

Reflections Upon Anarchism

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Science is making tremendous progress in this century, but instead of science being the means of benefiting the people in every respect, it is used as a medium for inflicting misery and hardship upon those who are doomed to labor like slaves for a precarious existence. The inventions of science only give greater facilities to the privileged classes for increasing their happiness at the expense of terrible sufferings among that class which labors to produce the means whereby happiness is attainable. Machinery, instead of reducing the heavy labor of the working populace is used as a scientific mode of driving human beings from work and bread together; those who claim possession of the implements of production ruthlessly use every available means for throwing a number of industrial kind agricultural laborers out of employment. So great has become the army of unemployed workers of every description that a Revolution is inevitable. But what are the new social conditions to be?

The society of the future will surely be based upon the principle of equality; an equality which recognizes the human right of every individual to exercise to the full his powers of intellectual activity. There will be no need to curtail this complete freedom, for there will be no fear of the intellectual genius trying to make himself wealthy at the expense of others when production for the public use has taken the place of production for individual profit or personal gain.

Among the various schools of Socialist thought the State Socialist school insists upon the necessity of central government to regulate production and carry on public functions. This is the point upon which Anarchists and State Socialists differ. Both aim at the emancipation of man from his present slavery, but Anarchists refuse to recognize authority; State Socialists favor a certain system of officialism.

Now we believe that Anarchism might be put in practice without going through any form of State Socialism. The moment the commercial system breaks down, authority will cease to have any influence; and the people will be compelled to organize themselves without waiting to be told to do so, to produce commodities of every description for their own use. Such organization will need no officials to drill the people into it. When the mass of the workers know what they require for their maintenance, they will voluntarily associate together to manufacture commodities for themselves without waiting to be ordered to do what natural instinct and intelligence tell them they must do or perish. And in that case what would be the use of government officials?

The more productive workers there are, the fewer the hours of labor necessary for producing commodities, and in an Anarchist society there would be very few non-producers. There would

be no large army of government officials, soldiers, policemen, revenue officers, and such like to be supported at the cost of the labor of all the other workers. An advantage over State Socialism apparent to every one.

But we may be asked: Would every person be expected to do manual labor in an Anarchist society? Manual labor under capitalism is degrading for those who are forced to perform it because there is no other occupation open to them whereby they may secure a livelihood, Labor in a free society would not be degrading but honorable, for the laborer would feel his toil was essential to the happiness of the community. At present men work long hours because their employers want a profit out of their labor; but when employers are unknown and work is done for the well-being of the people collectively, then the hours of labor will be diminished to what is really necessary, and work which is wearisome to-day will become pleasant. No doubt every able-bodied person will be expected to do his three or four hours per day of productive labor, so as to enable the whole community to devote their leisure hours to the cultivation of their mental faculties. Cultivation of the intellect is almost impossible for our present manual laborers, whose hose toil from morning till evening banishes all thought of mental training from their minds, and they would rather indulge in some kind of frivolous amusement to drive from them that heaviness and anxiety which labor, under our competitive institutions, brings upon them. And it would be considered very unfair in a free society, where men associated together as brothers and equals, that all the heavy labor should be shouted on to certain people's shoulders. If there were no class privileges secured by laws, men would never stand that sort of thing. The shirkers would find themselves left out in the cold and be forced by their own unsupplied needs to cooperate in the necessary manual labor. The hardships belonging to such labor to-day would soon begin to disappear when it was everybody's interest to invent means to get rid of them.

When Anarchists propound these ideas to unthoughtful mortals, they are very often told that some human beings would be too indolent even to labor three or four hours per day; and they are asked what would be done with the idlers under Anarchism, if there were no coercive methods used to make them comply with the natural obligations imposed upon all men, namely, to labor in order to live? We admit that there are many idle men and women to-day; but are they not mostly lazy because the work they are made to perform is repugnant to their nature? Any man turns against work that is forced upon him and does not suit his taste, and work which men are forced to undertake bleeds the discontent that causes every one to revolt against what is likely to do them bodily harm. To-day men and women are doomed to violent and sustained exertion on insufficient food or to stick to monotonous routine work for hours and hours in close, gloomy workshops, or noisy, stuffy factories which produce the most miserable nervous depression and blunt of the faculties-no wonder they shrink from such labor. But when this unnatural labor is no longer exacted, when a free society is an accomplished fact, then most of those who refuse to labor at present for an employer, would most willingly throw off the garment, of laziness which our society causes them to wear, and voluntarily assist in work which would require no continuous physical overstrain. Our social institutions breed laziness; Anarchism would turn indolence into a love for honest labor. Where then is the need for coercive methods to compel the indolent to work? If laziness is to be abolished, the evils responsible for it must cease to exist; if the evils remain, the consequences of the evils will go on increasing. Since our social conditions create evils out of which arises laziness, these conditions must be destroyed before the evils can be abolished. The only method by which this can be accomplished is by adopting an Anarchical

system of society, wherein these evils will not be even known, much less fostered by unnatural coercive authority.

Now in a free society where all took their fair share of work, very little time would be taken out of each one's day by the business of producing food-stuffs, clothing, shelter, and such like for the general use; here would be a great deal of leisure. What would people do with it? When intelligent people have the privilege of utilizing their spare time in whatever manner they think proper, the desire for further intellectual development grows from their original love of knowledge. And when the means of acquiring knowledge are at the disposal of everybody the enthusiasm of the more intelligent will inspire the rest to strive after the intellectual development attained by the industrious and diligent students. Therefore the general level of man's mental faculties in an Anarchist society will soon be immensely superior to what they are to-day, when despair breeds an impulse in many individuals to resist any attempt to enlighten them upon topics relating to their social surroundings.

Nowadays, too, the world is full of nonsensical trash, disgusting to the searchers after truth. So-called philosophers write numerous volumes upon matters of little importance to those who suffer from the evils arising out of the social institutions which those philosophers write to defend. False men cannot write truthful matter; living in a false atmosphere they fail to sympathize with men and women longing to be freed from wage slavery and competition. The monopolizers of wealth and privilege have a whole army of literary supporters whose efforts are devoted to the furtherance of principles detrimental to the masses upon whose labor they exist. And all those whose minds are nourished upon this vile literature are, certain to entertain the erroneous ideas it is meant to instill, unless indeed they read for the purpose of dissecting the ideas expressed and pointing out the fallacious arguments used by the author in favor of the principles intended for dissemination among those who never think about what they read or ask themselves whether a writer's statements are true or false. Literature of this description would be eschewed in an Anarchist society; and instead of authors being obliged to waste their mental energy in writing matter acceptable to their pay-masters only, they would be encouraged to compose works containing matter which would elevate the reader's morals and sharpen his intellect.

Not only would literature be free from interested lies and mercenary clap-trap but the different sections of the scientific world would be open freely to all those who are now prevented from taking part in scientific research. Why should scientific investigation be confined to a privileged few? Why should the wealth producers be prevented from sharing in its joys and honors? The people generally are, in these days, debarred from studying scientific problems or making themselves familiar with music and painting, sculpture and literature, or any other art in which the moneyed class alone can give their children a thorough education. But when monopoly vanishes and freedom takes its place, then the arts and sciences will become popular, and the entire community enjoy the benefits arising from their progress, progress which is fatally hindered whilst education in the higher subjects is a class privilege.

Society at present recognizes the right of one man to domineer over another, because the persons who obey allow themselves to be treated as inferior to those whom society encourages to act as masters. But those who rule to-day cannot give any satisfactory account of the origin of their authority over their fellow citizens. Rulers and ruling classes have taken it upon themselves to reign over those willing to submit, and that submission denotes the utter foolishness of the governed. If an intelligent minority refused to be ruled by a minority of usurpers, they would have a much stronger moral position in refusing obedience than the rulers have for compelling it.

The handful of men which refuses to be governed by usurpers, can boast of superior intelligence to those who patiently yield to the demands of ambitious and selfish individuals. Human beings were born to work harmoniously together, so as to provide each other with the necessities of life; and also to make each other's life as happy as possible. When a man attempts to over-rule another he displays an unspeakable amount of ignorance. And when pedantic individuals are induced to dictate to their so-called inferiors, the result is that a fierce desire for place and authority begins to burn within their hearts and flames ever higher and higher. Mankind being socially equal, authority should not be even mentioned, for intelligence can best guard the intelligent - under free conditions against committing acts injurious to their neighbors.

Whilst ignorance reigned among the masses of the people they were content to believe that rulers and those in authority, kings, barons, priests, employers, had some sort of divine or natural right to tell them what to do and force them to do it. But the spread of knowledge, even the small amount of it current to-day, has been enough to change all that; to lead the people to question the right to rule, to challenge the usurpers of authority. A great many people are beginning to believe that, every human being ought to have at his disposal every aid to intellectual development, that he may acquire that knowledge whereby he would be enabled to control himself; his own instincts guided by his own reason would then be the best law for his conduct. At present the millions permit the hundreds to make hard and fast laws for them, laws in harmony, perhaps, with the views of the hundreds, but altogether at variance with the views and interests of the millions. In consequence the millions are continually struggling against laws repugnant to their natural instincts, repugnant to their ideas of right and of those natural laws by which alone mankind ought to be ruled. They obey, but obey perforce and against their conscience. And this evil is inseparable from a fixed code made by any set of men for others, for the human mind is continually developing and each can only find out for himself the line of conduct which is fitting to him at any given moment. It is impossible for others to fully realize his position and dictate to him. If this fact were recognized the office of the law-maker would be at an end and coercion would appear the monstrous outrage upon human equality and fraternity that it really is.

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