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How to Take Out the Garbage in an Anarchist State

Levi Raskin

Any plausible anarchist state cannot rely on Dad to organize the household chore lists for everyone. Vacuuming, unloading the dishwasher, and taking out the garbage are all three simple chores, but require the presence of two components for the task to be completed. The first step is simply a recognition of the problem and the second is a motivation to address the problem in the right way. This, of course, raises two distinct problems for the anarchist state and its logistics: recognition of the problem and motivation to act upon said problem must be intrinsically addressed. Dad is not there to remind you to take out the garbage, instead that motivation to take it out, and to do it right for that matter, must come from some internal desire. The logistic network of the anarchist state is driven with personal passion.

Using the specific example of garbage collection, one can see several obstructions inhibiting organization quickly arise. Dump locations must be set, collections have to be organized, the wastage of resources into the landfill must be considered. The optimization of the balance between individual liberty and communal well being is

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a question that must be continually grappled with in the anarchist state. This lowly analogy of general anarchist economy and society to garbage collection is a prime example of a solution to such a problem.

The first thing that is noteworthy is that plastic-wrapped processed foods would almost certainly have to disappear within an anarchist state. Of course, plastics are a useful material, but underneath contemporary American food corporations, shrink-wrapped food has only served to bolster the profits by spreading the product across a nation without spoilage. This level of continental, and even global food distribution is purely a capitalistic phenomenon. A constant search for the next market drives this plasticization of food and the minute the contemporary notion of “market” dies, so too will the desire to preserve food for mass transport. Local foods, direct from a farm, are significantly easier to organize with an absolute minimization of the middleman, a devious character in capitalist societies that creates nothing and consumes nothing, but merely transfers product, skimming some off the top for himself.

Waste would likely decrease gradually to simple food waste and significantly less non-organic garbage. Garbage is a product of human society since we first evolved several million years ago and will be several million years into the future. In order to deal with this uniquely human phenomenon, the original questions of recognition and motivation need to be solved. Identification of the issue at hand can come from anyone within the individual’s circle as they would be the people affected by the unkempt household and the odious odor wafting through the kitchen. Recognition is straightforward in that regard. Neighbors, friends, family, or the individual themselves have the potential and the right, by virtue of being affected by it, to identify an overflowing garbage.

The motivation to act right, such as taking the metal garbage to a blacksmith or artisan and the food waste to a local farm, is sourced directly from the human-centric economy. The identification of a problem, already sourced intrinsically or from those who

are within the individual’s sphere, is direct between the person affected and the one who has the power, or at least the primary interest and responsibility, of remedying the situation. The motivation to act is equally direct. Within the plausible anarchist state, food is sourced from a farmer, tools sourced from the blacksmith. Repositories and stores, beyond what is necessary for production such as silos, are another form of the capitalistic middlemen which neither create nor consume and as such, must be avoided. The direct nature of this plausible state creates the human bonds between someone who might be able to reuse garbage and someone who can provide said garbage. Favors are traded for products, which are in turn traded for favors: the menial task of sorting garbage into compost is repaid by the menial tasks involved with farming. Simply put, the motivation to act is sourced indirectly from the necessity of dependence.

Broadly speaking, there is a clear dual theme inherent to taking out the garbage. The first is that an anarchist state must have an economy, not based upon dollar bills or gold, but instead dependent upon human connections and favors. The second is that, directly descendent from the first, middlemen must be avoided at all costs and in all forms. An economy reliant on direct human relationship between producer and consumer cannot allow for bureaucracy to take a cut from the product. When this happens, the forces that lead people to produce and consume disappear, crippling the anarchist state into a pseudo-capitalistic resurgence. Taking out the garbage requires one esoteric step: removal of the middleman.