

Why we are Anarchists

Louise Michel

1891

We are Anarchists because it is absolutely impossible to obtain justice for all in any other way than by destroying institutions founded on force and privilege.

We cannot believe that improvement is possible, if we still keep up the same institutions, now more rotten than in the past, or if we merely replace those whose iniquities are known by new men.

These latter become in their turn what the others were, or else become barren.

After the gradual changes of past centuries the hour has come when evolution cannot be separated from revolution, as in all birth they must be accomplished together. You can no more retard the birth of a system than you can that of living being.

In what would you that we should help those who govern—their work being only exploitation and wholesale murder—it has never been otherwise: the reason for the existence of a state is nothing but the accomplishment of some crime or other in order to assure the domination of a privileged class.

An equal division of wealth would also be as mad as capitalism is criminal: to expect any amelioration of misery by modifying laws is a piece of stupidity of which we are not capable: we have seen the work of men whose illusions have only been able to perpetuate misery — millions of years being insufficient for the least amelioration of the lot of the workers. We can now see the fin-de-siècle cutthroats and assassins. That is better. We can see power on trial — we can judge it for what it is worth.

The land which belongs to all can no more be divided than the light which also belongs to all.

When free groups of men will use for the general welfare machines which reduce the hours of labour to a few, and in many forms of production the toil of rough work will be annihilated, there will remain for the intellect of the time, some time for the pursuit of art and science; and when men are delivered from the struggle for existence, they will also be delivered from crime and grief.

The ideal alone is the truth — it is the measure of our horizon. Time was when the ideal was to live without eating an other up. Is it not so still under another form which exists in the so-called civilized countries where the exploiter eats up the exploited? Do not the people in nocks fertilize the soil by their sweat and blood?

That is what we want to destroy — this annihilation — this eating of man by an other man.

The old bogie of "Society" is dead. It is time that she was buried with the worms burrowing in her vitals, in order that the air may be pure for young Anarchy, which will be order and peace under freedom instead of order kept by the murder of the multitudes.

How did I become an Anarchist? This is how. It was during a four months voyage for New Caledonia while looking at the infinity of the sea and of the sky — feeling how miserable living beings are when taken individually — how great is the ideal when it goes beyond time and beyond the hecatombs as far as the new aurora.

There I deeply felt how each drop of water of the waves was but microscopic, but how powerful it was when joined to the ocean.

So also ought each man to be in humanity. As for the third question I am not the least bit in the world "chief" of the "International school"; the word "directrix" which my comrades have joined to my name is worth nothing either, for each of us gives freely according to his conscience the courses of instruction with which he or she has charged him or her self.

What would you have? Our tongue is poor, the words are old and so they ill express new ideas.

And finally is it not time that our limited tongues should fall into the ocean of speech and of human thought? What will be the language of mankind delivered to the new Aurora — Anarchy!

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