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Let Us Unite

Ross Winn

1894

“In union there is strength,” and “a house divided against itself must fall.” In all countries and at all times there has been room for not more than one great movement at a time. So with us now. If the reformers of this country would achieve success it must be by a united phalanx.

The different movements now seeking social reform are a unit as to the end sought to be realized, and differ only as to the methods. Yet, even upon the question of methods there is no great divergence of opinion. The tendency of all reform ideas is towards the principle of co-operation, and it is no stretch of fact to say that the co-operation movement advocated by the Twentieth Century is the ultimate aim of the various schools, both radical and conservative, whether Socialists, Nationalists, Populists, Anarchists, Communists or what not. All these various parties have as a common ideal some such system as that denominated by the Twentieth Century as the co-operative commonwealth.

But Anarchists insist that all organization for whatever purpose should be voluntary. With the co-operative commonwealth they are in perfect harmony, but they insist that it must be voluntary.

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The right to ignore the state must be its basis. Upon this point the Anarchists will not yield.

Most Socialists are opposed to coercion, and when they openly proclaim their adherence to the principal of voluntary association they will remove the only barrier between them and those who wear the name of Individualists.

Our ideal of the co-operative commonwealth is one free from the blighting effects of authority; one wherein each is a sovereign of his own person, and where the association is that of free individuals. in short, we contend for a co-operative commonwealth organized by mutual consent, and maintained by mutual consent.

We have had coercion enough. For ages man has ruled with sword and bayonet, with bars and chains. For many ages the strong hand of power has crushed the liberties of the people, has soaked the soil with human blood, has cast the sable shadow of oppression over the earth, and now are we not civilized enough to dispense with it forever? What blessings does government confer?

Has it not ever been an engine of oppression in the hands of the few? Is it not in its very nature antagonistic to freedom, and can we expect it to defend that which it destroys? For many centuries government has held sway, and liberty has been driven from among men. Let us give liberty control.

Liberty does not bring confusion, it brings peace. Under the government the nations are armed constantly for war. The state thrives on war and violence. Its chief prop is the sword. It lives only by violence. Take from it the power of its arms and it will die a natural death.

Let us have the co-operative commonwealth. It is sure to come, but let its foundation be individual freedom. Let us say to our fellow citizens: We do not wish to coerce you. We demand freedom to establish our affairs in our way, and accord you that right. Take the hand of restraint from us. Give us our natural right to manage our own affairs, and we will respect your equal rights.

This is what our attitude should be. Leaving names aside, the thing the Socialist wants is all the Anarchist contends for. A union of Socialists can be effected, and the basis is voluntary co-operation.