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A reply to friend Parker

Mark A. Sullivan

1976

A comrade from England writes:

I enjoyed reading *The Storm!* but wonder how much use resurrecting Tuckerian economics will be. If one believes that a “free society” is possible and can be established there may be some point to it, but I don’t and therefore think, as Armand put it towards the end of his life, that anarchist individualism “situates itself on the psychological plane of resistance to social totalitarianism”...

S.E.Parker

Mark A. Sullivan
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A reply to friend Parker:

As always, it is a pleasure to hear from you, and a pleasure to respond. My decision to “resurrect” Tuckerian economics (actually, it never died, but was kept alive by Laurance Labadie and the School of Living in the ‘50s and ‘60s) is part and parcel of the whole purpose of *THE STORM!*, which is to present individualism

in its most radical form — as a rejection of ALL power and authority over the individual, ie., as anarchism. The “school” of individualist anarchism, of which Tucker was the chief propagandist, rejected as invasive, authoritarian, and unnecessary, a property system which empowered those who owned the means of production and exchange to collect tribute from the workers who made these resources productive. Income not derived from the performance of an actual service is exploitation, supported by most everyone who hope to some day find themselves in a position to live without working, by grace of a title or privilege granted by the State.

I am not optimistic, given the general desire to rule and exploit others, while thus going along with BEING so ruled and exploited, that a “free society” will ever come to pass. Free association within the present society is both a possible and desirable goal. I am inclined to believe that the struggle against authority will go on as long as the human race endures — thus I agree with Armand, with whom I feel the strongest affinity, that the prime struggle is one of psychological “resistance to social totalitarianism”. But in this struggle, the economic criticisms levelled by Warren, Proudhon, Tucker, AND Armand (himself influenced by Tucker, as you know) can indicate to many the degree of their economic enslavement and move them to avoid or resist exploitation whenever possible. There have been and continue to be many attempts to carry on life outside the state-capitalist economy which are oriented toward the ideal of equitable exchange, which is the economic cornerstone, as I see it, of anarchist individualism. Current experiments in urban and rural co-operatives which attempt to eliminate the “middle-man” and substitute an exchange or barter of services is one step away from Warren’s substitution of labor-notes for legal tender. What keeps us more enslaved to the “System” than the fact that, in order to live, we must use a medium of exchange created at whim to benefit those who get to exploit us EVERY TIME we use the stuff?! Who doesn’t pay sales and income taxes, interest on loans and mortgages, and more and more dollars (pounds, etc.) for the

same (at best) goods and services every day? Hopefully, psychological resistance will flower into alternative means of livelihood and interaction outside legal channels.

However, it is more likely that political revolution rather than alternative economies will be attempted as the solution to social totalitarianism. Along with the authoritarian left, most revolutionary anarchists believe that unregulated free exchange, laissez faire, will lead to even greater exploitation than exists under present capitalism. The impression is fostered by the fact that some defenders of free exchange include capitalistic income as the result of free exchange, and not the result of State-created privileges. THE STORM! answers the arguments of anarcho-capitalists with heavy dose of “Tuckerian economics” in order to prevent throwing out economic freedom along with exploitation, which many anarchists have a habit of doing. I am in favor of any attempt to end economic exploitation which does not sacrifice individual liberty. A revolutionary anarchist movement ignorant of Tucker’s arguments for economic freedom will lead to communal totalitarianism. In his later years, Tucker gave up on a peaceful transition to anarchy, but not on its ultimate validity. Why does THE STORM! propagate Tuckerian economics? Tucker himself can best answer that question.

Until measures of forcible confiscation, through the State or in defiance of it, shall have abolished the concentrations that monopoly has created, the economic solution proposed by Anarchism...*and there is no other solution*—will remain a thing to be taught to the rising generation, that conditions may be favorable to its application after the great leveling... If this lesson shall not be learned in a season, the past will be repeated in the future... (B.R.T. January 6, 1911)¹

¹ State Socialism and Anarchism: How Far They Agree, and Wherein They Differ, 1888.