

THE

FREE COMMUNE.

No. 2.

MANCHESTER.

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The Free Commune

The word Commune originally stood for, and is used today, on the continent for the village or small communities. As villages became large towns, the word was used for them also, but it is in its simpler sense that I understand it here.

Social co-operation is necessary to a real human life, and mutual concession is needful to successful co-operation; in other words when men form society, they tacitly agree to give up a great many advantages including liberty in other directions, or we may put it they sink a portion of their purely personal liberty in a general or collective liberty, in short a wild liberty or license, for social liberty.

So soon as men, however, arrive at that state where the good of all is the absorbing private desire of each, personal and collective liberty becomes blended in one perfect whole, yet for a long time it seems to me there must be a certain amount of collective influence (not necessarily violent) to maintain personal activity in the line of social harmony and collective good.

Most anarchists practically admit this in pointing out as they often do, the effect of social ostracism or boycotting or even the simple expression of public feeling on poss-

ible evil natural persons in a free society.

Now, this involves the need of special association of the community as a whole, as a means of keeping the collective interests of society in view and preserving the idea of the commonweal.

Most anarchists usually base their ideas of future social organisation on the absolute independence of individuals and guilds or producing groups. But it seems to me that these are sectional associations, apt to look at things from a sectional point of view, and not that of the whole community. Therefore I think that there should be, in addition to these special groups which embody the idea of individuality, another association, consisting of the same people, which embodies that of community; and that I consider would be the commune.

Why the commune? it may be asked, why not the State? because the latter concentrates collective power in the hands of a central body while we, who believe in Freedom, would diffuse it amongst all.

But will not the commune be as limited as the State, putting local interests before those of the whole? It would be if it were not open to all comers. (In this way unlike the traditional communes and Russian mirs.)

The special business of the communes as collective society as distinct from the

gangs or the more private groups, would be to deal with those things, that more specially and immediately concern the life of all, such as the distribution and exchange of wealth and the public works and utilities (as halls, parks, roads, etc) so as to prevent undue waste of wealth and labour, and ensure to all a full share of the results of social effort. As for production, that is another matter. It would probably be best to leave that under the control of the workers themselves, as men work best when working as they will. The communes would doubtless be managed by mass meetings of all the people—the folk-mote—with such delegates and agents as necessary.

But a commune in the sense we have said, is too small for real social and economic life. That needs larger areas, which in rural districts we call counties, in urban areas, cities, (though in a free society the cities would cease to be huge aggregations of buildings and become so mingled in the country, with gardens, fields and woods as scarcely to be distinguished from it.)

These, however, can easily be worked by small communes appointing delegates and electing committees or officers to do the needful work; these being under the direct guidance of, and under power of dismissal by their principals—the folk-mote.

For example, in place of the communes of a city, exchanging their goods separately, they might have a central warehouse, and this would give receipts for the goods deposited by the communes, and these receipts might then be redeemable in goods required by them in exchange. A central

system like this would obviate a lot of waste and would not be coercive, since communes that did not care to exchange in this way, would not be forced to do so.

Then the communes of a city might appoint a committee (or committees) to see to public works and utilities; not to decide on everything, except perhaps in small matters of detail—but to receive suggestions, put them before the various communes and if accepted to make arrangements with voluntary groups of workers to carry them out.

If I am asked what would prevent the commune or unit of collective society from encroaching too much upon individual liberty, I should say; first of all, the free spirit of men who were able to express themselves as they would; the claim of each to secede or withdraw without losing the means of living by so doing; and probably the claim which reasonable people would recognise of free arbitration in all cases of dispute.

If I am asked would communes recognise majority voting, I should say that if they occasionally adopted it as a temporary expedient they would reject it as a general rule, but common sense would generally decide each matter upon its own merits without any set form of action.

My ideas can be put into three phrases: communal possession of wealth or social equality, communal autonomy, or in other words, the folk-mote as the basis of social organisation; and individual liberty, or the right of persons and groups to the most complete self activity limited only by the rights of all.

That is why, I believe in the Free Commune and think that the words Free Com-

munist or Free Socialist preferable to anarchist to express our ideas except in the rough and ready sense in which anarchist is used to express a rebel and fighter against constituted society and the state.

A. BARTON.

Leicester Socialist LEAGUE.

Sec. T. Clay, 62, Waring Street.

MODERN FABLES.

THE LARK AND THE FAT HEN.

A lark flew up into the heavens, singing joyfully. A fat old hen looking on said: 'How shameful it is that things should be allowed to go on in such a fashion! No sensible person would want to go to such giddy heights, I wonder that there isn't a law to stop it!' Then she fell asleep again but the lark bathed in the glory of the morning sun sang a psalm to the dawn.

THE WOLVES AND HYENAS.

The wolves met in council resolved: "It is necessary to see to the morals of our neighbours the hyenas." An old wolf said 'Have we not enough to do to attend to our own vices?' (That is just why we need to draw attention from them by reforming other people's) said a companion:

THE HORSE AND THE DOG.

The Horse challenged the Dog to fight. The Dog accepted the challenge and was sharpening his teeth, when the Horse said, 'It is only fair that we use the same weapons; we will therefore fight with our feet.' The Dog stood no chance.

Moral: Choose your own weapons. Never mind if your enemy calls it cowardly. B.

DEMOCRACY!

A. Hopkinson writes an article in Cornhill showing how the private member of Parliament has ceased to exist. The Cabinet and Party Leaders do all the real business; all the House has to do, is to make a lot of "talkee talkie", and then vote as the leaders have arranged.

And this in spite of the democratic progress of the age! Centralised management always ends in virtual despotism.

REVOLUTION!

Is 1898 to be another '48! The revolts in Italy, Spain and elsewhere make it look like it.

In Italy the preliminary battle of the Revolution has been fought in Milan. The people fought bravely, but tiles and stones are of no use against cannon. The wonder is, that other and more powerful weapons were not used.

The brutal bandits who have robbed Italy's people, of their last crust to prop up monopolies and maintain the demon of military prestige, will only have themselves to blame whatever may result. [B.]

THE BROTHERHOOD WORKSHOP.

A little while ago, one G. Gibson owned an Electrical and Cycle Engineering business and was - in the 'Samuel Smiles' sense, a promising young man. But alas! for our good 'thrift-mongers, the 'promise' is not fulfilled, for our comrade has come to the conclusion that he has been helping to perpetuate the property system and must alter his ways. In coming to this conclusion we are glad to say that he was greatly helped by the 'j'ernicious' teaching of J.C. Kenworthy.

The upshot of it all is, that he has thrown his business into a communist workshop, and there to-day, with several other comrades, is busy making bicycles and other things, as merrily and as joyfully as one would picture men doing in the good time to come.

The organisation is entirely Anarchist and Communist in character. Each man receives according to his needs, on the basis of a common agreement, without the aid of any laws or rules. The profits from the business are to be devoted to its extension and ultimately to the establishing of a regular Communist Colony - an oasis in the desert of commercialism.

So far for, and needless to say we want to see every comrade, who needs anything in the shape of cycles, tyres, electric apparatus etc, to see that he patronises the place. Good sound "bikes" - not made of gas pipes but equal to many sold at double the price can be had from £9-0-0. The address is 6 Victoria Road LEEDS.

It has made our heart glad to see the attempt, for it shows that if men only dare and act, how much nearer we might be to the time when 'man to man shall brothers be for a' that'.

MAC.

ENQUIRE AT

Leeds,

BROTHERHOOD WORKSHOP,
6, Victoria Rd.

Manchester,

ANARCHIST GROUP meets every Tuesday, City Cafe Rooms, Swan St.

Liverpool

ANARCHISTS at the Wenton Monument every Sunday.

Derby

ANARCHISTS at Comrade McGinnis's Sitwell St.

Sheffield Free Communist Group.

HUGH MARLETON Sec, Communist Colony
NORTON, NR SHEFFIELD.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Per Delorme, 4s. Dana, 2s. Soc League Leicester, 2s. W Bingham, 2s6d. Salop 2s6d. Stockton, 1s. Duff, 1s. Wilkes, 1s. Bert Stockton, 1s6d. L'pool, 6d. Per B'ton M 3d. J 6d. W 6d. I 3d. L 1d. A 2d. O 6d. F 2d. Per Jones, A 6d. Z 2d. P 3d. D 3d. Per Mac, H 6d. W 6d. J 1d. M 2d. B 3d. R 3d. P 1d. M'house 6d. R 1d. R B 7d. Total 24s7d. All monies subscribed are to be used only for paper and ink. Balance sheet detailing expenditure published half yearly. Sec. T JONES, 10 Garden Street, Ardwick, Manchester.

CO-OPERATION

'Div' hunting is at once suggested, when the subject of co-operation is broached. Undoubtedly, there are reasonable grounds for this thought, but at the same time, the value of co-operation - especially agricultural - has been largely overlooked as a factor in the Socialist movement.

It is urged by the 'orthodox', that the result of tampering with voluntary associations of this character, would be in energies withdrawn from the cause, and yet bring us no closer to the great change we desire.

Let us examine - cursorily - into this statement, and perhaps the best way of so doing is to briefly state our position thereon.

We urge all comrades, that wherever possible, they should group themselves together and acquire land; establishing small colonies adjacent to the towns. They could after the manner of the Clousden Hill Colonists, go in for intensive and glass culture, producing quantities of glasshouse fruits etc. In this manner a large part of their own food could be produced, and the surplus disposed of - preferably to the Co-operative Societies - in exchange for labour notes, or drafts upon the stores, which would be a mutual advantage, relieving as it would the necessity of legal tender so often the great difficulty in such enterprises. This would provide for those necessities or luxuries which owing to the exigencies of climate or other circumstances they could not otherwise acquire.

If attempts of this character were dotted up and down the country, they would prove powerful examples of our principles and

would, no doubt, be largely imitated.

They would help to form the nucleus of a better society, and what is more to the point, find a haven of refuge for those who were victimised in the fight against authority and exploitation.

Agricultural co-operation would produce these results, if no more - and in so far as it already exists, amply justifies our contention.

It would remove men from the contaminating influence of commercialism, and by bringing them in contact with Mother Earth, purify and broaden their characters.

Everything that purifies life helps the Revolution; the mere change of social forms does not necessarily bring Socialism but Fraternity spells Revolt.

W. MACQUEEN.

Wisdom.

All passions are good when one masters them; all are bad when one is a slave to them.

ROUSSEAU.

Better a stormy freedom than a peaceful slavery.

SCHILLER.

What is the great dragon which the spirit is no longer willing to call Lord and God? "Thou shalt" is the name of the great dragon. But the lion's spirit hath "I will".

NITZSCHE.

That which can be bought is of little value.

He who would be free himself must strike the blow!

Since 1801 Parliament has passed 29,000 new laws. Yet our Judges have the effrontery to tell us that "ignorance of the law is no excuse."

And what good have they done except when they merely registered public opinion, and then they were unnecessary.

It is true as in Goldsmith's day, "Laws and the poor, and rich men rule the laws"

Green the historian, has ably traced the growth of Kingship, Government, and privilege in this country from military leadership and power. In old Saxon days the people in their village and folk moots (meetings attended by all heads of families) managed their own affairs and judged the disputes which occasionally arose, and at the same time, lived in rude plenty and almost complete equality. The king was at first only the leader in time of war, but during times of continued strife and combat gradually increased his power until he became a permanent institution, and laws grew up to consolidate his power.

With the growth of power in the hands of a few, property and wealth also became concentrated, and the masses became more and more a subject class, toiling for the benefit of and subject to the will of their masters, and 'superiors'. Capitalistic enterprise and representative government have only tended in the same direction, so that when a shadow of the old institutions is revived in the shape of parish councils, people are astonished at the progress we are making. B.

HAVE YOU READ?

Freedom.

JOURNAL OF
ANARCHIST COMMUNISM.

1d monthly. 7, Lamb's Conduit Street
London, W. C.

Free Society.

AMERICAN ANARCHIST JOURNAL.
Published in San Francisco, California.

New Order.

Edited by J. C. KENWORTHY and is devoted to the exposition of Christian Anarchism. 2d monthly from 26 Paternoster Square, London E. C.

Solidarity.

AMERICAN ANARCHIST JOURNAL.
Published in New York.

Freedom Pamphlets

Talk between workers, by E. Malatesta
Anarchist Communism: its basis and principles, by P. Kropotkin.

Anarchism: its philosophy and ideal by Kropotkin.

All the above to be had from the FREE COMMUNE office. Sample copies for stamp subscriptions also taken for the continental anarchist journals.

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