

The New Anarchism

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August 1919

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This is not the beginning of a new cult. It is a restatement of what we want and what we intend to do towards realising it. The New Anarchism is the old Anarchism in new clothes. It is set out in a way that he who runs may read.

What Anarchists Want.

We want to place certain ideas before the people. These ideas we believe will contribute towards the making of a better people and a better world. Anarchists are not alone in holding such ideas. But the ideas of Anarchists differ essentially from others in some main points.

The world has so evolved by now that most nations are more or less self-governing States. That is to say, we have nations such as the British, French, German and many others spread over the five continents. They are Empires, Monarchies, Republics, according as the main body of each nation has asserted itself. In the main, however, the controlling force is the Government, however it may be elected. These Governments rule the people by laws already framed, new laws being added as circumstances arise.

The main body of the people have had nothing to do with the framing of these laws; they were there when they were born into the world. The new laws are invariably framed without consulting the people. These laws are made for the preservation of the State or the defence of the realm.

Most of these laws are property-protecting laws. They are laws against theft of property, destruction of property. And as most of the property is held by a few "owners," it follows that the laws are made for the benefit of the few, not for the benefit of the nation.

A man who starves has no right to take bread where he may find it. That is one instance.

The laws are upheld by judges, lawyers, policemen, jailers and hangmen. Property inside the country is protected in this way. Outside the country the property of individuals in a nation is protected by an army and a navy. These are to prevent other nations interfering with the rights of property of other people resident or holding property in those countries. The property in any given country is, as we said, held by a few. The land belongs to a few landlords. The mills, mines, factories, docks, ships, and so forth are held by a few capitalists. The rest of the nation, having no property from which to get a living, have to work for these property owners. This is the case in all countries. Each nation is, therefore, divided into the Haves and the Have-nots: the masters and the workers. This is described by most Socialists as the two classes of capitalists and workers (or proletariat).

Now as to the "rights of property." The land was made by no one; consequently, it cannot have "owners." The whole of the nation is, therefore, entitled to free access to the land. The mills, factories, docks, ships, and so forth were made by the workers; the pretence that the workers were paid for the work will not hold. The full value of work done is never paid; otherwise there would be no "profit." The workers are, therefore, robbed of the value of their work in the form of "profit."

So far the Anarchists and the Socialists agree. Where they differ is in the cure. The Socialists want all the land and all the industries, all the buildings and the ships to belong to the nation, nominally, but really to the State. This State will be a Parliament elected by the people, and this State will control all industry. Consequently there will be only one master—the State—and the people will have to work on the terms of the State. This State will control everything, and,

consequently, the State will have to make laws for the control of the people. In order to uphold these laws the State must have recourse to some punishments that will make the disobedient obey these laws. The people, then, will be well housed and fed, but they will be exploited by the State. In other words, they will still be slaves, although well-fed slaves.

The Anarchists, being for the fullest freedom possible, are in all cases against the State; that is to say, against government. The individual is unable to develop where he is controlled from above; progress and evolution are thereby hindered. The individual is, however, not always able to battle for himself; and individualism lends itself to abuse by the strong, who invariably turn out despots or tyrants. They can only develop themselves at the expense of the community. The Anarchist is, therefore, for co-operation, or a Communistic state of society. The Law of Nature is that the best progress is made where individuals are bound together by mutual aid. With the present rate of progress of civilisation, it is impossible for an individual to be independent of others.

The Anarchist suggests, therefore, that the best form of society, and the most natural, is where men can form together in free organisations for the common good. These free organisations are impossible under a Government, therefore government must go. No free organisation can do anything unless there is free access to the land and to industry. The land and industry are held by a few “owners” as private property. It follows then that private property must go.

The essence of Anarchism, therefore, is free land and free industry. The people, organising themselves in groups and communities, will then be able to supply all their wants without the interference of a State or Government. And since the people will look after their own wants, there will be no money, either as wages or for exchange. This means the abolition of the wage system.

Free land, free industry, free exchange, and the people looking after themselves in free organisations—this is the essence of Anarchism. This is what Anarchists want. We now come to

How It Will Be Done.

The Anarchists do not pretend to put forth a cut-and-dried plan, an easy method of changing society for the better. The saving of the people must be the work of the people themselves. They have only to decide what they want done and to do it. This is the main thing of all, that this change must be accomplished by the people themselves. They have only to take over the land and work it. They have only to take over industry and run it for the good of all. This does not mean that the land and industry will be run on the same lines as at present. It is sufficient to say that all useless work will be cut out, and science brought to the aid of cultivation and industry. This will save an enormous amount of labour, and mean more leisure all round.

Anarchists want to hasten this change; they, therefore, do all they can to spread their ideas by publishing literature and by speaking. They try always to point out that any trouble and distress that may arise cannot be cured by the State. The trouble (or “questions”) of poverty, unemployment, lack of housing, and so on, are part and parcel of the present system of ownership by the few and toil by the many. They can only be done away with by changing the whole system, and running the country as the Anarchists suggest.

It is not necessary for the people to proclaim themselves Anarchists—and wait for something to happen. They will have to make something happen by doing it themselves. Once they have got the idea, it only remains to be carried out, and they are the ones to do it.

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Freedom (London) 33 no. 363 (August, 1919): 47

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