

Excerpts from

## John Beverly Robinson

(Translator of Proudhon's "General Idea of the Revolution  
in the Nineteenth Century.")



"Whether Government is organized as an autocracy, or a monarchy, or a democracy, makes no difference, it is always the rule of the propertied class."

"We have yet to learn that, with the most benevolent intentions in the world, no one can rule over another without oppressing him. Much as we love our rulers, and deeply as we trust their good intentions, we are learning by bitter experience that we cannot safely grant them any power over us. If we grant power to anybody to order us about, we soon find that their notion of what is good for us is very different from our own notion.

"Apart from the deference to authority which characterizes religion, and which makes it the most deadly foe of liberty, it is a backward force in two other ways. First: it teaches that men are naturally depraved, ignoring the hand that Property has in depraving them. Secondly: it holds that life is a "vale of tears" and cannot be made anything but wretched, in order that it may be a "trial" and "preparation" for the joys of a hypothetical future life; thereby paralyzing the hand and brain that would make life here a heaven on earth. . .

"Suppose that the workers should stop voting for lawyers, and should vote a whole legislature full of workers of their own kind. What would result?

"If the "reform legislature" should attempt any vital change. . . proprietors would rally such soldiers as remained loyal to them, denounce the new legislators through such newspapers as they still controlled as cut-throats and rioters, turn loose the troops to shoot them down at sight, and call upon all other governments which might still remain in the hands of proprietors to aid in suppressing the "disorder."

"Far better simply to abstain from voting, and devote all energy to spreading the light!

"Crime is not natural: it is artificial."

"The free society of the future, which is to replace government, will know neither taxes, nor penalties, nor jails, nor gallows. The judges will be private arbitrators. The courts, where any are needed, spontaneous juries of individuals; the only penalty to be feared, ostracism and boycott."