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On 'Fifth Estate', Anarchism, Technology & Bookchin

FE View Not New...

Marcus Graham

November 19, 1981

To the Fifth Estate:

The "Against the Megamachine" article in the July 1980 Fifth Estate ought to influence pro-machine marxists, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists in realizing the Frankenstein that the scientists have created.

George Bradford's essay, "On Marxism, Anarchism and the Roots of the New Totalitarianism," in particular deals with this phrase most effectively. Bradford correctly points out that although anarchists are opposed to "authoritarian Marxism," they have failed to realize what the technological megamachine implies.

Nevertheless, not all anarchists have followed Peter Kropotkin's pro-machine position. In the weekly anarchist "Road to Freedom" (1924-1939), in an article entitled "Man's Liberation," appearing July 1925, this writer stated in part: "Man created machines. Machines that were to lessen man's toil. But alas! The machine has increased the wealth of the idlers and brought misery to the many... .What is even worse, the machine has destroyed man's

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joy of artisan creation. Man merely became a spook of the very machine that he himself created.”

I think the future will prove that Kropotkin, from an anarchist point of view, has, in accepting thus the machine, made one of the greatest errors. Such an attitude was perfectly logical for the Marxian school of thought, but certainly not for the anarchist. In reality, man will never be able to master the machine without the sacrifice of endangering human life.

Kropotkin’s pro-machine position received a new impetus when Murray Bookchin came out in favor of the machine under the alluring title *Toward a Liberatory Technology* in “Anarchos” issues 2 & 3, 1968–69. In a reply, “Questioning the Premises” of Bookchin which appeared in the October 1971 issue of the *Match!* of Tucson, Arizona, I wrote: “Technology rests on the basic principle of centralized authority, as its technique shows in every move that it makes. Anarchism, on the other hand, rests on the very opposite basic principle of decentralization. Whether by intent or not, Bookchin is correct when using the words ‘socialist ideal,’ since Marxism fits into technology as into a perfect glove. But when he implies that technology is related or conducive to the building of an Anarchist society, he is totally wrong.”

It is indeed good to find Bookchin changing his position by now as quoted by Bradford in his article.

Last but not least, the Fifth Estate, although not calling itself an anarchist publication, is nevertheless considered as such by “The Anarchist Review” of England, anarchist groups and individuals who materially support it – for the reason of its most consistent anti-authoritarian reaction towards every political and social question.

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