi. Those anarchists who accept a role for people's violence usually see this occurring only in defence of revolutionary changes against the violence of the state. The idea of an armed vanguard seeking to capture state power is alien to anarchism, since it opposes the state.

A popular conception of the anarchist is of a terrorist who practises "propaganda of the deed" as a means of sowing chaos. This is very far from most anarchist thinking and practice. There are some individuals who have undertaken assassinations and bombings and called themselves anarchists, but usually they have little connection with anarchist groups and are rejected by most anarchists. Nevertheless, anarchism has been tarred with a violent image, which is convenient to and has been fostered by its opponents on both the right and left.

Suffice it to say that only the nonviolent strand of anarchism is fully compatible with the principle of nonviolence. But violence is not central for even those anarchists who believe armed struggle will be necessary in a transition to self-management. In the usual anarchist model of economics, there is no state, no standing army and no system of private property.[8]

Anarchism was a considerable force in the international socialist movement prior to World War I. It reached its most dramatic expression in Spain, where it was behind the 1936 revolution but within a few years was crushed by the fascist armies led by Franco on the one hand and by the communists in the republican movement on the other. A type of spontaneous anarchism is apparent in many revolutionary situations, such as the Paris Commune of 1871, the early stages of the Russian Revolution in 1917-1918, Germany 1918-1919, Hungary 1956, France 1968 and Chile 1970-1971. In such cases, workers and communities organise themselves to run society, without a government.[9]

Another side to anarchist action is cooperatives, which are enterprises in which the workers manage everything without bosses. There are food cooperatives, media cooperatives and manufacturing cooperatives.[10] Cooperatives could be considered to be a feature of a Gandhian constructive programme. They are an attempt to "live the alternative" or, in other words, to use means for social change that contain within them elements of the sought-after goal.

For all their strengths, cooperatives have seldom been able to provide much of a challenge to capitalist enterprises. Few cooperatives have the capital or size to compete effectively, and with larger size there is a serious risk of reverting to conventional working arrangements, with a hierarchy developing and workers becoming like employees.

Another economic initiative with links to anarchism occurs when workers take over existing enterprises and run them without bosses. As noted earlier, this often occurs in revolutionary situations, but it can happen at other occasions too, especially when jobs or the entire enterprise are under threat.[11] Such instances of direct action by workers are commonly met by concerted action by government and other companies to put owners and managers back in command. Workers' control is a serious challenge to capitalists and their government allies. It can occur in government enterprises too.

In a wide range of areas, there are initiatives and ongoing activities that can be interpreted as practical manifestations of anarchism.[12] Examples include:

• free schools, in which teachers and students collaborate in learning[13];

• housing constructed by dwellers, often in a community where mutual help is provided[14];

• citizen control over town planning;

• workers collectively making decisions to get things done at work despite bosses and regulations;

• voluntarily organised children's play;

• informal systems in families and local communities for supportively responding to delinquent or deviant behaviour;

• sharing of information on the Internet.

Although in recent decades there have been many activities and initiatives that are compatible with anarchism, groups that are explicitly anarchist have not been prominent. There are quite a

number of small groups, newsletters and local activities, but the activity is usually low profile. To complicate the picture, there are many individuals who call themselves anarchists but who have little idea of anarchist theory or practice and mainly use this label because of its antiestablishment connotations.

Although the explicit anarchist movement is not well developed, anarchist sentiments are quite common in social movements, especially the feminist, environmental and nonviolence movements, though members may not describe their beliefs with the anarchist label. They are opposed to systems of rule, whether capitalist, communist or representative, and support instead methods of direct democracy such as consensus. They reject reform solutions of achieving power through individual advancement or parliamentary election, seeing bureaucratic hierarchies as part of the problem. Their aim is to empower individuals and communities rather than to gain power and use that power to "help" others.

This type of anarchist sensibility is widespread. Activists would agree that in many countries it has much more support than do vanguard left parties. This sensibility is seldom due to the direct influence of anarchists or anarchist writings. Rather, it appears to be a response to hierarchical systems of power, reflecting a belief that a more egalitarian society is both possible and desirable.[15]

Anarchism's greatest strengths are its general critique of domination and its alternative of self-management, which is both a means and an end. Although its critique remains focussed on the state, anarchism has broadened its ambit, a process that could easily be continued as new sources of oppression develop or are discovered.

Unlike Marxism and feminism, anarchism has only a small academic following, so anarchist theory has not received all that much attention. In particular, anarchism's critique of capitalism is undeveloped. The lynchpin of anarchist critique is the state, but if the power of multinational corporations is overshadowing that of states, anarchist critique needs updating or augmenting.

Anarchism is built on an assumption of rationality, and much anarchist activity centres around providing information about problems with the state and the advantages of self-management. Yet in a world in which commercial speech and government disinformation are becoming ever more sophisticated, and in which voices of rational critique remain in the margins, anarchism may need some-

thing more than small-scale alternatives and reliance on sponta-neous self-management in revolutionary situations.

Nonviolent action provides an ideal complement to anarchist theory and practice. Anarchists have often used nonviolent action but, as noted, many anarchists believe that armed popular struggle may be necessary. By instead seeking an alliance between nonvio-lence and anarchism, much more progress may be possible.

Voluntaryism

Imagine a market economy in which all interactions are based on voluntary agreements, and in which there is no state or other agency that can use force to protect property or enforce laws. That is the essence of voluntaryism.

> "The Voluntaryists are libertarians who have organized to promote non-political strategies to achieve a free society. We reject electoral politics, in theory and in practice, as incompatible with libertarian principles. Governments must cloak their actions in an aura of moral legitimacy in order to sustain their power, and political methods invariably strengthen that legitimacy. Voluntaryists seek instead to delegitimize the State through education, and we advocate withdrawal of the co-operation and tacit consent on which State power ultimately depends."[16]

Voluntaryism is a spin-off from libertarianism.[17] Libertarians are opposed to government, but then divide into libertarian socialists—who are more or less equivalent to anarchists—and free-market libertarians. Free-market libertarians oppose government, but most of them see a need for a minimal state whose main role would be to protect private property and run the legal system. Most of the other functions of the state would be dropped, such as running schools, providing welfare, and regulating workplace safety and pollution. All these functions would be handled by the market. For example, enterprises would offer education services and employees injured on the job could sue their employers. Libertarians trust the market to solve many problems, such as unemployment. For example, without minimum wage legislation, some enterprises would find it profitable to provide jobs for most of those presently unem-ployed. Charity would provide for those few still in need.

Voluntaryists adopt much of this model, but are opposed to the minimal state and the use of force to defend property. Instead, they argue that all economic arrangements should be entered into voluntarily. If one side breaks an agreement, for example by not providing goods promised in exchange for services rendered, then the aggrieved party could respond by not entering into further agreements and by notifying interested parties about the other side's behaviour. Since a bad reputation would have damaging effects in the long term, there would be a strong incentive to keep agreements.

But without the state, and without military forces, what is there to maintain order? The answer for voluntaryists is nonviolent action, for defence against aggression, enforcement of agreements and opposition to oppression. Voluntaryism can be considered to be a combination of a market economy and nonviolent action.

Voluntaryism is highly principled in terms of method. Because it is based on a rejection of the state, voluntaryists reject any method of change that relies on the state, including lobbying or voting. On the other hand, noncooperation with the state, such as refusing to pay taxes, serve on juries or send children to government schools, fits the voluntaryist model perfectly. This is in contrast with the Libertarian Party in the US, in which voting and getting elected are seen as means to gain power with the ultimate end of reducing the scope of the state. In voluntaryism, like sarvodaya and anarchism, the means are compatible with the ends.

Principle 1: cooperation. Voluntaryism is based on cooperative arrangements in a competitive economy. If someone else is offering a better deal, then there is an incentive to trade with them.

> "People engage in voluntary exchanges because they anticipate improving their lot; the only individuals capable of judging the merits of an exchange are the parties to it. Voluntaryism follows naturally if no one does anything to stop it. The interplay of natural property and exchanges results in a free market price system, which conveys the necessary information needed to make intelligent economic decisions."[18]

Principle 2: serving those in need. Voluntaryism does not have a built-in method of serving those most in need. For this, the system relies on voluntary service. However, this is far more likely than in a capitalist economy, since there is no state to monopolise welfare

provision. The routine use of voluntary agreements and nonviolent action would provide a favourable environment for helping others. Nevertheless, like other market systems, provision for those in need, especially those who have no way of helping themselves, is not a built-in feature of voluntaryism.

Principle 3: satisfying work. A voluntarily run market system would create many opportunities for satisfying work, because it would not be run by a few bosses for their own ends. Enterprises, like all activities, would be voluntarily organised, which would encourage cooperatives and other egalitarian structures rather than bureaucratic ones. Hence workers would have a strong influence on the work they did. They could choose to work individually (at least in certain occupations), in a small group or a larger organisation. This means that having satisfying work is a reasonable prospect. However, the market would drive down economic returns in areas where there are excess workers or low productivity, providing an incentive for workers to shift into other areas.

Principle 4: participation. Since all economic and other arrangements are voluntary, participation is built in to voluntaryism.

Principle 5: nonviolence. Voluntaryism relies on nonviolence in place of the state or any other form of organised violence. Nonviolent action is both a method of settling disputes and for defending communities. Thus nonviolence is both method and goal for voluntaryism.

Libertarianism has its greatest level of support in the US, which may be because that is where belief in the market is strongest. The Libertarian Party candidate has received the third highest number of votes in a number of presidential elections. Voluntaryism, though, is a tiny offshoot of libertarianism and has no organisational presence. Its principal vehicle is the newsletter *The Voluntaryist,* edited by Carl Watner.[19] Currently, then, voluntaryism exists primarily as an idea rather than a movement.

Watner, though, argues that the voluntaryist approach has been the de facto foundation of many productive economic and social activities, such as the evolution of industrial standards, private postal systems and philanthropy.[20] Another example is when corporations settle disputes using an outside arbitrator, independently of any government requirements or mechanisms.[21] This is far cheaper and

quicker than fighting through the courts. Any corporation that refuses the arbitrator's decision would lose credibility for any future arbitration, which provides a strong check on bad faith.

Watner argues that when activities are organised cooperatively, without government regulation, things usually work far more efficiently. It is when government steps in, with laws and regulations, that problems arise, including higher costs, unfair dealings and monopolies. While arbitration can be done entirely on a voluntary basis, often the state steps in to regulate the procedure, providing legal penalties for noncompliance. This can be taken to be an example of capitalism either crushing or coopting alternatives, as described in chapter 3, with the qualification that capitalism in this case means "state-regulated monopoly capitalism" or "actually existing capitalism."

The sort of capitalism supported by voluntaryists is indeed quite different from actually existing capitalism. With no state to defend private property, it would mean that large accumulations of capital would be impossible to sustain unless others respected them. For example, workers in an enterprise would have to reach agreement about entitlements to wages and equity in capital. The full implications of the voluntaryist picture remain to be worked out, but it is quite possible that large corporations of the present sort would be unsustainable, because they would not have state power to protect their far-flung operations if workers or consumers decided exploitation was occurring and withdrew cooperation or used direct action to push for changes. Furthermore, corporate owners and managers would have a hard time exercising dictatorial power since workers could withdraw to form separate companies or just refuse to accept directives. The upshot might well be a proliferation of much smaller enterprises, many of them self-managed internally, held together by networks and systems of agreement, themselves managed by enterprises that had built up high levels of trust. Just as an arbitrator who makes fair-minded decisions is more likely to be called on again, all sorts of "brokerage agents"—the necessary go-betweens in an efficient market—would have a strong incentive to be fair and be seen to be fair. This occurs already in areas such as judging or umpiring for sporting events. All participants have an interest in having fair judges, and those who are perceived as talented and fair will be given greater responsibilities.

Although the law might appear to be the source of order in communities, in many instances it is unimportant to the way people behave. Robert C. Ellickson, in a study of neighbourly dispute resolution in a ranching area in California, showed that local people use informal methods in accordance with local norms, even when those norms conflict with the law.[22] Voluntaryism thus has some basis in everyday behaviour.

As a strategy against capitalism, voluntaryism has the advantage that it accepts the market—which is what capitalism's defenders portray capitalism as being—while rejecting the power of the state. Voluntaryism thus highlights the violence that underpins capitalism. Voluntaryism builds on historical and current experiences of voluntary agreements, a process that can be expanded in small ways in all sorts of areas.

Voluntaryism, in its full-blown form involving total noncooperation with the state, is difficult for most people to follow, especially tax refusal, which is not easily possible in most occupations. Most people rely on or accept state-based services or impositions at least part of the time. If voluntaryism is to gain a wider appeal, then partial adherence to its principles would become common, as is the case with sarvodaya and anarchism, where supporters "live the alternative" to varying degrees depending on their circumstances.

A bigger problem is how voluntaryism can widen its appeal. Should some sort of a movement be built? How should it be structured? (Naturally, it would be a voluntary arrangement.) Are there campaigns to be undertaken? What should be the targets?

Voluntaryism has the greatest natural affinity to libertarianism, but has attracted only a small following by comparison. Is there scope for links with other social movements such as environmentalism and feminism? It is interesting to note that along with liberal feminism, socialist feminism and radical feminism, one of the lesser but still significant strands of feminism is anarcha-feminism, a synergy of anarchism and feminism. But there is, as yet, no voluntaryist feminism. Is it a possibility? And are there similar possibilities for other movements? If voluntaryism is to become a powerful vision for an economic future, and a basis for organising, then these are among the questions worth exploring.

Demarchy
Representative government is based on election of government officials who then make decisions that citizens must obey. The power of the state is used to enforce decisions. This system of rule is commonly called democracy, but at best it is indirect democracy, since citizens do not make political decisions themselves but only occasionally get to vote for representatives. Furthermore, the representatives are not bound by their election promises or by majority views in the electorate. Representative government might be said to give the illusion of popular control while ceding most power to elites, both those who are elected (politicians) and those who are not (corporate executives, government bureaucrats).[23] Representative government thus is an ideal accompaniment for capitalism, giving maximum legitimacy with minimal direct citizen control.

In contrast, direct democracy or participatory democracy is when people make decisions themselves. Self-management is basically another word for direct democracy.

One of the dilemmas of direct democracy is how to maximise participation without using up everyone's time. One method is the electronic referendum, in which an entire electorate votes immediately on a measure after a television debate. But even here participation is attenuated, since few people can actually join the discussion, much less help formulate the referendum proposal.

The anarchist solution is delegates and federations. However, those who are not delegates are not directly involved in higher-level discussions. The possible danger is that delegates gain excess power through their positions, and use this power to cement the resulting inequality.

Demarchy[24] is built around a different solution to direct democracy's participation dilemma. It is based around random selection and separation of functions. Imagine a community of some thousands or tens of thousands of people. Instead of there being a single decision-making body—an elected council, for example—there would be dozens of groups, each one dealing with just a single function, such as transport, land, harvests, manufacturing, education, arts, water, building, health and so forth. Each group would be made up of perhaps a dozen individuals chosen randomly from volunteers for that group. The groups would make decisions about their particular area.

Thus, rather than everyone being involved in every decision—a sure prescription for overload with direct democracy, or for concentration of power with representative government—every volunteer has an equal chance of being selected for groups of their choice. Everyone would still have full opportunity to lobby, write letters to newspapers, give testimony to groups and in various other ways be involved in debating the issues.

In demarchy, there is no state and no bureaucracies. All decision making and implementation is handled by the functional groups.

Some current systems of local government, such as town meetings in part of the US and municipalities in Norway, achieve high levels of citizen participation and government responsiveness to people's needs.[25] Demarchy builds on the advantages of this scale of decision making through random selection of decision makers and separation of functions, both of which reduce opportunities for a few individuals to entrench themselves in powerful and lucrative positions.

The advantage of random selection is that no one, however eloquent, devious or talented, is guaranteed a decision-making role. Furthermore, no one who is selected has a mandate. After all, they were selected by chance. So terms of office would be limited, with a staggering of the random selections to provide continuity.

So far demarchy is a model for a political alternative. It can be extended to economics in various ways. Functional groups responsible for economic matters, such as industry and agriculture, could contract work to bidders, which could be conventional enterprises or cooperatives. There could be functional groups that make decisions about land, for example requiring a rent for various uses or non-uses of types of land. There could be functional groups regulating the money supply. The basic principle is that groups of randomly selected citizens would decide how the economy runs.

Demarchy is a challenge to capitalism in two major ways. First, since it dispenses with the state, there is no military and hence no ultimate resort to organised violence to protect private property. Second, demarchy puts control over the operation of the economy directly in the hands of citizens.

Principle 1: cooperation. Demarchy relies heavily on trust in other citizens to make sensible decisions. Even those who are currently members of a functional group cannot be a member of *other* functional groups. This trust is bolstered by the process of random selec-

tion and the limited terms of office, rather like the reasons why citizens put trust in the jury system for criminal justice: there is far less potential for bias and corruption than when a few individuals have much more power, whether judges or politicians.

The trust aspect of demarchy suggests that cooperation would be more prominent than competition in economic decision-making. Even if a market is used, it is a grassroots-citizen-controlled market.

Principle 2: serving those in need. Demarchy does not explicitly specify policies in relation to need. Indeed, it is useful to note that demarchy is a framework for decision making that does not specify the content of decisions made. However, all the evidence available suggests that citizen decision makers, who are typical of the community in most regards, are more likely to be sensitive to those in need than are elected representatives, who are for the most part wealthier, more articulate and more power-seeking than average citizens. Furthermore, those people who are most concerned about serving those in need would have a strong incentive to nominate themselves, and other sympathisers, for those functional groups that make the most relevant policies.

Principle 3: satisfying work. As in the case of serving those in need, demarchy does not specify the nature of work but provides a framework that is conducive to making work satisfaction a priority. Work satisfaction is a high priority for most workers and there would be a strong incentive for people interested in this to nominate for relevant groups.

Principle 4: participation. Demarchy does not guarantee anyone a formal decision-making position, but instead gives everyone an equal chance of being members of groups of their choice. In addition, anyone who wants to can join in public debate, give testimony to groups and protest against unpopular decisions. The level of participation in the groups can be made as high as a community desires, by having more groups. In reality, not everyone wants to be involved in decision-making tasks.

On some controversial issues, such as abortion and drugs, partisans will try to get as many supporters as possible to nominate for the relevant groups, to increase their odds of having greater numbers. But since groups hear testimony, study evidence and discuss the issues in depth, not just any supporter will do. To be an effective advocate of a position, a partisan would need a deep grasp of principles and a

sophisticated understanding of arguments. A superficial prejudice could readily break down in the face of new information and dialogue, including awareness that those with contrary views are sincere and well-meaning. Therefore, the process of mobilising supporters to nominate for groups in controversial areas would have to be one promoting genuine understanding. This would be, in essence, a participatory process of community education, quite a contrast to the usual dynamic of advertising, lobbying and getting the numbers, with the aim of winning rather than educating.

Principle 5: nonviolence. Since there is no state in demarchy, the only way for the community to defend itself would be through direct citizen struggle, whether armed or nonviolent. With no state, demarchic groups have no means for enforcing their decisions, instead relying on argument and public trust: if there were such a means, it would be the equivalent of military forces. So the only really self-consistent foundation for demarchy is nonviolent action.

Historically, the closest thing to demarchy in practice was democracy in ancient Athens.[26] The Athenians used random selection for most public offices, typically selecting 10 individuals, one from each of the ten tribes, for a term of just one year. While any citizen could attend the assembly, much business was carried out in the council whose members were selected randomly. The Athenian system worked well for hundreds of years. It gave priority to participation over competence, and with multiple occupants of public offices, there were enough competent people to make the system work. Ancient Athens was far from an ideal participatory democracy, especially given that women, slaves and foreigners were excluded from decision-making, but it does show that random selection can serve as the foundation for a participatory society.

Since the 1970s, there have been a number of experiments with decision making by groups of randomly selected citizens, especially in Germany, the US and Britain.[27] Groups have been drawn together to look at challenging and contentious policy issues such as energy scenarios, town planning, transport options and dealing with mental illness. A typical "policy jury" or "planning cell" involves 10 to 25 people meeting for three to five days, hearing testimony from experts and partisans, discussing options and making recommendations. These experiments have been remarkably successful in showing the

power of participation. The randomly selected group members, many of whom had no prior knowledge of the topic nor much confidence in their ability to contribute, soon became enthusiastic participants. Most have reported very favourably on the experience, while the groups have usually come up with recommendations that seem sensible to others. What these experiments show is that making ordinary citizens into decision makers in today's world is a viable option. This provides strong support for key aspects of demarchy.

However, there are only a few people exploring demarchy and not even the beginning of a social movement to promote this as an alternative. So demarchy for the moment is primarily an idea. Furthermore, it requires much more theoretical development, especially in its economic dimensions.

Demarchy's greatest strength is its model of participation that does not give anyone a formal position of influence, no matter how brilliant, ambitious or ruthless. Whereas a village leader in sarvodaya or a high-level delegate in a federation of self-managing groups can use talent or influence to gain a significant position, this is not possible in demarchy, which is functionally decentralised.

A major weakness of demarchy is that it is difficult to turn it into a strategy for change. Unlike consensus or voting, which can be used with small groups, random selection and functional groups only come into their own in larger groups. This is not an overwhelming obstacle, though, since a local community or a large organisation could decide to try it, but it does mean that considerable effort is needed to build support. Another difficulty is that leaders of challenger groups, such as women's, environmental and peace groups, may not be supportive. After all, they would not be guaranteed a special role when decision makers are chosen randomly.

Comments on alternatives

Sarvodaya, anarchism, voluntaryism and demarchy are four possible alternatives to capitalism that are compatible with nonviolence both as a means and an end. There are other possible nonviolent alternatives, and no doubt further ones will be developed in the future. The point of describing these four is to show how alternatives can be assessed using a set of principles.

It is noteworthy that in each of the four models, the economic alternative is closely linked with a political alternative. In sarvodaya,

economic self-reliance is linked with village democracy. In anarchism, self-management systems are used in both economic and political domains. In voluntaryism, the political realm seems part of the process of voluntary agreements. In demarchy, random selection and functional groups are used in all spheres. Partly this reflects the rather arbitrary distinction between economics and politics, which always interact. In any case, it suggests that the process of seeking an alternative to capitalism should be tied to the process of seeking alternative decision-making systems, both in the corporate sphere (including in organisations) and in the sphere of governance.

One value in looking at alternatives is to give guidance for strategy. For a nonviolence strategy against capitalism, it is quite sufficient for most purposes to use nonviolent action and foster grassroots empowerment. That is very likely to move things in a useful direction. But at some point, it is necessary to look at social arrangements: the way society is and could be organised. More than looking at social arrangements, it is essential to experiment with them. It takes an enormous amount of trial and error to get the capitalist market working moderately well, and even then there are periodic crashes. Similarly, elections require a lot of social preparation, including education, rules, agreements, expectations and the like. The same sort of trial and error will certainly be needed to make any nonviolent alternative to capitalism work decently. A rigid plan is not appropriate, but general principles and some ideas for alternative arrangements can be helpful. To use nonviolent action simply as a technique, without some connection to creating different social arrangements, is a prescription for reform without any change in the basic system.

Examining alternatives gives some idea of goals for a consistently nonviolent challenge to capitalism. And because, in a nonviolence strategy, means need to be consistent with ends, this also gives guidance about suitable strategies, the topic of the remaining chapters.

Notes

1 Kunal Roy Chowdhuri, "Gandhi's theory of sarvodaya socialism," *Gandhi Marg,* Vol. 15, No. 1, April-June 1993, pp. 62-77; Amritananda Das, *Foundations of Gandhian Economics* (Bombay: Allied, 1979); Romesh Diwan, "Income distribution theories and Gandhian economics,"

Gandhi Marg, Vol. 6, No. 10, January 1985, pp. 707-720; Romesh Diwan and Mark Lutz (eds.) *Essays in Gandhian Economics* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1985); J. C. Kumarappa, *Swaraj for the Masses* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1948); J. C. Kumarappa, *Economy of Permanence: A Quest for a Social Order Based on Non-Violence* (Rajghat, Kashi.: Akhil Bharat Sarva-Seva-Sangh-Publications, 1958, 4th edition); Jai Narain, *Economic Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Sehgal, 1992); J. D. Sethi, "Gandhian philosophy and theory of international trade," *Gandhi Marg,* Vol. 11, No. 3, October-December 1989, pp. 303-326; Rama Shankar Singh, "Elements in Gandhian economics," *Gandhi Marg,* Vol. 12, No. 4, January-March 1991, pp. 454-466.

2 Quoted in Chowdhuri, pp. 66-67.

3 Romesh Diwan and Sushila Gidwani, "Elements in Gandhian economics," *Gandhi Marg,* Vol. 1, No. 5, August 1979, pp. 248-258, reprinted in Diwan and Lutz, pp. 54-65.

4 Detlef Kantowsky, *Sarvodaya: The Other Development* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1980). The movements in India and Sri Lanka are different in a number of respects but are grouped here for convenience.

5 On anarchism, see for example Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970).

6 See chapter 7.

7 Ken Smith, *Free is Cheaper* (Gloucester: John Ball Press, 1988), presents a case for free distribution, though not from an anarchist starting point.

8 This is the model of collectivist anarchism. An alternative model is free-market individualist anarchism, which accepts private property. Voluntaryism, discussed later, falls in this latter tradition.

9 See Guérin, op. cit.; Michael Raptis, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Chile: A Dossier on Workers' Participation in the Revolutionary Process* (London: Allison & Busby, 1974).

10 George Melnyk, *The Search for Community: From Utopia to a Co-operative Society* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1985); Jenny Thornley, *Workers' Co-operatives: Jobs and Dreams* (London: Heinemann, 1981). For a critique of cooperative practice, see Charles Landry, David Morley, Russell Southwood and Patrick Wright, *What a Way to Run a Railroad: An Analysis of Radical Failure* (London: Comedia, 1985).

11 Ken Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy: The Implications of Factory Occupations in Great Britain in the Early 'Seventies* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1981).

12 Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Freedom Press, 1982).

13 Allen Graubard, *Free the Children: Radical Reform and the Free School Movement* (New York: Random House, 1972); John Holt, *Instead of Education: Ways to Help People Do Things Better* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977); Jonathan Kozol, *Free Schools* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972); Joel Spring, *A Primer of Libertarian Education* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1975).

14 John F. C. Turner, *Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

15 This point is developed in Brian Martin, "Eliminating state crime by abolishing the state," in Jeffrey Ian Ross (ed.), *Controlling State Crime: An Introduction* (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 389-417,

16 "Statement of purpose," *The Voluntaryist,* No. 1, October 1982, p. 1. See also Carl Watner, "What we believe and why," *The Voluntaryist,* No. 57, August 1992, pp. 1, 7.

17 Voluntaryists can also draw links with a number of prior thinkers, such as the Stoics of ancient Greece. See Carl Watner, "Thinkers and groups of individuals who have contributed significant ideas or major written materials to the radical libertarian tradition," *The Voluntaryist,* No. 25, April 1987, pp. 1, 7.

18 Carl Watner, "The fundamentals of voluntaryism," *The Voluntaryist,* No. 40, October 1989, pp. 1, 3.

19 *The Voluntaryist,* PO Box 1275, Gramling SC 29348, USA. See also Carl Watner (ed.), *I Must Speak Out: The Best of* The Voluntaryist *1982-1999* (San Francisco: Fox & Wilkes, 1999), in which most of the articles cited here are reproduced.

20 Carl Watner, "Voluntaryism and the evolution of industrial standards," *The Voluntaryist,* No. 52, October 1991, pp. 1, 4-7; Carl Watner, "The most generous nation on earth: voluntaryism and American philanthropy," *The Voluntaryist,* No. 61, April 1993, pp. 1, 3-7; Carl Watner, "'Plunderers of the public revenue': voluntaryism and the mails," *The Voluntaryist,* No. 76, October 1995, pp. 1-7.

21 Carl Watner, "'Stateless, not lawless': voluntaryism and arbitration," *The Voluntaryist,* No. 84, February 1997, pp. 1-8.

22 Robert C. Ellickson, *Order Without Law: How Neighbors Settle Disputes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

23 Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Consequences of Consent: Elections, Citizen Control and Popular Acquiescence* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1982); Thomas S. Martin, "Unhinging all government: the defects of political representation," *Our Generation*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Fall 1988, pp. 1-21; Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988).

24 The word "demarchy" was coined by John Burnheim, whose book *Is Democracy Possible? The Alternative to Electoral Politics* (London: Polity Press, 1985) is the pioneering treatment of the model. See also F. E. Emery, *Toward Real Democracy* (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Labour, 1989); Brian Martin, "Democracy without elections," *Social Anarchism,* No. 21, 1995, pp. 18-51.

25 On New England town meetings, see Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980). I thank Ellen Elster for comments on Norwegian municipalities.

26 Mogens Herman Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles and Ideology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

27 Lyn Carson and Brian Martin, *Random Selection in Politics* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999).