

Without Bosses

[Sin Jefes]

Ricardo Flores Magón

March 21, 1914

To want bosses and at the same time to want to be free is to want the impossible. It is necessary to choose once and for all between two things: either to be free, completely free, refusing all authority, or to be enslaved perpetuating the power of man over man.

The boss or government is necessary only under a system of economic inequality. If I have more than Pedro, I naturally fear that Pedro will grab me by the neck and will take from me what he needs. In this case, I need a government or a supervisor to protect me against the possible attacks of Pedro; but if Pedro and I are economic equals; if we both have the same opportunity to profit from the riches of nature, such as land, water forests, mines, and everything else, just as the riches created by the hand of man, like the machineries, houses, railroads, and the thousand and one manufacturers, reason says that it would be impossible that Pedro and I would grab each other by the hair to dispute the things that we both profit from equally and in this case there is no need to have bosses.

To talk of bosses between equals is a contradiction, unless we speak of equals in servitude, brothers in chains, as we workers are now.

There are many who say that it is impossible to live without bosses or government; if it is the bourgeois that say such things, I admit they are right in their reasoning because they fear that the poor will seize them by the neck and will snatch away their riches that they have amassed by making the worker sweat; but for what do the poor need bosses or government?

In Mexico, we have had and have hundreds of proofs that humankind does not need bosses or government if not in the case of economic inequality. In the rural villages and communities, the people have not felt it necessary to have a government. Until recently, the land, forests, water, and fields have been common property of the people of the region. When government is spoken of to those simple people, they start to tremble because for them government is the same as an executioner; it signifies the same as tyranny. They live happily in their freedom, without knowing, in many cases, the name of the President of the Republic, and they only know of the existence of a government when the military chiefs pass through the region looking for men to convert into soldiers, or when the federal tax collector comes to collect taxes. The government was, then, to a large part of the Mexican population, the tyrant that pulled the working men out of their homes to convert them into soldiers, or to savagely exploit that they would snatch away the tax in the name of the tax authority.

Would these populations feel the need to have government? They needed it for nothing and they could live in that way for hundreds of years, until the natural riches were snatched away for the benefit of the neighboring landholders. They did not eat one another, the way that those who have only known the capitalist system feared would happen; a system in which each man has to compete with everyone else to put a piece of bread in his mouth; the strong do not exert tyranny over the weak, as happens under a capitalist civilization, in which the most idle, greedy, and clever rule over the honest and good. All were brothers in these communities; they all helped out, and sensing equality, the way it really was, they did not need authorities to watch over the interests of those who had them, fearing possible attacks of those who did not have.

In these moments, for what do the free communities of the Yaqui of Durango, of the South of Mexico and so many other areas in which the people have taken possession of the land, need government? From the moment that they consider themselves equals, with the same right to the Mother Earth, they do not need a boss to protect the privileged against those without privileges, because all are privileged.

Let us open our eyes, proletariats: the government should only exist when there is economic inequality. Adopt then, as a moral guide, the Manifesto of September 23, 1911.

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