

Practical Socialism

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A common mode of raising objections against Socialism is the following. An exponent of revolutionary principles is asked how such and such a particular detail of social life is to be arranged after the advent of the Social Revolution, and on his deciding either according to his own individual Judgment or in accordance with the views of this or that school of Socialists, the critic supposes a case attended with circumstances which render the decision evidently absurd or unjust, and turns from the debate in triumph, leaving the propagandist puzzled and the bystanders amused at his confusion, and, perhaps, impressed with the is after all impracticable.

The Anarchist, however, possessing a clear notion of the scope and aim of the coming Social Revolution, is not liable to be nonplussed in any such fashion: he knows and never ceases to assert that the first work of the Revolution must be one of destruction, not of construction, and that its immediate purpose is not to build up some wonderful fabric in accordance with a pre-arranged program, but simply to uproot, remove, and utterly annihilate everything that can in any way interfere with the absolute freedom of men in the arrangement of their affairs by and for themselves. When asked by opponents what is to done in this or that case, he will reply without hesitation that it is not for him nor for anybody else to decide upon a course of action for others, and that every matter must be left to the free judgment of the parties concerned; and he will furthermore declare—what is obvious to common-sense—that it is impossible to decide upon any question of detail until each and every point hearing upon it is fully known and weighed. As the change produced by the Revolution will be a complete one, radically modifying every relation and condition of social life, it is clearly impossible for anyone to form such a sufficient idea of what will be required as can enable him to lay down any absolute rule for individual cases.

As social beings, men must necessarily associate one with another; it is as much a part of their nature to do so as it is to seek for food and other necessaries of life. The purpose of the Revolution is to render them perfectly free in following the guidance of this social nature which they possess, and it will do so by destroying all those Artificial contrivances whereby, in all ages of man's history, combined knavery and ignorance have sought to guide and improve his nature with the solitary result of crippling and distorting it to the utmost. Among these contrivances must be numbered all laws, because law is the negation of liberty, and all institutions which are forcibly imposed upon anybody, and which are not voluntarily accepted or cannot be set aside at will.

So long as Socialists persist in advocating utopian projects, however admirably planned those projects may be, valuable time and attention will be wasted in those fruitless debates which divide the revolutionary party and afford its opponents unlimited opportunities for picking out weak points and raising specious objections. An attacking party has always a balance of advantage on its side, let us therefore be always assailants and press on to victory without giving our enemy any opportunity for returning our blows at his leisure. During the time of preparation for the Revolution whatever weakens authority or its possessors must be used by us against them, and at the moment of actual Revolution we must be careful to destroy pitilessly whatever they can possibly use against us. In the very instant of victory on hesitatingly snatch away from your masters and superiors the property and position which authorize them to look down upon you as their dependents or to employ you as their tools! Work such havoc with the documents which convey and the precedents which consecrate the usurpations of your tyrants. that the devil himself may not be able to show them their own again! When, after the great French Revolution, the peasants had seized upon the land of the nobility and clergy and had made it their own by cultivating it and reaping the produce *for themselves*, not even the reinstated monarchy could restore the original proprietorship.. Nothing could put Humpty Dumpty together again. It will be still less possible for our present monopolists to recover their complicated sources of wealth when once these latter, shall have been appropriated by the people. As possession is nine points in law, let us make it the whole ten for Justice!

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