

# Reply to Monatte

By [Christiaan Cornelissen](#)

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Topics: [Holland](#), [manufacturing](#)

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I do not believe that any anarchist could object to Monatte's speech. However, it should be agreed that he spoke solely from the point of view of a syndicalist militant and that from an anarchist viewpoint his speech requires completion.

Anarchists, we must support both syndicalism and direct action, but on one condition: that their goal be revolutionary and that they do not cease to aim at transforming today's society into a communist and libertarian society.

We cannot hide from the fact that neither syndicalism nor direct action are always, necessarily revolutionary. It is possible to use them for conservative, even reactionary ends. Thus the diamond workers of Amsterdam and Antwerp have greatly improved their working conditions without resorting to parliamentary means, by the sole use of direct syndicalist action. And what do we see now? The diamond cutters have made a sort of closed caste of their corporation, around which they have built a Chinese wall. They have limited the number of apprentices and they oppose ex-cutters returning to the trade once they have left. Certainly we cannot approve of such practices!

And neither is this a Dutch speciality. In England and in the United States, the unions have often practiced direct action. They have used direct action to create a state of privilege for their members; they prevent foreign workers from working even when they are members of unions; and lastly, being made up of "qualified" workers, they have at times opposed the movements of manual labourers, of "unqualified" workers. We can approve of none of this.

Similarly, we cannot approve of the attitude of the French and Swiss typographers who refuse to work with women. There is at present a threat of war between the United States and Japan, but the fault lies not with the American capitalists and bourgeoisie, who would draw even greater benefit from exploiting Japanese workers than American workers. No, it is the American workers themselves who are sparking off the war by violently opposing the importation of Japanese manpower.

Finally, there are also other forms of direct action that we must never cease to combat: for example, those that seek to oppose the introduction of machinery (linotypes, hoists, etc.), in other words the improvement of production through the improvement of the tools of production.

I intend to condense these ideas into the form of a motion that will set out which forms of syndicalism and direct action anarchists can support.

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## **Additional Information**

See [International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam](#) for context, source, and additional materials.