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## Skills for Action: talking & writing

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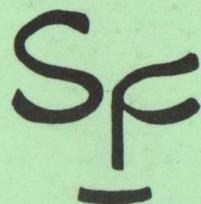
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Solidarity Federation recognises how crucial communication is, and how important self-education is in developing effective communication skills. This guide to effective speaking and writing is an example of putting this recognition into practice. It has been compiled from notes made at the Solidarity Federation 'Skills for Action' summer session entitled 'Talking & Writing', which was held at the Manchester Solidarity Centre in August 1998.

**The SelfEd Education Collective** is a diverse group of people within the Solidarity Federation. Its aim is to develop and spread the knowledge and ideas of anarcho-syndicalism. Importantly, it seeks to draw on the long tradition of anarcho-syndicalism in using alternative methods to achieve this aim. Only through controlling their own learning can people develop their self-confidence, enabling them to participate in democracy and to begin to fulfil their full potential in life. SelfEd puts the theory of self-education into practice.

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A Solidarity Federation Booklet

# Skills for Action: talking & writing

## Notes on effective communication

A Solidarity Federation Booklet written and produced by  
**SelfEd Education Collective**

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## Notes on effective communication.

## Introduction

The accepted wisdom is that, if you can speak and write 'properly', you are 'intelligent', if not, you are stupid. However, it is effectiveness of communication that matters, not whether a particular prescribed formula is followed or not.

To organise ourselves, we need to communicate effectively. In the past, Trade Unions placed great emphasis on communication but, as the Unions have declined in effectiveness, so this emphasis has been lost. The opportunities to develop these skills outside the narrow and often destructive confines of state education have thus declined markedly.

Solidarity Federation recognises how crucial communication is, and how important self-education is in developing effective communication skills. This guide to effective speaking and writing is an example of putting this recognition into practice. It has been compiled from notes made at a Solidarity Federation 'Skills for Action' discussion day, which was held at the Manchester Solidarity Centre in August 1998.

# SPEAKING IN PUBLIC

## Freedom Of Thought, Freedom Of Speech

Ideas of 'democracy' and 'freedom' are useless if you don't have the confidence to communicate in public. Anarcho-syndicalism emphasises self-organisation and participation within democratic structures. The cornerstone of this democratic self-organisation is meeting together in groups. It therefore follows that people must develop the confidence to speak in public, since they have to be able to participate openly in these meetings and public groups. Such communication skills are crucial to the success of any self-organised libertarian organisation or society.

Speaking in a meeting is very stressful at first. If this common fear is not addressed, it is left up to the most confident/experienced people present to communicate with each other and on behalf of those who feel unable to. This is unlikely to help the situation, and can make people lose self-confidence further. Ignoring this problem creates a vacuum in which alienation flourishes. Addressing the problem means actively finding ways of empowering new/less confident people so they can participate equally. Practically, it means filling the vacuum - giving people the opportunity to gain communication skills and confidence; it means self-education.

So it follows that anarcho-syndicalist organisations such as the Solidarity Federation must actively help existing and new members to develop their verbal communication skills.

Within Solidarity Federation groups, who meet regularly, it is the responsibility of the group to give practical help, encouragement and advice to assist people to feel relaxed and able to communicate whenever they choose. In other words, in meetings, everyone present has the right to speak and therefore the right to the communication skills and the confidence they need to do this. On the other hand, everyone also has the duty to assist others in getting their message across, to allow for and consider the communication skills and the opinions of others, and to play their part in ensuring that the meeting is structured so that everyone can communicate what they want to it.

When it comes to people getting up and presenting prepared talks, there are some specific techniques that can be useful. These form the basis of the remainder of the workshop.

# Public Meetings

There are a number of ways for speakers to get around the intimidation that can arise in meeting situations (even in small meetings). Firstly, we must recognise that there is no single 'correct' method - everyone develops their own skills and gets to know the best approach to use for them. Secondly, there are different types of meeting. The two which we will concentrate on here are: (a) Persuasive - an action-orientated meeting, where the speaker might be arguing for a certain course of action, and (b) Descriptive - a meeting where the speaker wants to explain an idea or communicate information.

## The Persuasive Meeting

This is probably the easiest meeting to make interesting - because you as a speaker will be arguing for something that you feel very strongly about. Also, the audience knows your agenda and it is clear what you want.

You must feel strongly about your subject. This means your message can be injected with passion quite naturally. Passion generates interest - it can also lead to haranguing or shouting, or even choking up and breaking down in tears. Even if your voice is faltering, or your sentences are no longer flowing, passion helps to impress upon people how strongly you feel. Letting go of your emotions is a key persuasive tool. It is this that carries you through and keeps the audience's attention.

However, it is important not to lose the message in the emotion! Always keep to the forefront of your thoughts what it is you want out of the meeting. Be clear what your aims and objectives are. Structure your talk so that your conclusion is clear and there is a natural progression towards this conclusion.

## The Descriptive Meeting

Explaining ideas may appear less contentious and therefore easier than persuading people, but it can actually be more problematic. If you are dealing with a 'dry' or technical topic (say, European Monetary Union), shouting and bawling at people won't work. Passion can't be relied upon to get you through any more.

Firstly, you need to find ways of keeping the audience's attention. This means making the talk fresh and relevant. To get over the "dryness" of some topics, it is useful to expose any humour, topicality or direct connection with the audience. For example, break the ice with self-deprecating humour. Make a point about the journey to the talk, or something that has just happened which is relevant to the topic and the people in the room.

Secondly, even if your delivery is good, you need to be confident in the substance of your message - that it is relevant and important and useful.

# Preparation and Delivery

There are a number of approaches to the actual preparation and delivery of a talk. Whichever you use, remember that, when talking in front of people, spontaneity cannot be relied upon to happen. Good preparation is the key.

## 1. Reading out a prepared speech.

This works only if you can read out loud well. It can get around the problem of 'what do I say next?' and the danger of 'freezing' (or thinking that you might freeze - which can cause you to do it). One of the problems is that it becomes clear to the audience that you are reading. People may then think 'why did I come here, I could have read it myself'. When people attend a talk, they expect to see more than reading. Politicians get around this by using invisible screens, etc., and by developing their reading technique so that it appears quite spontaneous. They also give very few different speeches, so they learn and deliver the same lines over and over again.

Obviously, you will have to write your speech out, but remember that the spoken word is different from the written word. A speech is different from an essay. You must go over it a few times, and check that you have written down what somebody might say, not what they might write! You should write in apparently 'spontaneous' asides, to keep the interest going.

## 2. Using Speaker's Notes.

This is the most common approach, where the speaker uses notes as prompts. Beware, this approach can lead to the worst of both worlds; you have to break periodically to refer to your notes (so it looks like you are reading), while at the same time, you also have to memorise the parts between the notes (so there is also the fear of forgetting a part of your talk and freezing). Also, you have to be confident of not losing your place in your notes. If you are nervous, this can easily happen. Again, preparation is the key. Write the speech out in full and then 'boil it down' into notes. Practice from the notes and see how well you remember and link the points. On the plus side, it does provide some security against coming across as reading (between looking at your notes) and also some security against freezing and forgetting (because you do have some notes to refer back to). Also, it is a common form of speaking, so the audience is likely to be familiar with the speaker glancing down at their notes from time to time.

Variations on this theme might include using cards with the first sentence of each section of your speech on each one, or with particular quotes you might want to use. Visual aids may even be used - e.g. overhead projectors with notes on them. People can both see and hear the message this way and

you don't need to keep looking down. The speaker also escapes the problem of everyone staring intently at them all the time! The major problems with such visual aids are that they aren't always working or available, they introduce an often unwelcome 'school' type element, and people often don't want to or can't effectively read while they are listening. Thus, you lose their concentration, attention, and the diversion detracts from the message.

## 3. No notes.

Speaking without notes, you still have to prepare them, but you do the talking from memory. The key advantage here is that you don't have to switch your attention between the written word and the spoken word. This transfer is much more difficult for some people than others, but it always requires part of your concentration. If you have the confidence to speak without notes and can overcome the fear of forgetting and freezing, then this is the best approach. The initial approach is the same as all techniques; you have to write out your speech in full, then boil it down to notes. From these notes, you then make a shortened plan which you can memorise. Then, as you deliver the talk, each of the points on the plan will lead your memory to the sections that you had written in your full talk. Practice the speech a few times while you're doing the washing up, etc. to ensure these links work.

No notes may seem to be only for the experienced, but it can also be a good approach for people who are feeling nervous. If you have practised it and you know you can remember it, you can feel confident that you are prepared. This confidence helps overcome nerves.

# 18 Tips on Public Speaking

- 1 Don't be conned into doing a topic you have no interest in. Passion and interest in your topic are necessary. Make sure it's your decision.
- 2 Give yourself time to prepare (think about it for weeks if possible, and spend a few evenings writing and re-writing). Last minute speeches are disastrous. Good preparation also boosts confidence.
- 3 Dummy run: Practice different ways of doing talks - get your local Solidarity Federation group to participate, within a friendly and sympathetic environment.
- 4 There's no right way to speak. Anyone can speak in public. As long as it's clear and understandable, it doesn't matter what your accent, background or disposition is like. Good preparation, good content, familiarity and confidence is all you need. If you have something useful to say, your own style can work.
- 5 Avoid going over 'worst case scenarios' - that someone might rip your argument apart, or think you're stupid, etc... If your preparation and topic is good, it won't happen. You should simply relax on the night before your talk.
- 6 Don't get there too early, especially if you're nervous of people weighing you up. Get there at most an hour before, and spend the time going over in your head what you're going to say.
- 7 Don't drink alcohol to help your nerves; it is a false comfort.
- 8 Always have someone (preferably known/sympathetic to you) to chair the meeting. They can introduce you, direct questions to you, prevent interruptions, and generally organise the meeting. They also reduce the feeling of isolation.
- 9 Getting started is the worst bit. Remember, fear and nerves usually disappear less than 5 minutes into the talk.
- 10 Freezing: If you freeze, the main thing is to get started again, and everything will come back. If you're using notes, refer to them to get back on track. Otherwise, practice or have an emergency line, e.g. "so, as I was saying, this talk is about ....". Another way is to say "my mind's gone blank". It will break the ice and relax you and the audience - they will generally be on your side.
- 11 The message is everything. Patchy presentation doesn't matter if you have a well-argued message.

- 12 Ignore nerves and worry. Again, people will warm to you if you're nervous - they know public speaking is nerve-wracking. Don't worry about getting embarrassed or going red. People will identify with you as being human. You can't stop yourself looking nervous or embarrassed, so ignore it and get on with the talk.
- 13 Don't judge yourself by people's faces. Some may look asleep, but they could be the ones to ask all the questions afterwards. Make eye contact and address your audience, but do not look for any messages from them while you are speaking.
- 14 Controversy: It's easy to feel that you want to be loved, but don't be surprised if people disagree with you. It's not your ability as a speaker that's wrong. If the audience connects with you and gets the message, it worked. Discussion and argument is usually a better sign than no one saying anything, but equally, don't be put off by silence. People are often not used to speaking up - society has brought us all up to be consumers (not producers) of ideas, so we generally find it hard to make verbal contributions in public.
- 15 Familiarity: Remember, actors, musicians, etc. still get stage fright, even after years of experience. The fear thing always remains. Develop your own routine of preparing and delivering. Pick topics you feel familiar with, especially for your first few talks. Professionals only have a few basic speeches, which they develop and alter over the years.
- 16 Avoid ad-libbing. Good speakers may seem to ad-lib, but it is all planned either on paper or in their head. Even when you want to contribute to a group meeting from the floor of a meeting, put your hand up and then use the time until it's your turn to speak to go over on paper, or in your head, what point you are going to make and why.
- 17 Never go away thinking it was a disaster. Instead, always look at how to improve it next time. Judge yourself by how well you put across the points you wanted. Go back and look at your preparation. Was it too cluttered? Did it hang together properly?
- 18 Solidarity in improvement: If you don't know how to improve, seek advice from friends in Solidarity Federation - preferably people who have also done public speaking. Get them to help you test out new improvements to the message, technique and delivery.

# WRITING for ACTION

## Introduction

There are plenty of parallels between talking and writing as forms of communication, for example, in the techniques for persuading and describing. However, the main problem facing many would-be writers is the question of what is 'good' writing and how it 'should' be done. Again, like talking, the key to measuring whether writing is 'good' is whether it is effective - whether it succeeds in getting the message across that you wanted to communicate.

Most people have had someone try to shame them at some point for their writing 'mistakes'. There is no room for 'shame' in developing writing skills. The 'Queens English' is an irrelevant notion, as is 'correct' writing. The idea of correctness revolves around a few privileged people trying to elevate their power and status over everyone else. In reality, languages are always changing, both in terms of words we use and the way we spell, punctuate and order them in writing. We don't talk of 'correct' food, clothing etc., and we shouldn't talk of 'correct' language or writing. Rather than asking yourself what is the 'correct' way to write, ask what you want to write about and why.

## Real Writing Skills

Writing well is not about using correct English, it is about using persuasion and/or information to get a message across. Often, both are involved, a typical formula being; argue and persuade (make your point) first, then back up with facts and information later. Getting spelling and grammar 'right' means getting into a form which people are familiar with. It is a minor problem - and the skills and tools are available to assist with this. They are called 'secretarial skills' and many can be done with a computer spellchecker or by getting one or two friends to proof-read it and make alterations. The real writing skills are the developing and ordering of thoughts, ideas and arguments. Just as teaching people to write should not be about exerting power over them, so writing should not be about exerting power over readers either. This means deliberately trying to be clever or confuse or 'get one over on' the reader is wrong. It does not help get the point across, quite the opposite. Effective writing is about passing on important arguments and information, not trying to alienate people. Don't use words or terms because they will show how clever you are - the genuine reader will just see how clever you aren't! Using French phrases in persuasive English writing is usually posing twaddle. Real writing skills mean being able to get points across with **clarity** and simplicity, showing **comprehension** and understanding, and making effective **communication** (whether of information and/or a case/agenda/set of thoughts).

# Clarity in Writing

The following are general pointers which are not always hard and fast rules, but which generally will help to improve the clarity and strength of the message in your writing.

## 1. CLARITY AT WORD LEVEL

Generally, avoid words which are unnecessarily long, unfamiliar or nouns made out of verbs.

*I decisioned the necessifaction of the resignatory action/option due to the dangerousity of the trendflowing of foreign policy away from our originatious careful coursing towards consistensivity, purposity, steadfastnitude, and above all, clarity.*

Power can come across by making the reader feel weak, e.g. by using long, unfamiliar words, often accidentally. To avoid this, use words derived from Anglo-Saxon, which tend to be shorter and more direct, whereas those from Latin tend to be longer and sound more complex. There are many synonyms - words that mean the same. For example, guess which have the Latin roots in the following pairs; acquisition/get, examination/test, fabrication/make, utilisation/use, paedophilia/child abuse, implementation/bring in.

Another thing to avoid is jargon. Words which are specialist or likely to be not widely known should be explained if they do have to be used. Acronyms should also be explained, unless they are generally used, such as the 'BBC'. Obscurity is at best useless, at worst it is used to hide tyranny. People are and should be suspicious of obscure writing, it is usually deliberately obscure in order to hide something which the writer wants to keep from the reader.

## 2. CLARITY AT SENTENCE LEVEL

**Firstly, the use of passive, rather than active verbs, changes the meaning implied by your writing.**

For example, 'They killed Mrs Brown' becomes 'Mrs Brown was killed'. Using the passive takes away the crudity and directness of the action (since the verb becomes more complex and the perpetrator of the action is no longer mentioned or is mentioned later in the sentence). The passive is useful to emphasise the victim/recipient of a certain action. It can also be used when you want to take the emphasis off the doer (e.g. "six black youths shot" - no mention of the police shooting them). Generally, if you want to be direct about the action that took place, avoid the passive.

**Secondly, avoid too much adding on of extra comments before you**

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### make your point (called post-modification).

This is when the verb is put after a load of interrelated ideas. It is confusing and hard for the brain to process. Ways around it are to split the sentence into two or more shorter sentences, and to bring the verb to the beginning.

The core of any sentence is a verb, with a noun before it. In these examples, the point is the main verb (in CAPITALS), but there is a sequence of interconnected nouns (underlined) before it. Usually, the first one goes with the verb, but the reader has to keep all the extra qualifications in mind, before the connection is finally made. The linking words that add on these qualifying comments are in bold.

How Ann Salisbury can *claim that* Pam Dawber's anger at not receiving her fair share of acclaim for Mork and Mindy's success derives from a fragile ego ESCAPES me.

WHAT 'escapes me'?

It also *argued that* the increasing fear that falling birth rates could lead to a future shortage of cheap labour COULD BE AVOIDED.

WHAT could be avoided?

Nor do we HEAR much from Labour about the social inequality () women suffer which forces them to accept low paid, unskilled shift work being created by the growing service sector.

WHAT... don't we hear much about?

### 3. MANIPULATION OF AUDIENCE: [RHETORIC]

We are consumers and recipients of rhetoric, but we don't tend to use it ourselves because we are not taught it. It by-passes the brain and excites us or goes to the gut. Rhetoric is the use of emotive words. However, in using it, there is a need to achieve balance. Don't overdo it. It can be balanced with your statistics, dry accounts and facts, etc. There is no easy answer as to "how much rhetoric is useful". It depends on the reader's taste. Too much can be the equivalent to "shouting and haranguing" at a meeting. Perhaps the best way to judge is to ask "is the message clear enough".

Rhetorical techniques usually revolve around providing them with some particular patterns of words - lists of three (phrases repeated three times for effect), parallelism (balance/reversal/contrast, etc. of phrases), alliteration

(successive words with the same start letter), etc. or using words & images which generate an emotional response.

John Major's speech writers used loads of rhetorical tools:

I want to see wealth cascading **down the generations**, a tapestry of talents **in a classless society**, ending false and futile **divisions based on class and envy**. **I want to nail Labour's NHS privatisation lie to the wall of truth**. **I hope the whole country is listening- let me make it even clearer: There will be no charges for hospital treatment, no charges for visits to the doctor, no privatisation of health care, neither piecemeal, nor in part, nor in whole. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not after the next election. Not ever while I'm Prime Minister.** **I want closer union between states. Not a federal merger of states. That is our policy. I shall put** the interests of our country before any agreement. Not any agreement before the interests of our country. **I have travelled a long road from Coldharbour Lane in Brixton to 10 Downing Street. Just as the Conservatives have provided me with a party of opportunity, I want to create a country of opportunity. There are no barriers in our party, just as there will be no barriers in the Britain we are building together.** **I want to offer the people a strong economy, free from the threat of inflation, in which** taxes could fall, and savings grow.

The following is a more humble and deserving passage, but nevertheless an expertly rhetorical, emotional and yet clear message.

*My name is Hinmatuhelokut. I have been asked to show you my heart. I am glad to have a chance to do so now. I want the white man to understand my people. He has many words to tell how my people look to him, but it does not require many words to speak the truth. What I have to say will come from my heart and I will speak it with a straight tongue. The Great Spirit is looking at me and will hear me. I have heard talk and talk, but nothing is done. Good words do not last long, unless they amount to something. Words do not pay for dead people. They do not pay for my country, now overrun by white men. They do not protect my father's grave. They do not pay for my horses and cattle. Good words will not give me back my children. Good words will not give my people good health and stop them from dying. Good words will not get my people a home, where they can live in peace and take care of themselves.*

*I am tired of talk that comes to nothing. It makes my heart sick when I remember all the good words and all the broken promises. If the white man wants to live in peace with the Indians, he can live in peace. There need be no trouble. Treat all men alike. Give all the same law. Give them even chance to live and grow. All men were made by the same Great Spirit Chief. They are all brothers. The earth is the mother of all people and all people should have the same rights. If you tie a horse to a stake, do you expect him to grow fat? If you pin an Indian to a small plot of earth, he will not be content, nor will he grow and prosper. I only ask*

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of the government to be treated as all other men are treated. When I think of our condition, my heart is heavy.

Let me be a free man: free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to think and talk and act for myself, and I will obey every law or submit to the penalty. There will be one sky above, one country around us and one government for all. Then the Great Spirit Chief will smile upon this land. Hinmatuhelokut has spoken for his people.

Examples of Rhetoric from DA articles - can they be made more effective?, are they overdone?

Lists of Threes

“...pro-family movement which is (1) socially conservative, (2) overtly anti-feminist and above all, (3) anti-homosexual.”

Parallelism & Contrast

“But capitalism’s requirement for more women workers has **little to do with** women’s *rights* and **everything to do with** the greater *exploitation* of women.”

Alliteration

“...the growing number of **fatherless families**...”

Imagery

Inappropriate - “...their support among women beginning to haemorrhage alarmingly...”

Emotive Language

“Accompanying this economic **blackmail**, the Labour **government** plans to introduce some form of direct **state control** over “**wayward**” **children** and “**bad**” **parents**, though, as yet, they appear unsure of how such **draconian state intervention** can be made to work.”

Tautology

“...a **whole host** of regressive legislation...”

Things to Avoid

Rhetoric is not always a positive addition to a piece of writing. It should be used sparingly, and in the knowledge that readers are sophisticated in their detection of rhetorical devices, and may become suspicious if a passage is laden with such things. Specifically, emotive language is often a ‘turn off’, especially if it involves using terms which are out of context, sound odd, or are clearly laden with venom.

Tautology - using extra similar-meaning words for emphasis is also often best avoided, as it makes sentences longer and often adds no more meaning. Similarly, using tentative expressions - ‘It would appear that’, ‘It would seem that’, ‘It is perhaps’ - suggests the writer is unsure, and is consequently not very persuasive. The opposite - stating very assertively that people have ‘always’ done this or ‘everyone’ feels that, etc. is often equally unbelievable, and writers should not attribute things to a whole group of people (e.g. the Catholics all...)

Finally, a piece of writing should have a degree of style about it. Readers can detect if one writer writes the first part and another writes the second part of a passage. This is because they bring their own style to it. A mixed style, e.g. where direct or colloquial forms of writing are alternated with more abstract or complex sentence structures, may confuse or unbalance the reader. While alternated short and long sentences may work well, the style in which they are written should be kept reasonably consistent throughout the piece.

Structure of Writing

Journalistic structure is very different from other writing, such as letters, essays and academic reports. Use the first paragraph, and especially the first sentence, to grab the reader’s attention. By the end of the second paragraph you must make the reader feel that it’s worth carrying on. You therefore have to make your essential points early on in your article. You can then use the rest of the article to back up your main points.

The writer should be clear about the point, or message, from very early on in the piece - and so should the reader. You are attempting to test or try something, your writing should have structure and purpose. Think of it as ‘a trial’, with the writer as barrister arguing the case to convince a judge and jury. Once the purpose (aim) is made clear, the ensuing argument must be strong, clear & fair. Readers are invariably knowledgeable & dispassionate, therefore the style and tone need to be appropriately formal and subtle. Never underestimate - people are very sophisticated readers, and attempts to do so invariably appear patronising, pompous, etc.

# Writing Articles for DA

You are welcome to send stuff into Direct Action magazine unsolicited, or contact DA first to ask about material or discuss ideas, etc. DA can always use high quality 'copy'. It competes on the magazine racks with rags which have been written by full-time professionals - journalists. So what sort of 'journalistic style' should DA contributors like you be aiming for, and how can you improve your contributions? Here are some pointers for structure and format.

- ✓ **The question/title should be catchy but relevant (remember, it may be changed to fit with other article titles, etc. in the overall DA style)**
- ✓ **Introduction- chance to make the issues absolutely clear. This often involves a definition of terms, and probably a brief indication/summary of the argument to follow. This should certainly also exist in note form.**
- ✓ **The overall structure: clear progression and argument. A paragraph deals with each point in turn, with the order chosen for greatest effect- often building up to the strongest point.**
- ✓ **Each paragraph should make one point relevant to the question/ topic. 'Claims' should be supported by evidence, logic, etc.**
- ✓ **Some paragraphs may play 'devil's advocate', forecasting possible objections from an opposing point of view. Present the possible alternative views with their evidence, but explain why it may be discounted.**
- ✓ **The conclusion is the writer's chance to recap on the points of the argument for the benefit of the 'jury', and to indicate what the final decision should be on the question suggested by the title.**

While this rather classic essay structure may not have to strictly be adhered to, some elements of it are always relevant, irrespective of the size and style of the piece. For example, you should always have a clear plan, starting with a well-chosen title and an introduction along the lines indicated above. Your central aim should be clear to the reader. You should be 'fair' to all arguments around the topic at all times - dismissals and omissions will be looked on with suspicion. For all your main points, ask yourself 'why', and explain the logic behind your point clearly in the text. Finally, build up to a conclusion - and end with a few well-chosen sentences which neatly summarise the most powerful, important and central part of your case.

## Journalistic Style

Most newspaper and magazine copy is commercial, attention-grabbing, pandering to bigotry, talking down to the audience, etc. In short, it is not what DA wants.

However, we do want to get messages across in the most accessible way. People must find what they read interesting, challenging to their assumptions and society's 'norms' and, above all, convincing. The differences between what DA wants and what commercial rags want lead to one big problem and one big opportunity.

The problem is that the message we want to get across is often less familiar than 'mainstream' ideas, and may be difficult to explain, with lots of questions arising from each point. For example, persuading the reader about a future libertarian society may involve unfamiliar ground for them, and throw up more questions than it can answer. Firstly, writers must get around this by choosing the size and scope of the topic carefully, and by explaining to the reader what will and won't be discussed, and why. This makes the topic simpler to deal with. Secondly, the accessibility problem can be dealt with by using the techniques of writing covered in the writing workshop above. While rhetoric and other literary devices are used and abused by commercial rags, this does not mean we can't use them! Rhetoric is used because it is persuasive and it works. As long as such tools are used in accordance with libertarian principles, feel free to use any device you think will be effective (which means not cheesy!) Obviously, using bigotry to 'make a connection' with readers is out, but achieving this connection by pointing out a common predicament we are all in is fine.

The opportunity which DA writers have which commercial writers generally don't is that we are free to write with clear logic and express ourselves openly. Commercial writers have to think about their business, and they have to support the system. This means their arguments are invariably inconclusive or selective, to shed the best light on the commercial world. DA writers, by contrast, have the benefit of being able to call on theory and logic which is not twisted by having to fit in the commercial world. For example, the left wing press may criticise Blair for embracing the market, but we can say the root cause is that we, as a society, elect leaders, so such things are inevitable. Our critique is much more powerful, and using this is both the most complex part of the writer's job, and the most important - in terms of maximising the opportunity to make DA more readable and interesting than the commercial rags which sell alongside it.

'DA thinks this', 'SolFed thinks that', 'anarcho-syndicalists should be doing this', etc. are phrases which should be used exceedingly sparingly, if

# Writing Articles for DA

ever - they indicate there is an 'axe to grind', and that there is an us (writers/magazine) and them (readers, general public). This is not the way it is.

Always be prepared to re-read your piece a few days later, and make substantial changes - these will usually further improve it. Especially, try to cut it 'down to the bone' on subsequent re-drafts - this invariably condenses your points out and makes the article far more exciting, engaging and hard-hitting than any earlier drafts would have been.

## Finalising and getting it to DA

- 1** Final articles or pieces for publication should be typed at minimum 12-point size, or preferably, sent in PC text/word format on a floppy disk (enclose a printed out copy if possible).
- 2** ALWAYS put TWO spaces at the beginning of EVERY sentence.
- 3** Spell-check and grammar check if possible.
- 4** Don't add fancy fonts, headers and footers, etc., they only cause problems - just stick to the words, we'll make it look nice.
- 5** ALWAYS look out for IMAGES and GRAPHICS to go with your literary imagery.
- 6** Write a subheading trailer (1-2 short sentences leading the reader in) and an introduction (2-3 sentences) which launch the article. These 2 devices are invariably used in DA as in other 'heavyish' magazines to lower the reader gently into the topic...
- 7** Be prepared to have your text changed without notice by the DA Collective - if you want to copyright or control any editorial changes, you MUST tell us with your submission. We do not believe in copyright, but instead try to achieve the BEST COLLECTIVE RESULT - so we assume all copy is anti-copyright. However, we do promise to make every effort NEVER to change the sense or meaning or spirit of your articles.
- 8** DA also has a policy of not stating authorship - we do not support the formation of 'cultish' behaviour towards particular individuals. DA is a COLLECTIVE EFFORT. When you contribute, you are entitled to take a COLLECTIVE SHARE of the credit!
- 9** DA has very strict COPY DEADLINES and is THEMED, which means, if you want to target your article into a particular issue, contact DA first. Otherwise, get writing!
- 10** Send your results and queries to - DA, PO Box 1095, Sheffield, S2 4YR (ansaphone 0161 232 7889 for questions/contacts, etc.)