

FREEDOM PAMPHLET

**ANARCHISM
AND
DEMOCRACY**

By
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Anarchism & Democracy

I.

These are times of change. To what end we are all hastening is not at all clear, and one can only hoe his garden patch in patience, hoping that the intelligence of mankind will be sufficient to break down and smash up and tear out the institutions of slavery amongst us. Every man and woman of us was born to be free in thought, word, and deed. Perhaps we may choose to sell our heritage, but the sale must be voluntary, and not—as it now is—under compulsion. Anarchism, above all things, stands for intelligence and common honesty. And these qualities being rather uncommon in these our days, Anarchists have the opprobrium and venom of those who believe, quite sincerely, in authority and politics; that is, of those who have the chief seats in pulpit, Press, and Parliament. "Yes," say they, in gravest tones of warning, "the country is being plunged into Anarchy and disorder. Bolshevism—that blessed word—is making strikes and disputes and commotions. Anarchism is a national menace," and so on, and so on.

So it must be quite clearly pointed out in beginning that the country is being rapidly plunged, not into Anarchy at all, but into the cesspool of law and enactment. ("Cesspool" is the exact word to be used, for in a cesspool no freedom of movement is possible, it being filled with stagnancy and filth.) Anarchy stands for the abolition of laws, but there are more laws, and more persons charged with the duties of administering them than ever before in the history of any country under the sun. To whatever such a state of things may be leading, Anarchy is certainly not the objective. I offend against the laws by reading a newspaper in the street or hawking there a pair of bootlaces, by the mere act of

fishing in a stream or trapping a wild rabbit. We have even reached the stage when the supposedly Christian duty of loving one's enemies becomes a serious criminal offence, punishable—as it has been in many cases—by three or more years of imprisonment with hard labour.

Laws, or legal enactments as they had better be called, are the precursors and originators of disorder. Their very multiplicity means the withdrawal from productive industry of a large army of people, who make it their business to expound and interpret and argue these same enactments. The very existence of a lawyer class is an inevitable symptom of disorder. So numerous and varied are the individual interpretations of these laws, that no one—in his senses or out of them—knows whether his conduct be criminal or not. And again, that any number of men and women should abstain from productive labour means most certainly that they who do labour to produce are thereby deprived of some portion of the product of their labour. Indeed, the lawgivers and makers take far more from them than do the criminal classes. (The word "criminal" is here used in its strictly legal sense.) Such a condition of things—whatever else it may be styled—is certainly not orderly. Neither is it moral or just.

By what strange misuse of English have the terms "law" and "order" been coupled together? The two are not twins, but opposites. As liberty is the mother of order—to use Proudhon's immortal phrase—so are laws the corollary of disorder and confusion. If we consider the Factory Acts in illustration of this, we shall find that, though they were framed and instituted by men and women whose motives were above suspicion, they have not as yet accomplished what it was intended to accomplish by them. And there were no Factory Acts in the "golden age" of English labour, which is the title given by Thorold Rogers to the first half of the sixteenth century. Little children, in those days were not enslaved by brutal employers, for the perfectly obvious reason that the English working people were the actual possessors of a larger share

of the product of their skill and industry than ever before or since. The average man who can earn a comfortable subsistence for himself and his family does not send his children or his womenfolk to the mill or the factory. And thus, these much vaunted Factory Acts are merely the hall-mark of robbery and exploitation. Get rid of the robbery and exploitation, and there remains no conceivable reason for their continued existence. Parents are not naturally brutal towards their children, though necessity often makes them so. The children of wealthy people do not spend their adolescence in mills or factories.

But, I shall be told, the abolition of laws would mean a tremendous increase in the number of criminals. Such objection would have weight only if it can be demonstrated that the number of criminals at present amongst us is capable of increase. Here is a noble lord who takes from the accumulated industry of the people living on a square mile of the earth's surface thirty pounds' worth of wealth for every hour of time. And there are others. Even the prince of burglars, Charles Peace, did not do as well as this. It is time the word "criminal" was overhauled and understood properly. There are only three ways by which you may get your living: By working for it, begging it, or stealing it. And the Eleventh Commandment is more important than all the ten compressed together: "*Thou shalt not be stolen from!*"

The objection is reduced to absurdity if we consider that, with the abolition of laws, every one of us may become criminals. For when we have all stolen and looted everything possible to be stolen or looted—who would be buyers or sellers in such a condition of affairs?—we should then have to go back to the earth, and scratch it, as we do now. I wonder what sort of biped he would be who would share his scratchings with an able-bodied individual who had done no scratching at all. The Apostolic dictum, "He who will not work, neither shall he eat," would be put sternly into practice, and no lawyers would be needed to interpret it, either.

Curiously enough, all unknowing, we have arrived in these two last sentences, at a magnificent conception of the meaning of order.

II.

It is time we began to consider how that venerable, not to say antiquated, institution known as Parliament fashions the laws, obedience to which makes us virtuous and honourable. When the newly-elected member arrives at St. Stephen's, he finds there the most comfortable club in Europe, for attendance at which he is paid £400 per annum. And also the bargain shop of the Empire. The magic word which unlocks all its secrets is the word "procedure." Unless a thing has been done before, it cannot be done at all. If it should be attempted, cries of "Order, order!" overwhelm the unknowing member. He may desire to ask a question—about the only thing he can do—but his question must be worded in accordance with formula, and be approved by the Speaker. This "procedure" is necessary in order that the member of the Government who replies may be put to no unusual mental exertion in inventing a suitable lie. The small Bill in his pocket will never be heard of, unless our member enters into numerous bargains with other members, by which he pledges himself to support the small Bills they have also in their pockets. Let us assume he gets a "first reading"; that is the end of his Bill, for the Government promptly squashes it, by refusing to allow further time for its progress. Not dismayed, our member takes a manly part in a discussion, and makes a few exposures. He only does it for the first time, though, for three methods of "procedure" exist by which he can be made to keep his tongue between his teeth. "Mr. Speaker" may refuse to see him when he rises to speak again, or the House may be counted out, or, as a last resort, a Front Bench member may move "the closure." Thereafter he finds the refreshment room and the smokers' room to be much more comfortable places than the "House" itself. And who can blame him?

All legislation of any importance is initiated by the Government. Behind the Government are finan-

cial and landed interests; these form its constituency, which it always represents with the most abject faithfulness. Let me throw three straws into the water to indicate the flow of the current. First, the "Moratorium." Has it been forgotten that by this device—procedure ignored here—the Government in 1914—not the House of Commons—within the space of a few hours saved the banking interests of the country from collapse and utter ruin? Second, when the President of the Board of Trade announced he was unwilling to interfere with the then rising shipping freights, should it not be remembered that his own father, Sir Walter Runciman, was the chairman of a big Northern shipping combine? Third, that with the taking of Persia under the wing of Great Britain, there comes into being the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Evidence is not wanting to those who look for it. Indeed, the statement is a commonplace of Labour platforms.

Between the Government and its constituents come the official heads of State Departments, with their staffs. They—let every democrat make a note of this—are the real rulers of the country. They draft the Bills, they conduct the diplomatic business, they administer the laws, they are vital to the whole machinery of government. And they are representative of whom? The Democracy? (Before he can become attached to the diplomatic corps, a man must have an assured income of £400 a year.) I want to smash your delusions, Oh, Democracy!

"But," says Democracy, "we are going to alter all this." "And," shall be my cynical reply, "the more it is altered, the more it remains the same." Is it seriously proposed that the first business of a Labour or Socialist Government will be to discharge or retire the departmental heads and their staffs? Does any one of the political parties propose the repeal of a single enactment? No, they are all of them bursting with schemes of fresh measures, to be drafted and administered in the same offices, by the same people. These people might be growing wheat or hoeing potatoes. As it is, they are simply consuming wheat and potatoes, and not a blade of grass will grow under their feet.

I repeat again, these departmental heads and staffs are vital to government. Call your government what you will, Tory, Labour, or Socialist, heads of departments, etc., there must be, and in their hands control must reside. I put the question in all seriousness: Is it worth while to expend a lifetime of energy in attempting to replace one set of officials by another set of officials? The Anarchist—with his eyes on the democratic (?) Trade Union movement—says No!

1381 was the year of the Great Revolt. The distressed people, with their leaders, marched to London to see the King. In him they put their trust, and it was shamelessly betrayed. Five hundred years pass, and we see the people—the common people—putting their plaint before Parliament, in hope of some remedy issuing from its enactments. The time is yet to come when we, all of us, shall learn to trust in our own innate powers of craftsmanship, initiative, co-operation, industry and fellowship. Thus will the great revolution be begun and accomplished.

III.

This little island has been the workshop and the market of the world. Why, no one stays to consider. We supply everything from heathen idols to monster battleships. We deal in everything, from the worship of God to red handkerchiefs. But why? Kropotkin has demonstrated that enough can be grown and manufactured to feed, clothe, and house adequately every individual of our forty-five millions. What more do we want or could we desire? There is no real reason why we should sweat and toil to produce millions of things, which are of no earthly use to anyone at all. If there are certain necessary commodities which are only procurable from abroad, surely we can with order and decency estimate what of them is required, and exchange our surplus against them. It is tolerably certain that eight weeks of labour in each year would be sufficient to produce all we desire both for home consumption and overseas trade. But we are chained to our wheels, our forges, and benches, in order that some few women may have diamond

necklaces to wear, and some few men big bank balances. Here is the grisly secret revealed: The poor are made poorer to enable the rich to become richer. The vicious circle spins round, faster and yet faster. It is the aim of Anarchism to break it in its flight.

We are being urged—nay, commanded—to “increase production.” But what are the things, production of which must be increased? Motor cars, dead birds, pianos, wooden nutmegs, weighted calico, shoddy cloth, paper money, aeroplanes, munitions, battleships? Were millions of tons of them produced each day, the real benefit accruing to the country's workers would be infinitesimal. As a matter of fact, we are being called upon to increase the production of those things which can be sold in the world outside. It has already been pointed out in “The Builder,” that the production of cottages for the workers to live in is unremunerative. They are not saleable commodities. An American economist, Dr. Ely, has stated that “not more than one adult worker in ten is employed on necessary things; the other nine perform superfluous services.” The reverse of this statement is equally true; the one produces all the necessities the ten require. Which is equivalent to saying the one worker who is engaged on producing necessary things receives, at most, only one-tenth of the product of his labour. Actually he receives less than this.

The Socialist and Radical reformers view the continuance of such a condition of affairs with equanimity. They have forgotten the lesson taught them by William Morris, which was the separation of “useful work” from “useless toil.” What we really need is an exodus of workers from the factories of useless toil, to the farmsteads and workshops of useful work. The whole of our civilisation is epitomised in the picture of a poor dressmaker, who spends her life in making fashionable dresses, yet has never a decent gown in which she may dress herself. “Cut out the fashionable dresses,” says the Anarchist, “let the people make clothes for themselves!”

Over a hundred years ago—in 1805—Dr. Charles Hall explained very carefully that the production

of unnecessary commodities was encouraged and increased, because, by the sale of them some few people were being made wealthy. The statement is as true to-day as ever it was. Dividends and profits and bonuses come out of the sale of them; their manufacture provides a means for the use of capital—which, by the way, cannot be used otherwise. And in all this turmoil and confusion and struggle some few human maggots get fat; the others remain lean. *Law—and Order!* What an appropriate title for a comic opera! Or the most colossal of tragedies!

IV.

A German professor has, with usual intellectual stupidity, written a book, the purpose of which is to reduce Anarchism to a "norm"—that is to say, a rule or pattern. I do not think he succeeds, though he compares, with great diligence, the ideas expressed by seven separate Anarchist writers. The usefulness of all this kind of investigation may be doubted when it is pointed out that there are as many variations of Anarchism as there are Anarchists. Because Anarchism most decidedly is not a system either of religion, or morals, or politics, or anything else. It is, if you like, a light shining in darkness, by which the Anarchist looks upon the world and its doings. We do not know enough to be able to tell other people everything they ought to do, but we insist on our right to shout—and to do more than shout—because our chains and fetters hurt us, while the sight of them on other people offends our artistic sensibilities and our feelings of fellowship. Never shall we regard chains and fetters as being fashionable articles of wear. Even though they be forged by Socialists in garden cities!

Anarchism begins where most systems end—with Liberty. What then do we mean by Liberty? *It is, in its essence, the recognition, and use, by the individual himself of the power he has within him and his natural right—of which he must not be deprived—to govern himself and his activities.* Such self-government has, as its corollary, free and unfettered expression of thought.

Slavery, on the other hand, is the *recognition* by the individual of the power of others to govern him and to control his activities. The one outstanding fact about slavery to be remarked is that it cannot be imposed upon any number of people without the consent of those upon whom it is imposed. Even though revolt and death are the only alternatives.

This is plain English enough, I hope. Let the gentle reader examine his own thoughts and activities from this viewpoint and he will be surprised at the extent of his endurance. As it is, he carries about the world with him superstitions of all sorts, religious, economic, moral, political—their name is legion. And his besetting sin is, that he refuses to drop them.

"All very well," we shall be told, "but what does the Anarchist do?" Ernest Crosby, in a striking little poem, has, in its concluding line, supplied the answer:

"I do *not* obey: I think."

Thought is the most potent force in the world. Blake speaks of his "mental strife." And in truth, the real conflict—unseen maybe—is being waged by armies of thoughts against other armies of thoughts. The Anarchists are a comparatively small number of people, who have set themselves in mental antagonism to the confused and ever-wavering thought of those who would exploit the world's peoples—for their own good, of course. (The good, however, is a long time in arriving.) We can do no less than this; the pity of it is that the other people will not do as much, they being more concerned in the defence of their authoritative organisations and institutions.

Look closely at the struggles in Russia. On the one side is Socialist thought, on the other, Exploitation thought. Those are the real protagonists. The visible outcome is that millions of men and women, infected by those thoughts, are prepared to fight and die on the one side or the other.

Surely it is obvious enough! I am not now discussing the origins of thoughts—whether they are provoked by material considerations or not—being

content merely to indicate their influence upon human conduct. The thoughts of men are in perpetual conflict, and Anarchists desire to have them elevated to a higher plane of activity. At present we all—whether we like it not—are concerned and implicated in economic and political considerations. Anarchism declares these considerations need not detain the mind of man any further. There is no economic *problem!* There is no political *problem!* Delusions and superstitions they are, both of them!

As I have tried to show, Anarchism has no system by which square men may be fitted into round holes. The trick might be done, and is being done, by burying them upright. Enactment digs the grave, and Monopoly drops the unfortunate wretch into it. Meanwhile the funeral service is read by any or all of the hundred true churches we have amongst us. The country is one huge cemetery, in which living men and women stand buried alive. And by persons of authority and refinement such a spectacle is regarded as being, on the whole, most artistic and impressive.

But such figurative language will not please the horny-handed reader. He will demand to know into what Utopia it is suggested he should march. To attempt any sort of answer is almost impossible. When he gets his feet on the track of self-government and independence, he need not trouble about what he will do when he gets there—he will find, perhaps, to his astonishment, that he is doing it.

Let us take as an example of what might be done, the mediæval guild. (Here let me warn the reader that I express *personal* opinions only, and that I have neither sympathy with, nor part, nor lot in "Guild Socialism.") When any number of people in mediæval England wanted to do anything—build a bridge, maintain lights at an altar, provide for their own funerals, and so on—they constituted themselves into a guild for that particular purpose. There were thousands of such guilds in existence at one time. The members of them made their contributions and gave their services for the object they had in view. Say the guild was to provide sufficient service for the funerals of its members.

Then, when a member died, the other members provided the grave, paid the priest, attended at the burial, and made the necessary feast afterwards. Now, I am not enamoured of mediævalism, but there is abundant life yet in the principles of the mediæval guild. Let us imagine that in a free country a number of individuals desire to express their views in a news-sheet. Then, a guild for this purpose might be formed. Its members would write the copy, set up the type, print off the sheets, and put them into circulation in much the same manner as the Freedom Group of Anarchists did with "Freedom." (Military authority is the reason why such an example has temporarily come to an end.) The same principle can apply to other activities equally well. As a matter of fact, the co-operative movement represents the degeneration of this guild principle. The degeneration has come about because of monopoly, which has behind it the violence of the State, i.e., government. A glaring example is the fact that Lord Leverhulme controls the nut-bearing areas of the Congo district, not because the natives of the Congo have consented to his lordship's control, but because backing it is the power of the British Army and Navy. In effect, the Government said to Lord Leverhulme, "Go ahead; control the supplies of raw material for soap, margarine, and vegetable oils, and if anyone interferes with you he shall feel the weight of the fists of the Army and Navy!"* Such is part of the difficulty which confronts the co-operative move-

* Colonel Amery has recently told the House of Commons that since October 20th, 1919, there has been a tax of £2 per ton on palm kernels exported from the four West African colonies to any country outside the Empire, and that the inhabitants of those colonies are *not to be allowed* to export more than a certain proportion of their copra, ground nuts, and kernels to any place outside the United Kingdom. Which, in effect, means that a combine of British producers of margarine and cattle-cake shall not only fix the prices at which these products may be sold in this country or anywhere else, but power is specifically given to them by the Government to fix also the prices at which they may buy their raw material. Another example, not of competition, but of monopoly backed by governmental force and enactment.

ment and leads, naturally, to the securing of monopolies on its own behalf. Land is one gigantic monopoly, abetted and supported by the violence government has at its control. Free guilds, membership of which is not compulsory upon anyone, are impossible in such a condition of things. To conglomerate all these monopolies into one monopoly—the Socialist way—is not a remedy.

Let it be conceded, then, that in a free society folk will band themselves into voluntary organisations, or guilds, for the doing of anything they want to do. But the first business of men and women in these days is to free themselves from their mental thralldom. They must think, not in terms of the Press or the pulpit, but in their own terms—and be not ashamed.

And freedom of thought should be accompanied by boldness of action. Tyranny must be resisted. It matters not in what form it displays itself. To take a part of my earnings—in the form of income-tax—from me in order that war-speculators may have dividends, is as surely an invasion of my liberty as would be the attempt to use my body without my consent in a war in the making of which I had no concern. *In the simple word "Resist" is the call to action.* All the talk about the interests of the community, the nation's welfare and so on is mere foolery. The need is, and the call is, for a race of heroes. Heroes who will resist the ruthless "tyrant of their little fields," as well as those larger tyrants who have taken the products of the whole earth into their own possession. The man—the plain uncultured man who works with hands and brain—is the real microcosm of the nation. Unless he stand for Liberty, no number of his like, however infinite, can possibly stand for Liberty. The glad free call of Anarchism is to the heroic in man and woman. Let us justify our manhood and womanhood! "There is nothing to fear, but Fear," is for us the greatest of human utterances. For the time-server, the place-hunter, the poltroon, the flunkey, Anarchism has no call. They die, and by their deaths benefit those who remain.

But we are concerned with the living, and not with the dead! Life itself shall become the expression of invincible thought; awaiting the brave and the bold are victories greater than any hitherto dreamed of. Beaten on many a hard-fought field, these unsullied swords of ours shall yet prevail against the enemies of human dignity and human worth and Liberty, Mother and Queen of us all. Take no thought of the morrow then; it is in this "to-day" we must fight, and happy are they whose strength availeth them till the morning. As Walt Whitman has put it so finely:

"Courage yet, my brother or my sister!
Keep on—Liberty is to be subserv'd whatever occurs;
That is nothing that is quelled by one or two
failures, or by any number of failures,
Or by the indifference or ingratitude of the people,
or by any unfaithfulness,
Or the show of the tushes of power, soldiers, cannon,
penal statutes.
What we believe in waits latent forever through all
the continents,
Invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness
and light, is positive and composed, knows no
discouragement,
Waiting patiently, waiting its time."

The writer would conclude this writing with the casual remark that in it is plainness of language, written down by a plain man. Every sentence has its peculiar value, and every word—he hopes—is set down in its place. Even though he realises he is kicking against the pricks of civilisation. Let him, in a few final words, connect his title with his subject. When Democracy cultivates a soul its name will be found to be—Anarchism.

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