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Why We Are Anarchists

Commonweal Anarchist Group

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1894

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these means are found by independent forerunners who open up new paths, like our comrades Pini, or Ravachol, or Pallas, and many others, or by independent collective action of a greater number, or any other natural development. It is not our part to be horrified at the incidents that may occur in this fight here and there, we leave this to the upholders of the present system who are showing off so much hypocritical morality and “humanity” when speaking of the “crimes” of Anarchists. Our ways and means, our host of comrades are inexhaustible; because, we repeat, we are not a sect of a certain limited opinion, but the exponents of the principle of free action, free development itself, which is the only basis of all human and organic development in general. We teach the people by our example to remove all the fetters laid on the free development of Humanity by the State, law and authority, and the rest: a better state of things will and must come by itself. Our principles are those lying at the bottom of every progress during the past and will be so in the future. This is *why we are Anarchists*.

which they usually *ended*, discipline, submission to the counsel of prominent leaders, and compromises or defeats, but the amount of direct unorganized violence used before the movement was, once more, got under the control of the fanatic priests of law and order, be they called Socialists or soldiers. And if we compare the recent events of 1892 and 1893 in Europe and America with what used to happen a few years ago, we cannot fail to notice the progress made in the way of spontaneous violent action of the workers so long as they are not crushed by some organization; and on such action, the spread of the examples given and the new ideas that spring up, we base our hopes for the future.

On the actions of the Anarchists themselves we have only a few words to say at a moment like this, when their acts in nearly all countries are before the public and are daily being commented upon and discussed by millions of people.

The ways of Anarchist action are wide and different, because they are not actions of a particular sect or creed, but action in itself, independent of fetters and prejudices of any kind, directed against the immense variety of oppressive and coercive horrors by which we are surrounded. Whoever feels disgust at these horrors and rebels against them, adds something to increase the wave of revolt that will sweep away this system. And, in many cases, the direct effect of the act is of small importance, whilst its chief benefit is its value as an example to others. It is quite evident that, if everybody follows his own judgment, we shall often disagree as to the importance and value of this or that act, but those who are not used to tolerate other people's opinion besides their own, do not consider one of the first principles of Anarchy: that the freedom of others is the basis of our own freedom. The war against the present system has begun for years, and the more we enter into it the more the fight produces new situations which require new means, and

PART I.

It may be well to give some of the arguments for our belief in Anarchism as the coming form of our social and political institutions.

We are confronted, it appears, on all sides by obstacles and difficulties. Here, the inveterate belief in law and authority, in religious superstitions and in the educational powers of compulsion and coercion; there, the various forms of political humbug, the representative system, the struggle for political power, expressed in the shape of self-advertizing electioneering political swindlers on one side and the ever befooled, hero-worshipping, addle-headed, "sovereign people" on the other side. Again, the fallacious belief either in competition and throat-cutting and monopolizing individualism, or in that other treacherous panacea—State-socialism, the dream of all authoritarians and, in reality, the paradise of officialism and corruption, erected on the shoulders of a people whose freedom and equality would consist of the freedom to elect new masters and that equality which is the product of equal servitude and degradation. The arguments of "economic science" are arrayed against us; the misapplied doctrines of evolution as apparently opposed to evolution; the state or municipal ownership of all the means of production; the centralization of the production of all commodities—in support of which the concentration of capital in the hands of, a diminishing number of big capitalists is adduced;—Anarchism is said to be antagonistic to the real course of the evolution of human society; etc., etc.

All these and other arguments are constantly used by all existing parties against Anarchism—not to mention the host of lies from which no party shrinks when Anarchism, that enemy of society, is concerned. These fallacies and misconceptions are inoculated in the people by their education, at home and at school, by their daily private and public life—as long as they, have not learned to see

through the veil of superstition and ignorance which all parties are eager to keep on their eyes as long as ever possible

Yet still, there is an increasing number of Anarchists in all countries. What are the ideas that bring them together, unite them in their aims, without the necessity of an artificial organization which no other party can do without? Whilst the other parties give free scope to the development of evil passions, of corruption, arrogance, and self-seeking, what has anybody who is active in Anarchist agitation to expect but persecution and calumny,—and the conviction that he is doing the right thing, that he is on the road to progress and is helping others to go forward with him towards their individual and social emancipation?

It is, after all, because in many people the belief in FREEDOM as the only sound foundation of human development has never been eradicated by the coarse brutality and coercion of the weary everyday life and toil, nay, has been strengthened and is spreading in spite of all obstacles, and supported by the evident failure of the law and order system.

Those who believe in freedom are constantly met with the objection that unlimited freedom is impossible, being incompatible with the existence of any human society, etc. To these objections as far as they are bona fide, and are not the mere phrases which lazy intellects have got against everything which is new to them, we reply that we understand by freedom the free scope left to the development of everything on its own lines, by non-interference with it from outside on any account, consequently neither for oppressive nor for apparently beneficent and tutelary purposes. We maintain that only if every person, or group, or whatever form any aggregation of people may assume, are left free to associate or to disconnect themselves with and from persons, groups, societies, institutions, surroundings, etc., according to their own mind about the matter, their faculties and powers will have the proper opportunity to exert themselves;—and, whether their aims meet in the end with success or failure, this will not injure the equal free-

won for popular warfare: the awe which one of the most dreadful weapons and a weapon that is in the hands of everybody inspired, fire, seems to be gone and one powerful instrument more added to the arsenal of the people: for so perverted and misdirected are the people by the false education they have for ages received from reactionists, that only one by one, by slow instalments, they learn to use *for themselves* the weapons which are continually, daily used *against them*.

But this understanding is making progress, and this is all we can wish for. We do not pretend to do anything *for* the people, we only wish, by acting ourselves for ourselves, to induce the people to follow our example and *also act for themselves*. And he who acts for himself must admit the right of others to do the same, or he will be a tyrant; and if he does so he is an Anarchist. For we cannot repeat it often enough: Anarchism is not a philosophical system imposed on men like so many other philosophical, theological, economical schemes, but it is simply life itself, the way of living without building up our wellbeing on the oppression and, consequently, exploitation of our fellow men. It is the way the most honest and best of men tried to live during all times—and succeeded as far as the coercive surroundings permitted it: they lived by their own labor, imparted the results of their genius and talent to mankind in general without asking for reward and profit, and their worries and persecutions, often their martyrdom, are witnesses to the fact that their worst enemy was the State, its rulers and institutions and the tyranny of the majority, of the big prejudiced crowd which upholds every reaction.

To-day, at last, it has become evident that it is not sufficient to abstain from taking part in the work of oppression by the State and try to live apart from its interference, but that it is necessary to destroy once for all this huge machinery, detrimental to progress. Every act of revolt brings the people nearer to this intelligence, every act of “law and order” removes again this goal. For us, the most important features of all these recent strikes are not the way in

tendencies on the other side; the disgraceful attacks and sneers at Anarchists¹ and revolutionists in general; the haughty disdain for the propaganda of Socialism pure and simple versus all these petty reforms, etc. The capitalists second these tactics by tendering with one hand political, parliamentary “reforms” which they make useless with the other hand, by their economic supremacy. This play would go on for ever, were not the people beginning to realize the dreary farce they are victims of, and to act for themselves.

Life under capitalism is becoming more miserable for the workers in spite of all “reforms” and this leads, and will always lead, to strikes, lock-outs, and their consequences. So much of discontent is accumulated everywhere that outbursts are evoked by causes quite disproportionate to the effects they produce. And these outbursts take the form of attacks on property and its defenders, the State in the form of soldiers and police, capitalists and blacklegs; their weapons range from stones and rifles to dynamite and fire. The Homestead steel-workers, the Kansas miners, the Buffalo railway workers, the French and Belgian miners, the Sicilian peasants, the workers of all trades in Naples and Barcelona,—their actions represent all kinds and all grades of effective and victorious warfare against the bourgeois system and it is from these sources that we may trace in our minds pictures of the social war that is coming. New means and methods spontaneously originate and, if effective, spread from one country to the other. Thus when in July last the Paris population, during the nightly riots on the Rive gauche, pulled down the kiosks and overturned tramcars and set fire to both, the same was done a month later by the Italian population at Naples, and may be considered as a new element, new ground

¹ Only a few weeks ago (on November 30th) Mr Liebknecht, in a discourse in the German Parliament, declared Ravachol was a police spy. And infamous old idiots of this kind “represent” the German proletariat.

dom of others, but be an example to them;—whereas, when people, whether they like it or not, are bound together by artificial ties, be it in the name of an absolute king “by the grace of God,” or in the name of the elective assembly of a Socialist republic, the result of this compulsory co-operation will be that the best faculties are stunted, many possibilities of development never discovered, etc., all owing to everybody’s reliance on the laws imposed by the leaders, and the consequent corruption and incapacity of these leaders through the authority given into their hands.

It may be preferable to a great number of careless people to be looked after by the State in a paternal and tutelary way, as they fancy, not seeing the claws of oppression and exploitation behind the bland demeanor and glib phrases of politicians; and these people may rejoice if they see the care of the State for their own well-being constantly extended by State-interference with everything, but these are not the people we appeal to. We quite recognize that some sense of human dignity and independence is necessary in order to grasp the primary ideas of Anarchism; and, thanks to our blessed civilization, some people have lost even that. But they do not count in the history of progress; they are the victims and tools of the present system; and as the wretched slums and hovels will give place to neat houses and homes, these people will have to go. But most people have some glimmering sparks of the spirit of liberty left, and from these our ranks begin to fill.

A consequence of freedom is *the rejection of majority rule*, viz: the right of association and secession. The mere fact that a majority of a given number of persons are in favor of something, proves evidently nothing for or against it. There cannot be any connection whatever between the advisability or absurdity of any measure—which depends entirely upon its own nature—and the opinions which any number of people of various knowledge, intelligence, experience, tendencies, character, even whims and hobbies, hold about it.

Nor is majority rule adopted in anything to which human progress is due. No scientist who discovers a natural law is expected to submit it to the vote of an assembly of even the most learned men of his branch of science. Those scientists whose studies the new discovery affects take notice of it if they think it worth while, and try, by their own experiments, to get supplementary evidence to confirm or refute it; and by-and-by the new theory is universally adopted or sinks into oblivion. It may be advanced that congresses of scientists adopt certain general rules, international standards and tests, terms and signs, etc., by majority rule; but even this is no proper law-making by majority, because it ordinarily means the sanction given to a procedure which is already almost generally adopted and approved after having been proposed and tried in the above described way. And if some go too far in this, it must not be forgotten that science is also under the corrupting influence of the State, that in some branches there is an official and a free science, etc. But in general the rules adopted are not enforced by police and soldiers; anybody who knows better may go his own way and has—if the means of production are not entirely monopolized by the State, in the form of the official science,—the power to show by the results who is right or wrong.

Compare the steady *progress of science*, to which the advantages now exploited and preyed upon by the oppressing classes are due, to the conspicuous *failure of legislation* by majority rule, prompted by personal or party interests or, even in the rare cases of disinterestedness, made incapable by ignorance and want of experience. *Experience*, the source of knowledge, and *law* exclude each other; knowledge, the understanding of *natural laws*, follows experience, whilst *artificial law* precedes experience and excludes it, because it wants obedience and submission, not doubt and experiments.

The confession of the failure of legislation is made by those who cry for *more* legislation, like a rich person who, when medicine fails, calls for more medicine. Science, as long as it lay bound under

ranks in the army of privileged leaders of the people. They are wide awake to the fact that the present State can absorb all of them and go very far in the way of “concessions” and “ameliorations” without seriously affecting the holy principles of Property, Profit, and Plunder. If it is true that we must not expect the social revolution to be promoted by the bourgeois, who have only to lose by it, we must equally accept the truth of the fact that we must not expect anything in favor of the revolution from this new class of labor parasites, who make their living as intermediaries and trimmers between Capital and Labor, and who will be the losers in the event of a revolution like the bourgeois, for they know very well that the revolution may be a little delayed and certainly betrayed by their machinations, but that it will come in any case, and that it will sweep away the greater part of them; a few might try to become grand chiefs and dictators of the revolution, but they will also find things lively for them; for the revolution will be an Anarchist revolution if it be a revolution at all; otherwise there might be all sorts of political riots, introducing a new set of masters, even such as call themselves Socialists, but no revolution: once the people themselves seize on property and destroy the machinery of the State, they have nothing before them but Anarchism as the self-evident solution of all questions; and before they do so they will never achieve anything, but be exploited in the name of other enemies, be they capitalists or State-socialists.

We did not think it worth while to insist on mentioning persons or facts with regard to the foreign movements, for they are too dreary and monotonous and all of the same character: the steady decline of these movements into training grounds for parliamentary and municipal place-hunters and so-called reformers; the decline of the existing economic organizations by the preference given to politics on one side and their authoritarian centralizing

power by politics. The most significant victim of these doctrines is the proletariat of Germany: when it matters to boss international congresses or to silence the voice of conscience in the more sincere members of that party, they, the German social-Democratic Party, boast to be the largest and strongest Socialist party on the face of the globe; but in all practical questions they declare themselves to be very nearly powerless; take for example the First of May, the war strike, and general strike questions. They are even afraid that the Austrian workers, who are almost always their satellites, should, by independent action, set an example to the German workers in the question of a general strike for universal suffrage, which has been agitated in Austria since the summer of this year (1893). There is not much prospect that such a strike will take place, and it would be in favor of an object for which we have no sympathy; but already the earnest discussion of such a subject—instead of sneering at it and excommunicating it in the name of “scientific” Socialism—is disagreeable to the Berlin leaders, and they raise their voice to put this discussion down (see the *Vorwörter*): from this we see that they extend their reactionary influence over other countries outside of their own. And they have not the slightest intention to alter their tactics, viz. the recent discussion about “Labor politics—v—Trade-unionism” during their Congress at Cologne and in their official organ; the economic movements are deliberately neglected and belittled to give space to the omnivorous abyss of labor politics. And even where labor organizations exist, they are to a great extent paralyzed by centralization and officialism.

The failure of all these movements is so manifest with regard to the English movement. There are hundreds or thousands of persons, each full of unscrupulous ambition to raise himself above the heads of his fellows, and there is next to nothing of revolutionary conviction, ardour, and enthusiasm. They are all afraid of revolutionary outbursts of the people, which would jeopardize their peaceful and regular course of promotion to higher and higher

the antique and mediaeval traditions of Aristotle or the scholastic philosophers, in fact, as long as it held to the authority of traditions and supposed revelations, made no progress whatever; only when it shook off the ancient fetters and went on the lines of freedom it achieved all that we see to-day, or rather what is still unknown to the vast majority of mankind, but what would insure to everybody an almost unknown degree of comfort and ease, if applied for the benefit of all instead of being misappropriated by the governing classes of to-day.

And yet every branch of science comprehends but one group of phenomena, and human life and activity comprises such a number of phenomena that no science has hitherto discovered more than the barest outlines of some not quite improbable hypotheses on the various phenomena of human life. Still, what science which invented machines and telegraphs and all the countless perfections of human domination over the forces of nature, was unable to achieve—to find the laws of human society,—the representative assemblies, consisting of landlords, capitalists, lawyers and soldiers, officials and social-Democrats, or, for the matter of that, maybe consisting of the very incarnations of most scientific social-Democracy, are expected to find! This is so manifestly absurd that it requires no refutation; the greatest scientist may spend years in active study before he ventures to summarise the result of his studies in one general observation which may if by-and-by found to be right, be called a natural law, whilst the bragging demagogue scribbles down a dozen laws as a programme, tells invented lies on the benefits the people will derive from them, and if he has reasons of his own to stick to his promises, tries to enforce these laws by getting them adopted by a majority of ignorants and tricksters like himself.

The principle of the rejection of majority rule, then, if applied to society at large, would mean that minorities are left to themselves to go their own way, until example and experience establish a reliable proof as to who is right.

This would not imply confusion, waste of time and material, etc., as our opponents contend: it is the interest of both majority and minority to be as practical and sensible as the case requires, for they have not as to-day, to order others to do something, but they have to do it *themselves* and to bear the consequences. They act on their own responsibility and will be careful.

Suppose even the worst happens, a majority forgets its respect for the freedom of the minority and of itself, and coerces a minority. Surely that would be an isolated case, generally resented, and probably the minority would find more support from outside than it ever wants. Is this an argument against us, as is sometimes said? But what is done to-day? To-day coercion of the minority is the *rule*, rebellion against it is rank treason and Anarchy; coercion rules in every country, town, village, and family. Those who are so apprehensive of a possible act of atavistic unsolidarity in the future, and who consider this an argument against freedom and in favor of law, are the same who uphold a state of things in which this wanton infringement on freedom is general, the time-honored custom and rule! Anarchism is no panacea against every evil, but it maintains that freedom is the best remedy for everything.

PART II.

The rejection of the *representative system* and of laws is another consequence of freedom as we understand it.

Representation means the abdication of the will and the brains of a large number of people in favor of one individual who has somehow contrived to attract their attention and to get their votes. By what unscrupulous means and reckless use of promises, slander and lies this is usually done, everybody knows. And yet the people think they are the masters, the possessors of political power, when they exercise the precious privilege of choosing between two or three humbugs and go home again for three, five, or seven years,

that leader who has won some prestige by unscrupulously, stepping on the shoulders of others is all their basis and foundation; thus, nothing is more open to errors and deceptions; they collapse often, but other leaders gather in the same flock; in short, the same farce which we see in the countless religious bodies which, for thousands of years preach, dogmatize, excommunicate each other, amalgamate or split up, is repeated in these modern authoritarian labor movements and organizations. And this is not to be wondered at; are they no both built on the same rotten principles of authority and submission, of exploiters and exploited?

In short, the worst enemy of the workers could not devise a more cunning system of deceiving them and perpetuating their misery, than this network of labor politics, which paralyze the spontaneous outbursts of revolt among the working classes or, if it cannot do so for once, misdirects it to fill the ballot-boxes with voting papers—a new version of the old legend of the Danaids.

We might hold small hopes for a future of freedom and happiness if, by the side of these pseudo-popular movements, there existed no signs of freedom and revolt in the people; before we consider them, we will rapidly review the State-socialist movements in the continental countries and in America.

Almost everywhere the propaganda of Socialist *principles* is considered now an unpractical utopian waste of time, and all the energy of the State-socialist parties is concentrated on politics. The absurd dogma: because the working classes are not strong enough to get their emancipation by economic means (combinations and strikes), they must get it by political means (the State and parliament), is triumphant in all these labor movements. Said M. Jaurès, a Socialist deputy in the French Chamber: “The workman has the power to wreck a ministry, but nothing protects him against being sacked to-morrow by his employer. The workingmen are Sovereigns by the vote, and proletarians by the existence of capital.” Quite right, and yet all efforts of these movements tend towards teaming the horse by the tail, towards getting economic

tion, and this is far better achieved when they are held down by their own leaders than by mere brute force: for this oppression exists in any case, in England as in Russia, only in England the fetters are twofold. First, oppression which is identical—for, whilst the fetters of the laws may be different, the bullets and butt ends of soldiers' guns are practically identical in both countries, are they not?—and, secondly, submission to leaders and organizations, the self-imposed fetters of the workers in free England only. And is not almost everything in these movements being arranged to make matters as comfortable and cheering as possible for the capitalist classes? The State, this machinery of coercion, which the people must destroy if they want to be free,—is it not invoked daily by the people's leaders to protect the people with regard to trifles—whilst it attacks and plunders them wholesale? Is not the belief in the State strengthened by the continuous appeals for nationalization of this or that, for State property in everything: and by the continuous advocacy of electioneering, of requiring parliament to do this or that? Property—is it seriously attacked? Direct attacks on it by the people are denounced as criminal, riotous, barbarous; and in the immediate agitation all attacks on property are reduced to demanding state-ownership of railways or mines, or municipal ownership of docks or waterworks, all things which to a large degree exist just in the most reactionary countries: viz., the Siberian mines, the Prussian State railways, the Austrian monopoly of salt and tobacco etc. Of course the “means of production” figure still in academic resolutions but have long since been put aside in practical agitation. *Religion*—it is seriously left alone, if not openly embraced; canting hypocrites or fools *à la* Mann or Tillett or “Labor Church” directly advocate it; parsons and priests, lurk around these labor movements, ready to creep in at critical periods as arbitrators *d la* Manning or exploiters of the unemployed *à la* Booth or the more audacious ones enter these movements as “Christian Socialists” etc. These movements seem to be open to every quack or rogue, for they are void of any definite intellectual contents: allegiance to this or

having fulfilled one of their “highest civic duties.” In ancient Rome the slaves were allowed on a certain day of the year, the Saturnalia, to roam about the town, amuse themselves by fancying that they were free men, and put in the place of their masters; this was done to keep them content; the next day, of course, they were slaves again, and so all the year round. Bakounine, in one of his writings, compares the day of the general election, in our high-praised civilization, to the farce of the Saturnalia in ancient Rome, and the comparison is a just one. You fancy one day to be the masters of the destiny of your country, and return a parliament—and then go home to toil away for seven more years! You go to Hyde Park—not even on the First of May, as the poor Continental workers do, but on the first Sunday of May, when trade and commerce are not interfered with—and then trot home again to your life of drudgery and misery in the East End, until you pop up again in the West End with starving faces and glittering banners and sashes at the bidding of another set of demagogues who want to show to the bourgeois their influence and prestige by pulling you up and down at their pleasure, like puppets in a show.

We hardly think, indeed, that the great mass of the people can be so stupid as to imagine that their representatives in elective bodies are of any good to them. They may think to themselves that a government will exist in any case, and that it little matters which set of oppressors put their heels on them; they know that they are cheated and exploited in any case. It should be our effort to confirm them in this indifference and disgust of politics, and to open their eyes to the possibility and necessity of a society without government, where people themselves manage their own affairs.

A tedious obstacle to this is the propensity of the so-called Socialist and Labor parties to do just the opposite, and extol the value of the rotten representative system. After winning the people's confidence by dwelling on the necessity of alleviating their misery and promising palliative reforms which it is very easy to invent and orate about, they foment again the superstitious belief in “send-

ing the right man to Parliament”—meaning, of course, themselves. This party is, in our eyes, the most dishonest of all existing parties; for the other parties act quite fairly when they say: “We want to *maintain* by all means the present system of private property and capitalism—only it might be mended here and there to prevent eruptions of popular discontent;” that’s reaction pure and simple, an open enemy. But these so-called Socialist and Labor cliques say: “We want the people to be happy and to *abolish* private property and capitalism—but by *legal* means, by constitutional exercise of our political rights and what not!” This is dishonest; it means posing as your friend and then putting a treacherous broken weapon in your hands for your defence. Can a decaying putrid organism, which infects and pesters its surroundings, be saved by a transfusion of new blood? In most cases, not, and even though it be kept alive, it is still a source of evil to its neighbours. So the rotten system of State and Government, if strengthened by the new interest the people are to take in it, would only become more oppressive, coercive, and exploiting than ever.

We do not for a moment believe that a parliament or a government of the foremost State-socialists and labor leaders would be better than any bourgeois parliament and government. They may resolve that all their manifold programmes and particular hobbies become law tomorrow; how is this to be carried out? By governmental authority and red tape,—for the people must not move; they have got a government that provides for them! I cannot imagine a more piteous spectacle than such an assembly of scientific socialists would be. Nor did anybody, except these benighted labor politicians, ever expect such things from parliaments and governments as the modern labor programmes do. The French peasants in 1789 did not wait for the parliament of that period to give them the land,—else they might still be waiting; they took it, and burned the castles, and left to parliament the gratification of its self-importance by endorsing facts which could not be undone. In 1848 the peasant of other continental countries did the same; the

adopt the mask of friends of the people, of Cardinal Manning in the dockers strike of 1889 or of Lord Rosebery in the recent miner’s strike. It matters little whether they are scoundrels or dupes, for the action of the honest among them, like that of the worst scoundrel, is born of the idea that they are called to act *for the people*, instead of leaving the people alone to act *for themselves*. They are imbued with the spirit of enslavement, authority, tyranny, and every apparent victory that they may win is a tenfold loss to the people, for it is the victory of Authority over Freedom.

Is it necessary to let all these men and their acts pass before our eyes? Who is silly enough to wait for the benefits that the working-classes will reap from the action of “honest John Burns” in parliament, or of Keir Hardie, or Wilson, or Woods? Or of the Independent Labor Party, or of Champion and Barry, or of Hyndman and Quelch, or of that incarnation of human wisdom and science—the Fabian Society? All these quacks, who want to impose their rulership on the working classes, have so often mutually exposed each other that hardly anything serious is left of them for an impartial observer. They all try the impossible, absurd, and reactionary, to lay the great popular movement of discontent in the bondage of their own little personalities and doctrines, and whenever they succeed it is because their allies are nothing else but the old superstitious belief of the people in authority and leaders—which *they* do their best to preserve; hence their enmity to the Anarchists, the only ones who openly fight this belief and advocate the ideas of freedom and revolt.

There is no need to say that the capitalist parties benefit by the action of these trimmers. Twenty years ago they trembled at the thought of international and revolutionary action of the working classes. They have seen long since that their only serious enemies are the Anarchists and the people itself as long as not enslaved to any political party; but as to the political socialist parties, they hope to absorb them at the cost of compromises and concessions. To do this the working classes must give up all spontaneous ac-

fices for official labor statistics, inspection etc., has the evident tendency to make all spontaneous action of the working-classes impossible, to act the role of wise and beneficent Providence for the poor strata of society which is unable to arrange its own affairs and which, giving way to revolutionary tendencies that only uneducated barbarians and Anarchists still believe in, are likely to act foolishly and criminally, to attack the foundations of civilized society if they, the politicians and labor-leaders, do not wisely settle their affairs for them. This spirit of impertinent tutelage, of cynical contempt for the people, characterizes all these so-called labor movements: first the people are cajoled, bamboozled by these men to get their votes, and when they have acted as stepping-stones for them, they think it time to put fetters on the people to prevent them from getting rid of these new masters. They enter into negotiations with the people's enemies, the capitalists, and strive to become a recognized public institution as a board of arbitrators or a labor exchange or what not; in parliament they strive for little laws or amendments regulating this or that detail, imposing fines or more registration, more inspection, etc.,—that is, as a rule, laws regulating things which, where the workers are strong enough, they have enforced long since, themselves; and which, where they are not strong enough to do so, remain on paper whether they are laws or not. But, not only are they useless, they engender the demoralizing spirit of petty quibbling, denouncing, and going to law,—all for the benefit of the present system, for men who actually believe in all this humbugging and pettifogging are the very strongholds of existing prejudices and reaction.

When the workers begin a strike, in come these men and before all exhort the strikers to abide by law and order, and when they have taken the spirit out of the movement and reduced it to a subservient tool in their hands, they negotiate with the capitalists and arrange matters in such a way that the outcome of the immense sufferings of the starving workers and their families is the advertisement and apotheosis of the worst enemies of the people, who

governments had for years meddled with the question of serfdom, but their solutions of it remained on paper until the peasants took matters into their own hands during the revolution of 1848. And the Russians, although liberated officially in 1861, are still as badly off as before, and will be until the coming Russian revolution sets them free. In America only a gigantic war, the greatest civil war of all ages, could liberate the slaves. And, in face of all the teachings of history, the English people are lulled and gulled to continue to believe in constitutional means! Only knaves, fools—or labor leaders can believe such things.

Laws are by necessity an obstacle to progress. They must be obeyed, and are enforced, else it would be absurd to have them at all; so they must prevent progress according to their own nature.

Who has heard of laws made by scientists to prohibit further experiment to be made on a given subject? And yet this is what governments and parliaments do: once something has become law, you may make agitations, petitions, resolutions, etc., about it, but must not -test its value by outstepping and transgressing it. Only in the middle-ages and with primitive peoples dissent from childish biblical theories on science was considered a crime, and torturers and the stake awaited those who made independent researches; and yet to those men our progress and knowledge is due. They broke the law, which was ten times stronger than modern laws are, because it had not only brute force but stupid superstition at its disposal, and acting as Anarchist pioneers they paved the road to progress. Torquemada and Loyola are in the pillory of history; Giordano Bruno and Galileo, the rebels, are in its pantheon; and so future generations will think about the authoritarians, from Bismarck to Marx on one side, and the Anarchists and rebels, from Ravachol to Bakounine, on the other side.

Natural facts are matters of experience and of knowledge, and to disregard them is absurd and suicidal. Besides them only impulsive: or spontaneous arrangements can be made between men according to their temporary knowledge of the matter in question. Nothing prevents the repetition of such arrangements if advisable; but nothing calls for the arbitrary fixing of such arrangements, which is what is called *Law*. And what escape is there from such arbitrary regulations except by breaking them? And what is this method, the most self-evident and practical one, but the Anarchist method? Why, then, make laws at all?

Have we not already made some progress towards disregarding the most “sacred” laws? Think how, a few centuries ago, people strictly and fanatically believed in the bible and were hanged and burned about theological quibbles which to-day no sensible person cares for? Too much of all sorts of superstitions is still left, but some of it has gone, and in the same way, no doubt, there are hundreds of things, forbidden by laws still in existence, which are done as a matter of course—in the same way, really, as children are told about dressing and going to bed and grown people are not told. Does not all this show Anarchists to be on the right road when they say that laws are to be abolished? And how?—not by expecting others to abrogate and cancel them, but by boldly transgressing and defying them and their satellites.

PART III.

The consequences of Anarchism, viz. no majority rule, no representative system, no laws, must be tested by their working in real life, in a system of production and consumption in which they have full scope to exert themselves, in which, therefore, free arrangements, voluntary combinations and separations, and personal and local autonomy shall prevail.

We will begin with a survey of the forces of modern reaction, that is of all parties and institutions except the various kinds of Anarchists; for here we may not only count the number of comrades who are actively engaged in the Anarchist movement, but also the much larger number of persons who, whilst quite outside of every Anarchist movement, view with disgust the insidious growth of these freedom-killing tendencies to State-interference with everything of which modern humanity boasts as a great blessing, and whom we may consider as latent or passive Anarchists.

The crucial point is the admission or rejection of the principle of interference with other people for whatever purpose. Those who admit it, whether they wish to benefit or exploit the people, act as reactionists, because they interfere with the freedom of others to arrange their own affairs as they think best. Every system of democracy, of majority rule, falls under this head, and it is sufficiently known that the most lofty imaginations of State-socialists about their ideal of a future society do not outstep the worn-out paths of representative democracy, of a majority called “the sovereign People” imposing their will as law on the minority, which has got to abide by the “will of the people.” If, then, this party does not respect freedom even in their conceptions of a future better society, if freedom is not one of their aims for the future, still less, evidently, it will care for it in its present political career where, using the old rotten machinery of cheating the people, of the bourgeois State, the system of elections and “constitutional” agitation, they strive for what is called “political power,” that is the ways and means to make the people submit for ever to exploitation and oppression.

And, indeed, what do we see of progressive, free tendencies in these labor movements under the control of State-socialists? Precious little, here and there a poor crust thrown in to make the people swallow more eagerly the bulk of authoritarian measures. A new bureaucracy is imposed on the people, the bureaucracy of organized labor, which by means of its various institutions, labor bureaus, labor exchanges, boards of arbitration, etc., and other of-

ple attracted to them by their free access,—in the first case all things are different, in the second all things are equalized *by freedom itself* and therefore there is no necessity for an artificial regulation by means of rents and taxes, which imply rent and tax *collectors*, which imply courts of law, police and prison for those who object, which implies the State with all its baleful consequences.

We will conclude with a general survey of the present Anarchist and Labor movements and their most conspicuous tendencies.

PART VI.

In conclusion we shall examine the present situation of the labor movement in different countries and point out the facts which, in our opinion, justify our confidence in the future of Anarchism.

We have to deal with four series of facts, viz.: the Anarchist movements, the State-socialist and Labor movements, the action of other parties, of the State, the Church, etc., and the action of the People themselves, if let alone and influenced as little as possible by any of the preceding factors. It is evident that the last series of facts is the most important as far as the general tendencies, which we will try to find out, are concerned; but it is difficult to observe it properly, because the people are not used to take matters into their own hands, and the influence of this or that of the old or new parties or institutions intervenes constantly, and—reviving the old prejudices of Law and Order, the State, Representation, Constitutional action, Patriotism, Religion, etc., which the people, driven by misery and oppression to revolt, put aside for a moment—lead away the wrath of the people into peaceful channels; so it is only by moments that we can observe the popular tendencies like flashes of lightning in the dark night of prejudices and reaction.

On the economic structure of such a society various opinions prevail among Anarchists; that one corresponding to our views is the theory of Anarchist-Communism, whilst others uphold those of Collectivism and Individualism. We are not going to enter into this question here, but to explain our position towards Individualism.

By Individualism we understand those views which uphold the idea that the attainment of the greatest perfection, happiness and independence of every individual is the highest of all human aspirations, in opposition to other views which maintain that the prosperity of Society or the State is the great goal to which the independence, the happiness, if need be the life of every individual must at any moment be ready to be sacrificed. As Anarchists we are individualists, and we are Communists because we think that true individualism— aspiring to the greatest individual elevation and perfection—can best prosper under Communism. Communism means that, by the free cooperation of all, the commodities necessary for life are produced in such quantities that it would be absurd to mete out a share to everybody, but that they be adopt it; for communism is a means and not the aim. The line between communism and individualism will be drawn in each case according to the local and personal requirements. Some will prefer to live more for themselves, others prefer to live in common with their neighbours. All these details, satisfying the individual wants of everybody can easily be met, once—by a few hours of cooperation—the economic independence of all is secured.

From these reasons we consider communism as the true basis of Anarchism. We reject the so-called *individualist* Anarchism as authoritarian and coercive.

Whilst we put our confidence in the principles of freedom and autonomy, our State-socialist opponents assert that the State is

called to crush by legislative coercion and competition the capitalist monopolists, to arrange production on a huge scale, utilizing all the results of concentration of machinery, etc., and to establish a system in which everybody would have his little post as one of the minute wheels of the gigantic machinery of State regulated production.

Is State-socialism in this sense possible at all? There is no doubt that it is easy enough to increase the number of laws which are supposed to protect the workers and are called “socialistic legislation,” nor would it be difficult (or in any way dangerous to the present system) to find jobs for supervision, registration, inspection, statistics, etc., of labor for all those who cry loudest for State-socialism; but all these measures are in perfect harmony with the capitalist system, which they would only help to prolong by removing apparently some of its most appalling atrocities whilst wage-labor and monopoly continue to exist. Nor would so-called *nationalization* of any part of the existing private property destroy the present system, as the profit-mongers would shift to the remaining parts of private property. So State-socialism by installments is impossible and the absurdity of the belief in constitutional means demonstrated. And who can imagine a State-socialist revolution? The starving masses who to-day are supposed to fight and put an end to the capitalist State—what are the fruits of their victory to them? To-morrow the new “socialist” State is constituted, which expects them to give up everything into the hands of their new masters whom they will graciously be allowed to choose themselves—out of the great host of labor politicians who were cautious enough to survive the struggles of the revolution.

Is this new State to be arranged on a national or an international basis? In the former case there would be other “socialist” States, and rivalry, competition and coercion, in consequence standing preparations for war would continue; whilst to-day the international character of capitalist property is one of the strongest factors to prevent continuous wars,—the exclusively national character of

If we knew a better way to attain the possibility of individual development than communism as the economic basis of society, we would same level and then people will not move about without good reasons; and, before the attractions are equalized, whilst diversity of objects exists they will not cease to crowd together to make use of better things before the less good—this is inevitable. It might be presumed that people in our future society will have more feeling of solidarity than now, and will reasonably give way to those who need a thing most, even if they themselves are stronger and are the first comers; but, even if this feeling of solidarity were not yet fully developed in everybody, the principle of free access finally solves this question, e.g. the houses on Richmond Hill would simply be so crowded that there would be but very insufficient accommodation for every individual, whilst there would be plenty of room in less attractive places. Then everybody would not have to choose between a *house on Richmond Hill* and a *house in Poplar*, but, perhaps, between a small room on the Hill and a comfortable house in the East End—in short, the attractions of “very small room and splendid situation” would be equal to those of “comfortable house and plain country,” as 1 plus 11= 11 plus 1; should still more people come to the Hill, its attractions would become smaller and smaller, as $\frac{1}{2}$ plus 11, $\frac{1}{4}$ plus 11, etc., are smaller than 11 plus 1—the East End house; therefore people would find no advantage in going there, and only those who most wanted to do so would go.

The same applies to the “fertile land” objection. However much you toil on land, with all the perfections of agricultural chemistry applied to it, there is a limit to its fertility. When, for example, ten persons, cultivating an area of land (A), produce as much a fifty persons, on a less fertile soil (B), so many would come from B to A that even the rich crops of A would not suffice for their needs, and in consequence a part of them would return to B, or elsewhere, until an equilibrium of attraction is established. For we must never compare two things by themselves as our opponents sophistically do, but only compare different things together with the number of peo-

nism, then, will give to all the security and ease that are necessary to make higher intellectual efforts, and here the role of Individualism, as we understand it, begins. The people, all on the equal basis of plenty and security, will begin to make individual manifold efforts in all directions to attain the particular perfections which they desire; everybody goes his own way and associates, if he likes, with his friends. The greater the solidarity and unity in which he cooperated in the morning with his neighbours to produce food and shelter for the community, the more he may like to spend the rest of the day working or studying for himself, or amusing himself in the way he best likes.

This is only possible if the ordinary wants, which can only be supplied by work, are supplied in the speediest and most effective, and—for the individual—least oppressive way: by free co-operation, banishing the principle of competition, ambition, monopoly. Competition in matters of daily bread makes life insupportable, a continuous race and reckless crushing of the weaker and good-natured by the stronger or brutal and callous—and to this end Individualist Anarchism of the Tuckerian school would come. Competition in other matters, better named emulation, is an element of progress. And why is competition good in one case and bad in the other case? Because in one case it possesses the basis essential to all progress; in the other case not. This basis is FREEDOM. Competition as to daily bread is *compulsory competition*; competition in other matters is *voluntary competition*. If all run for bread, death and starvation are waiting for the vanquished. If all have plenty of bread, those who choose may run for the laurels of science, others for those of art, of strength, of skill—others may stay where they are and look on—this free competition will exercise and develop their faculties and create true individualities, not machine and routine-made men as those of to-day;—the compulsory competition for bread of the Tuckerians would only breed greedy and callous monopolists on one side, and vanquished slaves, ready to sell their “liberty” for bread, on the other side.

State-socialist property in that impossible future society would immensely help to create wars. And suppose an international, universal, World State: this means the negation of all progress, the return to the delirious phantasies of the decaying Caesars and popes who dreamed of an universal empire or of universal submission to the Roman Church; and yet even they were content with political and spiritual submission and did not interfere with production and consumption, which would be the chief duty of a “socialist” State. Individual and collective initiative would be banished, for they would frustrate the careful calculations of the paternal, omniscient, omnipotent State which would either have to arrange *everything*, simply everything—for only in this case a methodical *regulation* of production (of which social-Democrats talk so much, but in a perfectly thoughtless way) is possible—or nothing at all, and then there exists no State-socialism at all. A compromise is impossible, because all individual action (action of persons, groups, larger collectivities) interferes with the providential State arrangements and makes them fail. This puts an end to progress; for progress “by the permission of the authorities” has not yet advanced mankind one inch up to date; freedom is the only soil upon which progress grows and prospers.

Thus real, consequent State-socialism is an absurdity, and the absorption of the labor politicians by the present State, and the enactment of pseudo-protective laws for labor—the only issue of the social-Democratic movement—which, then, is no danger but rather a safety-valve to the present system. The people will, we are sure, not let themselves in this way be cheated of the revolution; all these schemes will vanish when—perhaps sooner and easier than we think—the reign of capitalism and monopoly is demolished and the people feel that they are free and have no masters; these sentiments none of us can realize to-day; the change in all conceptions will be so rapid and so great that our present optimists may be called pessimists then; but, however that may be, the advocates of

new slavery and new masters, the advocates of State-socialism will have played out their role then; of that we are sure.

We are next going to trace the future development of society as we Anarchists believe it will happen, and to state our reasons for, this belief.

PART IV.

After stating our arguments against State socialism we will next put forward our own conception of the course the economic evolution of society is taking, and examine whether this course leads to a necessary and inevitable centralization of production—the preliminary condition of State socialism,—or to the decentralization of production—the basis of Anarchist economics of the future.

We cannot discuss this question at full length here. The evidence in favor of centralization is generally known and may make, on many, an overwhelming impression: still, we think that the two tendencies must be separated which, if taken together, give a false picture of the real character of modern civilization, namely, the centralization due to the technical requirements of production, and that due to the superior power of competition of a larger capital over a smaller capital, to the interference of the State, which at the instance of the most successful capitalists makes them still more powerful by enforcing all sorts of regulations, customs, duties, etc.: even, if thought profitable, making war to accommodate their private interests,—in short monopoly, the outcome of competition, and State-power, the obedient tool of monopoly, create an immense amount of artificial centralization, not required at all by the purely technical process of production. When monopoly and State-power are abolished, many huge centralizations of to-day which are thought to be the very incarnation of practical and really modern production, will collapse like an inflated balloon with the gas escaping. The real productive forces can only be known then,

producing articles of secondary importance, and for these it might not be worth while to produce them everywhere; so, those working at them would be in immediate co-operation with others in other localities, not with the other local groups. Finally, articles of a personal character, requiring individual skill, would be produced by single individuals, forming the rest of the population. Thus, whilst the local production of the chief necessities of life is a guarantee of local autonomy, the dependence on non-local groups for other commodities, etc., is a guarantee of mutual intercourse and relations, and an equilibrium, a balance, will be established which will, we hope, make local privileges, the predomination of some local groups over others, impossible. For to all this we have to add the necessity for a certain exchange of raw materials, such as iron or other metals, which is inevitable; but by the decentralization of production the local groups will be such strongholds of independence that they can successfully paralyze the monopolistic tendencies of, for example, iron or coal producing groups, if such tendencies should arise.

And there is another antidote to such tendencies: this is the principle of *free access to all groups*, which is a fundamental principle of Anarchist society. This principle, in our opinion, is one of the arguments against the *economic rent objection* to Anarchism, the famous houses on Richmond Hill or the fertile and unfertile land. No rules, need to be made about these houses, no rent need be charged; the principle of *free access* will bring the attractions of everything to the consumed in measure to the wants of everybody. This is nothing so very out of the way as it may appear to some at the first glance. Is it really so inconceivable that what exists to-day with regard to water or roads, free access, without measuring what one individual consumes,—taxes and monopolies exist of course to day—shall to-morrow exist with regard to bread or potatoes, or clothes or houses? Mankind would be played out indeed, if this small step forward, once put in practice, would not the next day become a matter of course, and a reaction impossible. Commu-

people themselves know what to do; and powerless to interfere—because orders are not acts—where the people are on the wrong track. From the beginning it is a mistake to imagine that the revolution will be equally thorough and successful at once, everywhere; therefore, the more completely centralization is destroyed, the less harm backward localities or districts or even countries can do. It is wrong to establish a new centralization to fight them with united efforts, because we want no vanquished slaves but free fellow human beings. The only way to convince them is to let them alone and to bring about in our own localities and districts all the wonderful progress we expect from Anarchism, and they will soon fall in with us.

The chief thing is the utter destruction of central power, and the full freedom of every group or individual to arrange matters in their own way. This will bring about actions of the most diverse kind and value—some absurd, probably: but that diversity is just the thing we want; only by full freedom can we properly discern what is useful, practical, valuable, and what *not*. The change to be brought about is so immense that it is not to be expected to hit at once on the right principles.

From these remarks it will be seen that we have little belief in schemes laid out beforehand, and leave all this to the free development under full freedom, the only thing in which we have full confidence. But we may have, each one of us, our personal conceptions of this future organization (nobody need be afraid of this word “organization” which is a mere technical term for the co-operation of two or more factors, implying no authority at all, if properly used)—and we imagine about as follows:—

The greater part of the articles of first and immediate necessity will be produced by the greater part of the people of a greater or smaller locality or district for themselves. Nearly all the rest will be

because now all calculations are necessarily wrong owing to the difficulty, we may say impossibility, to judge between practical and artificial centralization, and because nearly all inventive efforts are now directed toward increasing this artificial centralization, which is only maintained by robbery and slavery, by monopoly and the State.

On the other side, in spite of these obstacles, the decentralization of industry is making progress. The same commodities which, thirty or fifty years ago, were only produced in the huge industrial centres of England, or a very limited part of the continent, are now produced almost everywhere on the spot; and the scramble for new markets (e.g. the infamous invasion of Africa in the exclusive interest of European merchants) show how difficult and unremunerative commerce between the so-called civilized countries is gradually becoming, owing to the local development of industry. As long as it was possible for the old established industrial centres to crush this new development, they certainly did so; and the fact that they are no longer able to do so, proves the victorious force of the local development of industries. In the near future, we may presume that almost everything will be produced within a comparatively small area. If, therefore, State socialists try to ignore this natural development and advocate centralization by all means, they are wasting their time like people who are expecting a river to run uphill.

Of course, the question of the agricultural products, and of the raw materials in general, and the motive power, coals, etc., will be raised against us. We are not discussing the events of to-day and to-morrow, but the general tendency of development; and so, anticipating a certain time to come, we might reply thus: The natural fertility of the soil becoming more and more exhausted, agriculture will become more and more an industry depending, not so much on the soil itself, but on the chemical products, manure, etc., put into the soil; and, this being possible almost everywhere, the privilege of special agricultural countries or districts is gradually

diminishing. The same will be the case with many raw materials, and everybody seems to be aware of it with regard to coals which must be exhausted at some certain date, but long before that time, probably, heat will be produced everywhere on the spot. We cannot say how, but as long as it is a fact that coals are not found everywhere, but that *everywhere*, at the same depth underneath the surface of the globe, there is nothing but material substance heated to the greatest possible degree, and when we consider that all natural phenomena, be they of an acoustic, optical, magnetic, or electric character, are simply one and the same material substance in different forms of motion, and that science begins to find the ways of supplanting one form of motion by an equivalent other form, changing heat into motive power, or electricity into heat, etc., we may presume that the total decentralization and localization of motive power and fuel is a problem that will be solved. Coals are an accidental product and, whilst giving the immense impulse to production that we know, are to a large extent responsible for the existing centralization and monopoly. They have certainly, at the present time, become a reactionary factor. It may be possible for the miners by a general strike to paralyze all production and make the present capitalist system collapse—well and right! because this system is to be destroyed by all means,—but they would be equally able to enforce their terms in a future society; therefore, the sooner this remainder of centralization will be dispensed with the better.

It will always be easy to object to that particular detail of these conclusions; it should be borne in mind that that we consider is the general tendency of evolution, which means the product of many forces working in all sorts of directions; therefore particular facts are no objection, even if they point in another direction, as long as the stronger facts counteracting them are not refuted. (Fuller details are found in several articles by Kropotkine, in the *Nineteenth Century Review* and *La Révolte*, reprinted in *La Conquête du Pain*, Paris, 1892.)

As Anarchists we draw from all this the following conclusion: The development of production itself combats centralization—leading to monopoly, and based on State power. It leads towards decentralization, the basis of local autonomy and Freedom, that is—to ANARCHY.

To advocate State socialism is, therefore, not only a violation of the principle of freedom, but also an absurdity, because it is impossible. If it were possible it would not work, as we saw before; but it is impossible from the beginning. All we may see of it, is more State-interference under the *present* system, since every tyrant, when he feels his hour of defeat approach, increases his ferocity and brutality as last efforts to save himself, at the same time often making desperate efforts to captivate part of his assailants, as the present State does with the labor leaders and their crowd.

These views coincide with the only way by which production can be organized after the revolution. The people in each locality will not want to work again for others,—to be ordered about by a new centralized power, etc. They will start to work for themselves; and there being, as we have shown, no mechanical necessity for centralization, they will be doing the right thing.

PART V.

During the revolution it will be the most important work to destroy all the governmental and administrative centres, to prevent the existing state-apparatus of centralization being used against the people. If these centres were not as soon as ever possible paralyzed, others, new leaders, will get them into their power and use them for their purposes. This new government, even if consisting of Revolutionary Socialists, can only produce the same mischief as all other governments: uselessly and wantonly interfering where the