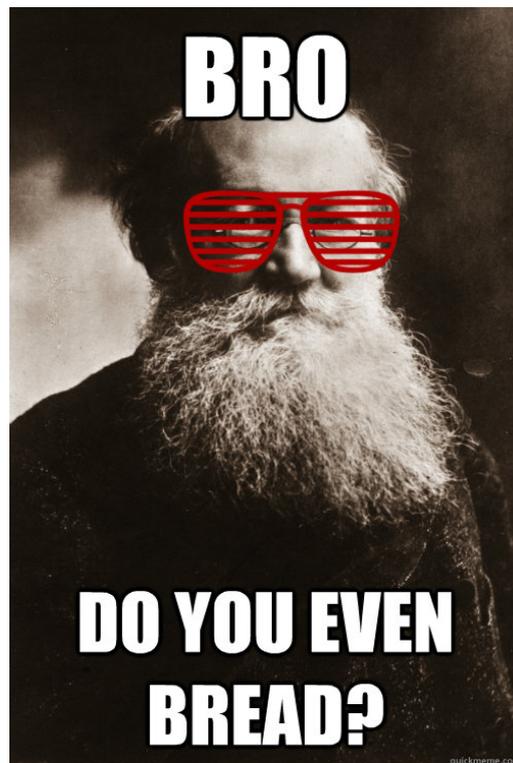


KTTTTTN's reading list

anarchism, panarchism, feminism, transfeminism, transhumanism,
trashhumanism, ancom



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Anarchafeminist Manifesto

Anonymous

1983

All over the world most women have no rights whatsoever to decide upon important matters which concern their lives. Women suffer from oppressions of two kinds: 1) the general social oppression of the people, and 2) secondly sexism — oppression and discrimination because of their sex.

There are five main forms of oppression:

- Ideological oppression, brainwash by certain cultural traditions, religion, advertising and propaganda. Manipulation with concepts and play upon women's feelings and susceptibilities. Widespread patriarchal and authoritarian attitudes and capitalistic mentality in all areas.
- State oppression, hierarchical forms of organization with command lines downwards from the top in most interpersonal relations, also in the so-called private life.
- Economic exploitation and repression, as a consumer and a worker in the home and in low-salary women's jobs.
- Violence, under the auspices of the society as well as in the private sphere — indirectly when there is coercion because of lack of alternatives and direct physical violence.
- Lack of organization, tyranny of the structurelessness which pulverizes responsibility and creates weakness and inactivity.

These factors work together and contribute simultaneously to sustain each other in a vicious circle. There is no panacea to break the circle, but it isn't unbreakable.

Anarcha-feminism is a matter of consciousness. The consciousness which puts guardians off work. The principles of a liberating society thus stand perfectly clear to us.

Anarcha-feminism means women's independence and freedom on an equal footing with men. A social organization and a social life where no-one is superior or inferior to anyone and everybody is coordinate, women as well as men. This goes for all levels of social life, also the private sphere.

Anarcha-feminism implies that women themselves decide and take care of their own matters, individually in personal matters, and together with other women in matters which concern several women. In matters which concern both sexes essentially and concretely women and men shall decide on an equal footing.

Women must have self-decision over their own bodies, and all matters concerning contraception and childbirth are to be decided upon by women themselves.

It must be fought both individually and collectively against male domination, attitudes of ownership and control over women, against repressive laws and for women's economic and social autonomy and independence.

Crisis centers, day care centers, study and discussion groups, women's culture activities etc. must be established, and be run under women's own direction.

The traditional patriarchal nuclear family should be replaced by free associations between men and women based on equal right to decide for both parts and with respect for the individual person's autonomy and integrity.

Sex-stereotyping in education, media and at the place of work must be abolished. Radical sharing of the work by the sexes in ordinary jobs, domestic life and education is a suitable mean.

The structure of working life must be radically changed, with more part-time work and flat organized cooperation at home as well as in society. The difference between men's work and women's work must be abolished. Nursing and taking care of the children must concern men just as much as women.

Female power and female prime ministers will neither lead the majority of women to their ends nor abolish oppression. Marxist and bourgeoisie feminists are misleading the fight for women's liberation. For most women it is not going to be any feminism without anarchism. In other words, anarcha-feminism does not stand for female power or female prime ministers, it stands for organization without power and without prime ministers.

The double oppression of women demands a double fight and double organizing: on the one hand in feminist federations, on the other hand in the organizations of anarchists. The anarcha-feminists form a junction in this double organizing.

A serious anarchism must also be feminist otherwise it is a question of patriarchal half-anarchism and not real anarchism. It is the task of the anarcha-feminists to secure the feminist feature in anarchism. There will be no anarchism without feminism.

An essential point in anarcha-feminism is that the changes must begin today, not tomorrow or after the revolution. The revolution shall be permanent. We must start today by seeing through the oppression in the daily life and do something to break the pattern here and now.

We must act autonomously, without delegating to any leaders the right to decide what we wish and what we shall do: we must make decisions all by ourselves in personal matters, together with other women in pure female matters, and together with the male fellows in common matters.

Retrieved on April 29th, 2009 from info.interactivist.net

The origin of the Anarchafeminist Manifesto is in Norway. The Anarchafeminist Manifesto is the summary of the feminist political program unanimously agreed upon by the third congress of the Anarchist Federation of Norway, 1—7 of June 1982. The manifesto was first published in Norwegian in "Folkebladet" (IJA) no 1 1983 pp. 4—5. Soon after the "Manifesto" was published in CRIFA-Bulletin no 44 mars—avril 1983 in French (p. 12) and English (p. 13). Later on the French version was used as the basis for a translation to English that was published on the Internet. The "Manifesto" is also translated to other languages. Anarchafeminist greetings from Anna Quist, co-writer of the "Anarchafeminist Manifesto." Translated from French (Bulletin C.R.I.F.A. No 44 mars—avril 1983 p. 12).

Feminist Class Struggle

bell hooks

Class difference and the way in which it divides women was an issue women in the feminist movement talked about long before race. In the mostly white circles of a newly formed women's liberation movement the most glaring separation between women was that of class. White working-class women recognized that class hierarchies were present in the movement. Conflict arose between the reformist vision of women's liberation which basically demanded equal rights for women within the existing class structure, and more radical and/or revolutionary models, which called for a fundamental change in the existing structure so that models of mutuality and equality could replace the old paradigms. However, as the feminist movement progressed and privileged groups of well-educated white women began to achieve equal access to class power with their male counterparts, feminist class struggle

From the onset of the movement women from privileged classes were able to make their concerns "the" issue that should be focused on in part because they were the group of women who received public attention. They attracted mass media. The issues that were most relevant to working women were never highlighted by mainstream mass media. Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique* identified "the problem that has no name" as the dissatisfaction females felt about being confined and subordinated in the home as housewives. While this issue was presented as a crisis for women, it really was only a crisis for a small group of well-educated white women. While they were complaining about the dangers of confinement in the home a huge majority of women in the nation were in the workforce. And many of these working women, who put in long hours for low wages while still doing all the work in the domestic household would have seen the right to stay home as "freedom".

It was not gender discrimination or sexist oppression that kept privileged women of all races from working outside the home, it was the fact that the jobs that would have been available to them would have been the same low-paying unskilled labor open to all working women. Elite groups of highly educated females stayed at home rather than do the type of work large numbers of lower-middle class and working class women were doing. Occasionally, a few of these women defied convention and worked outside the home performing tasks way below their educational skills and facing resistance from husbands and family. It was this resistance that turned the issue of their working outside the home into an issue of gender discrimination and made opposing patriarchy and seeking equal rights with men of their class the political platform that chose feminism rather than class struggle.

From the onset, reformist white women with class privilege were well aware that the power and freedom they wanted was the freedom they perceived men of their class enjoying. Their resistance to patriarchal male domination in the domestic household provided them with a connection they could use to unite across class with other women who were weary of male domination. But only privileged women had the luxury to imagine working outside the home would actually provide them with an income which would enable them to be economically self-sufficient. Working class women already knew that the wages they received would not liberate them.

Reformist efforts on the part of privileged groups of women to change the workforce so that women workers would be paid more and face less gender-based discrimination and harassment on the job had positive impact on the lives of all women. And these gains are important. Yet the fact that privileged women gained in class power while masses of women still do not receive wage equity with men is an indication of the way in which class interests superseded feminist efforts to change the workforce so that women would receive equal pay for equal work.

Lesbian feminist thinkers were among the first activists to raise the issue of class in the feminist movement, expressing their viewpoints in an accessible language. They were a group of women who had not imagined they could depend on husbands to support them. And they were often much more aware than their straight counterparts of the difficulties all women would face in the workforce. In the early 1970s, anthologies like *Class and Feminism*, edited by Charlotte Bunch and Nancy Myron, published work written by women from diverse backgrounds who were confronting the issue in feminist circles. Each essay emphasized the fact that class was not simply a question of money. In *The Last Straw*, Rita Mae Brown (who was not a famous writer at the time) clearly stated:

“Class is much more than Marx’s definition of relationship to the means of production. Class involves your behavior, your basic assumptions, how you are taught to behave, what you expect from yourself and from others, your concept of a future, how you understand problems and solve them, how you think, feel, act.”

These women who entered feminist groups, made up of diverse classes, were among the first to see that the vision of a politically based sisterhood where all females would unite together to fight patriarchy could not emerge until the issue of class was confronted.

Placing class on feminist agendas opened up the space where the intersections of class and race were made apparent. Within the institutionalized race, sex, class social system in our society black females were clearly at the bottom of the economic totem pole. Initially well-educated white women from working class backgrounds were more visible than black females of all classes in the feminist movement. They were a minority within the movement, but theirs was the voice of experience. They knew better than their privileged class comrades of any race the costs of resisting race, class and gender domination. They knew what it was like to struggle to change one’s economic situation. Between them and their privileged-class comrades there were ongoing conflicts over appropriate behavior, over the issues that would be presented as fundamental feminist concerns. Within the feminist movement women from privileged class backgrounds who had never before been involved in leftist freedom fighting learned the concrete politics of class struggle, confronting challenges made by less privileged women, and also learning in the process assertiveness skills and constructive ways to cope with conflict. Despite constructive intervention, many privileged white women continued to act as though feminism belonged to them, as though they were in charge.

Mainstream patriarchy reinforced the idea that the concerns of women from privileged class groups were the only ones worthy of receiving attention. Feminist reform aimed to gain social equality for women within the existing structure. Privileged women wanted equality with men of their class. Despite sexism among their class they would not have wanted to have the lot of working class men. Feminist efforts to grant women social equality with men of their class neatly coincided with white supremacist-capitalist-patriarchal fears that white power would diminish if non-white people gained equal access to economic power and privilege. Supporting what in effect became white power-reformist-feminism enabled the mainstream white supremacist patriarchy to bolster its power while simultaneously undermining the radical politics of feminism.

Only revolutionary feminist thinkers expressed outrage at this co-optation of the feminist movement. Our critique and outrage gained a hearing in the alternative press. In her collection of essays, *The Coming of Black Genocide*, radical white activist Mary Barfoot boldly stated:

“There are white women, hurt and angry, who believed that the '70s women's movement meant sisterhood, and who feel betrayed by escalator women. By women who went back home to patriarchy. But the women's movement never left the father Dick's side. There was no war. And there was no liberation. We got a share of the genocide profits and we love it. We are Sisters of Patriarchy, and true supporters of national and class oppression, Patriarchy in its highest form is Euro-imperialism on a worldscale. If we're Dick's sister and want what he has gotten, then in the end we support that system that he got it all from.”

Indeed, many more feminist women found and find it easier to consider divesting of white supremacist thinking than of their class elitism.

As privileged women gained greater access to economic power with men of their class, feminist discussions of class were no longer commonplace. Instead, all women were encouraged to see the economic gains of affluent females as a positive sign for all women. In actuality, these gains rarely changed the lot of poor and working class women. And since privileged men did not become equal caretakers in the domestic household, the freedom of privileged-class women of all races has required the sustained subordination of working class and poor women. In the 1990s, collusion with the existing social structure was the price of “women's liberation.” At the end of the day class power proved to be more important than feminism. And this collusion helped de-stabilize the feminist movement.

When women acquired greater class status and power without conducting themselves differently from males feminist politics were undermined. Lots of women felt betrayed. Middle- and lower-middle class women who were suddenly compelled by the ethos of feminism to enter the workforce did not feel liberated once they faced the hard truth that working outside the home did not mean work in the home would be equally shared with male partners. No-fault divorce proved to be more economically beneficial to men than women. As many black women/women of color saw white women from privileged classes benefiting economically more than other groups from reformist feminist gains, from gender being tacked on to racial affirmative action, it simply reaffirmed their fear that feminism was really about increasing white power. The most profound betrayal of feminist issues has been the lack of mass-based feminist protest challenging the government's assault on single mothers and the dismantling of the welfare system. Privileged women, many of whom call themselves feminists, have simply turned away from the “feminization of poverty”.

The only genuine hope of feminist liberation lies with a vision of social change which challenges class elitism. Western women have gained class power and greater gender inequality because a global white supremacist patriarchy enslaves and/or subordinates masses of third world women. In this country, the combined forces of a booming prison industry and workfare-oriented welfare in conjunction with conservative immigration policy create and condone the conditions for indentured slavery. Ending welfare will create a new underclass of women and children to be abused and exploited by the existing structures of domination.

Given the changing realities of class in our nation, widening gaps between the rich and poor, and the continued feminization of poverty, we desperately need a mass-based radical feminist movement that can build on the strength of the past, including the positive gains generated by reforms, while offering meaningful interrogation of existing feminist theory that was simply wrongminded while offering us new strategies. Significantly, a visionary movement would ground its work in the concrete conditions of the working class and poor women.

Retrieved on April 29th, 2009 from www.nefac.net

This article has been edited for space. To read full text, see “Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics” by bell hooks; published by South End Press: www.southendpress.org

Feminism As Anarchism

Lynne Farrow

1974

Feminism practices what Anarchism preaches. One might go as far as to claim feminists are the only existing protest groups that can honestly be called practising Anarchists; first because women apply themselves to specific projects like abortion clinics and day-care centres; second, because as essentially apolitical women for the most part refuse to engage in the political combat terms of the right or the left, reformism or revolution, respectively.

But women's concern for specific projects and their a-political activities constitute too great a threat to both the right and the left, and feminist history demonstrates how women have been lured away from their interests, co-opted on a legislative level by the established parties and co-opted on a theoretical level by the Left. This co-option has often kept us from asking exactly what is the Feminist situation? What's the best strategy for change?

The first impulse toward female liberation came in the 1840's when liberals were in the midst of a stormy abolition campaign. A number of eloquent Quaker women actively made speeches to liberate the slaveholding system of the South and soon realised that the basic rights they argued for Blacks were also denied women. Lucy Stone and Lucretia Mott, two of the braver women abolitionists, would occasionally tack some feminism ideas on the end of the abolition speeches, annoying to an unusual degree their fellow liberals. But the women were no threat so long as they knew their place and remembered which cause was the more serious.

Then in 1842 the World anti-slave convention was held in London and some American women crossed the Atlantic along with other Abolition delegates to find that not only were women denied a part in the proceedings, but worse, they were forced to sit behind a curtain. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cade Stanton, enraged at the hypocrisy of the liberal's anti-slavery gathering denying women participation, then and there determined to return to America and organise on behalf of liberating women.

The first Women's Rights Convention was held at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, attracting with only three days' notice in a local newspaper a huge number of women filling the church in which they met. At the end of the very moving convention the gathering drew up a Declaration of Rights and Sentiments based on the Declaration of Independence only directed at men rather than England's King George. After this convention which is identified as the formal beginning of the Women's Rights Movement in America, feminism picked up quickly aiming at women's property laws and other grievances.

As American Feminism gathered a small measure of support, liberals became nervous that these women were spending energy on the woman issue rather than the real issue of the time: abolition. After all, they insisted, this is "the negroes' hour" and women shouldn't be so petty as to think of themselves at a time like this. When the Civil War became imminent this rhetoric grew from subtlety to righteous indignation. How could women be so unpatriotic as to devote themselves to feminism during a *national* crisis. Virtually every feminist in America suspended her feminist consciousness and gave support to the liberal interests at this point, assured that when the war was over and Blacks were given equal rights under the Constitution women would be included.

Susan B. Anthony, an ardent Abolitionist, was the only known feminist at the time that refused to buy the liberal's proposal. She continued appealing for the rights of women despite the gradual disintegration of her following who had been co-opted by the Abolitionists into joining their ranks. She insisted that both struggles could be run simultaneously and if they didn't women would be forgotten after the war. She was right. When the 14th Amendment was introduced in Congress after the war, not only were women omitted, they were specifically excluded. For the first time the word "male" was written into the Constitution making it clear that when it referred to a person that was the equivalent to male person.

This substantial blow to organised feminism hindered further legal advance for women. Then around 1913 when British women launched their militant tactics bombing buildings and starting fires, Alice Paul, an enthusiastic young American woman of Quaker stock, travelled to England to study and ended up working with the notorious Pankhursts. She returned to the States determined to rejuvenate the

cause of suffrage and soon had persuaded the practically non-functioning National Woman's Suffrage Association to re-open the federal campaign for suffrage in Washington.

In a very short time and due to nothing but her sheer genius for organising and strategy Alice Paul created a multifactional movement to be reckoned with. Her most effective tactic was picketing the White House with embarrassing placards denouncing President Wilson's authoritarian stand on Woman Suffrage while he preached democracy abroad. World War I approached steadily and the stage was again set for the feminists' co-option.

The pacifists appealed to the women to suspend their cause temporarily and join the peace effort while at the same time the majority, the war hawks, were scandalised that the women abandoned their country at a time like this. Again the women were co-opted as thousands left the feminist cause to go to the aid of their parties, but nevertheless a small efficient group, the National Woman's Party, stayed intact to fight suffrage through.

It is difficult to ascertain which side, the right or the left, has been more responsible for co-opting the feminist efforts at change. History assures us their methods have been identical and their unquestioning confidence in the priority of "the larger struggle" inevitably leads to a dismissal of feminist issues as tangential. The analysis of the current Black Movement and the Marxist dominated left squeezes women into their plans symptomatically, i.e. when the essential struggle is fought and won women then will come into their own. Women must wait. Women must help the *larger* cause.

The poetry of Black women identifies intensely with building the egos of the Black male in the conventional way egos are built, by self-depreciation. The theme heard over and over again tells of the Black woman's proud suffering at the hands of the Black man who has been emasculated by his white boss and so needs his woman to at least feel superior to. She does her part. Her suffering is a direct contribution to the Black (Male) struggle which she considers a noble sacrifice. (As Germaine Greer has suggested, since women have no power to threaten, they cannot be castrated and therefore no one sees their powerlessness as anything but natural and no one's going to lie down for women to kick.) Whereas the Black male's powerlessness is only temporary, since he is male and has the potential power of the white male. All he needs is a woman to dominate the way the white man has dominated him and his stature will be restored. Blacks have challenged white supremacy by realising Black is beautiful. They have yet to challenge the white family model, the patriarchal family as something to be desired and therefore still uphold male supremacy.

Juliet Mitchell is a Marxist feminist whose ideas, as in *Woman's Estate*¹, typifies the conceptual style of interpreting a group's very concrete grievances, like those of the feminists, as basically irrelevant to or symptomatic of the larger struggle where all groups participate in abstractions called ideologies. Predictably, if contradictions are found in the theory, Mitchell calls for an "overview", an abstraction that will enlarge itself to accommodate them. When interest groups such as students, women, Blacks or homosexuals formulate their priorities stemming directly from their situation, Mitchell accuses them of being helplessly short-sighted in refusing to see their needs as a symptom. What they need to understand, she continues, is the "totalism", the analysis to end all analyses.

The fully developed political consciousness of an exploited class or an oppressed group cannot come from within itself, but only from a knowledge of the interrelationships (and domination structures) of all the classes in society ... This does not mean an immediate comprehension of the ways in which other groups and classes were exploited or oppressed, but it does mean what one could call a "totalist" attack on capitalism which can come to realise the need for solidarity with all other oppressed groups.

¹Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, Pantheon books, 1971, p. 23.

Mitchell might easily be accused of conceptual imperialism considering the “totalist” terms she uses serve to gobble up lesser terms reducing them to subsidiary categories under the authority of her original Marxist idea. According to Mitchell individual groups responding in their own way to their own interests must learn to see the way and sacrifice. Her idea that they must renounce their individual concern for the good of the total is an abstraction that has ceased to represent any interests at all, since it has come to be so large it cannot relate to diverse interests in any way.

The totalist position is a precondition for this realisation, but it must diversify its awareness or get stuck in the mud of Black chauvinism, which is the racial and cultural equivalent of working class economism, seeing no further than one’s own badly out of joint nose.

Mitchell’s ideas invalidate all forms of individualism in the same way the organised left and organised right have historically co-opted women from working in their own interests. Women are asked to be “totalist” in the same way citizens are asked to be “patriotic”. We are being asked to switch one kind of paternalism for another. We are asked to comply with an hierarchical meta-analysis which we cannot assume with the even most remote faith has any connection with our immediate grievance. What is good for all is supposed to be good for one.

With the spectre of totalitarianism looming intimidating over us we are called upon to *justify* and rationalise the authenticity of our interests, i.e., stop *pursuing* our cause and be drawn into the diversionary web of *defending* it. We are so accustomed to thinking in terms of one group’s interests being more significant, more basic, than another’s that we are baited into self-rationalisation rather than question the value of pitting one group against another in the first place.

Not only does the “totalistic” approach make for much scrambling as to which cause is prior, it suggests that *when the nature of the problem is totalistic so then the solution must be*, which brings us to the place women have always been shafted. Groups may function under the illusion they are “all in it together” for just so long, usually as long as they are theorising, e.g., like the promises made to the feminists before the Civil War. When it comes to doing something specific about this abstractly designed situation, one cannot so easily search and destroy the totalistic enemy. Solutions, in short, necessarily imply specific choices to be made about what will be done first and for whom. Thus the cause most efficient at coercing the others will be given priority and the others will wait. Either that or the totalistic solution will be so diffuse as to mobilise energies that will help no one. Women lose either way when they see their struggle against sexism in the context of any larger struggle.

If the feminist struggle is not tangential or subsidiary to other political movements then how can it be characterised?

Because most women live or work with men for at least part of their lives they have a radically different approach from others to the problems they face with what would ordinarily be called “the oppressor.” Since a woman generally has an interest in maintaining a relationship with men for personal or professional reasons the problem cannot only be reduced to or located with men. First, that would imply removal of them from the situation as a solution which is of course against her interests. Second, focusing on the source of the problem is not necessarily the problem. It is a mistake to locate a conflict with certain people rather than the kind of *behaviour* that takes place between them.

It seems to follow then that women because of their interest in preserving a relationship with men must relate to their own condition in an entirely different, necessarily situationist basis. It follows that the energies of feminism will be problem-centred rather than people (or struggle) centred. The emphasis will not be directed at competing us-against-them style with mythological oppressor for certain privileges but rather an avoidance of any pitting of sides against each other. E.g., if a competitive situation already exists between the sexes, learning Karate will only reinforce the stockpiling of arms, on both sides; the terms of the struggle don’t change the balance of power on both sides.

Feminism as situationism means that elaborate social analysis and first causes a la Marx would be superfluous because changes will be rooted in situations from which the problems stem; instead change will be idiosyncratic to the people, the time and the place. This approach has generally been seen as unpopular because we do not respect person to person problem-solving or are embarrassed by it or both. We characterise these concerns as petty if they cannot immediately seem to identify with any large scale interests or if those concerns cannot be universalised to a "symptom of some larger condition." Discussing "male chauvinism" is as fruitless as discussing "capitalism" in that, safely reduced to an explanation, we have efficiently distanced ourselves from a problem and the necessity to immediately interact with it or respond to other people. *Such theoretical over-articulation gives one the illusion of responding to a critical situation without ever really coming to grips with one's own participation in it.*

Originally the feminists were accused of not having one comprehensive theory but a lot of little gripes. This made for much amusement in the media because there was no broad-based theoretical connection made between things like married women taking their husband's names, inadequate day care facilities, the persistent use of 'girl' for woman and women wanting to work on equal basis with men. Rather than this diversity being seen as a strength it was seen as a weakness. Predictably a few Marxist feminists rose to the occasion, becoming apologists for the cause and made feminism theoretically respectable, centring women's problems around the 'ideology of reproduction' and other such vague notions.

Feminism has traditionally tried to find ad hoc solutions appropriate to needs at the time, i.e., centred around the family or community of friends. However, certain unscrupulous, legal, well-publicised (as well as theoretical) attempts have been made to bring women's liberation into the big time.

For example, some friends and I were recently involved in setting up a feminist conference on divorce. We found some speakers who would describe how to go about getting a divorce and some attorneys who would give free legal advice to women who wanted it. Various workshops were organised around topics that interested those involved or concerned with divorce. A huge number of women from the community came, attracted because of the problem-centred topic, women who would probably not have identified themselves with the mystifying concept of feminism. Everyone participated enthusiastically exchanging advice, phone numbers, lawyers names. Some women cried in the workshops, overwhelmed at the supportiveness of women in similar predicaments.

The conference was running smoothly when a speaker from the National Organisation for Women made a presentation of the official national position on divorce and the organisation's plans for the future. Included was a proposal that couples should be able to pass a test before they married so only qualified people could participate in this kind of legal arrangement. Presumably those who could not pass the test created by the law makers would be discouraged, thus preventing any future divorces.

Aside from the obvious fallacy of believing more laws will change what existing laws have created and thereby save people from themselves, the N.O.W. proposal exemplifies the attempt to solve the problem of women's liberation by high-handed monolithic means very similar to the Marxist Branka Magas' ambition of 'seizing the culture.' The impulse to coerce people by national laws is similar to the impulse to create a revolution to change the balance of power. Each kind of grand scale change will find reasons to service its own magnanimous authoritarianism. Moreover each side claims what's good for all is good for one and therefore any means can be used to advance the ambitions of the revolution, in model of the corporation.

These occasional large scale proposals lead people to believe such a thing a non-situationist Women's Liberation Movement exists, a veritable army clamouring in unison for national reforms. The media perpetuated it. But there is no feminist movement per se. Feminists have been too busy working at their community based projects within families, communes, working places, to focus on building an image or identity for themselves. Further, a single movement image or principle would be counterproductive and have women constantly comparing their lives with the image, monitoring life styles and their work to see if it was in *compliance* with the MOVEMENT.'

The ‘movement’ at the same time has been criticised for not being cohesive and for not having a program. Exactly. That’s the point. The diversity in which feminists implement and practice change is its strength. Feminism has no leaders in the lieutenant sense for the same reason. There is nothing to lead. We plan no revolution. Women are doing what they can where they can. We are not unified because women do not see themselves as one class struggling against another. We do not envision a women’s liberation army mobilised against male tyranny. Solidarity for its own sake is the stuff governments are made of and adapting these methods only reinforces the perspective of us against them sex-class antagonism. Identifying with other strugglers in such paranoid fashion encourages brutal competition and keeps the contest going. What’s more, stressing solidarity can only lead to a self-consciousness about what we are doing as personalities, thereby accentuating our individual differences and causing conflicts before we even begin to apply ourselves to the practical problems of sexism.

The National Organisation for Women notwithstanding, feminism begins at home and it generally doesn’t go a whole lot further than the community.

Midwives and witches practising their herbals and healing arts figure prominently in our individualist tradition. Women in families passed on information on how to diagnose pregnancy, prevent conception, cure infections, stop bleeding, prevent cramping and alleviate pain. Quietly, sometimes mysteriously, women have ministered to children and friends without elaborating on the policy of it. Their effectiveness inspired awe and fear and risked ridicule but they did not stop to explain or mystify what they were doing, they merely did it. What mysterious description remains of midwife methods, a female lore passed along from mother to daughter, has been deprecated as ‘old wives tales.’

The current feminist wave maintains this individualist tradition in that women’s health problems have surfaced as the principle concern. Small projects have sprung up all over the country for the purpose of meeting local needs for adequate abortions, birth control, pregnancy-testing and general medical care. Previously women had limited facilities or had to rely on the paternalism of doctors. New women’s groups discovered there are many routine examinations and services that can be performed safely at little or no cost by women themselves.

Just such a group has organised around these interests at our local women’s centre, providing various services, i.e., abortion referrals and information to the community on a daily basis, as the demands arise. Those involved see their function as community action problem solving, assessing the needs of women and coming up with the most efficient way of fleeing that problem with the resources available. Of course, there are things we’ve learned are within our ability to do and things we must refer. Pregnancy tests are done quite simply and for free by volunteers at the centre. Abortion cases are referred to a competent carefully checked out physician who charges a minimum fee. A list of the cheapest and best venereal disease clinics has been completed and distributed by flyers. The scope and ambition of our project is dictated entirely by the interests of the people nearby. We enthusiastically co-operate with other groups on the mutual exchange of information but have no intention of expanding. We have too much to do to create an analysis or policy, and we haven’t the time to stop and observe what’s going on.

Where Do We Move From Here?

Where do we move from here? Feminists have always possessed an exuberant disregard for the ‘why?’ questions, the theoretical mainstay of our menfolk. Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* for one was severely attacked by reviewers for spending all those pages *not* formulating a theory on why sexism existed. Our disinterest in theoretical speculation has been construed as a peculiar deficiency. Of course. Similarly our distrust for logic and that which has been unscrupulously passed off as the Known in the situation. We can’t ‘argue rationally’ we are told and it probably is true that we avoid this kind of verbal jiggling.

But the fact is we haven't any real stake in the game. KNOWLEDGE and ARGUMENT as it relates to women is so conspicuously alien to our interests that female irreverence for the intellectual arts is rarely concealed. In fact, women seem to regard male faith in these processes as a form of superstition because there appears no apparent connection between these arts and the maintenance of life, the principle female concern.

Women's occupation centres basically around survival processes, the gathering of resources, the feeding, clothing and sheltering of children and meeting the necessities of life on a day to day basis. Our energies must necessarily be applied to 'how to' questions rooted in our practical responsibilities. Observing and evaluating life routines must be the occupation of the comparatively idle, those with less responsibilities, i.e., men. Similarly, an old joke points at the delusionary importance men invest their work with: the head of the family reports to his friends, "I make the big decisions in the family like whether Red China should be admitted to the UN and my wife makes the small ones like if we need a new car and what school the kids should go to."

Because women have no vested interest in theoretical assumptions and their implications and hence no practice in the arts of verbal domination they will not easily be drawn into its intricate mechanics. Instead, even young girl children, appraising their lot, acquire an almost automatic distrust (like Lucy of *Peanuts* fame) for the theoretical in the situation and rely on their wits and instincts of the moment to solve pressing practical problems. Women are suspicious of logic and its rituals the same way the poor are suspicious of our legal labyrinths. Veiled in mystification both institutions function against their interests.

The province of our interests, the ministering of practical needs as women, has been so seriously and consistently devalued that there is scarcely anything we do that is regarded as significant. Where our conversation is about people and problems it is perjoratively referred to as gossip; our work, because it is necessarily repetitive and home-centred, is not considered work, but when we ask for help with it is called nagging. When we won't argue logically it is the source of great amusement and it never occurs to anyone to ask us if we wanted to pursue such competitive fancy in the first place.

We must learn to see our so-called defects as advantages, as a problem-to-problem, person-to-person approach to Living rooted in the individual situation. We must learn to value other than the traditional ways of 'knowing' and instead smarten our senses and quicken our responses to the situations in which we find ourselves.

Feminism means finding new terms to deal with traditional situations, not traditional terms to deal with what has been called a new movement. It is a mistake for us to argue the validity of our cause; that would imply we wanted in. It would suggest there was a contest going on that we consented to enter, and there would be a dominating winner and a dominated loser.

Arguing a case for feminism is a form of appeal, like a powerless class asking for power or a PR enterprise attempting to sell something to a potential buyer. Feminism means rejecting all the terms we are offered to gain legitimacy as a respectable social movement and redefining our real interests as we meet them. So when our disinterest in aggression is called 'passivity' and our avoidance of systematic organisation called 'naive', we must heartily agree. How else can you get anything done?

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After the Revolution

Diego Abad de Santillan

1937

Part 1: A General Survey

The Essential Factors of Production

The principle of all economy consists in obtaining the relative maximum result from the least relative effort.

This economic law should be sufficient in itself to combat and reject the present order of capitalism because, quite contrary to obtaining the maximum result from a minimum effort, the waste is enormous; the utilization of natural resources and technical facilities and science is negligible. We do not live as we could live — as we should live!

What are the factors of production?

First: Nature, which furnishes man with raw material and certain natural forces.

Second: Human Labor, manual and intellectual, which elaborates and utilizes the raw material.

Third: the Machinery which multiplies the power and the intensity of human labor. (Some economists call this Capital.)

Capitalism does not avail itself even of the possible resources of the first factor (Nature), as is manifest in the great extensions of uncultivated land, idle water power and unutilized raw material. As far as human labor is concerned, intellectual or manual, it is unnecessary to demonstrate that not even 50% of its capacity is utilized by the existing economic regime. There are in the world today tens of millions of workers without jobs. Professional men and scientists are vegetating and wandering about in the midst of privation, without means of realizing their studies and their experiments. Only a very minor number of professional men and scientists succeed in selling their services to the potentates of the capitalist regime.

It is also quite evident that the third factor, machinery, is working very much below its capacity. There have been prodigious inventions even greater ones will appear — but they are employed hardly more than a few hours a day or several days during the week. It has been calculated that industry in the U.S.A. working full force would be able to supply the industrial products required by the whole world. The capitalist economists, the men of State, the conferences of experts all the forces of social and political conservatism have been trying to find a way out of this without success. On the contrary, the situation has become more and more aggravated.

The only thing that can be prophesied without fear of error, is that the industrial paralyzation will be still greater in the years to come and the situation of the workers from year to year will become more and more intolerable. For this reason the capitalistic system is no longer workable since it is no longer capable of extracting the maximum yield out of the three factors of production. If for purely economic reasons there is no defense of the present order, what possible justification can be made for it on the basis of human and social principles?

The capitalist enterprise, for example, in the field of agriculture, involves the following factors:

1. Rent of the land.
2. Interest on the capital.
3. Wages.

4. Profits.
5. Government defense of private property.

There is a tax on the loaf of bread which you purchase, part of which the proprietor of the land takes, with another part corresponding to the interest on the capital invested, another part with the wages of the workers, and still another with a profit for the owner and finally, with that of government defense of private property and the rest of the political machinery involved in preserving so-called public order.

We have seen above that only three factors of production are necessary — land, human labor, and machinery. A socialized economy has consideration for, only these three factors and under a socialized economy,; the same loaf of bread will be taxed only for the part representing the human labor necessary to produce it and the part corresponding to the use of mechanical devices. The rent of the proprietor, the interest of capital, the profit of the owner and the government defense all disappear.

It may be said that money, the great deity of present economy, is a productive factor. No one can prove that profit, as such, is a necessary force of production. No one would say that wheat would not grow in fields well cultivated without land titles and police. Imagine what a new economy would be like, in which all the parasitic factors interposed by the regime of private property were suppressed, in which the producers themselves would be entitled to the benefits (plus those categories of consumers which have a natural right to existence, that is, the child, the aged and the sick).

J. Stuart Mills has written: "I do not consider just a state of society in which there exists a class which does not work, in which exist human beings who, without having acquired any right to leisure by previous work, are excused from taking part in the labor incumbent on the human species." Stuart Mill is right. We believe that such a society has no right to existence and we desire its total transformation. We want a socialized economy in which the land, the factories, the homes, and the means of transport cease to be the monopoly of private ownership and become the collective property of the entire community.

This change of regime requires an entirely distinct structure of economic life. Today the direction of industry is in the hands of private enterprise, namely, the capitalists. Technically, they are inferior to the engineers and the workers. The entrepreneurs are in turn dominated by the large financial institutions, and in the last analysis, the bankers are the ones who directly control the economic life of our day. And the bankers are interested exclusively in the quotations on the stock exchange.

The new socialized economy will be in the hands of the workers and the technicians, and will have no other motive, no other finality, than the satisfaction of the needs of the people. The consumer will not simply signify a market, he will not be created to purchase the products but the products will be elaborated to satisfy his wants.

The pecuniary evaluation of things will be removed and with it, the monstrous absorbing and entirely parasitic power of finance, public debts, and other unproductive charges of money. With it will disappear the slavery of wages, interest, rent and profit. We will return at last to an economy of common sense, by which all the wealth will be produced through the medium of the coordination of the three essential factors of economy — land and its natural forces, human labor, and the machine.

On the maximum consolidation of these factors will depend the standard of life in the future, which means that it will be in our hands and in our will to realize the welfare and the happiness of this world.

Work and Bread for Everybody

During many centuries of exploitation of man by man, the producer of all wealth has consumed barely the minimum indispensable for existence. With the development of education and popular culture, the slogan, "He who would eat, must work" has emerged as the expression of justice and freedom. All economic and social development which does not take this maxim as a basis and ideal is only a new

deception, a new sabotage of revolutionary action. For us, the realization of this formula is primordial. All men who believe that man should live by work really form one party and should present a single front of action.

We will explain our concept of work. Adam Smith considered only so-called manual labor as productive. But the process of labor is the combination of intellectual and physical forces which, in the artisan, may be expressed in a single individual; but in modern economy is manifest as a coordination of highly specialized functions. "There is no reason for maintaining that productive work has not been performed by the engineer, the office worker, the shop foreman; but that only the manual workers have made the product and consequently are alone to be considered."²

The work of modern society is the conjunction of technical and manual forces, all the more, when the technician can simplify physical forces and transfer to the machine strenuous human labor.

The scientist in his laboratory or in the lecture room, the technician and the worker are all forces of labor, socially useful and necessary. But will someone tell us what is produced by capitalists, private owners, shareholders and intermediaries of the present system? The work of these elements is, in the words of Proudhon, "A fiction of ancient feudal rights which has passed over to modern political economy and constitutes an almost free gift of the worker to the speculative capitalist — the last vestige of exploitation of man by man...In reality only physical and intellectual labor is productive."

Not as a Proudhonian socialist but simply as a sincere devotee of the truth, German Bernacer, a Spanish author, in his book, "Interest of Capital," maintains that the only origin of income should be productive labor. The interest of capital can be eliminated even in a regime of individual production. This idea compares with the modern conception of the American technocrats.

We want something similar: the suppression of illegitimate incomes — which are those not produced by physical or intellectual labor — not socially useful. This means a deep economic transformation. It means placing in the centre of all economy, not speculation and profit, but work and goods for the welfare of all.

Nature imposes work on man for his existence. We must produce grain, cultivate plants for textile fibers, extract fuel and metal from the bowels of the earth, manufacture tools, apparatus, for the ever growing needs of an ever increasing population.

Only a few years ago an automobile was a rarity which provoked the astonishment and the envy of the people. Today it is almost a proletarian vehicle, indispensable as a daily necessity and, as such, should be within the reach of all the inhabitants of a country. We do not want to deprive ourselves of any of the conveniences that modern technique has made available. On the contrary, if possible, we want to increase or multiply these conveniences, and we do not doubt this possibility. If under capitalism so many wonders have been achieved, gives more reason why they should be realized in a regime of socialization and freedom. "Only in the pure air of liberty can the gigantic flight of technical progress advance." (H. Deitzel.)

To conserve and increase the benefits of civilization, multiply the productivity of the soil, and reduce the brutality of physical labor, we must work. But no one has said that only a single category should constitute the workers, — those traditionally enslaved, the proletariat. No educator still maintains the old principles of class or caste. In other times, laws had to be decreed to declare the trade of the tailor or the shoemaker as not degrading. Today, we aim at decrees to make idleness and parasitism degrading.

Today, half of the people of Spain dress raggedly and depend for food on a piece of black bread; for half of Spain, fruit, in this land of fruit, is a luxury; half of the inhabitants of cities live in slums, and on the land, in caves and hovels. But this is a commonplace and so well known that one is led to believe in divine origin and to say with Mohammedan fatalism, "There have always been poor and rich, and this condition will always have to prevail."

²Kleinwaechter: Political Economy, Pages 100–101.

Under capitalism there is nothing unusual in this state of affairs because capital is incapable of utilizing all the resources of nature, science and human labor. Half of Spain is dressed in rags and textile workers cannot find anyone to employ their skill and competence, while factories close and machinery rusts.

In a socialized economy, this spectacle would be impossible because production would not follow the needs of a market, independent of the real needs of the people, but would be in line with these needs; and so long as a single Spaniard did not have sufficient clothing, there would be no reason to close a single textile factory, or to make idle a single worker.

The same can be said of any other industry. The building trades do not work within 40% of their capacity. Unemployment is slowly delivering a large number of these workers to tuberculosis; while half of the Spanish population lives in conditions often inferior to animals.

But capitalism is not capable of remedying these deficiencies. Capitalists are only interested in utilizing an infinitesimal part of the social resources of human labor, of technical inventions, of scientific discovery, of natural forces, because capitalism is interested exclusively in profit. It does not respond to the real demands of our standard of culture, and consequently is an obstacle to progress and even to the very maintenance of life.

In order to obtain the maximum of welfare of which our society is capable, it would be necessary only to suppress parasitism, to organize life in such a way that he who does not work finds no means of living by other people's toil. Naturally, children, the aged and the sick are not considered parasites. The children will be productive when they grow up. The aged have already made their contribution to social wealth and the sick are only temporarily unproductive.

Under a social economy, counting only the forces of labor of mature age, the quantity of human effort would at least be doubled. It is easy to get an idea of what this extra capacity would mean in the lessening of work as well as in the increase of wealth. Besides, a socialized economy is a regime of liberation for technicians and scientists, a free access to work in every branch. From the moral point of view, socialization, by imposing the principle of "He who would eat must work," would give an impulse of unlimited development in the life of the people; because labor and genius would not be shut out by artificial barriers and would finally be able to convert into fact the old dream of an earthly paradise.

We are guided by the vision of a society of free producers and distributors in which no power exists to remove from them the possession of the productive apparatus. In the Russian example, the State has taken away from workers' associations and peasants the free decision over everything relating to the instruments of labor, production and distribution. The producers there have changed their masters. They do not even own the means of production nor the goods they produce, and the wage earner, who is subjected to as many inequalities or more than in the capitalistic society, is living under an economic order of dependency, servitude and slavery.

One might object — from a social point of view — that in the economic organization proposed by us, the consumers, as such, play a small part, if any, inasmuch as they are not assigned any distinct organization. Undoubtedly, man is not only a producer but also a consumer, a social being who, outside of the factory or shop, possesses cultural affinities, social aspirations, political and religious motives. These currents of opinion must create their own organs of expression and social influence through the press, by assembly, and other methods to which free initiative can have full recourse and possibility of realization. This is an aspect into which we are not entering just now — nor shall we dwell on the defense of the Revolution. Concretely, we wish to outline the general trend of the economic mechanism already latent in the actual syndicates, and in the popular, almost instinctive tendencies.

The soviets were a fact before becoming a theory, and as a first step in the Revolution we are concerned with the taking possession of the whole economic structure and its direct administration by the producers themselves, in order to assure the satisfaction of the fundamental necessities of the people.

The rest can be left for later spontaneous solution, being matters more of individual sentiment which common interests and political necessities will determine.

The Population of Spain and its Distribution

It is important to know the population of Spain, because the problems of reconstruction depend essentially on the number of inhabitants. The Spanish population can be calculated as twenty-four million inhabitants. In 1930 the birth rate was calculated as 28.8 per thousand, the death rate 17.8, the annual increase of the Spanish population, therefore, being 0.61% in the period 1800 to 1810, 0.52% from 1870 to 1910, and 0.65% from 1910 to 1930.

The natural resources of the land are limited. If anything, there is a great need for their development, which cannot come, as in the past, by the conquest of new territories but by intensifying the cultivation of the old territory. Also industry and science must supply that which natural resources do not furnish.

The index of the development of the country is not measured by its agricultural population but by its industrial population. In fertile countries easy to cultivate, such as Canada, a tenth of the total population would be sufficient to supply their necessities. In Spain a minimum of 20% of the total population would be necessary.

With this number, work in the fields, which is today a curse through ignorance, taxes, and property rights, would be converted to one of the most healthy and productive occupations.

Spain is relatively backward in agricultural industry and transportation. The Revolution must accomplish in a few years a prodigious advance. It must construct all the technical devices which it lacks, modernize the methods of cultivation, build roads, replant the forests and utilize every available drop of water from the rivers, to transform the arid wastes of steppes into productive soil.

The population is sufficiently numerous to achieve these aims in a few years. If all the armed forces and government employees alone were set to work on reforestation, construction of canals and waterworks, the present arid territories of Spain would become a potent source of agricultural wealth. This could be done by the three hundred and fifty thousand men employed merely to defend the wealth of the privileged classes.

But the parasitism in Spain is infinitely greater. A tendency to live without working, very human in a way, is noticeable throughout the history of Spain; a tendency which has been put in relief excessively by superficial observers and, as a result, has created a special fame for laziness to attach to the Spaniard. But this tendency is characteristic of the privileged classes only.

The workers and peasants are excessively laborious and in comparison with other countries, they are in no way inferior in skill, resistance and constancy on their jobs. Spanish workers are to be found in the most modern factories of the United States, in the Argentine pampas and in all places of the world. If they distinguish themselves at all it is perhaps in their stronger sense of independence and in their greater propensity for rebellion. That is why in some places the door has been shut for them, but never for any inferiority in their working capacity.

In the census taken by Campomanes in 1787 only a fifth of the population was employed in useful economic functions. On the other hand, there were 481,000 noblemen, 189,000 churchmen, and 280,000 servants. Subsequent reports may have modified the nomenclature, but we will always find a part of the population avoiding all obligations to earn their daily bread with the sweat of their own brows and so long as the social and economic system does not undergo a radical change, there is no use of dreaming that this parasitism will disappear.

In 1915, in the 49 capitals of the provinces of Spain and in 40 cities of more than 30,000 inhabitants there were a total of 4,645,633 people; that is 23% of the population. This percentage has undoubtedly increased but the agricultural population is still superior to that in the cities.

To illustrate the significance of the distribution of inhabitants, let us take the figures in France. In 1789 its rural population was 26,363,000; and urban 5,709,270. For every five inhabitants in the country there was only one in the city. In 1921 the rural and urban populations were equal. In 1926 the agricultural

population represented only 31% of the total. From 1921 to 1926 the French agricultural regions lost almost a million peasants who migrated to city industries.

The lack of equilibrium between the growth of large cities and their corresponding regions is most pronounced in Catalonia. In 1920 the total population of Catalonia was 2,244,719, and Barcelona alone had 721,869. In 1930 the figures were 2,791,292 and 1,005,565 respectively. In 1934, according to best available data, the population of the region was 2,969,921 and of Barcelona 1,148,129.

In 1919 406,000 Spaniards were dedicated to commerce and trade. In 1920 this figure reached 644,000. In this same year, the percentage allotted to industry and mines was 31%, very much below that of practically all European countries.

The population in Spain is divided in 46,082 units, from cities of a million inhabitants to communities of a dozen or two people. There are 284 cities, 4,669 municipalities, 16,300 towns, 13,211 villages, and 11,618 hamlets.

Another distribution worthy of consideration is as follows: Spain is divided in 527 judicial sectors, in 12,340 city districts and 9,260 municipalities. Even though the future structure will have a more economic basis than a political geographic one, the present situation should be known.

Comparing the census of 1910 with the present one we calculate 10,000,000 people of working age, 18 to 50. Of this figure there are not actually 5,000,000 employed in socially useful work in the fields and industries, including those now unemployed and the families of the peasants.

According to the census of 1920, the 9,260 municipalities referred to above had the following population:

25 municipalities	up to 100 inhabitants;
1325 municipalities	100-300 inhabitants;
1079 municipalities	300-500 inhabitants;
2243 municipalities	500-1,000 inhabitants;
1697 municipalities	1,000-2,000 inhabitants;
749 municipalities	2,000-3,000 inhabitants;
700 municipalities	3,000-5,000 inhabitants;
523 municipalities	5,000-10,000 inhabitants;
284 municipalities	10,000; nine of which contain over 100,000 inhabitants.

The average of 43 inhabitants per square kilometer is too high for an agricultural country and too low for an industrial one.

In resume, the Spanish population under capitalism is excessive. The alleviation afforded by the valve of emigration cannot be depended upon in the future; consequently, the population will increase in spite of the ravages of penury and tuberculosis. Under the present regime there are only the perspectives of increasing privations, further oppression and slavery for the workers.

In a socialized economy there will be no unproductive individuals; everyone will have a job which can be chosen within ample limits. The four or five million men who today break their backs for a crust of bread and maintain in ease and comfort the functionaries of state, the lords of industry and the idle rich, will automatically see their number doubled and by this fact alone relief, will make itself felt immediately. If all eat, it is only just that all work. Besides, this relief will be increased from year to year by public works of irrigation, communication and transportation, by the increase of mineral production and general intensification of industry. With the present methods of production and the present state of economy in Spain, the food capacity, according to Fisher, would suffice for 27,000,000 people. But this limit could be extended considerably by the transformations which the Revolution would bring.

A Society of Producers and Consumers

The idea of the suppression of economic and political parasitism is or should be sufficiently ripe in the minds of the people, for its immediate realization. Those who work cannot be very happy to see the best part of their production deviated, and if it were not for the armed forces of the State, surely the slogan of justice, "he who does not work should not eat," would be instantly realized. But the workers of the factories and the land still live subjected to a regime of oppression and servitude. The only difference is that modern wage-earners in the so-called democracies have the freedom to choose their masters, a very relative freedom to say the least.

Out of ten million persons able to work in Spain, only 4 1/2 to 5 million are actually employed in productive labor. The Revolution would suppress this parasitism and by this fact alone, its mission would be justified. With the disappearance of parasitism would be eliminated abundance alongside of privation, ostentation of great luxury alongside of penury. If there were not enough of any particular product to satisfy the needs of all, it would be rationed so that no one remained without his share, on the basis of equitable distribution. Clothing, housing and education would be attended to in the general interest. For the first time in the history of the world there would be no brains or muscles on forced strike.

We do not believe that there would be any real resistance to work, even on the part of the class known as the idle rich. There would be the natural initial difficulties in the adequate proportioning of a large population in respective trades and industries. The chief difficulty, however, would be in the eventuality of an international blockade.

Spain lacks cotton and without this raw material about 200,000 workers would be left jobless. Without petroleum transportation would be seriously affected. Even paper is lacking and the deficiency of same would result in the unemployment of thousands of printers, journalists and writers. The Revolution must therefore concern itself, right from the beginning, in assuring supplies of cotton; it must solve the problem of synthetic petroleum by the distillation of mineral coals. There are no insuperable technical difficulties which science could not conquer and if the Revolution would not bring society to lower standards, but on the contrary, elevate the general well-being, it must produce sufficient commodities to take care of the general requirements. Of course, these problems would be less urgent if the world blockade would not take place and Spain could obtain petroleum from Russia and cotton from America in exchange for copper and iron ore.

Of the large amount of ore extracted in the mines only a very small part is refined. The greatest part is exported and returns to Spain in the form of machinery, instruments, etc. The Revolution should make of the metallurgical industries a reality and increase the foundries, plants, and substitute motor traction for horsepower. It should electrify railroads and factories, utilize natural resources of water power for irrigation and electricity, replant the forests and prepare new territory for agriculture. In a word, the Revolution should realize in a few years what capitalism is already impotent to create: a Spain capable of feeding, clothing and housing a population which will not take long in arriving at the figure of 30,000,000 inhabitants.³

We don't need a postulate of God to build up our society of workers. Nor do we need the hypothesis of a State. We don't wish everyone to dance to the same step; we even admit the possibility of different organisms, some more and some less revolutionary; some more and some less friendly to the new situation. The important thing is, that all Spaniards have a minimum of necessities which must be satisfied and to which we must contribute through the process of production. The same as we work today and consider our comrades more as good-working companions regardless of their political ideas; so tomorrow we will

³Lucas MaDada has said "The Spanish workers in relation to workers of the rest of Europe of the same social condition are poorest dressed, fed and housed."

rub elbows with people who will not think as we do and who may be even hostile to our ideology. These we must conquer by the example of our labor and by the efficacy of our plans. There are different workers' organizations in Spain; all should contribute to the economic reconstruction and to all should be given a place. The Revolution does not reject any contribution in this respect.

Afterwards, outside of the equitable distribution of production — the work of all and for all each one can adopt the form of social life most pleasing to him. Nor will we deny the right of religious faith to those who wish to practice same. We would not deny the expression of other social concepts; nor their defense and practice; always with the condition that these are not aggressive and respect the same right for us. Otherwise there would be hostility and civil war.

We can even foresee that the friends of the Russian system might institute their own experiments and the political socialists could have their parliament and continue making speeches. We will not be the least affected and will be content with the prevention of any manifest aggression of one faction against another and maintain the productive and distributive apparatus in the hands of the producers and distributors themselves.

In other words, we wish absolute liberty in the political order of things; coordination of all the forces in the economic order. What objection can there be to a society organized in this way? We believe that such a Revolution would harm no one and benefit all. What does it matter if a lot of people who are enjoying too many privileges have to forego them and learn a little of what it means to earn their crust of bread? For them, the change will be a moral and physical benefit. But the middle class and the proletariat have nothing to lose and a whole world to gain in fraternal productive cooperation, thanks to which everyone will be able to obtain a secure standard of living. There will be no worries for tomorrow and no more of the continual tragedies of unemployment of people who yesterday had relative comfort and today are plunged in utter misery. All this will disappear because work will be available for all without any other aim than the satisfaction of social necessities.

Timid people suppose that the Revolution is inspired by vengeance. This is an error. On the contrary it is to be feared that a triumphant Revolution might sin by excessive generosity. The Spanish workers are not revengeful. Quite the contrary, on the day they take possession of the social wealth, they will have forgotten their long Calvary.

We need not have any illusions about the men and women who are not used to work. It will be necessary to adapt their parasitic generation to the less important tasks. But on the other hand a number of small industrialists and even capitalists who began on the same level with workers will have a valuable and sure place as technicians and experts in their respective branches of industry. They will not be the masters, but they will be indispensable members of the new social structure and they will be able to develop much more freely and much more completely all their initiative of enterprise and plans for general improvements.

We could go through all the categories of society and demonstrate that no one should have any fear of the inevitable social change. There will be no royal gentries, there will be no people bursting with excessive wealth, sick with the gout and boredom through vicious living. There are less than a 100,000 homes in Spain which would feel their situation lowered by the revolutionary process. We refer to the 100,000 persons whose wealth is secure from all risk of depletion. On the other hand for the 23 or 24 million other Spaniards the Revolution will be liberating and will bring an incomparably higher standard of living than they have known under capitalism.

Social and Economic Iniquity

What do we observe in the structure of society under the direction of capitalism? A formidable apparatus developed to a degree of undreamed of possibilities by technique and science, unable to

function due to the inherent contradiction in a system of speculation, whose productive power depends on markets rather than consumption.

Every laborer in the U.S.A. has at his disposal 3,000 slaves of energy in the form of 300 mechanical horsepower. Could a magnate of Greek, Roman or Egyptian times have dreamed of so much power at his disposal? In other countries the technical development is less but, nevertheless, all modern producers can utilize a great amount of mechanical power, which can still be increased enormously.

We ask ourselves, has human welfare benefited by these possibilities? Is there a justification for the way we live as compared with how we might live? The steel production of the United States in 1930 was 509 less than the maximum attained previously. The same occurred in England and Germany, and in France the reduction was 33%. The descent has not been stopped and the world trade shows an equally enormous drop. In some industries as much as 70% and 80% of the personnel finds itself in unemployment.

Agricultural countries must see their grain rot in the fields or stocked up in warehouses for the lack of buyers; while industrial centers are choked with merchandise which is not sellable as unemployment steadily increases. In the industrial countries of Europe and America there are over 50,000,000 workers without a job, and no matter what public projects are initiated on ever rising government loans, the situation of these jobless men cannot improve under the present regime.

Our present society which allows for a maximum capacity of production alongside of an equally extraordinary poverty can have no defenders. There is security only for the few and if we do not find more militants against an organization which degrades and ruins us, the reason is to be found in the lethargy of the masses.

Let us examine the case of Germany. Out of 65 million inhabitants, 32.5% are considered as productive; of this number, 29 million earn less than 200 marks a month. F. Fried, in his book "The End of Capitalism," tells us further "that out of 29 and a half million workers 16 million earn less than 100 marks; 6 million earn between 100 and 125, and 7 and a half million between 125 and 200 marks. This signifies that half of the productive population of Germany does not receive even the minimum salary recognized officially as indispensable. Going on with our figures, we find that three and a half million earn 450 marks a month and 30,000 men between 12 and thirteen thousand marks. Totally, about 100,000 men in Germany are living in complete economic security."

Is there any justification for so many sacrifices of the people to preserve a capitalist regime which liberates only an insignificant number of inhabitants from economic insecurity? Hitlerism, one of the most horrible manifestations of the return to barbarism, has surged to the surface and exists only in defense of these 100,000 privileged rich. What is true for Germany is, on general lines, equally so for any other country.

We will, however, not lose any more time in criticizing the capitalist system which has arrived at the point of its own complete breakdown. The moment has come to offer solutions and we offer ours, without party lines, without preconceived notions. Facing objectively the situation, we will try to find the most direct approach towards human salvation, the assurance of the right to life and work.

Property should pass out of private hands to collective ownership. We should not get confused with State ownership, which is nothing more than State capitalism. A communist economy is neither a heresy nor an impossibility. The Catholic Church itself, at a time when it was still influenced by Christian motives, that is, before its submission to the Caesars of Rome, defended communism with ardor and enthusiasm. Its greatest apostles have continued defending communism throughout the centuries.

St. Crisostomo said, "Crime, war and lawsuits originated at the time when the frozen words, 'Thine' and 'Mine' arose. Even though you have inherited your wealth from your father, who in turn inherited it from his grandfathers, no matter how far back you will go through your ancestors, you will trip up infallibly on the criminal, that is, the origin of all property is in robbery."

St. Ambrose sustained that land is the common property of all (like the air) and that private property has its origin in usurpation. We take the following phrase from St. Basilio, "A perfect society is that which excludes all private property. This was the primitive good which was overturned by the sin of our first fathers." St. Ambrose the Great affirmed that land, from which we all are born, belongs to all. Private property is, according to the Fathers of the Church, a sin, and according to St. Jeronimo, a rich man is an iniquity or the heir of an iniquity.

But not only is private property immoral but an insurmountable obstacle in the way of economic readjustment of the world. Around it flourishes the monstrous commercial, bureaucratic political and social parasites. Around it springs unemployment — the slavery of man before man.

Fermin Galan, the hero of Jaca, had for a moment the balance of the history of Spain in his hand. If he had been as good a strategist as a revolutionist, he would have triumphed and have realized his project of a new creation. Inspired by the forces of our organized movement of the workers and by libertarian ideas, the passionately creative spirit of Galan made the mistake of recognizing property as a usufruct. He considered the biological and historical instinct of individual egoism too strongly opposed to the suppression of property, and believed that over an initial period, private property, nontransferable and non-accumulative, should prevail; until a better solution is found. He sustained that an equal part of social wealth to all satisfies the social and not the individual instinct, and rejected, in consequence, the two formulas of socialism; "To everyone according to his capacity" and "From every one according to his ability and to everyone according to his needs." Galan proposes, "To all and to everyone according to his ability and his physical effort."

We cannot ignore the part of truth which is to be found in the position of Galan, and it is very likely that the revolution will have to give in, in part, to individual instinct of peasant ownership. This will involve the coexistence of totally socialized property and private property, in simple usufruct.

On the other hand, we must not forget the precedents of communal property, deeply instituted in Spain, of which Joaquin Costa, in his "Agrarian Collectivism" and Rafael Altamira, in his history of "Communal Property" gives so many examples. The latter, referring to communalizing of property, tells us, "Our peninsula abounds in small valleys, mountains, and places where large agricultural developments are impossible; also places where the climatic and geological conditions do not favor either extensive or intensive cultivation." I believe that these localities of communal property bear the aspects of the tradition of communism which frightens no one. They show the need of proceeding in unison towards the new economic and social order, and at the same time, demonstrate practically that this is not a panacea but a reality already established and with a psychological background in a good part of Spain.

Besides, the Spanish peasants live so miserably — even with their property — that nothing would be lost by giving it over to society in exchange for a better exploitation of the land and a more adequate distribution of labor and goods. Out of 13,530 taxpayers in the Province of Avila, 11,452 are subsisting with an income less than 1 peseta per day; 1,758 with an income less than five pesetas per day; and 155 with incomes between five and eight pesetas. These figures hold as an average for the whole country, and it can be said safely that 90% of landowners in Spain earn less than industrial workers without property. Out of a total of 1,026,412 landowners, 847,548 earn less than 1 peseta per day, which gives us "A class of proletarian landowners who differ in no way from peasant proletarians or workers of the land in their absolute dependency on the markets of wages."⁴

These peasants, in some parts, might demand the retention of their land ownership in the conditions proposed by Fermin Galan and thus obtain a concession from the liberating revolution, but would not take long in learning their lesson by experience and see their error and the injustice for themselves by their egoism.

⁴S. Madariaga; "Spain," 1930, Page 14.

The torment of Tantalus is no fantasy. We have it as a symbol of capitalist society; man is thirsty and cannot drink because the rule of privilege prevents him, he is hungry and must succumb before elevators full of grain and bursting warehouses. Can anyone imagine a greater contradiction than that abundance should be the principal source of misery? Such is the reality of the world. Tantalus is the unprivileged citizen of any modern country.

In the new society if we have raw material, land, tools and brawn in great quantity, or at least in necessary proportion to assure a superior standard of life for all, we must break the artificial barriers which prevent the use of all these resources. Later, if we obtain abundance in some goods, nobody will go without them; if there is scarcity in others at first, an equitable division will be made of what there is, among the population. It is no problem of differential calculus but a simple operation of common sense.

It is not only just, but it is also more practical and beneficial that abundance should signify enjoyment by all and not penury for the great majority. To arrive at this simple result, it is necessary to socialize property, put the land in the hands of those who work it, the machines under the control of the workers, the laboratories under the direction of scientists, etc. Some late prophets of individualist economy, Manchesterian night owls, such as F. S. Nitti, are irritated by the very idea of a communist economy. However, an equilibrium can be found only in a communist form of economy or, at least, with a definite tendency to communism through the means of regulating and coordinating plans of all productive and distributive forces of a country or of a group of countries.

The modern projects of planned economy, whatever they may be, always presuppose improvements on individualist economy. But we would shorten the road if the new planned economy would emanate from the productive masses directly and not from the bureaucracy of a State converted into supreme judge.

We have already had experience of totalitarian communism. We know the structure of communism under the empire of the Incas and of Egyptian communism — in Egypt common forced labor existed. Revillout, the explorer of Egyptian lore, described conditions there as a species of “State Socialism.” It is the kind of Pharaohism which might have come to be Russian communism; but this modality does not correspond to contemporary conscience, regardless of what the diplomacy of state, supposedly proletarian, might do.

The capitalist machine of production has developed so fantastically that not even the capitalists themselves understand it, and those who say they do are impotent to dominate and direct it. That is the origin of all the contradictions and difficulties. The capitalists themselves in their hunger for speculation and profit have unchained the spirits of rebellion and now do not know how to silence them. They have forgotten the magic word and they themselves have become the playthings of their own creation.

Something similar has occurred with the modern State; it has grown so much, it has become so complicated, and its machinery so strong, that the statesman who in old times was master of things, today is the slave of the machine. That is why we do not want to occupy, in our fighting positions, the places of the present supposed leaders. We could not do more than they, nor differently from them — being perforce docile instruments of the entire mechanism, the persistence of which, is incompatible with the right to live.

From our deductions of the study of modern economy, the evolution of feasible developments for all is to be found in the sphere of coordination and unity. Work is an obligation, more or less conscious, something which would be avoided if it were possible. However, if we have to work to live, it is preferable to do so with the least effort possible, not with the greatest effort. The individual like of the producer has less weight in modern economy than of the artisan; we might say that it does not carry any weight, since the producer performs generally a single motion in an endless conglomeration of functions towards

a final result. He may not even know what his particular function leads to in the end. This is not good but that is what happens in modern industry.

To re-vindicate a modality of work, which would return us a little to the artisan, would be like preaching in the air and make us appear eccentric. Economic life tends to scientific coordination not only because it is the most economic method of production but because the population has increased out of proportion as against the times of the artisan.

William Morris has executed precious works of ebony, but his system could not supply humanity with the furniture needed and his products would not enter under social necessity. Anyone desiring such work would have to confine it outside of the hours necessary to satisfy the general needs. The interest of the moment would be to assure all human beings with a minimum for existence indispensable in feeding, clothing, housing, and so forth. Once this minimum is assured, new horizons will open, when other principles less unified will be applied, at least outside of the general economic mechanism. Also after the working hours socially established for every industry there would remain a sufficient margin for individual labor for the gratification and satisfaction of personal likes.

Just as it is impossible to return to transportation by ox carts, so in all things, in all spheres of economy, it is necessary to adopt the most progressive ideas and then adopt all possible innovations towards a greater perfection of production (the greatest utility with the least effort). We say this even though we would prefer personally a little more work at the expense of less production but more in harmony with the multiform of methods. However, the multiplicity of methods will be reduced daily in the interest of greater results and the least effort. Secondly, because the populations, already so numerous in all countries and their necessities at times superfluous, but nevertheless there, have increased by hundredfold in relation to populations of fifty, one hundred or two hundred years ago. Today, we demand a thousand things which our ancestors, centuries ago, did not dream of as even possible. We are much more numerous and it is necessary that the production of one man of today be superior 10, 20 and 50 times to that of the ancient Greek or Roman citizen. For this reason, at least during the first part of the revolution, we see no other way, than the precept of modern economy; unified coordination in everything possible.

Part 2: The New Structure

Organization of Work

Perhaps, inspired by irony, the parliament of the second Spanish Republic proclaimed in the preamble of the Constitution “The Spanish Republic of Workers.” Many have held this an absurdity and added that a more just title would be “Spain, a republic of police, or workers — in jail.” A Republic of Workers is not created in parliament not even by decree of State. It has to be made by the Workers, in their working places and not outside of them.

We will sketch here the economic organism of the Revolution and give the general lines of the new economic structure. We don't pretend to erect new tablets of law but it goes without saying, a Republic of Workers should have as its fundamental basis work, eliminating private owners and middlemen. A Republic of Workers must take possession of all social wealth and undertake all administration by the producers themselves. In the past number of years a good deal of constructive socialist literature has been contributed by the anarchists. More important still has been the popular faith in the possibility of a change in the economic and political conditions in order to assure all human beings a minimum of existence through the work of every individual.

We realize that the road to reconstruction of the world is not free from obstacles, errors and cross-roads. No human being is infallible, much less an institution, no matter how revolutionary or proletarian he may be. What is important as a first step is to create the organism which will have to solve the daily and immediate problems of the Revolution. This organism we believe can be no other than organized labor, without intervention of State and without intermediaries and parasites.

We cannot return to an economic primitivism; we must aspire to a regime of production and distribution by the producers and the consumers themselves, realizing the maximum coordination of all the productive factors. Contrary to the essence of capitalistic economy which has been unable to avoid the terrible waste and suicidal locality economy, we would proceed, more on a national coordinated scale of maximum and widest possibilities. We agree with Cornelissen that the nucleus of production is each establishment and not the trade.

In a single modern establishment the workers of various trades and crafts can work together and prepare the local, national or international organization of all the establishments in the respective branches of industry.

Naturally it is necessary to preserve the liberty of the individual within the group, that of the group within the syndicate, of the syndicate in the branch council, of the latter in the local council, etc. At the same time, multiple exceptions would have to be allowed for. Consequently there must be created a general inclusive organism of economy which we will try to outline.

It is not our dream of the future which we will try to define, but what is actually feasible with the given human material in the present world conditions. We can go beyond the regime of private capitalism without going over to state capitalism. We will give to those who work: The means of becoming the real owners of production and distribution. If our project does not fulfill the aspiration of the more exigent, and we are among them, it is nevertheless something alive which doesn't shut the door on hope and the possibility of future perfection.

Work will be a right, and at the same time, an obligation.

Economic life cannot be interrupted; on the contrary, the Revolution must stimulate it powerfully and we must know now on what basis to educate ourselves in order to continue producing, distributing and consuming during and after the Revolution not only by the partisans of the Revolution but also by those contrary to it. It is feared that in a free society those indisposed to productive labor will easily elude their obligations. However in a system of organized labor it is very difficult to live on the margin of production. Excesses of coercion and rigor are more to be feared than the loosening of the ties of productive cohesion. That is why we say that the next Revolution in which the anarchists will give all their enthusiasm, all their fighting spirit, all their sacrifice will be a Revolution behind which resistance to force has no place. We foresee a long and fecund libertarian labor after the crushing of capitalism, because centuries of education under privilege and for privilege cannot be wiped out by a single stroke.

In place of the capitalist, private owner and entrepreneur, after the Revolution we will have factory, shop or industrial Councils, constituted of workers, executives, and technicians in representation of the personnel of the enterprise, who will have the right to moderate and revoke their delegates. No one knows better than the workers themselves the capacity of each one in a determined establishment. There, where everybody knows everybody, the practice of democracy is possible. The factory Council in representation of the personnel in the same place of work will coordinate and cohere the work in their establishment and combine same with similar activities of other establishments or productive groups. In the disposition and regulation of their work, no outside factor intervenes. There is complete autonomy without any intent of caprice in production, because the same has to respond to the necessities and possibilities in line with the exact knowledge of the conditions of each establishment and the needs and demands of the population.

The factory Councils will be combined by functional relation and form the syndicates of producers of similar goods, syndicates of trade or of industry; these new institutions have no proper authority in the internal structure of local establishments. They will provide for the modernizing of implements; attend to the fusion and coordination of factories, suppression of unproductive establishments, etc. The Syndicates are the representative organisms of local production and not only do they care for its preservation, but condition the future; creating schools of apprenticeship, research institutes, and experimental laboratories in accordance with their means and initiative. The Syndicates are co-leagued in accordance with the basic functions of economy, which we divide into eighteen sectors or general branches of activity necessary for the progressive march of a modern society.

They are the following:

1. Council of Foodstuffs Branch
2. Council of Construction Industries
3. Council of the Clothing Industries
4. Council of Agriculture
5. Council of Livestock Production
6. Council of Forestry
7. Council of Mining and Fishing Industries
8. Council of Public Utilities Industries
9. Council of Transport Industry
10. Council of Communications

11. Council of Chemical Industries
12. Council of Sanitation
13. Council of Metallurgical Industries
14. Local Council of Economy
15. Regional Councils of Economy
16. Federal Council of Economy
17. Council of Credit and Exchange
18. Council of Publishing and Cultural Activities

Council of Foodstuffs Branch

The foodstuff industries are made up of the Syndicates which produce and distribute comestibles from the factory to the home. Anywhere from ten to thirty thousand workers are engaged in this industry in each of the more important cities.

According to the statistical Year Book for 1930 there were, in 1929, 1,524 canneries, 726 sugar factories, 1,511 chocolate factories, 25,152 flour and rice establishments, 7,487 oil refineries, 7,008 beverage plants and 36 coffee and chicory plants. These official figures for the whole of Spain do not give the complete survey of all the foodstuff industries, but a fair representation on the basis of taxes paid to the government.

Let us take as an example the flour mills. There are some that still function with the old primitive grindstone; the greater number, however, have modern installations of motor power furnished by water, steam, gas, and electrical horsepower. In each of these establishments the workers would appoint an administrative and technical council; these councils would form a syndicate and the syndicates would be coordinated in the council of the foodstuffs branch. In the same way all the establishments would proceed from the simple to the complex, from the factory council to the syndicate; from the syndicate to the branch council; from the branch council to the local federation, and from the latter to the regional, and ultimately to the national council.

The cooks and waiters would form an important part of the foodstuffs branch since there would be great saving of time and energy in the collective kitchens, doing away as much as possible with the home kitchens. Overnight, by reason of a better distribution even without an average increase in production, there would be no one starving and no one suffering from overeating. This would be the first step of the Revolution in the foodstuffs industry.

Until the necessary means of increasing supplies has been developed, the average ration will be the same for all. This would be controlled by an adequate statistical service under the council of credit and exchange. The foodstuffs council would see to it that in every locality each inhabitant gets a fair ration, either in the collective kitchen, which would do away with the drudgery of housework, or in the houses where individuals would still persist in maintaining the family kitchen. As an example, in Barcelona there is a daily consumption of four to five thousand chickens but whereas today, only those who have a good income can eat them, tomorrow, after taking care of the needs of the sick and convalescent, the rest would be distributed in turn, so that at least once a week or once a month every inhabitant would have his or her fowl.

The same thing can be said for all products not plentiful enough to meet the total demand. It is not necessary to go into further details; suffice it to say that the organs of the Revolution can regulate the

function of the whole structure of the foodstuffs industry, without in any way depending on middlemen or merchants. All syndicates of producers will have to extend their activities to reach the consumer, in conjunction with other syndicates similar in function. The present class of merchants would be absorbed in the syndical organism along with all other separate functions.

Of course, a great number of combinations is possible. The Council of the fishing industry could control the fisheries alone. But they might extend their activities to cover also the canneries, as well as distribution of their products down to the smallest hamlet. In the solution of these problems, necessity and convenience would have the last word. The essential point is that no function remains outside of the general organism of production, distribution and consumption.

A number of edibles and Spanish beverages have a favorable market in other countries, i.e., wines, olive oil, oranges, tinned goods. Such would be a sure basis of income for commercial exchange of products which we have not got in our own land, such as machinery, chemical products, cotton, and even wheat in sufficient quantity. However, we cannot take the index of export as an index of superabundance. Our supply of oranges, oil, fish and wines would hardly be enough for internal consumption; as at present the average consumption is very low and the Revolution should aim to raise same considerably. We do not wish to export the food of the people, as was done with Russian and Romanian wheat.

The consumption of meat in Spain represents an average of thirty kilos per head; in France sixty-two kilos per head; in England, 72; in Buenos Aires, 101. These figures are sufficient to show that of modern nations, the Spanish population consumes per inhabitant less than any other country in Europe. The Revolution, by better livestock administration and a more equitable distribution, would at least afford a minimum consumption to the worker and do away with the special privilege now exercised by the moneyed class.

Finally, the regional and national federation would coordinate the entire process of the foodstuff industries and create special institutes for ever more perfect means of production and distribution throughout the country.

Council of Construction Industries

In foreign literature on Spain, abound descriptions of the tragedy of the Spanish home. A great number of the population still live like troglodytes or in places not fit to be mentioned as homes.⁵ If raw material were lacking this situation might be in a way explained. But there is no scarcity of building material or of architects and builders. Relative scarcity of wood is easily made up for to advantage by the modern use of metal; also the supply of stone and bricks is more than abundant. It is, moreover, a striking fact that precisely in the Syndicates of the construction industries there exists the greatest number of unemployed.

In 1910 there was a total of 3,644,483 dwelling houses; other buildings were in the number of 800,179; unoccupied buildings numbered 442,931. Of this total 1,738,557 were mere huts of one-story; 2,355,227 of two-stories and 793,809 of over two-stories. Since 1910 there has been more building but on the other hand a good many houses have been torn down as well as crumbled by time. The result is that a considerable number of inhabitants live in conditions completely deficient in hygiene and exposed to illness through humidity, faulty ventilation and filth.

In the big cities the sight of the so-called populous districts causes horror. The Ghettos of Madrid and the "barrio chino" of Barcelona are outstanding examples. In Madrid, official inspection has listed 28,000 homes as inadequate, of which 10,000 were declared uninhabitable. But the working population

⁵Tens of thousands of Spaniards live in caves and one whole city, Guadix, consists 60% of caves. In the southeast, Aragon and Castilla and other provinces, our impressions of these horrible human ant-hills are unforgettable. Gonzalo de Reparaz, "Misery and Backwardness of Spain", page 49.

day after day must still live in them. This is not all; in December 1933 the total of dwelling places available was 205,835. The census of heads of families reached 215,842.

Not alone are the living conditions bad and scarce but also dear. In Madrid, rents of 50 to 75 pesetas per month number only 60,000. Consequently, the proletarians have to spend an excessive part of their earnings for rent.

In the beginning of 1935 the Cement Manufacturers' Association complained of the low consumption of its products. Up to 100,000 workers of this trade were jobless and the factories, erected for large scale production of a material which is more than abundant, were unable to function profitably.

The capacity production of the cement works is calculated at 2,600,000 tons per year, i.e., 509 more than has been consumed in the last five years. We can see, therefore, that there are enough cement factories capable of satisfying the needs in Spain, to the extent that not a single worker in the building trades should remain without a job. There is plenty of iron, plenty of space in the cities, and adequate technical requirements. Nothing is lacking towards the initiation of a radical transformation of dwelling places in Spain, in accordance with all the needs of hygiene and comfort.

Naturally, the Revolution cannot supply what is not there. In the beginning it would be a great improvement to distribute equitably the houses monopolized by small families in the rich quarters of the cities, among the homeless families of the workers.

But it must not stop there: the Revolution from the very beginning must direct its attention to the construction of modern dwellings in the cities and countries, in sufficient number to house comfortably all the inhabitants. If there is anything to fear in the post-revolutionary period, it is the possible lack of sufficient personnel necessary for the immediate industrial and technical renovation. This is in conspicuous contrast with the present situation where 40 to 60 per cent of the building trades are jobless.

In the organization of the construction industry, the same principle of factory and shop Councils, syndicates and federations, as in the foodstuffs industries, would be instituted. The workers, administrators, and technicians of each shop or factory would be guided and coordinated by the function of the syndicates, in which each establishment would be represented by its elected delegates. Sections of architects, builders, carpenters, electricians, plasterers, etc., could be formed and coordinated under the local federation.⁶ Here again, the electricians, for example, might belong to the local Council of the electrical industries. These are questions of convenience and would not create any friction. The same would hold for transportation. All of which goes to show the impossibility of a rigid classification, and the necessity of leaving detailed organization to practical and spontaneous solutions.

The important thing is to maintain the individuality of each worker in the factory, of each factory committee in its syndicate, of each syndicate in the local branch Council. The painters and architects in turn could hold their assemblies and permanent committees as well as establish professional schools. All the activities, however, should be resolved by the productive and distributive organs emanating from the administrative Council of each locality; to be finally connected through the syndicate, branch and local council, to the federal council of economy.

An important function would be rendered by neighborhood committees, which in representing the residents, would propose improvements, reforms and other necessities. This would give the population in general due expression of their needs and would afford them the opportunity of solving their own problems.

When necessary, the regional councils would create special schools for architects, engineers, technicians and specialized workers. These research centers would constitute in turn their administrative committees with delegations throughout the branch. All the elements contributing to the construction of dwellings

⁶In Sweden, in defense against unemployment and against the possible boycott of reformists, there have been formed construction guilds by the Syndicalists of the S.A.C. These have demonstrated, even within the present system of private property and money value of labor, the vitality of syndicalist action.

would thus be coordinated locally, regionally and nationally, on an equal basis, with equal rights for all and by all.

Council of the Clothing Industries

In 1922 the official figures for production in Spain were as follows:

Mineral Production:	1,070,237,191 pesetas
Agricultural Production:	9,201,300,131 pesetas
Industrial Production:	6,500,000,000 pesetas

Under industrial production the first place is held by the textile industry, with 2,150,000,000 pesetas. The number of workers employed in this industry totals 300,000. There are 2,300,000 cotton spinners of which 2,000,000 are in Catalonia. The cotton industry employs 170,000 workers and consumes 430,000 bales of cotton. The wool industry has in Catalonia 244,624 spinners and 6,270 weavers, with 30,200 workers whose production annually totals ten million kilos.

There are entire cities in Catalonia devoted to the textile industry, such as Sabadell, which in 1917 counted with 285 wool factories? 292 cotton factories, 11,693 workers, 188,400 spinners, 4,100 mechanical weavers, using in all 16,000 horsepower. There has been much improvement since then but there is still in use machinery built about fifty years ago.

As we have suggested, the textile industry is largely confined to Catalonia where the most important factories of silks, cottons, woolens and felts are developing on an ever increasing scale. For silk there were, in 1920, twenty factories which were supplied by one thousand tons of cocoons. There are thirty schools of sericulture throughout the provinces of the country. The textile industry in Spain can very well supply the total needs of the Spanish population. There is a lack of raw material, principally cotton and wool, but cotton can be raised in the peninsula as well as in Morocco in the necessary proportion to meet the requirements.

The organization of factory councils, syndicates and branch councils follows the procedure outlined in previous chapters. The capitalists, as such, would be eliminated, and only if they have technical capacities would they be integrated in their respective functions. As there are many small shops in this industry, there would probably be a strong regrouping of shops and factories which could be done quite easily since competition would no longer exist between different establishments.

Apprenticeship schools, research institutions, statistics, and information centers would be important parts of the textile structure. The coordination of industry would correspond to the local, regional and national Council of Economy.

Under the present capitalist system, the textile industry is undergoing an endless crisis. There are increasing numbers of unemployed alongside a rugged population. In the new economy, so long as sufficient raw materials can be obtained, there will be no paralysis of the factories until the internal consumption needs of the people have been thoroughly saturated.

The textile industries will include also the allied industries of the manufacture of felts, hats, shoes, etc. The textile groups proper will encompass the greatest number of workers and because of their importance will be a stronghold of the new social economic structure.

Council of Agriculture

The Revolution is often associated with a sense of catastrophe as a natural result of the fear of the privileged few — the minority that expropriates the toil of others. But, serious as the damage of a Civil

war would be, the harm would never be as great as the misery wrought in a normal, perfectly peaceful year under capitalism. We have seen how the socialization of the ownership of housing, clothing and foodstuffs would reduce sensibly the happy time of those who live today in overabundance. But we have seen on the other hand how the laborious producers would improve their conditions by a more equitable distribution of goods.

What about the land? The transition from private monopoly to collective ownership or socialization will not in any way affect the land itself. It will still be there — only that instead of representing continued slavery for the poor peasant, in behalf of the landlords, this same land will be a fountain of wealth for the benefit of all.

The territory of Spain covers 50,521,002 hectares, of which about 20,000,000 hectares are cultivated, 25,000,000 are wild plains and mountains, and 5,000,000 urban centers, roads, rivers and railroads.

The possibility of extending productive areas is still great. Just as in Holland whole regions of ocean lands have been gained, so in Spain, entire provinces of half desert and bare landscape can be made fertile.⁷

The following is the approximate distribution of the 20 million cultivated hectares:⁸

Cereals and Vegetables:	14,800,000 Hectares
Olive Trees:	1,720,000 Hectares
Vineyards:	1,340,000 Hectares
Industrial Plants:	650,000 Hectares
Roots, Tubercles and Bulbs:	480,000 Hectares
Fruit Trees:	450,000 Hectares
Artificial Plains:	465,000 Hectares
Horticulture:	88,000 Hectares
Special Cultivation:	7,000 Hectares

Of the cereals, wheat covers 4,200,000 hectares, oats 1,600,000, rye 740,000, hay 600,000, corn 480,000, and rice 43,000. The wheat area is as follows, on the basis of quintals in 1929:

Old Castilla:	9,383,200
New Castilla:	12,663,000
Aragon and Rioja:	2,123,000
Andalusia:	8,543,750
Basque Navarre:	1,278,750
Catalonia:	1,841,000
Levante:	1,542,750
Galicia and Asturias:	381,650
Adjacent Isles:	886,250

⁷Spain has steppes ranging over 75,000 kilometers, 1/7 of its territory, These bare landscapes are mostly arid and would require much transformation to make them fertile. The rivers in Spain carry off enormous quantities of fertile soil and minerals, impoverishing dangerously great tracts of land. There is immediate necessity for the construction of water dams and strategic defenses where most needed. (Geofilo — Problems of Spain — “Tiempos Nuevos” — April 1936, Barcelona.)

We need not entertain too many illusions about the soil of Spain. The geologist Lucas Mallada has tabulated its agricultural capacities as follows:

Bare Rocky Land — 10%

Areas of Small Productivity — 35%

Areas of Fair Productivity — 45%

Areas of Exceptional Productivity — 10%

⁸A hectare contains 100 acres.

The orange area occupies about 60,000 hectares plus 500,000 trees distributed elsewhere.

We need not go into further details on the Spanish agricultural production. If the Revolution does not succeed at first in raising the agricultural production, it will not diminish it. It will at least assure a real distribution of the products to nourish the millions of workers on the land who have been living more like beasts of burden, ignorant of any human happiness.

There are numerous agricultural schools and model farms throughout the country. There are factories producing agricultural machines and tools. There isn't enough of either but they provide a good basis for unlimited development.

With the increase of human needs, all the development of modern technical processes of production must be utilized. At the same time, specialization will supplant the individual peasant, just as the modern industrial worker has taken the place of the artisan. The modern peasant must produce for society in the same way as does the factory worker. This evolution does not imply necessarily, concentration in agriculture. It may well be realized through specialization of both the large and small agricultural enterprises.

A general plan is, however, advisable. Councils of agricultural production in each locality would combine and constitute the agricultural syndicate of the area. The vine growers, olive growers, sugar beet growers, etc., would form their separate syndicates, and, altogether, would constitute the branch council for a given zone.

This branch Council would look after the experimental schools, and coordinate the problems of internal nature and the growing needs of industrialization of agriculture. The branch Councils would unite with similar Councils of other industries, such as transportation, sanitation, motor power, etc. and form economic Councils with the geographic unit taken as a basis. In union then with the regional and federal councils of economy, and in direct line with all the other agricultural councils of the country, the coordination of the factors of production would be assured.

In the process of distribution of agricultural products, the Councils of credit and exchange in their respective localities would maintain complete statistics of production and consumption, as well as of the land, machinery, and labor available. It is through the medium of the council of credit and exchange (which takes the place of the banking system under capitalism) that the products are bartered for machines, tools, clothing, food, etc., in accordance with the requirements and needs of producers and consumers.

Council of Livestock Production

We have referred in a previous chapter to the inadequacy of meat consumption in Spain. In 1921 the record of livestock was as follows:

Horses:	722,183 head
Donkeys:	1,137,980 head
Mules:	1,294,912 head
Cows:	3,718,189 head
Sheep:	20,521,677 head
Goats:	4,298,059 head
Pigs:	5,151,988 head
Fowls:	15,102,973 head

In 1933 the figures were approximately the same. The average consumption of close to 30 kilos per head should be at least doubled to reach the average of meat consumed in France. We might include in

our record the raising of bees. In 1920 there were 689,210 beehives producing 2,815,363 kilos of honey and 748,086 of wax.

There is much room for the improvement and selection of livestock, in which veterinaries, stockbreeders, and shepherds, through their respective Councils, can all cooperate towards the desirable end of adequate production in this branch.

Council of Forestry

Lumber is not plentiful in Spain. Woods have been: disgracefully thinned without any thought of the future. This has given Spain an almost desolate aspect and has seriously affected the humidity of the soil, fountain of its agricultural wealth. For a considerable period of years reforestation will be an important task for the new economy.

There are 2,380,000 acres of high mountain land, 4,500,000 of slopes and pasture land. Under proper care this total acreage should supply the necessary lumber for building and fuel. The timber is not only to be considered for its industrial utility, but also as a beneficial agent for the land, producing microorganisms to fertilize the soil and form the humus, which in the course of years will reduce the aridity and desolation of the Spanish land.

It can be calculated that the reforestation of the 14 million present desert acres would produce yearly more than twenty million cubic feet of lumber, plus the other direct and indirect benefits of an extensive and profuse area of woods.

In Segovia there are great tracts of plains with their important production of resin and by-products. Extremadura and Andalusia abound in cork trees which have been very important in the maintenance of the cork industry in Spain. As a matter of fact, the production of cork in Spain and Portugal represents 70% of the world output. This industry has now spread to other countries and only through a thorough modernization of productive technique can the cork industry in Spain gain its past prestige in the World.

St. John's bread grows more in Spain than in any other Mediterranean zone. Eight million trees occupy 192,793 acres; to which must be added further three million trees disseminated through rocky lands and gullies. The seed of these trees converted into flour makes a nutritious feed for livestock. There is also another by-product, "vaina" which can be used in the production of alcohol. There are besides other medicinal and chemical byproducts of these trees.

Almond trees are also much cultivated in Spain and their product has a big market in the interior as well as abroad.

What is necessary is a corps of technicians, botanists, engineers, and laborers to develop plantations and forest beds. An adequate number of forest guards for the conservation of the woods is also required. The Council of forest production should be constituted in every geographical zone with the object of encouraging the cultivation of trees, planting of forests, the production of fruit trees and the distribution of lumber and fuel for the use of the population. They will also care for textile fibers and other industrial substances extracted from the trees.

All the immediate work would be under the organic supervision of this Council leaving the ulterior processes of industrialization to other Councils. For example, the forest council would collect the oil from the olive trees but the refining of the oil and bottling of the olives would be administered by the foodstuffs Council. In the same way, the elaboration of resin and the roots from the pines would come under the Council of Chemical Industries.

Council of Mining and Fishing Industries

Spain is relatively rich in mines, and can produce all the minerals necessary for her economic independence. Mercury, lead, potash and pyrites are more than abundant in the peninsula and can be exported to advantage. The Moroccan zone produces chiefly iron, copper, sulfur and antimony.

Spain is one of the richest countries in iron pyrite — with a productive capacity of five million tons per year. These pyrites are very important for the production of sulfuric acid, fertilizers, etc. There has been little use of pyrite in Spain; consequently its export would be of considerable value.

In 1920, the total number employed in the mines was 125,000, of which close to 40,000 were in Asturias. 18,000 were lads between 16 and 18 years, and there were over 2,000 girls and women.

In 1927, the total mineral coal production was 6,690,076 tons.

In 1928 the numbers were as follows:

Total iron mineral production:	5,571,207 tons
Total copper pyrite production:	3,619,691 tons
Total potash production:	243,233 tons
Total zinc production:	122,141 tons
Total lead production:	177,059 tons

In 1920, the factories of minerals and their by-products numbered 417, employing 31,599 workers, of whom 959 were aged 14 to 16 years, and 2,635 aged 16 to 18 years.

In 1928, there were a total of 5,474 machines in operation with a capacity of 361,084 horsepower.

There is a special school for mining engineers in Madrid and a number of minor schools in the cities of Cartagena, Almaden, Mieres, Linares, Vera, Huelva and Bilbao. There is a specialized laboratory for essays and analysis of minerals in Madrid.

The organization of the branch would follow the general line in the respective mining zones and factories. Under the national Council there would be the mining schools, geological institutes, mineral museums and tool factories.

The products would go to the local and central supply depots from which the industries would be supplied through the medium of the Credit and Exchange Councils.

It is necessary to mention that the mining industries are owned largely by English, French and Belgian companies, which would lead to some inconveniences on account of inevitable international claims.

The first great advantage which the socialization of the mining industry would bring is the reduction of work to four or a maximum of five hours and provision 4 for the highest possible security for the personnel.

Capitalist owners concerned only in profit would never make these indispensable; reforms in the international market would not permit it.

Due to its extensive coasts on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean, Spain is relatively privileged in the abundance of fish.

About 180,000 men and their families are engaged in the fishing industry, producing annually about 400,000 tons of fish. There were in 1920, 29,955 skiffs and rowboats and 1,549 motor trawlers.

In what way will the revolution benefit the fishermen? Firstly, by improving the boats and secondly by reducing the hours which automatically would provide more employment. The average consumption of 20 kilos per inhabitant could be increased considerably.

Council of Public Utilities Industries

In these times the economic capacity of a country is measured more by the electrical energy it consumes than by the number of its workers and the extent of its territories. According to the statistics of the Federal Power Commission of the United States, the hydroelectric reserve power of Spain amounts to four million horsepower, of which only a fourth part is exploited. In partial confirmation of this, the statistical year book of Spain for 1930 lists 1,064,272 horsepower consumed. There are big plants, such as Riegos y Fuerzas del Ebro, la Energia electrica de cataluna, la Hidroelectrica espanola, la Union electrica madrilenia, la Hidroelectrica iberica, etc., etc., mostly owned by American companies. But there is plenty of room for greater development, as the country's resources of electrical energy are far from being utilized to even an appreciable degree.

The engineer Pereira Carballo, in an article published in 'Revista Electricidad' and reprinted in the "Sol," Madrid, January 7, 1936, considers possible the production of over twelve million horsepower distributed as follows:

Rio Ebro:	3,150,000 hp
Rio Duero:	2,080,000 hp
Guadalquivir:	1,964,000 hp
Rio Tajo:	1,865,000 hp
Guadiana:	865,000 hp
Rio Mino:	743,000 hp
Rio Jucar:	511,000 hp
Rio Segura:	346,000 hp
Other streams and rivers:	990,000 hp
Total:	12,514,000 hp

Translating this hydroelectric power or white fuel into black fuel, we would have the equivalent of 75,000,000 tons of coal with enormous saving in the cost of production.

There are a number of projects for electrification, water dams and the utilization of hydraulic energy for motor power as well as for droughts. There is nothing in the way of the realization of these plans besides pecuniary obstacles. The engineers capable of executing these developments, the manual labor and material are not lacking. Besides hydroelectric energy which would be cheapest in Spain, there can be thermoelectric energy obtained from coal. In this field magnificent innovations have been realized. The first turbine ever mounted in a central station, in 1903, consumed 6.88 lbs. of carbon per kilowatt hour. In 1913, the consumption of carbon per kilowatt hour in the central station of the United States dropped to 2.87 lbs. and in 1929 the average was 1.2. In 1933 less than a pound per kilowatt hour was consumed.

There still remain the fountains of energy which may be drawn from the air, which the Dutch have utilized so well with their windmills and which is now thought of as a possible source of electrical energy.

A large amount of electrical material is now being produced in Spain. Underground cables of 6,000, 11,000, 30,000 and 50,000 voltage are manufactured for the centrals of Madrid, Malaga, Bilbao, Barcelona and Valencia; also telephone cables and wires for the urban and interurban lines, cables for the mines, motors for industry, machinery and electrical apparatus for the Navy and the Army, electric meters, lamps, filaments, etc.

In 1921 there were 118 establishments manufacturing electrical material, 515 producing gas and electricity, and 101 water works, without counting the private enterprises which exist in large numbers in Spain. These latter predominate in almost every field, which creates great complexity for the Spanish capitalists in their efforts to concert their interests and enterprises.

We combine the figures for the production of light, motor power and water works for the cities and irrigation for the fields because all of these function closely together. The organization of the public utilities industries is the same as the others from the bottom up, from the individual establishment to the syndicate, from the syndicate to the branch council, from the branch council to the local council of economy, etc. But, as in transport, the public utilities must be integrated on a national scale. This is indispensable and will afford the greatest possibilities of development. There is even today talk of the electrical unification of the whole European continent so that not a single kilowatt may remain unused or wasted.

This proposed council of the public utilities will play a very important role in cementing the future of the country because all the plans for increasing production, decreasing labor, and furthering culture will be sterile so long as all the forces which the country has to offer are not utilized by the new economic regime.

Council of Transport Industry

The Council of the transport industry will be one of the most important in the new economy. Its coordination must be perfect and we believe will be more easily achieved through the suppression of private enterprise based on conflicting competitive interests.

Spain has 16,000 kilometers of railroad, according to statistics in 1930, and employs 150,000 railway men and employees. The principal lines are the M.Z.A. (Madrid, Zaragoza, Alicante) and the Norte. The national roads constructed cover 52,000 kilometers. There are besides 7,000 kilometers of provincial roads and 10,000 kilometers of local roads. However, almost half of the towns in Spain are still isolated and out of contact with the modern arteries of life.

In 1935 Spain possessed a merchant fleet of 1,265,321 long tons. Of this number, close to 300,000 tons are not in operation, with the result that in Vizcaya alone close to 15,000 seamen are unemployed. Not being an important exporting country, Spain does not find itself with the necessity of competing with the maritime transport of other nations. It possesses a sufficient tonnage to take care of the country's local and foreign trade. There are, however, excellent shipbuilding yards in Spain, capable of producing commercial and war ships, with exclusively national material. In 1921 such construction amounted to 37,023 tons and in 1931 the figure of 48,117 tons was reached.

Commercial aviation is also on the increase. 1920 registered 3,215 hours of flying covering 468,040 kilometers. In 1930 the hours of flying numbered 4,070 and the distance covered 603,035 kilometers, for 31,965 kilos of merchandise and 6,300 passengers. There are schools for military pilots in Madrid, Cartagena and Sevilla. There are also adequate schools for mechanics and technicians, as well as an aerodynamic laboratory in Madrid.

After the Revolution nothing of all this will be suppressed, but a greater benefit for all will be obtained by a better coordination of all available resources. Development would go on towards obtaining greater velocity, comfort, and economy of material and labor, towards the ever increasing perfection of the transport service.

There will be the natural problems of bureaucratic organization and the opposition of small to large scale operation. We believe, however, that the rationalization of the transport industry with the gradual elimination of small establishments is the more desirable. There is the danger of abuse, waste and neglect of the collective interest; but the large scale method is certainly the more efficient and we are confident that the watchfulness and interest of the workers themselves will safeguard the proper functioning of the organism. Particularly in the automobile industry, certainly a model of the Ford organization in Detroit should be substituted for the small automobile factories in Barcelona.

The national Council of the transport industry in Spain will comprise no less than 400,000 workers, mechanics and technicians, and its task will be highly constructive and beneficial to the entire economic structure.

Council of Communications

The post office and telegraph service in Spain is administered by the State. The telephone service belongs to a private enterprise with foreign capital. There is no doubt that the services performed by technicians and their aids would be much more efficient by the elimination of political and private intervention.

The personnel of the post office totals 31,760. The number of offices in all of Spain totals about 12,000. Complementary to the post office there are about 4,000 telegraph offices, with 20,000 employees. In 1931 there were about 3,000 telephone exchanges and about 250,000 telephones. In totality, 100,000 to 150,000 persons are required for the adequate function of the post office, telegraph and telephone services.

Communications in a country are like the nervous system of the living organism, they must be especially cared for. The revolution must develop this service to the greatest possible perfection, assimilating working elements, oversupplied in other branches. There is an official school of telegraphy for operators, technicians and engineers. There is a national school for personnel of the post office. These schools can be developed to include radio and all other modern developments in means of communication. Eliminating the purely political and bureaucratic directors of the present system, the personnel of the post office, telegraph and telephone services would organize themselves in local, regional and federal councils towards the maximum efficiency and responsibility.

Council of Chemical Industries

Just as the textile industry faces the urgent necessity of adequate supplies of cotton, in order to meet the requirements of the textile factories, so the chemical industry faces the immediate necessity of:

1. Obtaining petroleum and its by-products through the distillation of coal, lignites and bituminous slate by the process of hydrolysis.

In Germany, England, France and other countries there have been experiments in the distillation of coals to produce petroleum. In Germany, the plants already established produce almost a million tons of gasoline which, added to other combustibles, benzene and alcohol, represent more than half the total consumption. If in England and the United States the progress has not been so great, it is because of the hostility and opposition of the oil companies which see in this brand new industry a dangerous competitor.

2. Producing pastes for the manufacture of paper.

There is a possibility as well of producing a national combustible with alcohol as a base. In solving the problem of the supply of paper, which depends very much on reforestation, the council of the publishing industry would have to cooperate with the council of the chemical industries. A coordination of all these forces would be the task of the socializing revolution, which would close down unproductive establishments, combine others, erect new factories and localize the various industries in the regions which are most suitable to each.

Every chemical factory will name a council or a committee which will coordinate and regulate all the activities in the various sections of the establishment. The factory councils will form syndicates according to function, i.e., a syndicate of varnish and paint factories, a syndicate of alcohol factories, etc. These syndicates will unite in turn in a local council of the branch industry.

The branch council will form part of the local council of economy and will associate itself with other branch councils of the region to constitute the national council of the chemical industries. This national organism will direct the chemical schools, laboratories, research institutes, libraries, etc.

Just as in the metallurgical and other basic industries, so in the chemical industry the personnel cannot be unskilled. Therefore, from the very commencement of the factory councils and the branch councils, there must be special preparation for the training of an adequate number of technicians and specialized workers in order to assure maximum efficiency from the start.

Council of Sanitation

Spain is backward not only in industry but also in matters of sanitation. There is an excessive mortality due to ignorance, improper hygiene, inadequate medical aid, and inanition. About 50,000 T.B.'s die annually due to lack of sanatoriums and proper medical care. In all of Spain there are only about 35 sanatoriums and dispensaries for tuberculosis patients.

About 3,000 to 4,000 women die in childbed and about 17,000 babies die at birth. These excessive figures are due to medical and social failings. Medical science has made real progress in Spain and can be considered on the same level with the most advanced countries. It is only, however, in the new economy where its benefits and resources would be available. At present, the vast majority of the Spanish Population is too poor to have access to the advances and progress in medicine.

Even leprosy has spread more in our country than we imagine. In 1921 there were 426 lepers in the hospitals and over a number of provinces; 356 small towns were invaded by this horrible disease.

While half of Spain has practically no sanitary service, a great number of doctors are out of work. The Revolution must remedy all this and will not only employ doctors, dentists, nurses, and interns, but will increase and perfect all the medical service required to insure the best possible health of the population. There will be no private doctors, since the entire profession will be at the service of all. They will be incorporated, however, along with dentists, pharmacists, etc., in respective Councils and form similar organizations as in other branches. The Council of Sanitation will create schools and research institutions, and will also take care of the public health in the cities and in the country.

Council of Metallurgical Industries

Spain is not an industrialized country. It is necessary to accelerate industrialization reconciling man with the machine. This has been impossible under capitalism, whereby the machine, capable of producing abundance, actually deprives the greatest number of the bare essentials of life.

A shoemaker in ancient Rome made a pair of shoes in a week; a worker in a modern factory produces 500 pairs in a week. Undoubtedly many went barefoot in the time of Caesar. Is there a real justification for such a condition today?

In Spain in 1860 there were about 150,000 industrial workers, about 26,000 miners, alongside of 600,000 artisans. Today an artisan is nowhere to be found.

Among plants producing machinery are the very important factories of locomotives and railroad material in Barcelona, Bilbao and Zaragoza. There are automobile and motor factories in Barcelona and throughout the provinces; there are numerous plants producing machinery and tools. There is the

“Siderurgica del Mediterraneo” in Sagunto, which employs 4,000 men and is one of the most modern and important plants in Spain with 200 kilometers of its own railroad, its very own port, and Martin Siemens foundries of 80 ton and 90 ton capacity, able to produce 900 tons of steel daily.

In 1923 in Barcelona alone, there were 30,000 metal workers. Totally there must be about 120,000 in Spain.

The average production of steel products in Spain is 19 kilos per inhabitant as against 200 in Germany and 150 in Belgium. Resources of iron, estimated at 600 million tons, should enable the development of an important metallurgical industry in Spain.

Local Council of Economy

There are three practicable schools of economy: (a) Private Capitalism, (b) State Capitalism, (c) Socialized Economy or Communism.

We know the conditions and disastrous results of private capitalism, and we have pointed out our objections to State Capitalism as practiced in Russia. Our solution is the Socialized Economy not only because it is more just but because it is the only means of overcoming the monstrous contradiction of competitive production based on profit.

To facilitate exchange of products, there are two means: (1) The monetary system, (2) the social control of consumption in accordance with available stocks. We choose, naturally, the second method by which we would establish the unit of production and the unit of consumption in accordance with the necessities of society.

After organizing production and distribution in every branch of work similar to a great cooperative, in which all have the same equal rights and obligations and in which nobody lives by the exploitation of his fellow workers, it is necessary to associate these diverse branches in an organ of coordination to be called the Local Council of Economy.

It will substitute the actual political organisms, such as municipalities, assemblies, etc. In cases of emergency or danger of a counter-revolution, this local Council of Economy will assume the mission of defense and raise voluntary corps for guard duty and if need be, for combat.

The Local Council of Economy will also act as a clearing house for relations with other localities. The necessities of the various guilds and of the consumers will be determined through these Local Councils of Economy, which will increase and reduce and even suppress production in accordance with needs.

In our brief exposition of the organs of the new economy, we have seen that the new mechanism is not one of class and does not admit oppression or exploitation of anyone. There is no distinction between men and women of working age. But work in the new economy must be a social obligation; if it is not fulfilled voluntarily, one is excluded arbitrarily from the benefits of a productive and free community. We cannot say that with the new economy, coercion or authoritarianism will be impossible. The organisms of the new economy can be good or bad. They can be the guarantees of freedom, and they can also be the instruments of force. This is the essential difference from the bourgeois or state apparatus whose institutions are necessarily authoritarian and cannot be anything else. To pretend that the capitalist state is not such and to hope that it will interpret as well the interests of the workers for whose oppression it has been created, is absurd. On the other hand, the new economy, which is not a class economy and fights only against parasitism and special privilege, has no need of coercion, once parasitism and special privilege are abolished.

Regional Councils of Economy

Up till now we have referred to the organization of industry and agriculture in a local sense. We have mentioned however that in modern economy there is no place for localism and emphasized the need for a competent inter-relation of all coordinated factors of production, distribution and consumption.

In Spain there are a number of regions with their own peculiar characteristics of dialect, history and geography. These regions will be the organized economic centers of the future. Local councils of economy in the city; and the municipal councils of districts and country combine to form regional councils of economy, with the same functions on a more extensive scale. Thus you will have the council of the Balearic Islands, the council of Catalonia, the council of the Basque Navarre, the Galician and other regional councils of economy. Every region will have perfect administrative autonomy and thus the statutes of autonomy, asked for in vain of the central capitalist government, will at last be realized. Autonomy however does not mean isolation or independence, because all regions in Spain are necessarily inter-dependent.

The advantage of a regional economy resides in the fact that the men of the region know better the problems of their own territory and would consecrate their efforts with greater interest and enthusiasm in their development. Culture would also stand to gain in values and significance. Kropotkin was right in exalting for example the arts in the free cities of the Middle Ages. You must not forget however that the results will be more fecund depending on the temperament, intelligence and regional spirit, not through isolation but through a mature and permanent contact with other regions and the outside world.

The regional council of economy through the medium of its council of credit and exchange will attend to the statistics of production, consumption, labor and raw material available. It will administrate public works on a large scale; it will create, in cooperation with all the federated local councils, research and scientific institutes. It will stimulate production and improve the modern methods of labor, intensify agriculture and redeem large arid areas and rocky land by irrigation, etc.

No other economic or political regime would respect so much the regional life, customs, language and peculiarities, as we propose to do. Under our plan the greatest coordination is based on the perfect autonomy of each federated member, beginning with the individual and going through to the local councils of economy.

The regional councils of economy would call assemblies periodically to elect or reelect their members, and with free initiative and opinion construct the programs to be realized.

The regional councils will constitute by delegations or through assemblies the federal council of economy, the highest organ of economic coordination in the country. The latter would be a permanent national unification and would counteract any possible regional localization tendency.

Parallel to this structure is the national federation of branch councils whose mission is limited to the due coordination of all the branch industrial and agricultural activities of the country. Whereas the latter is organized on an economic guild basis, the federal council of economy would act as a social counterweight, which, in case of need, would restrict the corporative trade unionism which might manifest itself to excess, and vice versa. A mutual collaboration of information and initiative would be highly fruitful.

Nevertheless in the case of need of evaluating labor, and fixing a medium of exchange, it will be the local, regional and federal councils of economy which will have to resolve the norms to be followed. In this way will be avoided a possible overestimation of either the individual branches or the national federations of same with regard to their own activities.

Exchange of products will also be part of the mission of the councils of economy and not of the national or local councils of industrial and agricultural branches.

Federal Council of Economy

We began with the primary cell of, the worker, the peasant, the miner, the fisherman. We passed on to the first structure of cells united by similar functions in the same working establishment, the factory council, the mine council, the collective farm. We then developed associations of these first working colonies into syndicates and subsequently in branch councils where the productive efforts are concentrated as a complete economic function. We have seen how these branch councils are federated in local councils of economy on one hand, and on the other, are leagued into a national federation of branch councils. Through the medium of the local councils of economy, work attains unity and organization first on a local basis; second, through the regional council of economy, on a regional basis; and finally, through the federal council of economy integrated by delegations from the regional councils, on a national basis.

In all this mechanism of non-capitalist workers' organization no element, as such, of the principle of force is inherent. The structure is adaptable to the modern conception of the world and responds to the intense desire of combining the liberty of the individual with his obligation to work in behalf of the whole of society. Our conception of economy as a unit is inevitable. Whether it is through revolutionary or reactionary resources, the economic structure of the world must develop into a definite unity. Economic individualism and localism are definitely out of perspective in the actual order of things. Economy must be planned in order to avoid individual waste or abuse. The eternal aspiration for individual differentiation will however find expression in a thousand ways and will not be submerged by any leveling process. We do not believe that the contribution of the individual to the social common effort would in any way be leveling. Even outside of standardized methods of economy there will be plenty of opportunity in the worker's hours of leisure to develop individual avocations.

Once for all we must realize that we are not any longer rocking in the cradle of a little utopian world. We must take cognizance of the vast revolution realized in the productive processes. For an economy socialized, directed or planned, no matter what you call it, it is imperative to follow the evolution of the modern economic world.

The federal council of economy made up of all the nuclei of labor from the simple to the complex, from the bottom up, binds the whole economy of the country and is the resultant organism of an infinitely complex system of forces all converging towards the same end: increased production and better distribution.

If socialism and its variations would have conceded from the very beginning the necessity of substituting the outworn political and economic capitalism, by adequate organisms of practical economy, our conditions in the world today would be quite different than what they are. In reality the substitution proposed contained the nefarious thought of a state apparatus with its attributes of power and command to decree the new tablets of the law.

On the other hand, the revolutionary part in fierce struggle against the common adversary had little time to think of the constructive part of a new society. The whole history of revolutionary tendency has been one of heroism and unlimited sacrifice. Therefore, in facing the problem of social transformation, the Revolution cannot consider the state as a medium, but must depend on the organization of producers.

We have followed this norm and we find no need for the hypothesis of a superior power to organized labor, in order to establish a new order of things. We ask anyone to point out to us what function, if any, the State can have in an economic organization, where private property has been abolished and in which parasitism and special privilege have no place. The suppression of the State cannot be a languid affair; it must be the task of the Revolution to finish with the State. Either the Revolution gives social wealth to the producers in which case the producers organize themselves for due collective distribution and the State has nothing to do; or the Revolution does not give social wealth to the producers, in which case the Revolution has been a lie and the State would continue.

Our federal council of economy is not a political power but an economic and administrative regulating power. It receives its orientation from below and operates in accordance with the resolutions of the regional and national assemblies. It is a liaison corps and nothing else.

The federal council of economy will have an important part to play in propagandizing the new norms, in furthering the interrelations of the regions, in the fomenting of a national solidarity. On the basis of the total statistics which it will receive from all sources of economic and social activities, it will know in a given moment the specific economic situation. It will know; where the deficiencies and where the excesses of production are, it will know the requirements of transport and communications, and the needs for new roads, new cultivations, and new factories. And where the regions do not have sufficient resources, it will provide national assistance for public works of recognized need.

It will have no need of gendarmerie to enforce its suggestions and proposals. In bourgeois parliaments, laws are decreed which no one but those interested understand, and for their execution, they require a police force. In the federal council of economy, where the supreme authority resides in numbers and statistical data, coercion, besides being impossible in itself, would produce contrary and sterile results.

In place of the kingdom of parliamentary orators will be substituted statistical facts — which are infinitely more eloquent and in consonance with the living reality.

Council of Credit and Exchange

In the Council of Credit and Exchange are summed up all the cumulative economic functions and interrelations. Under the new economy in which credit will be a social function and not a private speculation or usury, it will have an important mission to fulfill as a vital means towards prosperity and progress. Credit will be based on the economic possibilities of society and not on interests or profit. Its mechanism will consist of exact statistics on production and consumption. The personnel would be selected out of the present banking institutions.

The exchange of products will come under the control of the currency. Based on statistics the Council will regulate the distribution of products, transmit orders and fulfill generally the function of the present commercial establishments. The Council will not have to occupy itself generally with the distribution of products, since the branch councils of industry and agriculture are adequately organized to take care of all operations, from the production of raw material to the delivery of the manufactured product to the consumer. The Council's mission would be to serve as the centre of demand and supply.

Should it be necessary, as it probably will, to create a symbol of exchange in response to the necessities of circulation and exchange of products, the Council will create a unit for this purpose exclusively as a facility and not as a money-power.

The Council would be organized on the same basis as the other branches, but will function as a liaison of all the Councils and thus establish a perfect solidarity in the new economy. The local Councils of the economy will be a part of the Council of Credit and Exchange. Together with all other regional councils would be formed the National Council of Credit and Exchange which would regulate the foreign trade and the international financial relations in conjunction with the federal Council of Economy.

For a few years there will not be abundance and consequently, the control of production and distribution would have to be strictly maintained. Individualism as practiced in the capitalist regime would lead to abuse and inequality in consumption, as well as to insecurity in production. That is why the essential condition of the new economy is of a social character, the special function of which is to assure at least a minimum standard of existence to the population. When production is more abundant, when technical progress has made possible the maximum benefit, then above the minimum of existence for all, we will be able to satisfy individual desires.

The Council of Credit and Exchange will be like a thermometer of the products and needs of the country. The producing guilds will know through the Council what goods they must produce and their destination. The bureaus of statistical records, which under the present system perform only a decorative function would be the central axis of the council of Credit and Exchange and would proportion all the necessary data for the competent administration of the new economy.

Council of Publishing and Cultural Activities

We have already mentioned in a previous chapter the scarcity of raw material for an adequate supply of paper, and have suggested the means of remedying the default through reforestation. In 1928, discounting newspapers and magazines, there were published 2,830 books and 3,578 pamphlets and brochures.

The organization of the paper factories could include the preparation of pastes and pulp. The printers would form a syndicate of graphic arts. In the same way every nucleus of writers, journalists and scientists would form its respective council. Altogether they would constitute the syndicate of writers and journalists.

Together with the council of transportation, communication and credit and exchange, the council of the publishing industries belongs also to the kind of social nervous system which combines the diverse parts of the entire social organism. The mission of journalists and editors in the new economy is of a special significance. Science, literature, art, and the service of rendering information will be available in their purest form to the whole of the community. There will be no bastard interest to exploit publications for private lucre. The light will come to all as freely and purely as the sun, without guise of caste and without the taint of factions.

We are not the first to suppose that the role of public instruction in the capitalist regime fulfils much more the necessity in modern life for workers who can read, write, and add, than the sincere desire for culture and progress for the people themselves. In any event, culture under capitalism attains its end through perversion and falsification in the interest of the dominating class. The public schools, the university, the cinema, the theatre, sports, etc., are all used as means towards providing a legal, moral and material foundation for the privileges of a few and the slavery of the vast majority.

“Capital” says Ferdinand Fried, “places so low an esteem on science that it considers universities only as professional schools for the creation of better forces.”⁹

The new economy, representing the contribution and effort of all, must develop a true culture without any other end than that of progress and the elevation of man to a higher standard. Culture, properly speaking, might not be included in the economic structure of the new order; but our free society which considers not merely the worker, but man, is not nourished by bread alone but by knowledge.

The organism of culture related closely to all the other organisms of production and distribution is constituted also as an organic entity, from the school with its administrative council made up of teachers, parents and pupils, up to the syndicate of teachers and local council formed by the various syndicates. The universities, however, will have a different structure. For example, the faculty of chemistry would pass over to the council of the chemical industries, and the faculties of engineering would depend on their respective branch council, and so forth.

Theatres operated today exclusively for private profit will in the future be instruments of culture. Cinemas, sports, etc., will all be integrated in the culture council and for the first time fulfill their real purpose. In the same way, art — today a privilege of select and rich minority — will be available to all and ennoble and beautify the lives of everybody capable of appreciating it. Not only will illiteracy be

⁹“The End of Capitalism”; ed. Grassei, Pans, p. 122.

exiled but every child will be equipped with real adequate knowledge and a technical preparation for industry and agriculture.

The revolution needs capable workers, peasants with initiative, men of solid preparation, which the new school and research faculties will have as its special mission to supply. Spain will then be in a position to fulfill the most romantic hopes of its most exalted patriots.

Capitalism cannot sustain the present apparatus of public education. Its largest budget must be reserved for public order, the army and the navy. The schoolteacher is a poor, forgotten functionary living in misery. The new economy needs thousands of new schools, thousands of new teachers, and hundreds of specialized schools of trades and agriculture.

Part 3: The Revolution of Liberty

Economy and Liberty

Anarchism, meaning Liberty, is compatible with the most diverse economic conditions, on the premise that these cannot imply, as under capitalist monopoly, the negation of liberty. Anarchism is an attitude of the spirit towards life and in any and all economic situations not monopolistic, man can be master of himself and should exercise the control of his own will) rejecting imposition from without.

The negation of the principle of authority of man over man is not bound up with the realization of a predetermined economic level. It is opposed to Marxism, which desires to attain a system, as a corollary of capitalist evolution.

To be an anarchist, one has to attain a certain level of culture, consciousness of power and capacity for self-government. Idiots cannot become anarchists; they must be cared for by society, along with the weak and the incapacitated.

We are cognizant of the fact that the grade of economic development and material conditions of life influence powerfully human psychology. Faced with starvation, the individual becomes an egoist; with abundance he may become generous, friendly and socially disposed. All periods of privation and penury produce brutality, moral regression and a fierce struggle of all against all, for daily bread. Consequently, it is plain that economics influences seriously the spiritual life of the individual and his social relations. That is precisely why we are aiming to establish the best possible economic conditions, which will act as a guarantee of equal and solid relationships among men. We will not stop being anarchists, on an empty stomach, but we do not exactly like to have empty stomachs.

We wish an economic regime in which abundance, wellbeing and enjoyment will be available to all. This aspiration does not distinguish us as revolutionaries. The ideal of wellbeing is shared by all social movements. What distinguishes us is our condition as anarchists, which we place even before wellbeing. At least as individuals, we prefer freedom with hunger to satiation alongside of slavery and subjection.

If we are in favor of communism, it is not because this system is identical with anarchism. Communism can be realized in a multiform of economic arrangements, individual and collective. Proudhon advocated mutualism; Bakunin, collectivism; Kropotkin, communism. Malatesta has conceived the possibility of mixed agreements, especially during the first period. Tarrida del Marmol y Mella advocated pure anarchism without any economic qualifications, which supposes the freedom of experimenting or establishing on trial, that which every period and locality judges most convenient.

What we can say is that we must aim for an economic system of equal rights and justice, in which, abundance will be possible. That is, the proper satisfaction of material needs, which alone will create a favorable social disposition and thus constitute a solid guarantee of liberty and solidarity. Man pitted against man is a wolf and he can never become a real brother to man, unless he has material security.

If anarchism for the anarchists can exist with abundance as well as with misery, communism must have as its basis, abundance. In communism there is a certain generosity, and this generosity in a time of want is replaced little by little by egoism, distrust, competition; in a word, the struggle for bread. We repeat, therefore: abundance is indispensable to assure a progressive collective life.

We face, therefore, economic reorganization of the future, free from any preconceived notions, fixed system or dogma. Communism will be the natural result of abundance, without which it will remain

only an ideal. In each locality the degree of communism, collectivism or mutualism will depend on the conditions prevailing. Why dictate rules? We, who make freedom our banner, cannot deny it in economy. Therefore there must be free experimentation, free show of initiative and suggestions, as well as the freedom of organization.

To make possible this freedom, we must insist on the prerequisite of abundance which we can attain by the thorough use of industrial technique, modern agriculture and scientific development. But modern industry as well as modern agriculture has its own limits and possesses its own rhythm. The human rhythm does not make its mark on the machine; it is the rhythm of the machine which determines human progress.

With the Revolution, private property is suppressed; but the factory must go on and follow the same methods and development of production. What changes, is the distribution of the product; which, instead of obeying the laws of interest and profit, must satisfy the general needs on an equitable basis. The factory is not an isolated organism, nor can it function independently. It is part of a complicated network, spreading throughout the locality, region and nation, and beyond all frontiers.

The writer knew economic localism in his own native town, a little hidden valley out of all contact with civilization, only thirty years ago. The wool was spun from sheep, shoes were made from wood, the wheat was cultivated and made into bread; the herbs of the surrounding hills made the import of medicines from the outside unnecessary. We knew that somewhere beyond our valley there was some kind of superior power, which sent out tax collectors and police forces. This little town, thirty or forty years ago, lived autonomously. But today everything is changed, fortunately. The townfolk wear clothes woven in Barcelona or Lancashire, made from Argentine or Australian wool, or from Indian or American cotton. They have radios manufactured in England or France, they drink coffee from Brazil. Would it be desirable to return to economic localism? No one would consent to it voluntarily; everyone wishes to enjoy all the good that intelligence and labor have produced. It is plain: a thousand ties unite the most insignificant locality with national and world economy.

We are not interested how the workers, employees and technicians of a factory will organize themselves. That is their affair. But what is fundamental is that from the first moment of Revolution there exists a proper cohesion of all the productive and distributive forces. This means that the producers of every locality must come to an understanding with all other localities of the province and country, which must have an international direct entente between the producers of the world. This cohesion is imperious and indispensable for the very function of all the factors of production. The interdependence of the factory and the electrical plant; the foundries in Bilbao and the production of the mines; the railroads, agriculture, building and a thousand and one trades and activities, all make for an inevitable highest maximum coordination of production and distribution.

We believe there is a little confusion in some libertarian circles between social conviviality, group affinities and the economic function. Visions of happy Arcadias or free communes were imagined by the poets: of the past; for the future, conditions appear quite different. In the factory we do not seek the affinity of friendship but the affinity of work. It is not an affinity; of character, except on the basis of professional capacity and quality of work, which is the basis of conviviality in the factory. The "free commune" is the logical product of the concept of group affinity, but there are no such free communes in economy, because that would presuppose independence, and there are no independent communes. One thing is the free commune from the political or social standpoint and quite another, from an economic point of view. In the latter, our ideal is the federated commune, integrated in the economic total network of the country or countries in revolution.

Economic communism is also a relic of old juristic concepts of communal property and we who advocate the suppression of all private property do not wish that, in the place of the old individual owner, should appear a new proprietor with many heads. Our work on the land and in the factory does not make of us individual or collective proprietors of the land or of the factory; but it makes of us

contributors to the general welfare. Everything belongs to everybody and the product of all labor must be distributed as equitably as the human efforts themselves.

We cannot realize our economic revolution in a local sense; for economy on a localized basis, can only cause collective privation and scarcity of goods. Economy is today, a vast organism and all isolation must prove detrimental. Only with the suppression of specialized labor can we imagine the free commune as an economic ideal. This, needless to add, is quite impossible. We must work with a social criterion, considering the interests of the whole country and if possible, of the whole world.

The Libertarian Revolution

We have said that anarchism is the expression of our will for a free life. We have affirmed that anarchism can exist in penury or in abundance, under one or another form of economy. We will now dwell on another phase of libertarian thought.

Our chief distinction as individuals and as a movement is represented in our position on the principle of authority, in our perennial affirmation of respect for the liberty of all and of each. Apart from the method, we can coincide in economic solutions with other social forces. In the political solution, we substitute for the principle of authority and its maximum incarnation, the State and its oppressive institutions, the free accord of social groups. In this position, we anarchists are more isolated, and even in a victorious revolution we would still be set off by ourselves. We believe that a great number of people are not with us through ignorance; that the majority have been influenced negatively by their systematic education. Besides, they do not understand our aspirations, not having the same sensitiveness, or a sufficient development of the sense of liberty, in, dependence and justice.

The revolution may awake in many men the forces of liberation, held in lethargy by daily routine and by a hostile environment. But it cannot by art or magic convert the anarchist minority into an absolute social majority. And even if tomorrow we were to become a majority, there would still remain a dissident minority which would suspect and oppose our innovations, fearing our experimental audacity.

However, if today we do not renounce violence in order to fight enslaving forces, in the new economic and social order of things we can follow only the line of persuasion and practical experience. We can oppose with force those who try to subjugate us in behalf of their interests or concepts, but we cannot resort to force against those who do not share our points of view, and who do not desire to live as we attempt to. Here, our respect for liberty must encompass the liberty of our adversaries to live their own life, always on the condition that they are not aggressive and do not deny the freedom of others.

If, in the social revolution, in spite of all the obstacles, we were to become a majority, the practical work of economic reconstruction would be enormously facilitated, because we could immediately count on the good will and support of the great masses. But even so, we would have to respect the experiments of different minorities, and reach an understanding with them in the exchange of products and services. Surely, as an historical minority, we anarchists have the right of re-vindicating this same liberty of experimentation and to defend it with all our might against any individual party or class which would attempt to crush it. Any totalitarian solution is of fascist tailoring, even though it may be defended in the name of the proletariat and the revolution. The new mode of life is a social hypothesis, which only practical experience should evaluate.

We are convinced that right and justice are on our side, although at the same time we recognize the rights of other social tendencies, methods and aspirations. We believe that the truth is nearer our concepts but we do not consider ourselves infallible, nor do we deny the sincerity and good faith of other doctrines. Which is to be the method to prove these or other social hypotheses: our own or some other revolutionary program?

In the Middle-Ages, one inclined to the judgment of God. Later men would resolve their dispute by a duel. The one who crushed the head of the other would be the victor of justice and truth. Do we wish in our day, in place of the judgment of God, to accept force as the sole means of resolving the truth between different revolutionary tendencies? We reflect back to anarchism in Russia: has its practical extermination by the new dictatorship proved that it had no right to exist? If we condemn this procedure in demonstrating the superiority of a given revolutionary party, we do not do so because it was practiced in Russia, but we would have to condemn it even if it were attempted in Spain by ourselves. We want, first of all, to recognize the right of free experimentation for all social tendencies in our revolution; for this reason, it will not be a new tyranny, but the entrance into a reign of freedom and well being, in which all forces can show themselves, all initiative be tried out and all progress be put in practice.

Violence is justified in the destruction of the old world of violence, but it is counterrevolutionary and antisocial when it is employed as a reconstructive method.

In Asturias, during the October revolution, two well-defined tendencies came into relief — in some localities a socialist republic was proclaimed and in others, libertarian communism. If the revolution had had a different outcome, what would have been the consequence? Unfortunately the respect for free experimentation would have had to depend on the force our tendency had at its disposal, in defense against contrary pretensions of a totalitarian regime. The anarchists would have had no objection to the innovation in Oviedo of the methods of labor and distribution proposed by the Socialists, while in Gijon and La Felguera, libertarian communism was put into practice. Perhaps the Socialist and Communist tendencies not being identical, on the day following the triumph over the bourgeoisie and the State, a Civil War might have broken out, to determine whether the future would be social, democratic, bolshevist or libertarian, a war between brothers, which would have annihilated the spirit and the promises of the revolution.

We do not know if our friends in Asturias would have been able to defend their right of existence against a socialist or communist totalitarianism. Perhaps there, they would have found themselves in minority. But in the rest of Spain, in the event of a revolution, we would have been an indisputable majority, as manifested in Aragon, Rioja and Navarre, in Andalusia, in Catalonia and in Levante. Imagine the disaster and the death of the revolution, were we to affirm the same totalitarian criterion maintained by socialists and bolshevists.

In the political aspect, naturally, we must renounce; the hegemony of a committee, of a party, or of a given tendency; that is, we must renounce the State as an institution which demands obedience from all with or without their consent. Without this renunciation of a State dictating the law for all, there can be no true revolution or social wellbeing, because the maintenance of the State is the maintenance of the largest source of exploitation of human labor.

This does not imply that the economic order would exclude solidarity, mutual aid and agreement. On the contrary, where economic localism is impossible, libertarian communist Gijon needs socialist Oviedo. Just as in the question of economic organization, what is most important is reciprocal good will between the parties to a pact. Assuming this good will, agreement must follow, notwithstanding political and social divergences, which might separate the interested parties. In this way, it is possible to organize a magnificent network of relations and exchanges, on an entire national scale, without the precondition of a sole regime regulating life and production on a monopolistic basis.

For over half a century, Marxism has produced division in the ranks of the workers by its dogmatic embrace of the totalitarian state concept. We aim for the unity of the workers; for, without unity, they will continue to serve as cannon fodder, or as beasts of burden, for the benefit of the privileged class in power. But we want this unity to emerge from the common interests of all and to guarantee the freedom of the individual within the collective organism. There is a common basis of accord, and it is the sincere recognition of differences of character, temperament and education, and the solemn promise of mutual

understanding, through mutual respect, in our common aspiration: the suppression of capitalism and the totalitarian state, towards the triumph of the Revolution.

Spain and the Revolution

We are living in a crisis, in a universal decomposition of values, institutions and systems. Unfortunately, the people have not been prepared for so great a demoralization, either psychologically or materially. That is why, surrounded with misery, they have not been able to throw off the old fetishes. And so, they fall from one idolatry to another, from one serfdom to another; instead of gathering their forces and gaining confidence in themselves and in their capacity for a better life.

It is deplorable to look at the spectacle of whole nations bending down on their knees in subjection imploring for a chief, a leader, or remaining subordinated to those, who promise to strengthen the chains of slavery. Germany is satisfied with her Fuhrer, Italy has faith in the Duce, Russia confides in Stalin. The opinion of minorities, in opposition, does not count. We believe that it isn't all the result of violence, oppression and savagery; to our mind, this situation is explained by voluntary servitude. The people have no confidence in themselves through no fault of their own but due to the centuries of perverted education. The seeds of mental slavery yield their fruit, and only the anarchists, against all currents, have been able to maintain their incorruptible faith in themselves.

Never in the history of the world has there been a more favorable situation for a change of regime. The old institutions, the old moral, political, social and economic interpretations are in plain disruption. All that is needed is the final impetus, to throw all the decrepitude over the precipice, so that the people may at last assume the responsibility for their own destiny. But the years pass on, the privileged classes grope in the dark for solutions, applying panaceas; and although they go from failure to failure, the game goes on, at the expense of those who labor and suffer. And the most notable thing is — instead of fortifying the revolutionary battlefield — the world panorama offers us a contrary picture: we see the reactionary front fortified towards the restoration of the old powers, intensified.

Insecurity and discontent are general. The bourgeoisie and the magnates of industry, commerce and agriculture are also very unhappy. They vegetate in the high spheres under a continuous strain of shocks. The crash of 1929 in New York threw thousands and thousands from lordly comfort to the depths of despair. It seemed at first a temporary crisis, which needed only some readjustments; but the years passed on and we see that it is not a crisis but a definite bankruptcy of the entire system of capitalism. A new economy is necessary. Everybody agrees to this and still solutions are being sought on the basis of privilege and the exclusion of the productive masses from the direction of their work and destiny.

The totalitarian state appears as a solution. The direction of economy, having failed under private capitalism, will in the future rest upon the power of the state. This is all the intelligence of the bourgeoisie, seconded by the Marxist tendency, have known how to propose. It is said a totalitarian state will eliminate the contradictions of rival capitalist groups, suppress the friction of the struggle of classes and convert the economic apparatus of an entire country into a single power, responding to a single will.

Undoubtedly an economic coordination is necessary, but when attained by the State, the remedy is worse than the illness, because it is achieved at the cost of exterminating all the values, initiatives, etc., which have no origin in the State.

Moreover, the totalitarian state represents authority raised to the maximum degree; it must fortify its institutions, maintain an army, police force and bureaucracy, which will enormously increase the burden of taxation. This sole fact is the best argument to ordain its failure. The modern state is insupportable not only because of its tyranny but because it is excessively expensive and because its essential functions are obstacles to social development. The totalitarian state increases parasitism in great magnitude, as

is evidenced in the countries, where it has been put into practice. Under these conditions, the crisis of a system is not remedied. On the contrary, the economic disruption is made worse. The suppression of the cry of pain and protest does not imply the suppression of the pain itself, nor of the right of protest. As a logical complement to the totalitarian state: appears the doctrine of nationalism, of racism, and of anything which suppresses the personality before a more powerful divinity; nationalism is war, and war is the cause of new calamities, the harbinger of new degradations of feelings and of human thought.

The modern state, having failed in its liberal dressings and in its democratic aspects, has left only the alternative of a totalitarian state, with omnipotent power in economy, and no restraint or moral scruple of any kind, when defending its existence.

We have to choose once for all. On the one side we have the state, that is, capitalism, which means war, which means unemployment and the crushing of producers by heavy taxation, and the persecution of free thought. On the other side, we have the socialization of economy, the direct understanding between producers, to regulate production and distribution according to necessities, without economic, political or social parasitism. We wish to point out again to those who still have illusions as to a proletarian government, that the capitalism of the state does not suppress capitalism, but conduces to a temporary revival of capitalism; that the government of the proletariat is like any other government, only worse, because it ties the workers spiritually to its institutions, in the hope of impossible solutions.

There is another way, our way, that of socialization and the entente of all the producers as such, and all the consumers, on the basis of their possession of the product of their labor. Religious, political and social ideas need not enter into this accord. What does it matter if people believe in God or the devil, if they are religious or atheists, Catholics or Protestants, conservatives or Socialists? We are interested simply in realizing the ideal of all who work, which ideal is the possession of the integral product of labor, possible only in a socialized economy. The workers' organizations have already in Spain the framework of an immediate economic coordination, through the network of syndical and cooperative organizations. Neither capitalism nor the state has an economic basis of action, as complete as our workers' organizations. For them, it would be relatively easy even now to take over the production and distribution on the basis of the principle of the satisfaction of necessities. This would benefit even the parasites who by birth, education or inherent conditions, find themselves on the margin of productive activity, performing a function, which is perhaps secretly repugnant to them, of being simply watchdogs of the wealth of the privileged classes.

The revolution of 1917 in Russia awakened millions and millions of slaves to the consciousness of a new life. The fall of the Czar and the intervention of the proletariat in the direction of their destiny's, was greeted with an indescribable joy. Russia became the symbol for all the revolutionary proletarian forces. We were not the last but among the first to be on the side of Russia when it was the great hope of the oppressed.

Politics of the state have killed the socialist spirit and in a few years that great country left off being a symbol of liberty to become the ideal of bureaucrats. Today it is an imperialistic power among other powers, preparing for war just like all the other nations and having as little to do with socialism and the ideals of the proletariat, as any other state. This development might astonish and surprise many, but not the anarchists, who have pointed out the danger by their constant criticism.

Once more history confirms the certitude of our predictions. The politics of State and Socialism harmonize as little as water with fire. If one triumphs, the other must succumb, and vice versa. Socialism can be created only in the measure that the State is destroyed and popular institutions are erected to take over a direct control of production and distribution. With a disappearance of the symbol of the Orient (the myth of Russia as Berkman defined it), there has risen for the revolting slaves of the world a new symbol, the symbol of Spain. Today, Spain represents the last standard bearer of the spirit of liberty, the last hope of resurrection in this dark-age.

We are not patriots, we do not glorify nationalism, our Fatherland doesn't exist where there is in place of justice only misery and slavery. In the concert of capitalist nations, our country can only represent an insignificant link, a semi-colony in which only a minority of privileged rich can enjoy and bless life at the expense of the sweat and the privations of the great mass of Spanish workers and peasants. In the capitalist regime, Spain can represent only an extremely subordinate role on account of her industrial backwardness and the ignorance of her laborious masses. If the Spanish panorama is to be modified under the capitalist regime, it will be the work and initiative of foreign capital, due to the lower mentality and insignificant spirit of enterprise of native capitalists, which would imply forcibly the further dependency of the country.

But if the Spanish people should break their chains and proceed to build up a new order based on work and solidarity, then Spain would rise from the lowest rungs of the scale of modern nations to the supreme head of progressive humanity and serve as an example and stimulus, as the great living symbol of the future for the entire world.

We have seen in other countries how progressive movements have fallen under the crushing weight of regressive hordes. To save Spain from such a destiny, we are ready to suffer the greatest of sacrifices. We aim for a libertarian regime without laws and authoritarians, which we would replace by free federations and solidarity for a common cause. We know and are able to live in accord with our tenets, and we feel that even those most poisoned by the virus of authoritarianism will adapt themselves happily to a regime of life and work of mutual help, which we advocate. We entertain the firm conviction that the world will be happy only when it is free, when it will have exterminated from its institutions and activities and ideas; — the domination and exploitation of man by man.

The situation is grave. The enemy has shut itself up in fortresses and menaces the total extermination of all the progressive movements. We may be the first to fall, but we will not be the last, as in Italy, as in Germany and other lands. There is talk of defensive alliances, of popular fronts. We have always favored and worked, to the point of fatigue, for the consolidation of all progressive tendencies, to oppose the imminent retrocession in the direction of fascism. We have warned the liberal and left political parties that all attempts to break down the power of the CNT must of necessity redound to themselves. Our experience has shown us that the change of rudders and ideologies, without removing the State, only aggravates the economic, social and moral evils. That is why we cannot participate in alliances which are concerned more with the aim to divide the spoils in the new State, or simply with the limited objective of opposing a determined form of fascism, a specific type of tyranny, or a special kind of capitalism.

We repeat: we are ready to sacrifice many of ourselves, but it must be for an alliance rising from the heart of the proletariat, and from the centers of production. It must be for a united front of the producers to assure all who work the full mastery of their product. This unity can come only on the terrain of liberty, agreement and mutual respect for the present and future. This is not possible under the premise of a conquered State, which would necessarily afford the force of law to personal ambitions, and thus again become the natural enemy of the people.

To deny the reactionary, antisocial and anti-proletarian significance of the State would be equivalent to suicide. The state can no more fraternize with liberty than water with fire; nor can it in any way fulfill the fundamental demand "he who does not work should not eat." How easy would it be for the workers to agree, without the meddling of ambitious opportunists seeking power in the political parties!

The Spanish people possess an immense creative capacity. Spain has traditions of free life, material resources together with brawn and brain. In Spain, everything remains to be done in industry, agriculture, forestry, the means of communication, and culture. The work to be realized is immense in all domains. A revolution cannot do miracles. But it would liberate energies paralyzed by the present system and direct all efforts to social utility. In a few years, Spain could clothe, house and feed her population decently. At the same time Spain would become a guiding power of first order, and her word would be heard universally. Her example would not take long in being seconded by other countries, and at last

the fatuous edifice of authoritarianism would crumble to the ground together with all its pestilence and human burdens. And while Russia is preparing her million soldiers to fight alongside of capitalist France in the next war, Spain could at last lift her voice and proclaim peace to the world in reply to the mad race of modern states towards degeneration and disaster.

This little peninsula could be the cradle of a new era; and it might be the tomb of a great hope. The future, not very distant, will pronounce the final word.

Anarchism: Communist or Individualist? Both

Max Nettlau

1914

Anarchism is no longer young, and it may be time to ask ourselves why, with all the energy devoted to its propaganda, it does not spread more rapidly. For even where local activity is strongest, the results are limited, whilst immense spheres are as yet hardly touched by any propaganda at all. In discussing this question, I will not deal with the problem of Syndicalism, which, by absorbing so much of Anarchist activity and sympathies, cannot by that very fact be considered to advance the cause of Anarchism proper, whatever its other merits may be. I will also try not to repeat what I put forward in other articles in years gone by as possible means of increasing the activity of Anarchists. As my advice was not heeded, it cannot, in any case, be considered to have hampered the progress of our ideas.

I will consider the theories of Anarchism only; and here I have been struck for a long time by the contrast between the largeness of the aims of Anarchism — the greatest possible realization of freedom and well-being for all — and the narrowness, so to speak, of the economic program of Anarchism, be it Individualist or Communist. I am inclined to think that the feeling of the inadequacy of this economic basis — exclusive Communism or exclusive Individualism, according to the school — hinders people from acquiring practical confidence in Anarchism, the general aims of which appeal as a beautiful ideal to many. I feel myself that neither Communism nor Individualism, if it became the sole economic form, would realize freedom, which always demands a choice of ways, a plurality of possibilities. I know that Communists, when asked pointedly, will say that they should have no objection to Individualists who wished to live in their own way without creating new monopolies or authority, and *vice versa*. But this is seldom said in a really open and friendly way; both sections are far too much convinced that freedom is only possible if *their* particular scheme is carried out. I quite admit that there are Communists and Individualists to whom their respective doctrines, and these alone, give complete satisfaction and leave no problem unsolved (in their opinion); these would not be interfered with, in any case, in their lifelong constancy to *one* economic ideal. But they must not imagine that all people are constituted after their model and likely to come round to their views or remain “unreclaimed” adversaries on whom no sympathy is to be wasted. Let them but look on real life, which is bearable at all only by being varied and differentiated, in spite of all official uniformity. We all see the survivals of earlier Communism, the manifold workings of present-day solidarity, from which new forms of future Communism may develop — all this in the teeth of the cut-throat capitalist Individualism which predominates. But this miserable bourgeois Individualism, if it created a desire for solidarity, leading to Communism, certainly also created a desire for a genuine, free, unselfish Individualism, where freedom of action would no longer be misused to crush the weaker and to form monopolies, as to-day.

Neither Communism nor Individualism will ever disappear; and if by some mass action the foundations of some rough form of Communism were laid, Individualism would grow stronger than ever in opposition to this. Whenever a uniform system prevails, Anarchists, if they have their ideas at heart, will go ahead of it and never permit themselves to become fossilised upholders of a given system, be it that of the purest Communism.

Will they, then, be always dissatisfied, always struggling, never enjoying rest? They might feel at ease in a state of society where all economic possibilities had full scope, and then their energy might be applied to peaceful emulation and no longer to continuous struggle and demolition. This desirable state of things could be prepared from now, if it were once for all frankly understood among Anarchists that both Communism and Individualism are equally important, equally permanent; and that the exclusive predominance of either of them would be the greatest misfortune that could befall mankind. From isolation we take refuge in solidarity, from too much society we seek relief in isolation: both solidarity and isolation are, each at the right moment, freedom and help to us. All human life vibrates between these two poles in endless varieties of oscillations.

Let me imagine myself for a moment living in a free society. I should certainly have different occupations, manual and mental, requiring strength or skill. It would be very monotonous if the three or four groups with whom I would work (for I hope there will be no Syndicates then!) would be organized on exactly the same lines; I rather think that different degrees or forms of Communism will prevail in them. But might I not become tired of this, and wish for a spell of relative isolation, of Individualism? So I might turn to one of the many possible forms of "equal exchange" Individualism. Perhaps people will do one thing when they are young and another thing when they grow older. Those who are but indifferent workers may continue with their groups; those who are efficient will lose patience at always working with beginners and will go ahead by themselves, unless a very altruist disposition makes it a pleasure to them to act as teachers or advisers to younger people. I also think that at the beginning I should adopt Communism with friends and Individualism with strangers, and shape my future life according to experience. Thus, a free and easy change from one variety of Communism to another, thence to any variety of Individualism, and so on, would be the most obvious and elementary thing in a really free society; and if any group of people tried to check this, to make one system predominant, they would be as bitterly fought as revolutionists fight the present system.

Why, then, was Anarchism cut up into the two hostile sections of Communists and Individualists? I believe the ordinary factor of human shortcomings, from which nobody is exempt, accounts for this. It is quite natural that Communism should appeal more to some, Individualism to others. So each section would work out their economic hypothesis with full ardour and conviction, and by-and-by, strengthened in their belief by opposition, consider it the *only* solution, and remain faithful to it in the face of all. Hence the Individualist theories for about a century, the Collectivist and Communist theories for about fifty years, acquired a degree of settledness, certitude, apparent permanency, which they never ought to have assumed, for stagnation — this is the word — is the death of progress. Hardly any effort was made in favor of dropping the differences of schools; thus both had full freedom to grow, to become generalized, if they could. With what result?

Neither of them could vanquish the other. Wherever Communists are, Individualists will originate from their very midst; whilst no Individualist wave can overthrow the Communist strongholds. Whilst here aversion or enmity exists between people who are so near each other, we see Communist Anarchism almost effacing itself before Syndicalism, no longer scorning compromise by accepting more or less the Syndicalist solution as an inevitable stepping-stone. On the other hand, we see Individualists almost relapse into bourgeois fallacies — all this at a time when the misdeeds of authority, the growth of State encroachments, present a better occasion and a wider field than ever for real and outspoken Anarchist propaganda.

It has come to this, that at the French Communist Anarchist Congress held in Paris last year Individualism was regularly stigmatised and placed outside the pale of Anarchism by a formal resolution. If ever an international Anarchist Congress was held on these lines, endorsing a similar attitude, I should say good-bye to all hopes placed in this kind of sectarian Anarchism.

By this I intend neither to defend nor to combat Communism or Individualism. Personally, I see much good in Communism; but the idea of seeing it generalized makes me protest. I should not like to pledge my own future beforehand, much less that of anybody else. The Question remains entirely open for me; experience will show which of the extreme and of the many intermediate possibilities will be the best on each occasion, at each time. Anarchism is too dear to me that I should care to see it tied to an economic hypothesis, however plausible it may look to-day. Unique solutions will never do, and whilst everybody is free to believe in and to propagate his own cherished ideas, he ought not to feel it right to spread them except in the form of the merest hypothesis, and every one knows that the literature of Communist and Individualist Anarchism is far from keeping within these limits; we have all sinned in this respect.

In the above I have used the terms "Communist" and "Individualist" in a general way, wishing to show the useless and disastrous character of sectional exclusiveness among Anarchists. If any Individualists have said or done absurd things (are Communists impeccable?), to show these up would not mean to refute me. All I want is to see all those who revolt against authority work on lines of general solidarity instead of being divided into little chapels because each one is convinced he possesses a correct economic solution of the social problem. To fight authority in the capitalist system and in the coming system of State Socialism, or Syndicalism, or of both, or all the three combined, an immense wave of real Anarchist feeling is wanted, before ever the question of economic remedies comes in. Only recognize this, and a large sphere of solidarity will be created, which will make Communist Anarchism stand stronger and shine brighter before the world than it does now.

* * *

P. S. — Since writing the above I have found an early French Anarchist pamphlet, from which I translate the following:

"Thus, those who feel so inclined will unite for common life, duties, and work, whilst those to whom the slightest act of submission would give umbrage will remain individually independent. The real principle [of Anarchism] is this far from demanding integral Communism. But it is evident that for the benefit of certain kinds of work many producers will unite, enjoying the advantages of co-operation. But I say once more, Communism will never be a fundamental [meaning unique and obligatory] principle, on account of the diversity of our intellectual faculties, of our needs, and of our will."

This quotation (the words in brackets are mine) is taken from p. 72 of what may be one of the scarcest Anarchist publications, on which my eye lit on a bookstall ten days after writing the above article: "Philosophie de l'insoumission ou Pardon a Cain," par Felix P. (New York, 1854, iv. 74 pp., 12mo) — that is, "Philosophy of Non-Submission," the author's term for Anarchy. I do not know who Felix P. was; apparently one of the few French Socialists, like Dejacque, Bellegarrigue, Coeurderoy, and Claude Pelletier, whom the lessons of 1848 and other experiences caused to make a bold step forward and arrive at Anarchism by various ways and independent of Proudhon. In the passage quoted he put things into a nutshell, leaving an even balance between the claims of Communism and Individualism. This is exactly what I feel in 1914, sixty years after. The personal predilections of everybody would remain unchanged and unhurt, but exclusivism would be banished, the two vital principles of life allied instead of looking askance at each other.

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After the Revolution

Diego Abad de Santillan

1937

Part 1: A General Survey

The Essential Factors of Production

The principle of all economy consists in obtaining the relative maximum result from the least relative effort.

This economic law should be sufficient in itself to combat and reject the present order of capitalism because, quite contrary to obtaining the maximum result from a minimum effort, the waste is enormous; the utilization of natural resources and technical facilities and science is negligible. We do not live as we could live — as we should live!

What are the factors of production?

First: Nature, which furnishes man with raw material and certain natural forces.

Second: Human Labor, manual and intellectual, which elaborates and utilizes the raw material.

Third: the Machinery which multiplies the power and the intensity of human labor. (Some economists call this Capital.)

Capitalism does not avail itself even of the possible resources of the first factor (Nature), as is manifest in the great extensions of uncultivated land, idle water power and unutilized raw material. As far as human labor is concerned, intellectual or manual, it is unnecessary to demonstrate that not even 50% of its capacity is utilized by the existing economic regime. There are in the world today tens of millions of workers without jobs. Professional men and scientists are vegetating and wandering about in the midst of privation, without means of realizing their studies and their experiments. Only a very minor number of professional men and scientists succeed in selling their services to the potentates of the capitalist regime.

It is also quite evident that the third factor, machinery, is working very much below its capacity. There have been prodigious inventions even greater ones will appear — but they are employed hardly more than a few hours a day or several days during the week. It has been calculated that industry in the U.S.A. working full force would be able to supply the industrial products required by the whole world. The capitalist economists, the men of State, the conferences of experts all the forces of social and political conservatism have been trying to find a way out of this without success. On the contrary, the situation has become more and more aggravated.

The only thing that can be prophesied without fear of error, is that the industrial paralyzation will be still greater in the years to come and the situation of the workers from year to year will become more and more intolerable. For this reason the capitalistic system is no longer workable since it is no longer capable of extracting the maximum yield out of the three factors of production. If for purely economic reasons there is no defense of the present order, what possible justification can be made for it on the basis of human and social principles?

The capitalist enterprise, for example, in the field of agriculture, involves the following factors:

1. Rent of the land.
2. Interest on the capital.
3. Wages.

4. Profits.
5. Government defense of private property.

There is a tax on the loaf of bread which you purchase, part of which the proprietor of the land takes, with another part corresponding to the interest on the capital invested, another part with the wages of the workers, and still another with a profit for the owner and finally, with that of government defense of private property and the rest of the political machinery involved in preserving so-called public order.

We have seen above that only three factors of production are necessary — land, human labor, and machinery. A socialized economy has consideration for, only these three factors and under a socialized economy,; the same loaf of bread will be taxed only for the part representing the human labor necessary to produce it and the part corresponding to the use of mechanical devices. The rent of the proprietor, the interest of capital, the profit of the owner and the government defense all disappear.

It may be said that money, the great deity of present economy, is a productive factor. No one can prove that profit, as such, is a necessary force of production. No one would say that wheat would not grow in fields well cultivated without land titles and police. Imagine what a new economy would be like, in which all the parasitic factors interposed by the regime of private property were suppressed, in which the producers themselves would be entitled to the benefits (plus those categories of consumers which have a natural right to existence, that is, the child, the aged and the sick).

J. Stuart Mills has written: "I do not consider just a state of society in which there exists a class which does not work, in which exist human beings who, without having acquired any right to leisure by previous work, are excused from taking part in the labor incumbent on the human species." Stuart Mill is right. We believe that such a society has no right to existence and we desire its total transformation. We want a socialized economy in which the land, the factories, the homes, and the means of transport cease to be the monopoly of private ownership and become the collective property of the entire community.

This change of regime requires an entirely distinct structure of economic life. Today the direction of industry is in the hands of private enterprise, namely, the capitalists. Technically, they are inferior to the engineers and the workers. The entrepreneurs are in turn dominated by the large financial institutions, and in the last analysis, the bankers are the ones who directly control the economic life of our day. And the bankers are interested exclusively in the quotations on the stock exchange.

The new socialized economy will be in the hands of the workers and the technicians, and will have no other motive, no other finality, than the satisfaction of the needs of the people. The consumer will not simply signify a market, he will not be created to purchase the products but the products will be elaborated to satisfy his wants.

The pecuniary evaluation of things will be removed and with it, the monstrous absorbing and entirely parasitic power of finance, public debts, and other unproductive charges of money. With it will disappear the slavery of wages, interest, rent and profit. We will return at last to an economy of common sense, by which all the wealth will be produced through the medium of the coordination of the three essential factors of economy — land and its natural forces, human labor, and the machine.

On the maximum consolidation of these factors will depend the standard of life in the future, which means that it will be in our hands and in our will to realize the welfare and the happiness of this world.

Work and Bread for Everybody

During many centuries of exploitation of man by man, the producer of all wealth has consumed barely the minimum indispensable for existence. With the development of education and popular culture, the slogan, "He who would eat, must work" has emerged as the expression of justice and freedom. All economic and social development which does not take this maxim as a basis and ideal is only a new

deception, a new sabotage of revolutionary action. For us, the realization of this formula is primordial. All men who believe that man should live by work really form one party and should present a single front of action.

We will explain our concept of work. Adam Smith considered only so-called manual labor as productive. But the process of labor is the combination of intellectual and physical forces which, in the artisan, may be expressed in a single individual; but in modern economy is manifest as a coordination of highly specialized functions. "There is no reason for maintaining that productive work has not been performed by the engineer, the office worker, the shop foreman; but that only the manual workers have made the product and consequently are alone to be considered."¹⁰

The work of modern society is the conjunction of technical and manual forces, all the more, when the technician can simplify physical forces and transfer to the machine strenuous human labor.

The scientist in his laboratory or in the lecture room, the technician and the worker are all forces of labor, socially useful and necessary. But will someone tell us what is produced by capitalists, private owners, shareholders and intermediaries of the present system? The work of these elements is, in the words of Proudhon, "A fiction of ancient feudal rights which has passed over to modern political economy and constitutes an almost free gift of the worker to the speculative capitalist — the last vestige of exploitation of man by man...In reality only physical and intellectual labor is productive."

Not as a Proudhonian socialist but simply as a sincere devotee of the truth, German Bernacer, a Spanish author, in his book, "Interest of Capital," maintains that the only origin of income should be productive labor. The interest of capital can be eliminated even in a regime of individual production. This idea compares with the modern conception of the American technocrats.

We want something similar: the suppression of illegitimate incomes — which are those not produced by physical or intellectual labor — not socially useful. This means a deep economic transformation. It means placing in the centre of all economy, not speculation and profit, but work and goods for the welfare of all.

Nature imposes work on man for his existence. We must produce grain, cultivate plants for textile fibers, extract fuel and metal from the bowels of the earth, manufacture tools, apparatus, for the ever growing needs of an ever increasing population.

Only a few years ago an automobile was a rarity which provoked the astonishment and the envy of the people. Today it is almost a proletarian vehicle, indispensable as a daily necessity and, as such, should be within the reach of all the inhabitants of a country. We do not want to deprive ourselves of any of the conveniences that modern technique has made available. On the contrary, if possible, we want to increase or multiply these conveniences, and we do not doubt this possibility. If under capitalism so many wonders have been achieved, gives more reason why they should be realized in a regime of socialization and freedom. "Only in the pure air of liberty can the gigantic flight of technical progress advance." (H. Deitzel.)

To conserve and increase the benefits of civilization, multiply the productivity of the soil, and reduce the brutality of physical labor, we must work. But no one has said that only a single category should constitute the workers, — those traditionally enslaved, the proletariat. No educator still maintains the old principles of class or caste. In other times, laws had to be decreed to declare the trade of the tailor or the shoemaker as not degrading. Today, we aim at decrees to make idleness and parasitism degrading.

Today, half of the people of Spain dress raggedly and depend for food on a piece of black bread; for half of Spain, fruit, in this land of fruit, is a luxury; half of the inhabitants of cities live in slums, and on the land, in caves and hovels. But this is a commonplace and so well known that one is led to believe in divine origin and to say with Mohammedan fatalism, "There have always been poor and rich, and this condition will always have to prevail."

¹⁰Kleinwaechter: Political Economy, Pages 100–101.

Under capitalism there is nothing unusual in this state of affairs because capital is incapable of utilizing all the resources of nature, science and human labor. Half of Spain is dressed in rags and textile workers cannot find anyone to employ their skill and competence, while factories close and machinery rusts.

In a socialized economy, this spectacle would be impossible because production would not follow the needs of a market, independent of the real needs of the people, but would be in line with these needs; and so long as a single Spaniard did not have sufficient clothing, there would be no reason to close a single textile factory, or to make idle a single worker.

The same can be said of any other industry. The building trades do not work within 40% of their capacity. Unemployment is slowly delivering a large number of these workers to tuberculosis; while half of the Spanish population lives in conditions often inferior to animals.

But capitalism is not capable of remedying these deficiencies. Capitalists are only interested in utilizing an infinitesimal part of the social resources of human labor, of technical inventions, of scientific discovery, of natural forces, because capitalism is interested exclusively in profit. It does not respond to the real demands of our standard of culture, and consequently is an obstacle to progress and even to the very maintenance of life.

In order to obtain the maximum of welfare of which our society is capable, it would be necessary only to suppress parasitism, to organize life in such a way that he who does not work finds no means of living by other people's toil. Naturally, children, the aged and the sick are not considered parasites. The children will be productive when they grow up. The aged have already made their contribution to social wealth and the sick are only temporarily unproductive.

Under a social economy, counting only the forces of labor of mature age, the quantity of human effort would at least be doubled. It is easy to get an idea of what this extra capacity would mean in the lessening of work as well as in the increase of wealth. Besides, a socialized economy is a regime of liberation for technicians and scientists, a free access to work in every branch. From the moral point of view, socialization, by imposing the principle of "He who would eat must work," would give an impulse of unlimited development in the life of the people; because labor and genius would not be shut out by artificial barriers and would finally be able to convert into fact the old dream of an earthly paradise.

We are guided by the vision of a society of free producers and distributors in which no power exists to remove from them the possession of the productive apparatus. In the Russian example, the State has taken away from workers' associations and peasants the free decision over everything relating to the instruments of labor, production and distribution. The producers there have changed their masters. They do not even own the means of production nor the goods they produce, and the wage earner, who is subjected to as many inequalities or more than in the capitalistic society, is living under an economic order of dependency, servitude and slavery.

One might object — from a social point of view — that in the economic organization proposed by us, the consumers, as such, play a small part, if any, inasmuch as they are not assigned any distinct organization. Undoubtedly, man is not only a producer but also a consumer, a social being who, outside of the factory or shop, possesses cultural affinities, social aspirations, political and religious motives. These currents of opinion must create their own organs of expression and social influence through the press, by assembly, and other methods to which free initiative can have full recourse and possibility of realization. This is an aspect into which we are not entering just now — nor shall we dwell on the defense of the Revolution. Concretely, we wish to outline the general trend of the economic mechanism already latent in the actual syndicates, and in the popular, almost instinctive tendencies.

The soviets were a fact before becoming a theory, and as a first step in the Revolution we are concerned with the taking possession of the whole economic structure and its direct administration by the producers themselves, in order to assure the satisfaction of the fundamental necessities of the people.

The rest can be left for later spontaneous solution, being matters more of individual sentiment which common interests and political necessities will determine.

The Population of Spain and its Distribution

It is important to know the population of Spain, because the problems of reconstruction depend essentially on the number of inhabitants. The Spanish population can be calculated as twenty-four million inhabitants. In 1930 the birth rate was calculated as 28.8 per thousand, the death rate 17.8, the annual increase of the Spanish population, therefore, being 0.61% in the period 1800 to 1810, 0.52% from 1870 to 1910, and 0.65% from 1910 to 1930.

The natural resources of the land are limited. If anything, there is a great need for their development, which cannot come, as in the past, by the conquest of new territories but by intensifying the cultivation of the old territory. Also industry and science must supply that which natural resources do not furnish.

The index of the development of the country is not measured by its agricultural population but by its industrial population. In fertile countries easy to cultivate, such as Canada, a tenth of the total population would be sufficient to supply their necessities. In Spain a minimum of 20% of the total population would be necessary.

With this number, work in the fields, which is today a curse through ignorance, taxes, and property rights, would be converted to one of the most healthy and productive occupations.

Spain is relatively backward in agricultural industry and transportation. The Revolution must accomplish in a few years a prodigious advance. It must construct all the technical devices which it lacks, modernize the methods of cultivation, build roads, replant the forests and utilize every available drop of water from the rivers, to transform the arid wastes of steppes into productive soil.

The population is sufficiently numerous to achieve these aims in a few years. If all the armed forces and government employees alone were set to work on reforestation, construction of canals and waterworks, the present arid territories of Spain would become a potent source of agricultural wealth. This could be done by the three hundred and fifty thousand men employed merely to defend the wealth of the privileged classes.

But the parasitism in Spain is infinitely greater. A tendency to live without working, very human in a way, is noticeable throughout the history of Spain; a tendency which has been put in relief excessively by superficial observers and, as a result, has created a special fame for laziness to attach to the Spaniard. But this tendency is characteristic of the privileged classes only.

The workers and peasants are excessively laborious and in comparison with other countries, they are in no way inferior in skill, resistance and constancy on their jobs. Spanish workers are to be found in the most modern factories of the United States, in the Argentine pampas and in all places of the world. If they distinguish themselves at all it is perhaps in their stronger sense of independence and in their greater propensity for rebellion. That is why in some places the door has been shut for them, but never for any inferiority in their working capacity.

In the census taken by Campomanes in 1787 only a fifth of the population was employed in useful economic functions. On the other hand, there were 481,000 noblemen, 189,000 churchmen, and 280,000 servants. Subsequent reports may have modified the nomenclature, but we will always find a part of the population avoiding all obligations to earn their daily bread with the sweat of their own brows and so long as the social and economic system does not undergo a radical change, there is no use of dreaming that this parasitism will disappear.

In 1915, in the 49 capitals of the provinces of Spain and in 40 cities of more than 30,000 inhabitants there were a total of 4,645,633 people; that is 23% of the population. This percentage has undoubtedly increased but the agricultural population is still superior to that in the cities.

To illustrate the significance of the distribution of inhabitants, let us take the figures in France. In 1789 its rural population was 26,363,000; and urban 5,709,270. For every five inhabitants in the country there was only one in the city. In 1921 the rural and urban populations were equal. In 1926 the agricultural

population represented only 31% of the total. From 1921 to 1926 the French agricultural regions lost almost a million peasants who migrated to city industries.

The lack of equilibrium between the growth of large cities and their corresponding regions is most pronounced in Catalonia. In 1920 the total population of Catalonia was 2,244,719, and Barcelona alone had 721,869. In 1930 the figures were 2,791,292 and 1,005,565 respectively. In 1934, according to best available data, the population of the region was 2,969,921 and of Barcelona 1,148,129.

In 1919 406,000 Spaniards were dedicated to commerce and trade. In 1920 this figure reached 644,000. In this same year, the percentage allotted to industry and mines was 31%, very much below that of practically all European countries.

The population in Spain is divided in 46,082 units, from cities of a million inhabitants to communities of a dozen or two people. There are 284 cities, 4,669 municipalities, 16,300 towns, 13,211 villages, and 11,618 hamlets.

Another distribution worthy of consideration is as follows: Spain is divided in 527 judicial sectors, in 12,340 city districts and 9,260 municipalities. Even though the future structure will have a more economic basis than a political geographic one, the present situation should be known.

Comparing the census of 1910 with the present one we calculate 10,000,000 people of working age, 18 to 50. Of this figure there are not actually 5,000,000 employed in socially useful work in the fields and industries, including those now unemployed and the families of the peasants.

According to the census of 1920, the 9,260 municipalities referred to above had the following population:

25 municipalities	up to 100 inhabitants;
1325 municipalities	100-300 inhabitants;
1079 municipalities	300-500 inhabitants;
2243 municipalities	500-1,000 inhabitants;
1697 municipalities	1,000-2,000 inhabitants;
749 municipalities	2,000-3,000 inhabitants;
700 municipalities	3,000-5,000 inhabitants;
523 municipalities	5,000-10,000 inhabitants;
284 municipalities	10,000; nine of which contain over 100,000 inhabitants.

The average of 43 inhabitants per square kilometer is too high for an agricultural country and too low for an industrial one.

In resume, the Spanish population under capitalism is excessive. The alleviation afforded by the valve of emigration cannot be depended upon in the future; consequently, the population will increase in spite of the ravages of penury and tuberculosis. Under the present regime there are only the perspectives of increasing privations, further oppression and slavery for the workers.

In a socialized economy there will be no unproductive individuals; everyone will have a job which can be chosen within ample limits. The four or five million men who today break their backs for a crust of bread and maintain in ease and comfort the functionaries of state, the lords of industry and the idle rich, will automatically see their number doubled and by this fact alone relief, will make itself felt immediately. If all eat, it is only just that all work. Besides, this relief will be increased from year to year by public works of irrigation, communication and transportation, by the increase of mineral production and general intensification of industry. With the present methods of production and the present state of economy in Spain, the food capacity, according to Fisher, would suffice for 27,000,000 people. But this limit could be extended considerably by the transformations which the Revolution would bring.

A Society of Producers and Consumers

The idea of the suppression of economic and political parasitism is or should be sufficiently ripe in the minds of the people, for its immediate realization. Those who work cannot be very happy to see the best part of their production deviated, and if it were not for the armed forces of the State, surely the slogan of justice, "he who does not work should not eat," would be instantly realized. But the workers of the factories and the land still live subjected to a regime of oppression and servitude. The only difference is that modern wage-earners in the so-called democracies have the freedom to choose their masters, a very relative freedom to say the least.

Out of ten million persons able to work in Spain, only 4 1/2 to 5 million are actually employed in productive labor. The Revolution would suppress this parasitism and by this fact alone, its mission would be justified. With the disappearance of parasitism would be eliminated abundance alongside of privation, ostentation of great luxury alongside of penury. If there were not enough of any particular product to satisfy the needs of all, it would be rationed so that no one remained without his share, on the basis of equitable distribution. Clothing, housing and education would be attended to in the general interest. For the first time in the history of the world there would be no brains or muscles on forced strike.

We do not believe that there would be any real resistance to work, even on the part of the class known as the idle rich. There would be the natural initial difficulties in the adequate proportioning of a large population in respective trades and industries. The chief difficulty, however, would be in the eventuality of an international blockade.

Spain lacks cotton and without this raw material about 200,000 workers would be left jobless. Without petroleum transportation would be seriously affected. Even paper is lacking and the deficiency of same would result in the unemployment of thousands of printers, journalists and writers. The Revolution must therefore concern itself, right from the beginning, in assuring supplies of cotton; it must solve the problem of synthetic petroleum by the distillation of mineral coals. There are no insuperable technical difficulties which science could not conquer and if the Revolution would not bring society to lower standards, but on the contrary, elevate the general well-being, it must produce sufficient commodities to take care of the general requirements. Of course, these problems would be less urgent if the world blockade would not take place and Spain could obtain petroleum from Russia and cotton from America in exchange for copper and iron ore.

Of the large amount of ore extracted in the mines only a very small part is refined. The greatest part is exported and returns to Spain in the form of machinery, instruments, etc. The Revolution should make of the metallurgical industries a reality and increase the foundries, plants, and substitute motor traction for horsepower. It should electrify railroads and factories, utilize natural resources of water power for irrigation and electricity, replant the forests and prepare new territory for agriculture. In a word, the Revolution should realize in a few years what capitalism is already impotent to create: a Spain capable of feeding, clothing and housing a population which will not take long in arriving at the figure of 30,000,000 inhabitants.¹¹

We don't need a postulate of God to build up our society of workers. Nor do we need the hypothesis of a State. We don't wish everyone to dance to the same step; we even admit the possibility of different organisms, some more and some less revolutionary; some more and some less friendly to the new situation. The important thing is, that all Spaniards have a minimum of necessities which must be satisfied and to which we must contribute through the process of production. The same as we work today and consider our comrades more as good-working companions regardless of their political ideas; so tomorrow we will

¹¹Lucas MaDada has said "The Spanish workers in relation to workers of the rest of Europe of the same social condition are poorest dressed, fed and housed."

rub elbows with people who will not think as we do and who may be even hostile to our ideology. These we must conquer by the example of our labor and by the efficacy of our plans. There are different workers' organizations in Spain; all should contribute to the economic reconstruction and to all should be given a place. The Revolution does not reject any contribution in this respect.

Afterwards, outside of the equitable distribution of production — the work of all and for all each one can adopt the form of social life most pleasing to him. Nor will we deny the right of religious faith to those who wish to practice same. We would not deny the expression of other social concepts; nor their defense and practice; always with the condition that these are not aggressive and respect the same right for us. Otherwise there would be hostility and civil war.

We can even foresee that the friends of the Russian system might institute their own experiments and the political socialists could have their parliament and continue making speeches. We will not be the least affected and will be content with the prevention of any manifest aggression of one faction against another and maintain the productive and distributive apparatus in the hands of the producers and distributors themselves.

In other words, we wish absolute liberty in the political order of things; coordination of all the forces in the economic order. What objection can there be to a society organized in this way? We believe that such a Revolution would harm no one and benefit all. What does it matter if a lot of people who are enjoying too many privileges have to forego them and learn a little of what it means to earn their crust of bread? For them, the change will be a moral and physical benefit. But the middle class and the proletariat have nothing to lose and a whole world to gain in fraternal productive cooperation, thanks to which everyone will be able to obtain a secure standard of living. There will be no worries for tomorrow and no more of the continual tragedies of unemployment of people who yesterday had relative comfort and today are plunged in utter misery. All this will disappear because work will be available for all without any other aim than the satisfaction of social necessities.

Timid people suppose that the Revolution is inspired by vengeance. This is an error. On the contrary it is to be feared that a triumphant Revolution might sin by excessive generosity. The Spanish workers are not revengeful. Quite the contrary, on the day they take possession of the social wealth, they will have forgotten their long Calvary.

We need not have any illusions about the men and women who are not used to work. It will be necessary to adapt their parasitic generation to the less important tasks. But on the other hand a number of small industrialists and even capitalists who began on the same level with workers will have a valuable and sure place as technicians and experts in their respective branches of industry. They will not be the masters, but they will be indispensable members of the new social structure and they will be able to develop much more freely and much more completely all their initiative of enterprise and plans for general improvements.

We could go through all the categories of society and demonstrate that no one should have any fear of the inevitable social change. There will be no royal gentries, there will be no people bursting with excessive wealth, sick with the gout and boredom through vicious living. There are less than a 100,000 homes in Spain which would feel their situation lowered by the revolutionary process. We refer to the 100,000 persons whose wealth is secure from all risk of depletion. On the other hand for the 23 or 24 million other Spaniards the Revolution will be liberating and will bring an incomparably higher standard of living than they have known under capitalism.

Social and Economic Iniquity

What do we observe in the structure of society under the direction of capitalism? A formidable apparatus developed to a degree of undreamed of possibilities by technique and science, unable to

function due to the inherent contradiction in a system of speculation, whose productive power depends on markets rather than consumption.

Every laborer in the U.S.A. has at his disposal 3,000 slaves of energy in the form of 300 mechanical horsepower. Could a magnate of Greek, Roman or Egyptian times have dreamed of so much power at his disposal? In other countries the technical development is less but, nevertheless, all modern producers can utilize a great amount of mechanical power, which can still be increased enormously.

We ask ourselves, has human welfare benefited by these possibilities? Is there a justification for the way we live as compared with how we might live? The steel production of the United States in 1930 was 509 less than the maximum attained previously. The same occurred in England and Germany, and in France the reduction was 33%. The descent has not been stopped and the world trade shows an equally enormous drop. In some industries as much as 70% and 80% of the personnel finds itself in unemployment.

Agricultural countries must see their grain rot in the fields or stocked up in warehouses for the lack of buyers; while industrial centers are choked with merchandise which is not sellable as unemployment steadily increases. In the industrial countries of Europe and America there are over 50,000,000 workers without a job, and no matter what public projects are initiated on ever rising government loans, the situation of these jobless men cannot improve under the present regime.

Our present society which allows for a maximum capacity of production alongside of an equally extraordinary poverty can have no defenders. There is security only for the few and if we do not find more militants against an organization which degrades and ruins us, the reason is to be found in the lethargy of the masses.

Let us examine the case of Germany. Out of 65 million inhabitants, 32.5% are considered as productive; of this number, 29 million earn less than 200 marks a month. F. Fried, in his book "The End of Capitalism," tells us further "that out of 29 and a half million workers 16 million earn less than 100 marks; 6 million earn between 100 and 125, and 7 and a half million between 125 and 200 marks. This signifies that half of the productive population of Germany does not receive even the minimum salary recognized officially as indispensable. Going on with our figures, we find that three and a half million earn 450 marks a month and 30,000 men between 12 and thirteen thousand marks. Totally, about 100,000 men in Germany are living in complete economic security."

Is there any justification for so many sacrifices of the people to preserve a capitalist regime which liberates only an insignificant number of inhabitants from economic insecurity? Hitlerism, one of the most horrible manifestations of the return to barbarism, has surged to the surface and exists only in defense of these 100,000 privileged rich. What is true for Germany is, on general lines, equally so for any other country.

We will, however, not lose any more time in criticizing the capitalist system which has arrived at the point of its own complete breakdown. The moment has come to offer solutions and we offer ours, without party lines, without preconceived notions. Facing objectively the situation, we will try to find the most direct approach towards human salvation, the assurance of the right to life and work.

Property should pass out of private hands to collective ownership. We should not get confused with State ownership, which is nothing more than State capitalism. A communist economy is neither a heresy nor an impossibility. The Catholic Church itself, at a time when it was still influenced by Christian motives, that is, before its submission to the Caesars of Rome, defended communism with ardor and enthusiasm. Its greatest apostles have continued defending communism throughout the centuries.

St. Crisostomo said, "Crime, war and lawsuits originated at the time when the frozen words, 'Thine' and 'Mine' arose. Even though you have inherited your wealth from your father, who in turn inherited it from his grandfathers, no matter how far back you will go through your ancestors, you will trip up infallibly on the criminal, that is, the origin of all property is in robbery."

St. Ambrose sustained that land is the common property of all (like the air) and that private property has its origin in usurpation. We take the following phrase from St. Basilio, "A perfect society is that which excludes all private property. This was the primitive good which was overturned by the sin of our first fathers." St. Ambrose the Great affirmed that land, from which we all are born, belongs to all. Private property is, according to the Fathers of the Church, a sin, and according to St. Jeronimo, a rich man is an iniquity or the heir of an iniquity.

But not only is private property immoral but an insurmountable obstacle in the way of economic readjustment of the world. Around it flourishes the monstrous commercial, bureaucratic political and social parasites. Around it springs unemployment — the slavery of man before man.

Fermin Galan, the hero of Jaca, had for a moment the balance of the history of Spain in his hand. If he had been as good a strategist as a revolutionist, he would have triumphed and have realized his project of a new creation. Inspired by the forces of our organized movement of the workers and by libertarian ideas, the passionately creative spirit of Galan made the mistake of recognizing property as a usufruct. He considered the biological and historical instinct of individual egoism too strongly opposed to the suppression of property, and believed that over an initial period, private property, nontransferable and non-accumulative, should prevail; until a better solution is found. He sustained that an equal part of social wealth to all satisfies the social and not the individual instinct, and rejected, in consequence, the two formulas of socialism; "To everyone according to his capacity" and "From every one according to his ability and to everyone according to his needs." Galan proposes, "To all and to everyone according to his ability and his physical effort."

We cannot ignore the part of truth which is to be found in the position of Galan, and it is very likely that the revolution will have to give in, in part, to individual instinct of peasant ownership. This will involve the coexistence of totally socialized property and private property, in simple usufruct.

On the other hand, we must not forget the precedents of communal property, deeply instituted in Spain, of which Joaquin Costa, in his "Agrarian Collectivism" and Rafael Altamira, in his history of "Communal Property" gives so many examples. The latter, referring to communalizing of property, tells us, "Our peninsula abounds in small valleys, mountains, and places where large agricultural developments are impossible; also places where the climatic and geological conditions do not favor either extensive or intensive cultivation." I believe that these localities of communal property bear the aspects of the tradition of communism which frightens no one. They show the need of proceeding in unison towards the new economic and social order, and at the same time, demonstrate practically that this is not a panacea but a reality already established and with a psychological background in a good part of Spain.

Besides, the Spanish peasants live so miserably — even with their property — that nothing would be lost by giving it over to society in exchange for a better exploitation of the land and a more adequate distribution of labor and goods. Out of 13,530 taxpayers in the Province of Avila, 11,452 are subsisting with an income less than 1 peseta per day; 1,758 with an income less than five pesetas per day; and 155 with incomes between five and eight pesetas. These figures hold as an average for the whole country, and it can be said safely that 90% of landowners in Spain earn less than industrial workers without property. Out of a total of 1,026,412 landowners, 847,548 earn less than 1 peseta per day, which gives us "A class of proletarian landowners who differ in no way from peasant proletarians or workers of the land in their absolute dependency on the markets of wages."¹²

These peasants, in some parts, might demand the retention of their land ownership in the conditions proposed by Fermin Galan and thus obtain a concession from the liberating revolution, but would not take long in learning their lesson by experience and see their error and the injustice for themselves by their egoism.

¹²S. Madariaga; "Spain," 1930, Page 14.

The torment of Tantalus is no fantasy. We have it as a symbol of capitalist society; man is thirsty and cannot drink because the rule of privilege prevents him, he is hungry and must succumb before elevators full of grain and bursting warehouses. Can anyone imagine a greater contradiction than that abundance should be the principal source of misery? Such is the reality of the world. Tantalus is the unprivileged citizen of any modern country.

In the new society if we have raw material, land, tools and brawn in great quantity, or at least in necessary proportion to assure a superior standard of life for all, we must break the artificial barriers which prevent the use of all these resources. Later, if we obtain abundance in some goods, nobody will go without them; if there is scarcity in others at first, an equitable division will be made of what there is, among the population. It is no problem of differential calculus but a simple operation of common sense.

It is not only just, but it is also more practical and beneficial that abundance should signify enjoyment by all and not penury for the great majority. To arrive at this simple result, it is necessary to socialize property, put the land in the hands of those who work it, the machines under the control of the workers, the laboratories under the direction of scientists, etc. Some late prophets of individualist economy, Manchesterian night owls, such as F. S. Nitti, are irritated by the very idea of a communist economy. However, an equilibrium can be found only in a communist form of economy or, at least, with a definite tendency to communism through the means of regulating and coordinating plans of all productive and distributive forces of a country or of a group of countries.

The modern projects of planned economy, whatever they may be, always presuppose improvements on individualist economy. But we would shorten the road if the new planned economy would emanate from the productive masses directly and not from the bureaucracy of a State converted into supreme judge.

We have already had experience of totalitarian communism. We know the structure of communism under the empire of the Incas and of Egyptian communism — in Egypt common forced labor existed. Revillout, the explorer of Egyptian lore, described conditions there as a species of “State Socialism.” It is the kind of Pharaohism which might have come to be Russian communism; but this modality does not correspond to contemporary conscience, regardless of what the diplomacy of state, supposedly proletarian, might do.

The capitalist machine of production has developed so fantastically that not even the capitalists themselves understand it, and those who say they do are impotent to dominate and direct it. That is the origin of all the contradictions and difficulties. The capitalists themselves in their hunger for speculation and profit have unchained the spirits of rebellion and now do not know how to silence them. They have forgotten the magic word and they themselves have become the playthings of their own creation.

Something similar has occurred with the modern State; it has grown so much, it has become so complicated, and its machinery so strong, that the statesman who in old times was master of things, today is the slave of the machine. That is why we do not want to occupy, in our fighting positions, the places of the present supposed leaders. We could not do more than they, nor differently from them — being perforce docile instruments of the entire mechanism, the persistence of which, is incompatible with the right to live.

From our deductions of the study of modern economy, the evolution of feasible developments for all is to be found in the sphere of coordination and unity. Work is an obligation, more or less conscious, something which would be avoided if it were possible. However, if we have to work to live, it is preferable to do so with the least effort possible, not with the greatest effort. The individual like of the producer has less weight in modern economy than of the artisan; we might say that it does not carry any weight, since the producer performs generally a single motion in an endless conglomeration of functions towards

a final result. He may not even know what his particular function leads to in the end. This is not good but that is what happens in modern industry.

To re-vindicate a modality of work, which would return us a little to the artisan, would be like preaching in the air and make us appear eccentric. Economic life tends to scientific coordination not only because it is the most economic method of production but because the population has increased out of proportion as against the times of the artisan.

William Morris has executed precious works of ebony, but his system could not supply humanity with the furniture needed and his products would not enter under social necessity. Anyone desiring such work would have to confine it outside of the hours necessary to satisfy the general needs. The interest of the moment would be to assure all human beings with a minimum for existence indispensable in feeding, clothing, housing, and so forth. Once this minimum is assured, new horizons will open, when other principles less unified will be applied, at least outside of the general economic mechanism. Also after the working hours socially established for every industry there would remain a sufficient margin for individual labor for the gratification and satisfaction of personal likes.

Just as it is impossible to return to transportation by ox carts, so in all things, in all spheres of economy, it is necessary to adopt the most progressive ideas and then adopt all possible innovations towards a greater perfection of production (the greatest utility with the least effort). We say this even though we would prefer personally a little more work at the expense of less production but more in harmony with the multiform of methods. However, the multiplicity of methods will be reduced daily in the interest of greater results and the least effort. Secondly, because the populations, already so numerous in all countries and their necessities at times superfluous, but nevertheless there, have increased by hundredfold in relation to populations of fifty, one hundred or two hundred years ago. Today, we demand a thousand things which our ancestors, centuries ago, did not dream of as even possible. We are much more numerous and it is necessary that the production of one man of today be superior 10, 20 and 50 times to that of the ancient Greek or Roman citizen. For this reason, at least during the first part of the revolution, we see no other way, than the precept of modern economy; unified coordination in everything possible.

Part 2: The New Structure

Organization of Work

Perhaps, inspired by irony, the parliament of the second Spanish Republic proclaimed in the preamble of the Constitution “The Spanish Republic of Workers.” Many have held this an absurdity and added that a more just title would be “Spain, a republic of police, or workers — in jail.” A Republic of Workers is not created in parliament not even by decree of State. It has to be made by the Workers, in their working places and not outside of them.

We will sketch here the economic organism of the Revolution and give the general lines of the new economic structure. We don't pretend to erect new tablets of law but it goes without saying, a Republic of Workers should have as its fundamental basis work, eliminating private owners and middlemen. A Republic of Workers must take possession of all social wealth and undertake all administration by the producers themselves. In the past number of years a good deal of constructive socialist literature has been contributed by the anarchists. More important still has been the popular faith in the possibility of a change in the economic and political conditions in order to assure all human beings a minimum of existence through the work of every individual.

We realize that the road to reconstruction of the world is not free from obstacles, errors and cross-roads. No human being is infallible, much less an institution, no matter how revolutionary or proletarian he may be. What is important as a first step is to create the organism which will have to solve the daily and immediate problems of the Revolution. This organism we believe can be no other than organized labor, without intervention of State and without intermediaries and parasites.

We cannot return to an economic primitivism; we must aspire to a regime of production and distribution by the producers and the consumers themselves, realizing the maximum coordination of all the productive factors. Contrary to the essence of capitalistic economy which has been unable to avoid the terrible waste and suicidal locality economy, we would proceed, more on a national coordinated scale of maximum and widest possibilities. We agree with Cornelissen that the nucleus of production is each establishment and not the trade.

In a single modern establishment the workers of various trades and crafts can work together and prepare the local, national or international organization of all the establishments in the respective branches of industry.

Naturally it is necessary to preserve the liberty of the individual within the group, that of the group within the syndicate, of the syndicate in the branch council, of the latter in the local council, etc. At the same time, multiple exceptions would have to be allowed for. Consequently there must be created a general inclusive organism of economy which we will try to outline.

It is not our dream of the future which we will try to define, but what is actually feasible with the given human material in the present world conditions. We can go beyond the regime of private capitalism without going over to state capitalism. We will give to those who work: The means of becoming the real owners of production and distribution. If our project does not fulfill the aspiration of the more exigent, and we are among them, it is nevertheless something alive which doesn't shut the door on hope and the possibility of future perfection.

Work will be a right, and at the same time, an obligation.

Economic life cannot be interrupted; on the contrary, the Revolution must stimulate it powerfully and we must know now on what basis to educate ourselves in order to continue producing, distributing and consuming during and after the Revolution not only by the partisans of the Revolution but also by those contrary to it. It is feared that in a free society those indisposed to productive labor will easily elude their obligations. However in a system of organized labor it is very difficult to live on the margin of production. Excesses of coercion and rigor are more to be feared than the loosening of the ties of productive cohesion. That is why we say that the next Revolution in which the anarchists will give all their enthusiasm, all their fighting spirit, all their sacrifice will be a Revolution behind which resistance to force has no place. We foresee a long and fecund libertarian labor after the crushing of capitalism, because centuries of education under privilege and for privilege cannot be wiped out by a single stroke.

In place of the capitalist, private owner and entrepreneur, after the Revolution we will have factory, shop or industrial Councils, constituted of workers, executives, and technicians in representation of the personnel of the enterprise, who will have the right to moderate and revoke their delegates. No one knows better than the workers themselves the capacity of each one in a determined establishment. There, where everybody knows everybody, the practice of democracy is possible. The factory Council in representation of the personnel in the same place of work will coordinate and cohere the work in their establishment and combine same with similar activities of other establishments or productive groups. In the disposition and regulation of their work, no outside factor intervenes. There is complete autonomy without any intent of caprice in production, because the same has to respond to the necessities and possibilities in line with the exact knowledge of the conditions of each establishment and the needs and demands of the population.

The factory Councils will be combined by functional relation and form the syndicates of producers of similar goods, syndicates of trade or of industry; these new institutions have no proper authority in the internal structure of local establishments. They will provide for the modernizing of implements; attend to the fusion and coordination of factories, suppression of unproductive establishments, etc. The Syndicates are the representative organisms of local production and not only do they care for its preservation, but condition the future; creating schools of apprenticeship, research institutes, and experimental laboratories in accordance with their means and initiative. The Syndicates are co-leagued in accordance with the basic functions of economy, which we divide into eighteen sectors or general branches of activity necessary for the progressive march of a modern society.

They are the following:

1. Council of Foodstuffs Branch
2. Council of Construction Industries
3. Council of the Clothing Industries
4. Council of Agriculture
5. Council of Livestock Production
6. Council of Forestry
7. Council of Mining and Fishing Industries
8. Council of Public Utilities Industries
9. Council of Transport Industry
10. Council of Communications

11. Council of Chemical Industries
12. Council of Sanitation
13. Council of Metallurgical Industries
14. Local Council of Economy
15. Regional Councils of Economy
16. Federal Council of Economy
17. Council of Credit and Exchange
18. Council of Publishing and Cultural Activities

Council of Foodstuffs Branch

The foodstuff industries are made up of the Syndicates which produce and distribute comestibles from the factory to the home. Anywhere from ten to thirty thousand workers are engaged in this industry in each of the more important cities.

According to the statistical Year Book for 1930 there were, in 1929, 1,524 canneries, 726 sugar factories, 1,511 chocolate factories, 25,152 flour and rice establishments, 7,487 oil refineries, 7,008 beverage plants and 36 coffee and chicory plants. These official figures for the whole of Spain do not give the complete survey of all the foodstuff industries, but a fair representation on the basis of taxes paid to the government.

Let us take as an example the flour mills. There are some that still function with the old primitive grindstone; the greater number, however, have modern installations of motor power furnished by water, steam, gas, and electrical horsepower. In each of these establishments the workers would appoint an administrative and technical council; these councils would form a syndicate and the syndicates would be coordinated in the council of the foodstuffs branch. In the same way all the establishments would proceed from the simple to the complex, from the factory council to the syndicate; from the syndicate to the branch council; from the branch council to the local federation, and from the latter to the regional, and ultimately to the national council.

The cooks and waiters would form an important part of the foodstuffs branch since there would be great saving of time and energy in the collective kitchens, doing away as much as possible with the home kitchens. Overnight, by reason of a better distribution even without an average increase in production, there would be no one starving and no one suffering from overeating. This would be the first step of the Revolution in the foodstuffs industry.

Until the necessary means of increasing supplies has been developed, the average ration will be the same for all. This would be controlled by an adequate statistical service under the council of credit and exchange. The foodstuffs council would see to it that in every locality each inhabitant gets a fair ration, either in the collective kitchen, which would do away with the drudgery of housework, or in the houses where individuals would still persist in maintaining the family kitchen. As an example, in Barcelona there is a daily consumption of four to five thousand chickens but whereas today, only those who have a good income can eat them, tomorrow, after taking care of the needs of the sick and convalescent, the rest would be distributed in turn, so that at least once a week or once a month every inhabitant would have his or her fowl.

The same thing can be said for all products not plentiful enough to meet the total demand. It is not necessary to go into further details; suffice it to say that the organs of the Revolution can regulate the

function of the whole structure of the foodstuffs industry, without in any way depending on middlemen or merchants. All syndicates of producers will have to extend their activities to reach the consumer, in conjunction with other syndicates similar in function. The present class of merchants would be absorbed in the syndical organism along with all other separate functions.

Of course, a great number of combinations is possible. The Council of the fishing industry could control the fisheries alone. But they might extend their activities to cover also the canneries, as well as distribution of their products down to the smallest hamlet. In the solution of these problems, necessity and convenience would have the last word. The essential point is that no function remains outside of the general organism of production, distribution and consumption.

A number of edibles and Spanish beverages have a favorable market in other countries, i.e., wines, olive oil, oranges, tinned goods. Such would be a sure basis of income for commercial exchange of products which we have not got in our own land, such as machinery, chemical products, cotton, and even wheat in sufficient quantity. However, we cannot take the index of export as an index of superabundance. Our supply of oranges, oil, fish and wines would hardly be enough for internal consumption; as at present the average consumption is very low and the Revolution should aim to raise same considerably. We do not wish to export the food of the people, as was done with Russian and Romanian wheat.

The consumption of meat in Spain represents an average of thirty kilos per head; in France sixty-two kilos per head; in England, 72; in Buenos Aires, 101. These figures are sufficient to show that of modern nations, the Spanish population consumes per inhabitant less than any other country in Europe. The Revolution, by better livestock administration and a more equitable distribution, would at least afford a minimum consumption to the worker and do away with the special privilege now exercised by the moneyed class.

Finally, the regional and national federation would coordinate the entire process of the foodstuff industries and create special institutes for ever more perfect means of production and distribution throughout the country.

Council of Construction Industries

In foreign literature on Spain, abound descriptions of the tragedy of the Spanish home. A great number of the population still live like troglodytes or in places not fit to be mentioned as homes.¹³ If raw material were lacking this situation might be in a way explained. But there is no scarcity of building material or of architects and builders. Relative scarcity of wood is easily made up for to advantage by the modern use of metal; also the supply of stone and bricks is more than abundant. It is, moreover, a striking fact that precisely in the Syndicates of the construction industries there exists the greatest number of unemployed.

In 1910 there was a total of 3,644,483 dwelling houses; other buildings were in the number of 800,179; unoccupied buildings numbered 442,931. Of this total 1,738,557 were mere huts of one-story; 2,355,227 of two-stories and 793,809 of over two-stories. Since 1910 there has been more building but on the other hand a good many houses have been torn down as well as crumbled by time. The result is that a considerable number of inhabitants live in conditions completely deficient in hygiene and exposed to illness through humidity, faulty ventilation and filth.

In the big cities the sight of the so-called populous districts causes horror. The Ghettos of Madrid and the "barrio chino" of Barcelona are outstanding examples. In Madrid, official inspection has listed 28,000 homes as inadequate, of which 10,000 were declared uninhabitable. But the working population

¹³Tens of thousands of Spaniards live in caves and one whole city, Guadix, consists 60% of caves. In the southeast, Aragon and Castilla and other provinces, our impressions of these horrible human ant-hills are unforgettable. Gonzalo de Reparaz, "Misery and Backwardness of Spain", page 49.

day after day must still live in them. This is not all; in December 1933 the total of dwelling places available was 205,835. The census of heads of families reached 215,842.

Not alone are the living conditions bad and scarce but also dear. In Madrid, rents of 50 to 75 pesetas per month number only 60,000. Consequently, the proletarians have to spend an excessive part of their earnings for rent.

In the beginning of 1935 the Cement Manufacturers' Association complained of the low consumption of its products. Up to 100,000 workers of this trade were jobless and the factories, erected for large scale production of a material which is more than abundant, were unable to function profitably.

The capacity production of the cement works is calculated at 2,600,000 tons per year, i.e., 509 more than has been consumed in the last five years. We can see, therefore, that there are enough cement factories capable of satisfying the needs in Spain, to the extent that not a single worker in the building trades should remain without a job. There is plenty of iron, plenty of space in the cities, and adequate technical requirements. Nothing is lacking towards the initiation of a radical transformation of dwelling places in Spain, in accordance with all the needs of hygiene and comfort.

Naturally, the Revolution cannot supply what is not there. In the beginning it would be a great improvement to distribute equitably the houses monopolized by small families in the rich quarters of the cities, among the homeless families of the workers.

But it must not stop there: the Revolution from the very beginning must direct its attention to the construction of modern dwellings in the cities and countries, in sufficient number to house comfortably all the inhabitants. If there is anything to fear in the post-revolutionary period, it is the possible lack of sufficient personnel necessary for the immediate industrial and technical renovation. This is in conspicuous contrast with the present situation where 40 to 60 per cent of the building trades are jobless.

In the organization of the construction industry, the same principle of factory and shop Councils, syndicates and federations, as in the foodstuffs industries, would be instituted. The workers, administrators, and technicians of each shop or factory would be guided and coordinated by the function of the syndicates, in which each establishment would be represented by its elected delegates. Sections of architects, builders, carpenters, electricians, plasterers, etc., could be formed and coordinated under the local federation.¹⁴ Here again, the electricians, for example, might belong to the local Council of the electrical industries. These are questions of convenience and would not create any friction. The same would hold for transportation. All of which goes to show the impossibility of a rigid classification, and the necessity of leaving detailed organization to practical and spontaneous solutions.

The important thing is to maintain the individuality of each worker in the factory, of each factory committee in its syndicate, of each syndicate in the local branch Council. The painters and architects in turn could hold their assemblies and permanent committees as well as establish professional schools. All the activities, however, should be resolved by the productive and distributive organs emanating from the administrative Council of each locality; to be finally connected through the syndicate, branch and local council, to the federal council of economy.

An important function would be rendered by neighborhood committees, which in representing the residents, would propose improvements, reforms and other necessities. This would give the population in general due expression of their needs and would afford them the opportunity of solving their own problems.

When necessary, the regional councils would create special schools for architects, engineers, technicians and specialized workers. These research centers would constitute in turn their administrative committees with delegations throughout the branch. All the elements contributing to the construction of dwellings

¹⁴In Sweden, in defense against unemployment and against the possible boycott of reformists, there have been formed construction guilds by the Syndicalists of the S.A.C. These have demonstrated, even within the present system of private property and money value of labor, the vitality of syndicalist action.

would thus be coordinated locally, regionally and nationally, on an equal basis, with equal rights for all and by all.

Council of the Clothing Industries

In 1922 the official figures for production in Spain were as follows:

Mineral Production:	1,070,237,191 pesetas
Agricultural Production:	9,201,300,131 pesetas
Industrial Production:	6,500,000,000 pesetas

Under industrial production the first place is held by the textile industry, with 2,150,000,000 pesetas. The number of workers employed in this industry totals 300,000. There are 2,300,000 cotton spinners of which 2,000,000 are in Catalonia. The cotton industry employs 170,000 workers and consumes 430,000 bales of cotton. The wool industry has in Catalonia 244,624 spinners and 6,270 weavers, with 30,200 workers whose production annually totals ten million kilos.

There are entire cities in Catalonia devoted to the textile industry, such as Sabadell, which in 1917 counted with 285 wool factories? 292 cotton factories, 11,693 workers, 188,400 spinners, 4,100 mechanical weavers, using in all 16,000 horsepower. There has been much improvement since then but there is still in use machinery built about fifty years ago.

As we have suggested, the textile industry is largely confined to Catalonia where the most important factories of silks, cottons, woolens and felts are developing on an ever increasing scale. For silk there were, in 1920, twenty factories which were supplied by one thousand tons of cocoons. There are thirty schools of sericulture throughout the provinces of the country. The textile industry in Spain can very well supply the total needs of the Spanish population. There is a lack of raw material, principally cotton and wool, but cotton can be raised in the peninsula as well as in Morocco in the necessary proportion to meet the requirements.

The organization of factory councils, syndicates and branch councils follows the procedure outlined in previous chapters. The capitalists, as such, would be eliminated, and only if they have technical capacities would they be integrated in their respective functions. As there are many small shops in this industry, there would probably be a strong regrouping of shops and factories which could be done quite easily since competition would no longer exist between different establishments.

Apprenticeship schools, research institutions, statistics, and information centers would be important parts of the textile structure. The coordination of industry would correspond to the local, regional and national Council of Economy.

Under the present capitalist system, the textile industry is undergoing an endless crisis. There are increasing numbers of unemployed alongside a rugged population. In the new economy, so long as sufficient raw materials can be obtained, there will be no paralysis of the factories until the internal consumption needs of the people have been thoroughly saturated.

The textile industries will include also the allied industries of the manufacture of felts, hats, shoes, etc. The textile groups proper will encompass the greatest number of workers and because of their importance will be a stronghold of the new social economic structure.

Council of Agriculture

The Revolution is often associated with a sense of catastrophe as a natural result of the fear of the privileged few — the minority that expropriates the toil of others. But, serious as the damage of a Civil

war would be, the harm would never be as great as the misery wrought in a normal, perfectly peaceful year under capitalism. We have seen how the socialization of the ownership of housing, clothing and foodstuffs would reduce sensibly the happy time of those who live today in overabundance. But we have seen on the other hand how the laborious producers would improve their conditions by a more equitable distribution of goods.

What about the land? The transition from private monopoly to collective ownership or socialization will not in any way affect the land itself. It will still be there — only that instead of representing continued slavery for the poor peasant, in behalf of the landlords, this same land will be a fountain of wealth for the benefit of all.

The territory of Spain covers 50,521,002 hectares, of which about 20,000,000 hectares are cultivated, 25,000,000 are wild plains and mountains, and 5,000,000 urban centers, roads, rivers and railroads.

The possibility of extending productive areas is still great. Just as in Holland whole regions of ocean lands have been gained, so in Spain, entire provinces of half desert and bare landscape can be made fertile.¹⁵

The following is the approximate distribution of the 20 million cultivated hectares:¹⁶

Cereals and Vegetables:	14,800,000 Hectares
Olive Trees:	1,720,000 Hectares
Vineyards:	1,340,000 Hectares
Industrial Plants:	650,000 Hectares
Roots, Tubercles and Bulbs:	480,000 Hectares
Fruit Trees:	450,000 Hectares
Artificial Plains:	465,000 Hectares
Horticulture:	88,000 Hectares
Special Cultivation:	7,000 Hectares

Of the cereals, wheat covers 4,200,000 hectares, oats 1,600,000, rye 740,000, hay 600,000, corn 480,000, and rice 43,000. The wheat area is as follows, on the basis of quintals in 1929:

Old Castilla:	9,383,200
New Castilla:	12,663,000
Aragon and Rioja:	2,123,000
Andalusia:	8,543,750
Basque Navarre:	1,278,750
Catalonia:	1,841,000
Levante:	1,542,750
Galicia and Asturias:	381,650
Adjacent Isles:	886,250

¹⁵Spain has steppes ranging over 75,000 kilometers, 1/7 of its territory, These bare landscapes are mostly arid and would require much transformation to make them fertile. The rivers in Spain carry off enormous quantities of fertile soil and minerals, impoverishing dangerously great tracts of land. There is immediate necessity for the construction of water dams and strategic defenses where most needed. (Geofilo — Problems of Spain — “Tiempos Nuevos” — April 1936, Barcelona.)

We need not entertain too many illusions about the soil of Spain. The geologist Lucas Mallada has tabulated its agricultural capacities as follows:

Bare Rocky Land — 10%

Areas of Small Productivity — 35%

Areas of Fair Productivity — 45%

Areas of Exceptional Productivity — 10%

¹⁶A hectare contains 100 acres.

The orange area occupies about 60,000 hectares plus 500,000 trees distributed elsewhere.

We need not go into further details on the Spanish agricultural production. If the Revolution does not succeed at first in raising the agricultural production, it will not diminish it. It will at least assure a real distribution of the products to nourish the millions of workers on the land who have been living more like beasts of burden, ignorant of any human happiness.

There are numerous agricultural schools and model farms throughout the country. There are factories producing agricultural machines and tools. There isn't enough of either but they provide a good basis for unlimited development.

With the increase of human needs, all the development of modern technical processes of production must be utilized. At the same time, specialization will supplant the individual peasant, just as the modern industrial worker has taken the place of the artisan. The modern peasant must produce for society in the same way as does the factory worker. This evolution does not imply necessarily, concentration in agriculture. It may well be realized through specialization of both the large and small agricultural enterprises.

A general plan is, however, advisable. Councils of agricultural production in each locality would combine and constitute the agricultural syndicate of the area. The vine growers, olive growers, sugar beet growers, etc., would form their separate syndicates, and, altogether, would constitute the branch council for a given zone.

This branch Council would look after the experimental schools, and coordinate the problems of internal nature and the growing needs of industrialization of agriculture. The branch Councils would unite with similar Councils of other industries, such as transportation, sanitation, motor power, etc. and form economic Councils with the geographic unit taken as a basis. In union then with the regional and federal councils of economy, and in direct line with all the other agricultural councils of the country, the coordination of the factors of production would be assured.

In the process of distribution of agricultural products, the Councils of credit and exchange in their respective localities would maintain complete statistics of production and consumption, as well as of the land, machinery, and labor available. It is through the medium of the council of credit and exchange (which takes the place of the banking system under capitalism) that the products are bartered for machines, tools, clothing, food, etc., in accordance with the requirements and needs of producers and consumers.

Council of Livestock Production

We have referred in a previous chapter to the inadequacy of meat consumption in Spain. In 1921 the record of livestock was as follows:

Horses:	722,183 head
Donkeys:	1,137,980 head
Mules:	1,294,912 head
Cows:	3,718,189 head
Sheep:	20,521,677 head
Goats:	4,298,059 head
Pigs:	5,151,988 head
Fowls:	15,102,973 head

In 1933 the figures were approximately the same. The average consumption of close to 30 kilos per head should be at least doubled to reach the average of meat consumed in France. We might include in

our record the raising of bees. In 1920 there were 689,210 beehives producing 2,815,363 kilos of honey and 748,086 of wax.

There is much room for the improvement and selection of livestock, in which veterinaries, stockbreeders, and shepherds, through their respective Councils, can all cooperate towards the desirable end of adequate production in this branch.

Council of Forestry

Lumber is not plentiful in Spain. Woods have been: disgracefully thinned without any thought of the future. This has given Spain an almost desolate aspect and has seriously affected the humidity of the soil, fountain of its agricultural wealth. For a considerable period of years reforestation will be an important task for the new economy.

There are 2,380,000 acres of high mountain land, 4,500,000 of slopes and pasture land. Under proper care this total acreage should supply the necessary lumber for building and fuel. The timber is not only to be considered for its industrial utility, but also as a beneficial agent for the land, producing microorganisms to fertilize the soil and form the humus, which in the course of years will reduce the aridity and desolation of the Spanish land.

It can be calculated that the reforestation of the 14 million present desert acres would produce yearly more than twenty million cubic feet of lumber, plus the other direct and indirect benefits of an extensive and profuse area of woods.

In Segovia there are great tracts of plains with their important production of resin and by-products. Extremadura and Andalusia abound in cork trees which have been very important in the maintenance of the cork industry in Spain. As a matter of fact, the production of cork in Spain and Portugal represents 70% of the world output. This industry has now spread to other countries and only through a thorough modernization of productive technique can the cork industry in Spain gain its past prestige in the World.

St. John's bread grows more in Spain than in any other Mediterranean zone. Eight million trees occupy 192,793 acres; to which must be added further three million trees disseminated through rocky lands and gullies. The seed of these trees converted into flour makes a nutritious feed for livestock. There is also another by-product, "vaina" which can be used in the production of alcohol. There are besides other medicinal and chemical byproducts of these trees.

Almond trees are also much cultivated in Spain and their product has a big market in the interior as well as abroad.

What is necessary is a corps of technicians, botanists, engineers, and laborers to develop plantations and forest beds. An adequate number of forest guards for the conservation of the woods is also required. The Council of forest production should be constituted in every geographical zone with the object of encouraging the cultivation of trees, planting of forests, the production of fruit trees and the distribution of lumber and fuel for the use of the population. They will also care for textile fibers and other industrial substances extracted from the trees.

All the immediate work would be under the organic supervision of this Council leaving the ulterior processes of industrialization to other Councils. For example, the forest council would collect the oil from the olive trees but the refining of the oil and bottling of the olives would be administered by the foodstuffs Council. In the same way, the elaboration of resin and the roots from the pines would come under the Council of Chemical Industries.

Council of Mining and Fishing Industries

Spain is relatively rich in mines, and can produce all the minerals necessary for her economic independence. Mercury, lead, potash and pyrites are more than abundant in the peninsula and can be exported to advantage. The Moroccan zone produces chiefly iron, copper, sulfur and antimony.

Spain is one of the richest countries in iron pyrite — with a productive capacity of five million tons per year. These pyrites are very important for the production of sulfuric acid, fertilizers, etc. There has been little use of pyrite in Spain; consequently its export would be of considerable value.

In 1920, the total number employed in the mines was 125,000, of which close to 40,000 were in Asturias. 18,000 were lads between 16 and 18 years, and there were over 2,000 girls and women.

In 1927, the total mineral coal production was 6,690,076 tons.

In 1928 the numbers were as follows:

Total iron mineral production:	5,571,207 tons
Total copper pyrite production:	3,619,691 tons
Total potash production:	243,233 tons
Total zinc production:	122,141 tons
Total lead production:	177,059 tons

In 1920, the factories of minerals and their by-products numbered 417, employing 31,599 workers, of whom 959 were aged 14 to 16 years, and 2,635 aged 16 to 18 years.

In 1928, there were a total of 5,474 machines in operation with a capacity of 361,084 horsepower.

There is a special school for mining engineers in Madrid and a number of minor schools in the cities of Cartagena, Almaden, Mieres, Linares, Vera, Huelva and Bilbao. There is a specialized laboratory for essays and analysis of minerals in Madrid.

The organization of the branch would follow the general line in the respective mining zones and factories. Under the national Council there would be the mining schools, geological institutes, mineral museums and tool factories.

The products would go to the local and central supply depots from which the industries would be supplied through the medium of the Credit and Exchange Councils.

It is necessary to mention that the mining industries are owned largely by English, French and Belgian companies, which would lead to some inconveniences on account of inevitable international claims.

The first great advantage which the socialization of the mining industry would bring is the reduction of work to four or a maximum of five hours and provision 4 for the highest possible security for the personnel.

Capitalist owners concerned only in profit would never make these indispensable; reforms in the international market would not permit it.

Due to its extensive coasts on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean, Spain is relatively privileged in the abundance of fish.

About 180,000 men and their families are engaged in the fishing industry, producing annually about 400,000 tons of fish. There were in 1920, 29,955 skiffs and rowboats and 1,549 motor trawlers.

In what way will the revolution benefit the fishermen? Firstly, by improving the boats and secondly by reducing the hours which automatically would provide more employment. The average consumption of 20 kilos per inhabitant could be increased considerably.

Council of Public Utilities Industries

In these times the economic capacity of a country is measured more by the electrical energy it consumes than by the number of its workers and the extent of its territories. According to the statistics of the Federal Power Commission of the United States, the hydroelectric reserve power of Spain amounts to four million horsepower, of which only a fourth part is exploited. In partial confirmation of this, the statistical year book of Spain for 1930 lists 1,064,272 horsepower consumed. There are big plants, such as Riegos y Fuerzas del Ebro, la Energia electrica de cataluna, la Hidroelectrica espanola, la Union electrica madrilenia, la Hidroelectrica iberica, etc., etc., mostly owned by American companies. But there is plenty of room for greater development, as the country's resources of electrical energy are far from being utilized to even an appreciable degree.

The engineer Pereira Carballo, in an article published in 'Revista Electricidad' and reprinted in the "Sol," Madrid, January 7, 1936, considers possible the production of over twelve million horsepower distributed as follows:

Rio Ebro:	3,150,000 hp
Rio Duero:	2,080,000 hp
Guadalquivir:	1,964,000 hp
Rio Tajo:	1,865,000 hp
Guadiana:	865,000 hp
Rio Mino:	743,000 hp
Rio Jucar:	511,000 hp
Rio Segura:	346,000 hp
Other streams and rivers:	990,000 hp
Total:	12,514,000 hp

Translating this hydroelectric power or white fuel into black fuel, we would have the equivalent of 75,000,000 tons of coal with enormous saving in the cost of production.

There are a number of projects for electrification, water dams and the utilization of hydraulic energy for motor power as well as for droughts. There is nothing in the way of the realization of these plans besides pecuniary obstacles. The engineers capable of executing these developments, the manual labor and material are not lacking. Besides hydroelectric energy which would be cheapest in Spain, there can be thermoelectric energy obtained from coal. In this field magnificent innovations have been realized. The first turbine ever mounted in a central station, in 1903, consumed 6.88 lbs. of carbon per kilowatt hour. In 1913, the consumption of carbon per kilowatt hour in the central station of the United States dropped to 2.87 lbs. and in 1929 the average was 1.2. In 1933 less than a pound per kilowatt hour was consumed.

There still remain the fountains of energy which may be drawn from the air, which the Dutch have utilized so well with their windmills and which is now thought of as a possible source of electrical energy.

A large amount of electrical material is now being produced in Spain. Underground cables of 6,000, 11,000, 30,000 and 50,000 voltage are manufactured for the centrals of Madrid, Malaga, Bilbao, Barcelona and Valencia; also telephone cables and wires for the urban and interurban lines, cables for the mines, motors for industry, machinery and electrical apparatus for the Navy and the Army, electric meters, lamps, filaments, etc.

In 1921 there were 118 establishments manufacturing electrical material, 515 producing gas and electricity, and 101 water works, without counting the private enterprises which exist in large numbers in Spain. These latter predominate in almost every field, which creates great complexity for the Spanish capitalists in their efforts to concert their interests and enterprises.

We combine the figures for the production of light, motor power and water works for the cities and irrigation for the fields because all of these function closely together. The organization of the public utilities industries is the same as the others from the bottom up, from the individual establishment to the syndicate, from the syndicate to the branch council, from the branch council to the local council of economy, etc. But, as in transport, the public utilities must be integrated on a national scale. This is indispensable and will afford the greatest possibilities of development. There is even today talk of the electrical unification of the whole European continent so that not a single kilowatt may remain unused or wasted.

This proposed council of the public utilities will play a very important role in cementing the future of the country because all the plans for increasing production, decreasing labor, and furthering culture will be sterile so long as all the forces which the country has to offer are not utilized by the new economic regime.

Council of Transport Industry

The Council of the transport industry will be one of the most important in the new economy. Its coordination must be perfect and we believe will be more easily achieved through the suppression of private enterprise based on conflicting competitive interests.

Spain has 16,000 kilometers of railroad, according to statistics in 1930, and employs 150,000 railway men and employees. The principal lines are the M.Z.A. (Madrid, Zaragoza, Alicante) and the Norte. The national roads constructed cover 52,000 kilometers. There are besides 7,000 kilometers of provincial roads and 10,000 kilometers of local roads. However, almost half of the towns in Spain are still isolated and out of contact with the modern arteries of life.

In 1935 Spain possessed a merchant fleet of 1,265,321 long tons. Of this number, close to 300,000 tons are not in operation, with the result that in Vizcaya alone close to 15,000 seamen are unemployed. Not being an important exporting country, Spain does not find itself with the necessity of competing with the maritime transport of other nations. It possesses a sufficient tonnage to take care of the country's local and foreign trade. There are, however, excellent shipbuilding yards in Spain, capable of producing commercial and war ships, with exclusively national material. In 1921 such construction amounted to 37,023 tons and in 1931 the figure of 48,117 tons was reached.

Commercial aviation is also on the increase. 1920 registered 3,215 hours of flying covering 468,040 kilometers. In 1930 the hours of flying numbered 4,070 and the distance covered 603,035 kilometers, for 31,965 kilos of merchandise and 6,300 passengers. There are schools for military pilots in Madrid, Cartagena and Sevilla. There are also adequate schools for mechanics and technicians, as well as an aerodynamic laboratory in Madrid.

After the Revolution nothing of all this will be suppressed, but a greater benefit for all will be obtained by a better coordination of all available resources. Development would go on towards obtaining greater velocity, comfort, and economy of material and labor, towards the ever increasing perfection of the transport service.

There will be the natural problems of bureaucratic organization and the opposition of small to large scale operation. We believe, however, that the rationalization of the transport industry with the gradual elimination of small establishments is the more desirable. There is the danger of abuse, waste and neglect of the collective interest; but the large scale method is certainly the more efficient and we are confident that the watchfulness and interest of the workers themselves will safeguard the proper functioning of the organism. Particularly in the automobile industry, certainly a model of the Ford organization in Detroit should be substituted for the small automobile factories in Barcelona.

The national Council of the transport industry in Spain will comprise no less than 400,000 workers, mechanics and technicians, and its task will be highly constructive and beneficial to the entire economic structure.

Council of Communications

The post office and telegraph service in Spain is administered by the State. The telephone service belongs to a private enterprise with foreign capital. There is no doubt that the services performed by technicians and their aids would be much more efficient by the elimination of political and private intervention.

The personnel of the post office totals 31,760. The number of offices in all of Spain totals about 12,000. Complementary to the post office there are about 4,000 telegraph offices, with 20,000 employees. In 1931 there were about 3,000 telephone exchanges and about 250,000 telephones. In totality, 100,000 to 150,000 persons are required for the adequate function of the post office, telegraph and telephone services.

Communications in a country are like the nervous system of the living organism, they must be especially cared for. The revolution must develop this service to the greatest possible perfection, assimilating working elements, oversupplied in other branches. There is an official school of telegraphy for operators, technicians and engineers. There is a national school for personnel of the post office. These schools can be developed to include radio and all other modern developments in means of communication. Eliminating the purely political and bureaucratic directors of the present system, the personnel of the post office, telegraph and telephone services would organize themselves in local, regional and federal councils towards the maximum efficiency and responsibility.

Council of Chemical Industries

Just as the textile industry faces the urgent necessity of adequate supplies of cotton, in order to meet the requirements of the textile factories, so the chemical industry faces the immediate necessity of:

1. Obtaining petroleum and its by-products through the distillation of coal, lignites and bituminous slate by the process of hydrolysis.

In Germany, England, France and other countries there have been experiments in the distillation of coals to produce petroleum. In Germany, the plants already established produce almost a million tons of gasoline which, added to other combustibles, benzene and alcohol, represent more than half the total consumption. If in England and the United States the progress has not been so great, it is because of the hostility and opposition of the oil companies which see in this brand new industry a dangerous competitor.

2. Producing pastes for the manufacture of paper.

There is a possibility as well of producing a national combustible with alcohol as a base. In solving the problem of the supply of paper, which depends very much on reforestation, the council of the publishing industry would have to cooperate with the council of the chemical industries. A coordination of all these forces would be the task of the socializing revolution, which would close down unproductive establishments, combine others, erect new factories and localize the various industries in the regions which are most suitable to each.

Every chemical factory will name a council or a committee which will coordinate and regulate all the activities in the various sections of the establishment. The factory councils will form syndicates according to function, i.e., a syndicate of varnish and paint factories, a syndicate of alcohol factories, etc. These syndicates will unite in turn in a local council of the branch industry.

The branch council will form part of the local council of economy and will associate itself with other branch councils of the region to constitute the national council of the chemical industries. This national organism will direct the chemical schools, laboratories, research institutes, libraries, etc.

Just as in the metallurgical and other basic industries, so in the chemical industry the personnel cannot be unskilled. Therefore, from the very commencement of the factory councils and the branch councils, there must be special preparation for the training of an adequate number of technicians and specialized workers in order to assure maximum efficiency from the start.

Council of Sanitation

Spain is backward not only in industry but also in matters of sanitation. There is an excessive mortality due to ignorance, improper hygiene, inadequate medical aid, and inanition. About 50,000 T.B.'s die annually due to lack of sanatoriums and proper medical care. In all of Spain there are only about 35 sanatoriums and dispensaries for tuberculosis patients.

About 3,000 to 4,000 women die in childbed and about 17,000 babies die at birth. These excessive figures are due to medical and social failings. Medical science has made real progress in Spain and can be considered on the same level with the most advanced countries. It is only, however, in the new economy where its benefits and resources would be available. At present, the vast majority of the Spanish Population is too poor to have access to the advances and progress in medicine.

Even leprosy has spread more in our country than we imagine. In 1921 there were 426 lepers in the hospitals and over a number of provinces; 356 small towns were invaded by this horrible disease.

While half of Spain has practically no sanitary service, a great number of doctors are out of work. The Revolution must remedy all this and will not only employ doctors, dentists, nurses, and interns, but will increase and perfect all the medical service required to insure the best possible health of the population. There will be no private doctors, since the entire profession will be at the service of all. They will be incorporated, however, along with dentists, pharmacists, etc., in respective Councils and form similar organizations as in other branches. The Council of Sanitation will create schools and research institutions, and will also take care of the public health in the cities and in the country.

Council of Metallurgical Industries

Spain is not an industrialized country. It is necessary to accelerate industrialization reconciling man with the machine. This has been impossible under capitalism, whereby the machine, capable of producing abundance, actually deprives the greatest number of the bare essentials of life.

A shoemaker in ancient Rome made a pair of shoes in a week; a worker in a modern factory produces 500 pairs in a week. Undoubtedly many went barefoot in the time of Caesar. Is there a real justification for such a condition today?

In Spain in 1860 there were about 150,000 industrial workers, about 26,000 miners, alongside of 600,000 artisans. Today an artisan is nowhere to be found.

Among plants producing machinery are the very important factories of locomotives and railroad material in Barcelona, Bilbao and Zaragoza. There are automobile and motor factories in Barcelona and throughout the provinces; there are numerous plants producing machinery and tools. There is the

“Siderurgica del Mediterraneo” in Sagunto, which employs 4,000 men and is one of the most modern and important plants in Spain with 200 kilometers of its own railroad, its very own port, and Martin Siemens foundries of 80 ton and 90 ton capacity, able to produce 900 tons of steel daily.

In 1923 in Barcelona alone, there were 30,000 metal workers. Totally there must be about 120,000 in Spain.

The average production of steel products in Spain is 19 kilos per inhabitant as against 200 in Germany and 150 in Belgium. Resources of iron, estimated at 600 million tons, should enable the development of an important metallurgical industry in Spain.

Local Council of Economy

There are three practicable schools of economy: (a) Private Capitalism, (b) State Capitalism, (c) Socialized Economy or Communism.

We know the conditions and disastrous results of private capitalism, and we have pointed out our objections to State Capitalism as practiced in Russia. Our solution is the Socialized Economy not only because it is more just but because it is the only means of overcoming the monstrous contradiction of competitive production based on profit.

To facilitate exchange of products, there are two means: (1) The monetary system, (2) the social control of consumption in accordance with available stocks. We choose, naturally, the second method by which we would establish the unit of production and the unit of consumption in accordance with the necessities of society.

After organizing production and distribution in every branch of work similar to a great cooperative, in which all have the same equal rights and obligations and in which nobody lives by the exploitation of his fellow workers, it is necessary to associate these diverse branches in an organ of coordination to be called the Local Council of Economy.

It will substitute the actual political organisms, such as municipalities, assemblies, etc. In cases of emergency or danger of a counter-revolution, this local Council of Economy will assume the mission of defense and raise voluntary corps for guard duty and if need be, for combat.

The Local Council of Economy will also act as a clearing house for relations with other localities. The necessities of the various guilds and of the consumers will be determined through these Local Councils of Economy, which will increase and reduce and even suppress production in accordance with needs.

In our brief exposition of the organs of the new economy, we have seen that the new mechanism is not one of class and does not admit oppression or exploitation of anyone. There is no distinction between men and women of working age. But work in the new economy must be a social obligation; if it is not fulfilled voluntarily, one is excluded arbitrarily from the benefits of a productive and free community. We cannot say that with the new economy, coercion or authoritarianism will be impossible. The organisms of the new economy can be good or bad. They can be the guarantees of freedom, and they can also be the instruments of force. This is the essential difference from the bourgeois or state apparatus whose institutions are necessarily authoritarian and cannot be anything else. To pretend that the capitalist state is not such and to hope that it will interpret as well the interests of the workers for whose oppression it has been created, is absurd. On the other hand, the new economy, which is not a class economy and fights only against parasitism and special privilege, has no need of coercion, once parasitism and special privilege are abolished.

Regional Councils of Economy

Up till now we have referred to the organization of industry and agriculture in a local sense. We have mentioned however that in modern economy there is no place for localism and emphasized the need for a competent inter-relation of all coordinated factors of production, distribution and consumption.

In Spain there are a number of regions with their own peculiar characteristics of dialect, history and geography. These regions will be the organized economic centers of the future. Local councils of economy in the city; and the municipal councils of districts and country combine to form regional councils of economy, with the same functions on a more extensive scale. Thus you will have the council of the Balearic Islands, the council of Catalonia, the council of the Basque Navarre, the Galician and other regional councils of economy. Every region will have perfect administrative autonomy and thus the statutes of autonomy, asked for in vain of the central capitalist government, will at last be realized. Autonomy however does not mean isolation or independence, because all regions in Spain are necessarily inter-dependent.

The advantage of a regional economy resides in the fact that the men of the region know better the problems of their own territory and would consecrate their efforts with greater interest and enthusiasm in their development. Culture would also stand to gain in values and significance. Kropotkin was right in exalting for example the arts in the free cities of the Middle Ages. You must not forget however that the results will be more fecund depending on the temperament, intelligence and regional spirit, not through isolation but through a mature and permanent contact with other regions and the outside world.

The regional council of economy through the medium of its council of credit and exchange will attend to the statistics of production, consumption, labor and raw material available. It will administrate public works on a large scale; it will create, in cooperation with all the federated local councils, research and scientific institutes. It will stimulate production and improve the modern methods of labor, intensify agriculture and redeem large arid areas and rocky land by irrigation, etc.

No other economic or political regime would respect so much the regional life, customs, language and peculiarities, as we propose to do. Under our plan the greatest coordination is based on the perfect autonomy of each federated member, beginning with the individual and going through to the local councils of economy.

The regional councils of economy would call assemblies periodically to elect or reelect their members, and with free initiative and opinion construct the programs to be realized.

The regional councils will constitute by delegations or through assemblies the federal council of economy, the highest organ of economic coordination in the country. The latter would be a permanent national unification and would counteract any possible regional localization tendency.

Parallel to this structure is the national federation of branch councils whose mission is limited to the due coordination of all the branch industrial and agricultural activities of the country. Whereas the latter is organized on an economic guild basis, the federal council of economy would act as a social counterweight, which, in case of need, would restrict the corporative trade unionism which might manifest itself to excess, and vice versa. A mutual collaboration of information and initiative would be highly fruitful.

Nevertheless in the case of need of evaluating labor, and fixing a medium of exchange, it will be the local, regional and federal councils of economy which will have to resolve the norms to be followed. In this way will be avoided a possible overestimation of either the individual branches or the national federations of same with regard to their own activities.

Exchange of products will also be part of the mission of the councils of economy and not of the national or local councils of industrial and agricultural branches.

Federal Council of Economy

We began with the primary cell of, the worker, the peasant, the miner, the fisherman. We passed on to the first structure of cells united by similar functions in the same working establishment, the factory council, the mine council, the collective farm. We then developed associations of these first working colonies into syndicates and subsequently in branch councils where the productive efforts are concentrated as a complete economic function. We have seen how these branch councils are federated in local councils of economy on one hand, and on the other, are leagued into a national federation of branch councils. Through the medium of the local councils of economy, work attains unity and organization first on a local basis; second, through the regional council of economy, on a regional basis; and finally, through the federal council of economy integrated by delegations from the regional councils, on a national basis.

In all this mechanism of non-capitalist workers' organization no element, as such, of the principle of force is inherent. The structure is adaptable to the modern conception of the world and responds to the intense desire of combining the liberty of the individual with his obligation to work in behalf of the whole of society. Our conception of economy as a unit is inevitable. Whether it is through revolutionary or reactionary resources, the economic structure of the world must develop into a definite unity. Economic individualism and localism are definitely out of perspective in the actual order of things. Economy must be planned in order to avoid individual waste or abuse. The eternal aspiration for individual differentiation will however find expression in a thousand ways and will not be submerged by any leveling process. We do not believe that the contribution of the individual to the social common effort would in any way be leveling. Even outside of standardized methods of economy there will be plenty of opportunity in the worker's hours of leisure to develop individual avocations.

Once for all we must realize that we are not any longer rocking in the cradle of a little utopian world. We must take cognizance of the vast revolution realized in the productive processes. For an economy socialized, directed or planned, no matter what you call it, it is imperative to follow the evolution of the modern economic world.

The federal council of economy made up of all the nuclei of labor from the simple to the complex, from the bottom up, binds the whole economy of the country and is the resultant organism of an infinitely complex system of forces all converging towards the same end: increased production and better distribution.

If socialism and its variations would have conceded from the very beginning the necessity of substituting the outworn political and economic capitalism, by adequate organisms of practical economy, our conditions in the world today would be quite different than what they are. In reality the substitution proposed contained the nefarious thought of a state apparatus with its attributes of power and command to decree the new tablets of the law.

On the other hand, the revolutionary part in fierce struggle against the common adversary had little time to think of the constructive part of a new society. The whole history of revolutionary tendency has been one of heroism and unlimited sacrifice. Therefore, in facing the problem of social transformation, the Revolution cannot consider the state as a medium, but must depend on the organization of producers.

We have followed this norm and we find no need for the hypothesis of a superior power to organized labor, in order to establish a new order of things. We ask anyone to point out to us what function, if any, the State can have in an economic organization, where private property has been abolished and in which parasitism and special privilege have no place. The suppression of the State cannot be a languid affair; it must be the task of the Revolution to finish with the State. Either the Revolution gives social wealth to the producers in which case the producers organize themselves for due collective distribution and the State has nothing to do; or the Revolution does not give social wealth to the producers, in which case the Revolution has been a lie and the State would continue.

Our federal council of economy is not a political power but an economic and administrative regulating power. It receives its orientation from below and operates in accordance with the resolutions of the regional and national assemblies. It is a liaison corps and nothing else.

The federal council of economy will have an important part to play in propagandizing the new norms, in furthering the interrelations of the regions, in the fomenting of a national solidarity. On the basis of the total statistics which it will receive from all sources of economic and social activities, it will know in a given moment the specific economic situation. It will know; where the deficiencies and where the excesses of production are, it will know the requirements of transport and communications, and the needs for new roads, new cultivations, and new factories. And where the regions do not have sufficient resources, it will provide national assistance for public works of recognized need.

It will have no need of gendarmerie to enforce its suggestions and proposals. In bourgeois parliaments, laws are decreed which no one but those interested understand, and for their execution, they require a police force. In the federal council of economy, where the supreme authority resides in numbers and statistical data, coercion, besides being impossible in itself, would produce contrary and sterile results.

In place of the kingdom of parliamentary orators will be substituted statistical facts — which are infinitely more eloquent and in consonance with the living reality.

Council of Credit and Exchange

In the Council of Credit and Exchange are summed up all the cumulative economic functions and interrelations. Under the new economy in which credit will be a social function and not a private speculation or usury, it will have an important mission to fulfill as a vital means towards prosperity and progress. Credit will be based on the economic possibilities of society and not on interests or profit. Its mechanism will consist of exact statistics on production and consumption. The personnel would be selected out of the present banking institutions.

The exchange of products will come under the control of the currency. Based on statistics the Council will regulate the distribution of products, transmit orders and fulfill generally the function of the present commercial establishments. The Council will not have to occupy itself generally with the distribution of products, since the branch councils of industry and agriculture are adequately organized to take care of all operations, from the production of raw material to the delivery of the manufactured product to the consumer. The Council's mission would be to serve as the centre of demand and supply.

Should it be necessary, as it probably will, to create a symbol of exchange in response to the necessities of circulation and exchange of products, the Council will create a unit for this purpose exclusively as a facility and not as a money-power.

The Council would be organized on the same basis as the other branches, but will function as a liaison of all the Councils and thus establish a perfect solidarity in the new economy. The local Councils of the economy will be a part of the Council of Credit and Exchange. Together with all other regional councils would be formed the National Council of Credit and Exchange which would regulate the foreign trade and the international financial relations in conjunction with the federal Council of Economy.

For a few years there will not be abundance and consequently, the control of production and distribution would have to be strictly maintained. Individualism as practiced in the capitalist regime would lead to abuse and inequality in consumption, as well as to insecurity in production. That is why the essential condition of the new economy is of a social character, the special function of which is to assure at least a minimum standard of existence to the population. When production is more abundant, when technical progress has made possible the maximum benefit, then above the minimum of existence for all, we will be able to satisfy individual desires.

The Council of Credit and Exchange will be like a thermometer of the products and needs of the country. The producing guilds will know through the Council what goods they must produce and their destination. The bureaus of statistical records, which under the present system perform only a decorative function would be the central axis of the council of Credit and Exchange and would proportion all the necessary data for the competent administration of the new economy.

Council of Publishing and Cultural Activities

We have already mentioned in a previous chapter the scarcity of raw material for an adequate supply of paper, and have suggested the means of remedying the default through reforestation. In 1928, discounting newspapers and magazines, there were published 2,830 books and 3,578 pamphlets and brochures.

The organization of the paper factories could include the preparation of pastes and pulp. The printers would form a syndicate of graphic arts. In the same way every nucleus of writers, journalists and scientists would form its respective council. Altogether they would constitute the syndicate of writers and journalists.

Together with the council of transportation, communication and credit and exchange, the council of the publishing industries belongs also to the kind of social nervous system which combines the diverse parts of the entire social organism. The mission of journalists and editors in the new economy is of a special significance. Science, literature, art, and the service of rendering information will be available in their purest form to the whole of the community. There will be no bastard interest to exploit publications for private lucre. The light will come to all as freely and purely as the sun, without guise of caste and without the taint of factions.

We are not the first to suppose that the role of public instruction in the capitalist regime fulfils much more the necessity in modern life for workers who can read, write, and add, than the sincere desire for culture and progress for the people themselves. In any event, culture under capitalism attains its end through perversion and falsification in the interest of the dominating class. The public schools, the university, the cinema, the theatre, sports, etc., are all used as means towards providing a legal, moral and material foundation for the privileges of a few and the slavery of the vast majority.

“Capital” says Ferdinand Fried, “places so low an esteem on science that it considers universities only as professional schools for the creation of better forces.”¹⁷

The new economy, representing the contribution and effort of all, must develop a true culture without any other end than that of progress and the elevation of man to a higher standard. Culture, properly speaking, might not be included in the economic structure of the new order; but our free society which considers not merely the worker, but man, is not nourished by bread alone but by knowledge.

The organism of culture related closely to all the other organisms of production and distribution is constituted also as an organic entity, from the school with its administrative council made up of teachers, parents and pupils, up to the syndicate of teachers and local council formed by the various syndicates. The universities, however, will have a different structure. For example, the faculty of chemistry would pass over to the council of the chemical industries, and the faculties of engineering would depend on their respective branch council, and so forth.

Theatres operated today exclusively for private profit will in the future be instruments of culture. Cinemas, sports, etc., will all be integrated in the culture council and for the first time fulfill their real purpose. In the same way, art — today a privilege of select and rich minority — will be available to all and ennoble and beautify the lives of everybody capable of appreciating it. Not only will illiteracy be

¹⁷“The End of Capitalism”; ed. Grassei, Pans, p. 122.

exiled but every child will be equipped with real adequate knowledge and a technical preparation for industry and agriculture.

The revolution needs capable workers, peasants with initiative, men of solid preparation, which the new school and research faculties will have as its special mission to supply. Spain will then be in a position to fulfill the most romantic hopes of its most exalted patriots.

Capitalism cannot sustain the present apparatus of public education. Its largest budget must be reserved for public order, the army and the navy. The schoolteacher is a poor, forgotten functionary living in misery. The new economy needs thousands of new schools, thousands of new teachers, and hundreds of specialized schools of trades and agriculture.

Part 3: The Revolution of Liberty

Economy and Liberty

Anarchism, meaning Liberty, is compatible with the most diverse economic conditions, on the premise that these cannot imply, as under capitalist monopoly, the negation of liberty. Anarchism is an attitude of the spirit towards life and in any and all economic situations not monopolistic, man can be master of himself and should exercise the control of his own will) rejecting imposition from without.

The negation of the principle of authority of man over man is not bound up with the realization of a predetermined economic level. It is opposed to Marxism, which desires to attain a system, as a corollary of capitalist evolution.

To be an anarchist, one has to attain a certain level of culture, consciousness of power and capacity for self-government. Idiots cannot become anarchists; they must be cared for by society, along with the weak and the incapacitated.

We are cognizant of the fact that the grade of economic development and material conditions of life influence powerfully human psychology. Faced with starvation, the individual becomes an egoist; with abundance he may become generous, friendly and socially disposed. All periods of privation and penury produce brutality, moral regression and a fierce struggle of all against all, for daily bread. Consequently, it is plain that economics influences seriously the spiritual life of the individual and his social relations. That is precisely why we are aiming to establish the best possible economic conditions, which will act as a guarantee of equal and solid relationships among men. We will not stop being anarchists, on an empty stomach, but we do not exactly like to have empty stomachs.

We wish an economic regime in which abundance, wellbeing and enjoyment will be available to all. This aspiration does not distinguish us as revolutionaries. The ideal of wellbeing is shared by all social movements. What distinguishes us is our condition as anarchists, which we place even before wellbeing. At least as individuals, we prefer freedom with hunger to satiation alongside of slavery and subjection.

If we are in favor of communism, it is not because this system is identical with anarchism. Communism can be realized in a multiform of economic arrangements, individual and collective. Proudhon advocated mutualism; Bakunin, collectivism; Kropotkin, communism. Malatesta has conceived the possibility of mixed agreements, especially during the first period. Tarrida del Marmol y Mella advocated pure anarchism without any economic qualifications, which supposes the freedom of experimenting or establishing on trial, that which every period and locality judges most convenient.

What we can say is that we must aim for an economic system of equal rights and justice, in which, abundance will be possible. That is, the proper satisfaction of material needs, which alone will create a favorable social disposition and thus constitute a solid guarantee of liberty and solidarity. Man pitted against man is a wolf and he can never become a real brother to man, unless he has material security.

If anarchism for the anarchists can exist with abundance as well as with misery, communism must have as its basis, abundance. In communism there is a certain generosity, and this generosity in a time of want is replaced little by little by egoism, distrust, competition; in a word, the struggle for bread. We repeat, therefore: abundance is indispensable to assure a progressive collective life.

We face, therefore, economic reorganization of the future, free from any preconceived notions, fixed system or dogma. Communism will be the natural result of abundance, without which it will remain

only an ideal. In each locality the degree of communism, collectivism or mutualism will depend on the conditions prevailing. Why dictate rules? We, who make freedom our banner, cannot deny it in economy. Therefore there must be free experimentation, free show of initiative and suggestions, as well as the freedom of organization.

To make possible this freedom, we must insist on the prerequisite of abundance which we can attain by the thorough use of industrial technique, modern agriculture and scientific development. But modern industry as well as modern agriculture has its own limits and possesses its own rhythm. The human rhythm does not make its mark on the machine; it is the rhythm of the machine which determines human progress.

With the Revolution, private property is suppressed; but the factory must go on and follow the same methods and development of production. What changes, is the distribution of the product; which, instead of obeying the laws of interest and profit, must satisfy the general needs on an equitable basis. The factory is not an isolated organism, nor can it function independently. It is part of a complicated network, spreading throughout the locality, region and nation, and beyond all frontiers.

The writer knew economic localism in his own native town, a little hidden valley out of all contact with civilization, only thirty years ago. The wool was spun from sheep, shoes were made from wood, the wheat was cultivated and made into bread; the herbs of the surrounding hills made the import of medicines from the outside unnecessary. We knew that somewhere beyond our valley there was some kind of superior power, which sent out tax collectors and police forces. This little town, thirty or forty years ago, lived autonomously. But today everything is changed, fortunately. The townfolk wear clothes woven in Barcelona or Lancashire, made from Argentine or Australian wool, or from Indian or American cotton. They have radios manufactured in England or France, they drink coffee from Brazil. Would it be desirable to return to economic localism? No one would consent to it voluntarily; everyone wishes to enjoy all the good that intelligence and labor have produced. It is plain: a thousand ties unite the most insignificant locality with national and world economy.

We are not interested how the workers, employees and technicians of a factory will organize themselves. That is their affair. But what is fundamental is that from the first moment of Revolution there exists a proper cohesion of all the productive and distributive forces. This means that the producers of every locality must come to an understanding with all other localities of the province and country, which must have an international direct entente between the producers of the world. This cohesion is imperious and indispensable for the very function of all the factors of production. The interdependence of the factory and the electrical plant; the foundries in Bilbao and the production of the mines; the railroads, agriculture, building and a thousand and one trades and activities, all make for an inevitable highest maximum coordination of production and distribution.

We believe there is a little confusion in some libertarian circles between social conviviality, group affinities and the economic function. Visions of happy Arcadias or free communes were imagined by the poets: of the past; for the future, conditions appear quite different. In the factory we do not seek the affinity of friendship but the affinity of work. It is not an affinity; of character, except on the basis of professional capacity and quality of work, which is the basis of conviviality in the factory. The "free commune" is the logical product of the concept of group affinity, but there are no such free communes in economy, because that would presuppose independence, and there are no independent communes. One thing is the free commune from the political or social standpoint and quite another, from an economic point of view. In the latter, our ideal is the federated commune, integrated in the economic total network of the country or countries in revolution.

Economic communism is also a relic of old juristic concepts of communal property and we who advocate the suppression of all private property do not wish that, in the place of the old individual owner, should appear a new proprietor with many heads. Our work on the land and in the factory does not make of us individual or collective proprietors of the land or of the factory; but it makes of us

contributors to the general welfare. Everything belongs to everybody and the product of all labor must be distributed as equitably as the human efforts themselves.

We cannot realize our economic revolution in a local sense; for economy on a localized basis, can only cause collective privation and scarcity of goods. Economy is today, a vast organism and all isolation must prove detrimental. Only with the suppression of specialized labor can we imagine the free commune as an economic ideal. This, needless to add, is quite impossible. We must work with a social criterion, considering the interests of the whole country and if possible, of the whole world.

The Libertarian Revolution

We have said that anarchism is the expression of our will for a free life. We have affirmed that anarchism can exist in penury or in abundance, under one or another form of economy. We will now dwell on another phase of libertarian thought.

Our chief distinction as individuals and as a movement is represented in our position on the principle of authority, in our perennial affirmation of respect for the liberty of all and of each. Apart from the method, we can coincide in economic solutions with other social forces. In the political solution, we substitute for the principle of authority and its maximum incarnation, the State and its oppressive institutions, the free accord of social groups. In this position, we anarchists are more isolated, and even in a victorious revolution we would still be set off by ourselves. We believe that a great number of people are not with us through ignorance; that the majority have been influenced negatively by their systematic education. Besides, they do not understand our aspirations, not having the same sensitiveness, or a sufficient development of the sense of liberty, in, dependence and justice.

The revolution may awake in many men the forces of liberation, held in lethargy by daily routine and by a hostile environment. But it cannot by art or magic convert the anarchist minority into an absolute social majority. And even if tomorrow we were to become a majority, there would still remain a dissident minority which would suspect and oppose our innovations, fearing our experimental audacity.

However, if today we do not renounce violence in order to fight enslaving forces, in the new economic and social order of things we can follow only the line of persuasion and practical experience. We can oppose with force those who try to subjugate us in behalf of their interests or concepts, but we cannot resort to force against those who do not share our points of view, and who do not desire to live as we attempt to. Here, our respect for liberty must encompass the liberty of our adversaries to live their own life, always on the condition that they are not aggressive and do not deny the freedom of others.

If, in the social revolution, in spite of all the obstacles, we were to become a majority, the practical work of economic reconstruction would be enormously facilitated, because we could immediately count on the good will and support of the great masses. But even so, we would have to respect the experiments of different minorities, and reach an understanding with them in the exchange of products and services. Surely, as an historical minority, we anarchists have the right of re-vindicating this same liberty of experimentation and to defend it with all our might against any individual party or class which would attempt to crush it. Any totalitarian solution is of fascist tailoring, even though it may be defended in the name of the proletariat and the revolution. The new mode of life is a social hypothesis, which only practical experience should evaluate.

We are convinced that right and justice are on our side, although at the same time we recognize the rights of other social tendencies, methods and aspirations. We believe that the truth is nearer our concepts but we do not consider ourselves infallible, nor do we deny the sincerity and good faith of other doctrines. Which is to be the method to prove these or other social hypotheses: our own or some other revolutionary program?

In the Middle-Ages, one inclined to the judgment of God. Later men would resolve their dispute by a duel. The one who crushed the head of the other would be the victor of justice and truth. Do we wish in our day, in place of the judgment of God, to accept force as the sole means of resolving the truth between different revolutionary tendencies? We reflect back to anarchism in Russia: has its practical extermination by the new dictatorship proved that it had no right to exist? If we condemn this procedure in demonstrating the superiority of a given revolutionary party, we do not do so because it was practiced in Russia, but we would have to condemn it even if it were attempted in Spain by ourselves. We want, first of all, to recognize the right of free experimentation for all social tendencies in our revolution; for this reason, it will not be a new tyranny, but the entrance into a reign of freedom and well being, in which all forces can show themselves, all initiative be tried out and all progress be put in practice.

Violence is justified in the destruction of the old world of violence, but it is counterrevolutionary and antisocial when it is employed as a reconstructive method.

In Asturias, during the October revolution, two well-defined tendencies came into relief — in some localities a socialist republic was proclaimed and in others, libertarian communism. If the revolution had had a different outcome, what would have been the consequence? Unfortunately the respect for free experimentation would have had to depend on the force our tendency had at its disposal, in defense against contrary pretensions of a totalitarian regime. The anarchists would have had no objection to the innovation in Oviedo of the methods of labor and distribution proposed by the Socialists, while in Gijon and La Felguera, libertarian communism was put into practice. Perhaps the Socialist and Communist tendencies not being identical, on the day following the triumph over the bourgeoisie and the State, a Civil War might have broken out, to determine whether the future would be social, democratic, bolshevist or libertarian, a war between brothers, which would have annihilated the spirit and the promises of the revolution.

We do not know if our friends in Asturias would have been able to defend their right of existence against a socialist or communist totalitarianism. Perhaps there, they would have found themselves in minority. But in the rest of Spain, in the event of a revolution, we would have been an indisputable majority, as manifested in Aragon, Rioja and Navarre, in Andalusia, in Catalonia and in Levante. Imagine the disaster and the death of the revolution, were we to affirm the same totalitarian criterion maintained by socialists and bolshevists.

In the political aspect, naturally, we must renounce; the hegemony of a committee, of a party, or of a given tendency; that is, we must renounce the State as an institution which demands obedience from all with or without their consent. Without this renunciation of a State dictating the law for all, there can be no true revolution or social wellbeing, because the maintenance of the State is the maintenance of the largest source of exploitation of human labor.

This does not imply that the economic order would exclude solidarity, mutual aid and agreement. On the contrary, where economic localism is impossible, libertarian communist Gijon needs socialist Oviedo. Just as in the question of economic organization, what is most important is reciprocal good will between the parties to a pact. Assuming this good will, agreement must follow, notwithstanding political and social divergences, which might separate the interested parties. In this way, it is possible to organize a magnificent network of relations and exchanges, on an entire national scale, without the precondition of a sole regime regulating life and production on a monopolistic basis.

For over half a century, Marxism has produced division in the ranks of the workers by its dogmatic embrace of the totalitarian state concept. We aim for the unity of the workers; for, without unity, they will continue to serve as cannon fodder, or as beasts of burden, for the benefit of the privileged class in power. But we want this unity to emerge from the common interests of all and to guarantee the freedom of the individual within the collective organism. There is a common basis of accord, and it is the sincere recognition of differences of character, temperament and education, and the solemn promise of mutual

understanding, through mutual respect, in our common aspiration: the suppression of capitalism and the totalitarian state, towards the triumph of the Revolution.

Spain and the Revolution

We are living in a crisis, in a universal decomposition of values, institutions and systems. Unfortunately, the people have not been prepared for so great a demoralization, either psychologically or materially. That is why, surrounded with misery, they have not been able to throw off the old fetishes. And so, they fall from one idolatry to another, from one serfdom to another; instead of gathering their forces and gaining confidence in themselves and in their capacity for a better life.

It is deplorable to look at the spectacle of whole nations bending down on their knees in subjection imploring for a chief, a leader, or remaining subordinated to those, who promise to strengthen the chains of slavery. Germany is satisfied with her Fuhrer, Italy has faith in the Duce, Russia confides in Stalin. The opinion of minorities, in opposition, does not count. We believe that it isn't all the result of violence, oppression and savagery; to our mind, this situation is explained by voluntary servitude. The people have no confidence in themselves through no fault of their own but due to the centuries of perverted education. The seeds of mental slavery yield their fruit, and only the anarchists, against all currents, have been able to maintain their incorruptible faith in themselves.

Never in the history of the world has there been a more favorable situation for a change of regime. The old institutions, the old moral, political, social and economic interpretations are in plain disruption. All that is needed is the final impetus, to throw all the decrepitude over the precipice, so that the people may at last assume the responsibility for their own destiny. But the years pass on, the privileged classes grope in the dark for solutions, applying panaceas; and although they go from failure to failure, the game goes on, at the expense of those who labor and suffer. And the most notable thing is — instead of fortifying the revolutionary battlefield — the world panorama offers us a contrary picture: we see the reactionary front fortified towards the restoration of the old powers, intensified.

Insecurity and discontent are general. The bourgeoisie and the magnates of industry, commerce and agriculture are also very unhappy. They vegetate in the high spheres under a continuous strain of shocks. The crash of 1929 in New York threw thousands and thousands from lordly comfort to the depths of despair. It seemed at first a temporary crisis, which needed only some readjustments; but the years passed on and we see that it is not a crisis but a definite bankruptcy of the entire system of capitalism. A new economy is necessary. Everybody agrees to this and still solutions are being sought on the basis of privilege and the exclusion of the productive masses from the direction of their work and destiny.

The totalitarian state appears as a solution. The direction of economy, having failed under private capitalism, will in the future rest upon the power of the state. This is all the intelligence of the bourgeoisie, seconded by the Marxist tendency, have known how to propose. It is said a totalitarian state will eliminate the contradictions of rival capitalist groups, suppress the friction of the struggle of classes and convert the economic apparatus of an entire country into a single power, responding to a single will.

Undoubtedly an economic coordination is necessary, but when attained by the State, the remedy is worse than the illness, because it is achieved at the cost of exterminating all the values, initiatives, etc., which have no origin in the State.

Moreover, the totalitarian state represents authority raised to the maximum degree; it must fortify its institutions, maintain an army, police force and bureaucracy, which will enormously increase the burden of taxation. This sole fact is the best argument to ordain its failure. The modern state is insupportable not only because of its tyranny but because it is excessively expensive and because its essential functions are obstacles to social development. The totalitarian state increases parasitism in great magnitude, as

is evidenced in the countries, where it has been put into practice. Under these conditions, the crisis of a system is not remedied. On the contrary, the economic disruption is made worse. The suppression of the cry of pain and protest does not imply the suppression of the pain itself, nor of the right of protest. As a logical complement to the totalitarian state: appears the doctrine of nationalism, of racism, and of anything which suppresses the personality before a more powerful divinity; nationalism is war, and war is the cause of new calamities, the harbinger of new degradations of feelings and of human thought.

The modern state, having failed in its liberal dressings and in its democratic aspects, has left only the alternative of a totalitarian state, with omnipotent power in economy, and no restraint or moral scruple of any kind, when defending its existence.

We have to choose once for all. On the one side we have the state, that is, capitalism, which means war, which means unemployment and the crushing of producers by heavy taxation, and the persecution of free thought. On the other side, we have the socialization of economy, the direct understanding between producers, to regulate production and distribution according to necessities, without economic, political or social parasitism. We wish to point out again to those who still have illusions as to a proletarian government, that the capitalism of the state does not suppress capitalism, but conduces to a temporary revival of capitalism; that the government of the proletariat is like any other government, only worse, because it ties the workers spiritually to its institutions, in the hope of impossible solutions.

There is another way, our way, that of socialization and the entente of all the producers as such, and all the consumers, on the basis of their possession of the product of their labor. Religious, political and social ideas need not enter into this accord. What does it matter if people believe in God or the devil, if they are religious or atheists, Catholics or Protestants, conservatives or Socialists? We are interested simply in realizing the ideal of all who work, which ideal is the possession of the integral product of labor, possible only in a socialized economy. The workers' organizations have already in Spain the framework of an immediate economic coordination, through the network of syndical and cooperative organizations. Neither capitalism nor the state has an economic basis of action, as complete as our workers' organizations. For them, it would be relatively easy even now to take over the production and distribution on the basis of the principle of the satisfaction of necessities. This would benefit even the parasites who by birth, education or inherent conditions, find themselves on the margin of productive activity, performing a function, which is perhaps secretly repugnant to them, of being simply watchdogs of the wealth of the privileged classes.

The revolution of 1917 in Russia awakened millions and millions of slaves to the consciousness of a new life. The fall of the Czar and the intervention of the proletariat in the direction of their destiny's, was greeted with an indescribable joy. Russia became the symbol for all the revolutionary proletarian forces. We were not the last but among the first to be on the side of Russia when it was the great hope of the oppressed.

Politics of the state have killed the socialist spirit and in a few years that great country left off being a symbol of liberty to become the ideal of bureaucrats. Today it is an imperialistic power among other powers, preparing for war just like all the other nations and having as little to do with socialism and the ideals of the proletariat, as any other state. This development might astonish and surprise many, but not the anarchists, who have pointed out the danger by their constant criticism.

Once more history confirms the certitude of our predictions. The politics of State and Socialism harmonize as little as water with fire. If one triumphs, the other must succumb, and vice versa. Socialism can be created only in the measure that the State is destroyed and popular institutions are erected to take over a direct control of production and distribution. With a disappearance of the symbol of the Orient (the myth of Russia as Berkman defined it), there has risen for the revolting slaves of the world a new symbol, the symbol of Spain. Today, Spain represents the last standard bearer of the spirit of liberty, the last hope of resurrection in this dark-age.

We are not patriots, we do not glorify nationalism, our Fatherland doesn't exist where there is in place of justice only misery and slavery. In the concert of capitalist nations, our country can only represent an insignificant link, a semi-colony in which only a minority of privileged rich can enjoy and bless life at the expense of the sweat and the privations of the great mass of Spanish workers and peasants. In the capitalist regime, Spain can represent only an extremely subordinate role on account of her industrial backwardness and the ignorance of her laborious masses. If the Spanish panorama is to be modified under the capitalist regime, it will be the work and initiative of foreign capital, due to the lower mentality and insignificant spirit of enterprise of native capitalists, which would imply forcibly the further dependency of the country.

But if the Spanish people should break their chains and proceed to build up a new order based on work and solidarity, then Spain would rise from the lowest rungs of the scale of modern nations to the supreme head of progressive humanity and serve as an example and stimulus, as the great living symbol of the future for the entire world.

We have seen in other countries how progressive movements have fallen under the crushing weight of regressive hordes. To save Spain from such a destiny, we are ready to suffer the greatest of sacrifices. We aim for a libertarian regime without laws and authoritarians, which we would replace by free federations and solidarity for a common cause. We know and are able to live in accord with our tenets, and we feel that even those most poisoned by the virus of authoritarianism will adapt themselves happily to a regime of life and work of mutual help, which we advocate. We entertain the firm conviction that the world will be happy only when it is free, when it will have exterminated from its institutions and activities and ideas; — the domination and exploitation of man by man.

The situation is grave. The enemy has shut itself up in fortresses and menaces the total extermination of all the progressive movements. We may be the first to fall, but we will not be the last, as in Italy, as in Germany and other lands. There is talk of defensive alliances, of popular fronts. We have always favored and worked, to the point of fatigue, for the consolidation of all progressive tendencies, to oppose the imminent retrocession in the direction of fascism. We have warned the liberal and left political parties that all attempts to break down the power of the CNT must of necessity rebound to themselves. Our experience has shown us that the change of rudders and ideologies, without removing the State, only aggravates the economic, social and moral evils. That is why we cannot participate in alliances which are concerned more with the aim to divide the spoils in the new State, or simply with the limited objective of opposing a determined form of fascism, a specific type of tyranny, or a special kind of capitalism.

We repeat: we are ready to sacrifice many of ourselves, but it must be for an alliance rising from the heart of the proletariat, and from the centers of production. It must be for a united front of the producers to assure all who work the full mastery of their product. This unity can come only on the terrain of liberty, agreement and mutual respect for the present and future. This is not possible under the premise of a conquered State, which would necessarily afford the force of law to personal ambitions, and thus again become the natural enemy of the people.

To deny the reactionary, antisocial and anti-proletarian significance of the State would be equivalent to suicide. The state can no more fraternize with liberty than water with fire; nor can it in any way fulfill the fundamental demand "he who does not work should not eat." How easy would it be for the workers to agree, without the meddling of ambitious opportunists seeking power in the political parties!

The Spanish people possess an immense creative capacity. Spain has traditions of free life, material resources together with brawn and brain. In Spain, everything remains to be done in industry, agriculture, forestry, the means of communication, and culture. The work to be realized is immense in all domains. A revolution cannot do miracles. But it would liberate energies paralyzed by the present system and direct all efforts to social utility. In a few years, Spain could clothe, house and feed her population decently. At the same time Spain would become a guiding power of first order, and her word would be heard universally. Her example would not take long in being seconded by other countries, and at last

the fatuous edifice of authoritarianism would crumble to the ground together with all its pestilence and human burdens. And while Russia is preparing her million soldiers to fight alongside of capitalist France in the next war, Spain could at last lift her voice and proclaim peace to the world in reply to the mad race of modern states towards degeneration and disaster.

This little peninsula could be the cradle of a new era; and it might be the tomb of a great hope. The future, not very distant, will pronounce the final word.

Cooperative Scavenging

Margaret Killjoy

2010

“We have no more interest in repairing civilization than a scrapyard does in repairing cars. When you see a roadkill deer, you don’t attempt emergency breathing — you skin and eat it. Well, if you eat meat.” — Sara Czolgosz

In the previous issue, I laid out the basics of post-civilization theory (affectionately referred to by most people I know as “post-civ”). The really, really short version of it is: we don’t like civilization, but we’re not primitivists either. Oh sure, we learned a lot from our relationship with civilization, but in the end, it was just too abusive. It’s time to break up, it’s time to move on.

In this issue, we’re going to take a close look at post-civilized approaches to production and highlight a possible way to undermine the capitalist economic system.

The Scavenger Versus The Civilian

Let’s say there’s a civilian, and she’s hungry. She chooses a recipe from the cookbook and then goes to the store to purchase the ingredients.

Elsewhere, there’s a scavenger that’s hungry too. She looks to see what food is available and plans her meal accordingly. At all times, she’s passively on the lookout for food, from her garden, from the dumpsters, the discount bins, or gleaned from wild plants.

You might have guessed it: we post-civilized favor the scavenger approach. This applies to most all things, from art to science to education. We favor this approach for so many reasons (admittedly, aesthetic taste is among them).

The civilized idea is that productivity exists for its own sake: automobile manufacturers make cars because it’s what they do. At no point is the question asked, “Have we made enough cars yet?” (The answer to that question, by the way, is obviously yes. Even if we wanted a car culture, we have all the personal automobiles we could possibly need, waiting to be repaired or improved upon.) Forests get cleared and new houses get built while buildings elsewhere sit empty.

This sort of behavior is not reflective of the cunning and resourcefulness of the animal we evolved to be. It’s a cultural imposition forced upon us by civilization.

A civilian will shop for ideologies like she’s buying a new phone, taking a gander at a few before picking one right off the shelf. A scavenger will dissect ideologies, collect the interesting bits, and put them together with other ideas to form her own worldview.

Because, when it comes down to it, a scavenger is a hacker, a hacker is a scavenger.

“That’s fine and good for a tiny minority,” you might be thinking (or, more interestingly, screaming and gesticulating wildly), “but an entire society couldn’t function as scavengers: who would grow the food? Who would build the tables?”

And you’d probably be right, if you were thinking or yelling that. Most of us live in population densities too high to sustain a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. But hunter-gatherer isn’t what we’re going for, exactly. We’ll grow food, we just aren’t going to grow monocultured corn for export. We’ll still build tables, but we’ll build them out of what’s available, and we’ll build them where it’s appropriate.

This isn’t about a purity of approach. In fact, it isn’t about purity at all.

Undermining the Capitalist Economy

We want to use the resources that are available to us already before we go about making more. How, then, do we restructure society to allow for this? Revolution is always a possibility, albeit one without a tremendous track record. Collapse? Civilization, at least the global one, is as likely as not going to

do itself in at some point. But who wants to die, and who wants to wait until we've left the land and oceans scorched and devoid of life?

Post-civilization theory posits that it's useful to begin to live post-civilized here and now, whether or not a rev-ocalypse is going to save us in a year or two. So how are we going to do it?

Nothing I'll talk about in this column, today or ever, is meant as prescriptive. But there are a couple ideas out there.

One of them is to begin to supplant the market capitalist economy, right the hell now. The co-op and syndicalist movements of the 19th and 20th century were on the right track: the co-ops took the middleman out and distributed directly to people, saving everyone money. And the syndicalists took control of industry by firing their bosses and working as equals. But we don't really want money or industry, certainly not on the scale we have today.

If most of the things — the actual tangible objects we need — have already been made, it can be as simple as getting them to people free of charge. Free stores, we call them in the US (and give-away shops elsewhere, I believe). These are storefronts operated by volunteers that act as secondhand shops in which everything is free.

But by and large, these storefronts are isolated and cannot handle the enormous mass of goods that will otherwise be wasted every day in the civilized world. So then, my proposal, to be enacted on a citywide level:

- Rent or purchase a warehouse. Store donated and acquired resources.
- Rent, purchase, or squat storefronts in multiple neighborhoods throughout the town. Distribute said resources.

As more people's needs are met outside of market economics, the less they will depend upon that market. With less people shopping, the capitalist economy will suffer, leaving more people dependent upon the new, alternative economy, which will experience growth. Eventually, the old methods will be obsolete. The gift economy will grow beyond secondhand items to include food, artisan crafts, and volunteer labor.

There are two major obstacles to overcome on the local level in order to be effective: rent and the clubhouse effect.

By starting with a network of stores (and a warehouse), rather than a single location, we can hope to minimize the clubhouse effect. People often feel alienated by the cliquish nature of radical circles. Some people who have pointed this out in the past feel like the proper solution then is to water down our politics, or to ascertain that we in no way look or act "weird." This is the lowest-common-denominator approach that, among other things, explains why large-scale majoritarian democracy always leads to such bland, useless culture and politics.

So instead of a single homogenous radical culture, it's best to have a large number of diverse cultures acting in solidarity with one another. Allow the central warehouse to be common ground for all of the groups, but let each individual free store be as subcultural as it wants. Just be certain to encourage all subcultures to participate and get in on the act.

The issue of rent can be more complicated. The stores could run on a voluntary subscription model: subscription carries no specific, tangible benefits (like the first pick of the best recycled stuff), but would encourage people to donate some portion of their income every month to pay the rent on the individual stores and the central warehouse. Obviously, methods that minimize costs may be necessary. This can work with no paid staff (after all, a full-time volunteer ought to be able to live entirely off the goods within the gift economy!), bike carts and bakfiets can be used to transport goods whenever possible, and storefronts can be squatted in places where open squats are tolerated.

But these obstacles are, really, quite minor. And now, in what yet might be the death throes of the existing economy, the need of — and opportunity for — a better method of economics has never been greater.

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The Wage System

Pëtr Kropotkin

1920

I. Representative Government and Wages

In their plan for the reconstruction of society, the Collectivists commit, in our opinion, a double error. Whilst speaking of the abolition of the rule of capital, they wish, nevertheless, to maintain two institutions which form the very basis of that rule, namely, representative government and the wage system.

As for representative government, it remains absolutely incomprehensible to us how intelligent men (and they are not wanting amongst the Collectivists) can continue to be the partisans of national and municipal parliaments, after all the lessons on this subject bestowed on us by history, whether in England or in France, in Germany, Switzerland or the United States. Whilst parliamentary rule is seen to be everywhere falling to pieces; whilst its principles in themselves — and no longer merely their applications — are being criticized in every direction, how can intelligent men calling themselves Revolutionary Socialists, seek to maintain a system already condemned to death?

Representative government is a system which was elaborated by the middle class to make head against royalty and, at the same time, to maintain and augment their domination of the workers. It is the characteristic form of middle-class rule. But even its most ardent admirers have never seriously contended that a parliament or municipal body does actually represent a nation or a city; the more intelligent are aware that this is impossible. By upholding parliamentary rule the middle class have been simply seeking to oppose a dam between themselves and royalty, or between themselves and the territorial aristocracy, without giving liberty to the people. It is moreover plain that, as the people become conscious of their interests, and as the variety of those interests increases, the system becomes unworkable. And this is why the democrats of all countries are seeking for different palliatives or correctives and cannot find them. They are trying the Referendum, and discovering that it is worthless; they prate of proportional representation, of the representation of minorities, and other parliamentary utopias. In a word, they are striving to discover the undiscoverable; that is to say, a method of delegation which shall represent the myriad varied interests of the nation; but they are being forced to recognize that they are upon a false track, and confidence in government by delegation is passing away.

It is only the Social Democrats and Collectivists who are not losing this confidence, who are attempting to maintain so-called national representation; and this is what we cannot understand.

If our Anarchist principles do not suit them, if they think them inapplicable, they ought, at least, as it seems to us, to try to discover what other system of organization could well correspond to a society without capitalists or landlords. But to take the middle class system — a system already in its decadence, a vicious system if ever there was one — and to proclaim this system (with a few innocent corrections, such as the imperative mandate, or the Referendum the uselessness of which has been demonstrated already) good for a society that has passed through the Social Revolution, is what seems to us absolutely incomprehensible, unless under the name of Social Revolution they understand something very different from Revolution, some petty botching of existing, middle-class rule.

The same with regard to the wage system. After having pro-claimed the abolition of private property and the possession in common of the instruments of production, how can they sanction the maintenance of the wage system under any form? And yet this is what the Collectivists are doing when they praise the efficiency of labor notes.

That the English Socialists of the early part of this century should invent labor notes is comprehensible. They were simply trying to reconcile Capital and Labor. They repudiated all idea of laying violent hands upon the property of the capitalists. They were so little of revolutionaries that they declared themselves ready to submit even to imperial rule, if that rule would favor their co-operative societies. They remained middle class men at bottom, if charitable ones; and this is why (Engels has said so in his preface to the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848) the Socialists of that period were to be found amongst the middle class, whilst the advanced workmen were Communists.

If later Proudhon took up this same idea, that again is easy to understand. What was he seeking in his Mutualist system, if not to render capital less offensive, despite the maintenance of private property, which he detested to the bottom of his heart, but which he believed necessary to guarantee the individual against the state? Further, if economists, belonging more or less to the middle class, also admit labor notes, it is not surprising. It matters little to them whether the worker be paid in labor notes or in coin stamped with the effigy of king or republic. They want to save, in the coming overthrow, private property in inhabited houses, the soil, the mills; or, at least, in inhabited houses and the capital necessary for the production of manufactures. And to maintain this property, labor notes will answer very well.

If the labor note can be exchanged for jewels and carriages, the owner of house property will willingly accept it as rent. And as long as the inhabited house, the field and the mill belong to individual owners, so long will it be requisite to pay them in some way before they will allow you to work in their fields or their mills, or to lodge in their houses. And it will also be requisite to pay wages to the worker, either in gold or in paper money or in labor notes exchangeable for all sorts of commodities.

But how can this new form of wages, the labor note, be sanctioned by those who admit that houses, fields, mills are no longer private property, that they belong to the commune or the nation?

II. The Collectivist Wage System

Let us examine more closely this system for the remuneration of labor, as set forth by the English, French, German and Italian Collectivists.¹⁸

It comes very much to this: Every one works, be it in fields, in factories, in schools, in hospitals or what not. The working day is regulated by the state, to which belong the soil, factories, means of communication and all the rest. Each worker, having done a day's work, receives a labor note, stamped, let us say, with these words: eight hours of labor. With this note he can procure any sort of goods in the shops of the state or the various corporations. The note is divisible in such a way that one hour's worth of meat, ten minutes' worth of matches, or half-an-hour's worth of tobacco can be purchased. Instead of saying: "two pennyworth of soap," after the Collectivist Revolution they will say: "five minutes' worth of soap."

Most Collectivists, faithful to the distinction established by the middle-class economists (and Marx also) between qualified (skilled) and simple (unskilled) labor, tell us that qualified or professional toil should be paid a certain number of times more than simple toil. Thus, one hour of the doctor's work should be considered as equivalent to two or three hours of the work of the nurse, or three hours of that of the navvy. "Professional or qualified labor will be a multiple of simple labor," says the Collectivist Grönlund, because this sort of labor demands a longer or shorter apprenticeship.

Other Collectivists, the French Marxists for example, do not make this distinction. They proclaim "equality of wages." The doctor, the schoolmaster and the professor will be paid (in labor notes) at the same rate as the navvy. Eight hours spent in walking the hospitals will be worth the same as eight hours spent in navvies' work or in the mine or the factory.

Some make a further concession; they admit that disagreeable, or unhealthy labor, such as that in the sewers, should be paid at a higher rate than work which is agreeable. One hour of service in the sewers may count, they say, for two hours of the labor of the professor. Let us add that certain Collectivists advocate the wholesale remuneration of trade societies. Thus, one society may say: "Here are a hundred tons of steel. To produce them one hundred workers of our society have taken ten days; as our day consisted of eight hours, that makes eight thousand hours of labor for one hundred tons of steel; eighty

¹⁸The Spanish Anarchists, who continue to call themselves Collectivists, understand by this term common possession of the instruments of labor and "liberty for each group to share the produce of labor as they think fit"; on Communist principles or in any other way.

hours a ton." Upon which the State will pay them eight thousand labor notes of one hour each, and these eight thousand notes will be distributed amongst the fellow-workers in the foundry as seems best to themselves.

Or again, if one hundred miners have spent twenty days in hewing eight thousand tons of coal, the coal will be worth two hours a ton, and the sixteen thousand labor notes for one hour each received by the miners' union will be divided amongst them as they think fair.

If there be disputes: if the miners protest and say that a ton of steel ought to cost six hours of labor instead of eight; or if the professor rate his day twice as high as the nurse; then the State must step in and regulate their differences.

Such, in a few words, is the organization which the Collectivists desire to see arising from the Social Revolution. As we have seen, their principles are: collective property in the instruments of labor and remuneration of each worker according to the time spent in productive toil, taking into account the productiveness of his work. As for their political system, it would be parliamentary rule, ameliorated by the change of men in power, the imperative mandate, and the referendum — i.e., the general vote of Yes or No upon questions submitted to the popular decision.

Now, we must at once say that this system seems to us absolutely incapable of realization.

The Collectivists begin by proclaiming a revolutionary principle — the abolition of private property — and, as soon as proclaimed, they deny it, by maintaining an organization of production and consumption springing from private property.

They proclaim a revolutionary principle and ignore the consequences it must necessarily bring about. They forget that the very fact of abolishing individual property in the instruments of production (land, factories, means of communication, capital) must cause society to set out in a new direction; that it must change production from top to bottom, change not only its methods but its ends; that all the everyday relations between individuals must be modified as soon as land, machinery and the rest are considered as common possessions.

They say: "No private property"; and immediately they hasten to maintain private property in its everyday forms. "For productive purposes you are a commune," they say; "the fields, the tools, the machinery, all that has been made up to this day — manufactures, railways, wharves, mines to all of you in common. Not the slightest distinction will be made concerning the share of each one in this collective property.

"But from tomorrow you are minutely to discuss the part that each one of you is to take in making the new machines, digging the new mines. From tomorrow you are to endeavor to weigh exactly the portion which will accrue to each one from the new produce. You are to count your minutes of work, you are to be on the watch lest one moment of your neighbor's toil may purchase more than yours.

"You are to calculate your hours and your minutes of labor, and since the hour measures nothing, — since in one factory a workman can watch four looms at once, whilst in another he only watches two, you are to weigh the muscular force, the energy of brain, the energy of nerve expended. You are scrupulously to count up the years of apprenticeship, that you may value precisely the share of each one amongst you in the production of the future. And all this, after you have declared that you leave entirely out of your reckoning the share he has taken in the past."

Well, it is evident to us that a society cannot organize itself upon two absolutely opposing principles, two principles which contradict one another at every step. And the nation or the commune which should give to itself such an organization would be forced either to return to private property or else to transform itself immediately into a communist society.

III. Unequal Remuneration

We have said that most Collectivist writers demand that in Socialist society remuneration should be based upon a distinction between qualified or professional labor and simple labor. They assert that an hour of the engineer's, the architect's or the doctor's work should be counted as two or three hours' work from the blacksmith, the mason or the nurse. And the same distinction, say they, ought to be established between workers whose trades require a longer or shorter apprenticeship and those who are mere day laborers.

Yes, but to establish this distinction is to maintain all the inequalities of our existing society. It is to trace out beforehand a demarcation between the worker and those who claim to rule him. It is still to divide society into two clearly defined classes: an aristocracy of knowledge above, a horny-handed democracy below; one class devoted to the service of the other; one class toiling with its hands to nourish and clothe the other, whilst that other profits by its leisure to learn how to dominate those who toil for it.

This is to take the distinctive features of middle-class society and sanction them by a social revolution. It is to erect into a principle an abuse which to-day is condemned in the society that is breaking up.

We know very well what will be said in answer. We shall be told about "Scientific Socialism." The middle-class economists, and Marx: too, will be cited to prove that there a good reason for a scale of wages, for the "labor force" of the engineer costs society more than the "labor force" of the navy. And, indeed, have not the economists striven to prove that, if the engineer is paid twenty times more than the navy, it is because the cost necessary to produce an engineer is more considerable than that necessary to produce a navy? And has not Marx maintained that the like distinction between various sorts of manual labor is of equal logical necessity? He could come to no other conclusion, since he took up Ricardo's theory of value and insisted that products exchange in proportion to the quantity of the work socially necessary to produce them.

But we know also how much of all this to believe. We know that if the engineer, the scientist and the doctor are paid today ten or a hundred times more than the laborer, and the weaver earns three times as much as the toiler in the fields and ten times as much as a match girl, it is not because what they receive is in proportion to their various costs of production. Rather it is in proportion to the extent of monopoly in education and in industry. The engineer, the scientist and the doctor simply draw their profits from their own sort of capital — their degree, their certificates — just as the manufacturer draws a profit from a mill, or as a nobleman used to do from his birth and title.

When the employer pays the engineer twenty times more than the workman, he makes this very simple calculation: if an engineer can save him £4,000 a year in cost of production, he will pay him £800 a year to do it. And if he sees a foreman is a clever sweater and can save him £400 in handicraft, he at once offers him £80 or £90 a year. He expends £100 where he counts upon gaining £1,000; that is the essence of the capitalist system. And the like holds good of the differences in various trades.

Where then is the sense of talking of the cost of production of labor force, and saying that a student who passes a merry youth at the University, has a right to ten times higher wages than the son of a miner who has pined in a pit since he was eleven? Or that a weaver has a right to wages three or four times higher than those of an agricultural laborer? The expenditure needed to produce a weaver is not four times as great as the necessary cost of producing a field worker. The weaver simply benefits by the advantageous position which industry enjoys in Europe as compared with parts of the world where at present there is no industrial development.

No one has ever estimated the real cost of production of labor force. And if an idler costs society much more than an honest workman, it still remains to be known if, when all is told (infant mortality amongst the workers, the ravages of anaemia the premature deaths) a sturdy day laborer does not cost society more than an artisan.

Are we to be told that, for example, the 1s. a day of a London workwoman and the 3d. a day of the Auvergne peasant who blinds herself over lace-making, represent the cost of production of these women? We are perfectly aware that they often work for even less, but we know also that they do it entirely because, thanks to our splendid social organization, they would die of hunger without these ridiculous wages.

The existing scale of wages seems to us a highly complex product of taxation, government interference, monopoly and capitalistic greed — in a word, of the State and the capitalist system. In our opinion all the theories made by economists about the scale of wages have been invented after the event to justify existing injustices. It is needless to regard them.

We are, however, certain to be informed that the Collectivist wage scale will, at all events, be an improvement. “You must admit,” we shall be told, “that it will, at least, be better to have a class of workers paid at twice or three times the ordinary rate than to have Rothschilds, who put into their pockets in one day more than a workman can in a year. It will be a step towards equality.”

To us it seems a step away from it. To introduce into a Socialist society the distinction between ordinary and professional labor would be to sanction by the Revolution and erect into a principle a brutal fact, to which we merely submit today, considering it all the while as unjust. It would be acting after the manner of those gentlemen of the Fourth of August, 1789, who proclaimed, in high sounding phraseology, the abolition of feudal rights, and on the Eight of August sanctioned those very rights by imposing upon the peasants the dues by which they were to be redeemed from the nobles. Or again, like the Russian government at the time of the emancipation of the serfs when it proclaimed that the land henceforth belonged to the nobility, whereas previously it was considered an abuse that the land which belonged to the peasants should be bought and sold by private persons.

Or, to take a better known example, when the Commune of 1871 decided to pay the members of the Communal Council 12s. 6d. a day, whilst the National Guards on the rampart had only 1s. 3d., certain persons applauded this decision as an act of grand democratic equality. But, in reality, the Commune did nothing thereby but sanction the ancient inequality between officials and soldiers, governors and governed. For an Opportunist parliament such a decision might have seemed splendid, but for the Commune it was a negation of its own principles. The Commune was false to its own revolutionary principle, and by that very fact condemned it.

In the present state of society when we see Cabinet Ministers paying themselves thousands a year, whilst the workman has to content himself with less than a hundred; when we see the foreman paid twice or three times as much as the ordinary hand, and when amongst workers themselves there are all sorts of gradations from 7s. or 8s. a day down to the 3d. of the sempstress, we disapprove the large salary of the minister, and also the difference between the artisans eight-shillings and the sempstress' three-pence. And we say, “Let us have done with privileges of education as well as of birth.” We are Anarchists just because such privileges disgust us.

How can we then raise these privileges into a principle? How can we proclaim that privileges of education are to be the basis of an equal society, without striking a blow at that very Society. What is submitted today, will be submitted to no longer in society based on equality. The general above the soldier, the rich engineer above the workman, the doctor above the nurse, already disgust us. Can we suffer them in a society which starts by proclaiming equality?

Evidently not. The popular conscience, inspired by the idea of equality, will revolt against such an injustice, it will not tolerate it. It is not worth while to make the attempt.

That is why certain Collectivists, understanding the impossibility of maintaining a scale of wages in a society inspired by the influences the Revolution, zealously advocate equality in wages. But they only stumble against fresh difficulties, and their equality of wages becomes a Utopia as incapable of realization as the wage scale of the others. A society that has seized upon all social wealth, and has

plainly announced that all have a right to this wealth, whatever may be the part they have taken in creating it in the past, will be obliged to give up all idea of wages, either in money or in labor notes.

IV. Equal Wages *versus* Communism

“To each according to his deeds,” say the Collectivists, or rather according to his share of service rendered to society. And this is the principle they recommend as the basis of economic organization, after the Revolution shall have made all the instruments of labor and all that is necessary for production common property!

Well, if the Social Revolution should be so unfortunate as to proclaim this principle, it would be stemming the tide of human progress, it would be leaving unsolved the huge social problem cast by past centuries upon our shoulders.

It is true that in such a society as ours, where the more a man works the less he is paid, this principle may seem, at first sight, all aspiration towards justice. But at bottom it is but the consecration of past injustice. It is with this principle that the wage system started, to end where it is today, in crying inequalities and all the abominations of the present state of things. And it has ended thus because, from the day on which society began to value services in the money or any other sort of wages, from the day on which it was said that each should have only what he could succeed in getting paid for his work, the whole history of Capitalism (the State aiding therein) was written beforehand; its germ was enclosed in this principle.

Must we then return to our point of departure and pass once more through the same process of capitalist evolution? These theorists seem to desire it; but happily it is impossible; the Revolution will be Communistic; or it will be drowned in blood, and must be begun all over again.

Service rendered to society, be it labor in factory or field, or moral service, cannot be valued in monetary units. There cannot be an exact measure of its value, either of what has been improperly called its “value in exchange” or of its value in use. If we see two individuals, both working for years, for five hours daily, for the community, at two different occupations equally pleasing to them, we can say that, taken all in all, their labors are roughly equivalent. But their work could not be broken up into fractions, so that the product of each day, each hour or each minute of the labor of one should be worth the produce of each minute and each hour of that of the other.

Broadly speaking, we can say that a man who during his whole life deprives himself of leisure for ten hours daily has given much more to society than he who has deprived himself of but five hours a day, or has not deprived himself of any leisure at all. But we cannot take what one man has done during any two hours and say that this produce is worth exactly twice as much as the produce of one hour’s work from another individual, and reward each proportionately. To do this would be to ignore all that is complex in the industry, the agriculture, the entire life of society as it is; it would be to ignore the extent to which all individual work is the outcome of the former and present labors of society as a whole. It would be to fancy oneself in the Stone Age, when we are living in the Age of Steel.

Go into a coal mine and see that man stationed at the huge machine that hoists and lowers the cage. In his hand he holds a lever whereby to check or reverse the action of the machinery. He lowers the handle, and in a second the cage changes the direction of its giddy rush up or down the shaft. His eyes are attentively fixed upon an indicator in front of him which shows exactly the point the cage has reached; no sooner does it touch the given level than at his gentlest pressure it stops dead short, not a foot above or below the required place. And scarcely are the full trucks discharged or the empties loaded before, at a touch to the handle, the cage is again swinging up or down the shaft.

For eight or ten hours at a time he thus concentrates his attention. Let his brain relax but for an instant, and the cage would fly up and shatter the wheels, break the rope, crush the men, bring all the

work of the mine to a stand-still. Let him lose three seconds upon each reverse of the lever and, in a mine with all the modern improvements, the output will be reduced by from twenty to fifty tons a day.

Well, is it he who renders the greatest service in the mine? Or is it, perhaps, that boy who rings from below the signal for the mounting of the cage? Or is it the miner who risks his life every moment in the depths of the mine and will end one day by being killed by fire-damp? Or, again, the engineer who would lose the coal seam and set men hewing bare rock, if he merely made a mistake in the addition of his calculations? Or, finally, is it the owner, who has put all his patrimony into the concern, and who perhaps has said, in opposition to all previous anticipations: "Dig there, you will find excellent coal"?

All the workers engaged in the mine contribute to the raising of coal in proportion to their strength, their energy, their knowledge their intelligence and their skill. And we can say that all have the right to live, to satisfy their needs, and even gratify their whims, after the more imperious needs of every one are satisfied. But how can we exactly value what they have each done?

Further, is the coal that they have extracted entirely the result of their work? Is it not also the outcome of the work of the men who constructed the railway leading to the mine, and the roads branching off on all sides from the stations? And what of the work of those who have tilled and sown the fields which supply the miners with food, smelted the iron, cut the wood in the forest, made the machines which will consume the coal, and so on?

No hard and fast line can be drawn between the work of one and the work of another. To measure them by results leads to absurdity. To divide them into fractions and measure them by hours of labor leads to absurdity also. One course remains: not to measure them at all, but to recognize the right of all who take part in productive labor first of all to live, and then to enjoy the comforts of life.

Take any other branch of human activity, take our existence as a whole, and say which of us can claim the highest reward for his deeds?

The doctor who has divined the disease or the nurse who has assured its cure by her sanitary cares? The inventor of the first steam engine or the boy who one day, tired of pulling the cord which formerly served to open the valve admitting the steam beneath the piston, tied his cord to the lever of the machine, and went to play with his companions, without imagining that he had invented the mechanism essential to all modern machinery — the automatic valve? The inventor of the locomotive or that Newcastle workman who suggested that wooden sleepers should take the place of the stones which were formerly put under the rails and threw trains off the line by their want of elasticity? The driver of the locomotive or the signalman who stops the train or opens the way for it? To whom do we owe the trans-Atlantic cable? To the engineer who persisted in declaring that the cable would transmit telegrams, whilst the learned electricians declared that it was impossible? To Maury, the scientist, who advised the disuse of thick cables and the substitution of one no bigger than a walking stick? Or, after all, is it to those volunteers, from no one knows where, who spent day and night on the deck of the *Great Eastern*, minutely examining every yard of cable and taking out the nails that the shareholders of the maritime companies had stupidly caused to be driven through the isolating coat of the cable to render it useless?

And, in a still wider field, the vast tract of human life, with its joys, its sorrows, and its varied incidents, cannot each of us mention some one who during his life has rendered him some service so great, so important, that if it were proposed to value it in money he would be filled with indignation? This service may have been a word, nothing but a word in season, or it may have been months or years of devotion. Are you going to estimate these, the most important of all services, in labor notes? "The deeds of each"! But human societies could not live for two successive generations, they would disappear in fifty years, if each one did not give infinitely more than will be returned to him in money, in "notes" or in civic rewards. It would be the extinction of the race if the mother did not expend her life to preserve her children, if every man did not give some things without counting the cost, if human beings did not give most where they look for no reward.

If middle-class society is going to ruin; if we are today in a blind alley from which there is no escape without applying axe and torch to the institutions of the past, that is just because we have calculated too much. It is just because we have allowed ourselves to be drawn into giving that we may receive; because we have desired to make society into a commercial company based upon debit and credit.

Moreover, the Collectivists know it. They vaguely comprehend that a society cannot exist if it logically carries out the principle, "To each according to his deeds." They suspect that the needs (we are not speaking of the whims) of the individual do not always correspond to his deeds. Accordingly, De Paepe tells us:

"This eminently individualistic principle will be tempered by social intervention for the purpose of the education of children and young people (including their maintenance and nurture) and by social organizations for the assistance of the sick and infirm, asylums for aged workers, etc."

Even Collectivists suspect that a man of forty, the father of three children, has greater needs than a youth of twenty. They suspect that a woman who is suckling her child and spends sleepless nights by its cot, cannot get through so much work as a man who has enjoyed tranquil slumber.

They seem to understand that a man or woman worn out by having perhaps, worked over hard for society in general may find themselves incapable of performing so many "deeds" as those who take their hours of labor quietly and pocket their "notes" in the privileged offices of State statisticians.

And they hasten to temper their principle. Oh, certainly, they say, society will feed and bring up its children. Oh, certainly it will assist the old and infirm. Oh, certainly needs not deeds will be the measure of the cost which society will impose on itself to temper the principle of deeds.

What, Charity? Yes, our old friend, "Christian Charity," organized by the State.

Improve the founding hospital, organize insurance against age and sickness, and the principle of deeds will be "tempered." "Wound that they may heal," they can get no further.

Thus, then, after having forsworn Communism, after having sneered at their ease at the formula, "To each according to his needs," is it not obvious that they, the great economists, also perceive that they have forgotten something, i.e., the needs of the producers? And thereupon they hasten to recognize these needs. Only it is to be the State by which they are to be estimated, it is to be the State which will undertake to find out if needs are disproportionate to deeds.

It is to be the State that will give alms to him who is willing to recognize his inferiority. From thence to the Poor Law and the Workhouse is but a stone's throw.

There is but a stone's throw for even this step-mother of a society against which we are in revolt, has found it necessary to temper its individualistic principle. It too has had to make concessions in a Communistic sense, and in this same form of charity.

It also distributes halfpenny dinners to prevent the pillage of its shops. It also builds hospitals, often bad enough, but sometimes splendid, to prevent the ravages of contagious disease. It also after having paid for nothing but the hours of labor, receives the children of those whom it has itself reduced to the extremity of distress. It also takes account of needs — as a charity.

Poverty, the existence of the poor, was the first cause of riches. This it was which created the earliest capitalist. For, before the surplus value, about which people are so fond of talking, could begin to be accumulated it was necessary that there should be poverty-stricken wretches who would consent to sell their labor force rather than die of hunger. It is poverty that has made the rich. And if poverty had advanced by such rapid strides by the end of the Middle Ages, it was chiefly because the invasions and wars, the creation of States and the development of their authority, the wealth gained by exploitation in the East and many other causes of a like nature, broke the bonds which once united agrarian and urban communities, and led them, in place of the solidarity which they once practised, to adopt the

principle of the wage-system. Is this principle to be the outcome of the Revolution? Dare we dignify by the name of a Social Revolution that name so dear to the hungry, the suffering and the oppressed — the triumph of such a principle as this?

It cannot be so. For, on the day when ancient institutions splinter into fragments before the axe of the proletariat, voices will be heard shouting: Bread for all! Lodging for all! Right for all to the comforts of life!

And these voices will be heeded. The people will say to themselves: Let us begin by satisfying our thirst for the life, the joy the liberty we have never known. And when all have tasted happiness, we will set to work; the work of demolishing the last vestiges of middle-class rule, with its account-book morality, its philosophy of debit and credit, its institutions of mine and shine. “While we throw down we shall be building,” as Proudhon said; we shall build in the name of Communism and of Anarchy.

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**Proudhon's Ghost: petit-bourgeois
anarchism, anarchist businesses, and the
politics of effectiveness**

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2007

When they're not busy murdering, ignoring, or desperately courting anarchists as comrades, Marxists frequently resort to dismissive and/or scurrilous accusations. One of the most enduring is the charge that anarchism in and of itself is a petit-bourgeois — they sometimes also add individualist here — ideology. Marx's correct analysis of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's economic Mutualism as petit-bourgeois is the source of this dismissal; a nearly total absence of Proudhon's economic ideas among anarchists for the last 150 years, however, has made the continual use by Marxists of this century-old analysis seem silly.

In the meantime, and quite unfortunately, the spectacles of post-Seattle summit-hopping seem to have altered the expectations of our (until recently) reinvigorated anarchist milieu. How much time, effort, and energy did the activism of international travel, puppet making, and grant writing take away from the more mundane tasks of writing, distributing, and discussing anarchist theory and analysis, and then putting them into some kind of practice? The palpable lull in anarchist projects and activities, and an accompanying dearth of theoretical engagement among anarchists and other radicals interested in promoting and fomenting an anti-state and anti-capitalist future (to say nothing of such an engagement with the rest of the world), appears to be the result of this activist-driven exhaustion.

Within the past decade, occurring at the same time as this critical malaise (although certainly beginning earlier), and in the absence of trends to object to it specifically, we have witnessed an increasing influence of anarchist-run businesses, which has regenerated a factual foundation to the allegation that anarchism is petit-bourgeois. The centralization of commercial projects purporting to be anarchist has meant that most anarchists engage in the circulation of the printed material produced and distributed by those enterprises; the political agendas of most English-speaking/reading anarchists is thereby set — by others. General anarchist acquiescence to the predominance of these businesses as the defining projects of 21st century American anarchism cannot continue, that is if anarchists are to stake out and maintain an authentically anti-capitalist position.

Proudhon and Property

Proudhon, the father of modern anarchism, was a fan of private property, but not the sort that generates capital without labor. For Proudhon (as well as other socialists), real estate speculation, money lending at interest, and trading in stocks and bonds were considered unsavory because there was no actual physical work put into them. This is what he meant when he famously wrote "Property is Theft." Proudhon's People's Bank, along with the romanticized pastoralism of small-scale (cottage) industry and agriculture, were the hallmarks of his anti-statist social vision. Exchange of goods and services directly between the producers and consumers was to be the basis of a free and fair economy; prices or exchange values were to be negotiated and determined by the producers and consumers themselves without the interference of bankers, economic planners, or other experts and bureaucrats. That's what he meant when he less-famously wrote "Property is Liberty." Writing as Marx's contemporary in the mid-nineteenth century, Proudhon was reacting to the fitful implementation of industrialism and its accompanying process of proletarianization, finding fault with its centralizing and monopolizing tendencies. Marx and Engels (et al) found in that centralization the perfect mechanism for the creation of a self-conscious class, a revolutionary subject capable of expropriating the Means of Production once they (both the class and the means of production) became fully developed. Proudhon believed that the proletarianization of former peasants and ruined shopkeepers would only create a mass of alienated and submissive workers.

What is a petit bourgeois? In economic terms it refers to a small businessperson, someone who is either self-employed, works only with members of her/his family, or has a handful of employees; a shopkeeper. The petit bourgeois may hold the title to her store, but the bank holds the mortgage; the

petit bourgeois may or may not dislike neo-liberal globalization, and may grumble about the injustice of monopoly capitalism, but this is only a complaint about a particular organization of capitalism — the petit bourgeois is still a capitalist, relying on the exchange of commodities for a profit, however small. In Marxist slang (because of the Marxist assertion that economic status determines one's socio-cultural ideology) it's also used to describe a certain mentality that accompanies the precarious and self-centered economic status of the person whose relationship to the oft-cited Means of Production is not the same as that of the big bourgeois (large landowner, banker, boss). In class terms, the bourgeois is in constant conflict with the proletariat; the petit bourgeois can take either side, but more often than not comes down against the proletariat as well. If the historical mission of the proletariat is to expropriate the private property and social wealth of capitalists, then the petit bourgeois will ultimately remain loyal to the regime of capitalism, private property, and the state.

The petit bourgeois is stereotypically small-minded, parochial, conformist, acquisitive, stingy, and easily swayed by demagoguery. Populism (characterized by anti-intellectualism; the scapegoating of easy/abstract targets; charismatic yet approachable leaders, and the promotion of small-scale capitalism) is often the typical expression of petit-bourgeois politics.

Anarchist Property, Press, and Business

For centuries, those who have sought to change society from below have relied on the pamphlet and the small journal as the primary means for making their ideas known to others. Anarchists are no exception to this tradition, and it continues today. Educational efforts have been the most stable and long-lasting anti-authoritarian projects compared to communal living, modern schools, and labor unions. Whether it's the anarchist bookstore or infoshop, a one-time pamphlet, a poster, or a periodical, anarchist publishing and the distribution and discussion of printed material has been the primary effort of most anarchists for the past 150 years; indeed, most anarchist organizations have centered their activities around the production and distribution of periodicals.

No anarchist ever made a living at writing anarchist material; given the pervasiveness of capitalist social relations, that is to be expected. Journals are lucky to break even, while most incur substantial debt (the vibrant French anarchist publishing scene in the period leading up to WWI was funded largely through the armed robberies of the so-called Bonnot Gang and the pre-revolution Spanish anarchist press and their educational centers — ateneos, the infoshops of their day — were kept afloat through the expropriations carried out by CNT militants). With the rise of postmodernism and the explosion of niche marketing, a shift occurred; along with the encouragement of passively consuming — rather than actively participating in — dissidence, anarchist and other radical publishing, in North America at least, began to be looked upon as something that could become more than a financial black hole.

The relationship of many producers of anarchist commodities to their consumers has by now become (if it ever had a different potential) the same as that of the more honest (!) capitalist entrepreneur: supplier of identifiable accessories, from black and red messenger bags, to banners, bumperstickers, and hoodies. The entrepreneur/petit bourgeois isn't attached to the specific content of the crap being flogged, so long as it brings in a profit at the end of the fiscal period.

The fact that there might be anarchist content or an anarchist theme in printed material doesn't alter the relationship of author(s) to printer, or author(s) to readers, or printer to readers. Brand-name anarchist accoutrements are all commodities being offered for sale within the parameters of a market economy. The enterprises engaged in the production of these items as well as the venues (book fairs and others) are bound by the necessities of economic survival; unless the producers are financially solvent outside the project (and so are able to subsidize it), direct, non-monetary, exchange of goods with other producers can only occur on a limited basis — otherwise the project will certainly fail. The goal of being

a self-sustaining (or profit-making) multi-title publisher in a competitive economy can only be realized with an increasing monopoly on a desirable line of recognizable commodities; this is the petit-bourgeois wet dream. The economic imperative of the small business operator, to reinvest a percentage of profits in the project in order to expand the number and diversity of the products, operates without being called into question; if the goal is to get the Word out, get the Idea to more and more people, then success can only be measured using capitalist terms and logic, and no amount of protesting about the use of that logic, or the watering down of the message, can lessen this reliance on the tools of our exploiters.

Another, related, problem of having a business elite set our political agendas is the implicit proposition that all relevant theorizing and discussing of anti-state and anti-capitalist ideas has been completed — as if the Last Word of Anarchism were coterminous with the first words of Bakunin or Kropotkin, and that therefore the only task that remains is simply to sell as many books and pamphlets written by them as possible. The move by many writers (in books and journals, as well as on the internet) to quote Bakunin, and/or whoever else in the anarchist pantheon they wish to invoke as their favorite authority, is a reflection of this reluctance of our contemporary anti-intellectual comrades to bring anarchist ideas into the current century. Citing a famous published writer, as a means of ending debate, is an old authoritarian trick, unbecoming of anyone who adheres to a philosophy that celebrates independent thought. And we anarchists poke fun at the Marxists...

The first few San Francisco Bay Area Anarchist Book Fairs were places where commerce, trade (in the sense of direct non-monetary exchange), and socializing took place; a swap meet or flea market atmosphere made this annual event qualitatively different from just going into a store to shop. Most people offering merchandise more recently identify as vendors, looking at book fairs (and other events where printed material, t-shirts, tote bags, stickers, and other paraphernalia can be displayed) as purely mercantile events, where products and crafts are sold — not to comrades and friends in the course of conversation and unmediated interaction, but to anonymous consumers. These events have now become frenzies of niche market buying and selling, with consumers looking for the best deals while vendors look to entice more cash out of customers. Packaging has become more important than content; quasi- or non-anarchist pamphlets and books are published and distributed (and more often than not the same items appear on more than one vendor table) that are geared not to a specifically anarchist (or anarchist-curious) readership, but to a generically left-liberal (and therefore more affluent) consumer base. Production and distribution decisions are made in purely economic terms; whatever items are offered that are not explicitly within the bounds of the business mission statement are explained as profit-generating items that allow for the production of those items that are supposed to fit, or at least fit better. So at the display tables of anarchist vendors we are treated to the unabashed offerings of t-shirts with images of Che and books written by Leninists and other anti-anarchists. Contemporary anarchism apparently doesn't sell well to those interested in something more than product recognition, but the popular icons of statist rebellion apparently do just fine, which begs the question of who is actually buying this stuff. There are very few voices calling into question these unilateral, agenda-setting, business decisions; fewer still willing to insist that such decisions have real (mostly negative) consequences for the spread of anarchist ideas and practice — as opposed to Maoism hiding behind a circle-A, or red-and-black liberalism.

This combination of such questionable production decisions and the maintenance of the typical relationship of deliberate producer to passive consumer is what makes anarchist business practices particularly hard to swallow. After all, what difference does it make if the producer/proprietor offers goods that promote an anarchist theme if the context of its production and distribution is fully capitalist?

How have the business priorities, agendas, and decisions of the economic elite influenced the practices of the rest of us? How much has written and graphic agitation been left to those who've literally cornered the market, leaving the actual actors relying, for the vital task of evaluation and analysis, on the published accounts of others?

Anarchist Effectiveness, Capitalist Logic

There is an uncomfortable correlation between the desire to make anarchism (or anarchist ideas/projects/methods) more effective, and the pursuits of anarchist businesses. Part of the logic is circular: spreading the ideas is often what prompts the anarchist entrepreneur to start a business in the first place. What effectiveness means in the case of anarchist projects remains unclear; that of anarchist businesses can only mean more income and/or profit. The point is not that only a cash-poor or in-debt project can be truly anarchist, but that there's something fishy about a supposedly anti-capitalist project being successful (or effective) in capitalist terms. Are those who invoke effectiveness saying that they want anarchist ideas to be more popular? That they want more anarchists? That they want more groups to use anarchist organizational models and/or decision-making processes? In business terms, effectiveness means bigger or more influential — a larger market share. How are we to understand this push for anarchists to be more effective or influential? More importantly, how are we to judge whether or not anarchists are being effective at all — let alone more effective? What criteria should be used to (attempt to) make such a determination?

According to many commentators, in times and places (revolutionary or not) where anarchists and anarchist ideas have had some kind of noticeable presence, our influence has extended beyond our numbers. While I would prefer this to be true, it is difficult — at best — to support such a statement with actual evidence. Does that extended influence become noticeable when non-anarchists use non-hierarchical organizational models? When non-anarchists organize themselves into affinity groups and/or networks? When non-anarchists use some kind of directly democratic or consensus-type decision-making process? When non-anarchists use black and red on their logos? When dead anarchists are made into non-anarchist martyrs?

A related concern is that anarchists break out of our subcultural ghettos. The language used in this argument centers on effectiveness as well. In an article published two years ago in *Northeastern Anarchist*, a NEFACker commented that a time of the growth of infoshops and other small-scale anarchist projects was a depressing time “for anarchists.” After I questioned why the expansion of infoshops and related projects would be depressing for him, one of his supporters responded by asking about what “lasting contributions” such projects have made? This is a fair question, but only if one is looking for a direct causal relationship between one's anarchist activities and the influence of those activities on a wider, non-anarchist, public. Even their influence on other anarchists and other anarchist projects would be an interesting piece of information.

Those who are concerned with such questions are as unable as the rest of us to determine how much actual effectiveness their projects and activities have. Perhaps they are judging by the number of new members of their particular groups. Perhaps they are judging by the number of periodicals printed and/or distributed. The late Murray Bookchin averred that the approximate circulation of a flyer and a journal he co-wrote in the late 1960s was an accurate determinant for his and his group's influence. The print run of this magazine has fluctuated between five and a little over six thousand for the past six years, but does this mean it actually reaches 5000 people? That's highly doubtful; using corporate distributors means that we accept corporate distributor returns (a depressingly large number). Clearly there are people we don't know who are often picking up, sometimes buying, rarely subscribing, but definitely reading *AJODA*. Plus this periodical has been around for a quarter of a century — long enough to have some kind of influence. But again, how are we supposed to determine what it is and how much comes directly from us?

There's a certain capitalist logic involved in trying to determine quantitatively this cause and effect relationship between anarchist projects and anarchist effectiveness. At the end of the day (or year, or decade — sorry for those without the patience to wait that long), they seem to say, how many units of social transformation have we accumulated in the revolutionary accounts? To paraphrase a long-time

non-anarchist comrade, do (or can) these projects contain anything relevant to advancing the possibility of a large-scale movement for irreversible radical social change, or of relevance to anyone outside of a tiny subculture of people who like to call themselves anarchists?

Another fair question, but again, the actual data to help us make such a determination is sorely lacking; historically speaking, influences are most often decided upon after the fact. It is after a revolution occurs that the causes are picked out. Fifty years of tireless and dangerous education and agitation by anarchists is put forward as one of the causes of the early successes of Spanish Revolution in 1936; military defeat is touted as a primary cause of the overthrow of Tsarism. But the vast array of influences are often murkier, more difficult to decipher, and — more topically for this discussion — impossible to predict. Who knows if the addition of ten (or twenty or a hundred) infoshops and micropower radio stations will hasten an irreversible movement of radical social transformation in the United States? Who knows whether or not two (or ten or twenty) annual anarchist conferences will help spread the ideas and practical projects of destroying the state and all other institutional hierarchies? The problem with such criticisms is that some critics have already determined that these projects are irrelevant and offer no lasting contributions — to their particular organizations and visions. But based on what criteria? No immediate causal results, no increased market share, no coverage outside marginal media?

Anarchist Anti-Business, Anarchist Future

No matter how hard some may try to insist otherwise, anarchist practice does not start with, and cannot be based on, the purchasing of the proper brand of commodities. Radical practice begins with a refusal of hierarchy and the embrace of individual and group responsibility: in this case, rejecting unilateral business decisions that affect more people aside from those getting a piece of the action, and by refusing to reduce the determinants of a potentially positive interaction to the petit-bourgeois watchword “what’s in it for me?”

There have been, and continue to be, substantial achievements in getting anarchist ideas, theories, and practices to those curious about them. Independent and small presses have been an important source for much of the continued debate and refinement of anarchist, anti-state, and anti-capitalist theory and the various projects attached to those discussions. The creation of infoshops and other gathering spots as places where anarchists and other interested people can meet and read, discuss, and devise plans — and where commodity exchange doesn’t necessarily take place, and indeed is often actively discouraged — has been a largely positive example of (revived) anarchist practice. Internet discussion forums, conferences, study groups, the letters sections of periodicals, micropower radio, even the expansion of Food Not Bombs groups...for all their problems, these examples of expanding our day to day influence — if only on a limited scale — have also provided important commodity-free spaces, where the economic considerations of making a buck are completely ignored. The discovery, embrace, and celebration of egalitarianism, real affinity, friendships, solidarity, support networks, and empathic intimacy occur more easily where commodity exchange is absent, where relationships are not mediated by money or the creation and use of economic value, where commerce is absent and/or deliberately shunned. The basis of meaningful anarchist activity begins in these spaces. The maintenance and expansion of some kind of authentic revolutionary community and culture cannot be far behind.

I would like to thank BH and GD for their invaluable — that is, not quantifiable and therefore non-commodified — assistance in the writing of this essay.

What Is Communist Anarchism?

Alexander Berkman

1929

Forward

I consider anarchism the most rational and practical conception of a social life in freedom and harmony. I am convinced that its realization is a certainty in the course of human development.

The time of that realization will depend on two factors: first, on how soon existing conditions will grow spiritually and physically unbearable to considerable portions of mankind, particularly to the laboring classes; and, secondly, on the degree in which Anarchist views will become understood and accepted.

Our social institutions are founded on certain ideas; as long as the latter are generally believed, the institutions built on them are safe. Government remains strong because people think political authority and legal compulsion necessary. Capitalism will continue as long as such an economic system is considered adequate and just. The weakening of the ideas which support the evil and oppressive present-day conditions means the ultimate breakdown of government and capitalism. Progress consists in abolishing what man has outlived and substituting in its place a more suitable environment.

It must be evident even to the casual observer that society is undergoing a radical change in its fundamental conceptions. The World War and the Russian Revolution are the main causes of it. The war has unmasked the vicious character of capitalist competition and the murderous incompetency of governments to settle quarrels among nations, or rather among the ruling financial cliques. It is because the people are losing faith in the old methods that the Great Powers are now compelled to discuss limitation of armaments and even the outlawing of war. It is not so long ago that the very suggestion of such a possibility met with utmost scorn and ridicule.

Similarly is breaking down the belief in other established institutions. Capitalism still 'works', but doubt about its expediency and justice is gnawing at the heart of ever-widening social circles. The Russian Revolution has broadcasted ideas and feelings that are undermining capitalist society, particularly its economic bases and the sanctity of private ownership of the means of social existence. For not only in Russia did the October change take place: it has influenced the masses throughout the world. The cherished superstition that what exists is permanent has been shaken beyond recovery.

The war, the Russian Revolution, and the post-war developments have combined also to disillusion vast numbers about Socialism. It is literally true that, like Christianity, Socialism has conquered the world by defeating itself. The Socialist parties now run or help to run most of the European governments, but the people do not believe any more that they are different from other bourgeois regimes. They feel that Socialism has failed and is bankrupt.

In like manner have the Bolsheviks proven that Marxian dogma and Leninist principles can lead only to dictatorship and reaction.

To the Anarchists there is nothing surprising in all this. They have always claimed that the State is destructive to individual liberty and social harmony, and that only the abolition of coercive authority and material inequality can solve our political, economic and national problems. But their arguments, though based on the age-long experience of man, seemed mere theory to the present generation, until the events of the last two decades have demonstrated in actual life the truth of the Anarchist position.

The breakdown of Socialism and of Bolshevism has cleared the way for Anarchism.

There is considerable literature on Anarchism, but most of its larger works were written before the World War. The experience of the recent past has been vital and has made certain revisions necessary in the Anarchist attitude and argumentation. Though the basic propositions remain the same, some modifications of practical application are dictated by the facts of current history. The lessons of the Russian Revolution in particular call for a new approach to various important problems, chief among them the character and activities of the social revolution.

Furthermore, Anarchist books, with few exceptions, are not accessible to the understanding of the average reader. It is the common failing of most works dealing with social questions that they are written on the assumption that the reader is already familiar to a considerable extent with the subject, which

is generally not the case at all. As a result there are very few books treating of social problems in a sufficiently simple and intelligible manner.

For the above reason I consider a restatement of the Anarchist position very much needed at this time — a restatement in the plainest and clearest terms which can be understood by every one. That is, an ABC of Anarchism.

With that object in view the following pages have been written.

Paris, 1928.

Introduction

I want to tell you about Anarchism.

I want to tell you what Anarchism is, because I think it is well you should know it. Also because so little is known about it, and what is known is generally hearsay and mostly false.

I want to tell you about it, because I believe that Anarchism is the finest and biggest thing man has ever thought of; the only thing that can give you liberty and well-being, and bring peace and joy to the world.

I want to tell you about it in such plain and simple language that there will be no misunderstanding it. Big words and high sounding phrases serve only to confuse. Straight thinking means plain speaking.

But before I tell you what Anarchism is, I want to tell you what it *is not*.

That is necessary because so much falsehood has been spread about Anarchism. Even intelligent persons often have entirely wrong notions about it. Some people talk about Anarchism without knowing a thing about it. And some lie about Anarchism, because they don't want you to know the truth about it.

Anarchism has many enemies; they won't tell you the truth about it. Why Anarchism has enemies and who they are, you will see later, in the course of this story. Just now I can tell you that neither your political boss nor your employer, neither the capitalist nor the policeman will speak to you honestly about Anarchism. Most of them know nothing about it, and all of them hate it. Their newspapers and publications — the capitalistic press — are also against it.

Even most Socialists and Bolsheviks misrepresent Anarchism. True, the majority of them don't know any better. But those who do know better also often lie about Anarchism and speak of it as 'disorder and chaos'. You can see for yourself how dishonest they are in this: the greatest teachers of Socialism — Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels — had taught that Anarchism would come from Socialism. They said that we must first have Socialism, but that after Socialism there will be Anarchism, and that it would be a freer and more beautiful condition of society to live in than Socialism. Yet the Socialists, who swear by Marx and Engels, insist on calling Anarchism 'chaos and disorder', which shows you how ignorant or dishonest they are.

The Bolsheviks do the same, although their greatest teacher, Lenin, had said that Anarchism would follow Bolshevism, and that then it will be better and freer to live.

Therefore I must tell you, first of all, what Anarchism is not.

It is not bombs, disorder, or chaos.

It is not robbery and murder.

It is not a war of each against all.

It is not a return to barbarism or to the wild state of man.

Anarchism is the very opposite of all that.

Anarchism means that you should be free; that no one should enslave you, boss you, rob you, or impose upon you.

It means that you should be free to do the things you want to do; and that you should not be compelled to do what you don't want to do.

It means that you should have a chance to choose the kind of a life you want to live, and live it without anybody interfering.

It means that the next fellow should have the same freedom as you, that every one should have the same rights and liberties.

It means that all men are brothers, and that they should live like brothers, in peace and harmony.

That is to say, that there should be no war, no violence used by one set of men against another, no monopoly and no poverty, no oppression, no taking advantage of your fellow-man.

In short, Anarchism means a condition or society where all men and women are free, and where all enjoy equally the benefits of an ordered and sensible life.

'Can that be?' you ask; 'and how?'

'Not before we all become angels,' your friend remarks.

Well, let us talk it over. Maybe I can show you that we can be decent and live as decent folks even without growing wings.

Chapter 1: What Do You Want Out Of Life?

What is it that every one wants most in life? What do *you* want most?

After all, we are all the same under our skins. Whoever you be — man or woman, rich or poor, aristocrat or tramp, white, yellow, red or black, of whatever land, nationality, or religion — we are all alike in feeling cold and hunger, love and hate; we all fear disaster and disease, and try to keep away from harm and death.

What *you* most want out of life, what you fear most, that also is true, in the main, of your neighbor.

Learned men have written big books, many of them, on sociology, psychology, and many other ‘ologies’, to tell you what you want, but no two of those books ever agree. And yet I think that you know very well without them what you want.

They have studied and written and speculated so much about this, for them so difficult a question, that you, the individual, have become entirely lost in their philosophies. And they have at last come to the conclusion that you, my friend, don’t count at all. What’s important, they say, is not you, but ‘the whole’, all the people together. This ‘whole’ they call ‘society’, ‘the commonwealth’, or ‘the State’, and the wiseacres have actually decided that it makes no difference if you, the individual, are miserable so long as ‘society’ is all right. Somehow they forget to explain how ‘society’ or ‘the whole’ can be all right if the single members of it are wretched.

So they go on spinning their philosophic webs and producing thick volumes to find out where you really enter in the scheme of things called life, and what you really want.

But you yourself know very well what you want, and so does your neighbor.

You want to be well and healthy; you want to be free, to serve no master, to crawl and humiliate yourself before no man; you want to have well-being for yourself, your family, and those near and dear to you. And not to be harassed and worried by the fear of to-morrow.

You may feel sure that every one else wants the same. So the whole matter seems to stand this way:

You want health, liberty, and well-being. Every one is like yourself in this respect.

Therefore we all seek the same thing in life.

Then why should we not all seek it together, by joint effort, helping each other in it?

Why should we cheat and rob, kill and murder each other, if we all seek the same thing? Aren’t you entitled to the things you want as well as the next man?

Or is it that we can secure our health, liberty, and well-being better by fighting and slaughtering each other?

Or because there is no other way?

Let us look into this.

Does it not stand to reason that if we all want the same thing in life, if we have the same aim, then our *interests* must also be the same? In that case we should live like brothers, in peace and friendship; we should be good to each other, and help each other all we can.

But you know that it is not at all that way in life. You know that we do not live like brothers. You know that the world is full of strife and war, of misery, injustice, and wrong, of crime, poverty, and oppression.

Why is it that way then?

It is because, though we all have the same aim in life, our *interests are different*. It is this that makes all the trouble in the world.

Just think it over yourself.

Suppose you want to get a pair of shoes or a hat. You go into the store and you try to buy what you need as reasonably and cheaply as you can. That is *your* interest. But the store-keeper's interest is to sell it to you as dearly as he can, because then his *profit* will be greater. That is because everything in the life we live is built on making a profit, one way or another. We live in a *system of profit-making*.

Now, it is plain that if we have to make profits out of each other, then our interests cannot be the same. They must be different and often even opposed to each other.

In every country you will find people who live by making a profit out of others. Those who make the biggest profits are rich. Those who cannot make profits are poor. The only people who cannot make any profits are the workers. You can therefore understand that the interests of the workers cannot be the same as the interests of the other people. That is why you will find in every country several classes of people with entirely different interests.

Everywhere you will find:

1. a comparatively small class of persons who make big profits and who are very rich, such as bankers, great manufacturers and land owners — people who have much capital and who are therefore called capitalists. These belong to *the capitalist class*;
2. a class of more or less well-to-do people, consisting of business men and their agents, real estate men, speculators, and professional men, such as doctors, lawyers, inventors, and so on. This is the middle class or *the bourgeoisie*.
3. great numbers of workingmen employed in various industries — in mills and mines, in factories and shops, in transport and on the land. This is the working class, also called *the proletariat*.

The bourgeoisie and the capitalists really belong to the same capitalistic class, because they have about the same interests, and therefore the people of the bourgeoisie also generally side with the capitalist class as against the working class.

You will find that the working class is always the poorest class, in every country. Maybe you yourself belong to the workers, to the proletariat. Then you know that your wages will never make you rich.

Why are the workers the poorest class? Surely they labor more than the other classes, and harder. Is it because the workers are not very important in the life of society? Perhaps we can even do without them?

Let us see. What do we need to live? We need food, clothing, and shelter; schools for our children; street cars and trains for travel, and a thousand and one other things.

Can you look about you and point out a single thing that was made without labor? Why, the shoes you stand in, and the streets you walk on, are the result of labor. Without labor there would be nothing but the bare earth, and human life would be entirely impossible.

So it means that labor has created everything we have — all the wealth of the world. It is all the *product of labor* applied to the earth and its natural resources.

But if all the wealth is the product of labor, then why does it not belong to labor? That is, to those who have worked with their hands or with their heads to create it — the manual worker and the brain worker.

Everybody agrees that a person has a right to own the thing that he himself has made.

But *no one* person has made or can make anything all by himself. It takes many men, of different trades and professions, to create something. The carpenter, for instance, cannot make a simple chair or

bench all by himself; not even if he should cut down a tree and prepare the lumber himself. He needs a saw and a hammer, nails and tools, which he cannot make himself. And even if he should make these himself, he would first have to have the raw materials — steel and iron — which other men would have to supply.

Or take another example — let us say a civil engineer. He could do nothing without paper and pencil and measuring tools, and these things other people have to make for him. Not to mention that first he has to learn his profession and spend many years in study, while others enable him to live in the meantime. This applies to every human being in the world to-day.

You can see then that no person can by his own efforts alone make the things he needs to exist. In early times the primitive man who lived in a cave could hammer a hatchet out of stone or make himself a bow and arrow, and live by that. But those days are gone. To-day no man can live by his own work: he must be helped by the labor of others. Therefore all that we have, all wealth, is the product of the labor of many people, even of many generations. That is to say: *all labor and the products of labor are social*, made by society as a whole.

But if all the wealth we have is social, then it stands to reason that it should belong to society, to the people as a whole. How does it happen, then, that the wealth of the world is owned by some individuals and not by the people? Why does it not belong to those who have toiled to create it — the masses who work with hand or brain, the working class as a whole?

You know very well that it is the capitalistic class which owns the greatest part of the world's wealth. Must we therefore not conclude that the working people have lost the wealth they created, or that somehow it was taken away from them?

They did not lose it, for they never owned it. Then it must be that it was taken away from them.

This is beginning to look serious. Because if you say that the wealth they created has been taken away from the people who created it, then it means that it has been stolen from them, that they have been robbed, for surely no one has ever willingly consented to have his wealth taken away from him.

It is a terrible charge, but it is true. The wealth the workers have created, as a class, has indeed been stolen from them. And they are being robbed in the same way every day of their lives, even at this very moment. That is why one of the greatest thinkers, the French philosopher Proudhon, said that the possessions of the rich are stolen property.

You can readily understand how important it is that every honest man should know about this. And you may be sure that if the workers knew about it, they would not stand for it.

Let us see then *how* they are robbed and *by whom*.

Chapter 2: The Wage System

Did you ever stop to ask yourself this question: why were you born from *your* parents and not from some others?

You understand, of course, what I am driving at. I mean that *your consent was not asked*. You were simply born; you did not have a chance to select the place of your birth or to choose your parents. It was just chance.

So it happened that you were not born rich. Maybe your people are of the middle class; more likely, though, they belong to the workers, and so you are one of those millions, the masses, who have to work for a living.

The man who has money can put it into some business or industry. He invests it and lives *on the profits*. But you have no money. You have only your ability to work, your *labor power*.

There was a time when every workingman worked for himself. There were no factories then and no big industries. The laborer had his own tools and his own little workshop, and he even bought himself the raw materials he needed. He worked for himself, and he was called an artisan or craftsman.

Then came the factory and the large workshop. Little by little they crowded out the independent workman, the artisan, because he could not make things as cheaply as the factory — he could not compete with the big manufacturer. So the artisan had to give up his little workshop and go to the factory to work.

In the factories and large plants things are produced on a big scale. Such big-scale production is called *industrialism*. It has made the employers and manufacturers very rich, so that the lords of industry and commerce have accumulated much money, much capital. Therefore that system is called *capitalism*. We all live to-day in the capitalist system.

In the capitalist system the workingman cannot work for himself, as in the old days. He cannot compete with the big manufacturers. So, if you are a workman, you must find an employer. You work for him; that is, you give him your labor for so and so many hours a day or week, and he pays you for it. You sell him your labor power and he pays you *wages*.

In the capitalist system the whole working class sells its labor power to the employing class. The workers build factories, make machinery and tools, and produce goods. The employers keep the factories, the machinery, tools and goods for themselves *as their profit*. The workers get only wages.

This arrangement is called the *wage system*.

Learned men have figured out that the worker receives as his wage only about *one-tenth* of what he produces. The other *nine-tenths* are divided among the landlord, the manufacturer, the railroad company, the wholesaler, the jobber, and other middlemen.

It means this:

Though the workers, as a class, have built the factories, a slice of their daily labor is taken from them for the privilege of *using* those factories. That's the landlord's profit.

Though the workers have made the tools and the machinery, another slice of their daily labor is taken from them for the privilege of *using* those tools and machinery. That's the manufacturer's profit.

Though the workers built the railroads and are running them, another slice of their daily labor is taken from them for the transportation of the goods they make. That's the railroad's profit.

And so on, including the banker who lends the manufacturer other people's money, the wholesaler, the jobber, and other middlemen, all of whom get their slice of the worker's toil.

What is left then — one-tenth of the real worth of the worker's labor-is *his* share, his wage.

Can you guess now why the wise Proudhon said that *the possessions of the rich are stolen property*? Stolen from the producer, the worker.

It seems strange, doesn't it, that such a thing should be permitted?

Yes, indeed, it is very strange; and the strangest thing of all is that the whole world looks on and doesn't do a thing about it. Worse yet, the workers themselves don't do anything about it. Why, most of them think that everything is all right, and that the capitalist system is good.

It is because the workers don't see what is happening to them. They don't understand that they are being robbed. The rest of the world also understands very little about it, and when some honest man tries to tell them, they shout 'anarchist!' at him, and they shut him up or put him in prison.

Of course, the capitalists are very much satisfied with the capitalist system. Why shouldn't they be? They get rich by it. So you can't expect *them* to say it's no good.

The middle classes are the helpers of the capitalists and they also live off the labor of the working class, so why should they object? Of course, here and there you will find some man or woman of the middle class stand up and speak the truth about the whole matter. But such persons are quickly silenced and cried down as "enemies of the people", as crazy disturbers and anarchists.

But you would think that the workers should be the first to object to the capitalist system, for it is *they* who are robbed and who suffer most from it.

Yes, so it should be. But it isn't so, which is very sad.

The workers know that the shoe pinches somewhere. They know that they toil hard all their lives and that they get just enough to exist on, and sometimes not even enough. They see that their employers can ride about in fine automobiles and live in the greatest luxury, with their wives decked out in expensive clothes and diamonds, while the worker's wife can hardly afford a new calico dress. So the workers seek to improve their condition by trying to get better wages. It is the same as if I woke up at night in my house and found that a burglar had collected all my things and is about to get away with them. Suppose that instead of stopping him, I should say to him: 'Please, Mr. Burglar, leave me at least one suit of clothes so I can have something to put on', and then thank him if he gives me back a tenth part of the things he has stolen from me.

But I am getting ahead of my story. We shall return to the worker and see how he tries to improve his condition and how little he succeeds. Just now I want to tell you why the worker does not take the burglar by the neck and kick him out; that is, why he begs the capitalist for a little more bread or wages, and why he does not throw him off his back, altogether.

It is because the worker, like the rest of the world, has been made to believe that everything is all right and must remain as it is; and that if a few things are not quite as they should be, then it is because 'people are bad', and everything will right itself in the end, anyhow.

Just see if that is not true of yourself. At home, when you were a child, and when you asked so many questions, you were told that 'it is right so,' that 'it must be so,' that 'God made it so,' and that everything was all right.

And you believed your father and mother, as they had believed their fathers and mothers, and that is why you now think just as your grandfather did.

Later, in school, you were told the same things. You were taught that God had made the world and that all is well; that there must be rich and poor, and that you should respect the rich and be content with your lot. You were told that your country stands for justice, and that you must obey the law. The teacher, the priest, and the preacher all impressed it upon you that your life is ordained by God and that 'His will be done.' And when you saw a poor man dragged off to prison, they told you that he was bad because he had stolen something, and that it was a great crime.

But neither at home, nor in school, nor anywhere else were you ever told that it is a crime for the rich man to steal the product of the worker's labor, or that the capitalists are rich because they have possessed themselves of the wealth which labor created.

No, you were never told that, nor did any one else ever hear it in school or church. How can you then expect the workers to know it?

On the contrary, your mind — when you were a child and later on, too — has been stuffed so full of false ideas that when you hear the plain truth you wonder if it is really possible.

Perhaps you can see now why the workers do not understand that the wealth they have created has been stolen from them and is being stolen every day.

'But the law,' you ask, 'the government — does it permit such robbery? Is not theft forbidden by law?'

Chapter 3: Law and Government

Yes, you are right: the law forbids theft.

If I should steal something from you, you can call a policeman and have me arrested. The law will punish the thief, and the government will return to you the stolen property, if possible, because the law forbids stealing. It says that no one has a right to take anything from you without your consent.

But your employer takes from you what you produce. The whole wealth produced by labor is taken by the capitalists and kept by them as their property.

The law says that your employer does not steal anything from you, because it is done with your consent. You have agreed to work for your boss for certain pay, he to have all that you produce. Because you *consented* to it, the law says that he does not steal anything from you.

But did you really consent?

When the highwayman holds his gun to your head, you turn your valuables over to him. You ‘consent’ all right, but you do so because you cannot help yourself, because you are *compelled* by his gun.

Are you not *compelled* to work for an employer? Your need compels you, just as the highwayman’s gun. You must live, and so must your wife and children. You can’t work for yourself, under the capitalist industrial system you must work for an employer. The factories, machinery, and tools belong to the employing class, so you *must* hire yourself out to that class in order to work and live. Whatever you work at, whoever your employer may be, it always comes to the same: you must work *for him*. You can’t help yourself. You are *compelled*.

In this way the whole working class is compelled to work for the capitalist class. In this manner the workers are compelled to give up all the wealth they produce. The employers keep that wealth as their profit, while the worker gets only a wage, just enough to live on, so he can go on producing more wealth for his employer. Is that not cheating, robbery?

The law says it is a ‘free agreement’. Just as well might the highwayman say that you ‘agreed’ to give up your valuables. The only difference is that the highwayman’s way is called stealing and robbery, and is forbidden by law. While the capitalist way is called business, industry, profit making, and is protected by law.

But whether it is done in the highwayman’s way or in the capitalist way, you know that you are *robbed*.

The whole capitalist system rests on such robbery.

The whole system of law and government upholds and justifies this robbery.

That’s the order of things called capitalism, and law and government are there to protect this order of things.

Do you wonder that the capitalist and employer, and all those who profit by this order of things, are strong for ‘law and order’?

But where do you come in? What benefit have you from that kind of ‘law and order’? Don’t you see that this ‘law and order’ only robs you, fools you, and just *enslaves you*?

‘Enslave me?’ you wonder. ‘Why, I am a free citizen!’

Are you free, really? Free to do what? To live as you please? To do what you please?

Let’s see. How do you live? What does your freedom amount to?

You depend on your employer for your wages or your salary, don't you? And your wages determine your way of living, don't they? The conditions of your life, even what you eat and drink, where you go and with whom you associate, — all of it *depends on your wages*.

No, you are not a free man. You are *dependent* on your employer **and on your wages**. You are really a wage slave.

The whole working class, under the capitalist system, is dependent on the capitalist class. The workers are wage slaves.

So, what becomes of your freedom? What can you do with it? Can you do more with it than your wages permit?

Can't you see that your wage — your salary or income — is all the freedom that you have? Your freedom, your liberty, don't go a step further than the wages you get.

The freedom that is given you on paper, that is written down in law books and constitutions, does not do you a bit of good. Such freedom only means that you have the *right* to do a certain thing. But it doesn't mean that you *can* do it. To be able to do it, you must have the chance, the opportunity. You have a *right* to eat three fine meals a day, but if you haven't the means, the *opportunity* to get those meals, then what good is that right to you?

So freedom really means opportunity to satisfy your needs and wants. If your freedom does not give you that opportunity, than it does you no good. Real freedom means opportunity and well being. If it does not mean that, it means nothing.

You see, then, that the whole situation comes to this: Capitalism robs you and makes a wage slave of you. The law upholds and protects that robbery.

The government fools you into believing that you are independent and free.

In this way you are fooled and duped every day of your life. But how does it happen that you didn't think of it before? How is it that most other people don't see it, either?

It is because you and every one else are lied to about this all the time, from your earliest childhood.

You are told to be honest, while you are being robbed all your life.

You are commanded to respect the law, while the law protects the capitalist who is robbing you.

You are taught that killing is wrong, while the government hangs and electrocutes people and slaughters them in war.

You are told to obey the law and government, though law and government stand for robbery and murder.

Thus all through life you are lied to, fooled, and deceived, so that it will be easier to make profits out of you, to *exploit you*.

Because it is not only the employer and the capitalist who make profits out of you. The government, the church, and the school — they all live on your labor. You support them all. That is why all of them teach you to be content with your lot and behave yourself.

'Is it really true that I support them all?' you ask in amazement.

Let us see. They eat and drink and are clothed, not to speak of the luxuries they enjoy. Do *they* make the things they use and consume, do *they* do the planting and sowing and building and so on?

'But they pay for those things,' your friend objects.

Yes, they pay. Suppose a fellow stole fifty dollars from you and then went and bought with it a suit of clothes for himself. Is that suit by right his? Didn't he pay for it? Well, just so the people who don't produce anything or do no useful work pay for things. Their money is the profits they or their parents before them squeezed out of you, out of the workers.

'Then it is not my boss who supports me, but I him?'

Of course. He gives you a job; that is, permission to work in the factory or mill which was not built by him but by other workers like yourself. And for that permission you help to support him for the rest of your life or as long as you work for him. You support him so generously that he can afford a mansion in

the city and a home in the country, even several of them, and servants to attend to his wants and those of his family, and for the entertainment of his friends, and for horse races and for boat races, and for a hundred other things. But it is not only to him that you are so generous. Out of your labor, by direct and indirect taxation, are supported the entire government, local, state, and national, the schools and the churches, and all the other institutions whose business it is to protect profits and keep you fooled. You and your fellow workers, labor as a whole, support them all. Do you wonder that they all tell you that everything is all right and that you should be good and keep quiet?

It is good for *them* that you should keep quiet, because they could not keep on duping and robbing you once you open your eyes and see what's happening to you.

That's why they are all strong for this capitalist system, for 'law and order'.

But is that system good for you? Do you think it right and just? If not, then why do you put up with it? Why do you support it? 'What can I do?' you say; 'I'm only one.'

Are you really only one? Are you not rather one out of many thousands, out of millions, all of them exploited and enslaved the same as you are? Only they don't know it. If they knew it, they wouldn't stand for it. That's sure. So the thing is to make them know it.

Every workingman in your city, every toiler in your country, in every country, in the whole world, is exploited and enslaved the same as you are.

And not only the workingmen. The farmers are duped and robbed in the same manner.

Just like the workingmen, the farmer is dependent on the capitalist class. He toils hard all his life, but most of his labor goes to the trusts and monopolies of the land which by right is no more theirs than the moon is.

The farmer produces the food of the world. He feeds all of us. But before he can get his goods to us, he is made to pay tribute to the class that lives by the work of others, the profit-making, capitalist class. The farmer is mulcted out of the greater part of his product just as the worker is. He is mulcted by the land owner and by the mortgage holder; by the steel trust and the railroad. The banker, the commission merchant, the retailer, and a score of other middlemen squeeze their profits out of the farmer before he is allowed to get his food to you.

Law and government permit and help this robbery by ruling that the land, which no man created, belongs to the landlord; the railroads, which the workers built, belong to the railroad magnates; the warehouses, grain elevators, and storehouses, erected by the workers, belong to the capitalists; all those monopolists and capitalists have a right to get profits from the farmer for using the railroads and other facilities before he can get his food to you.

You can see then, how the farmer is robbed by big capital and business, and how the law helps in that robbery, just as with the workingman.

But it is not only the worker and the farmer who are exploited and forced to give up the greater part of their product to the capitalists, to those who have monopolized the land, the railroads, the factories, the machinery, and all natural resources. The entire country, the whole world is made to pay tribute to the kings of finance and industry.

The small business man depends on the wholesaler; the wholesaler on the manufacturer; the manufacturer on the trust magnates of his industry; and all of them on the money lords and banks for their credit. The big bankers and financiers can put any man out of business by just withdrawing their credit from him. They do so whenever they want to squeeze any one out of business. The business man is entirely at their mercy. If he does not play the game as they want it, to *suit their interests*, then they simply drive him out of the game.

Thus the whole of mankind is dependent upon and enslaved by just a handful of men who have monopolized almost the entire wealth of the world, but who have themselves never created anything.

'But those men work hard,' you say.

Well, some of them don't work at all. Some of them are just idlers, whose business is managed by others. Some of them *do* work. But what kind of work do they do? Do they produce anything, as the worker and the farmer do? No, they produce nothing, though they may work. They work to mulct people, to get profits out of them. Does their work benefit you? The highwayman also works hard and takes great risks to boot. His 'work', like the capitalist's, gives employment to lawyers, jailers, and a host of other retainers, all of whom *your* toil supports.

It seems indeed ridiculous that the whole world should slave for the benefit of a handful of monopolists, and that all should have to depend upon them for their right and opportunity to live. But the fact is just that. And it is the more ridiculous when you consider that the workers and farmers, who alone create all wealth, should be the most dependent and the poorest of all the other classes in society.

It is really monstrous, and it is very sad. Surely your common sense must tell you that such a situation is nothing short of madness. If the great masses of people, the millions throughout the world, could see how they are fooled, exploited and enslaved, as you see it now, would they stand for such goings on? Surely they would not!

The capitalists know they wouldn't. That is why they need the government to legalize their methods of robbery, to protect the capitalist system.

And that is why the government needs laws, police and soldiers, courts and prisons to protect capitalism.

But who are the police and the soldiers who protect the capitalists against you, against the people?

If they were capitalists themselves, then it would stand to reason why they want to protect the wealth they have stolen, and why they try to keep up, even by force, the system that gives them the privilege of robbing the people.

But the police and the soldiers, the defenders of 'law and order', are not of the capitalist class. They are men from the ranks of the people, poor men who for pay protect the very system that keeps them poor. It is unbelievable, is it not? Yet it is true. It just comes down to this: some of the slaves protect their masters in keeping them and the rest of the people in slavery. In the same way Great Britain, for instance, keeps the Hindoos in India in subjection by a police force of the natives, of the Hindoos themselves. Or as Belgium does with the black men in the Congo. Or as any government does with a subjugated people. It is the same system. Here is what it amounts to: Capitalism robs and exploits the whole of the people; the laws legalize and uphold this capitalist robbery; the government uses one part of the people to aid and protect the capitalists in robbing the whole of the people. The entire thing is kept up by educating the people to believe that capitalism is right, that the law is just, and that the government must be obeyed. Do you see through this game now?

Chapter 4: How the System Works

But take a closer look at it and see how the system ‘works’.

Consider how life and its real meaning have become turned upside down and topsy-turvy. See how your own existence is poisoned and made miserable by the crazy arrangement.

Wherein is the purpose of your life, where the joy of it?

The earth is rich and beautiful, the bright sunshine should gladden your heart. Man’s genius and labor have conquered the forces of nature and harnessed the lightning and the air to the service of humanity. Science and invention, human industry and toil have produced untold wealth. We’ve bridged the shoreless seas, the steam engine has annihilated distance, the electric spark and gasoline motor have unfettered man from the earth and chained even the atmosphere to do his bidding. We have triumphed over space, and the farthest corners of the globe have been brought close together. The human voice now circles the hemispheres, and through the azure there dart-fleet messengers, carrying man’s greeting to all the peoples of the world.

Yet the people groan under heavy burdens, and there is no joy in their hearts. Their lives are full of misery, their souls cold with want and need. Poverty and crime fill every land; thousands are a prey to disease and insanity, war slaughters millions and brings to the living tyranny and oppression.

Why all this misery and murder in a world so rich and beautiful? Why all the pain and sorrow upon an earth so full of nature’s bounty and sunshine?

‘It’s God’s will,’ says the church.

‘People are bad,’ says the lawmaker.

‘It must be so,’ says the fool.

Is it true? Must it really be so?

You and I and each of us, we all want to live. We have but one life and we want to make the best of it — rightly so. We want some joy and sunshine while we live. What will happen to us when we are dead, we don’t know. No one knows. The chances are that once dead we’ll stay dead. But whether so or not, while we live our whole being hungers for joy and laughter, for sunshine and happiness. Nature has made us that way. Made you and me, and millions of others like us, to long for life and joy. Is it right and just that we should be deprived of it and forever remain the slaves of a handful of men who lord it over us and over life?

Can that be ‘God’s will’, as the church tells you?

But if there be a God, he must be just. Would he permit us to be cheated and despoiled of life and its joys? If there be a God, he must be our father, and all men his children. Would a good father let some of his children go hungry and miserable while others have so much they don’t know what to do with it? Would he suffer thousands, even millions, of his children to be killed and slaughtered, just for the glory of some king or the profit of the capitalist? Would he sanction injustice, outrage, and murder? No, my friend, you cannot believe that of a good father, of a just God. If people tell you that God wants such things they Just lie to you.

Maybe you say that God is good, but it is people who are bad, and that is why things are so wrong in the world.

But if people are bad, who made them so? Surely you don’t believe that God made people bad, because in that case he himself would be responsible for it. Then it means that if people are bad, something else has made them so. That may well be. Let us look into it

Let us see how people are, what they are, and how they live. Let us see how you live.

From your earliest childhood it has been drilled into you that you must become successful, must 'make money'. Money means comfort security, power. It does not matter who you are, you are valued by what you are 'worth', by the size of your bank account. So you have been taught, and everybody else has been taught the same. Can you wonder that every one's life becomes a chase for money, for the dollar and your whole existence is turned into a struggle for possession, for wealth?

The money hunger grows on what it feeds. The poor man struggles for a living, for a bit of comfort. The well-to-do man wants greater riches to give him security and protect him against the fear of to-morrow. And when he becomes a big banker he must not relax his efforts, he must keep a sharp eye on his competitors, for fear of losing the race to some other man.

So every one is compelled to take part in the wild chase, and the hunger for possession gets ever stronger hold of man. It becomes the most important part of life; every thought is on money, all the energies are bent on getting rich, and presently the thirst for wealth becomes a mania, a madness that possesses those who have and those who have not.

Thus life has lost its sole true meaning of joy and beauty; existence has become an unreasoning, wild dance around the golden calf, a mad worship of God Mammon. In that dance and in that worship man has sacrificed all his finer qualities of heart and soul — kindness and justice honor and manhood, compassion and sympathy with his fellow-man.

'Each for himself and the devil take the hindmost' — that must perforce become the principle and urge of most people under such conditions. Is it any wonder that in this mad money chase are developed the worst traits of man — greed, envy, hatred, and the basest passions? Man grows corrupt and evil; he becomes mean and unjust; he resorts to deceit, theft, and murder.

Look closer about you and see how many wrongs and crimes are perpetrated in your city, in your country, in the world at large, for money, for property, for possession. See how full the world is of poverty and misery, see the thousands falling a prey to disease and insanity, to folly and outrage, to suicide and murder — all because of the inhuman and brutalizing *conditions* we live under.

Truly has the wise man said that money is the root of all evil. Wherever you look you will see the corroding and degrading effect of money, of possession, of the mania to have and to hold. Every one is wild to get, to grab by hook or crook, to accumulate as much as he can, so that he may enjoy to-day and secure himself for to-morrow.

But can you therefore say that man is bad? Is he not *compelled* to take part in this money chase by the conditions of existence, by the crazy system we live in? For you have no choice — you must get into the race or go under.

Is it your fault, then, that life forces you to be and act like that? Is it the fault of your brother or your neighbor or of any one? Is it not rather that we are all born into this mad scheme of things and that we have to fall into line?

But is not the scheme itself wrong that makes us act like that? Think it over and you will see that at heart you are not bad at all, but that conditions often compel you to do things that you know are wrong. You would rather not do them. When you can afford it, your urge is to be kind and helpful to others. But if you should follow your inclinations in this direction, you would neglect your own interests and you would soon be in want yourself.

So the conditions of existence suppress and stifle the instincts of kindness and humanity in us, and harden us against the need and misery of our fellow-man.

You will see this in *every* phase of existence, in all the relations of men, all through our social life. Of course, if our interests were the same, there would be no need of any one taking advantage of another. Because what would be good for Jack would also be good for Jim. To be sure, as human beings, as children of one humanity, we really do have the same interests. But as members of a foolish and criminal social arrangement, our present-day capitalist system, our interests are not at all the same. In fact, the

interests of the different classes in society are opposed to each other; they are inimical and antagonistic, as I have pointed out in preceding chapters.

That is why you see men taking advantage of each other when they can profit by it, when their interests dictate it. In business, in commerce, in the relations between employer and employee — everywhere you will find this principle at work. Every one is trying to get ahead of the other fellow. Competition becomes the soul of capitalistic life, beginning with the billionaire banker, the great manufacturer and lord of industry, all through the social and financial scale, down to the last worker in the factory. For even the workers are compelled to compete with each other for jobs and better pay.

In this way our whole life becomes a struggle of man against man, of class against class. In that struggle every method is used to achieve success, to down your competitor, to raise yourself above him by every means possible.

It is clear that such conditions will develop and cultivate the worst qualities of man. It is just as clear that the law will protect those who have power and influence, the rich and the wealthy, however they got their riches. The poor man must inevitably get the worst of it under such circumstances. He will try to do the same as the rich man does. But as he has not the same opportunity to advance his interests under the protection of the law, he will often attempt it outside of the law and he will fall into its meshes. Though he did nothing more than the rich man — took advantage of some one, cheated some one — he did it ‘illegally’, and you call him a criminal.

Look at that poor boy, for instance, on the street corner there. He is ragged, pale, and half-starved. He sees another boy, the son of wealthy parents, and that boy wears nice clothes, he is well fed, and he does not even deign to play with the poor kid. The ragged boy is angry at him he resents and hates the rich boy. And everywhere the poor boy goes he experiences the same thing: he is ignored and scorned, often kicked about — he feels people don’t think him as good as the rich boy, to whom every one is respectful and attentive. The poor boy gets embittered. And when he grows up, he again sees the same thing: the rich are admired and respected, the poor are kicked about and looked down upon. So the poor boy gets to hate his poverty, and he thinks of how he might become rich, get money, and he tries to get it in any way he can, by taking advantage of others, as others have always taken advantage of him, by cheating and lying, and sometimes even by committing crime.

Then you say that he is ‘bad’. But don’t you see what made him bad? Don’t you see that the *conditions* of his whole life have made him what he is? And don’t you see that the *system* which keeps up such conditions is a greater criminal than the petty thief? The law will step in and punish him, but is it not the same law that permits those bad conditions to exist and upholds the system that makes criminals?

Think it over and see if it is not the law itself, the government which really creates crime by compelling people to live in conditions that make them bad. See how law and government uphold and protect the biggest crime of all, the mother of all crimes, the capitalistic wage system, and then proceeds to punish the poor criminal.

Consider: does it make any difference whether you do wrong protected by the law, or whether you do it unlawfully? The thing is the same and the effects are the same. Worse even: legal wrongdoing is the greater evil because it causes more misery and injustice than illegal wrong. Lawful crime goes on all the time; it is not punishable and it is made easy, while unlawful crime is not so frequent and is more limited in its scope and effect.

Who causes more misery: the rich manufacturer reducing the wages of thousands of workers to swell his profits, or the jobless man stealing something to keep from starving?

Who commits the greater wrong: the wife of the industrial magnate spending a thousand dollars for a silver collar for her lapdog, or the underpaid girl in the magnate’s department store unable to withstand temptation and appropriating some trinket?

Who is the greater criminal: the speculator cornering the wheat market and making a million-dollar profit by raising the price of the poor man's bread, or the homeless tramp committing some theft?

Who is the greater enemy of man: the greedy coal baron responsible for the sacrifice of human lives in his badly ventilated and dangerous mines, or the desperate man guilty of assault and robbery?

It is *not* the wrongs and crimes punishable by law that cause the greatest evil in the world. It is the *lawful* wrongs and unpunishable crimes, justified and protected by law and government, that fill the earth with misery and want, with strife and conflict, with class struggles, slaughter, and destruction.

We hear much about crime and criminals, about burglary and robbery, about offenses against person and property. The columns of the daily press are filled with such reports. It is considered the 'news' of the [missing words]

But do you hear much about the crimes of capitalistic industry and business? Do the papers tell you anything about the constant robbery and theft represented by low wages and high prices? Do they write much about the widespread misery caused by market speculation, by adulterating food, by the thousand and one other forms of fraud, extortion, and usury on which business and trade thrive? Do they tell you of the wrong and evils, of the poverty, of the broken hearts and blasted hearths of disease and premature death, of desperation and suicide that follow in constant and regular procession in the wake of the capitalist system?

Do they tell you of the woe and worry of the thousands thrown out of work, no one caring whether they live or die? Do they tell you about the starvation wages paid to women and girls in our industries, pittance, that directly compel many of them to prostitute their bodies to help eke out a living? Do they tell you of the army of unemployed that capitalism holds ready to take the bread from your mouth when you go on strike for better pay? Do they tell you that unemployment, with all its heartache, suffering, and misery is due directly to the system of capitalism? Do they tell you how the wage slave's toil and sweat are coined into profits for the capitalist? How the worker's health, his mind and body are sacrificed to the greed of the lords of industry? How labor and lives are wasted in stupid capitalist competition and planless production?

Indeed, they tell you a lot about crimes and criminals, about the 'badness' and 'evil' of man, especially of the 'lower' classes, of the workers. But they don't tell you that capitalist conditions produce most of our evils and crime, and that capitalism itself is the greatest crime of all; that it devours more lives in a single day than all the murderers put together. The destruction of life and property caused by criminals throughout the world since human life began is mere child's play when compared with the ten millions killed and twenty millions wounded and the incalculable havoc and misery wrought by a single capitalist event, the recent World War. That stupendous holocaust was the legitimate child of capitalism, as all wars of conquest and gain are the result of the conflicting financial and commercial interests of the international bourgeoisie. It was a war for profits, as later admitted even by Woodrow Wilson and his class.

Profits again, as you see. Coining human flesh and blood into profits in the name of patriotism.

'Patriotism!' you protest; 'why, that is a noble cause!'

'And unemployment,' inquires your friend, 'is capitalism responsible for that, too? Is it the fault of my boss that he has no work for me?'

Chapter 5: Unemployment

I am glad your friend asked the question, for every workingman realises how important this matter of unemployment is to him. You know what your life is when you are out of work; and when you do have a job, how the fear of losing it hangs over you. You are also aware what a danger the standing army of unemployed is to you when you are out on strike for better conditions. You know that strikebreakers are enlisted from the unemployed whom capitalism always keeps on hand, to help break your strike.

‘How does capitalism keep the unemployed on hand?’ you ask.

Simply by compelling you to work long hours and as hard as possible, so as to produce the greatest amount. All the modern schemes of ‘efficiency’, the Taylor and other systems of ‘economy’ and ‘rationalization’ serve only to squeeze greater profits out of the worker. It is economy in the interest of the employer only. But as concerns you, the worker, this ‘economy’ spells the greatest expenditure of your effort and energy, a fatal waste of your vitality.

It pays the employer to use up and exploit your strength and ability at the highest tension. True, it ruins your health and breaks down your nervous system, makes you a prey to illness and disease (there are even special proletarian diseases), cripples you and brings you to an early grave — but what does your boss care? Are there not thousands of unemployed waiting for your job and ready to take it the moment you are disabled or dead?

That is why it is to the profit of the capitalist to keep an army of unemployed ready at hand. It is part and parcel of the wage system, a necessary and inevitable characteristic of it.

It is in the interest of the people that there should be no unemployed, that all should have an opportunity to work and earn their living; that all should help, each according to his ability and strength, to increase the wealth of the country, so that each should be able to have a greater share of it.

But capitalism is not interested in the welfare of the people. Capitalism, as I have shown before, is interested only in profits. By employing less people and working them long hours larger profits can be made than by giving work to more people at shorter hours. That is why it is to the interest of your employer, for instance, to have 100 people work 10 hours daily rather than to employ 200 at 5 hours. He would need more room for 200 than for 100 persons — a larger factory, more tools and machinery, and so on. That is, he would require a greater investment of capital. The employment of a larger force at less hours would bring less profits, and that is why your boss will not run his factory or shop on such a plan. Which means that a system of profit-making is not compatible with considerations of humanity and the well-being of the workers. On the contrary, the harder and more ‘efficiently’ you work and the longer hours you stay at it, the better for your employer and the greater his profits.

You can therefore see that capitalism is not interested in employing all those who want and are able to work. On the contrary: a minimum of ‘hands’ and a maximum of effort is the principle and the profit of the capitalist system. This is the whole secret of all ‘rationalization’ schemes. And that is why you will find thousands of people in every capitalist country willing and anxious to work, yet unable to get employment. This army of unemployed is a constant threat to your standard of living. They are ready to take your place at lower pay, because necessity compels them to it. That is, of course, very advantageous to the boss: it is a whip in his hands constantly held over you, so you will slave hard for him and ‘behave’ yourself.

You can see for yourself how dangerous and degrading such a situation is for the worker, not to speak of the other evils of the system.

'Then why not do away with unemployment?' you demand.

Yes, it would be fine to do away with it. But it could be accomplished only by doing away with the capitalist system and its wage slavery. As long as you have capitalism — or any other system of labor exploitation and profit-making — you will have unemployment. Capitalism can't exist without it: it is inherent in the wage system. It is the fundamental condition of successful capitalist production

'Why?'

Because the capitalist industrial system does not produce for the *needs* of the people; it produces for *profit*. Manufacturers do not produce commodities because the people want them and as much of them as is required. They produce what they expect to sell, and sell at a profit.

If we had a sensible system, we would produce the things which the people want and the quantity they need. Suppose the inhabitants of a certain locality needed 1,000 pairs of shoes; and suppose we'd have 50 shoemakers for the job. Then in 20 hours work those shoemakers would produce the shoes our community needs.

But the shoemaker of to-day does not know and does not care how many pairs of shoes are needed. Thousands of people may need new shoes in your city, but they cannot afford to buy them. So what good is it to the manufacturer to know who needs shoes? What he wants to know is who can buy the shoes he makes: how many pairs he can *sell* at a profit.

What happens? Well, he will manufacture about as many pairs of shoes as he thinks he will be able to sell. He will try his best to produce them as cheaply and sell them as dearly as he can, so as to make a good profit. He will therefore employ as few workers as possible to manufacture the quantity of shoes he wants, and he will have them work as 'efficiently' and hard as he can compel them to.

You see that production *for profit* means longer hours and fewer persons employed than would be the case if production were *for use*.

Capitalism is the system of production for profit, and that is why capitalism always must have unemployed.

But look further into this system of production for profit and you will see how its basic evil works a hundred other evils.

Let us follow the shoe manufacturer of your city. He has no way of knowing, as I have already pointed out, who will or will not be able to buy his shoes. He makes a rough guess, he 'estimates', and he decides to manufacture, let us say, 50,000 pairs. Then he puts his product on the market. That is, the wholesaler, the jobber, and the storekeeper put them up for sale.

Suppose only 30,000 pairs were sold; 20,000 pairs remain on hand. Our manufacturer, unable to sell the balance in his own city, will try to dispose of it, in some other part of the country. But the shoe manufacturers there have also had the same experience. They also can't sell all they have produced. The supply of shoes is greater than the demand for them, they tell you. They have to cut down production. That means the discharge of some of their employees, thus increasing the army of the unemployed.

'Over-production' this is called. But in truth it is not over-production at all. It is under-consumption, because there are many people who need new shoes, but they can't afford to buy them.

The result? The warehouses are stocked with the shoes the people want but cannot buy, shops and factories close because of the 'oversupply'. The same things happen in other industries. You are told that there is a 'crisis' and your wages must be reduced.

Your wages are cut; you are put on part time or you lose your work altogether. Thousands of men and women are thrown out of employment in that manner. Their wages stop and they cannot buy the food and other things they need. Are those things not to be had? No, on the contrary; the warehouses and stores are filled with them, there is too much of them there's 'over-production'.

So the capitalist system of production for profit results in this crazy situation:

1. people have to starve — not because there is not enough food but because there is too much of it; they have to do without the things they need, because there is too much of those things on hand;
2. because there is too much, manufacture is cut down, throwing thousands out of work;
3. being out of work and therefore not earning, those thousands lose their buying capacity. The grocer, the butcher, the tailor all suffer, as a result. That means increased unemployment all around, the crisis gets worse.

Under capitalism this happens in *every* industry.

Such crises are inevitable in a system of production for profit. They come from time to time; they return periodically, always getting worse. They deprive thousands and hundreds of thousands of employment causing poverty, distress, and untold misery. They result in bankruptcy and bank failures, which swallow up whatever little the worker has saved in time of 'prosperity'. They cause want and need, and people to despair and crime, to suicide and insanity.

Such are the results of production for profit; such the fruits of system of capitalism.

Yet that is not all. There is another result of this system, even worse than all the others combined. That is *War*.

Chapter 6: War?

War! Do you realize what it means? Do you know of any more terrible word in our language? Does it not bring to your mind pictures of slaughter and carnage, of murder, pillage, and destruction? Can't you hear the belching of cannon, the cries of the dying and wounded? Can you not see the battlefield strewn with corpses? Living humans torn to pieces, their blood and brains scattered about, men full of life suddenly turned to carrion. And there, at home, thousands of fathers and mothers' wives and sweethearts living in hourly dread lest some mischance befall their loved ones, and waiting, waiting for the return of those who will return nevermore.

You know what war means. Even if you yourself have never been at the front, you know that there is no greater curse than war with its millions of dead and maimed, its countless human sacrifices, its broken lives, ruined homes its indescribable heartache and misery.

'It's terrible', you admit, 'but it can't be helped'. You think that war must be, that times come when it is inevitable, that you must defend your country when it is in danger.

Let us see, then, whether you really defend your country when you go to war. Let us see what causes war, and whether it is for the benefit of your country that you are called upon to don the uniform and start off on the campaign of slaughter.

Let us consider whom and what you defend in war: who is interested in it and who profits by it.

We must return to our manufacturer. Unable to sell his product at a profit in his own country, he (and manufacturers of other commodities likewise) seeks a market in some foreign land. He goes to England, Germany, France, or to some other country, and tries to dispose there of his 'over-production', of his 'surplus'.

But there he finds the same conditions as in his own country. There they also have 'over-production'; that is, the workers are so exploited and underpaid that they cannot buy the commodities they have produced. The manufacturers of England, Germany, France, etc., are therefore also looking for other markets, just as the American manufacturer.

The American manufacturers of a certain industry organize themselves into a big combine, the industrial magnates of the other countries do the same, and the national combines begin competing with each other. The capitalists of each country try to grab the best markets, especially new markets. They find such new markets in China, Japan India, and similar countries; that is, in countries that have not yet developed their own industries. When each country will have developed its own industries, there will be no more foreign markets, and then some powerful capitalistic group will become the international trust of the whole world. But in the meantime the capitalistic interests of the various industrial countries fight for the foreign markets and compete with each other there. They compel some weaker nation to give them special privileges, 'favored treatment'; they arouse the envy of their competitors get into trouble about concessions and sources of profit, and call upon their respective governments to defend their interests. The American capitalist appeals to his government to protect 'American' interests. The capitalists of France, Germany, and England do the same: they call upon *their* governments to protect *their* profits. Then the various governments call upon their people to '*defend their country*'.

Do you see how the game is played? You are not told that you are asked to protect the privileges and dividends of some American capitalist in a foreign country. They know that if they tell you that, you would laugh at them and you would refuse to get yourself shot to swell the profits of plutocrats. But without you and others like you they can't make war! So they raise the cry of 'Defend you country!'

Your flag is insulted!' Sometimes they actually hire thugs to insult your country's flag in a foreign land, or get some American property destroyed there, so as to make sure the people at home will get wild over it and rush to join the Army and Navy.

Don't think I exaggerate. American capitalists are known to have caused even revolutions in foreign countries (particularly in South America) so as to get a more 'friendly' new government there and thus secure the concessions they wanted.

But generally they don't need to go to such lengths. All they have to do IS appeal to your 'patriotism', flatter you a bit, tell you that you can 'lick the whole world,' and they get you ready to don the soldier's uniform and do their bidding.

This is what your patriotism, your love of country is used for. Truly did the great English thinker Carlyle write:

'What, speaking in quite unofficial language, is the net purport and upshot of war? To my own knowledge, for example, there dwell and toil, in the British village of Dumdrudge, usually some five hundred souls. From these, by certain 'natural enemies' of the French there are successively selected, during the French war, say thirty able bodiedmen. Dumdrudge, at her own expense, has suckled and nursed them; she has, not without difficulty and sorrow, fed them up to man hood, and even trained them to crafts, so that one can weave, an other build, another hammer, and the weakest can stand under thirty stone avoirdupois. Nevertheless, amid much weeping and swearing, they are selected; all dressed in red; and shipped away, at public charge, some two thousand miles, or say only to the south of Spain, and fed there till wanted.

'And now to that same spot in the south of Spain are thirty similar French artisans, from a French Dumdrudge, in like manner wending, till at length, after infinite effort, the two parties come into actual juxtaposition; and Thirty stands fronting Thirty, each with a gun in his hand.

'Straightway the word 'Fire!' is given, and they blow the souls out of one another, and in the place of sixty brisk useful craftsmen, the world has sixty dead carcasses, which it must bury, and anon shed tears for. Had these men any quarrel? Busy as the devil is, not the smallest! They lived far enough apart; were the entirest strangers; nay, in so wide a universe, there was even, unconsciously, by commerce, some mutual helpfulness between them. How then? Simpleton! Their governors had fallen out; and instead of shooting one another, had the cunning to make these poor blockheads shoot.'

It is not for your country that you fight when you go to war. It's for your governors, your rulers, your capitalistic masters.

Neither your country, nor humanity, neither you nor your class — the workers — gain anything by war. It is only the big financiers and capitalists who profit by it.

War is bad for you. It is bad for the workers. They have everything to lose and nothing to gain by it. They don't even get any glory from it, for that goes to the big generals and field marshals.

What do you get in war? You get lousy, you get shot, gassed, maimed, or killed. That is all the workers of any country get out of

War is bad for your country, bad for humanity: it spells slaughter and destruction. Everything that war destroys — bridges and harbors, cities and ships, fields and factories — all must be built up again. That means that the people are taxed, directly and indirectly, to build it up. For in the last analysis everything comes from the pockets of the people So war is bad for them materially, not to speak of the brutalizing effect war has upon mankind in general. And don't forget that 999 out of every 1,000 who are killed, blinded, or maimed in war are of the laboring class, sons of workers and farmers.

In modern war there is no victor, for the winning side loses almost as much as the defeated one. Sometimes even more, like France in the late struggle: France is poorer to-day than Germany. The workers of both countries are taxed to starvation to make good the losses sustained in the war. Labor's wages and standards of living are much lower now in the European countries that participated in the World War than they were before the great catastrophe.

'But the United States got rich through the war,' you object.

You mean that a handful of men gained millions, and that the big Capitalists made huge profits. Surely they did: the great financiers by lending Europe money at a high rate of interest and by supplying war material and munitions. But where do you come in?

Just stop to consider how Europe is paying off its financial debt to America or the interest on it. It does so by squeezing more labor and profits out of the workers. By paying lower wages and producing goods more cheaply the European manufacturers can undersell their American competitors, and for this reason the American manufacturer is compelled also to produce at lower cost. That's where his 'economy' and 'rationalization' come in, and as a result you must work harder or have your wages reduced, or be thrown out of employment altogether. Do you see how low wages in Europe directly affect your own condition? Do you realize that you, the American worker, are helping to pay the American bankers the interest on their European loans?

There are people who claim that war is good because it cultivates physical courage. The argument is stupid. It is made only by those who have themselves never been to war and whose fighting is done by others. It is a dishonest argument, to induce poor fools to fight for the interests of the rich. People who have actually fought in battles will tell you that modern war has nothing to do with personal courage: it is mass fighting at a great distance from the enemy. Personal encounters, in which the best man may win, are extremely rare. In modern war you don't see your antagonists: you fight blindly, like a machine. You go into battle scared to death, fearing that the next minute you may be shot to pieces. You go only because you don't have the courage to refuse.

The man who can face vilification and disgrace, who can stand up against the popular current, even against his friends and his country when he knows he is right, who can defy those in authority over him who can take punishment and prison and remain steadfast — that is a man of courage. The fellow whom you taunt as a 'slacker' because he refuses to turn murderer — he needs courage. But do you need much courage just to obey orders, to do as you are told and to fall in line with thousands of others to the tune of general approval and the 'Star Spangled Banner'?

War paralyzes your courage and deadens the spirit of true manhood. It degrades and stupefies with the sense that you are not responsible that 'tis not yours to think and reason why, but to do and die', like the hundred thousand others doomed like yourself. War means blind obedience, unthinking stupidity, brutish callousness, wanton destruction, and irresponsible murder.

I have met persons who say that war is good because it kills many people, so that there is more work for the survivors.

Consider what a terrible indictment this is against the present system. Imagine a condition of things where it is good for the people of a certain community to have some of their number killed off, so the rest could live better! Would it not be the worst man-eating system, the worst cannibalism?

That is just what capitalism is: a system of cannibalism in which one devours his fellow-man or is devoured by him. This is true of capitalism in time of peace as in war, except that in war its real character is unmasked and more evident

In a sensible, humane society that could not be. On the contrary, the greater the population of a certain community the better it would be for all, because the work of each would then be lighter.

A community is no different in this regard than a family. Every family needs a certain amount of work to be done in order to keep its wants supplied. Now the more persons there are in the family to do the necessary work, the easier for each member, the less work for each.

The same holds true of a community or a country, which is only a family on a large scale. The more people there are to do the work necessary to supply the needs of the community, the easier the task of each member.

If the contrary is the case in our present-day society, it merely goes to prove that conditions are wrong, barbaric, and perverse. Nay, more: that they are absolutely criminal if the capitalist system can thrive on the slaughter of its members.

It is evident then that for the workers war means only greater burdens, more taxes, harder toil, and the reduction of their pre-war standard of living.

But there is *one* element in capitalist society for whom war is good. It is the element that coins money out of war, that gets rich on your 'patriotism' and self-sacrifice. It is the munitions manufacturers, the speculators in food and other supplies, the warship builders. In short, it is the great lords of finance, industry, and commerce who alone benefit by war.

For these war is a blessing. A blessing in more than one way. Because war also serves to distract the attention of the laboring masses from their everyday misery and turns it to 'high politics' and human slaughter. Governments and rulers have often sought to avoid popular uprising and revolution by staging a war. History is full of such examples. Of course, war is a double-edged sword. Often it, in turn, leads to revolt. But that is another story to which we shall return when we come to the Russian Revolution.

If you have followed me thus far, you must realize that war is just as much a direct result and inevitable effect of the capitalist system as are the regular financial and industrial crises.

When a crisis comes, in the manner in which I have described it, with its unemployment and hardships, you are told that it is no one's fault, that it is 'bad times', the result of 'over-production' and similar humbug. And when capitalistic competition for profits brings about a condition of war, the capitalists and their flunkies — the politicians and the press — raise the cry 'Save your country!' in order to fill you with false patriotism and make you fight their battles for them.

In the name of patriotism you are ordered to stop being decent and honest, to cease being yourself, to suspend your own judgment, and give up your life; to become a will-less cog in a murderous machine, blindly obeying the order to kill, pillage, and destroy; to give up your father and mother, wife and child, and all that you love, and proceed to slaughter your fellow-men who never did you any harm — who are just as unfortunate and deluded victims of their masters as you are of yours.

Only too truly did Carlyle say that 'patriotism is the refuge of scoundrels.'

Can't you see how you are fooled and duped?

Take the World War, for instance. Consider how the people of America were tricked into participation. They did not want to mix in European affairs. They knew little of them, and they did not care to be dragged into the murderous brawls. They elected Woodrow Wilson on a 'he kept us out of the war' slogan.

But the American plutocracy saw that huge fortunes could be gained in the war. They were not satisfied with the millions they were reaping by selling ammunition and other supplies to the European combatants; immeasurably greater profits were to be made by getting a big country like the United States, with its over 100 millions of population, into the fray. President Wilson could not withstand their pressure. After all, government is but the maid-servant of the financial powers: it is there to do their bidding.

But how get America into the war when her people were expressly against it? Didn't they elect Wilson as President on the clear promise to keep the country out of war?

In former days, under absolute monarchs, the subjects were simply compelled to obey the king's command. But that often involved resistance and the danger of rebellion. In modern times there are surer and safer means of making the people serve the interests of their rulers. All that is necessary is to talk them into believing that they themselves want what their masters want them to do; that it is to their own interests, good for their country, good for humanity. In this manner the noble and fine instincts of man are harnessed to do the dirty work of the capitalistic master class, to the shame and injury of mankind.

Modern inventions help in this game and make it comparatively easy. The printed word, the telegraph, the telephone, and radio are all sure aids in this matter. The genius of man, having produced those wonderful things, is exploited and degraded in the interests of Mammon and Mars.

President Wilson invented a new device to snare the American people into the war for the benefit of Big Business. Woodrow Wilson, the former college president, discovered a 'war for democracy' a 'war to end war'. With that hypocritical motto a country-wide campaign was started, rousing the worst tendencies of intolerance, persecution, and murder in American hearts; filling them with venom and hatred against every one who had the courage to voice an honest and independent opinion; beating up, imprisoning, and deporting those who dared to say that it was a capitalistic war for profits. Conscientious objectors to the taking of human life were brutally maltreated as 'slackers' and condemned to long penitentiary terms; men and women who reminded their Christian countrymen of the Nazarene's command, 'Thou shalt not kill', were branded cowards and shut up in prison; radicals who declared that the war was only in the interests of capitalism were treated as 'vicious foreigners, and 'enemy spies'. Special laws were rushed through to stifle every free expression of opinion. Dire punishment was meted out to every objector. From the Atlantic to the Pacific hundred-percenters, drunk with murderous patriotism, spread terror. The whole country went mad with the frenzy of jingoism. The nation-wide militarist propaganda at last swept the American people into the field of carnage.

Wilson was 'too proud to fight', but not too proud to send others to do the fighting for his financial backers. He was 'too proud to fight', but not too proud to help the American plutocracy coin gold out of the lives of seventy thousand Americans left dead on European battlefields.

The 'war for democracy', the 'war to end war' proved the greatest sham in history. As a matter of fact, it started a chain of new wars not yet ended. It has since been admitted, even by Wilson himself, that the war served no purpose except to reap vast profits for Big Business. It created more complications in European affairs than had ever existed before. It pauperized Germany and France, and brought them to the brink of national bankruptcy. It loaded the peoples of Europe with stupendous debts, and put unbearable burdens upon their working classes. The resources of every country were strained. The progress of science was registered by new facilities of destruction. Christian precept was proven by the multiplication of murder, and the treaties were signed with human blood.

The World War built huge fortunes for the lords of finance — and tombs for the workers.

And to-day? To-day we stand again on the brink of a new war, far greater and more terrible than the last holocaust. Every government is preparing for it and appropriating millions of dollars of the workers' sweat and blood for the coming carnage.

Think it over, my friend, and see what capital and government are doing for you, doing *to you*.

Soon they will again be calling on you to 'defend your country!'

In times of peace you slave in field and factory, in war you serve as cannon fodder — all for the greater glory of your masters.

Yet you are told that 'everything is all right', that it is 'God's will', that it 'must be so'.

Don't you see that it is not God's will at all, but the doings of capital and government? Can't you see that it is so and 'must be so' only because you permit your political and industrial masters to fool and dupe *You*, so *they* can live in comfort and luxury off your toil and tears, while they treat you as the 'common' people, the 'lower orders', just good enough to slave for them?

'It has always been so,' you remark meekly.

Chapter 7: Church and School

Yes, my friend, it has always been so. That is, law and government have always been on the side of the masters. The rich and powerful have always doped you by 'God's will', with the help of the church and the school.

But must it always remain so?

In olden days, when the people were the slaves of some tyrant — of a tsar or other autocrat — the church (of every religion and denomination) taught that slavery existed by 'the will of God,' that it was good and necessary, that it could not be otherwise, and that whoever was against it went against God's will and was a godless man, a heretic, a blasphemer and a sinner.

The school taught that this was right and just, that the tyrant ruled by 'the grace of God', that his authority was not to be questioned, and that he was to be served and obeyed.

The people believed it and remained slaves.

But little by little there arose some men who had come to see that slavery was wrong: that it was not right for one man to hold a whole people in subjection and be lord and master over their lives and toil. And they went among the people and told them what they thought.

Then the government of the tyrant pounced upon those men. They were charged with breaking the laws of the land; they were called disturbers of the public peace, criminals, and enemies of the people. They were killed, and the church and the school said that it was right, that they deserved death as rebels against the laws of God and man. And the slaves believed it.

But the truth cannot be suppressed forever. More and more persons gradually came to see that the 'agitators' who had been killed were right. They came to understand that slavery was wrong and bad for them, and their numbers grew all the time. The tyrant made severe laws to suppress them: his government did everything to stop them and their 'evil designs'. Church and school denounced those men. They were persecuted and hounded and executed in the manner of those days.

Sometimes they were put on a big cross and nailed to it, or they had their heads cut off with an axe. At other times they were strangled to death, burned at the stake, quartered, or bound to horses and slowly torn apart.

This was done by the church and the school and the law, often even by the deluded mob, in various countries, and in the museums to-day you can still see the instruments of torture and death which were used to punish those who tried to tell the truth to the people.

But in spite of torture and death, in spite of law and government, in spite of church and school and press, slavery was at last abolished, though people had insisted that 'it was always so and must remain so'.

Later, in the days of serfdom, when the nobles forced it over the common people, church and school were again on the side of the rulers and the rich. Again they threatened the people with the wrath of God if they should dare to become rebellious and refuse to obey their lords and governors. Again they brought down their maledictions upon the heads of the 'disturbers' and heretics who dared defy the law and preach the gospel of greater liberty and well-being. Again those 'enemies of the people' were persecuted, hounded, and murdered — but the day came when serfdom was abolished.

Serfdom gave place to capitalism with its wage slavery, and again you find church and school on the side of the master and ruler. Again they thunder against the 'heretics', the godless ones who wish the people to be free and happy. Again church and school preach to you 'the will of God': capitalism is good

and necessary, they tell you; you must be obedient to your masters, for 'it is God's will' that there be rich and poor, and whoever goes against it is a sinner, a non-conformist, an anarchist.

So you see that church and school are still with the masters against their slaves, just as in the past. Like the leopard, they may change their spots, but never their nature. Still church and school side with the rich against the poor, with the powerful against their victims, with 'law and order' against liberty and justice.

Now as formerly they teach the people to respect and obey their masters. When the tyrant was king, church and school taught respect for and obedience to the 'law and order' of the king. When the king is abolished and a republic instituted, church and school teach respect for and obedience to republican 'law and order'. OBEY! that is the eternal cry of church and school, no matter how vile the tyrant, no matter how oppressive and unjust 'law and order'.

OBEY! For if you will cease obedience to authority you might begin to think for yourself! That would be most dangerous to 'law and order', the greatest misfortune for church and school. For then you would find out that everything they taught you was a lie, and was only for the purpose of keeping you enslaved, in mind and body, so that you should continue to toil and suffer and keep quiet.

Such an awakening on your part would indeed be the greatest calamity for church and school, for Master and Ruler.

But if you have gone thus far with me, if you have now begun to think for yourself if you understand that capitalism robs you and that government with its 'law and order' is there to help it do it; if you realize that all the agencies of institutionalized religion and education serve only to delude you and keep you in bondage, then you might rightly feel outraged and cry out, 'Is there no justice in the world?'

Chapter 8: Justice

No, my friend, terrible as it is to admit it, there is no justice in the world.

Worse yet: there *can be no justice* as long as we live under conditions which enable one person to take advantage of another's need, to turn it to his profit, and exploit his fellow man.

There can be no justice as long as one man is ruled by another; as long as one has the authority and power to compel another against his will

There can be no justice between master and servant.

Nor equality.

Justice and equality can exist only among equals. Is the poor street cleaner the social equal of Morgan? Is the washer woman the equal of Lady Astor?

Let the washer woman and Lady Astor enter any place, private or public. Will they receive equal welcome and treatment? Their very apparel will determine their respective reception. Because even their clothes indicate, under present conditions, the difference in their social position, their station in life, their influence, and wealth.

The washer woman may have toiled hard all her life long, may have been a most industrious and useful member of the community. The Lady may have never done a stroke of work, never been of the least use to society. For all that it is the rich lady who will be welcomed, who will be preferred.

I have chosen this homely example because it is typical of the entire character of our society, of our whole civilization.

It is money and the influence and authority which money commands, that alone count in the world.

Not justice, but possession.

Broaden this example to cover your own life, and you will find that justice and equality are only cheap talk, lies which you are taught, while money and power are the real thing, realities.

Yet there is a deep-seated sense of justice in mankind, and your better nature always resents it when you see injustice done to any one. You feel outraged and you become indignant over it: because we all have an instinctive sympathy with our fellow-man, for by nature and habit we are social beings. But when your interests or safety are involved, you act differently; you even feel differently.

Suppose you see your brother do wrong to a stranger. You will call his attention to it, you will chide him for it.

When you see your boss do an injustice to some fellow worker, you also resent it and you feel like protesting. But you will most probably refrain from expressing your sentiments because you might lose your job or get in bad with your boss.

Your *interests* suppress the better urge of your nature. Your dependence upon the boss and his economic power over you influence your behavior.

Suppose you see John beat and kick Bill when the latter is on the ground. Both may be strangers to you, but if you are not afraid of John, you'll tell him to stop kicking a fellow who is down.

But when you see the policeman do the same thing to some citizen you will think twice before interfering, because he might beat you up too and arrest you to boot. He has the authority.

John, who has no authority and who knows that some one might interfere when he is acting unjustly, will — as a rule — be careful what he is about.

The policeman, who is vested with some authority and who knows there is little chance of any one interfering with him, will be more likely to act unjustly.

Even in this simple instance you can observe the effect of authority: its effect on the one who possesses it and on those over whom it is exercised. Authority tends to make its possessor unjust and arbitrary; it also makes those subject to it acquiesce in wrong, subservient, and servile. Authority corrupts its holder and debases its victims.

If this is true of the simplest relations of existence, how much more so in the larger field of our industrial, political, and social life?

We have seen how your economic dependence upon your boss will affect your actions. Similarly it will influence others who are dependent upon him and his good will. Their interests will thus control their actions, even if they are not clearly aware of it.

And the boss? Will he also not be influenced by *his* interests? Will not his sympathies, his attitude and behavior be the result of his particular interests?

The fact is, every one is controlled, in the main, by his interests. Our feelings, our thoughts, our actions, our whole life is shaped, consciously and unconsciously, by our interests.

I am speaking of ordinary human nature, of the average man. Here and there you will find cases that seem to be exceptions. A great idea or an ideal, for example, may take such hold of a person that he will entirely devote himself to it and sometimes even sacrifice his life for it. In such an instance it might look as if the man acted against his interests. But that is a mistake — it only seems so. For in reality the idea or ideal for which the man lived or even gave his life, was his chief interest. The only difference is that the idealist finds his main interest in living for some idea, while the strongest interest of the average man is to get on in the world and live comfortably and peacefully. But both are controlled by their dominant interests.

The interests of men differ, but we are all alike in that each of us feels, thinks, and acts according to *his* particular interests, his conception of them.

Now, then, can you expect your boss to feel and act against his interests? Can you expect the capitalist to be guided by the interests of his employees? Can you expect the mine owner to run his business in the interests of the miners?

We have seen that the interests of the employer and employee are different; so different that they are opposed to each other.

Can there be justice between them? Justice means that each gets his due. Can the worker get his due or have justice in capitalist society?

If he did, capitalism could not exist: because then your employer could not make any profits out of your work. If the worker would get his due — that is, the things he produces or their equivalent — where would the profits of the capitalist come from? If labor owned the wealth it produces, there would be no capitalism.

It means that the worker cannot get what he produces, cannot get what is due to him, and therefore cannot get justice under wage slavery.

'If that is the case,' you remark, 'he can appeal to the law, to the courts.'

What are the courts? What purpose do they serve? They exist to uphold the law. If someone has stolen your overcoat and you can prove it, the courts would decide in your favor. If the accused is rich or has a clever lawyer, the chances are that the verdict will be to the effect that the whole thing was a misunderstanding, or that it was an act of aberration, and the man will most likely go free.

But if you accuse your employer of robbing you of the greater part of your labor, of exploiting you for his personal benefit and profit, can you get your due in the courts? The judge will dismiss the case, because it is not against the law for your boss to make profits out of your work. There is no law to forbid it. You will get no justice that way.

It is said that 'justice is blind.' By that is meant that it recognizes no distinction of station, of influence, of race, creed, or color.

This proposition needs only to be stated to be seen as thoroughly false. For justice is administered by human beings, by judges and juries, and every human being has his particular interests, not to speak of his personal sentiments, opinions, likes, dislikes, and prejudices, from which he can't get away by merely putting on a judge's gown and sitting on the bench. The judge's attitude to things — like every one else's — will be determined, consciously and unconsciously, by his education and bringing up, by the environment in which he lives, by his feelings and opinions, and particularly by his interests and the interests of the social group to which he belongs.

Considering the above, you must realize that the alleged impartiality of the courts of justice is in truth a psychological impossibility. There is no such thing, and cannot be. At best the judge can be relatively impartial in cases in which neither his sentiments nor his interests — as an individual or member of a certain social group — are in any way concerned. In such cases you might get justice. But these are usually of small importance, and they play a very insignificant role in the general administration of justice. no such thing, and cannot be. At best the judge can be relatively impartial in cases in which neither his sentiments nor his interests — as an individual or member of a certain social group — are in any way concerned. In such cases you might get justice. But these are usually of small importance, and they play a very insignificant rôle in the general administration of justice.

Let us take an example. Suppose two business men are disputing over the possession of a certain piece of property, the matter involving no political or social considerations of any kind. In such a case the judge, having no personal feeling or interest in the matter, may decide the case on its merits. Even then his attitude will to a considerable extent depend on his state of health and his digestion, on the mood in which he left home, on a probable quarrel with his spouse, and other seemingly unimportant and irrelevant yet very decisive human factors.

Or suppose that two workingmen are in litigation over the ownership of a chicken coop. The judge may in such a case decide justly, since a verdict in favour of one or other of the litigants in no way affects the position, feelings, or interests of the judge.

But suppose the case before him is that of a workingman in litigation with his landlord or with his employer. In such circumstances the entire character and personality of the judge will affect his decision. Not that the latter will necessarily be unjust. That is not the point I am trying to make. What I want to call your attention to is that, in the given case, the attitude of the judge cannot and will not be impartial. His sentiments toward workingmen, his personal opinion of landlords or employers, and his social views will influence his judgment, sometimes even unconsciously to himself. His verdict may or may not be just; in any case it will not be based exclusively on the evidence. It will be affected by his personal, subjective feelings and by his views regarding labor and capital. His attitude will generally be that of his circle of friends and acquaintances, of his social group, and his opinions in the matter will correspond with the interests of that group. He may even himself be a landlord or have stock in a corporation which employs labor. Consciously or unconsciously his view of the evidence given at the trial will be colored by his own feelings and prejudices, and his verdict will be a result of that.

Besides, the appearance of the two litigants, their manner of speech and behavior, and particularly their respective ability to employ clever counsel, will have a very considerable influence on the impressions of the judge and consequently on his decision.

It is therefore clear that in such cases the verdict will depend more on the mentality and class-consciousness of the particular judge than on the merits of the case.

This experience is so general that the popular voice has expressed it in the sentiment that 'the poor man can't get justice against the rich.' There may be exceptions now and then, but generally it **is true and can't** be otherwise as long as society is divided into different classes with differing interests. So long as that is the case, justice must be one-sided, *class justice*; that is, injustice in favor of one class as against the other.

You can see it still more clearly illustrated in cases involving definite class issues, cases of the class struggle.

Take, for instance, a strike of workers against a corporation or a rich employer. On what side will you find the judges, the courts? Whose interests will the law and government protect? The workers are striking for better conditions of living; they have wives and children at home for whom they are trying to get a little bigger share of the wealth they are creating. Does the law and government help them in this worthy aim?

What actually happens? Every branch of government comes to the aid of capital as against labor. The courts will issue an injunction against the strikers, they will forbid picketing or make it ineffectual by not permitting the strikers to persuade outsiders not to take the bread out of their mouths, the police will beat up and arrest the pickets, the judges will impose fines on them and railroad them to jail. The whole machinery of the government will be at the service of the capitalists to break the strike, to smash the union, if possible, and reduce the workers to submission. Sometimes the Governor of the State will even call out the militia, the President will order out the regular troops — all in support of capital against labor.

Meanwhile the trust or corporation where the strike is taking place will order their employees to vacate the company houses, will throw them and their families out in the cold, and will fill their places in the mill, mine, or factory with strikebreakers, under the protection and with the aid of the police, the courts, and the government, all of whom are supported by *your* labor and taxes.

Can you speak of justice under such circumstances? Can you be so naive as to believe that justice is possible in the struggle of the poor against the rich, of labor against capital? Can't you see that it is a bitter fight, a struggle of opposed interests, a *war of two classes*? Can you expect justice in war?

Truly the capitalistic class knows that it is war, and it uses every means at its command to defeat labor. But the workers unfortunately do not see the situation as clearly as their masters, and so they still foolishly twaddle about 'justice', 'equality before the law', and 'liberty'.

It is useful to the capitalist class that the workers should believe in such fairy tales. It guarantees the continuation of the rule of the masters. Therefore they use every effort to keep up this belief. The capitalistic press, the politician, the public speaker, never miss an opportunity to impress it upon you that law means justice, that all are equal before the law, and that every one enjoys liberty and has the same opportunity in life as the next fellow. The whole machinery of law and order, of capitalism and government, our entire civilization is based upon this gigantic lie, and the constant propaganda of it by school, church, and press is for the sole purpose of keeping conditions as they are, of sustaining and protecting the 'sacred institutions' of your wage slavery and keeping you obedient to law and authority.

By every method they seek to instill this lie of 'justice', 'liberty', and 'equality' in the masses, for full well they know that their whole power and mastery rest on this faith. On every appropriate and inappropriate occasion they feed you this buncombe; they have even created special days to impress the lesson more emphatically upon you. Their spellbinders fill you full of this stuff on the Fourth of July, and you are permitted to shoot your misery and dissatisfaction off in firecrackers and forget your wage slavery in the big noise and hullabaloo. What an insult to the glorious memory of that great event, the American Revolutionary War, which abolished the tyranny of George III and made the American Colonies an independent republic! Now the anniversary of that event is used to mask your servitude in the country where the workers have neither freedom nor independence. To add insult to injury, they have given you a Thanksgiving Day, that you may offer up pious thanks for what you have not!

So great is the assurance of your masters in your stupidity that they dare do such things. They feel safe in having duped you so thoroughly and reduced your naturally rebellious spirit to such abject worship of 'law and order' that you will never dream of opening your eyes and letting your heart cry out in outraged protest and defiance.

At the least sign of your rebellion the entire weight of the government, of law and order, comes down upon your head, beginning with the policeman's club, the jail, the prison, and ending with the gallows or the electric chair. The whole system of capitalism and government is mobilized to crush every symptom of dissatisfaction and rebellion; aye, even any attempt to improve your condition as a workingman. Because your masters well understand the situation and fully know the danger of your waking up to the actual facts of the case, to your real condition of slave. They are aware of their interests, of the interests of their class. They are class conscious, while the workers remain muddled and befuddled.

The industrial lords know that it is good for them to keep you unorganized and disorganized, or to break up your unions when they get strong and militant. By hook and crook they oppose your every advance as a class-conscious worker. Every movement for the improvement of labor's condition they hate and fight tooth and nail. They'll spend millions on the kind of education and propaganda that serves the continuation of their rule rather than on improving your conditions as a worker. They will spare neither expense nor energy to stifle any thought or idea that may reduce their profits or threaten their mastery over you.

It is for this reason that they try to crush every aspiration of labor for better conditions. Consider, for instance, the movement for the eight-hour day. It is comparatively recent history, and probably you remember with what bitterness and determination the employers opposed that effort of labor. In some industries in America and in most European countries the struggle is still going on. In the United States it began in 1886, and it was fought by the bosses with the greatest brutality in order to drive their workers back to the factories under the old conditions. They resorted to lockouts, throwing thousands out of work, to violence by hired thugs and Pinkertons upon labor assemblies and their active members, to the demolition of union headquarters and meeting places.

Where was 'law and order'? What side of the struggle was the government on? What did the courts and the judges do? Where was justice?

The local, State, and Federal authorities used all the machinery and power at their command to aid the employers. They did not even shrink from murder. The most active and able leaders of the movement had to pay with their lives for the attempt of the workers to reduce their hours of toil.

Many books have been written on that struggle, so that it is unnecessary for me to go into details. But a brief summary of those events will refresh the reader's memory.

The movement for the eight-hour workday started in Chicago, on May 1, 1886, gradually spreading throughout the country. Its beginning was marked by strikes declared in most of the large industrial centers. Twenty-five thousand workers laid down their tools in Chicago on the first day of the strike, and within two days their number was doubled. By the 4th of May almost all unionized labor in the city was on strike.

The armed fist of the law immediately hastened to the aid of the employers. The capitalist press raved against the strikers and called for the use of lead against them. There followed immediately assaults by police upon the strikers' meetings. The most vicious attack took place at the McCormick works, where the conditions of employment were so unbearable that the men were compelled to go on strike already in February. At this place the police and Pinkertons deliberately shot a volley into the assembled workers, killing four and wounding a score of others.

To protest against the outrage a meeting was called at Haymarket Square on the 4th of May, 1886.

It was an orderly gathering, such as were daily taking place in Chicago at the time. The Mayor of the city, Carter Harrison, was present; he listened to several speeches and then — according to his own sworn testimony later on in court — he returned to police headquarters to inform the Chief of Police that the meeting was all right. It was growing late — about ten in the evening, heavy clouds overcast the sky; it looked like rain. The audience began to disperse till only about two hundred were left. Then suddenly a detachment of a hundred policemen rushed upon the scene, commanded by Police Inspector Bonfield. They halted at the speakers' wagon, from which Samuel Fielden was addressing

the remnant of the audience. The Inspector ordered the meeting to disperse. Fielden replied: 'This is a peaceful assembly.' Without further warning the police threw themselves upon the people, mercilessly clubbing and beating men and women. At that moment something whizzed through the air. There was an explosion, as of a bomb. Seven policemen were killed and about sixty wounded.

It was never ascertained who threw the bomb, and even to this day the identity of the man has not been established.

There had been so much brutality by the police and Pinkertons against the strikers that it was not surprising that some one should express his protest by such an act. Who was he? The industrial masters of Chicago were not interested in this detail. They were determined to crush rebellious labor, to down the eight-hour movement, and to stifle the voice of the spokesmen of the workers. They openly declared their determination to 'teach the men a lesson'.

Among the most active and intelligent leaders of the labor movement at the time was Albert Parsons, a man of old American stock, whose forebears had fought in the American Revolution. Associated with him in the agitation for the shorter workday were August Spies, Adolf Fischer, George Engel, and Louis Lingg. The money interests of Chicago and of the State of Illinois determined to 'get' them. Their object was to punish and terrorize labor by murdering their most devoted leaders. The trial of those men was the most hellish conspiracy of capital against labor in the history of America. Perjured evidence, bribed jurymen, and police revenge combined to bring about their doom.

Parsons, Spies, Fischer, Engel, and Lingg were condemned to death, Lingg committing suicide in jail; Samuel Fielden and Michael Schwab were sentenced to prison for life, while Oscar Neebe received 15 years. No greater travesty of justice was ever staged than the trial of these men known as the Chicago Anarchists.

What a legal outrage the verdict was you can judge from the action of John P. Altgeld, later Governor of Illinois, who carefully reviewed the trial proceedings and declared that the executed and imprisoned men had been victims of a plot of the manufacturers, the courts, and the police. He could not undo the judicial murders, but most courageously he liberated the still imprisoned Anarchists, stating that he was merely making good, so far as was in his power, the terrible crime that had been committed against them.

The vengeance of the exploiters went so far that they punished Altgeld for his brave stand by eliminating him from the political life of America.

The Haymarket tragedy, as the case is known, is a striking illustration of the kind of 'justice' labor may expect from the masters. It is a demonstration of its class character and of the means to which capital and government will resort to crush the workers.

The history of the American labor movement is replete with such examples. It is not within the scope of this book to review the great number of them. They are dealt with in numerous books and publications, to which I refer the reader for a nearer acquaintance with the Golgotha of the American proletariat. On a smaller scale the Chicago judicial murders are repeated in every struggle of labor. It is sufficient to mention the strikes of the miners in the State of Colorado, with its fiendish Ludlow chapter, where the State militia deliberately shot into the workers' tents, setting the latter afire and causing the death of a number of men, women and children; the murder of strikers in the hopfields of Wheatland, California, in the summer of 1913; in Everett, Washington' in 1916; in Tulsa, Oklahoma; in Virginia and in Kansas; in the copper mines of Montana, and in numerous other places throughout the country.

Nothing so arouses the hatred and vengeance of the masters as the effort to enlighten their victims. This is as true to-day as it was in the time of slavery and serfdom. We have seen how the church persecuted and martyred her critics and fought every advance of science as a threat to her authority and influence. Similarly has every despot always sought to stifle the voice of protest and rebellion. In the same spirit capital and government to-day furiously fall upon and tear to pieces every one who dares shake the foundations of their power and interests.

Take two recent cases as instances of this never-changing attitude of authority and ownership: the Mooney-Billings case and that of Sacco and Vanzetti. One took place in the East, the other in the West, the two separated by a decade and the whole width of the continent. Yet they were exactly alike, proving that there is neither East nor West, nor any difference of time or place in the masters' treatment of their slaves.

Mooney and Billings are in prison in California for life. Why? If I were to answer in just a few words, I should say, with perfect truth and completeness: because they were intelligent union men who tried to enlighten their fellow-employees and improve their condition.

It was just this, and no other reason, that doomed them. The Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco, the money power of California, could not tolerate the activities of two such energetic and militant men. Labor in San Francisco was becoming restive, strikes were taking place, and demands were being voiced by the toilers for a greater share of the wealth they were producing.

The industrial magnates of the coast declared war upon organized labor. They proclaimed the 'open shop' and their determination to break the unions. That was the preliminary step towards placing the workers in a position of helplessness and then reducing wages. Their hatred and persecution were directed first of all against the most active members of labor.

Tom Mooney had organized the street-car men of San Francisco, a crime for which the traction company could not forgive him. Mooney together with Warren Billings and other workers had also been active in a number of strikes. They were known and admired for their devotion to the union cause. That was enough for the employers and the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce to try to get them out of the way. On several occasions they had been arrested on frame-up charges by agents of the traction and other corporations. But the cases against them were of such flimsy nature that they had to be dismissed. The Chamber of Commerce bided its opportunity to 'get' those two labor men, as their agents openly threatened to do.

The opportunity came with the explosion during the Preparedness Parade in San Francisco, July 22, 1916. The labor unions of the city had decided not to participate in the parade, because the latter was merely a show of strength by California capital as against unionized labor which the Chamber of Commerce had set out to crush. The 'open shop' was its frankly proclaimed policy, and it made no secret of its determined and bitter hostility to unions.

It has never been ascertained who placed the infernal machine which exploded during the parade, but the San Francisco police never made any serious effort to find the responsible party or parties. Immediately following the tragic occurrence Thomas Mooney and his wife Rena were arrested, as well as Warren Billings, Edward D. Nolan, member of the machinists' union, and I. Weinberg, of the jitney drivers' union.

The trial of Billings and Mooney proved one of the worst scandals in the history of American courts.

The State witnesses were self-confessed perjurers, bribed and threatened by the police into giving false testimony. Evidence showing the entire innocence of Mooney and Billings was ignored. Mooney was accused of having placed the infernal machine at the very time when he was in the company of friends upon the roof of a house about a mile and a half distant from the scene of the explosion. A photograph taken of the demonstration by a film company during the parade clearly shows Mooney on the roof, and in the background a street clock indicating the time as 2.02 p.m. The explosion having taken place at 2.06 p.m., it would have been a physical impossibility for Mooney to have been at both places at almost the same time.

But it was not a question of evidence, of guilt or innocence. Tom Mooney was bitterly hated by the vested interests of San Francisco. He had to be gotten out of the way. Mooney and Billings were convicted, the former being sentenced to death, the latter receiving a lifetime term.

The outrageous manner in which the trial was conducted, the evident perjury of the State witnesses, and the clear hand of the manufacturers back of the prosecution aroused the country. The matter ulti-

mately was brought up before Congress. The latter passed a resolution ordering the Labor Department to investigate the case. The report of Commissioner John B. Densmore, sent to San Francisco for this purpose, exposed the conspiracy to hang Mooney as one of the methods of the Chamber of Commerce to destroy organized labor in California.

Since then most of the State witnesses, having failed to receive the reward promised them, confessed to having perjured themselves at the instigation of Charles M. Fickert, then District Attorney of San Francisco and known tool of the Chamber of Commerce. Draper Hand and R. W. Smith, police officials of the city, have both declared in sworn affidavits that the evidence against Mooney and Billings was manufactured from beginning to end by the District Attorney and his bribed witnesses from the lowest social dregs of the coast.

The Mooney-Billings case attracted national and even international attention. President Wilson felt induced to wire to the Governor of California twice, asking for a revision of the case. Mooney's death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, but no effort has succeeded in securing him a new trial. The money power of California was bent on keeping Mooney and Billings in the penitentiary. The Supreme Court of the State, obedient to the Chamber of Commerce, steadfastly refused, on technical grounds, to review the trial testimony, the perjured character of which had become a byword in California.

Since then all the surviving jurors have made statements to the effect that if the true facts of the case had been known to them during the trial, they would have never convicted Mooney. Even Judge Fraser, who presided at the trial, has asked for Mooney's pardon, on similar grounds.

Yet both Tom Mooney and Warren Billings still remain in the penitentiary. The Chamber of Commerce of California is determined to keep them there, and their power is supreme with the courts and the government.

Can you still speak of justice? Do you think justice to labor possible under the reign of capitalism?

The judicial murder of the Chicago Anarchists took place many years ago, in 1887. Considerable time has also elapsed since the MooneyBillings case, in 1916–1917. The latter, moreover, happened far away, on the Pacific Coast, at a time of war hysteria. Such rank injustice could take place only in those days, you might say; it could hardly be repeated to-day.

Let us then shift the scene to our own day, to the very heart of America, the proud seat of culture — to Boston, Massachusetts.

It is sufficient to mention Boston to call up the picture of two proletarians, Nicola Sacco and Bartolemeo Vanzetti, one a poor shoemaker, the other a fish peddler, whose names to-day are known and honored in every civilized country the world over.

Martyrs to humanity, if ever there were any; two men who gave up their lives because of their devotion to mankind, because of their loyalty to the ideal of an emancipated and freed working class. Two innocent men who bravely suffered torture during seven long years, and who died a terrible death with a serenity of spirit rarely equaled by the greatest martyrs of all time.

The story of that judicial murder of two of the noblest of men, the crime of Massachusetts that will neither be forgotten nor forgiven as long as the State exists, is too fresh in the memory of every one to need recapitulation here.

But why did Sacco and Vanzetti have to die? This question is of utmost moment; it bears directly upon the matters at issue.

Do you think that if Sacco and Vanzetti had been just a pair of criminals, as the prosecution tried to make you believe, there would have been such ruthless determination to execute them in the face of the appeals, pleadings, and protests of the entire world?

Or if they had been plutocrats actually guilty of murder, with no other issue involved, would they have been executed? Would no appeal to the higher courts of the State have been allowed, would the Federal Supreme Court have refused to consider the case?

You have often heard of some rich fellow killing a man, or of the sons of wealthy parents found guilty of murder in the first degree. But can you name a single one of them ever executed in the United States? Will you even discover many of them in prison? Does not the law always find excuses of 'mental excitation', of 'brain storm', of 'legal irresponsibility in cases of rich men convicted of crime'?

But even if Sacco and Vanzetti had been ordinary criminals sentenced to die, would not appeals from prominent men in all walks of life, from charitable societies, and hundreds of thousands of friends and sympathizers have secured clemency for them? Would not doubt of their guilt, expressed by the highest legal authorities, have resulted in a new trial, a revision of the old testimony, and the consideration of new evidence in their behalf?

Why was all this refused to Sacco and Vanzetti? Why did 'law and order', beginning with the local police and Federal detectives, up to the confessedly prejudiced trial judge, all through the Supreme Court of the State, the Governor, and ending with the Federal Supreme Court show such a determination to send them to the electric chair?

Because Sacco and Vanzetti were dangerous to the interests of capital. These men voiced the dissatisfaction of the workers with their condition of servitude. They expressed consciously what the workers mostly feel unconsciously. It is because they were class-conscious men, Anarchists, that they were a greater menace to the security of capitalism than if they had been a whole army of strikers not conscious of the real objects of the class struggle. The masters know that when you strike you demand only higher pay or shorter hours of work. But the class-conscious struggle of labor against capital is a far more serious matter; it means the entire abolition of the wage system and the freeing of labor from the domination of capital. You can readily understand then why the masters saw a greater danger in such men as Sacco and Vanzetti than in the biggest strike for the mere improvement of conditions with in capitalism.

Sacco and Vanzetti threatened the whole structure of capitalism and government. Not those two poor proletarians as individuals. No; rather what those two men represented — the spirit of conscious rebellion against existing conditions of exploitation and oppression.

It is that spirit which capital and government meant to kill in the persons of those men. To kill that spirit and the movement for labor's emancipation by striking terror into the hearts of all who might think and feel like Sacco and Vanzetti; to make an example of those two men that would intimidate the workers and keep them away from the proletarian movement.

This is the reason why neither the courts not the government of Massachusetts could be induced to give Sacco and Vanzetti a new trial. There was danger of their being acquitted in the atmosphere of an aroused public sense of justice; there was the fear that the plot to murder them would be exposed. That is why the Justices of the Federal Supreme Court declined to hear the case, just as the judges of the Supreme Court of the State of Massachusetts refused a new trial in spite of important new evidence. For that reason also the President of the United States did not intercede in the matter, though it was no less his moral than his legal duty to do so. His moral duty, in the interests of justice; his legal obligation because as President he had sworn to uphold the Constitution which guarantees every one a fair trial, which Sacco and Vanzetti did not get.

President Coolidge had sufficient precedents for interceding in behalf of justice, notably the example of Woodrow Wilson, in the case of Mooney. But Coolidge had not the courage to do so, being entirely subservient to the Big Interests. No doubt the case of Sacco and Vanzetti was also considered of even greater importance and class significance than that of Mooney. At any rate, both capital and government agreed in their resolve to uphold the courts of Massachusetts at all cost and to sacrifice Nicolo Sacco and Bartolemeo Vanzetti.

The masters were determined to uphold the legend of 'justice in the courts', because their whole power rests on the popular belief in such justice. It is not that infallibility is claimed for judges. If that were the attitude, there would be no appeal from the decision of a judge, there would be neither

superior nor supreme courts. The fallibility of Justice is admitted, but the fact that the courts and all government institutions serve only to support the rule of the masters over their labor slaves — that their justice is but class justice — that could not be admitted for even an instant. Because if the people found that out, capitalism and government would be doomed. That is exactly why no impartial review of the evidence in the Sacco and Vanzetti case could be permitted, no new trial given them, for such a proceeding would have exposed the motives and objects back of their prosecution.

Therefore there was no appeal and no new trial — only a star chamber hearing behind closed doors in the Governor's mansion, by men whose loyalty to the dominant class was above suspicion; men who by all their training and education, by their tradition and interests were bound to Sustain the courts and clear the Sacco and Vanzetti verdict of any imputation of class justice. Therefore Sacco and Vanzetti had to die.

Governor Fuller of Massachusetts pronounced the final word of their doom. There were, even up to the last moment, thousands who had hoped that the Governor would shrink from committing this coldblooded murder. But they did not know or had forgotten that years before, in 1919, the same Fuller had stated in Congress that every 'radical, socialist, IWW, or anarchist should be exterminated'; that is, that those who seek to free labor should be murdered. Could you reasonably expect such a man to do justice to Sacco and Vanzetti, two avowed Anarchists?

Governor Fuller acted according to his sentiments, in keeping with his attitude and interests as a member of the ruling class, in a manner thoroughly class-conscious. Similarly have acted Judge Thayer and all those involved in the prosecution, no less than the 'respectable gentlemen of the Commission appointed by Fuller to 'review' the case in secret session. All of them class-conscious, they were interested only in sustaining capitalistic 'justice', so as to preserve the 'law and order' by which they live and profit.

Is there justice for labor within capitalism and government? Can there be any as long as the present system exists? Decide for yourself.

The cases I have cited are but a few of the numerous struggles of American labor against capital. The same can be duplicated in every country. They clearly demonstrate the fact that

1. there is only class justice in the war of capital against labor; there can be no justice for labor under capitalism.
2. law and government, as well as all other capitalist institutions (the press, the school, the church, the police, and courts) are always at the service of capital against labor, whatever the merits of any given case. Capital and government are twins with one common interest.
3. capital and government will use any and all means to keep the proletariat in subjection: they will terrorize the working class and ruthlessly murder its most intelligent and devoted members.

It cannot be otherwise, because there is a life-and-death struggle between capital and labor.

Every time that capital and its servant, the law, hang such men as the Chicago Anarchists or electrocute the Saccos and Vanzettis, they proclaim that they have 'freed society from a menace'. They want you to believe that the executed were your enemies, enemies of society. They also want you to believe that their death has settled the matter, that capitalistic justice has been vindicated, and that 'law and orders has triumphed. But the matter is not settled, and the masters' victory is only temporary. The struggle goes on, as it has continued all through the history of man, all through the march of labor and liberty. No matter is ever settled unless it is settled right. You can't suppress the natural yearning of the human heart for freedom and well-being, however much terror and murder governments may resort to. You can't stifle the demand of the toiler for better conditions. The struggle goes on and will continue in spite of everything law, government, and capital may do. But that the workers may not be wasting their energy and efforts in the wrong direction, they must clearly understand that they can no more

hope for justice from the courts, from law and government, than they can expect wage slavery to be abolished by their masters.

‘What’s to be done, then?’ you ask. ‘How shall the workers get justice?’

Chapter 9: Can The Church Help You?

What's to be done?

How abolish poverty, oppression, and tyranny? How eliminate evil and injustice, weed out corruption, put an end to crime and murder?

How do away with wage slavery?

How secure liberty and well-being, joy and sunshine for every one?

'Turn to God,' commands the church; 'only a Christian life can save the world.'

'Let us pass a new law,' says the reformer; 'man must be compelled to be good'

'Vote for me!' says the politician; 'I'll look after your interests.'

'The Trade Union,' advises your labor friend; 'that's your hope.'

'Only Socialism can abolish capitalism and do away with wage slavery,' insists the Socialist.

'I'm a Bolshevik,' announces another; 'only the dictatorship of the proletariat will free the workers.'

'We'll remain slaves as long as we have rulers and masters,' says the Anarchist; 'only liberty can make us free.'

The Protectionist and the Free Trader, the Single Taxer and the: Fabian, the Tolstoyan and the Mutualist, and a score of other social physicians all prescribe their particular medicine to cure the ills of society, and you wonder who is right and what the true solution might be.

You cannot make any greater mistake than to accept *blindly* this or that advice. You are sure to go wrong.

Only your own reason and experience can decide where the right road lies. Examine the various proposals and determine with your own common sense which is the most reasonable and practical. Only then will you know what is best for yourself, for the worker, and for mankind.

So let us look into the different plans.

Can the church help you?

Maybe you are a Christian, or a member of some other religion -Jew, Mormon, Mohammedan, Buddhist, or what not.

It makes no difference. A man should be free to believe whatever he pleases. The point is not what your religious faith is, but whether religion can abolish the evils we suffer from.

As I said before, we have only one life to live on this earth, and we want to make the best of it. What will happen to us after we are dead we don't know. The chances are we'll never know, and so it's no use bothering about it.

The question here is of life, not of death. It is the living we are concerned with; with you and me and others like ourselves. Can the world be made a better place for us to live in? That's what we want to know. Can religion do it?

Christianity is about 2,000 years old. Has it abolished any evil? Has it done away with crime and murder, has it delivered us from poverty and misery, from despotism and tyranny?

You know that it has not. You know that the Christian Church, like all other churches, has always been on the side of the masters, against the people. More: the church has caused worse strife and bloodshed than all the wars of kings and kaisers. Religion has divided mankind into opposing beliefs, and the most bloody wars have been fought on account of religious differences. The church has persecuted people for their opinions, imprisoned and killed them. The Catholic Inquisition terrorized the whole world,

tortured so-called heretics, and burned them alive. Other churches did the same when they had the power. They always sought to enslave and exploit the people, to keep them in ignorance and darkness. They condemned every effort of man to develop his mind, to advance, to improve his condition. They damned science, and silenced the men who thirsted for knowledge. Till this very day institutionalized religion is the Judas of its alleged Savior. It approves of murder and war, of wage slavery and capitalistic robbery, and always stands for the 'law and order' which crucified the Nazarene.

Consider: Jesus wanted all men to be brothers, to live in peace and good will. The church upholds inequality, national strife, and war.

Jesus condemned the rich as vipers and oppressors of the poor. The church bows before the rich and accumulates vast wealth.

The Nazarene was born in a manger and remained a pauper all his life. His alleged representatives and spokesmen on earth live in palaces.

Jesus preached meekness. The Princes of the Church are haughty and purse-proud.

'As you do unto the least of my children,' Christ said, 'you do unto me.' The church supports the capitalist system which enslaves little children and brings them to an early grave.

'Thou shalt not kill,' commanded the Nazarene. The church approves of executions and war.

Christianity is the greatest hypocrisy on record. Neither Christian nations nor individuals practice the precepts of Jesus. The early Christians did — and they were crucified, burned at the stake, or thrown to the wild animals in the Roman arena. Later the Christian Church compromised with those in power; she gained money and influence by taking the side of the tyrants against the people. She sanctioned everything which Christ condemned, and by that she won the good will and support of kings and masters. To-day king, master, and priest are one trinity. They crucify Jesus daily; they glorify him with lip service and betray him for silver pieces; they praise his name and kill his spirit.

It is obvious that Christianity is the greatest sham and shame of humanity, and a complete failure because the Christian appeal is a lie. The churches do not practice what they preach. Moreover, they preach to you a gospel which they know you cannot live up to; they call upon you to become a 'better man' without giving you a chance to do so. On the contrary, the churches uphold the conditions that make you 'bad', while they command you to be 'good'. They benefit materially by the existing regime and are financially interested in keeping it up. The Catholic Church, the Protestant, Anglican, Christian Science, Mormon, and other denominations are among the wealthiest organizations in the world to-day. Their possessions represent the workers' brood and flesh. Their influence is proof of how the people are deluded. The prophets of religion are dead and forgotten; there remain only the profits.

'But if we would lead a truly Christian life,' you remark, 'the world would be different.'

You are right, my friend. But can you live a Christian life under present conditions? Does capitalism allow you to lead such a life? Will the government permit you to do so? Will even the church give you a chance to live a Christian life?

Just try it for a single day and see what happens to you.

As you leave your house in the morning, determine to be a Christian that day and speak only the truth. As you pass the policeman on the corner, remind him of Christ and His commandments. Tell him to 'love his enemy as himself', and persuade him to throw away his club and gun.

And when you meet the soldier on the street, impress it upon him that Jesus had said, 'Thou shalt not kill.'

In your shop or office speak the whole truth to you employer. Tell him of the Nazarene's warning. 'What shall it profit you to gain the whole earth and lose your soul and its salvation?' Mention that He commanded us to share our last loaf with the poor; that He said that the rich man has no more chance of getting into heaven than the camel can pass through the eye of a needle.

And when you are brought to court for disturbing the peace of the good Christians, remind the Judge: 'Judge not that ye be not judged.'

You will be declared a fool or a madman, and they will send you to a lunatic asylum or to prison.

You can see, then, what rank hypocrisy it is for the sky pilot to preach the Christian life to you. He knows as well as you that under capitalism and government there is no more chance to lead a Christian life than for a camel to 'pass through the needle's eye'. All those good folks who pretend to be Christians are just hypocrites who preach what cannot be practiced, for they don't give you any opportunity to lead a Christian life. No, not even to lead an ordinarily decent and honest life, without sham and deceit, without pretense and lying.

It is true that if we could follow the precepts of the Nazarene this would be a different world to live in. There would then be no murder and no war; no cheating and lying and profit-making. There would be neither slave nor master, and we should all live like brothers, in peace and harmony. There would be neither poor nor rich, neither crime nor prison, but that would not be what the church wants. It would be what the Anarchists want, and that we shall discuss further on.

So, my friend, you have nothing to expect from the Christian Church or from *any* church. All progress and improvement in the world has been made *against* the will and wishes of the church. You may believe in whatever religion you please, but don't put any hope of social improvement in the church.

Now let's see whether the reformer or politician can help us.

Chapter 10: Reformer and Politician

Who is the reformer, and what does he propose?

The reformer wants to 'reform and improve.' He is not sure what it is that he really wants to change: sometimes he says that 'people are bad,' and it is them that he wants to 'reform', at other times he means to 'improve' conditions. He does not believe in abolishing an evil altogether. Doing away with something that is rotten is 'too radical' for him. 'For Heaven's sake,' he cautions you, 'don't be too hasty.' He wants to change things gradually, little by little. Take war, for example. War is bad, of course, the reformer admits; it is wholesale murder, a blot upon our civilization. But — abolish it? Oh, no! He wants to 'reform' it. He wants to 'limit armaments,' for instance. With less armaments, he says, we'll kill fewer people. He wants to 'humanize' war, to make slaughter more decent, so to speak.

If you should carry out his ideas in your personal life, you would not have a rotten tooth that aches pulled out all at once. You would have it pulled out a little to-day, some more next week for several months or years, and by then you would be ready to pull it out altogether, so it should not hurt so much. That is the logic of the reformer. Don't be 'too hasty,' don't pull a bad tooth out all at once.

The reformer thinks he can make people better by law. 'Pass a new law,' he says whenever anything goes wrong; 'compel men to be good.'

He forgets that for hundreds, even for thousands, of years laws have been made to force people to 'be good,' yet human nature remains about what it always was. We have so many laws that even the proverbial Philadelphia lawyer is lost in their maze. The ordinary person can't tell any more what is right or wrong according to statute, what is just, what true or false. A special class of persons — judges — decide what is honest or dishonest, when it is permitted to steal and in what manner, when fraud is legal and when it is not, when murder is right and when it is a crime, which uniform entitles you to kill and which does not. It takes many laws to determine all this, and for centuries legislators have been busy making laws (at a good salary), and yet to-day we still need more laws, for all the other laws have failed to make you 'good.'

Still the lawmaker continues to compel people to be good. If the existing laws have not made you better, he says, then we need more laws and stricter ones. Stiffer sentences will diminish and prevent crime, he claims, while he appeals in behalf of his 'reform' to the very men who have stolen the earth from the people.

If some one has killed another in a business quarrel, for money or other advantage, the reformer will not admit that money and money getting rouse the worst passions and drive men to crime and murder. He will argue that the willful taking of human life deserves capital punishment, and he will straight away help the government send armed men to some foreign country to do wholesale killing there.

The reformer cannot think straight. He does not understand that if men act badly it is because they think it is to their advantage to do so. The reformer says that a new law will change all that. He is a born prohibitionist: he wants to prohibit men from being bad. If a man lost his job, for instance, feels blue about it, and gets drunk to forget his troubles, the reformer wouldn't think of helping the man to find work. No; it is drinking that must be prohibited, he insists. He thinks he has reformed you by driving you out of the saloon into the cellar where you stealthily slush on vile moonshine instead of openly taking a drink. In the same way he wants to reform you in what you eat and do, in what you think and feel.

He refuses to see that his 'reforms' create worse evils than those they are supposed to suppress; that they cause more deceit, corruption, and vice. He puts one set of men to spy upon another, and he thinks he has 'raised the standard of morality'; he pretends to have made you 'better' by compelling you to be a hypocrite.

I don't mean to detain you long with the reformer. We are going to meet him again as the politician. Without wishing to be rough on him, I can say frankly that when the reformer is honest he is a fool; when he is a politician he is a knave. In either case, as we shall presently see, he cannot solve our problem of how to make the world a better place to live in.

The politician is first cousin to the reformer. 'Pass a new law,' says the reformer, 'and compel men to be good.' 'Let *me* pass the law,' says the politician, 'and things will be better.'

You can tell the politician by his talk. In most cases he is a grafter who wants to climb on your shoulders to power. Once there, he forgets his solemn promises and thinks only of his own ambitions and interests.

When the politician is honest he misleads you no less than the grafter. Perhaps worse, because you put confidence in him and are the more disappointed when he fails to do you any good.

The reformer and the politician are both on the wrong track. To try to change men by law is just like trying to change your face by getting a new mirror. For men make laws, not laws men. The law merely *reflects* men as they are, as the mirror reflects your features.

'But the law keeps people from becoming criminals,' reformer and politician assert.

If that is true, if the law really prevents crime then the more laws the better. By the time we have passed enough laws there will be no more crime. Well, why do you smile? Because you know that it is nonsense. You know that the best the law can do is to *punish* crime; it cannot prevent it.

Should the time ever come when the law could read a man's mind and detect there his *intention* to commit a crime, then it might prevent it. But in that case the law would have no policemen to do the preventing, because they'd be in prison themselves. And if the administration of law would be honest and impartial, there would be neither judges nor lawmakers, because they would be keeping the police company.

But seriously speaking, as things stand, how can the law prevent crime? It can do so only when the intention to commit a crime has been announced or has somehow become known. But such cases are very rare. One does not advertise his criminal plans. The claim then that the law prevents crime is entirely baseless.

'But the fear of punishment,' you object, 'does it not prevent crime?'

If that were the case crime would have stopped long ago, for surely the law has done enough punishing; The whole experience of mankind disproves the idea that punishment prevents crime. On the contrary, it has been found that even the most severe punishments do not frighten people away from crime.

England, as well as other countries, used to punish not only murder but scores of lesser crimes with death. Yet it did not deter others from committing the same crimes. People were then executed publicly, by hanging, by garroting, by the guillotine, in order to inspire greater fear. Yet even the most fearful punishment failed to prevent or diminish crime. It was found that public executions had a brutalizing effect upon the people, and there are cases on record where persons who witnessed an execution immediately committed the very crime the terrible punishment of which they had just witnessed. That is why public execution was abolished: it did more harm than good. Statistics show that there has been no increase of crime in countries that have entirely done away with capital punishment.

Of course, there may be some cases in which the fear of punishment prevents a crime; but on the whole its only effect is to make the criminal more circumspect, so that his detection is more difficult.

There are, generally speaking, two types of crime: some committed in the heat of anger and passion, and in such cases one does not stop to consider the consequences, and so the fear of punishment does not enter as a factor. The other class of crime is committed with cold deliberation, mostly professionally, and

in such cases fear of punishment only serves to make the criminal more careful to leave no traces. It is a well-known trait of the professional criminal that he thinks himself sufficiently clever to avoid detection, no matter how often he happens to be caught. He will always blame some particular circumstance, some accidental cause, or just 'bad luck' for having been arrested. 'Next time I'll be more careful,' he says; or, 'I won't trust my pal any more.' But almost never will you find in him the faintest thought of giving up crime on account of the punishment which may be meted out to him. I have known thousands of criminals, yet hardly any of them ever took possible punishment into consideration.

It is just because fear of punishment has no deterrent effect that crime continues in spite of all laws and courts, prisons and executions.

But let us suppose that punishment does have a deterring effect. Must there not be some powerful reasons that cause people to commit crime, notwithstanding all the dire punishment inflicted?

What are those reasons?

Every prison warden will tell you that whenever there is much unemployment, hard times, the prisons get filled. This fact is also born out by investigation into the causes of crime. The greatest percentage of it is due directly to conditions, to industrial and economic reasons. That is why the vast majority of the prison population come from the poor classes. It has been established that poverty and unemployment, with their attendant misery and despair, are the chief sources of crime. Is there any law to prevent poverty and unemployment?

Is there any law to abolish these main causes of crime? Are not all the laws designed to keep up the conditions which produce poverty and misery, and thus manufacture crime all the time?

Suppose a pipe burst in your house. You put a bucket under the break to catch the escaping water. You can keep on putting buckets there, but as long as you do not mend the broken pipe, the leakage will continue, no matter how much you may swear about it.

Our filled prisons are the buckets. Pass as many laws as you want, punish the criminals as you may, the leakage will continue until you repair the broken social pipe.

Does the reformer or politician really want to mend that pipe?

I have said that most crime is of an economic nature. That is, it has to do with money, with possession, with the desire to get something with the least effort, to secure a living or wealth by hook or crook.

But that is just the ambition of our whole life, of our entire civilization. As long as our existence is based on a spirit of this sort, will it be possible to eradicate crime? As long as society is built on the principle of grabbing all you can, we must continue to live that way. Some will try to do it 'within the law'; others, more courageous, reckless, or desperate, will do it outside the law. But the one and the other will really be doing the same thing, and it's the thing that is the crime, not the manner in which it is done.

Those who can do it within the law call the others criminals. It's for the 'illegal' criminals — and for those who might become such — that most of the laws are made.

The 'illegal' criminals are often caught. Their conviction and punishment depend mainly on how successful they have been in their criminal career. The more successful, the less chance of their conviction, the lighter their punishment. It is not the crime they committed which will ultimately decide their fate, but their ability to employ expensive lawyers, their political and social connections, their money and influence. It will generally be the poor and friendless fellow who will be made to feel the full weight of the law; he'll get speedy 'justice' and the heaviest penalty. He is not able to take advantage of the various delays which the law affords to his richer fellow criminal, for appeals to higher courts are expensive luxuries which the moneyless criminal cannot indulge in. That is why you almost never see a rich man behind prison bars; such are occasionally 'found guilty', but mighty seldom punished. Nor will you find many professional criminals in prison. These know 'the ropes'; they have friends and connections; usually they also have 'fall money', for just such occasions, with which to 'oil' their way out of the legal meshes. Those you find in our prisons and penitentiaries are the poorest of society, accidental criminals, mostly

workingman and farm boys whom poverty and misfortune, striking and picketing, unemployment and general helplessness have brought behind the bars.

Are these at least reformed by the law and the penalties they undergo? Hardly. They come out of prison weakened in body and mind, hardened by the mistreatment and cruelty they suffered from or witnessed there, embittered by their 'fate. They have to go back to the same conditions which had made them law-breakers in the first place, but now they are labeled 'criminals', are looked down upon, scorned even by former friends, and persecuted and hounded by the police as men 'with a criminal record'. It is not long before most of them are again behind the bars.

So our social merry-go-round revolves. And all the time the conditions that had made those unfortunates into criminals continue manufacturing new crops of them, and 'law and order' goes on as before, and the reformer and the politician keep busy making more laws.

It is a profitable business, this law-making. Have you ever stopped to consider whether our courts, police, and the whole machinery of so called justice really want to abolish crime? Is it to the interest of the policeman, the detective, the sheriff, the judge, the lawyer, the prison contractors, wardens, deputies, keepers, and the thousands of others who live by the 'administration of justice' to do away with crime? Supposing there were no criminals, could those 'administrators' hold their jobs? Could you be taxed for their support? Would they not have to do some honest work?

Think it over and see if crime is not a more lucrative source of income to the 'dispensers of justice' than to the criminals themselves. Can you reasonably believe that they really want to abolish crime?

Their 'business' is to apprehend and punish the criminal; but it is not to their interest to do away with crime, for that's their bread and butter. That is the reason why they will not look into the *causes* of crime. They are quite satisfied with things as they are. They are the staunchest defenders of the existing system, of 'justice' and punishment, the champions of 'law and order'. They catch and punish 'criminals', but they leave crime and its causes severely alone.

'But what is the law for that?' you demand.

The law is to keep up existing conditions, to preserve 'law and order.' More laws are constantly made, all for the same purpose of defending and sustaining the present order of things. 'To reform men,' as the reformer says; 'to improve conditions,' as the politician assures you.

But the new laws leave men as they are, and conditions remain, on the whole, the same. Since capitalism and wage slavery began, millions of laws have been passed, but capitalism and wage slavery still remain. The truth is, all the laws serve only to make capitalism stronger and perpetuate the workers' subjection. It is the business of the politician, the 'science of politics', to make you believe that the law protects you and your interests, while it merely serves to keep up the system which robs, dupes, and enslaves you in body and mind. All the institutions of society have this one object in view: to instil in you respect for law and government, to awe you with its authority and sanctity, and thus support the social framework which rests upon your ignorance and your obedience. The whole secret of the thing is that the masters want to keep their stolen possessions. Law and government are the *means* by which they do it.

There is no great mystery about this matter of government and laws. Nor is there anything sacred or holy about them. Laws are made and unmade; old laws are abolished, and new laws are passed. It is all the work of men, human, and therefore fallible and temporary. There is nothing eternal or unchangeable about them. But whatever laws you make and however you change them, they always serve *one* purpose: to compel people to do certain things, to restrain them from or punish them for doing other things. That is to say, the only purpose of laws and government is to rule the people, to keep them from doing what they want and prescribe to them what certain other people want them to do.

But why must people be kept from doing what they want? And what is it that they want to do?

If you look into this you will find that people want to live, to satisfy their needs, to enjoy life. And in this all people are alike, as I have already pointed out before. But if people are to be prevented from living and enjoying their lives, then there must be some amongst us who have an interest in doing that.

So it is in fact: there are indeed people who don't want us to live and enjoy life, because they have taken the joy out of our lives, and they don't want to give it back to us. Capitalism has done it, and government which serves capitalism. To let the people enjoy life would mean to stop robbing and oppressing them. That is why capitalism needs government, that's why we are taught to respect the 'sanctity of the law'. We have been made to believe that breaking the law is criminal, though law-breaking and crime are often entirely different things. We have been made to believe that any act against the law is bad for society, though it may be bad only for the masters and exploiters. We have been made to believe that everything which threatens the possessions of the rich is 'evil' and 'wrong', and that everything which weakens our chains and destroys our slavery is 'criminal'.

In short, there has been developed in the course of time a kind of 'morality' that is useful for the rulers and masters only — a class morality; really a slave morality, because it helps to keep us in slavery. And whoever goes against this slave morality is called 'bad,' 'immoral,' a criminal, an anarchist.

If I should rob you of all you have and then persuade you that what I did is good for you and that you should guard my booty against others, it would be a very clever trick on my part, wouldn't it? It would secure me in my stolen possessions. Suppose further that I should also manage to convince you that we must make a rule that no one may touch my stolen wealth and that I may continue to accumulate more in the same manner, and that the arrangement is just and to your own best interests. If such a crazy scheme should be actually carried out, then we'd have the 'law and order' of government and capitalism which we have to-day.

It is clear, of course, that laws would have no force if the people did not believe in them and did not obey them. So the first thing to do is to make them believe that laws are 'necessary and that they are good for them. And it is still better if you can lead them to think that it is they themselves who make the laws. Then they will be willing and anxious to obey them. That's what is called democracy: to get the people to believe that they are their own rulers and that they themselves pass the laws of their country. That's the great advantage that a democracy or a republic has over a monarchy. In olden times the business of ruling and robbing the people was much harder and more dangerous. The king or feudal lord had to compel people by force to serve him. He would hire armed bands to make his subjects submit and pay tribute to him. But that was expensive and troublesome. A better way was found by 'educating' the populace to believe that they 'owe' the king loyalty and faithful service. Governing then became much easier, but still the people knew that the king was their lord and commander. A republic, however, is much safer and more comfortable for the rulers, for there the people imagine that they themselves are the masters. And no matter how exploited and oppressed they are, in a 'democracy' they think themselves free and independent.

That is why the average workingman in the United States, for instance, considers himself a sovereign citizen, though he has no more to say about the running of his country than the starved peasant in Russia had under the Tsar. He thinks he is free, while in fact he is only a wage slave. He believes he enjoys 'liberty for the pursuit of happiness', while his days, weeks and years, and his whole life, are mortgaged to the boss in the mine or factory.

The people under a tyranny know they are enslaved and sometimes they revolt. The people of America are in bondage and don't know it. That is why there are no revolutions in America.

Modern capitalism is wise. It knows that it prospers best under 'democratic' institutions, with the people electing their own representatives to the lawmaking bodies, and indirectly casting a vote even for the president. The capitalist masters do not care how or for whom you vote, whether it be the Republican or the Democratic ticket. What difference is it to them? Whoever you elect, he will legislate in favor of 'law and order,' to protect things as they are. The main concern of the powers that be is that

the people should continue to believe in and uphold the existing system. That is why they spend millions for the schools, colleges, and universities which 'educate' you to believe in capitalism and government. Politics and politicians, governors and law-makers are only their puppets. They will see to it that no legislation is passed against their interests. Now and then they will make a show of fighting certain laws and favoring others, else the game would lose its interest for you. But whatever laws there be, the masters will take care that they shouldn't hurt their business, and their well-paid lawyers know how to turn every law to the benefit of the Big Interests, as daily experience proves.

A very striking illustration of it is the famous Sherman Anti-Trust Law. Organized labor spent thousands of dollars and years of energy to pass that legislation. It was directed against growing capitalist monopoly, against the powerful combinations of money which ruled legislatures and courts and forded it over the workers with an iron hand. After long and expensive effort the Sherman Law was at last passed, and labor leaders and politicians were jubilant over the 'new epoch' created by that law, as they enthusiastically assured the toilers.

What has that law accomplished? The trusts have not been hurt by it; they have remained safe and sound, in fact, they have grown and multiplied. They dominate the country and treat the workers as abject slaves. They are more powerful and prosperous than ever before.

But one important thing the Sherman Law did accomplish. Passed especially in the 'interests of labor', it has been turned against the workers and their unions. It is now used to break up organizations of labor as being in 'prevention of free competition'. The labor unions are now constantly menaced by that anti-trust law, while the capitalistic trusts go on their way undisturbed.

My friend, do I need to tell you about the bribery and debauchery of politics, about the corruption of the courts, and the vile administration of 'justice'? Do I need to remind you of the big Teapot-Dome and oil lease scandals, and the thousand and one lesser ones of every-day occurrence? It would be to insult your intelligence to dwell upon these universally known things, for they are part and parcel of all politics, in every country.

The great evil is not that politicians are corrupt and the administration of law unjust. If that were the only trouble then we might try, like the reformer, to 'purify' politics and to work for a more 'just administration'. But it is not that which is the real trouble. The trouble is not with impure politics, but that the whole game of politics is rotten. The trouble is not with defects in the administration of the law, but that law itself is an instrument to subject and oppress the people.

The whole system of law and government is a machine to keep the workers enslaved and to rob them of their toil. Every social 'reform' whose realization depends on law and government is already *thereby* doomed to failure.

'But the union!' exclaims your friend; 'the labor union is the best defense of the worker.'

Chapter 11: The Trade Union

‘Yes, the union is our only hope,’ you agree; ‘it makes us strong.’

Indeed, there never was a truer word spoken: in union there is strength. It has taken labor a long time to realize this, and even to-day many proletarians don’t understand it thoroughly.

There was a time when the workers did not know anything about organization. Later, when they did begin to get together to improve their condition, laws were passed against it and labor associations were forbidden.

The masters always opposed the organization of their employees, and the governments helped them to prevent and suppress unions. It is not so long ago that England and other countries had very severe laws against workers’ getting organized. The attempt to better their situation by joint effort was condemned as ‘conspiracy’ and was prohibited. It took the wage earners a long time to fight out their right of association; and, mind you, they had to *fight* for it. Which shows you that the bosses have never granted anything to the workers except when the latter fought for it and compelled them to yield. Even to-day many employers oppose the organization of their employees; they prevent it wherever they can: they get labor organizers arrested and driven out of the city, and the law is always on their side and helps them do it. Or they resort to the trick of forming fake labor bodies, yellow company unions, which can be relied on to do the bosses’ bidding.

It is easy to understand why the masters don’t want you to be organized, why they are afraid of a real labor union. They know very well that a strong, fighting union can compel higher wages and better conditions, which means less profit for the plutocrats. That is why they do everything in their power to stop labor from organizing. When they can’t stop it, they try their best to weaken the union or to corrupt its leaders, so that the union should not be dangerous to the bosses’ interests.

The masters have found a very effective way to paralyze the strength of organized labor. They have persuaded the workers that they have the same interests as the employers, they have made them believe that capital and labor have ‘identical interests’, and that what is good for the employer is also good for his employees. They have given it the fine sounding name of ‘Harmony between capital and labor’. If your interests are the same as those of your boss, then why should you fight him? That is what they tell you. The capitalist press, the government, the school, and the church all preach the same thing: that you live in peace and amity with your employer. It is good for the industrial magnates to have their workers believe that they are ‘partners’ in a common business: they will then work hard and faithfully because it is ‘to their own interests’; the workers will not think of fighting their masters for better conditions, but they will be patient and wait until the employer can ‘share his prosperity’ with them. They will also consider the interests and well-being of ‘their’ country and they will not ‘disturb industry’ and the ‘orderly life of the community’ by strikes and stoppage of work. If you listen to your exploiters and their mouthpieces you will be ‘good’ and consider only the interests of your masters, of your city and country — but no one cares about your interests and those of your family, the interests of your union and of your fellow workers of the laboring class. ‘Don’t be selfish’, they admonish you, while the boss is getting rich by your being good and unselfish. And they laugh in their sleeves and thank the Lord that you are such an idiot.

But if you have followed me till now, then you know that the interests of capital and labor are not the same. No greater lie was ever invented than the so-called ‘identity of interests’. You know that labor produces all the wealth of the world, and capital itself is only the accumulated products of labor. You

know that there can be no capital, no wealth of any kind, except as the result of labor. So that by right all the wealth belongs to labor, to the men and women who have created it and keep on creating it by their brain and brawn; that is, to the industrial, agrarian, and mental workers of the world; to the whole working class, in short.

You know also that the capital owned by the masters is stolen property, stolen products of labor. Capitalist industry is the process of continuing to appropriate the products of labor for the benefit of the master class. The masters, in other words, exist and grow rich by keeping for themselves the products of your toil. Yet you are asked to believe that you, the workers, have the same interests as your exploiters and robbers! Can any one but a downright fool be taken in by such a plain fraud?

It is clear that your interests as a worker are *different* from the interests of your capitalistic masters. More than different: they are entirely opposite; in fact, contrary, antagonistic to each other. The better wages the boss pays you, the less profit he makes out of you. It does not require great philosophy to understand that. You can't get away from it, and no twisting and quibbling can change this solid truth.

The very existence of labor unions is itself proof of this, though most of the unions and their members don't understand it. If the interests of labor and capital are the same, why the union? If the boss really believes that what is good for him, as a boss, is also good for you, his employee, then he will certainly treat you right; he will pay you the highest wages possible, so what's the use of having your union? But you know that you do need the union: you need it to help you *fight* for better wages and better conditions of work. To fight whom? Your boss, of course, your employer, the manufacturer, the capitalist. But if you have to fight him, then it does not look as if your interests and his are the same, does it? What becomes of the precious 'identity of interests' then? Or maybe you are fighting your boss for better wages because he is so foolish that he does not understand his own interests? Maybe he does not understand that it is good for him to pay you more?

Well, you can see to what nonsense the idea of the 'identity of interests' leads. And still, the average labor union is built on this 'identity of interests'. There are some exceptions, of course, such as the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.), the revolutionary syndicalist unions, and other class-conscious labor organizations. They know better. But the ordinary unions, such as those belonging to the American Federation of Labor in the United States, or the conservative unions of England, France, Germany, and other countries, all proclaim the identity of interests between labor and capital. Yet as we have just seen, their very existence, their strikes and struggles all prove that the 'identity' is a fake and a lie. How does it happen then that the unions pretend to believe in the identity of interests, while their very existence and activity deny it?

It is because the average worker does not stop to think for himself. He relies upon his union leaders and the newspapers to do it for him, and they see to it that he should not do any straight thinking. For if the workers should begin to think for themselves, they would soon see through the whole scheme of graft, deceit, and robbery which is called government and capitalism, and they would not stand for it. They would do as the people had done before at various times. As soon as they understood that they were slaves, they destroyed slavery. Later on, when they realized that they were serfs, they did away with serfdom. And as soon as they will realize that they are wage slaves, they will also abolish wage slavery.

You see, then, that it is to the interests of capital to keep the workers from understanding that they are wage slaves. The 'identity of interests' swindle is one of the means of doing it.

But it is not only the capitalist who is interested in thus duping the workers. All those who profit by wage slavery are interested in keeping up the system, and all of them naturally try to prevent the workers from understanding the situation.

We have seen before to whose advantage it is to keep things as they are: to rulers and governments, to the churches, to the middle-classes in short, to all who live on the toil of the masses. But even the labor leaders themselves are interested in keeping up wage slavery. Most of them are too ignorant to see

through the fraud, and so they really believe that capitalism is all right and that we can't do without it. Yet others, the more intelligent ones, know the truth very well, but as highly paid and influential union officials they benefit by the continuation of the capitalist system. They know that if the workers should see through the whole thing, they would call their leaders to account for having misled and deceived them. They would revolt against their slavery and their misleaders — it might come to a revolution, as has happened often before in history. But labor leaders don't care for revolution; they prefer to let well enough alone, for things are well enough *for them*.

Indeed, the labor misleaders don't favor revolution; they are even opposed to strikes and try to prevent them whenever they can.

When a strike does break out they will see to it that the men 'don't go too far,' and they will do their best to settle the differences with the employer by 'arbitration,' in which the workers usually get the worst of it. They will hold conferences with the bosses and beg for some minor concessions, and only too often they will compromise the strike to the disadvantage of the union — but in any and all cases they will exhort the workers to 'preserve law and order,' to keep quiet, and be patient. They will sit at the same table with the exploiters, be wined and dined by them, and appeal to the government to 'intercede' and settle the 'trouble,' but they will be mighty careful never to mention the source of all the labor troubles, never to touch upon wage slavery itself.

Have you ever seen a single labor leader, of the American Federation of Labor, for instance, stand up and declare that the whole wage system is pure robbery and swindle, and demand for the workers the full product of his toil? Have you ever heard of any 'regular' labor leader in any country do that? I never did, nor has any one else. On the contrary, when some decent man dares do so, it is the labor leaders who are the first to declare him a disturber, an 'enemy of the workers', a socialist or an anarchist. They are the first to cry 'Crucify him!' and the unthinking workers unfortunately echo them.

Such men are crucified, because capital and government feel safe in doing it as long as the people approve of it.

Do you see the point, my friend? Does it look as if your labor leaders want you to get *next* to things, to understand that you are a wage slave? Do they not really serve the interests of the masters?

The union leaders and politicians — the more intelligent ones — know full well what great power labor could wield as the sole producer of the wealth of the world. But they don't want you to know it. They don't want you to know that the workers, properly organized and enlightened, could do away with their slavery and subjection. They tell you instead that your union is there only to help you get better wages, though they are aware that you won't improve your condition very much within capitalism; and that you must always remain a wage slave whatever pay the boss may give you. They know very well that even when you do succeed, by means of a strike, in getting a raise, you lose it again in the increased cost of living, not to speak of the wages you lose while you are out on strike.

Statistics show that most of the important strikes are lost. But let us suppose that you won your strike and that you were out only a few weeks. In that time you have lost more in wages than you can gain back working months at the higher pay.

Take a simple example. Suppose you were earning 40 dollars a week when you went on strike. Let us assume the best possible result: we'll say that the strike lasted only 3 weeks and that you gained a five dollar increase. During your 3 weeks' strike you lost 120 dollars in wages. Now you get five dollars a week more, and it will take you 24 weeks to get that lost 120 dollars back again. So, after six months work at the higher pay you will just stand even. But how about the increased cost of living in the meantime? Because you are not only a producer, you are also a consumer. And when you go to buy things you will find that they are more expensive than before. Higher wages mean increased cost of living. Because what the employer loses by paying you a greater wage he gets back again by raising the price of his product.

You can see, then, that the whole idea of higher wages is in reality very misleading. It makes the worker think that he is actually better off when he gets more pay, but the fact is — so far as the whole working class is concerned — that whatever the worker gains by higher wages he loses as a consumer, and in the long run the situation remains the same. At the end of a year of 'higher wages' the worker has no more than after a year of 'lower wages.' Sometimes he is even worse off, because the cost of living increases much faster than wages.

That is the general rule. Of course there are particular factors that affect wages as well as the cost of living, such as scarcity of materials or of labor. But we need not go into special situations, into cases of industrial or financial crisis, or times of unusual prosperity. What concerns us is the regular situation, the *normal* condition of the workingman. And the normal condition is that he always remains a workingman, a wage slave, earning just enough to enable him to live and to continue to work for his boss. You will find exceptions now and then, as of a worker inheriting or otherwise getting hold of some money, which enables him to go into business, or inventing something that may bring him wealth. But such cases are exceptions and they do not alter your condition; that is, the condition of the average toiler, of the millions of workingman all over the world.

So far as those millions are concerned, and so far as you, as one of them, are concerned, you remain a wage slave, whatever your work or your pay, and there is no chance for you to be anything else under the system of capitalism.

Now, then, you might justly ask, 'What is the use of the union? What are the union leaders doing about it?'

The truth is that your union leaders do nothing about it. On the contrary, they do everything they can to keep you a wage slave. They do it by making you believe that capitalism is all right and by having you support the existing system with its government and 'law and order.' They fool you by telling you that it can't be otherwise, just as the boss, the school, the church, and the government do. In fact, your labor leader is doing the same work for capitalism that your political leader is doing for the government: both support and get you to support the present system of injustice and exploitation.

'But the union,' you say, 'why doesn't the union change things?'

The union *could* change things. But what is the union? The union is just you and the other fellow and more of them — the membership and the officials. You realize now that the officials, the labor leaders, are not interested in changing things. Then it is up to the membership to do it, isn't it?

That's it. But if the membership — the workers in general — don't see what it is all about, then the union can't do anything. It means, therefore, that it is necessary to get the membership to understand the real situation.

This should be the true purpose of the labor union. It should be the union's business to enlighten its members about their condition, to show them why and how they are robbed and exploited, and find ways and means of doing away with it.

That would be fulfilling the union's true purpose of protecting the interests of the worker. The abolition of the capitalistic order of things with its government and law would be the only real defense of labor's interests. And while the union would be preparing for that, it would also be looking after the immediate needs of labor, the improvement of present conditions, so far as that is possible within capitalism.

But the ordinary, conservative union stands, as we have seen, for capitalism and for everything connected with it. It takes it for granted that you are a worker and that you are going to stay one, and that things must remain as they are. It asserts that all the union can do is to help you get a little better wages, cut down your hours of work, and improve the conditions under which you toil. It considers the employer a business partner, as it were, and it makes contracts with him. But it never questions why one of the partners — the boss — gets rich from that kind of contract, while the other partner, the worker,

always remains poor, labors hard, and dies a wage slave. It doesn't seem to be an equal partnership, somehow. It looks more like a confidence game, doesn't it?

Well, it is. It is a game in which one side does all the pulling of the chestnuts out of the fire, while the other side takes possession of them. A very unequal partnership, and all the striking of the workers is merely to beg or compel the capitalistic partner to give up a few chestnuts out of his big heap. A skin game, for all that, even when the worker succeeds in getting a few extra nuts.

Yet they speak to you of your dignity, of the 'dignity of labor.' Can you think of any greater insult? You slave for the masters all your life, you serve them and keep them in comfort and luxury, you let them lord it over you, and in their hearts they laugh at you and despise you for your stupidity — and then they talk to you of your 'dignity!'

From pulpit and platform, in the school and lecture room, every labor leader and politician, every exploiter and grafter extols the 'dignity of labor', while himself all the time sitting comfortably on your back. Don't you see how they are playing you for a sucker?

What is the union doing about it? What are your labor leaders doing for the fat salary they make you pay them? They are busy 'organizing' you, they are busy telling you what a fine fellow you are; how big and strong your union is, and how much your officials are doing for you. But what are they doing? Their time is taken up with petty matters of procedure, with factional fights, with questions of jurisdiction, with elections of officers, with conferences and conventions. You pay for it all, of course, and that is why your officials are always in favor of a big union treasury, but what have you got from it? You keep on working in the factory or mill and paying your dues, and your labor leader cares blessed little how hard you toil or how you live, and you have to make a big racket at your union meeting to compel attention to *your* needs and *your* complaints.

When the question of a strike is taken up you will notice, as I have mentioned before, that the leaders generally oppose it — for they also like the boss and the ruler, want 'peace and quiet' instead of the discomforts involved in a fight. Whenever they can, the union leaders will dissuade you from striking, and sometimes even directly prevent and forbid it. They will outlaw your organization if you go on strike with out their consent. But if the pressure is too strong for them to resist they will graciously 'authorize' the strike. Just imagine — you work hard and from your scanty earnings you support the union officials, who should serve you, yet you have to get *their* permission to improve your condition! It's because you have made them the bosses of your organization, just as you have made the government your master instead of your servant — or as you permit the policeman, whom you pay with your taxes, to order you about instead of you giving him orders.

Did you ever ask yourself how it happens that when you are out on strike (and at all other times as well) the law and the whole machinery of government is always on the side of the boss? Why, the strikers number thousands while the boss is only one, and they and he are supposed to be citizens of equal rights — yet, strange to say, it's the boss who always has the government at his service. He can get the courts to issue an injunction against your 'interfering' with 'his' business, he can have the police club you off the picket line, he can have you arrested and jailed. Did you ever hear of a mayor, chief of police, or governor order out the police or militia to protect *your* interests in a strike? Queer, isn't it? Again, the boss can get plenty of scabs and black legs, under police protection, to help break your strike, because you have been working so many hours that there is always an army of unemployed on hand ready to take your place. Generally you lose your strike because your labor leaders did not permit you to organize in the right way.

I have seen, for instance, bricklayers on a New York skyscraper lay down their tools, while the carpenters and iron workers on the same job remained at work. The strike did not concern them, their unions said, because they belonged to another trade; or they could not join the strikers because that would be breaking the contract their organizations had made with the boss. 50 they kept at work on the building where their brother union men had struck. That is, they were actually scabbing and helping

to break the strike of the bricklayers. Because, for sooth, they belonged to another craft, to a different trade! As if the struggle of labor against capital were a matter of craft and not the common cause of the whole working class!

Another example: the coal miners of Pennsylvania are on strike, and the coal miners of Virginia are taxed to help the strikers with money. The Virginia miners remain at work because they are 'bound by contract'. They keep on mining coal, so that the coal magnates can supply the market and lose nothing by the strike of the Pennsylvania miners. Sometimes they even gain by making the strike an excuse for raising the price of coal. Can you wonder that the Pennsylvania miners lose the strike, since their own fellow miners scab on them? But if the workers understood their true interests if they would be organized not by craft or trade but by industries, so that the whole industry — and if necessary the whole working class — could strike as one man, would any strike be lost?

We shall return to this subject. Just now I want to point out to you that your union, as at present organized, and your union officials are not built for effectively fighting capitalism. Not built even for successfully conducting strikes. They cannot materially improve your condition.

They serve only to keep the workers divided into different and often opposing organizations; they train them to believe that capitalism is all right; they paralyze their initiative and ability to think and act in a class conscious manner. That is why the labor leaders and the conservative unions are the strongest bulwark of existing institutions. They are the backbone of capitalism and of government, the best support of 'law and order,' and the reason why you remain in wage slavery.

'But we ourselves choose our union officials,' you object; 'if the present ones are no good, we can elect others.'

Of course, you can elect new leaders, but does it make any difference whether this or that man is your leader, whether it is Gompers or Green, Jouhaux in France, or Thomas in England, as long as your union sticks to the same foolish ideas and false methods, believes in capitalism and supports the 'harmony of interests', divides the workers and reduces their strength by craft organization, makes contracts with the boss which bind the membership and keep them scabbing on their fellows, and in many other ways upholds the regime of your bondage?

'Then the union is no good?' you demand.

In union there is strength, but it has to be a real union, a true organization of labor, because the workers everywhere have the *same* interests no matter what work they do or to what particular craft they belong. Such a union would be based on the mutual interests and solidarity of labor throughout the world. It would be conscious of its tremendous power as the creator of all wealth.

'Power!' you object. 'You said we're slaves! What power can slaves have?'

Let us see about it, then.

Chapter 12: Whose Is The Power?

People talk about the greatness of their country, about the strength of the government and the power of the capitalist class. Let us see what that power really consists of, wherein it lies, and who actually has it.

What is the government of a country? It is the King with his ministers, or the President with his cabinet, the Parliament or the Congress, and the officials of the various State and Federal departments. Altogether a small number of persons as compared with the entire population.

Now, when is that handful of men, called government, strong and in what does its strength consist?

It is strong when the people are with it. Then they supply the government with money, with an army and navy, obey it, and enable it to function. In other words, the strength of a government depends entirely on the support it receives.

But can any government exist if the people are actively opposed to it? Could even the strongest government carry out any undertaking without the aid of the populace, without the help of the masses, the workers of the country?

But can any government exist if the people are actively opposed to alone. It can do only what the people approve of or at least permit to be done.

Take the great World War, for instance. The American financiers wanted the United States to get into it, because they knew that they would rake in tremendous profits, as they actually did. But labor had nothing to gain from the war, for how can the toilers benefit by the slaughter of their fellows in some other land? The masses of America were not in favor of mixing in the European imbroglio. As previously mentioned, they had elected Woodrow Wilson President on a 'keep us out of war' platform. Had the American people persisted in this determination, could the government have gotten us into the carnage?

How was it managed, then, that the people of the United States were induced to go to war when they had voted against it by electing Wilson? I have already explained in a previous chapter. Those interested in entering the war started a great propaganda in favor of it. It was carried on in the press, in the schools and pulpit; by preparedness parades, patriotic spellbinders, and shouting for 'democracy' and 'war to end war.' It was a heinous way of fooling the people into believing that the war was for some 'ideal' instead of being just a capitalist war for profits, as all modern wars are. Millions of dollars were spent on that propaganda, the money of the people, of course, for in the end the people pay for everything. An artificial enthusiasm was worked up, with all kinds of promises to the workers of the wonderful things that would result for them from the war. It was the greatest fraud and humbug, but the people of the United States fell for it, and they went to war, though not voluntarily, but by conscription.

And the spokesmen of the workers, the labor leaders? As usual, they proved the best 'patriots', calling upon their union members to go and get themselves killed, for the greater glory of Mammon. What did the late Samuel Gompers, then President of the American Federation of Labor, do? He became the right-hand man of President Wilson, his chief recruiting lieutenant. He and his union officials fumed sergeants of capital in rounding up labor for the slaughter. The labor leaders of the other countries did the same.

Every one knows that the 'war to end war' really ended nothing. On the contrary, it has caused more political complications than there have ever been before in Europe, and has prepared the field for a new and more terrible war than the last one. But that question does not belong here. I have referred to the

matter merely to show you that without Gompers and the other labor leaders, without the consent and support of the toiling masses, the government of the United States would have been entirely unable to carry out the wishes of the lords of finance, industry, and commerce.

Or consider the case of Sacco and Vanzetti. Could Massachusetts have executed them if the organized workers of America had been against it, if they had taken action to prevent it? Suppose that Massachusetts labor had refused to support the State Government in its murderous intention: suppose the workers had boycotted the Governor and his agents, stopped supplying them with food, cut off their means of communication, and shut off the electric current in Boston and Charleston prison. The government would have been powerless to function.

If you look at this matter with clear, unprejudiced eyes, you will realize that it is not the people who are dependent on the government, as is generally believed, but just the other way about.

When the people withhold their aid from the government, when they refuse obedience and pay no taxes, what happens? The government cannot support its officials, cannot pay its police, cannot feed its army and navy. It remains without funds, without means to carry out its orders. It is paralyzed. The handful of persons calling themselves the government become helpless — they lose their power and authority. If they can gather enough men to aid them, they may try to fight the people. If they cannot, or lose the fight, they have to give it up. Their “governing” is at an end.

That is to say, the power of even the strongest government rests entirely in the people, in their willing support and obedience. It follows that government *in itself* has no power at all. The moment the people refuse to bow to its authority, the government ceases to exist.

Now, what strength has capitalism? Does the power of the capitalists rest in themselves, or where does it come from?

It is evident that their strength lies in their capital, in their wealth. They own the industries, the shops, factories, and land. But those possessions would do them no good but for the willingness of the people to work for them and pay tribute to them. Suppose the workers should say to the capitalists: ‘We are tired of making profits for you. We won’t slave for you any more. You didn’t create the land, you didn’t build the factories, nor the mills or shops. *We* built them and from now on we will use them to work in, and what we produce will not be yours but will belong to the people. You will get nothing, and we won’t even give you any food for your money. You’ll be just like ourselves, and you will work like the rest of us.’

What would happen? Why, the capitalists would appeal to the government for aid. They would demand protection for their interests and possessions. But if the people refuse to recognize the authority of the government, the latter itself would be helpless.

You might say that is revolution. Maybe it is. But whatever you call it, it would amount to this: the government and the capitalists- the political and financial rulers — would find out that all their boasted power and strength disappear when the people refuse to acknowledge them as masters, refuse to let them lord it over them.

Can this happen, you wonder. Well, it has happened many times before, and not so very long ago again in Russia, in Germany, in Austria. In Germany that mighty war lord, the Kaiser, had to flee for his life, because the masses had decided they did not want him any more. In Austria the monarchy was driven out because the people got tired of its tyranny and corruption. In Russia the most powerful Tsar was glad to give up his throne to save his head, and failed even in that. In his own capital he could not find a single regiment to protect him, and all his great authority went up in smoke when the populace refused to bow to it. Just so the capitalists of Russia were made helpless when the people stopped working for them and took the land, the factories, the mines and mills for themselves. All the money and ‘power’ of the bourgeoisie in Russia could not get them a pound of bread when the masses declined to supply it unless they did honest work.

What does it all prove?

It proves that so-called political, industrial, and financial power, all the authority of government and capitalism is *really* in the hands of the people. It proves that *only* the people, the masses, have power.

This power, the people's power, is *actual*: it cannot be taken away, as the power of the ruler, of the politician, or of the capitalist can be. It cannot be taken away because it does not consist in possessions but in ability. It is the ability to create, to produce; the power that feeds and clothes the world, that gives us life, health and comfort, joy and pleasure.

How great this power is you will realize when you ask yourself:

Would life be possible at all if the workers did not toil? Would the cities not starve if the farmers failed to supply them food?

Could the railroads run if the railroad men suspended work? Could any factory, shop, or mill continue operations but for the coal miners?

Could trade or commerce go on if the transport workers went on strike?

Would the theaters and movies, your office and house have light if the electricians would not supply the current?

Truly has the poet spoken:

'All the wheels stand still

When your strong arms so will.

That is the productive, industrial power of labor.

It does not depend on any politics, nor on king, president, parliament, or congress. It depends neither on the police, nor on the army and navy — for these only consume and destroy, they create nothing. Nor does it depend on laws and rules, on legislators or courts, on politician or plutocrat. It resides entirely and exclusively in the ability of the workers in factory and field, in the brain and brawn of the industrial and agricultural proletariat to labor, to create, to produce.

It is the *productive* power of the workers — of the man with the plow and with the hammer, of the man of mind and muscle, of the masses, of the entire *working class*.

It follows, therefore, that the working class, in every country, is the most important part of the population. In fact, it is the only vital part. The rest of the people help in the social life, but if need be we could do without them, while we could not live even a single day without the man of labor. His is the all-important *economic power*.

The strength of government and capital is external, *outside* of themselves.

The strength of labor is *not* external. It lies *in* itself, in its ability to work and create. It is the only *real* power.

Yet labor is held lowest in the social scale.

Is it not a topsy-turvy world, this world of capitalism and government? The workers, who as a class are the most essential part of society, who alone have real power, are powerless under present conditions. They are the poorest class, the least influential and least respected. They are looked down upon, the victims of every kind of oppression and exploitation, the least appreciated and least honored. They live wretchedly in ugly and unhealthy tenements, the death rate is greatest among them, the prisons are filled with them, the gallows and electric chair are for them.

This is the reward of labor in our society of government and capitalism; that is what you get from the 'law and order' system.

Does such law and order deserve to live? Should such a social system be permitted to continue? Should it not be changed for something else, something better, and is not the worker interested more than any one else in seeing to it? Should not his own organization, built especially for his interests — *the union* — help him do it?

How?

Chapter 13: Socialism

When you ask this question, the Socialist tells you:

‘Vote the Socialist ticket. Elect our party. We’ll abolish capitalism and establish Socialism.’

What does the Socialist want, and-how does he propose to get it?

There are many varieties of Socialists. There are Social Democrats, Fabian Socialists, National Socialists, Christian Socialists, and other labels. Generally speaking, they all believe in the abolition of poverty and unjust social conditions. But they disagree very much as to what would be ‘just’ conditions and, still more, how to bring them about.

These days even mere attempts to improve capitalism are often called ‘Socialism,’ while in reality they are only reforms. But such reforms cannot be considered socialistic because true Socialism does not mean to ‘improve’ capitalism but to abolish it altogether. Socialism teaches that the conditions of labor cannot be essentially bettered under capitalism; on the contrary, it shows that the lot of the worker must steadily get worse with the advancing development of industrialism, so that efforts to ‘reform’ and ‘improve’ capitalism are directly opposed to Socialism and only delay its realization.

We have seen in preceding chapters that the enslavement of the workers, inequality, injustice, and other social evils are the result of monopoly and exploitation, and that the system is upheld by the political machine called government. It would therefore serve no purpose to discuss those schools of Socialism (improperly so called) that do not stand for the abolition of capitalism and wage slavery. Just as useless it would be for us to go into allegedly socialistic proposals such as ‘juster distribution of wealth’, ‘equalization of income’, ‘single tax’, or other similar plans. These are not Socialism; they are only reforms. Mere parlor Socialism, such as Fabianism, for example, is also of no vital interest to the masses.

Let us therefore examine that school of Socialism which treats of capitalism and the wage system fundamentally, which deals with the worker, with the disinherited, and which is known as the Social Democratic movement. It considers all other forms of Socialism impractical and utopian; it calls itself the only sound and scientific theory of true Socialism as formulated by Karl Marx, the author of *Capital*, which is the gospel and guide of all Social Democrats.

Now, then, what do the Socialist followers of Karl Marx — known as Marxian Socialists, and whom, for the sake of brevity, we’ll call simply Socialists — propose?

They say that the workers can never become free and secure well being unless they abolish capitalism. The sources of production and the means of distribution must be taken out of private hands, they teach. That is to say, the land, machinery, mills, factories, mines, railroads and other public utilities should not be owned privately, because such ownership enslaves the workers as well as mankind in general. Private possession of the things without which humanity cannot exist must therefore cease. The means of production and distribution should become public property. Opportunity for free use would do away with monopoly, with interest and profit, with exploitation and wage slavery. Social inequality and injustice would be eliminated, the classes would be abolished, and all men would become free and equal.

These views of Socialism are also in full accord with the ideas of most Anarchists.

The present owners — Socialism further teaches — will not give up their possessions without a struggle. All history and past experience prove that. The privileged classes have always held onto their advantages, always opposed every attempt to weaken their power over the masses. Even to-day they

fight ruthlessly every effort of **labor for betterment**. It is therefore certain that in the future, as in the past, the plutocracy will resist if you try to deprive them of their monopolies, special rights, and privileges. That resistance will bring about a bitter struggle, a revolution.

True socialism is therefore *radical* and *revolutionary*. Radical, because it goes to the very root of the social trouble (*radix* meaning root in Latin); it does not believe in reforms and makeshifts, it wants to change things from the very bottom. Revolutionary, not because it wants bloodshed, but because it clearly foresees that revolution is inevitable; it knows that capitalism cannot be changed to Socialism without a violent struggle between the possessing classes and the dispossessed masses.

'But if a revolution', you ask, 'then why do the Socialists want me to vote them into office? Is the revolution to be fought there?'

Your question is to the point. If capitalism is to be abolished by revolution, what do the Socialists seek office for, why do they try to get into the government?

Here is just where the great contradiction of Marxian Socialism comes in, a fundamental contradiction that has been fatal to the Socialist movement in every country, and that has made it ineffectual and powerless to be of any use to the working class.

It is very necessary to realize that contradiction clearly in order to understand why Socialism has failed, why the Socialists have gotten into a blind alley and can't lead the workers to emancipation.

What is that contradiction? It is this: Marx taught that 'revolution is the midwife of capitalism pregnant with a new society'; that is, that capitalism will not be changed to Socialism except by revolution. But in his *Communist Manifesto*, on the other hand, Marx insists that the proletariat must get hold of the political machinery, of the government, in order to conquer the bourgeoisie. The working class — he teaches — must grasp the reins of the State, by means of the Socialist parties, and use the political power to usher in Socialism.

This contradiction has caused the greatest confusion among Socialists and has split the movement into many factions. The majority of them, the regular Socialist parties in every country, now stand for the conquest of political power, for the establishment of a Socialist government whose business it will be to abolish capitalism and bring about Socialism.

Judge for yourself if such a thing is possible. In the first place, Socialists themselves admit that the possessing classes will not give up their wealth and privileges without a bitter fight and that it will result in revolution.

Again, is the thing at all practical? Take the United States, for instance. For over fifty years the Socialists have been trying to elect party members to Congress with the result that after half a century of political work they have now just one member in the House of Representatives in Washington. How many centuries will it take at that rate (and the rate is declining rather than growing) to get a Socialist majority in Congress?

But even suppose that the Socialists could some day secure that majority. Will they then be able to change capitalism to Socialism? It would require amending and altering the Constitution of the United States, as well as in the individual States, for which a two-thirds vote would be necessary. Just stop and consider: the American plutocrats, the trusts, the bourgeoisie, and all the other forces that benefit by capitalism; would they just sit quietly and permit the changing of the Constitutions in such a manner as to deprive them of their wealth and privileges? Can you believe that? Do you remember what Jay Gould said when he was accused of getting his millions illegally and in defiance of the Constitution? 'To hell with the Constitution!' he replied. And so every plutocrat feels, even if he is not as frank as Gould. Constitution or no constitution, the capitalists would fight to the death for their wealth and privileges. And that is just what is meant by revolution. You can judge for yourself whether capitalism can be abolished by electing Socialists to office or whether Socialism can be voted in by the ballot. It is not hard to guess who'll win a fight between ballots and bullets.

In former days the Socialists realized this very well. Then they claimed that they meant to use politics only for the purpose of propaganda. It was in the days when Socialist agitation was forbidden, particularly in Germany. 'If you elect us to the Reichstag' (the German parliament), the Socialists told the workers then, 'we'll be able to preach Socialism there and educate the people to it.' There was some reason in that, because the laws which prohibited Socialist speeches did not apply to the Reichstag. So the Socialists favored political activity and took part in elections in order to have an opportunity to advocate Socialism.

It may seem a harmless thing, but it proved the undoing of Socialism. Because nothing is truer than that the means you use to attain your object soon themselves become your object. So money, for example, which is only a means to existence, has itself become the aim of our lives. Similarly with government. The 'elder' chosen by the primitive community to attend to some village business becomes the master, the ruler. Just so it happened with the Socialists.

Little by little they changed their attitude. Instead of electioneering being merely an educational method, it gradually became their only aim to secure political office, to get elected to legislative bodies and other government positions. The change naturally led the Socialists to tone down their revolutionary ardor; it compelled them to soften their criticism of capitalism and government in order to avoid persecution and secure more votes. To-day the main stress of Socialist propaganda is not laid any more on the educational value of politics but on the actual election of Socialists to office.

The Socialist parties do not speak of revolution any more. They claim now that when they get a majority in Congress or Parliament they will legislate Socialism into being; they will legally and peacefully abolish capitalism. In other words, they have ceased to be revolutionists; they have become reformers who want to change things by law.

Let us see, then, how they have been doing it during the past several decades.

In almost every European country the Socialists have secured great political power. Some countries now have Socialist governments, in others the Socialist parties have a majority; in others again Socialists occupy the highest positions in the State, such as cabinet offices, even those of Prime Ministers. Let us examine what they have accomplished for Socialism and what they are doing for the workers.

In Germany, the mother of the Socialist movement, the Social Democratic Party holds numerous government offices; its members are in the municipal and national legislative bodies, in the judiciary, and in the Cabinet. Two German Presidents, Haase and Ebert, were Socialists. The present Reichskanzler (Chancellor), Dr. Herman Muller, is a Socialist. Herr Loebe, President of the Reichstag, is also a member of the Socialist Party. Scheidemann, Noske, and scores of others in the highest positions in the government, in the army and navy, are all leaders of the powerful German Social Democratic Party. What have they done for the proletariat whose cause the Party is supposed to champion? Have they brought about Socialism? Have they abolished wage slavery? Have they made the least attempt toward those objects?

The uprising of the workers in Germany, in 1918, forced the Kaiser to flee the country, and the reign of the Hohenzollern was at an end. The people put their trust in the Social Democrats and voted them into power. But once secure in the government, the Socialists turned against the masses. They combined with the German bourgeoisie and the military clique, and themselves became the bulwark of capitalism and militarism. They not only disarmed the people and suppressed the toilers but they even shot and imprisoned every Socialist who dared protest against their treachery. Noske, as Socialist chief of the army during the Revolution, ordered his soldiers out against the workers and massacred them wholesale — the very proletarians who had voted him into power, his own brother Socialists. At his hands perished Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, two of the most devoted and loyal revolutionists, coldbloodedly murdered in Berlin on January 16, 1919, by army officers, with the secret connivance of the Socialist government. The Anarchist poet and thinker, Gustav Landauer, and scores of the best friends of labor shared the same fate all over Germany.

Haase, Ebert, Scheidemann, Noske, and their Socialist lieutenants did not permit the Revolution to accomplish anything vital. The moment they got into power they used it to crush rebellious labor. The open and stealthy murder of the truly revolutionary elements was but one of the means used by the Socialist government to subdue the Revolution. Far from introducing any changes for the benefit of the workers, the Socialist Party became the most zealous defender of capitalism, preserving all the prerogatives and benefits of the aristocracy and master class. That is why the German Revolution accomplished nothing except to drive out the Kaiser. The nobility remained in possession of all its titles, holdings, special rights, and privileges; the military caste retained the power it had under the monarchy; the bourgeoisie has been strengthened, and the financial kings and industrial magnates lord it over the German toiler to-day with even greater arbitrariness than before. The Socialist Party of Germany, with many million votes behind it, has *succeeded* — in getting into office. The workers slave and suffer as before.

The same picture you find in the other countries. In France the Socialist Party is strongly represented in the government. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aristide Briand, who had also held the post of Prime Minister, was formerly one of the greatest lights of the Party in France. To-day he is the strongest champion of capitalism and militarism. Many of his former fellow-Socialists are his colleagues in the government, and many more present-day Socialists are in the French Parliament and other important offices. What are they doing for Socialism? What are they doing for the workers?

They are helping to defend and 'stabilize' the capitalistic regime of France; they are busy passing laws increasing the taxes so that the high government officials may get better salaries; they are engaged in collecting the war indemnity from Germany, whose workers, just as their French brothers, have to bleed for it. They are working hard to help 'educate' France, and particularly her school children, to hate the German people; they are aiding to build more warships and military airplanes for the next war which they are themselves preparing by cultivating the spirit of jingoism and vengeance against their neighbor countries. The new law mobilizing every adult man and woman of France in case of war was introduced by the prominent Socialist, Paul Boncour, and passed with the aid of the Socialist members of the Chamber of Deputies.

In Austria and Belgium, in Sweden and Norway, in Holland and Denmark, in Czecho-Slovakia, and in most other European lands the Socialists have risen to power. In some countries entirely so, in others partly. And everywhere, without a single exception, they have followed the same course, everywhere they have fore sworn their ideals, have duped the masses, and turned their political elevation to their own profit and glory.

'These men who rose to power on the backs of labor and then betrayed the workers are scoundrels,' I hear you say in just indignation. True, but that is not all. There is a deeper reason for this constant and regular betrayal, a greater and more significant cause for this almost universal phenomenon. Socialists are not essentially different from other men. They are human, just as you and I. And no man turns scoundrel or traitor over night.

It is *power* which corrupts. The consciousness that you possess power is self the worst poison that corrodes the finest metal of man. The filth and contamination of politics everywhere sufficiently prove that. Moreover, even with the best intentions Socialists in legislative bodies or in government positions find themselves entirely powerless to accomplish anything of a socialistic nature, anything of benefit to the workers. For politics is not a means to better the conditions of labor. It never was and never can be.

The demoralization and vitiation take place little by little, so gradually that one hardly notices it himself. Just visualize for a moment the condition of a Socialist elected to Congress, for instance. He is all alone, as against several hundred men of other political parties. He senses their opposition to his radical ideas, and he finds himself in a strange and unfriendly atmosphere. But he is there and he must participate in the business that is being transacted. Most of that business — the bills brought in,

the laws proposed — is entirely foreign to him. It has no bearing whatever on the things the Socialist believes in, no connection with the interests of the working class voters who elected him. It is just the routine of legislation. It is only when a bill of some bearing upon labor or on the industrial and economic situation comes up, that our Socialist can take part in the proceedings. He does, and he is ignored or laughed at for his impractical ideas on the matter. For they are indeed impractical. Even at best, when the proposed law is not specially designed to grant new privileges to monopoly, it deals with matters involved in capitalist business, with some commercial treaty or agreement between one government and another. But he, the Socialist, was elected on a Socialist ticket, and it is his business to abolish the capitalistic government, to do away with the system of commerce and profit altogether, so how can he speak ‘practically’ on the submitted bills? Of course he becomes a butt of ridicule to his colleagues, and soon he begins to see how stupid and useless his presence is in the halls of legislation. That is why some of the best men of the Socialist Party in Germany turned against political action, as did John Most, for instance. But there are few persons of such honesty and courage. As a rule the Socialist remains in his position, and every day he is compelled to realize more and more what a senseless role he is playing. He comes to feel that he must find some way to take a serious part in the work, express sound opinions in the discussions and become a real factor in the proceedings. This is imperative in order to preserve his own dignity, to compel the respect of his colleagues, and also to show to his constituents that they did not elect a mere dummy.

So he begins to acquaint himself with the routine. He studies river dredging and coast improvement, reads up on appropriations, examines the hundred and one bills which come up for consideration, and when he occasionally gets the floor — which is not very often — he tries to explain the proposed legislation from the Socialist standpoint, as he is in duty bound to do. He ‘makes a Socialist speech.’ He dwells on the suffering of the workers and the crimes of wage slavery; he informs his colleagues that capitalism is an evil, that the rich must be abolished and the whole system done away with. He finishes his peroration and sits down. The politicians exchange glances, smile and joke, and the assembly goes over to the business in hand.

Our Socialist perceives that he is regarded as a laughing stock. His colleagues are getting tired of his ‘hot air’, and he finds more and more difficulty in securing the floor. He is often called to order and told he must speak to the point, but he knows that neither by his talk nor by his vote can he influence the proceedings in the slightest degree. His speeches don’t even reach the public; they are buried in the *Congressional Record* which no one reads, and he is painfully aware of being a solitary and unheeded voice in the wilderness of political machinations.

He appeals to the voters to elect more comrades to the legislative bodies. A lone Socialist cannot accomplish anything, he tells them. Years pass, and at last the Socialist Party succeeds in having a number of its members elected. Each of them goes through the same experience as their first colleague, but now they quickly come to the conclusion that preaching Socialist doctrines to the politicians is worse than useless. They decide to participate in the legislation. They must show that they are not just ‘spouting revolution’ but that they are practical men, statesmen, that they are doing something for their constituency, looking after its interests.

In this manner the situation compels them to take a ‘practical’ part in the proceedings, to ‘talk lousiness,’ to fall in line with the matters actually dealt with in the legislative body. Full well they know that these things have no relation to Socialism or to the abolition of capitalism. On the contrary, all this law-making and political mummery only strengthens the hold of the masters upon the people; worse, it misleads the workers into believing that the legislatures may do something for them and deludes them with the false hope that they may get results by politics. In this way it keeps them looking to the law and government to ‘change things,’ to ‘improve’ their condition.

So the machinery of government carries on its work, the masters remain secure in their position, and the workers are held off with promises of 'action' by their representatives in the legislative bodies, by new laws that are to give them 'relief'.

For years this process has been going on in all the countries of Europe. The Socialist parties have succeeded in electing many of their members to various legislative and government positions. Spending years in that atmosphere, enjoying good jobs and pay, the elected Socialists have themselves become part and parcel of the political machinery. They have come to feel that it is no use waiting for the Socialist revolution to abolish capitalism. It is more practical to work for some 'betterment', to try to get a Socialist majority in the government. For when they have a majority they will need no revolution, they now say.

Slowly, by degrees, the Socialist change has taken place. With growing success in elections and securing political power they turn more conservative and content with existing conditions. Removed from the life and suffering of the working class, living in the atmosphere of the bourgeoisie, of affluence and influence, they have become what they call 'practical.' Seeing at first hand the political machinery at work, knowing its debauchery and corruption, they have realized that there is no hope for Socialism in that swamp of deceit, bribery, and corruption. But few, very few Socialists find the courage to enlighten the workers about the hopelessness of politics to aid the cause of labor. Such a confession would mean the end of their political career, with its emoluments and advantages. So the great majority of them are content to keep their own counsel and let well enough alone. Power and position have gradually stifled their conscience, and they have not the strength and honesty to swim against the current.

That is what has become of Socialism, which had once been the hope of the oppressed of the world. The Socialist parties have joined hands with the bourgeoisie and the enemies of labor. They have become the strongest bulwark of capitalism, pretending to the masses that they are fighting for their interests, while in reality they have made common cause with the exploiters. They have so far forgotten and gone back on their original Socialism that in the great World War the Socialist parties in every country in Europe helped their governments to lead the workers to slaughter.

The war has clearly demonstrated the bankruptcy of Socialism. The Socialist parties, whose motto was 'Workers of the world, unite!' sent the toilers to murder each other. From having been bitter enemies of militarism and war they became defenders of 'their' land, urging the workers to don the soldiers' uniform and kill their fellow workers in other countries.

Strange indeed! For years they had been telling the proletarians that they have no country that their interests are opposed to those of their masters, that labor has 'nothing to lose but its chains', but at the first sign of war they called upon the toilers to join the army and voted support and money for the government to do the work of carnage. This happened in every country in Europe. True, there were Socialist minorities that protested against the war, but the dominant majority in the Socialist parties condemned and ignored them, and lined up for the slaughter.

It was a most terrible betrayal not only of Socialism but of the whole working class, of humanity itself. Socialism, whose purpose it was to educate the world to the evils of capitalism, to the murderous character of patriotism, to the brutality and uselessness of war; Socialism, which was the champion of man's rights, of liberty and justice, the hope and promise of a better day, miserably turned into a defender of the government and the masters, became the handmaiden of the militarists and jingo nationalists. The former Social Democrats became 'social patriots.'

This did not happen because of mere treachery, however. To take that view would be to miss the main point and misunderstand its warning lesson. Treachery it was indeed, both in its nature and effect, and the results of that treachery have bankrupted Socialism, disillusioned the millions that earnestly believed in it, and filled the world with black reaction. But it was not only treachery, not treachery of the ordinary kind. The real cause runs much deeper.

We are what we eat, a great thinker said. That is, the life we lead, the environment we live in, the thoughts we think, and the deeds we do — all subtly fashion our character and make us what we are.

The Socialists' long political activity and cooperation with bourgeois parties gradually turned their thoughts and mental habits from Socialist ways of thinking. Little by little they forgot that the purpose of Socialism was to educate the masses, to make them see through the game of capitalism, to teach them that government is their enemy, that the church keeps them in ignorance, that they are duped by ideas designed to perpetuate the superstitions and wrongs on which present-day society is built. In short, they forgot that Socialism was to be the Messiah who would drive darkness out of the minds and byes of men, lift them from the slough of ignorance and materialism, and rouse their natural idealism, the striving for justice and brotherhood, toward liberty and light.

They forgot it. They had to forget in order to be 'practical,' to 'accomplish' something, to become successful politicians. You cannot dive into a swamp and remain clean. They had to forget it, because their object had become to 'get results', to win elections, to secure power. They knew that they could not have success in politics by telling the people the whole truth about conditions— for the truth not only antagonizes the government, the church, and the school; it also offends the prejudices of the masses. These it is necessary to educate, and that is a slow and difficult process. But the political game demands success, quick results. The Socialists had to be careful not to come in too great conflict with the powers that be; they could not afford to lose time in educating the people.

It therefore became their main object to win votes. To achieve that they had to trim their sails. They had to lop off, little by little, those parts of Socialism which might result in persecution by the authorities in disfavor from the church, or which would keep bigoted elements from joining their ranks. They had to compromise.

They did. First of all they stopped talking revolution. They knew that capitalism cannot be abolished without a bitter struggle, but they decided to tell the people that they could bring about Socialism by legislation, by law, and that all that is necessary is to put enough Socialists in the government.

They ceased denouncing government as an evil; they quit enlightening the workers about its real character as an agency for enslavement. Instead they began asserting that *they*, the Socialists, are the staunchest upholders of 'the State' and its best defenders; that far from being opposed to 'law and order', they are its truest friends; that they are, indeed, the only ones who sincerely believe in government, except that the government must be socialistic; that is, that they, the Socialists, are to make the laws and run the government.

Thus, instead of weakening the false and enslaving belief in law and government, to weaken it so that those institutions could be abolished as a means of oppression, the Socialists actually worked to *strengthen* the people's faith in forcible authority and government, so that to-day the members of the Socialist parties the world over are the strongest believers in the State and are therefore called Statists. Yet their great teachers, Marx and Engels, clearly taught that the State serves only to suppress, and that when the people will achieve real liberty the State will be abolished, will 'disappear.'

Socialist compromise for political success did not stop there. It went further. To gain votes, the Socialist parties decided not to educate the people about the falsity, hypocrisy, and menace of organized religion. We know what a bulwark of capitalism and slavery the church, as an institution, is and always has been. It is obvious that people who believe in the church, swear by the priest and bow to his authority, will naturally be obedient to him and his commands. Such people, steeped in ignorance and superstition, are the easiest victims of the masters. But in order to achieve greater success in their election campaigns, The Socialists decided to eliminate educational anti-religious propaganda so as not to offend popular prejudices. They declared religion a 'private matter,' and excluded all criticism of the church from their agitation.

What you personally believe in is indeed your private affair; but when you get together with other people and organize them into a body to impose your belief on others, to force them to think as you do,

and to punish them (to the extent of your power) if they entertain other beliefs, then it is no more your 'private matter'. You might as well say that the Inquisition, which tortured and burned people alive as heretics, was a 'private affair.'

It was one of the worst betrayals of the cause of liberty by the Socialists, this declaration that religion is a 'private matter'. Mankind has slowly grown out of the fearful ignorance, superstition, bigotry, and intolerance which made religious persecution and inquisitions possible. The advance of science and invention, the printed word and means of communication have brought enlightenment, and it is that *enlightenment* which has to some extent freed the human mind from the clutches of the church. Not that she has entirely ceased to damn those who do not accept her dogmas. There is still enough of that persecution, but the advance of knowledge has robbed the church of her former absolute sway over the mind, the life, and liberty of man; just as progress has in the same way deprived government of the power to treat the people as absolute slaves and serfs.

You can easily see then how important it is to continue the work of enlightenment which has proven such a liberating blessing for the people in the past; to continue it, so that it may some day help us do away entirely with all the forces of superstition and tyranny.

But the Socialists determined to give up this most necessary work, declaring religion to be a 'private matter.'

Those compromises and the repudiation of the real aims of Socialism paid rather well. The Socialists gained political strength at the sacrifice of ideals. But that 'strength' has in the long run spelled weakness and ruin.

There is nothing more corrupting than compromise. One step in that direction calls for another, makes it necessary and compelling, and soon it swamps you with the force of a rolling snowball become a landslide.

One by one those features of Socialism which were really significant, educational, and liberating were sacrificed in behalf of politics, to secure more favorable public opinion, lessen persecution, and accomplish 'something practical'; that is, to get more Socialists elected to office. In this process, which has been going on for years in every country, the Socialist parties in Europe acquired a membership that numbered millions. But these millions were not socialistic at all; they were party followers who had no conception of the real spirit and meaning of Socialism; men and women steeped in old prejudices and capitalistic views; bourgeois-minded people, narrow nationalists, church members, believers in divine authority and consequently also in human government, in the domination of man by man, in the State and its institutions of oppression and exploitation, in the necessity of defending 'their' government and country, in patriotism and militarism.

Is it any wonder, then, that when the Great War broke out Socialists in every country, with few exceptions, took up arms to 'defend the fatherland', the fatherland of their rulers and masters? The German Socialist fought for his autocratic Kaiser, the Austrian for the Hapsburg monarchy, the Russian for the Tsar, the Italian for his King, the Frenchman for the 'republic,' and so the 'Socialists' of every country and their followers went on slaughtering each other until ten millions of them lay dead, and twenty millions were blinded, maimed, and crippled.

It was inevitable that the policy of political, parliamentary activity should lead to such results. For in truth so-called political 'action' is, so far as the cause of the workers and of true progress is concerned, worse than inaction. The very essence of politics is corruption, sail-trimming, the sacrifice of your ideals and integrity for success. Bitter are the fruits of that 'success' for the masses and for every decent man and woman the world over.

As a direct consequence of it millions of workers in every country are discouraged and disheartened. Socialism — they justly feel — has deluded and betrayed them. Fifty, nay, almost a hundred years of Socialist 'work' have resulted in the entire bankruptcy of the Socialist parties, in the disillusionment of

the masses, and have brought about a reaction which now dominates the entire world and holds labor by the throat with an iron grip.

Do you still think that the Socialist parties with their elections and politics can help the proletariat out of wage slavery?

By their fruits you shall know them.

'But the Bolsheviks,' you protest, 'they did not betray the workers. They have Socialism in Russia to-day!'

Let us take a look at Russia, then.

Chapter 14: The February Revolution

In Russia the Bolsheviki, known as the Communist Party, are in control of the government. The Revolution of October, 1917, put them in power.¹⁹

That Revolution was the most important event in the world since the French Revolution in 1789–1793. It was even greater than the latter, because it went much deeper to the rock bottom of society. The French Revolution sought to establish political freedom and equality, believing that it would thereby also secure brotherhood and welfare for all. It was a mighty step in advance on the road of progress and it ultimately changed the entire political face of Europe. It abolished the monarchy in France, established a republic, and gave the death blow to feudalism, to the absolute rule of the church and the nobility. It influenced every country on the Continent along progressive lines, and helped to further democratic sentiment throughout Europe.

But fundamentally it altered nothing. It was a *political* revolution, to secure political rights and liberties. It did secure them. France is a “democracy” to-day and the motto, “Liberty, Brotherhood, Equality,” is written even on every prison building. But it did not free man from exploitation and oppression; and that is, after all, the thing which is needed most.

The French Revolution put the middle classes, the bourgeoisie, into the government, in place of the aristocracy and nobility. It gave certain constitutional rights to the farmer and worker, who until then were mere serfs. But the power of the bourgeoisie, its industrial mastery, made the farmer its abject dependent and turned the city worker into a wage slave.

It could not be otherwise, because liberty is an empty sound as long as you are kept in bondage economically. As I have pointed out before, freedom means that you have the right to do a certain thing; but if you have no *opportunity* to do it, that right is sheer mockery. The opportunity lies in your economic condition, whatever the political situation may be. No political rights can be of the least use to the man who is compelled to slave all his life to keep himself and family from starvation.

Great as the French Revolution was as a step toward emancipation from the despotism of king and noble, it could accomplish nothing for the *real* freedom of man because it did not secure for him economic opportunity and independence.

It is for that reason that the Russian Revolution was a far more significant event than all the previous upheavals. It not only abolished the Tsar and his absolute sway; it did something more important: it destroyed the *economic* power of the possessing classes, of the land barons and industrial kings. For that reason it is the greatest happening in all history, the first and only time that such a thing has been tried.

This could not have been done by the French Revolution, because the people then still believed that political emancipation would be enough to make men free and equal. They did not realize that the basis of all liberty is economic. But that is by no means to the discredit of the French Revolution; the times were not ripe for a fundamental economic change.

Coming a hundred and twenty-eight years later, the Russian Revolution was more enlightened. It went to the root of the trouble. It knew that no political freedom would do any good unless the peasants got the soil and the workers the factories in their possession, so that they should not remain at the mercy of the land monopolists and the capitalistic owners of the industries.

¹⁹According to the old Russian calendar, in November.

Of course, the Russian Revolution did not accomplish this great work over night. Revolutions, like everything else, grow: they begin small, accumulate strength develop, and broaden.

It was during the war that the Russian Revolution started, because of the dissatisfaction of the people at home and the army at the front. The country was tired of fighting; it was worn out by hunger and misery. The soldiers had had enough of slaughter; they began to ask why they must kill or be killed-and when soldiers begin asking questions, no war can continue much longer.

The despotism and corruption of the Tsarist government added oil to the fire. The court had become a public scandal, with the priest Rasputin debauching the Empress and through his influence over her and the Tsar controlling the affairs of State. Intrigues, bribery, and every form of venality were rampant. The army funds were stolen by high officials, and the soldiers were often forced to go into battle without enough ammunition and supplies. Their boots were paper-soled, and many had no footgear at all. Some regiments revolted; others refused to fight. More and more frequently the soldiers fraternized with the "enemy" — young men like themselves, who had the misfortune of being born in a different country; and who, like the Russians, had been ordered to war without knowing why they must shoot or be shot. Great numbers dropped their guns and returned home. There they told the folks about the fearful conditions at the front, the useless carnage, the wretchedness, and disaster. That helped to increase the discontent of the masses, and presently voices began to be heard against the Tsar and his régime.

Day by day this sentiment grew; it was fanned into flame by increased taxes and great want, by the shortage of food and provisions.

In February, 1917, the Revolution broke out. As usual in such cases, the powers that be were stricken with blindness.

The autocrat and his ministers, the aristocrats and their advisers all believed that it was just a matter of some street disorders, of strikes, and bread riots. They imagined themselves safe in the saddle. But the "disorder" continued spreading over the entire country, and presently the Tsar saw himself forced to quit the throne. Before long the once mighty monarch was arrested and exiled to Siberia, where he himself had formerly sent thousands to their death, and where he and his whole family later met their doom.²⁰ The Russian autocracy was abolished. The February Revolution against the most powerful government in Europe was accomplished almost without firing a gun.

"How could it be done so easily?" you wonder.

The Romanov regime was an absolutism; Russia under the Tsars was the most enslaved country in Europe. The people practically had no rights. The whim of the autocrat was supreme, the order of the police the highest law. The masses lived in poverty and suffered the greatest oppression. They longed for freedom.

For over a hundred years libertarians and revolutionists in Russia worked to undermine the regime of tyranny, to enlighten the people and rouse them to rebellion against their subjection. The history of that movement is replete with the consecration and devotion of the finest men and women. Thousands, even hundreds of thousands of them, lined the road of Golgotha, filling the prisons, tortured and done to death in the frozen wilds of Siberia. Beginning with the Decembrist attempt to secure a constitution, over a hundred years ago, all through the century, the fires of liberty were kept burning by the heroic self-sacrifice of the nihilists and revolutionists. The story of that great martyrdom has no equal in the annals of man.

Apparently it was a losing struggle, for the complete denial of freedom made it practically impossible for the pioneers of liberty to reach the people, to enlighten the masses. Tsardom was well protected by its numerous police and secret service, as well as by the official church, press, and school which trained the people in abject servility to the Tsar and unquestioning obedience to "law and order." Dire punishment was visited upon anyone daring to voice a liberal sentiment; the most severe laws punished

²⁰Executed by the Bolsheviki in Ekaterinburg, Siberia, in 1918.

even the attempt to teach the peasants to read and write. The government, the nobility, the clergy, and the bourgeoisie all combined, as usual, to stamp out and crush the least effort to enlighten the masses. Deprived of every means of spreading their ideas, the liberal elements in Russia were driven to the necessity of employing violence against the barbarous tyranny, of resorting to acts of terror in order by such means to mitigate, even to a small extent, the rule of despotism, and at the same time to compel the attention of their country and of the world at large to the unbearable conditions. It was this tragic necessity that gave rise in Russia to terroristic activities, turning idealists, to whom human life was sacred, into executioners of tyrants. Nature's noblemen they were, those men and women who willingly, even eagerly, gave their lives to lift the fearful yoke from the people. Like bright stars on the firmament of the age-long warfare between oppression and liberty stand out the names of Sophie Perovskaya, Kibaltchitch, Grinevitsky, Sasonov, and countless other martyrs, known and unknown, of darkest Russia.

It was a most uneven struggle, apparently a hopeless fight. For the revolutionists were but a handful as against the almost limitless power of Tsardom with its large armies, numerous police, special bureaus of political spies, its notorious Third Department, the secret *Okhrana*, its universal system of house janitors as police aids, and with all the other great resources of a vast country of over a hundred million population.

A losing fight. And yet, the splendid idealism of the Russian youth—particularly of the student element—their unquenchable enthusiasm and devotion to liberty were not in vain. The people came out the victor, as they ultimately always do in the struggle of light against darkness. What a lesson to the world, what encouragement to the weak in spirit, what hope it holds for the further never-ceasing advance of mankind in spite of all tyranny and persecution!

In 1905 broke out the first revolution in Russia. Still strong was the autocracy, and the uprising of the masses was crushed, though not without its having compelled the Tsar to grant certain constitutional rights. But fearfully did the government avenge even those small concessions. Hundreds of revolutionists paid for them with their lives, thousands were imprisoned, and many other thousands doomed to Siberia.

Again despotism drew a fresh breath and felt itself secure against the people. But not for long. The hunger for liberty may be suppressed for a time; yet never exterminated. Man's natural instinct is for freedom, and no power on earth can succeed in crushing it for very long.

Twelve years later — a very short time in the life of a people — came another revolution, that of February, 1917. It proved that the spirit of 1905 was not dead, that the price paid for it in human lives had not been in vain. Truly has it been said that the blood of the martyrs nourishes the tree of liberty. The work and self-sacrifice of the revolutionists had borne fruit. Russia had learned much from past experience, as succeeding events proved.

The people had learned. In 1905 they had demanded only some mitigation of the despotism, some small political liberties; now they demanded the complete abolition of the tyrannical rule.

The February Revolution sounded the death-knell of Tsardom. It was the least bloody revolution in all history. As I have explained before, the power of even the strongest government evaporates like smoke the moment the people refuse to acknowledge its authority, to bow to it, and withhold their support. The Romanov regime was conquered almost without a fight, — naturally enough, since the entire people had become tired of its rule and had decided that it was harmful and unnecessary, and that the country would be better off without it. The ceaseless agitation and educational work carried on by the revolutionary elements (the Socialists of various groups, including the Anarchists) had taught the masses to understand that Tsardom must be done away with. So widespread had this sentiment become that even the army — the most unenlightened group in Russia, as in every land had lost faith in the existing conditions. The people had outgrown the despotism, had freed themselves in mind and spirit from it, and thereby gained the strength and possibility of freeing themselves actually, physically.

That is why the all-powerful autocrat could find no more support in Russia; no, not even a single regiment to protect him. The mightiest government in Europe broke down like a house of cards.

A temporary, Provisional Government, took the place of the Tsar. Russia was free.

Chapter 15: Between February and October

I remember attending a very large mass-meeting in Madison Square Garden, New York, called to celebrate the dethronement of the Tsar. The huge hall was crowded with twenty thousand people wrought up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. "Russia is free!" the leading speaker began. A veritable hurricane of applause, shouts, and hurrahs greeted the declaration. It continued for many minutes, breaking out again and again. But when the audience became quiet and the orator was about to proceed, there came a voice from the crowd:

"Free for what?"

There was no reply. The speaker continued his harangue.

The Russians are a simple and naive people. Never having had any constitutional rights, they had no interest in politics and were not corrupted by it. They knew little of congresses and parliaments, and cared less about them.

"Free for what?" they wondered.

"You are free from the Tsar and his tyranny," they were told.

That was very fine, they thought. "But how about the war?" the soldier asked. "How about the land?" the peasant demanded. "How about a decent existence?" the proletarian urged. You see, my friend, those Russians were so "uneducated" they were not satisfied just to be free *from* something; they wanted to be free *for* something, free *to do* what they wanted. And what they wanted was a chance to live, to work and enjoy the fruits of their labor. That is, they wanted access to the land, so they could raise food for themselves; access to the mines, shops, and factories, so as to produce what they needed. But under the Provisional Government, just as under the Romanovs, those things belonged to the wealthy; they remained "private property."

As I say, the simple Russian knew nothing about politics, but he knew exactly what he wanted. He lost no time in making his wants known, and he was determined to get them. The soldiers and sailors chose spokesmen from their own midst to present to the Provisional Government their demand to terminate the war. Their representatives organized themselves as soldiers' councils, called *soviets* in Russia. The peasants and the city workers did the same. In this manner every branch of the army and navy, every agricultural and industrial district, every factory even, established its own soviets. In the course of time the various soviets formed the All-Russian Soviet of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies, which held its sessions in Petrograd.

Through the Soviets the people presently began to voice their demands.

The Provisional Government, the new "liberal" regime under the leadership of Miliukov, paid no attention. It is characteristic of all political parties alike that, once in power, they turn a deaf ear to the needs and wants of the masses. The Provisional Government was no different in this than the Tsarist autocracy. It failed to understand the spirit of the time, and it stupidly believed that a few minor reforms would satisfy the country. It kept busy talking and discussing, proposing new bills and enacting more legislation. But it was not laws the people wanted. They wanted peace, while the government insisted on continuing the war. They cried for land and bread, but what they got was more laws.

If history teaches anything at all its clearest lesson is that you can't defy or resist the will of a whole people. You can suppress it for a while, stem the tide of popular protest, but the more violently will

the storm rage when it comes. Then it will break down every obstacle, sweep away all opposition, and its momentum will carry it even further than its original intention.

That has been the story of every great conflict, of every revolution.

Recall the American War for Independence, for instance. The rebellion of the colonies against Great Britain began with the refusal to pay the tea tax exacted by the Government of George III. The comparatively unimportant objection to "taxation without representation," meeting with the King's opposition, resulted in war and ended in completely freeing the American colonies from English rule. Thus was born the Republic of the United States.

The French Revolution similarly began with the demand for small improvements and reforms. The refusal of Louis XVI to lend ear to the popular voice cost him not only his throne but also his head, and brought about the destruction of the entire feudal system in France.

Just so did Tsar Nicholas II believe that a few insignificant concessions would stop the revolution. He also paid for his stupidity with his crown and life. The same fate overtook the Provisional Government. That is why a wise man said that "history repeats itself." It always does with government.

The Provisional Government consisted mostly of conservative men who did not understand the people and who were far removed from their needs. The masses demanded peace first of all. The Provisional Government, under the leadership of Miliukov and later under Kerensky, was determined to continue the war even in the face of the general dissatisfaction and the serious breakdown of the industrial and economic life of the country. The rising waves of the Revolution were soon to sweep it away: the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was preparing to take matters into its own hands.

Meanwhile the people did not wait. The soldiers at the front had already themselves decided to quit the war as unnecessary and useless slaughter. By the hundred thousands they were leaving the fields of battle and returning home to their farms and factories. There they began carrying into effect the real objects of the Revolution. For to them the Revolution did not mean printed constitutions and paper rights, but the land and the workshop. Between June and October, 1917, while the Provisional Government kept on endlessly discussing "reforms," the peasants started confiscating the estates of the large landholders and the workers took possession of the industries.

This was called *expropriating* the capitalist class: that is, depriving the masters of the things they had no right to monopolize, the things they had appropriated from the laboring classes, from the people.

In this manner the soil was expropriated from the landlords, the mines and mills from their "owners," the warehouses from the speculators. The workers and farmers took everything in charge through their labor unions and agrarian organizations.

The "liberal" Government of Miliukov had insisted on keeping up the war because the Allies wanted it. The "revolutionary" Government of Kerensky also remained deaf to the popular demands. It passed drastic laws against the "unauthorized" taking of land by the peasantry. Kerensky did everything in his power to keep the army at the front and even reintroduced the death penalty for "desertion." But the people now ignored the government.

The situation again proved that the real power of a country lies in the hands of the masses, of those who fight, toil, and produce, and not in any parliament or government. Kerensky at one time was the adored idol of Russia, more powerful than any Tsar. Yet his authority was lost) his government fell, and he himself had to flee for his life when the people realized that he was not serving their cause. While he was still the head of the Provisional Government, the actual power began to go over to the Petrograd Soviet, most of whose members were revolutionary workers, peasants, and soldiers.

Various and even opposing views were represented in the Soviet, as is inevitable in bodies composed of different classes of the population with their particular interests. But the greatest influence under such circumstances is always exerted by those who voice the deepest feelings and needs of the People. Therefore, the more revolutionary elements in the Soviet gradually gained the mastery, for they expressed the true wants and aspirations of the masses.

There were those in the Soviet who held that a constitution, something like that of the United States, was all that Russia needed to attain freedom and well-being. They asserted that capitalism was all right: there must be masters and servants, rich and poor; the people should be satisfied with the rights and liberties which a democratic government would grant them. These were the Constitutional Democrats, called for short *Cadets* in Russia. They quickly lost their influence, because the “naive” Russian workers and peasants knew that it was not rights and liberties on paper they wanted, but a chance to work and enjoy the fruits of their labor. They pointed to America with its Constitution and Declaration of Independence, and said that they did not care for the injustice, corruption, and wage slavery which constitutionally existed in that country.

The next more liberal element were the Social Democrats, known as Mensheviks. As Socialists they believed in the abolition of capitalism, but they declared that the Revolution was not the time to do it. Why not? Because it was not a proletarian revolution, they claimed, even if it looked like one. They maintained that it could not be a social revolution and therefore it should not alter the fundamental economic conditions of the country. According to them it was only a bourgeois revolution, a political one, and as such it should make only political changes. It could not be anything more than a bourgeois revolution, the Mensheviks argued, because had not the great Karl Marx taught that a proletarian revolution could take place only in a country where capitalism had reached its highest stage of development? Russia was very backward industrially, and therefore it would be against the teachings of Marx to consider the Revolution proletarian. For that reason capitalism must remain in Russia and be given a chance to ripen before the people could think of abolishing wage slavery.

The Social Democrats had a large following among the workers of Russia, many labor unions being Menshevik. But the argument that the Revolution was not proletarian only because Marx had fifty years before said that it couldn't be, did not appeal to the toilers. They had made the Revolution, they had fought and bled for it. They had driven out the Tsar and his clique, and they were now driving out their industrial masters, thus abolishing wage slavery and capitalism. They could not see why they could not do what they were actually doing only because some one who was dead long ago had believed that it couldn't be done. The reasoning of the Socialist leaders was too “scientific” for them. Their common sense told them that it was pure nonsense, and the Mensheviks lost most of their following among the workers.

Another political party was called Socialists Revolutionists. To this party belonged many of the terrorists who had been active against Tsardom in the past. The Socialists Revolutionists had numerous adherents, mainly among the farming population. But they alienated them by taking a stand for the continuation of the war when the country was against it. This attitude also caused a split in the party, the conservative element becoming known as the Right Socialists Revolutionists, while the more revolutionary faction called itself Left Socialists Revolutionists. The latter, led by Maria Spiridonova, who had suffered many years of Siberian imprisonment under the Tsar, advocated the termination of the war and secured a very considerable following, particularly among the poorer agricultural classes.

The most radical element in Russia were the Anarchists, who demanded immediate peace, free land for the peasant, and the socialization of the means of production and distribution. They wanted the abolition of capitalism and wage slavery, equal rights for all and special privileges to none. The land, the factories and mills, the machinery of production and the means of distribution were to become the possession of the whole people. Each able person was to work according to his ability and receive according to his needs. There was to be full liberty for every one and joint use on the basis of mutual interests. The Anarchists warned the proletariat against delegating power to any government or placing a political party in authority. Government of any kind, they said, would stifle the Revolution and rob the workers of the results already achieved. The life and welfare of a country depended on economics, not on politics, they argued. That is, what people want is to live, to work and satisfy their needs. For this, sensible management of industry is necessary, not politics. Politics, they insisted, is a game to rule

and govern men, not to help them live. In short, the Anarchists advised the toilers to permit no one to become their master again, to abolish political government, and to manage their agrarian, industrial, and social affairs for the good of all instead of for the benefit of rulers and exploiters. They called upon the masses to stand by their Soviets and look after their interests by means of their own organizations.

The Anarchists were, however, comparatively small in numbers. As the most advanced and revolutionary element they had been persecuted by the Tsarist regime even worse than the Socialists. Many of them had been executed, others imprisoned and their organizations suppressed as illegal. It was most dangerous to belong to the Anarchists, and their work of education was exceedingly difficult. Therefore, the Anarchists were not strong and could not exert much influence upon the people at large in a vast country of 120 Millions of population.

But they had a great advantage in that their idea appealed to the healthy instincts and sound sense of the masses. To the extent of their ability and limited power the Anarchists encouraged the demand for peace, land, and bread, and actively helped carry out those demands by direct expropriation and the formation of a free communal life.

There was another political party in Russia which was far more numerous and better organized than the Anarchists. That party realized the value of the Anarchist ideas and set to work to carry them out. It was the Bolsheviki.

Chapter 16: The Bolsheviks

Who were the Bolsheviks, and what did they want?

Up to the year 1903, the Bolsheviks were members of the Russian Socialist Party; that is, Social Democrats, followers of Karl Marx and his teachings. In that year the Social Democratic Labor Party of Russia split on the question of organization and other minor matters. Under the leadership of Lenin the opposition formed a new party, which called itself Bolshevik. The old party became known as Menshevik.²¹

The Bolsheviks were more revolutionary than the mother party from which they seceded. When the world war broke out they did not betray the cause of the workers and join the patriotic jingoists, as did the majority of the other Socialist parties. To their credit be it said that, like most of the Anarchists and Left Socialists Revolutionists, the Bolsheviks opposed the war on the ground that the proletariat had no interest in the quarrels of conflicting capitalist groups. When the February Revolution began the Bolsheviks realized that political changes alone would do no good, would not solve the labor and social problems. They knew that putting one government in place of another would not help matters. What was needed was a radical, fundamental change.

Though Marxists like their Menshevik step-brothers (believers in the theories of Karl Marx), the Bolsheviks did not agree with the Mensheviks in their attitude to the great upheaval. They scorned the idea that Russia could not have a proletarian revolution because capitalist industry had not developed there to its fullest possibilities. They realized that it was not merely a bourgeois political change that was taking place. They knew that the people were not satisfied with the abolition of the Tsar and not content with a constitution. They saw that things were developing further. They understood that the taking of the land by the peasantry and the growing expropriation of the possessing classes, did not signify "reform." Closer to the masses than the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks felt the popular pulse and more correctly judged the spirit and purpose of the tremendous events. It was foremost of all Lenin, the Bolshevik leader, who believed that the time was approaching when he and his Party might grasp the reins of government and establish Socialism on the Bolshevik plan.

Bolshevik Socialism meant the seizing of political power by the Bolsheviks in the name of the proletariat. They agreed with the Anarchists that Communism would be the best economic system; that is, the land, the machinery of production and distribution, and all public utilities should be owned in common, excluding private possession in those things. But while the Anarchists wanted the people as a whole to be the owners, the Bolsheviks held that everything must be in the hands of the State, which meant that the government would not only be the political ruler of the country but also its industrial and economic master. The Bolsheviks as Marxists believed in a strong government to run the country, with absolute power over the lives and fortunes of the people. In other words, the Bolshevik idea was a dictatorship, that dictatorship to be in the hands of themselves, of *their* political Party.

They called such an arrangement the "dictatorship of the proletariat," because their Party, they said, represented the best and foremost element, the advance guard of the working class, and their Party should therefore be dictator in the name of the proletariat.

The great difference between the Anarchists and the Bolsheviks was that the Anarchists wanted the masses to decide and manage their affairs for themselves, through their own organizations, without

²¹From the Russian word *bolshe*, meaning "more" or majority; *menshe* signifying less"

orders from any political party. They wanted real liberty and voluntary cooperation in joint ownership. The Anarchists therefore called themselves *free* Communists, or Communist Anarchists, while the Bolsheviks were *compulsory*, governmental or State Communists. The Anarchists didn't want any State to dictate to the people, because such dictation, they argued, always means tyranny and oppression. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, while repudiating the capitalist State and bourgeois dictatorship, wanted the State and the dictatorship to be *theirs*, of their Party.

You can therefore see that there is all the difference in the world between the Anarchists and the Bolsheviks. The Anarchists are opposed to all government; the Bolsheviks are strong for government on condition that it is in their hands. "They are not against the big stick," as a clever friend of mine is wont to say; "they only want to be at the right end of it."

But the Bolsheviks realized that the views and methods advocated by the Anarchists were sound and practical, and that only such methods could assure the success of the Revolution. They decided to make use of Anarchist ideas for their own purposes. So it happened that although the Anarchists were themselves too weak in numbers to reach the masses, they succeeded in influencing the Bolsheviks, who presently began to advocate Anarchist methods and tactics, pretending of course that they were their own.

But they were not their own. You might say that it does not matter who advocates or helps to carry out an idea that will benefit the people. But if you think it over a bit you will realize that it matters very much, as all history and particularly the Russian Revolution proves.

It matters because everything depends on the motives, on the purpose and spirit in which a thing is carried out. Even the best idea can be applied in such a manner as to bring much harm. Because the masses, fired by the great idea, may fail to notice how, in what manner, and by what means it is being carried out. But if carried out in the wrong spirit or by false means, even the noblest and finest idea can be turned to the ruin of the country and its people.

That is just what happened in Russia. The Bolsheviks advocated and partly carried out Anarchist ideas, but the Bolsheviks were not Anarchists and they did not at heart believe in those ideas. They used them for their own purposes — purposes that were *not* Anarchistic, that were really anti-Anarchistic, against the Anarchist idea. What were those Bolshevik purposes?

The Anarchist idea was to do away with oppression of every kind, to abolish the rule of one class over another, to substitute the management of things for the mastery of man over man, to secure liberty and well-being for all. Anarchist methods were calculated to bring about such a result.

The Bolsheviks used the Anarchist methods for an entirely different purpose. They did not want to abolish political domination and government: they only meant to get it into their own hands. Their object was, as already explained, to gain control of political power by their Party and establish a Bolshevik dictatorship. It is necessary to get this very clearly in order to understand what happened in the Russian Revolution and why "proletarian dictatorship" quickly became a Bolshevik dictatorship over the proletariat.

It was soon after the February Revolution that the Bolsheviks began to proclaim Anarchist principles and tactics. Among these were "direct action," "the general strike," "expropriation," and similar modes of action by the masses. As I have said, the Bolsheviks as Marxists did not believe in such methods. At least they had not believed in them until the Revolution. For years previously Socialists everywhere, including the Bolsheviks, had ridiculed the Anarchist advocacy of the general strike as the strongest weapon of the workers in their struggle against capitalist exploitation and government oppression. "The general strike is general nonsense," was the war cry of Socialists against the Anarchists. Socialists did not want the workers to resort to direct mass action and the general strike, because it might lead to revolution and the taking of things into their own hands. The Socialists wanted no independent revolutionary action by the masses. They advocated political activity. They wanted the workers to put them, the Socialists, in power, *so they* could do the revolutionizing.

If you glance over the Socialist writings for the past forty years, you will be convinced that Socialists were always against the general strike and direct action, as they were also opposed to expropriation and revolutionary syndicalism, which is another name for workers' soviets. Socialist congresses passed drastic resolutions against, and Socialist agitators fiercely denounced, all such revolutionary tactics.

But the Bolsheviks accepted these Anarchist methods and began advocating them with new-born conviction. Not, of course, at the outbreak of the Revolution, in February, 1917. They did it much later, when they saw that the masses were not content with mere political changes and were demanding bread instead of a constitution. The swiftly moving events of the Revolution *compelled* the Bolsheviks to fall in line with the most radical popular aspirations in order not to be left behind by the Revolution, as happened to the Mensheviks, to the Right Socialists Revolutionists, the Constitutional Democrats, and to other reformers.

Very sudden was this Bolshevik acceptance of Anarchist methods, because only a short time before they had been insistently calling for the Constituent Assembly. For months following the February Revolution they were demanding the convocation of a representative body to determine the form of government that Russia was to have. It was right for the Bolsheviks to favor the Constituent Assembly, since they were Marxists and pretended to believe in majority rule. The Constituent Assembly was to be elected by the entire people, and the majority in the Assembly was to decide matters. But the real reason why the Bolsheviks agitated for the Assembly was that they believed the masses were with them and that they, the Bolshevik Party, would be sure of a majority in the Assembly. Presently, however, it became clear that they would prove an insignificant minority in that body. Their hope to dominate it vanished. As good governmentals and believers in majority rule they should have bowed to the will of the people. But that did not suit the plans of Lenin and his friends. They looked about for other ways of getting control of the government, and their first step was to begin a vehement agitation against the Constituent Assembly.

To be sure, the Assembly could give nothing of value to the country. It was a mere talking machine, lacking all vitality, and unable to accomplish any constructive work. The Revolution was a fact outside and independent of the Constituent Assembly, independent of any legislative or governmental body. It began and was developing in spite of government and constitution, in spite of all opposition, in defiance of law. In its entire character it was unlawful, non-governmental, even anti-governmental. The Revolution followed the healthy natural impulses of the people, their needs and aspirations. In the truest sense it was Anarchistic in spirit and deed. Only the Anarchists, those governmental heretics who believe in liberty and popular initiative as the cure for social ills, welcomed the Revolution as it was and worked for its further growth and deepening, so as to bring the entire life of the country within the sphere of its influence.

All the other parties, including the Bolsheviks, had the sole object of lassoing the revolutionary movement and tying it to their particular band-wagon. The Bolsheviks needed the support of the masses to wrest political power for their Party and to proclaim the Communist dictatorship. Seeing that there was no hope of accomplishing this through the Constituent Assembly, they turned against it, joined the Anarchists in condemning it, and later forcibly dispersed it. But you can see that while the Anarchists could do this honestly, in keeping with their no-government ideas, similar action on the part of the Bolsheviks was rank hypocrisy and political trickery.

Together with their opposition to the Constituent Assembly the Bolsheviks borrowed from the Anarchist arsenal a number of other militant tactics. Thus they proclaimed the great war cry, "All power to the Soviets," advised the workers to ignore and even defy the Provisional Government, and to resort to direct mass action to carry out their demands. At the same time they also adopted the Anarchist methods of the general strike and energetically agitated for the "expropriation of the expropriators."

It is important to keep in mind that these tactics of the Bolsheviks were not, as I have already pointed out, the logical outcome of their ideas, but only a means of gaining the confidence of the masses with the

object of achieving political domination. Indeed, those methods were really *opposed* to Marxist theories and were not believed in by the Bolsheviks. It was therefore not surprising that, once in power, they repudiated all those anti-Marxist ideas and tactics.

The Anarchist mottoes proclaimed by the Bolsheviks did not fail to bring results. The masses rallied to their flag. From a Party with almost no influence, with its main leaders, Lenin and Zinoviev, discredited²² and hiding, with Trotsky and others in prison, they quickly became the most important factor in the movement of the revolutionary proletariat.

Attentive to the demands of the masses, particularly of the soldiers and workers, voicing their needs with energy and persistence, the Bolsheviks constantly gained greater influence among the people and in the Soviets, especially in those of Petrograd and Moscow. The inactivity of the Provisional Government and its failure to undertake any important changes aggravated the general dissatisfaction and resentment, which were soon to break into fury. The pusillanimous character of the Kerensky régime served to strengthen the hands of the Bolsheviks in the Soviets. Daily the rupture between the latter and the Government grew, presently developing into open antagonism and struggle.

The evident helplessness of the government, the decision of Kerensky to renew an aggressive movement at the front, together with the reintroduction of the death penalty for military desertion, the persecution of the revolutionary elements and the arrest of their leaders, all hastened the crisis. On July 3, 1917,²³ thousands of armed workers, soldiers, and sailors demonstrated in the streets of Petrograd in spite of government prohibition, demanding "All power to the Soviets." Kerensky sought to suppress the popular movement. He even recalled "trusted" regiments from the front to teach the proletariat of Petrograd a "salutary lesson." But in vain were all the efforts of the bourgeoisie, represented by Kerensky, by the Social Democratic leaders and Right Socialists Revolutionists, to stem the rising tide. The July demonstrations were suppressed, but within a short time the revolutionary movement swept the Provisional Government away. The Petrograd Soviet of soldiers and workers declared the government abolished, and Kerensky saved his life only by fleeing in disguise.

The masses backed the Petrograd Soviet. The example of the capital was soon followed by Moscow, thence spreading throughout the country.

It was on October 25th²⁴ that the Provisional Government was declared abolished, its members arrested, and the Winter Palace taken by the military-revolutionary committee of the Petrograd Soviet. On the same day the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets opened its sessions. Political government was practically abolished in Russia. All power was now in the hands of the workers, soldiers, and peasants represented in the Congress. The latter immediately began to consider steps to carry out the will of the masses: to terminate the war, secure land for the peasants, the industries for the workers, and establish liberty and welfare for all.

This was the status of the Russian Revolution in October, 1917. Beginning with the abolition of the Tsar, it gradually widened and developed into a thorough industrial and economic reorganization of the country. The spirit of the people and their needs marked out the further progress of the Revolution toward the rebuilding of life on the foundation of political freedom, economic equality, and social justice.

This could be accomplished only as the previous great changes, from February to October, had been; by the joint effort and free cooperation of the workers and peasants, the latter now joined by the bulk of the army.

But such a development did not come within the scheme of the Bolsheviks. As already explained, their aim was to establish a dictatorship wielded by their Party. But a dictatorship means dictation, the imposing of the ruler's will upon the country. The Bolsheviks now felt themselves strong enough

²²Because of the widely believed but false charge against Lenin of being in the pay of Germany.

²³July 16, new style.

²⁴November 7, new style.

to carry out their real object. They dropped the revolutionary and Anarchist mottoes. There must be a vigorous political power, they declared, to carry on the work of the Revolution. Under the guise of protecting the people against the monarchists and the bourgeoisie they began to use repressive measures. As a matter of fact, there were no Tsarist supporters or monarchists in Russia worth mentioning. The people had grown out of Tsarism, and there was no more chance whatever, for a monarchy in Russia. As to the bourgeoisie, there had never been any organized capitalist class in Russia, such as we have in highly developed industrial countries—in the United States, England, France, and Germany. The Russian bourgeoisie was small in numbers and weak. It continued to exist after the February Revolution only by the protection of the Kerensky Government. The moment the latter was abolished, the bourgeoisie went to pieces. It had neither strength nor means to stop the confiscation of its lands and factories by the peasants and workers. Strange as it may seem, it is a fact that throughout this whole period of the Revolution the Russian bourgeoisie did not make any organized and effectual attempt to regain its possessions.²⁵

Consider how different it would have been in America. There the capitalists, who are strong and well organized, would have offered the greatest resistance. They would have formed defense bodies to protect themselves and their interests by force of arms. I have no doubt they will do so when things begin to happen there as they did in Russia in 1917. Not that they will succeed, however. But as I say, the Revolution in Russia did not produce any organized and effective bourgeois resistance for the simple reason that there was no real bourgeoisie or capitalist class in that country. Military attempts there were indeed, such as that of the Tsarist General Kornilov to attack Petrograd with Cossacks brought from the front, but so harmless was that adventure that Kornilov's army melted away even before he could reach the capital. His men went over to the revolutionary garrison of Petrograd almost without firing a gun.²⁶

The point is that when the masses are with the Revolution, there can be no thought of successful resistance by any enemy, no chance of suppressing the Revolution. That was the situation in Russia in October, 1917, when the Soviets took the power into their hands.

The Bolshevik plan was to gain entire and exclusive control of the government for their Party. It did not fit into their scheme to permit the people themselves to manage things, through their Soviet organizations. As long as the Soviets had the whole say the Bolsheviki could not achieve their purpose. It was therefore necessary either to abolish the Soviets or to gain control of them.

To abolish the Soviets was impossible. **They represented** the toiling masses; the Soviet idea had been a cherished dream of the Russian people for centuries. Even in the far past Russia had soviets of various kinds, and the entire village life was built on the soviet principle; that is, on the equal right and representation of all members alike. The ancient Russian *mir*, the public assembly to transact the business of the village or town, was one of the forms of the soviet idea.

The Bolsheviki knew that the revolutionary workers and peasants, as well as the soldiers (who were workers and peasants in uniform), would not stand for the abolition of their soviets. There remained the only alternative of getting control of them. Holding to the Lenin principle that the "end justifies the means," the Bolsheviki did not shrink from any methods whatever to discredit and eliminate the other revolutionary elements from the Soviets. They carried on a persistent campaign of venom and detraction for the purpose of deluding the masses and turning them against the other parties, particularly against the Left Socialists Revolutionists and the Anarchists. Systematically and by the most Jesuitic means

²⁵In the South of Russia (the Ukraine) the bourgeoisie did offer some resistance, but only during the rule of the Hetmen Skoropadsky and Petlura, aided by the Allied armies. As soon as foreign aid was withdrawn, the Ukrainian bourgeoisie also became helpless.

²⁶Real counter-revolution began much later, when Bolshevik terror and dictatorship were in full sway, which alienated the masses and resulted in insurrections.

they sought to become the *sole* power, so as to be able to carry out Lenin's scheme of "proletarian dictatorship."

By such tactics the Bolsheviks finally succeeded in organizing a Soviet of People's Commissars, which in reality became the new government. All its members were Bolsheviks, with two minor exceptions: the Commissariats of justice and of Agriculture were headed by Left Socialists Revolutionists. Before long these were also eliminated and replaced by Bolsheviks. The Soviet of People's Commissars was the political machine of the Bolshevik Party, which was now rechristened into the Communist Party of Russia.

What this Communist Party stood for, what its objects and purposes were, we already know. It openly avowed its determination to secure exclusive Bolshevik domination under the label of the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

This was fatal to the Revolution and its great aim of a deep social and economic reconstruction, as the subsequent history of Russia has proven. Why?

Chapter 17: Revolution and Dictatorship

Because the Revolution and the Bolshevik dictatorship were things of an entirely different and even opposite nature. And here is where most people make the greatest mistake in confusing the Russian Revolution with the Communist Party and speaking of them as if they were one and the same, which emphatically they are not.

This will become clear to us if we compare the aims of the Revolution with the ends sought by the Bolsheviks.

The Revolution was a mighty uprising against oppression and misery. It voiced the longing of the masses for liberty and justice. It attempted to do away with everything that kept man in subjection, made him a slave and a beast of burden. The Revolution tried to establish new forms of life, conditions of real equality and brotherhood.

We have already seen that the Revolution was not a superficial change, that it did not stop with the February events. The Tsar had been abolished and the power of his autocracy broken, but the result was only another *form* of government. The economic and social conditions remained the same. Yet it was just those that the people meant to change. That is why the October Revolution took place. Its purpose was to rebuild life altogether, on new social foundations.

How was it to be rebuilt? It is evident that taking Romanov out of the Kremlin palace and putting Lenin in his Place would not do it. Something more was necessary. It was necessary to give the soil to the peasant, to put the factories in the hands of the workers and their labor organizations. In short, it was the aim of October to afford the people an opportunity to make use of the political freedom won in February.

That is the way the masses sized up the situation. And they acted upon it. They began to apply liberty to their needs. They wanted peace, so they stopped the war, first of all. It was months later that the Bolshevik Government signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty and concluded an official peace with Germany. But so far as the Russian armies were concerned, war was at an end long before, without diplomatic negotiations. Trotsky frankly admits this in his work on the Revolution.²⁷

The Russian workers and peasants, temporarily in soldiers' uniforms, had taken matters into their own hands and terminated the war by leaving the fronts.

Similarly did the peasantry and the proletariat act in solving the industrial and agrarian problems. While the Provisional Government was still discussing land reforms, the masses themselves acted, through their local councils and Soviets. The peasants took the land they needed and began cultivating it. With simple common sense and inherent popular justice they settled the agrarian problem over which politicians and lawgivers had been breaking their heads for many decades without result. The Bolsheviks, when they came to power, "legalized" what the peasants had already accomplished without asking anybody's permission.

In like manner did the workers' Soviets start to solve the industrial problem by taking over the factories and mines and managing them for the general benefit instead of for the profit of the "owners." That was actual abolition of capitalism and wage slavery, long before the Bolshevik Government declared capitalist ownership "legally" at an end.

²⁷1917, by Leon Trotsky. Moscow, 1925.

All the other problems of every-day life the Revolution was similarly solving by the practical and direct activity of the masses themselves. Cooperative organizations brought city and village together for the exchange of products; house Committees looked after the housing question; street and district committees were organized for the safety of the city, and other voluntary bodies were formed for the defense of the people's interests and of the Revolution.

The requirements of the situation directed the efforts of the masses; liberty of action brought initiative into play, and the wants of the people shaped their creative capacities to the needs of the hour.

These collective activities constituted the Revolution. They were the Revolution. For "revolution" is not some vague thing without definite meaning and purpose; nor does it signify political scene shifting or new legislation. The *actual* Revolution took place neither in February nor in October, but between those months. It consisted in the free play and interplay of the revolutionary energies and efforts of the people, in independent popular initiative and creative work, inspired by common need and mutual interests.

That was the spirit and tendency of the great economic and social upheaval in Russia. It solved problems as they arose, on the basis of liberty and free cooperation.

This process of the Revolution was stopped in its development by the Communist Party seizing political power and constituting itself a new government.

We have just seen what the aim of the Revolution was; we know what the masses of Russia wanted and what means they used to achieve it.

The objects of the Bolsheviks as a political party, on the other hand, were of an entirely different nature. As frankly admitted by themselves, their immediate goal was a dictatorship; that is, the formation of a powerful Bolshevik State which should direct the life and activities of the country according to the views and theories of the Communist Party.

To give due credit to the Bolsheviks let me say right here that there never was any political party more devoted to its cause, more wholehearted in its efforts to advance it, more determined and energetic in the achievement of its purposes. But *those* purposes were entirely foreign to the Revolution and opposed to its real needs. They were, in fact, so contrary to the spirit and aims of the Revolution that their achievement meant the destruction of the Revolution itself.

No doubt the Bolsheviks really thought that only by means of their dictatorship could Russia be converted into a Socialist paradise for the worker and farmer. Indeed, as Marxists they could not see things in any other way. Believers in an all-powerful State, they had no confidence in the people; they had no faith in the initiative and creative ability of the toilers. They distrusted them as a "multi-colored mob which has to be forced into liberty." They agreed with the cynical maxim of Rousseau that the masses "can be made free only by compulsion."

"Proletarian compulsion in all its forms," wrote Bukharin, the foremost Communist theoretician, "beginning with summary execution and ending with compulsory labor is, however paradoxical it may sound, a method of reworking the human material of the capitalistic epoch into Communist humanity."

That was the Bolshevik gospel; it was the attitude of a party that believed a revolution could be run by the orders of a Central Committee.

What followed was the logical outcome of the Bolshevik idea.

Claiming that only the dictatorship of their Party could properly conduct the Revolution, they bent all energies to secure that dictatorship. It meant that they had to take things exclusively into their own hands, to have the designs of the Party accomplished at any cost.

We need not go into the details of the schemes and political manipulations of those days which finally resulted in the Communist Party gaining the upper hand. The important point is that the Bolsheviks did contrive to carry out their Plans. Within a few months after the October Revolution, by April, 1918, they were in entire control of the government.

By taking advantage of the excitement of the revolutionary days and the inevitable confusion, they exploited the situation for their own objects. They used the political differences to rouse fierce party passions, resorted to every means to denounce their opponents as enemies of the people, branded them counter-revolutionists, and finally succeeded in damning them in the eyes of the workers and soldiers. Declaring that the Revolution must be protected against those alleged enemies, they were enabled to proclaim their own dictatorship. In the name of "saving the Revolution" they began eliminating all other revolutionary elements, non-Bolshevik, from positions of influence, finishing by suppressing them entirely.

It must be left to future historians to determine whether Bolshevik repression of the bourgeoisie, with which they started their rule, was not merely a means toward the ulterior purpose of suppressing all other non-Bolshevik elements. For the Russian bourgeoisie was not dangerous to the Revolution. As already explained, it was an insignificant minority, unorganized and powerless. The revolutionary elements, on the contrary, were a real obstacle to the dictatorship of any political party.

Because dictatorship would meet with the strongest opposition not from the bourgeoisie but from the truly revolutionary classes which considered dictatorship inimical to the best interests of the Revolution, the elimination of these would therefore be of prime necessity to any political party seeking dictatorship. Such a policy, however, could not successfully *begin* with the suppression of the revolutionists: it would provoke the disapproval and resistance of the workers and soldiers. It would have to be begun at the bourgeois end and means found gradually to spread the net over the other elements. Distrust and antagonism would have to be awakened intolerance and persecution stimulated, popular fear created for the safety of the Revolution in order to secure the people's support for an ever-widening campaign of elimination and suppression, for the introduction of the bloody hand of red terror into the life of the Revolution.

But as I have said, it is the place of the future historian to determine to what extent such motives fashioned the events of those days. Here we are more concerned with what actually happened.

What happened was that before long the Bolsheviks established the exclusive dictatorship of their Party.

"What was that dictatorship," you ask, "and what did it achieve?"

Chapter 18: The Dictatorship at Work

It achieved the complete mastery of the Bolsheviki over a country of 140 millions of population. In the name of the “proletarian dictatorship” *one* political organization, the Communist Party, became the absolute ruler of Russia. The proletarian dictatorship was not dictatorship by the proletariat. Millions of people cannot all be dictators. Nor can thousands of party members be dictators. By its very nature a dictatorship is limited to a small number of persons. The less of them, the stronger and more unified the dictatorship. In actual practice dictatorship is always in the hands of *one* person, the strong man whose will compels the consent of his nominal co-dictators. It cannot be otherwise, and so it was with the Bolsheviki.

The real dictator was neither the proletariat nor even the Communist Party. Theoretically the power was held by the Central Committee of the Party, but actually it was wielded by the inner circle of that Committee, called the political bureau or “politbureau.” But even the politbureau was not the real dictator, though its membership was less than a score. For in the politbureau there were differing views on every important question, as there must be when there are many heads. The real dictator was the man whose influence secured the support of the majority of the politbureau. That man was Lenin, and it was he who was the real “proletarian dictatorship,” just as Mussolini, for instance, and not the Fascist Party, is dictator in Italy. It was always the views and ideas of Lenin that were carried out, from the very inception of the Bolshevik Party to the last day of Lenin’s life; carried out when the entire Party was opposed to his opinion and even when the Central Committee bitterly fought his proposals on their first presentation. It was Lenin who always won, his will that prevailed. It was so in every critical period of Bolshevik history. It could not help being so, because dictatorship always means domination by the strongest personality, the supremacy of a single will.

The whole history of the Communist Party, as that of every dictatorship, indisputably demonstrates this. Bolshevik writings themselves prove it. Here it is sufficient to mention but a few of the most vital events to substantiate my contention.

In March, 1917, when Lenin returned home from exile in Switzerland, the Central Committee of his Party in Russia had decided to enter the Coalition Government formed after the abolition of the Tsarist régime. Lenin was opposed to cooperation with the bourgeois and Mensheviki who were in the Government. Yet notwithstanding that the Party had already decided the question and that Lenin was almost alone in his opposition, his influence carried. The Central Committee reversed itself and took up Lenin’s position.

Later, in July, 1917, Lenin advocated an immediate revolution against the Kerensky Government. His proposal was roundly condemned even by his nearest comrades and friends as foolhardy and criminal. But again Lenin won, even at the cost of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other influential Bolsheviki refusing to be parties to the scheme and resigning from the Central Committee. Incidentally, the *Putsch* (the attempt to upset Kerensky) proved a failure and cost many workers’ lives.

The red terror instituted by Lenin as soon as he came to power after the October Revolution was bitterly denounced by his co-workers as entirely uncalled for and as a direct betrayal of the Revolution. But in spite of the official protests of the most active and influential members of the Party, Lenin had his way.

During the Brest-Litovsk negotiations it was again Lenin who insisted that "peace on any terms" he made with Germany, while Trotsky, Radek, and other important Bolshevik leaders opposed the Kaiser's conditions as humiliating and destructive. Once more Lenin scored.

The "new economic policy" (the "nep") submitted by Lenin to his Party during the Kronstadt events²⁸ was fought by the Central Committee as nullifying all the revolutionary achievements and as a death blow to Communism. It was indeed a complete reversal of everything the Revolution stood for and a return to the very conditions that the great October change had abolished. But Lenin's will again prevailed and his resolution was carried at the IX Communist Congress held in Moscow, in March, 1921.

As you see, the alleged dictatorship of the proletariat was only the dictatorship of Lenin. He dictated to the politbureau, the politbureau to the Central Committee, the Central Committee to the Party, the Party to the proletariat and the rest of the people. Russia counted a population of over a hundred millions; the Communist Party had less than fifty thousand members; the Central Committee consisted of several score; the politbureau numbered about a dozen; and Lenin was one. But that one was *the* proletarian dictatorship.

Russia is a country of vast extent, spread over half of Europe and a goodly part of Asia. It is peopled by numerous races and nationalities speaking different languages, with diversified psychology, varied interests and outlook upon life. We know what the dictatorship of the Tsars did to the country. Let us now see what the "proletarian" dictatorship accomplished. To-day, after over a decade of Bolshevik rule in Russia, we can form a fair estimate of its effects and examine the results it achieved. Let us sum them up.

Politically the aim of the Revolution was to abolish governmental tyranny and oppression and make the people free. The Bolshevik Government is admittedly the worst despotism in Europe, with the sole exception of Fascist rule in Italy. The citizen has no rights which the government feels bound to respect. The Communist Party is a political monopoly, with all the other parties and movements outlawed. Security of person and domicile is unknown. Freedom of speech and press does not exist. Even within the Party the least difference of opinion is suppressed and punished by imprisonment and exile, as witness the fate of Trotsky and his followers of the Opposition. Independent opinion is not tolerated. The G.P.U., the secret service formerly called *Tcheka*, is a super-government with unlimited arbitrary powers over the liberty and lives of the people. Only those who are entirely on the side of the dominant Party clique enjoy freedom and privileges. But such, "liberty" is to be had under the worst despotism: if you have nothing to say you are perfectly free to say it even in the land of Mussolini. As a prominent member of a recent Communist Congress put it, "There is room for all political parties in Russia: the Communist Party is in the Government, the others are in prison."

Economically it was the fundamental aim of the Revolution to abolish capitalism and establish Communism and equality.

The Bolshevik dictatorship began by instituting a system of unequal compensation and discriminating rewards, and ended by reintroducing capitalistic ownership after it had been abolished by the direct action of the industrial and agrarian proletariat. To-day Russia is a country partly State capitalistic and partly privately capitalistic.

The dictatorship and the red terror by which it was maintained proved the main factors in paralyzing the economic life of the country. High-handed Bolshevik rule antagonized the people, its despotism embittered the masses. The repression of every independent effort alienated the best elements from the Revolution and made them feel that it had become the private concern of the political Party in power. Facing a new tyranny instead of the longed-for liberty, the workers became discouraged. They felt their revolutionary achievements taken from them and used as a weapon against themselves and their aspirations. The proletarian saw his factory committee subjected to the dictates of the Communist

²⁸The revolt of the Kronstadt sailors in March, 1921. See *The Kronstadt Rebellion*, by the author.

Party and made helpless to protect his interests as a toiler. His labor union became the mouthpiece and transmitter of Bolshevik orders, and he found himself deprived of all voice, not only in the management of industry but even in his own factory where he was kept at work long hours at the poorest pay. The toilers soon realized that the Revolution had been taken out of their hands, that their soviets had been emasculated of all power, and that the country was being ruled by some people far away in the Kremlin, just as it was in the days of the Tsars. Eliminated from revolutionary and creative activity, living only to obey the new masters, constantly harassed by Bolsheviks and Tchekists, and ever in fear of prison or execution for the least expression of protest, the worker became embittered against the Revolution. He deserted the factory and sought the village where he might be furthest removed from the dreaded rulers and at least secure of his daily bread. Thus broke down the industries of the country.

The peasant saw leather-clad and armed Communists descend upon his quiet village, despoil it of the fruit of his hard labor, and treat him with the brutality and insolence of the old Tsarist officials. He saw his Soviet dominated by some lazy, good-for-nothing village loafer calling himself Bolshevik and holding power from Moscow. He had willingly, even generously, given his wheat and corn to feed the workers and the soldiers, but he saw his provisions lie rotting at the railroad stations and in the warehouses, because the Bolsheviks could not themselves manage things and would let no one else do it. He knew that his brothers in the factory and in the army suffered for lack of food because of Communist inefficiency, bureaucracy, and corruption. He understood why more was always demanded of him. He saw his few possessions, his own family provisions, confiscated by Tchekists who often took even his last horse without which the peasant could neither work nor live. He saw his neighbor villages, that rebelled against these outrages, leveled to the ground and the peasants whipped and shot, just as in the old days. He turned against the Revolution and in his desperation he determined to plant and sow no more than he needed for himself and family and to hide even that in the forest.

Such were the results of the dictatorship, of Lenin's military communism and Bolshevik methods. Industry stood still, and famine overwhelmed the country. The general suffering, the bitterness of the workers, and the peasant uprisings began to threaten the existence of the Bolshevik régime. To save the dictatorship Lenin decided to introduce a new economic policy, known as the "nep."

The purpose of the "nep" was to revive the economic life of the country. It was to encourage greater production by the peasantry by allowing them to sell their surplus instead of having it forcibly confiscated by the government. It was also to enable exchange of products by legalizing trade and reviving the cooperatives formerly suppressed as counterrevolutionary. But the determination of the Communist Party to hold on to its dictatorship made all these economic reforms ineffectual, because industry cannot develop under a despotic régime. Economic growth, as well as trade and commerce, requires security of person and property, a certain amount of freedom and non-interference in order to function. But dictatorship does not permit that freedom; its "guarantees" cannot inspire confidence. Hence the new economic policy has not produced the results desired, and Russia remains in the throes of poverty, constantly on the brink of economic disaster.

Industrially the dictatorship has emasculated the Revolution of its basic purpose of placing production in the hands of the proletariat and making the worker independent of economic masters. The dictatorship merely changed masters: the government has become the boss instead of the individual capitalist, though the latter is now also developing as a new class in Russia. The toiler has remained dependent as before. In fact, more so. His labor organizations have been deprived of all power, and he has lost even the right to strike against his governmental employer. "Since the workers, as a class, wield the dictatorship," the Communists argue, "they cannot strike against themselves." Accordingly the proletarians in Russia pay themselves wages that are not sufficient for bare existence, live crowded in unhygienic quarters, work under most unsanitary conditions, endanger their health and lives because of lack of industrial precaution and safety, and arrest and imprison themselves for an expression of discontent.

Culturally the Bolshevik régime is a training school in Communism and party fanaticism, with no access to ideas differing from the views of the dominant clique. It is the rearing of an entire people in the dogmas of a political church, with no opportunity to broaden and cultivate the mind outside the circle of opinions permitted by the ruling class. No press exists in Russia except the official Communist publications and such others as are approved of by the Bolshevik censor. No public sentiment can find expression there, since the government has a monopoly of speech, press, and assembly.

It is no exaggeration to say that there is less freedom of opinion and opportunity to voice it under the Bolshevik dictatorship than there had been under the Tsars. When Russia was ruled by the Romanovs you could at least secretly issue pamphlets and books, since the government then had no monopoly of the paper supply and printing presses. These were in private hands, and the revolutionists could always find ways to use them for their propaganda.

To-day in Russia all the means of publication and distribution are in the exclusive possession of the Government, and no person can express his views to the public unless he first secures Bolshevik permission. Thousands of illegal publications had been issued by the revolutionary parties during the autocratic Romanov régime. Under Communist rule such a happening is most exceptional, as witness the indignant amazement of the Bolsheviks when it was discovered that Trotsky had succeeded in publishing the platform of the Opposition element in the Party.

Socially Bolshevik Russia, ten years after the Revolution, is a country where no man can enjoy political security or economic independence, where the hidden hand of the G.P.U. is always at work, terrorizing the people by sudden night searches, arrests for no known cause, secret denunciation for alleged counter-revolution out of personal revenge, imprisonment without bearing or trial, and year-long exile to the frozen North of Siberia or the wastes of Western Asia. A huge prison, where equality means the fear of all alike, and "freedom" signifies unquestioning submission to the powers that be.

Morally Russia represents the struggle of the finer qualities of man against the degrading and corrupting effects of a system built on coercion and intimidation. The Revolution brought the best instincts of man to the fore: his manhood, his consciousness of human value, his love of liberty and justice. The revolutionary atmosphere inspired and cultivated these tendencies lying dormant in the people, particularly the feeling against oppression, the hunger for freedom, the spirit of mutual helpfulness and cooperation. But the dictatorship has had the effect of counteracting these traits and arousing instead fear and hatred, the spirit of intolerance and persecution. Bolshevik methods have systematically weakened the people's morale, have encouraged servility and hypocrisy, created disillusionment and distrust, and have developed an atmosphere of time-serving now dominant in Russia.

Such is the situation to-day in that unhappy land, such the effects of the Bolshevik idea that you can make a people free by compulsion, the dogma that dictatorship can lead to liberty. "So you think that the Revolution failed because of dictatorship?" you ask. "Was not Russia too backward to make a success of it?" It failed because of Bolshevik ideas and methods. The Russian masses were not too "backward" to abolish the Tsar, to defeat the Provisional Government, to destroy capitalism and the wage system, to turn the land over to the peasantry and the industries to the workers. So far the Revolution was the greatest success, and the people were beginning to build their new life upon the foundation of equal liberty, opportunity, and justice. But the moment a political party usurped the reins of government and proclaimed its dictatorship, disastrous results were inevitable.

Revolution, when it Comes, must deal with conditions as it finds them. It is the means and methods used, and the purpose for which they are used, that are vital. Upon them depends the course and fate of the revolution.

Let us learn this lesson well because the fate of revolution depends on it. "You shall reap what you sow" is the acme of all human wisdom and experience.

Chapter 19: Is Anarchism Violence?

You have heard that Anarchists throw bombs, that they believe in violence, and that Anarchy means disorder and chaos.

It is not surprising that you should think so. The press, the pulpit, and every one in authority constantly din it into your ears. But most of them know better, even if they have a reason for not telling you the truth. It is time you should bear it.

I mean to speak to you honestly and frankly, and you can take my word for it, because it happens that I am just one of those Anarchists who are pointed out as men of violence and destruction. I ought to know, and I have nothing to hide.

“Now, does Anarchism really mean disorder and violence?” you wonder.

No, my friend, it is capitalism and government which stand for disorder and violence. Anarchism is the very reverse of it; it means order without government and peace without violence.

“But is that possible?” you ask.

That is just what we are going to talk over now. But first your friend demands to know whether Anarchists have never thrown bombs or ever used any violence.

Yes, Anarchists have thrown bombs and have sometimes resorted to violence.

“There you are!” your friend exclaims. “I thought so.”

But do not let us be hasty. If Anarchists have sometimes employed violence, does it necessarily mean that Anarchism means violence?

Ask yourself this question and try to answer it honestly.

When a citizen puts on a soldier’s uniform, he may have to throw bombs and use violence. Will you say, then, that citizenship stands for bombs and violence?

You will indignantly resent the imputation. It simply means, you will reply, that *under certain conditions* a man may have to resort to violence. The man may happen to be a Democrat, a Monarchist, a Socialist, Bolshevik, or Anarchist.

You will find that this applies to all men and to all times.

Brutus killed Caesar because he feared his friend meant to betray the republic and become king. Not that Brutus “loved Caesar less but that he loved Rome more.” Brutus was *not* an Anarchist. He was a loyal republican.

William Tell, as folklore tells us, shot to death the tyrant in order to rid his country of oppression. Tell had never heard of Anarchism.

I mention these instances to illustrate the fact that from time immemorial despots met their fate at the hands of outraged lovers of liberty. Such men were rebels against tyranny. They were generally patriots, Democrats or Republicans, occasionally Socialists or Anarchists. Their acts were cases of individual rebellion against wrong and injustice. Anarchism had nothing to do with it.

There was a time in ancient Greece when killing a despot was considered the highest virtue. Modern law condemns such acts, but human feeling seems to have remained the same in this matter as in the old days. The conscience of the world does not feel outraged by tyrannicide. Even if publicly not approved, the heart of mankind condones and often even secretly rejoices at such acts. Were there not thousands of patriotic youths in America willing to assassinate the German Kaiser whom they held responsible for starting the World War? Did not a French court recently acquit the man who killed Petlura to avenge

the thousands of men, women and children murdered in the Petlura pogroms against the Jews of South Russia?

In every land, in all ages, there have been tyrannicides; that is, men and women who loved their country well enough to sacrifice even their own lives for it. Usually *they* were persons of no political party or idea, but simply haters of tyranny. Occasionally they were religious fanatics, like the devout Catholic Kullmann, who tried to assassinate Bismarck²⁹ or the misguided enthusiast Charlotte Corday who killed Marat during the French Revolution.

In the United States three Presidents were killed by individual acts. Lincoln was shot in 1865, by John Wilkes Booth, who was a Southern Democrat; Garfield, in 1881, by Charles Jules Guiteau, a Republican; and McKinley, in 1901, by Leon Czolgosz. Out of the three only one was an Anarchist.

The country that has the worst oppressors produces also the greatest number of tyrannicides, which is natural. Take Russia, for instance. With complete suppression of speech and press under the Tsars, there was no way of mitigating the despotic régime than by "putting the fear of God" into the tyrant's heart.

Those avengers were mostly sons and daughters of the highest nobility, idealistic youths who loved liberty and the people. With all other avenues closed, they felt themselves compelled to resort to the pistol and dynamite in the hope of alleviating the miserable conditions of their country. They were known as nihilists and terrorists. They were not Anarchists.

In modern times individual acts of political violence have been even more frequent than in the past. The women suffragettes in England, for example, frequently resorted to it to propagate and carry out their demands for equal rights. In Germany, since the war, men of the most conservative political views have used such methods in the hope of reestablishing the kingdom. It was a monarchist who killed Karl Erzberger, the Prussian Minister of Finance; and Walter Rathenau, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was also laid low by a man of the same political party.

Why, the original cause of, *or* at least excuse for, the Great 'War itself was the killing of the Austrian heir to the throne by a Serbian patriot who had never heard of Anarchism. In Germany, Hungary, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and in every other European country men of the most varied political views have resorted to acts of violence, not to speak of the wholesale political terror, practiced by organized bodies such as the Fascists in Italy, the Ku Klux Klan in America, or the Catholic Church in Mexico.

You see, then, that Anarchists have no monopoly of political violence. The number of such acts by Anarchists is infinitesimal as compared with those committed by persons of other political persuasions.

The truth is that in every country, in every social movement, violence has been a part of the struggle from time immemorial. Even the Nazarene, who came to preach the gospel of peace, resorted to violence to drive the money changers out of the temple.

As I have said, Anarchists have no monopoly on violence. On the contrary, the teachings of Anarchism are those of peace and harmony, of non-invasion, of the sacredness of life and liberty. But Anarchists are human, like the rest of mankind, and perhaps more so. They are more sensitive to wrong and injustice, quicker to resent oppression, and therefore not exempt from occasionally voicing their protest by an act of violence. But such acts are an expression of individual temperament, not of any particular theory.

You might ask whether the holding of revolutionary ideas would not naturally influence a person toward deeds of violence. I do not think so, because we have seen that violent methods are also employed by people of the most conservative opinions. If persons of directly opposite political views commit similar acts, it is hardly reasonable to say that their ideas are responsible for such acts.

Like results have a like cause, but that cause is not to be found in political convictions; rather in individual temperament and the general feeling about violence.

²⁹July 13, 1874.

“You may be right about temperament,” you say. “I can see that revolutionary ideas are not the cause of political acts of violence, else every revolutionist would be committing such acts. But do not such views to some extent justify those who commit such acts?”

It may seem so at first sight. But if you think it over you will find that it is an entirely wrong idea. The best proof of it is that Anarchists who hold exactly the same views about government and the necessity of abolishing it, often disagree entirely on the question of violence. Thus Tolstoyan Anarchists and most Individualist Anarchists condemn political violence, while other Anarchists approve of or at least justify it.

Is it reasonable, then, to say that Anarchist views are responsible for violence or in any way influence such acts?

Moreover, many Anarchists who at one time believed in violence as a means of propaganda have changed their opinion about it and do not favor such methods any more. There was a time, for instance, when Anarchists advocated individual acts of violence, known as “propaganda by deed.” They did not expect to change government and capitalism into Anarchism by such acts, nor did they think that the taking off of a despot would abolish despotism. No, terrorism was considered a means of avenging a popular wrong, inspiring fear in the enemy, and also calling attention to the evil against which the act of terror was directed. But most Anarchists to-day do not believe any more in “propaganda by deed” and do not favor acts of that nature.

Experience has taught them that though such methods may have been justified and useful in the past, modern conditions of life make them unnecessary and even harmful to the spread of their ideas. But their ideas remain the same, which means that it was not Anarchism which shaped their attitude to violence. It proves that it is not certain ideas or “isms” that lead to violence, but that some other causes ring it about.

We must therefore look somewhere else to find the right explanation.

As we have seen, acts of political violence have been committed not only by Anarchists, Socialists, and revolutionists of all kinds, but also by patriots and nationalists, by Democrats and Republicans, by suffragettes, by conservatives and reactionaries, by monarchists and royalists, and even by religionists and devout Christians.

We know now that it could not have been any particular idea or “ism” that influenced their acts, because the most varied ideas and “isms” produced similar deeds. I have given as the reason individual temperament and the general feeling about violence.

Here is the crux of the matter. What is this general feeling about violence? If we can answer this question correctly, the whole matter will be clear to us.

If we speak honestly, we must admit that every one believes in violence and practices it, however he may condemn it in others. In fact, all of the institutions we support and the entire life of present society are based on violence.

What is the thing we call government? Is it anything else but organized violence? The law orders you to do this or not to do that, and if you fail to obey, it will compel you by force. We are not discussing just now whether it is right or wrong, whether it should or should not be so, just now we are interested in the fact that it is so — that all government, all law and authority finally rest on force and violence, on punishment or the fear of punishment.

Why, even spiritual authority, the authority of the church and of God rests on force and violence, because it is the fear of divine wrath and vengeance that wields power over you, compels you to obey, and even to believe against your own reason.

Wherever you turn you will find that our entire life is built on violence or the fear of it. From earliest childhood you are subjected to the violence of parents or elders. At home, in school, in the office, factory, field, or shop, it is always some one’s authority which keeps you obedient and compels you to do his will.

The right to compel you is called authority. Fear of punishment has been made into duty and is called obedience.

In this atmosphere of force and violence, of authority and obedience, of duty, fear and punishment we all grow up; we breathe it throughout our lives. We are so steeped in the spirit of violence that we never stop to ask whether violence is right or wrong. We only ask if it is legal, whether the law permits it.

You don't question the right of the government to kill, to confiscate and imprison. If a private person should be guilty of the things the government is doing all the time, you'd brand him a murderer, thief, and scoundrel. But as long as the violence committed is "lawful," you approve of it and submit to it. So it is not really violence that you object to, but to people using violence "unlawfully."

This lawful violence and the fear of it dominate our whole existence, individual and collective. Authority controls our lives from the cradle to the grave—authority parental, priestly and divine, political, economic, social, and moral. But whatever the character of that authority, it is always the same executioner wielding power over you through your fear of punishment in one form or another. You are afraid of God and the devil, of the priest and the neighbor, of your employer and boss, of the politician and policeman, of the judge and the jailer, of the law and the government. All your life is a long chain of fears—fears which bruise your body and lacerate your soul. On those fears is based the authority of God, of the church, of parents, of capitalist and ruler.

Look into your heart and see if what I say is not true. Why, even among children the ten-year-old Johnny bosses his younger brother or sister by the authority of his greater physical strength, just as Johnny's father bosses him by his superior strength, and by Johnny's dependence on his support. You stand for the authority of priest and preacher because you think they can "call down the wrath of God upon your head." You submit to the domination of boss, judge, and government because of their power to deprive you of work, to ruin your business, to put you in prison—a power, by the way, that you yourself have given into their hands.

So authority rules your whole life, the authority of the past and the present, of the dead and the living, and your existence is a continuous invasion and violation of yourself, a constant subjection to the thoughts and the will of some one else.

And as you are invaded and violated, so you subconsciously revenge yourself by invading and violating others over whom you have authority or can exercise compulsion, physical or moral. In this way all life has become a crazy quilt of authority, of domination and submission, of command and obedience, of coercion and subjection, of rulers and ruled, of violence and force in a thousand and one forms.

Can you wonder that even idealists are still held in the meshes of this spirit of authority and violence, and are often impelled by their feelings and environment to invasive acts entirely at variance with their ideas?

We are all still barbarians who resort to force and violence to settle our doubts, difficulties, and troubles. Violence is the method of ignorance, the weapon of the weak. The strong of heart and brain need no violence, for they are irresistible in their consciousness of being right. The further we get away from primitive man and the hatchet age, the less recourse we shall have to force and violence. The more enlightened man will become, the less he will employ compulsion and coercion. The really civilized man will divest himself of all fear and authority. He will rise from the dust and stand erect: he will bow to no tsar either in heaven or on earth. He will become fully human when he will scorn to rule and refuse to be ruled. He will be truly free only when there shall be no more masters.

Anarchism is the ideal of such a condition; of a society without force and compulsion, where all men shall be equals, and live in freedom, peace, and harmony.

The word Anarchy comes from the Greek, meaning without force, without violence or government, because government is the very fountainhead of violence, constraint, and coercion.

Anarchy³⁰ therefore does not mean disorder and chaos, as you thought before. On the contrary, it is the very reverse of it; it means no government, which is freedom and liberty. Disorder is the child of authority and compulsion. Liberty is the mother of order.

“A beautiful ideal,” you say; “but only angels are fit for it.”

Let us see, then, if we can grow the wings we need for that ideal state of society.

³⁰Anarchy refers to the condition. Anarchism is the theory or teaching about it.

Chapter 20: What is Anarchism?

“Can you tell us briefly,” your friend asks, “what Anarchism really is?”

I shall try. In the fewest words, Anarchism teaches that we can live in a society where there is no compulsion of any kind.

A life without compulsion naturally means liberty; it means freedom from being forced or coerced, a chance to lead the life that suits you best.

You cannot lead such a life unless you do away with the institutions that curtail your liberty and interfere with your life, the conditions that compel you to act differently from the way you really would like to.

What are those institutions and conditions? Let us see what we have to do away with in order to secure a free and harmonious life. Once we know what has to be abolished and what must take its place, we shall also find the way to do it.

What must be abolished, then, to secure liberty?

First of all, of course, the thing that invades you most, that handicaps or prevents your free activity; the thing that interferes with your liberty and compels you to live differently from what would be your own choice.

That thing is government.

Take a good look at it and you will see that government is the greatest invader; more than that, the worst criminal man has ever known of. It fills the world with violence, with fraud and deceit, with oppression and misery. As a great thinker once said, “its breath is poison.” It corrupts everything it touches.

“Yes, government means violence and it is evil,” you admit; “but can we do without it?”

That is just what we want to talk over. Now, if I should ask you whether *you* need government, I’m sure you would answer that you don’t, but that it is for the others that it is needed.

But if you should ask any one of those “others,” he would reply as you do: he would say that he does not need it, but that it is necessary “for the others.”

Why does every one think that he can be decent enough without the policeman, but that the club is needed for “the others”?

“People would rob and murder each other if there were no government and no law,” you say.

If they really would, *why* would they? Would they do it just for the pleasure of it or because of certain reasons? Maybe if we examine their reasons, we’d discover the cure for them.

Suppose you and I and a score of others had suffered shipwreck and found ourselves on an island rich with fruit of every kind. Of course, we’d get to work to gather the food. But suppose one of our number should declare that it all belongs to him, and that no one shall have a single morsel unless he first pays him tribute for it. We would be indignant, wouldn’t we? We’d laugh at his pretensions. If he’d try to make trouble about it, we might throw him into the sea, and it would serve him right, would it not?

Suppose further that we ourselves and our forefathers had cultivated the island and stocked it with everything needed for life and comfort, and that some one should arrive and claim it all as his. What would we say? We’d ignore him, wouldn’t we? We might tell him that he could share with us and join us in our work. But suppose that he insists on his ownership and that he produces a slip of paper and says that it proves that everything belongs to him? We’d tell him he’s crazy and we’d go about our

business. But if he should have a government back of him, he would appeal to it for the protection of "his rights," and the government would send police and soldiers who would evict us and put the "lawful owner in possession."

That is the function of government; that is what government exists for and what it is doing all the time.

Now, do you still think that without this thing called government we should rob and murder each other?

Is it not rather true that *with* government we rob and murder? Because government does not secure us in our rightful possessions, but on the contrary takes them away for the benefit of those who have no right to them, as we have seen in previous chapters.

If you should wake up to-morrow morning and learn that there is no government any more, would your first thought be to rush out into the street and kill someone? No, you know that is nonsense. We speak of sane, normal men. The insane man who wants to kill does not first ask whether there is or isn't any government. Such men belong to the care of physicians and alienists; they should be placed in hospitals to be treated for their malady.

The chances are that if you or Johnson should awaken to find that there is no government, you would get busy arranging your life under the new conditions.

It is very likely, of course, that if you should then see people gorge themselves while you go hungry, you would demand a chance to eat, and you would be perfectly right in that. And so would every one else, which means that people would not stand for any one hogging all the good things of life: they would want to share in them. It means further that the poor would refuse to stay poor while others wallow in luxury. It means that the worker will decline to give up his product to the boss who claims to "own" the factory and everything that is made there. It means that the farmer will not permit thousands of acres to lie idle while he has not enough soil to support himself and family. It means that no one will be permitted to monopolize the land or the machinery of production. It means that private ownership of the *sources of life* will not be tolerated any more. It will be considered the greatest crime for some to own more than they can use in a dozen lifetimes, while their neighbors have not enough bread for their children. It means that all men will share in the social wealth, and that all will help to produce that wealth.

It means, in short, that for the first time in history right justice, and equality would triumph instead of law.

You see therefore that doing away with government also signifies the abolition of monopoly and of personal ownership of the means of production and distribution.

It follows that when government is abolished, wage slavery and capitalism must also go with it, because they cannot exist without the support and protection of government. Just as the man who would claim a monopoly of the island, of which I spoke before, could not put through his crazy claim without the help of government.

Such a condition of things where there would be liberty instead of government would be Anarchy. And where equality of use would take the place of private ownership, would be Communism.

It would be Communist Anarchism.

"Oh, Communism," your friend exclaims, "but you said you were not a Bolshevik!"

No, I am not a Bolshevik, because the Bolsheviks want a powerful government or State, while Anarchism means doing away with the State or government altogether.

"But are not the Bolsheviks Communists?" you demand

Yes, the Bolsheviks are Communists, but they want their dictatorship, their government, to *compel* people to live in Communism. Anarchist Communism, on the contrary, means voluntary Communism, Communism from free choice

“I see the difference. It would be fine, of course;” your friend admits. “But do you really think it possible?”

Chapter 21: Is Anarchy Possible?

“It might be possible,” you say, “if we could do without government. But can we?”

Perhaps we can best answer your question by examining your own life.

What rôle does the government play in your existence? Does it help you live? Does it feed, clothe, and shelter you? Do you need it to help you work or play? If you are ill, do you call the physician or the policeman? Can the government give you greater ability than nature endowed you with? Can it save you from sickness, old age, or death?

Consider your daily life and you will find that in reality the government is no factor in it at all except when it begins to interfere in your affairs, when it compels you to do certain things or prohibits you from doing others. It forces you, for instance, to pay taxes and support it, whether you want to or not. It makes you don a uniform and join the army. It invades your personal life, orders you about, coerces you, prescribes your behavior, and generally treats you as it pleases. It tells you even what you must believe and punishes you for thinking and acting otherwise. It directs you what to eat and drink, and imprisons or shoots you for disobeying. It commands you and dominates every step of your life. It treats you as a bad boy or as an *irresponsible* child who needs the strong hand of a guardian, but if you disobey it holds you *responsible*, nevertheless.

We shall consider later the details of life under Anarchy and see what conditions and institutions will exist in that form of society, how they will function, and what effect they are likely to have upon man.

For the present we want to make sure first that such a condition is possible, that Anarchy is practicable.

What is the existence of the average man to-day? Almost all your time is given to earning your livelihood. You are so busy making a living that you hardly have time left to live, to enjoy life. Neither the time nor the money. You are lucky if you have some source of support, some job. Now and then comes slack-time: there is unemployment and thousands are thrown out of work, every year, in every country.

That time means no income, no wages. It results in worry and privation, in disease, desperation, and suicide. It spells poverty and crime. To alleviate that poverty we build homes of charity, poorhouses, free hospitals, all of which you support with your taxes. To prevent crime and to punish the criminals it is again you who have to support police, detectives, State forces, judges, lawyers, prisons, keepers. Can you imagine anything more senseless and impractical? The legislatures pass laws, the judges interpret them, the various officials execute them, the police track and arrest the criminal, and finally the prison warden gets him into custody. Numerous persons and institutions are busy keeping the jobless man from stealing and punish him if he tries to. Then he is provided with the means of existence, the lack of which had made him break the law in the first place. After a shorter or longer term he is turned loose. If he fails to get work he begins the same round of theft, arrest, trial, and imprisonment all over again.

This is a rough but typical illustration of the stupid character of our system; stupid and inefficient. Law and government support that system.

Is it not peculiar that most people imagine we could not do without government, when in fact our real life has no connection with it whatever, no need of it, and is only interfered with where law and government seep in?

“But security and public order,” you object, “could we have that without law and government? Who will protect us against the criminal?”

The truth is that what is called "law and order" is really the worst disorder, as we have seen in previous chapters. What little order and peace we do have is due to the good common sense and joint efforts of the people, mostly in spite of the government. Do you need government to tell you not to step in front of a moving automobile? Do you need it to order you not to jump off the Brooklyn Bridge or from the Eiffel Tower?

Man is a social being; he cannot exist alone; he lives in communities or societies. Mutual need and common interests result in certain arrangements to afford us security and comfort. Such co-working is free, voluntary; it needs no compulsion by any government. You join a sporting club or a singing society because your inclinations lie that way, and you coöperate with the other members without any one coercing you. The man of science, the writer, the artist, and the inventor seek their own kind for inspiration and mutual work. Their impulses and needs are their best urge: the interference of any government or authority can only hinder their efforts.

All through life you will find that the needs and inclinations of people make for association, for mutual protection and help. That is the difference between managing things and governing men; between doing something from free choice and being compelled. It is the difference between liberty and constraint, between Anarchism and government, because Anarchism means voluntary coöperation instead of forced participation. It means harmony and order in place of interference and disorder.

"But who will protect us against crime and criminals?" you demand.

Rather ask yourself whether government really protects us against them. Does not government itself create and uphold conditions which make for crime? Does not the invasion and violence upon which all governments rest cultivate the spirit of intolerance and persecution, of hatred and more violence? Does not crime increase with the growth of poverty and injustice fostered by government? Is not government itself the greatest injustice and crime?

Crime is the result of economic conditions, of social inequality, of wrongs and evils of which government and monopoly are the parents. Government and law can only punish the criminal. They neither cure nor prevent crime. The only real cure for crime is to abolish its causes, and this the government can never do because it is there to preserve those very causes. Crime can be eliminated only by doing away with the conditions that create it. Government cannot do it.

Anarchism means to do away with those conditions. Crimes resulting from government, from its oppression and injustice, from inequality and poverty, will disappear under Anarchy. These constitute by far the greatest percentage of crime.

Certain other crimes will persist for some time, such as those resulting from jealousy, passion, and from the spirit of coercion and violence which dominates the world to-day. But these, the offspring of authority and possession, will also gradually disappear under wholesome conditions with the passing away of the atmosphere that cultivated them.

Anarchy will therefore neither breed crime nor offer any soil for its thriving. Occasional anti-social acts will be looked upon as survivals of former diseased conditions and attitudes, and will be treated as an unhealthy state of mind rather than as crime.

Anarchy would begin by feeding the "criminal" and securing him work instead of first watching him, arresting, trying, and imprisoning him, and finally ending by feeding him and the many others who have to watch and feed him. Surely even this example shows how much more sensible and simpler life would be under Anarchism than now.

The truth is, present life is impractical, complex and confused, and not satisfactory from any point of view. That is why there is so much misery and discontent. The worker is not satisfied; nor is the master happy in his constant anxiety over "bad times" involving loss of property and power. The specter of fear for co-morrow dogs the steps of poor and rich alike.

Certainly the worker has nothing to lose by a change from government and capitalism to a condition of no government, of Anarchy.

The middle classes are almost as uncertain of their existence as the workers. They are dependent upon the good will of the manufacturer and wholesaler, of the large combines of industry and capital, and they are always in danger of bankruptcy and ruin.

Even the big capitalist has little to lose by the changing of the present-day system to one of Anarchy, for under the latter every one would be assured of living and comfort; the fear of competition would be eliminated with the abolition of private ownership. Every one would have full and unhindered opportunity to live and enjoy his life to the utmost of his capacity.

Add to this the consciousness of peace and harmony; the feeling that comes with freedom from financial or material worries; the realization that you are in a friendly world with no envy or business rivalry to disturb your mind; in a world of brothers, in an atmosphere of liberty and general welfare.

It is almost impossible to conceive of the wonderful opportunities which would open up to man in a society of Communist Anarchism. The scientist could fully devote himself to his beloved pursuits, without being harassed about his daily bread. The inventor would find every facility at his disposal to benefit humanity by his discoveries and inventions. The writer, the poet, the artist—all would rise on the wings of liberty and social harmony to greater heights of attainment.

Only then would justice and right come into their own. Do not underestimate the rôle of these sentiments in the life of man or nation. We do not live by bread alone. True, existence is not possible without opportunity to satisfy our physical needs. But the gratification of these by no means constitutes all of life. Our present system of civilization has, by disinheriting millions, made the belly the center of the universe, so to speak. But in a sensible society, with plenty for all, the matter of mere existence, the security of a livelihood would be considered self-evident and free as the air is for all. The feelings of human sympathy, of justice and right would have a chance to develop, to be satisfied, to broaden and grow. Even to-day the sense of justice and fair play is still alive in the heart of man, in spite of centuries of repression and perversion. It has not been exterminated, it cannot be exterminated because it is inborn, innate in man, an instinct as strong as that of self-preservation, and just as vital to our happiness. For not all the misery we have in the world today comes from the lack of material welfare. Man can better stand starvation than the consciousness of injustice. The consciousness that you are treated unjustly will rouse you to protest and rebellion just as quickly as hunger, perhaps even quicker. Hunger may be the immediate cause of every rebellion or uprising, but beneath it is the slumbering antagonism and hatred of the masses against those at whose hands they are suffering injustice and wrong. The truth is that right and justice play a far more important rôle in our lives than most people are aware of. Those who would deny this know as little of human nature as of history. In every-day life you constantly see people grow indignant at what they consider to be an injustice. "That isn't right," is the instinctive protest of man when he feels wrong done. Of course, every one's conception of wrong and right depends on his traditions, environment and bringing up. But whatever his conception, his natural impulse is to resent what he thinks wrong and unjust.

Historically the same holds true. More rebellions and wars have been fought for ideas of right and wrong than because of material reasons. Marxists may object that our views of right and wrong are themselves formed by economic conditions, but that in no way alters the fact that the sense of justice and right has at all times inspired people to heroism and self-sacrifice in behalf of ideals.

The Christs and the Buddhas of all ages were not prompted by material considerations but by their devotion to justice and right. The pioneers in every human endeavor have suffered calumny, persecution, even death, not for motives of personal aggrandizement but because of their faith in the justice of their cause. The John Husses, the Luthers, Brunos, Savonarolas, Gallileos and numerous other religious and social idealists fought and died championing the cause of right as they saw it. Similarly in paths of science, philosophy, art, poetry, and education men from the time of Socrates to modern days have devoted their lives to the service of truth and justice. In the field of political and social advancement, beginning with Moses and Spartacus, the noblest of humanity have consecrated themselves to ideals of

liberty and equality. Nor is this compelling power of idealism limited only to exceptional individuals. The masses have always been inspired by it. The American War of Independence, for instance, began with popular resentment in the Colonies against the injustice of taxation without representation. The Crusades continued for two hundred years in an effort to secure the Holy Land for the Christians. This religious ideal inspired six millions of men, even armies of children, to face untold hardships, pestilence, and death in the name of right and justice. Even the late World War, capitalistic as it was in cause and result, was fought by millions of men in the fond belief that it was being waged for a just cause, for democracy and the termination of all wars.

So all through history, past and modern, the sense of right and justice has inspired man, individually and collectively, to deeds of self-sacrifice and devotion, and raised him far above the mean drabness of his every-day existence. It is tragic, of course, that this idealism expressed itself in acts of persecution, violence, and slaughter. It was the viciousness and self-seeking of king, priest, and master, ignorance and fanaticism which determined those forms. But the spirit that filled them was that of right and justice. All past experience proves that this spirit is ever alive and that it is a powerful and dominant factor in the whole scale of human life.

The conditions of our present-day existence weaken and vitiate this noblest trait of man, pervert its manifestation, and turn it into channels of intolerance, persecution, hatred, and strife. But once man is freed from the corrupting influences of material interests, lifted out of ignorance and class antagonism, his innate spirit of right and justice would find new forms of expression, forms that would tend toward greater brotherhood and good will, toward individual peace and social harmony.

Only under Anarchy could this spirit come into its full development. Liberated from the degrading and brutalizing struggle for our daily bread, all sharing in labor and well-being, the best qualities of man's heart and mind would have opportunity for growth and beneficial application. Man would indeed become the noble work of nature that he has till now visioned himself only in his dreams.

It is for these reasons that Anarchy is the ideal not only of some particular element or class, but of all humanity, because it would benefit, in the largest sense, all of us. For Anarchism is the formulation of a universal and perennial desire of mankind.

Every man and woman, therefore, should be vitally interested in helping to bring Anarchy about. They would surely do so if they but understood the beauty and justice of such a new life. Every human being who is not devoid of feeling and common sense is inclined to Anarchism. Every one who suffers from wrong and injustice, from the evil, corruption, and filth of our present-day life, is instinctively sympathetic to Anarchy. Every one whose heart is not dead to kindness, compassion, and fellow-sympathy must be interested in furthering it. Every one who has to endure poverty and misery, tyranny and oppression should welcome the coming of Anarchy. Every liberty and justice-loving man and woman should help realize it.

And foremost and most vitally of all the subjected and submerged of the world must be interested in it. Those who build palaces and live in travels; who set the cable of life but are not permitted to partake of the repast; who create the wealth of the world and are disinherited; who fill life with joy and sunshine, and themselves remain scorned in the depths of darkness; the Samson of life shorn of his strength by the hand of fear and ignorance; the helpless Giant of Labor, the *proletariat* of brain and brawn, the industrial and agrarian masses—these should most gladly embrace Anarchy.

It is to them that Anarchism makes the strongest appeal; it is they who, first and foremost, must work for the new day that is to give them back their inheritance and bring liberty and well-being, joy and sunshine to the whole of mankind.

“A splendid thing,” you remark; “but will it work? And how shall we attain it?”

Chapter 22: Will Communist Anarchism Work?

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, no life can be free and secure, harmonious and satisfactory unless it is built on principles of justice and fair play. The first requirement of justice is equal liberty and opportunity.

Under government and exploitation there can be neither equal liberty nor equal opportunity-hence all the evils and troubles of present-day society.

Communist Anarchism is based on the understanding of this incontrovertible truth. It is founded on the principle of non-invasiveness and non-coercion; in other words, on liberty and opportunity.

Life on such a basis fully satisfies the demands of justice. You are to be entirely free, and everybody else is to enjoy equal liberty, which means that no one has a right to compel or force another, for coercion of any kind is interference with your liberty.

Similarly equal opportunity is the heritage of all. Monopoly and the private ownership of the means of existence are therefore eliminated as an abridgement of the equal opportunity of all.

If we keep in mind this simple principle of equal liberty and opportunity, we shall be able to solve the questions involved in building a society of Communist Anarchism.

Politically, then, man will recognize no authority which can force or coerce him. Government will be abolished.

Economically he will permit no exclusive possession of the sources of life in order to preserve his opportunity of free access.

Monopoly of land, private ownership of the machinery of production, distribution, and communication can therefore not be tolerated under Anarchy. Opportunity to use what every one needs in order to live must be free to all.

In a nutshell, then, the meaning of Communist Anarchism is this: the abolition of government, of coercive authority and all its agencies, and joint ownership-which means free and equal participation in the general work and welfare.

“You said that Anarchy will secure economic equality,” remarks your friend. “Does that mean equal pay for all?”

It does. Or, what amounts to the same, equal participation in the public welfare. Because, as we already know, labor is social. No man can create anything all by himself, by his own efforts. Now, then, if labor is social, it stands to reason that the results of it, the wealth produced, must also be social, belong to the collectivity. No person can therefore justly lay claim to the exclusive ownership of the social wealth. It is to be enjoyed by all alike.

“But why not give each according to the value of his work?” you ask.

Because there is no way by which value can be measured. That is the difference between value and price. Value is what a thing is worth, while price is what it can be sold or bought for in the market. What a thing is worth no one really can tell. Political economists generally claim that the value of a commodity is the amount of labor required to produce it, of “socially necessary labor,” as Marx says. But evidently it is not a just standard of measurement. Suppose the carpenter worked three hours to make a kitchen chair, while the surgeon took only half an hour to perform an operation that saved your

life. If the amount of labor used determines value, then the chair is worth more than your life. Obvious nonsense, of course. Even if you should count in the years of study and practice the surgeon needed to make him capable of performing the operation, how are you going to decide what "an hour of operating" is worth? The carpenter and mason also had to be trained before they could do their work properly, but you don't figure in those years of apprenticeship when you contract for some work with -.hem. Besides, there is also to be considered the particular ability and aptitude that every worker, writer, artist or physician must exercise in his labors. That is a purely individual, personal factor. How are you going to estimate its value?

That is why value cannot be determined. The same thing may be worth a lot to one person while it is worth nothing or very little to another. It may be worth much or little even to the same person, at different times. A diamond, a painting, or a book may be worth a great deal to one man and very little to another. A loaf of bread will be worth a great deal to you when you are hungry, and much less when you are not. Therefore the real value of a thing cannot be ascertained; it is an unknown quantity.

But the price is easily found out. If there are five loaves of bread to be had and ten persons want to get a loaf each, the price of bread will rise. If there are ten loaves and only five buyers, then it will fall. Price depends on supply and demand.

The exchange of commodities by means of prices leads to profit making, to taking advantage and exploitation; in short, to some form of capitalism. If you do away with profits, you cannot have any price system, nor any system of wages or payment. That means that exchange must be according to value. But as value is uncertain or not ascertainable, exchange must consequently be free, without "equal" value, since such does not exist. In other words, labor and its products must be exchanged without price, without profit, freely, according to necessity. This logically leads to ownership in common and to joint use. Which is a sensible, just, and equitable system, and is known as Communism.

"But is it just that all should share alike?" you demand. "The man of brains and the dullard, the efficient and the inefficient, all the same? Should there be no distinction, no special recognition for those of ability?"

Let me in turn ask you, my friend, shall we punish the man whom nature has not endowed as generously as his stronger or more talented neighbor? Shall we add injustice to the handicap nature has put upon him? All we can reasonably expect from any man is that he do his best-can any one do more? And if John's best is not as good as his brother Jim's, it is his misfortune, but in no case a fault to be punished.

There is nothing more dangerous than discrimination. The moment you begin discriminating against the less capable, you establish conditions that breed dissatisfaction and resentment: you invite envy, discord, and strife. You would think it brutal to withhold from the less capable the air or water they need. Should not the same principle apply to the other wants of man? After all, the matter of food, clothing, and shelter is the smallest item in the world's economy.

The surest way to get one to do his best is not by discriminating against him, but by treating him on an equal footing with others. That is the most effective encouragement and stimulus. It is just and human.

"But what will you do with the lazy man, the man who does not want to work?" inquires your friend.

That is an interesting question, and you will probably be very much surprised when I say that there is really no such thing as laziness. What we call a lazy man is generally a square man in a round hole. That is, the right man in the wrong place. And you will always find that when a fellow is in the wrong place, he will be inefficient or shiftless. For so-called laziness and a good deal of inefficiency are merely unfitness, misplacement. If you are compelled to do the thing you are unfitted for by your inclinations or temperament, you will be inefficient at it; if you are forced to do work you are not interested in, you will be lazy at it.

Every one who has managed affairs in which large numbers of men were employed can substantiate this. Life in prison is a particularly convincing proof of the truth of it and, after all, present-day existence for most people is but that of a larger jail. Every prison warden will tell you that inmates put to tasks for which they have no ability or interest are always lazy and subject to continuous punishment. But as soon as these "refractory convicts" are assigned to work that appeals to their leanings, they become "model men," as the jailers term them.

Russia has also signally demonstrated the verity of it. It has shown how little we know of human potentialities and of the effect of environment upon them-how we mistake wrong conditions for bad conduct. Russian refugees, leading a miserable and insignificant life in foreign lands, on returning home and finding in the Revolution a proper field for their activities, have accomplished most wonderful work in their right sphere, have developed into brilliant organizers, builders of railroads and creators of industry. Among the Russian names best known abroad to-day are those of men considered shiftless and inefficient under conditions where their ability and energies could not find proper application.

That is human nature: efficiency in a certain direction means inclination and capability for it; industry and application signify interest. That is why there is so much inefficiency and laziness in the world to-day. For who indeed is nowadays in his right place? Who works at what he really likes and is interested in?

Under present conditions there is little choice given the average man to devote himself to the tasks that appeal to his leanings and preferences. The accident of your birth and social station generally pre-determines your trade or profession. The son of the financier does not, as a rule, become a woodchopper, though he may be more fit to handle logs than bank accounts. The middle classes send their children to colleges which turn them into doctors, lawyers, or engineers. But if your parents were workers who could not afford to let you study, the chances are that you will take any job which is offered you, or enter some trade that happens to afford you an apprenticeship. Your particular situation will decide your work or profession, not your natural preferences, inclinations, or abilities. Is it any wonder, then, that most people, the overwhelming majority, in fact, are misplaced? Ask the first hundred men you meet whether they would have selected the work they are doing, or whether they would continue in it, if they were free to choose, and ninety-nine of them will admit that they would prefer some other occupation. Necessity and material advantages, or the hope of them, keep most people in the wrong place.

It stands to reason that a person can give the best of himself only when his interest is in his work, when he feels a natural attraction to it, when he likes it. Then he will be industrious and efficient. The things the craftsman produced in the days before modern capitalism were objects of joy and beauty, because the artisan loved his work. Can you expect the modern drudge in the ugly huge factory to make beautiful things? He is part of the machine, a cog in the soulless industry, his labor mechanical, forced. Add to this his feeling that he is not working for himself but for the benefit of some one else, and that he hates his job or at best has no interest in it except that it secures his weekly wage. The result is shirking, inefficiency, laziness.

The need of activity is one of the most fundamental urges of man. Watch the child and see how strong is his instinct for action, for movement, for doing something. Strong and continuous. It is the same with the healthy man. His energy and vitality demand expression. Permit him to do the work of his choice, the thing he loves, and his application will know neither weariness nor shirking. You can observe this in the factory worker when he is lucky enough to own a garden or a patch of ground to raise some flowers or vegetables on. Tired from his toil as he is, he enjoys the hardest labor for his own benefit, done from free choice.

Under Anarchism each will have the opportunity of following whatever occupation will appeal to his natural inclinations and aptitude. Work will become a pleasure instead of the deadening drudgery it is

to-day. Laziness will be unknown, and the things created by interest and love will be objects of beauty and joy.

“But can labor ever become a pleasure?” you demand.

Labor is toil to-day, unpleasant, exhausting, and wearisome. But usually it is not the work itself that is so hard: it is the conditions under which you are compelled to labor that make it so. Particularly the long hours, unsanitary workshops, bad treatment, insufficient pay, and so on. Yet the most unpleasant work could be made lighter by improving the environment. Take gutter cleaning, for instance. It is dirty work and poorly paid for. But suppose, for example, that you should get 20 dollars a day instead of 5 dollars for such work. You will immediately find your job much lighter and pleasanter. The number of applicants for the work would increase at once. Which means that men are not lazy, not afraid of hard and unpleasant labor if it is properly rewarded. But such work is considered menial and is looked down upon. Why is it considered menial? Is it not most useful and absolutely necessary? Would not epidemics sweep our city but for the street and gutter cleaners? Surely, the men who keep our town clean and sanitary are real benefactors, more vital to our health and welfare than the family physician. From the viewpoint of social usefulness the street cleaner is the professional colleague of the doctor: the latter treats us when we are ill, but the former helps us keep well. Yet the physician is looked up to and respected, while the street cleaner is slighted. Why? Is it because the street cleaner's work is dirty? But the surgeon often has much “dirtier” jobs to perform. Then why is the street cleaner scorned? Because he *earns little*.

In our perverse civilization things are valued according to money standards. Persons doing the most useful work are lowest in the social scale when their employment is ill paid. Should something happen, however, that would cause the street cleaner to get 100 dollars a day, while the physician earns so, the “dirty” street cleaner would immediately rise in estimation and social station, and from the “filthy laborer” he would become the much-sought man of good income.

You see that it is pay, remuneration, *the wage scale*, not worth or merit, that to-day-under our system of profit determines the value of work as well as the “worth” of a man.

A sensible society — under Anarchist conditions — would have entirely different standards of judging such matters. People will then be appreciated according to their *willingness to be socially useful*.

Can you perceive what great changes such a new attitude would produce? Every one yearns for the respect and admiration of his fellow men; it is a tonic we cannot live without. Even in prison I have seen how the clever pickpocket or safe blower longs for the appreciation of his friends and how hard he tries to earn their good estimate of him. The opinions of our circle rule our behavior. The social atmosphere to a profound degree determines our values and our attitude. Your personal experience will tell you how true this is, and therefore you will not be surprised when I say that in an Anarchist society it will be the most useful and difficult toil that men will seek rather than the lighter job. If you consider this, you will have no more fear of laziness or shirking.

But the hardest and most onerous task could be made easier and cleaner than is the case today. The capitalist employer does not care to spend money, if he can help it, to make the toil of his employees pleasanter and brighter. He will introduce improvements only when he hopes to gain larger profits thereby, but he will not go to extra expense out of purely humanitarian reasons. Though here I must remind you that the more intelligent employers are beginning to see that it pays to improve their factories, make them more sanitary and hygienic, and generally better the conditions of labor. They realize it is a good investment: it results in the increased contentment and consequent greater efficiency of their workers. The principle is sound. To-day, of course, it is being exploited for the sole purpose of bigger profits. But under Anarchism it would be applied not for the sake of personal gain, but in the interest of the workers' health, for the lightening of labor. Our progress in mechanics is so great and continually advancing that most of the hard toil could be eliminated by the use of modern machinery and labor saving devices. In many industries, as in coal mining, for instance, new safety and sanitary

appliances are not introduced because of the masters' indifference to the welfare of their employees and on account of the expenditure involved. But in a non-profit system technical science would work exclusively with the aim of making labor safer, healthier, lighter, and more pleasant.

"But however light you'll make work, eight hours a day of it is no pleasure," objects your friend.

You are perfectly right. But did you ever stop to consider why we have to work eight hours a day? Do you know that not so long ago people used to slave twelve and fourteen hours, and that it is still the case in backward countries like China and India?

It can be statistically proven that three hours' work a day, at most, is sufficient to feed, shelter, and clothe the world and supply it not only with necessities but also with all modern comforts of life. The point is that not one man in five is to-day doing any productive work. The entire world is supported by a small minority of toilers.

First of all, consider the amount of work done in present-day society that would become unnecessary under Anarchist conditions. Take the armies and navies of the world, and think how many millions of men would be released for useful and productive effort once war is abolished, as would of course be the case under Anarchy.

In every country to-day labor supports the millions who contribute nothing to the welfare of the country, who create nothing, and perform no useful work whatever. Those millions are only consumers, without being producers. In the United States, for instance, out of a population of 120 millions there are less than 30 million workers, farmers included.³¹ A similar situation is the rule in every land.

Is it any wonder that labor has to toil long hours, since there are only 30 workers to every 120 persons? The large business classes with their clerks, assistants, agents, and commercial travelers; the courts with their judges, record keepers, bailiffs, etc.; the legion of attorneys with their staffs; the militia and police forces; the churches and monasteries; the charity institutions and poorhouses; the prisons with their wardens, officers, keepers, and the non-productive convict population; the army of advertisers and their helpers, whose business it is to persuade you to buy what you don't want or need, not to speak of the numerous elements that live luxuriously in entire idleness. All these mount into the millions in every country.

Now, if all those millions would apply themselves to useful labor, would the worker have to drudge eight hours a day? If 30 men have to put in eight hours to perform a certain task, how much less time would it 'take 120 men to accomplish the same thing? I don't want to burden you with statistics, but there are enough data to prove that less than 3 hours of daily physical effort would be sufficient to do the world's work.

Can you doubt that even the hardest toil would become a pleasure instead of the cursed slavery it is at present, if only three hours a day were required, and that under the most sanitary and hygienic conditions, in an atmosphere of brotherhood and respect for labor?

But it is not difficult to foresee the day when even those short hours would be still further reduced. For we are constantly improving our technical methods, and new labor saving machinery is being invented all the time. Mechanical progress means less work and greater comforts, as you can see by comparing life in the United States with that in China or India. In the latter countries they toil long hours to secure the barest necessities of existence, while in America even the average laborer enjoys a much higher standard of living with fewer hours of work. The advance of science and invention signifies more leisure for the pursuits we love.

I have sketched in large, broad outline the possibilities of life under a sensible system where profit is abolished. It is not necessary to go into the minute details of such a social condition: sufficient has been said to show that Communist Anarchism means the greatest material welfare with a life of liberty for each and all.

³¹N. Y. *World Almanac*, 1927.

We can visualize the time when labor will have become a pleasant exercise, a joyous application of physical effort to the needs of the world. Man will then look back at our present day and wonder that work could ever have been slavery, and question the sanity of a generation that suffered less than one fifth of its population to earn the bread for the rest by the sweat of their brow while those others idled and wasted their time, their health, and the people's wealth. They will wonder that the freest satisfaction of man's needs could have ever been considered as anything but self-evident, or that people naturally seeking the same objects insisted on making life hard and miserable by mutual strife. They will refuse to believe that the whole existence of man was a continuous struggle for food in a world rich with luxuries, a struggle that left the great majority neither time nor strength for the higher quest of the heart and mind.

"But will not life under Anarchy, in economic and social equality mean general leveling?" you ask.

No, my friend, quite the contrary. Because equality does not mean an equal amount but equal *opportunity*. It does not mean, for instance, that if Smith needs five meals a day, Johnson also must have as many. If Johnson wants only three meals while Smith requires five, the quantity each consumes may be unequal, but both men are perfectly equal in the opportunity each has to consume as much as he needs, as much as his particular nature demands.

Do not make the mistake of identifying equality in liberty with the forced equality of the convict camp. True Anarchist equality implies freedom, not quantity. It does not mean that every one must eat, drink, or wear the same things, do the same work, or live in the same manner. Far from it; the very reverse, in fact.

Individual needs and tastes differ, as appetites differ. It is *equal opportunity to satisfy* them that constitutes true equality.

Far from leveling, such equality opens the door for the greatest possible variety of activity and development. For human character is diverse, and only the repression of this diversity results in leveling, in uniformity and sameness. Free opportunity of expressing and acting out your individuality means development of natural dissimilarities and variations.

It is said that no two blades of grass are alike. Much less so are human beings. In the whole wide world no two persons are exactly similar even in physical appearance; still more dissimilar are they in their physiological, mental, and psychical make-up. Yet in spite of this diversity and of a thousand and one differentiations of character we compel people to be alike to-day. Our life and habits, our behavior and manners, even our thoughts and feelings are pressed into a uniform mold and fashioned into sameness. The spirit of authority, law, written and unwritten, tradition and custom force us into a common groove and make of man a will-less automaton without independence or individuality. This moral and intellectual bondage is more compelling than any physical coercion, more devastating to our manhood and development. All of us are its victims, and only the exceptionally strong succeed in breaking its chains, and that only partly.

The authority of the past and of the present dictates not only our behavior but dominates our very minds and souls, and is continuously at work to stifle every symptom of nonconformity, of independent attitude and unorthodox opinion. The whole weight of social condemnation comes down upon the head of the man or woman who dares defy conventional codes. Ruthless vengeance is wreaked upon the protestant who refuses to follow the beaten track, or upon the heretic who disbelieves in the accepted formulas. In science and art, in literature, poetry, and painting this spirit compels adaptation and adjustment, resulting in imitation of the established and approved, in uniformity and sameness, in stereotyped expression. But more terribly still is punished nonconformity in actual life, in our everyday relationships and behavior. The painter and writer may occasionally be forgiven for defiance of custom and precedent because, after all, their rebellion is limited to paper or canvas: it affects only a comparatively small circle. They may be disregarded or labeled cranks who can do little harm, but not so with the man of action who carries his challenge of accepted standards into social life. Not harmless

he. He is dangerous by the power of example, by his very presence. His infraction of social canons can be neither ignored nor forgiven. He will be denounced as an enemy of society.

It is for this reason that revolutionary feeling or thought expressed in exotic poetry or masked in high-brow philosophic dissertations may be condoned, may pass the official and unofficial censor, because it is neither accessible to nor understood by the public at large. But give voice to the same dissenting attitude in a popular manner, and immediately you will face the frothing denunciation of all the forces that stand for the preservation of the establishes.

More vicious and deadening is compulsory compliance than the most virulent poison. Throughout the ages it has been the greatest impediment to man's advance, hedging him in with a thousand prohibitions and taboos, weighting his mind and heart down with outlived canons and codes, thwarting his will with imperatives of thought and feeling, with "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" of behavior and action. Life, the art of living, has become a dull formula, flat and inert.

Yet so strong is the innate diversity of man's nature that centuries of this stultification have not succeeded in entirely eradicating his originality and uniqueness. True, the great majority have fallen into ruts so deepened by countless feet that they cannot get back to the broad spaces. But some do break away from the beaten track and find the open road where new vistas of beauty and inspiration beckon to heart and spirit. These the world condemns, but little by little it follows their example and lead, and finally it comes up abreast of them. In the meantime those pathfinders have gone much further or tied, and then we build monuments to them and glorify the men we have vilified and crucified as we go on crucifying their brothers in spirit, the pioneers of our own day.

Beneath this spirit of intolerance and persecution is the habit of authority: coercion to conform to dominant standards, compulsion-moral and legal-to be and act as others, according to precedent and rule.

But the general view that conformity is a natural trait is entirely false. On the contrary, given the least chance, unimpeded by the mental habits instilled from the very cradle, man evidences uniqueness and originality. Observe children, for instance, and you will see most varied differentiation in manner and attitude, in mental and psychic expression. You will discover an instinctive tendency to individuality and independence, to non-conformity, manifested in open and secret defiance of the will imposed from the outside, in rebellion against the authority of parent and teacher. The whole training and "education" of the child is a continuous process of stifling and crushing this tendency, the eradication of his distinctive characteristics, of his unlikeness to others, of his personality and originality. Yet even in spite of yearlong repression, suppression, and molding, some originality persists in the child when it reaches maturity, which shows how deep are the springs of individuality. Take any two persons, for example, who have witnessed some tragedy, a big fire, let us say, at the same time and place. Each will tell the story in a different manner, each will be original in his way of relating it and in the impression he will produce, because of his naturally different psychology. But talk to the same two persons on some fundamental social matter, about life and government, for instance, and immediately you hear expressed an exactly similar attitude, the accepted view, the dominant mentality.

Why? Because where man is left free to think and feel for himself, unhindered by precept and rule, and not restrained by the fear of being "different" and unorthodox, with the unpleasant consequences it involves, he will be independent and free. But the moment the conversation touches matters within the sphere of our social imperatives, one is in the clutches of the taboos and becomes a copy and a parrot.

Life in freedom, in Anarchy, will do more than liberate man merely from his present political and economic bondage. That will be only the first step, the preliminary to a truly human existence. Far greater and more significant will be the *results* of such liberty, its effects upon man's mind, upon his personality. The abolition of the coercive external will, and with it of the fear of authority, will loosen the bonds of moral compulsion no less than of economic and physical. Man's spirit will breathe freely, and that mental emancipation will be the birth of a new culture, of a new humanity. Imperatives

and taboos will disappear, and man will begin to be himself, to develop and express his individual tendencies and uniqueness. Instead of "thou shalt not," the public conscience will say "thou mayest, taking full responsibility." That will be a training in human dignity and self-reliance, beginning at home and in school, which will produce a new race with a new attitude to life.

The man of the coming day will see and feel existence on an entirely different plane. Living to him will be an art and a joy. He will cease to consider it as a race where every one must try to become as good a runner as the fastest. He will regard leisure as more important than work, and work will fall into its proper, subordinate place as the means to leisure, to the enjoyment of life.

Life will mean the striving for finer cultural values, the penetration of nature's mysteries, the attainment of higher truth. Free to exercise the limitless possibilities of his mind, to pursue his love of knowledge, to apply his inventive genius, to create, and to soar on the wings of imagination, man will reach his full stature and become man indeed. He will grow and develop according to his nature. He will scorn uniformity, and human diversity will give him increased interest in, and a more satisfying sense of, the richness of being. Life to him will not consist in functioning but in living, and he will attain the greatest kind of freedom man is capable of, freedom in joy.

"That day lies far in the future," you say; "how shall we bring it about?"

Far in the future, maybe; yet perhaps not so far-one cannot tell. At any rate we should always hold our ultimate object in view if we are to remain on the right road. The change I have described will not come over night; nothing ever does. It will be a gradual development, as everything in nature and social life is. But a logical, necessary, and, I dare say, an inevitable development. Inevitable, because the whole trend of man's growth has been in that direction; even if in zigzags, often losing its way, yet always returning to the right path.

How, then, might it be brought about?

Chapter 23: Non-Communist Anarchists

Before we proceed let me make a short explanation. I owe it to those Anarchists who are not Communists.

Because you should know that not all Anarchists are Communists: not all of them believe that Communism-social ownership and sharing according to need-would be the best and justest economic arrangement.

I have first explained to you Communist Anarchism because it is, in my estimation, the most desirable and practical form of society. The Communist Anarchists hold that only under Communist conditions could Anarchy prosper, and equal liberty, justice, and well-being be assured to every one without discrimination.

But there are Anarchists who do not believe in Communism. They can be generally classed as Individualists and Mutualists.³²

All Anarchists agree on this fundamental position: that government means injustice and oppression, that it is invasive, enslaving, and the greatest hindrance to man's development and growth. They all believe that freedom can exist only in a society where there is no compulsion of any kind. All Anarchists are therefore at one on the basic principle of abolishing government.

They disagree mostly on the following points:

First: the manner in which Anarchy will come about. The Communist Anarchists say that only a social revolution can abolish government and establish Anarchy, while Individualist Anarchists and Mutualists do not believe in revolution. They think that present society will gradually develop out of government into a non-governmental condition.

Second: Individualist Anarchists and Mutualists believe in individual ownership, as against the Communist Anarchists who see in the institution of private property one of the main sources of injustice and inequality, of poverty and misery. The Individualists and Mutualists maintain that liberty means "the right of every one to the product of his toil"; which is true, of course. Liberty does mean that. But the question is not whether one has a right to his product, but whether there is such a thing as an individual product. I have pointed out in preceding chapters that there is no such thing in modern industry: all labor and the products of labor are social. The argument, therefore, about the right of the individual to his product has no practical merit.

I have also shown that exchange of products or commodities cannot be individual or private, unless the profit system is employed. Since the value of a commodity cannot be adequately determined, no barter is equitable. This fact leads, in my opinion, to social ownership and use; that is, to Communism, as the most practicable and just economic system.

But, as stated, Individualist Anarchists and Mutualists disagree with the Communist Anarchists on this point. They assert that the source of economic inequality is monopoly, and they argue that monopoly will disappear with the abolition of government, because it is special privilege given and protected by government-which makes monopoly possible. Free competition, they claim, would do away with monopoly and its evils.

³²The Mutualists, though not calling themselves Anarchists (probably because the name is so misunderstood), are nevertheless thoroughgoing Anarchists, since they disbelieve in government and political authority of any kind.

Individualist Anarchists, followers of Stirner and Tucker, as well as Tolstoyan Anarchists who believe in nonresistance, have no very clear plan of the economic life under Anarchy. The Mutualists, on the other hand, propose a definite new economic system. They believe with their teacher, the French philosopher Proudhon, that mutual banking and credit without interest would be the best economic form of a non-government society. According to their theory, free credit, affording every one opportunity to borrow money without interest, would tend to equalize incomes and reduce profits to a minimum, and would thus eliminate riches as well as poverty. Free credit and competition in the open market, they say, would result in economic equality, while the abolition of government would secure equal freedom. The social life of the Mutualist community, as well as of the Individualist society, would be based on the sanctity of voluntary agreement, of free contract.

I have given here but the briefest outline of the attitude of Individualist Anarchists and Mutualists. It is not the purpose of this work to treat in detail those Anarchist ideas which the author thinks erroneous and impractical. Being a Communist Anarchist I am interested in submitting to the reader the views that I consider best and soundest. I thought it fair, however, not to leave you in ignorance about the existence of other, non-Communist Anarchist theories. For a closer acquaintance with them I refer you to the appended list of books on Anarchism in general.

Chapter 24: Why Revolution?

Let us return to your question, "How will Anarchy come? Can we help bring it about?"

This is a most important point, because in every problem there are two vital things: first, to know clearly just what you want; second, how to attain it.

We already know what we want. We want social conditions wherein all will be free and where each shall have the fullest opportunity to satisfy his needs and aspirations, on the basis of equal liberty for all. In other words, we are striving for the free cooperative commonwealth of Communist Anarchism.

How will it come about?

We are not prophets, and no one can tell just how a thing will happen. But the world does not exist since yesterday; and man, as a reasonable being, must benefit by the experience of the past.

Now, what is that experience? If you glance over history you will see that the whole life of man has been a struggle for existence. In his primitive state man fought single-handed the wild beasts of the forest, and helplessly he faced hunger, cold, darkness, and storm. Because of his ignorance all the forces of nature were his enemies: they worked evil and destruction to him, and he, alone, was powerless to combat them. But little by little man learned to come together with others of his kind; together they sought safety and security. By joint effort they presently began to turn the energies of nature to their service. Mutual help and cooperation gradually multiplied man's strength and ability till he has succeeded in conquering nature, in applying her forces to his use, in chaining the lightning, bridging oceans, and mastering even the air.

Similarly the primitive man's ignorance and fear made life a continuous struggle of man against man, of family against family, of tribe against tribe, until men realized that by getting together, by joint effort and mutual aid, they could accomplish more than by strife and enmity. Modern science shows that even animals had learned that much in the struggle for existence. Certain kinds survived because they quit fighting each other and lived in herds, and in that way were better able to protect themselves against other beasts.³³ In proportion as men substituted joint effort and cooperation in place of mutual struggle, they advanced, grew out of barbarism, and became civilized. Families which had formerly fought each other to the death combined and formed one common group; groups joined and became tribes, and tribes federated into nations. The nations still stupidly keep on fighting each other, but gradually they are also learning the same lesson, and now they are beginning to look for a way to stop the international slaughter known as war.

Unfortunately in our social life we are yet in a condition of barbarism, destructive and fratricidal: group still combats group, class fights against class. But here also men are beginning to see that it is a senseless and ruinous warfare, that the world is big and rich enough to be enjoyed by all, like the sunshine, and that a united mankind would accomplish more than one divided against itself.

What is called progress is just the realization of this, a step in that direction.

The whole advance of man consists in the striving for greater safety and peace, for more security and welfare. Man's natural impulse is toward mutual help and joint effort, his most instinctive longing is for liberty and joy. These tendencies seek to express and assert themselves in spite of all obstacles and difficulties. The lesson of the entire history of man is that neither hostile natural forces nor human opposition can hold back his onward march. If I were asked to define civilization in a single phrase I

³³See *Mutual Aid*, by Peter Kropotkin.

should say that it is the triumph of man over the powers of darkness, natural and human. The inimical forces of nature we have conquered, but we still have to fight the dark powers of men.

History fails to show a single important social improvement made without meeting the opposition of the dominant powers — the church, government, and capital. Not a step forward but was achieved by breaking down the resistance of the masters. Every advance has cost a bitter struggle. It took many long fights to destroy slavery; it required revolts and uprisings to secure the most fundamental rights for the people; it necessitated rebellions and revolutions to abolish feudalism and serfdom. It needed civil warfare to do away with the absolute power of kings and establish democracies, to conquer more freedom and well-being for the masses. There is not a country on earth, not an epoch in history, where any great social evil was eliminated without a bitter struggle with the powers that be. In recent days it again took revolutions to get rid of Tsardom in Russia, of the Kaiser in Germany, the Sultan in Turkey, the monarchy in China, and so on, in various lands.

There is no record of any government or authority, of any group or class in power having given up its mastery voluntarily. In every instance it required the use of force, or at least the threat of it.

Is it reasonable to assume that authority and wealth will experience a sudden change of heart, and that they will behave differently in the future than they had in the past?

Your common sense will tell you that it is a vain and foolish hope. Government and capital will *fight* to retain power. They do it even to-day at the least menace to their privileges. They will fight to the death for their existence.

That is why it is no prophecy to foresee that some day it must come to a decisive struggle between the masters of life and the dispossessed classes.

As a matter of fact, that struggle is going on all the time.

There is a continuous warfare between capital and labor. That warfare generally proceeds within so-called legal form. But even these erupt now and then in violence, as during strikes and lockouts, because the armed fist of government is always at the service of the masters, and that fist gets into action the moment capital feels its profits threatened: then it drops the mask of "mutual interests" and "partnership" with labor and resorts to the final argument of every master, to coercion and force.

It is therefore certain that government and capital will not allow themselves to be quietly abolished if they can help it; nor will they miraculously "disappear" of themselves, as some people pretend to believe. It will require a revolution to get rid of them.

There are those who smile incredulously at the mention of revolution. "Impossible!" they say confidently. So did Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette of France think only a few weeks before they lost their throne together with their heads. So did the nobility at the court of Tsar Nicholas II believe on the very eve of the upheaval that swept them away. "It doesn't look like revolution," the superficial observer argues. But revolutions have a way of breaking out when it "doesn't look like it." The more far-seeing modern capitalists, however, do not seem willing to take any chances. They know that uprisings and revolutions are possible at any time. That is why the great corporations and big employers of labor, particularly in America, are beginning to introduce new methods calculated to serve as lightning rods against popular disaffection and revolt. They initiate bonuses for their employees, profit sharing, and similar methods designed to make the worker more satisfied and financially interested in the prosperity of his industry. These means may temporarily blind the proletarian to his true interests, but do not believe that the worker will forever remain content with his wage slavery even if his cage be slightly gilded from time to time. Improving material conditions is no insurance against revolution. On the contrary, the satisfaction of our wants creates new needs, gives birth to new desires and aspirations. That is human nature, and that's what makes improvement and progress possible. Labor's discontent is not to be choked down with an extra piece of bread, even if it be buttered. That is why there is more conscious and active revolt in the industrial centers of better-situated Europe than in backward Asia and Africa. The spirit of man forever yearns for greater comfort and freedom, and it is the masses

who are the truest bearers of this incentive to further advancement. The hope of modern plutocracy to forestall revolution by throwing a fatter bone to the toiler now and then is illusory and baseless. The new policies of capital may seem to appease labor for a while, but its onward march cannot be stopped by such makeshifts. The abolition of capitalism is inevitable, in spite of all schemes and resistance, and it will be accomplished only by revolution.

A revolution is similar to the struggle of man against nature. Single-handed he is powerless and cannot succeed; by the aid of his fellow-men he triumphs over all obstacles.

Can the individual worker accomplish anything against the big corporation? Can a small labor union compel the large employer to grant its demands? The capitalist class is organized in its fight against labor. It stands to reason that a revolution can be fought successfully only when the workers are united, when they are organized throughout the land; when the proletariat of all countries will make a joint effort, for capital is international and the masters always combine against labor in every big issue. That is why, for instance, the plutocracy of the whole world turned against the Russian Revolution. As long as the people of Russia meant only to abolish the Tsar, international capital did not interfere: it did not care what political form Russia would have, as long as the government would be bourgeois and capitalistic. But as soon as the Revolution attempted to do away with the system of capitalism, the governments and the bourgeoisie of every land combined to crush it. They saw in it a menace to the continuance of their own mastery.

Keep that well in mind, my friend. Because there are revolutions and revolutions. Some revolutions change only the governmental form by putting in a new set of rulers in place of the old. These are political revolutions, and as such they often meet with little resistance. But a revolution that aims to abolish the entire system of wage slavery must also do away with the power of one class to oppress another. That is, it is not any more a mere change of rulers, of government, not a political revolution, but one that seeks to alter the whole character of society. That would be a social revolution. As such it would have to fight not only government and capitalism, but it would also meet with the opposition of popular ignorance and prejudice, of those who believe in government and capitalism. .

How is it then to come about?

Chapter 25: The Idea is the Thing

Did you ever ask yourself how it happens that government and capitalism continue to exist in spite of all the evil and trouble they are causing in the world?

If you did, then your answer must have been that it is because the people support those institutions, and that they support them because they *believe* in them.

That is the crux of the whole matter: present-day society rests on the belief of the people that it is good and useful. It is founded on the idea of authority and private ownership. It is *ideas* that maintain conditions. Government and capitalism are the forms in which the popular ideas express themselves. Ideas are the foundation; the institutions are the house built upon it.

A new social structure must have a new foundation, new ideas at its base. However you may change the form of an institution, its character and meaning will remain the same as the foundation on which it is built. Look closely at life and you will perceive the truth of this. There are all kinds and forms of government in the world, but their real nature is the same everywhere, as their effects are the same: it always means authority and obedience.

Now, what makes governments exist? The armies and navies? Yes, but only apparently so. What supports the armies and navies? It is the belief of the people, of the masses, that government is necessary; it is the generally accepted idea of the *need* of government. That is its real and solid foundation. Take that idea or belief away, and no government could last another day.

The same applies to private ownership. The idea that it is right and necessary is the pillar that supports it and gives it security.

Not a single institution exists to-day but is founded on the popular belief that it is good and beneficial.

Let us take an illustration; the United States, for instance. Ask yourself why revolutionary propaganda has been of so little effect in that country in spite of fifty years of Socialist and Anarchist effort. Is the American worker not exploited more intensely than labor in other countries? Is political corruption as rampant in any other land? Is the capitalist class in America not the most arbitrary and despotic in the world? True, the worker in the United States is better situated materially than in Europe, but is he not at the same time treated with the utmost brutality and terrorism the moment he shows the least dissatisfaction? Yet the American worker remains loyal to the government and is the first to defend it against criticism. He is still the most devoted champion of the "grand and noble institutions of the greatest country on earth." Why? Because he believes that they are *his* institutions, that *he*, as sovereign and free citizen, is running them and that he could change them if he so wished. It is his *faith* in the existing order that constitutes its greatest security against revolution. His faith is stupid and unjustified, and some day it will break down and with it American capitalism and despotism. But as long as that faith persists, American plutocracy is safe against revolution.

As men's minds broaden and develop, as they advance to new ideas and lose faith in their former beliefs, institutions begin to change and are ultimately done away with. The people grow to understand that their former views were false, that they were not truth but prejudice and superstition.

In this way many ideas, once held to be true, have come to be regarded as wrong and evil. Thus the ideas of the divine right of kings, of slavery and serfdom. There was a time when the whole world believed those institutions to be right, just, and unchangeable. In the measure that those superstitions and false beliefs were fought by advanced thinkers, they became discredited and lost their hold upon the people, and finally the institutions that incorporated those ideas were abolished. Highbrows will tell

you that they had “outlived their usefulness” and that therefore they “died.” But how did they “outlive” their “usefulness”? To whom were they useful, and how did they “die”?

We know already that they were useful only to the master class, and that they were done away with by popular uprisings and revolutions.

Why did not old and effete institutions “disappear” and die off in a peaceful manner?

For two reasons: first, because some people think faster than others. So that it happens that a minority in a given place advance in their views quicker than the rest. The more that minority will become imbued with the new ideas, the more convinced of their truth, and the stronger they will feel themselves, the sooner they will try to realize their ideas; and that is usually before the majority have come to see the new light. So that the minority have to struggle against the majority who still cling to the old views and conditions.

Second, the resistance of those who hold power. It makes no difference whether it is the church, the king, or kaiser, a democratic government or a dictatorship, a republic or an autocracy—those in authority will fight desperately to retain it as long as they can hope for the least chance of success. And the more aid they get from the slower-thinking majority the better the fight they can put up. Hence the fury of revolt and revolution.

The desperation of the masses, their hatred of those responsible for their misery, and the determination of the lords of life to hold on to their privileges and rule combine to produce the violence of popular uprisings and rebellions.

But blind rebellion without definite object and purpose is not revolution. Revolution is rebellion become conscious of its aims. Revolution is *social* when it strives for a *fundamental* change. As the foundation of life is economics, the social revolution means the reorganization of the industrial, economic life of the country and consequently also of the entire structure of society.

But we have seen that the social structure rests on the basis of *ideas*, which implies that changing the structure presupposes changed ideas. In other words, social ideas must change *first* before a new social structure can be built.

The social revolution, therefore, is not an accident, not a sudden happening. There is nothing sudden about it, for ideas don't change suddenly. They grow slowly, gradually, like the plant or flower. Hence the social revolution is a result, a development, which means that it is revolutionary. It develops to the point when considerable numbers of people have embraced the new ideas and are determined to put them into practice. When they attempt to do so and meet with opposition, then the slow, quiet, and peaceful social evolution becomes quick, militant, and violent. Evolution becomes revolution.

Bear in mind, then, that evolution and revolution are *not* two separate and different things. Still less are they opposites, as some people wrongly believe. Revolution is merely the boiling point of evolution.

Because revolution is evolution at its boiling point you cannot “make” a real revolution any more than you can hasten the boiling of a tea kettle. It is the fire underneath that makes it boil: how quickly it will come to the boiling point will depend on how strong the fire is.

The economic and political conditions of a country are the fire under the evolutionary pot. The worse the oppression, the greater the dissatisfaction of the people, the stronger the flame. This explains why the fires of social revolution swept Russia, the most tyrannous and backward country, instead of America where industrial development has almost reached its highest point — and that in spite of all the learned demonstrations of Karl Marx to the contrary.

We see, then, that revolutions, though they cannot be made, can be hastened by certain factors; namely, by pressure from above: by more intense political and economical oppression; and by pressure from below: by greater enlightenment and agitation. These spread the ideas; they further evolution and thereby also the coming of revolution.

But pressure from above, though hastening revolution, may also cause its failure, because such revolution is apt to break out before the evolutionary process has been sufficiently advanced. Coming

prematurely, as it were, it will fizzle out in mere rebellion; that is, without clear, conscious aim and purpose. At best, rebellion can secure only some temporary alleviation; the real causes of the strife, however, remain intact and continue to operate to the same effect, to cause further dissatisfaction and rebellion.

Summing up what I have said about revolution, we must come to the conclusion that:

1. a social revolution is one that entirely changes the foundation of society, its political, economic, and social character;
2. such a change must *first* take place in the ideas and opinions of the people, in the minds of men;
3. oppression and misery may hasten revolution, but may *thereby* also turn it into failure, because lack of evolutionary preparation will make real accomplishment impossible;
4. only that revolution can be fundamental, social, and successful which will be the expression of a basic change of ideas and opinions.

From this it obviously follows that the social revolution must be *prepared*. Prepared in the sense of furthering the evolutionary process, of enlightening the people about the evils of present-day society and convincing them of the desirability and possibility, of the justice and practicability of a social life based on liberty; prepared, moreover, by making the masses realize very clearly just what they need and how to bring it about.

Such preparation is not only an absolutely necessary preliminary step. Therein lies also the safety of the revolution, the only guarantee of its accomplishing its objects.

It has been the fate of most revolutions — as a result of lack of preparation — to be sidetracked from their main purpose, to be misused and led into blind alleys. Russia is the best recent illustration of it. The February Revolution, which sought to do away with the autocracy, was entirely successful. The people knew exactly what they wanted; namely the abolition of Tsardom. All the machinations of politicians, all the oratory and schemes of the Lvovs and Miliukovs — the “liberal” leaders of those days could not save the Romanov régime in the face of the intelligent and conscious will of the people. It was this clear understanding of its aims which made the February, Revolution a complete success, with, mind you, almost no bloodshed.

Furthermore, neither appeals nor threats by the Provisional Government could avail against the determination of the people to end the war. The armies left the fronts and thus terminated the matter by their own direct action. The will of a people conscious of their objects always conquers.

It was the will of the people again, their resolute aim to get hold of the soil, which secured for the peasant the land he needed. Similarly the city workers, as repeatedly mentioned before, possessed themselves of the factories and the machinery of production.

So far the Russian Revolution was a complete success. But at the point where the masses lacked the consciousness of definite purpose, defeat began. That is always the moment when politicians and political parties step in to exploit the revolution for their own uses or to experiment their theories upon it. This happened in Russia, as in many previous revolutions. The people fought the good fight—the political parties fought over the spoils to the detriment of the revolution and to the ruin of the people.

This is, then, what took place in Russia. The peasant, having secured the land, did not have the tools and machinery he needed. The worker, having taken possession of the machinery and factories, did not know how to handle them to accomplish his aims. In other words, he did not have the experience necessary to organize production and he could not manage the distribution of the things he was producing.

His own efforts — the worker’s, the peasant’s, the soldier’s — had done away with Tsardom, paralyzed the Government, stopped the war, and abolished private ownership of land and machinery. For *that*

he was prepared by years of revolutionary education and agitation. But for no more than that. And because he was prepared for no more, where his knowledge ceased and definite purpose was lacking, there stepped in the political party and took affairs out of the hands of the masses who had made the revolution. Politics replaced economic reconstruction and thereby sounded the death knell of the social revolution; for people live by bread, by economics, not by politics.

Food and supplies are not created by decree of party or government. Legislative edicts don't till the soil; laws can't turn the wheels of industry. Dissatisfaction, strife, and famine came upon the heels of government coercion and dictatorship. Again, as always, politics and authority proved the swamp in which the revolutionary fires became extinguished.

Let us learn this most vital lesson: thorough understanding by the masses of the true aims of revolution means success. Carrying out their conscious will by their own efforts guarantees the right development of the new life. On the other hand, lack of this understanding and of preparation means certain defeat, either at the hands of reaction or by the experimental theories of would-be political party friends.

Let us prepare, then.

What and how?

Chapter 26: Preparation

“Prepare for revolution!” exclaims your friend; “is that possible?”

Yes. Not only is it possible but absolutely necessary.

“Do you refer to secret preparations, armed bands, and men to lead the fight?” you ask.

No, my friend, not that at all.

If the social revolution meant only street battles and barricades, then the preparations you have in mind would be the thing. But revolution does not signify that; at least the fighting phase of it is the smallest and least important part.

The truth is, in modern times revolution does not mean barricades any more. These belong to the past. The social revolution is a far different and more essential matter it involves the reorganization of the entire life of society. You will agree that this is certainly not to be accomplished by mere fighting.

Of course, the obstacles in the path of the social reconstruction have to be removed. That is to say the means of that reconstruction must be secured by the masses. Those means are at present in the hands of government and capitalism, and these will resist every effort to deprive them of their power and possessions. That resistance will involve a fight. But remember that the fight is not the main thing, is not the object, not the revolution. It is only the preface, the preliminary to it.

It is very necessary that you get this straight. Most people have very confused notions about revolution. To them it means just fighting, smashing things, destroying. It is the same as if rolling up your sleeves for work should be considered as the work itself that you have to do. The fighting part of revolution is merely the rolling up of your sleeves. The real, actual task is ahead.

What is that task?

“The destruction of the existing conditions,” you reply.

True. But *conditions* are not destroyed by breaking and smashing things. You can't destroy wage slavery by wrecking the machinery in mills and factories, can you? You won't destroy government by setting fire to the White House.

To think of revolution in terms of violence and destruction is to misinterpret and falsify the whole idea of it. In practical application such a conception is bound to lead to disastrous results.

When a great thinker, like the famous Anarchist Bakunin, speaks of revolution as destruction, he has in mind the ideas of authority and obedience which are to be destroyed. It is for this reason that he said that destruction means construction, for to destroy a false belief is indeed most constructive work.

But the average man, and too often even the revolutionist, thoughtlessly talks of revolution as being exclusively destructive in the physical sense of the word. That is a wrong and dangerous view. The sooner we get rid of it the better.

Revolution, and particularly the social revolution, is *not destruction but construction*. This cannot be sufficiently emphasized, and unless we clearly realize it, revolution will remain only destructive and thereby always a failure. Naturally revolution is accompanied by violence, but you might as well say that building a new house in place of an old one is destructive because you have first to tear down the old one. Revolution is the culminating point of a certain evolutionary process: it *begins* with a violent upheaval. It is the rolling up of your sleeves preparatory to *starting the actual work*.

Indeed, consider what the social revolution is to do, what it is to accomplish, and you will perceive that it comes not to destroy but to build.

What, really, is there to destroy?

The wealth of the rich? Nay, that is something we want the whole of society to enjoy.

The land, the fields, the coal mines, the railroads, factories, mills, and shops? These we want not to destroy but to make useful to the entire people.

The telegraphs, telephones, the means of communication and distribution—do we want to destroy them? No, we want them to serve the needs of all.

What, then, is the social revolution to destroy? It is to *take over* things for the general benefit, not to destroy them. It is to reorganize conditions for the public welfare.

Not to destroy is the aim of the revolution, but to reconstruct and rebuild.

It is for this that preparation is needed, because the social revolution is not the Biblical his mission by simple edict or Messiah who is to accomplish order. Revolution works with the hands and brains of *men*. And these have to understand the objects of the revolution so as to be able to carry them out. They will have to know what they want and how to achieve it. The way to achieve it will be pointed by the objects to be attained. For the end determines the means, just as you have to sow a particular seed to grow the thing you need.

What, then, must the preparation for the social revolution be?

If your object is to secure liberty, you must learn to do without authority and compulsion. If you intend to live in peace and harmony with your fellow-men, you and they should cultivate brotherhood and respect for each other. If you want to work together with them for your mutual benefit, you must practice coöperation. The social revolution means much more than the reorganization of conditions only: it means the establishment of new human values and social relationships, a changed attitude of man to man, as of one free and independent to his equal; it means a different spirit in individual and collective life, and that spirit cannot be born overnight. It is a spirit to be cultivated, to be nurtured and reared, as the most delicate flower is, for indeed it is the flower of a new and beautiful existence.

Do not dupe yourself with the silly notion that “things will arrange themselves.” Nothing ever arranges itself, least of all in human relations. It is men who do the arranging, and they do it according to their attitude and understanding of things.

New situations and changed conditions make us feel, think, and act in a different manner. But the new conditions themselves come about only as a result of new feelings and ideas. The social revolution is such a new condition. We must learn to think differently before the revolution can come. That alone can bring the revolution.

We must learn to think differently about government and authority, for as long as we think and act as we do to-day, there will be intolerance, persecution, and oppression, even when organized government is abolished. We must learn to respect the humanity of our fellow-man, not to invade him or coerce him, to consider his liberty as sacred as our own; to respect his freedom and his personality, to forswear compulsion in any form: to understand that the cure for the evils of liberty is more liberty, that liberty is the mother of order.

And furthermore we must learn that equality means equal opportunity, that monopoly is the denial of it, and that only brotherhood secures equality. We can learn this only by freeing ourselves from the false ideas of capitalism and of property, of mine and shine, of the narrow conception of ownership.

By learning this we shall grow into the spirit of true liberty and solidarity, and know that free association is the soul of every achievement. We shall then realize that the social revolution is the work of coöperation, of solidaric purpose, of mutual effort.

Maybe you think this too slow a process, a work that will take too long. Yes, I must admit that it is a difficult task. But ask yourself if it is better to build your new house quickly and badly and have it break down over your head, rather than to do it efficiently, even if it requires longer and harder work.

Remember that the social revolution represents the liberty and welfare of the whole of mankind, that the complete and final emancipation of labor depends upon it. Consider also that if the work is badly done, all the effort and suffering involved in it will be for nothing and perhaps even worse than for

nothing, because making a botch job of revolution means putting a new tyranny in place of the old, and new tyrannies, because they are new, have a new lease on life. It means forging new chains which are stronger than the old.

Consider also that the social revolution we have in mind is to accomplish the work that many generations of men have been laboring to achieve, for the whole history of man has been a struggle of liberty against servitude, of social well-being against poverty and wretchedness, of justice against iniquity. What we call progress has been a painful but continuous march in the direction of limiting authority and the power of government and increasing the rights and liberties of the individual, of the masses. It has been a struggle that has taken thousands of years. The reason that it took such a long time-and is not ended yet-is because people did not know what the real trouble was: they fought against this and for that, they changed kings and formed new governments, they put out one ruler only to set up another, they drove away a "foreign" oppressor only to suffer the yoke of a native one, they abolished one form of tyranny, such as the Tsars, and submitted to that of a party dictatorship, and always and ever they shed their blood and heroically sacrificed their lives in the hope of securing liberty and welfare.

But they secured only new masters, because however desperately and nobly they fought, they never touched the *real source* of trouble, the *principle of authority and government*. They did not know that *that* was the fountainhead of enslavement and oppression, and therefore they never succeeded in gaining liberty.

But now we understand that true liberty is not a matter of changing kings or rulers. We know that the whole system of master and slave must go, that the entire social scheme is wrong, that government and compulsion must be abolished, that the very foundations of authority and monopoly must be uprooted. Do you still think any kind of preparation for such a great task can be too difficult?

Let us, then, fully realize how important it is to prepare for the social revolution, and to prepare for it in the right way.

"But what is the right way?" you demand. "And who is to prepare?"

Who is to prepare? First of all, you and I-those who are interested in the success of the revolution, those who want to help bring it about. And you and I means every man and woman; at least every decent man and woman, every one who hates oppression and loves liberty, every one who cannot endure the misery and injustice which fill the world to-day.

And above all it is those who suffer most from existing conditions, from wage slavery, subjection, and indignity.

"The workers, of course," you say.

Yes, the workers. As the worst victims of present institutions, it is to their own interest to abolish them. It has been truly said that "the emancipation of the workers must be accomplished by the workers themselves," for no other social class will do it for them. Yet labor's emancipation means at the same time the redemption of the whole of society, and that is why some people speak of labor's "historic mission" to bring about the better day.

But "mission" is the wrong word. It suggests a duty or task imposed on one from the outside, by some external power. It is a false and misleading conception, essentially a religious, metaphysical sentiment. Indeed, if the emancipation of labor is a "historic mission," then history will see to it that it is carried out no matter what we may think, feel, or do about it. This attitude makes human effort unnecessary, superfluous; because "what must be will be." Such a fatalistic notion is destructive to all initiative and the exercise of one's mind and will.

It is a dangerous and harmful idea. There is no power outside of man which can free him, none which can charge him with any "mission." Neither heaven nor history can do it. History is the story of what has happened. It can teach a lesson but not impose a task. It is not the "mission" but *the interest* of the proletariat to emancipate itself from bondage. If labor does not consciously and actively strive for it, it will never "happen." It is necessary to free ourselves from the stupid and false notion of

“historic missions.” It is only by growing to a true realization of their present position, by visualizing their possibilities and powers, by learning unity and coöperation, and practicing them, that the masses can attain freedom. In achieving that they will also have liberated the rest of mankind.

Because of this the proletarian struggle is the concern of every one, and all sincere men and women should therefore be at the service of labor in its great task. Indeed, though only the toilers can accomplish the work of emancipation they need the aid of other social groups. For you must remember that the revolution faces the difficult problem of reorganizing the world and building a new civilization—a work that will require the greatest revolutionary integrity and the intelligent coöperation of all well-meaning and liberty-loving elements. We already know that the social revolution IS not a matter of abolishing capitalism only. We might turn out capitalism, as feudalism was got rid of, and still remain slaves as before. Instead of being, as now, the bondmen of private monopoly we might become the servants of State capitalism, as has happened to the people in Russia, for instance, and as conditions are developing in Italy and other lands.

The social revolution, it must never be forgotten, is not to alter one form of subjection for another, but is to do away with everything that can enslave and oppress you.

A political revolution may be carried to a successful issue by a conspirative minority, putting one ruling faction in place of another. But the social revolution is not a mere political change: it is a fundamental economic, ethical, and cultural transformation. A conspirative minority or political party undertaking such a work must meet with the active and passive opposition of the great majority and therefore degenerate into a system of dictatorship and terror.

In the face of a hostile majority the social revolution is doomed to failure from its very beginning. It means, then, that the first preparatory work of the revolution consists in winning over the masses at large in favor of the revolution and its objects, winning them over, at least, to the extent of neutralizing them, of turning them from active enemies to passive sympathizers, so that they may not fight against the revolution even if they do not fight for it.

The actual, positive work of the social revolution must, of course, be carried on by the toilers themselves, by the laboring people. And here let us bear in mind that it is not only the factory hand who belongs to labor but the farm worker as well. Some radicals are inclined to lay too much stress on the industrial proletariat, almost ignoring the existence of the agricultural toiler. Yet what could the factory worker accomplish without the farmer? Agriculture is the *primal* source of life, and the city would starve but for the country. It is idle to compare the industrial worker with the farm laborer or discuss their relative value. Neither can do without the other; both are equally important in the scheme of life and equally so in the revolution and the building of a new society.

It is true that revolution first breaks out in industrial localities rather than in agricultural. This is natural, since these are greater centers of laboring population and therefore also of popular dissatisfaction. But if the industrial proletariat is the advance-guard of revolution, then the farm laborer is its backbone. If the latter is weak or broken, the advance-guard, the revolution itself, is lost.

Therefore, the work of the social revolution lies in the hands of *both* the industrial worker and the farm laborer. Unfortunately it must be admitted that there is too little understanding and almost no friendship or direct coöperation between the two. Worse than that — and no doubt the result of it — there is a certain dislike and antagonism between the proletarians of field and factory. The city man has too little appreciation of the hard and exhausting toil of the farmer. The latter instinctively resents it; moreover, unfamiliar with the strenuous and often dangerous labor of the factory, the farmer is apt to look upon the city worker as an idler. A closer approach and better understanding between the two is absolutely vital. Capitalism thrives not so much on division of work as on the division of the workers. It seeks to incite race against race, the factory hand against the farmer, the laborer against the skilled man, the workers of one country against those of another. The strength of the exploiting class lies in

disunited, divided labor. But the social revolution requires the *unity* of the toiling masses, and first of all the coöperation of the factory-proletarian with his brother in the field.

A nearer approach between the two is an important step in preparation for the social revolution. Actual contact between them is of prime necessity. Joint councils, exchange of delegates, a system of coöperatives, and other similar methods, would tend to form a closer bond and better understanding between the worker and farmer.

But it is not only the coöperation of the factory proletarian with the farm laborer which is necessary for the revolution. There is another element absolutely needed in its constructive work. It is the trained mind of the professional man.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that the world has been built with hands only. It has also required brains. Similarly does the revolution need *both* the man of brawn and the man of brain. Many people imagine that the manual worker alone can do the entire work of society. It is a false idea, a very grave error that can bring no end of harm. In fact, this conception has worked great evil on previous occasions, and there is good reason to fear that it may defeat the best efforts of the revolution.

The working class consists of the industrial wage earners and the agricultural toilers. But the workers require the services of the professional elements, of the industrial organizer, the electrical and mechanical engineer, the technical specialist, the scientist, inventor, chemist, the educator, doctor, and surgeon. In short, the proletariat absolutely needs the aid of certain professional elements without whose coöperation no productive labor is possible.

Most of those professional men in reality also belong to the proletariat. They are the intellectual proletariat, the proletariat of brain. It is clear that it makes no difference whether one earns his living with his hands or with his head. As a matter of fact, no work is done *only* with the hands or only with the brain. The application of both is required in every kind of effort. The carpenter, for instance, must estimate, measure, and figure in the course of his task: he must use both hand and brain. Similarly the architect must think out his plan before it can be drawn on paper and put to practical use.

“But only labor can produce,” your friend objects; “brain work is not productive.”

Wrong, my friend. Neither manual labor nor brain work can produce anything *alone*. It requires both, working together, to create something. The bricklayer and mason can't build the factory without the architect's plans, nor can the architect erect a bridge without the iron and steel worker. Neither can produce alone. But both together can accomplish wonders.

Furthermore, do not fall into the error of believing that only productive labor counts. There is much work that is not directly productive, but which is useful and even absolutely necessary to our existence and comfort, and therefore just as important as productive labor.

Take the railroad engineer and contractor, for instance. They are not producers, but they are essential factors in the system of production. Without the railroads and other means of transport and communication we could manage neither production nor distribution.

Production and distribution are the two points of the same life pole. The labor required for the one is as important as that needed for the other.

What I said above applies to numerous phases of human effort which, though themselves not directly productive, play a vital part in the manifold processes of our economic and social life. The man of science, the educator, the physician and surgeon are not productive in the industrial sense of the word. But their work is absolutely necessary to our life and welfare. Civilized society could not exist without them.

It is therefore evident that useful work is equally important whether it be that of brain or of brawn, manual or mental. Nor does it matter whether it is a salary or wages which one receives, whether he is paid much or little, or what his political or other opinions might be.

All the elements that can contribute useful work to the general welfare are needed in the revolution for the building of the new life. No revolution can succeed without their solidaric coöperation, and

the sooner we understand this the better. The reconstruction of society involves the reorganization of industry, the proper functioning of production, the management of distribution, and numerous other social, educational, and cultural efforts to transform present-day wage slavery and servitude into a life of liberty and well-being. Only by working hand in hand will the proletariat of brain and brawn be able to solve those problems.

It is most regrettable that there exists a spirit of unfriendliness, even of enmity, between the manual and intellectual workers. That feeling is rooted in lack of understanding, in prejudice and narrow-mindedness on both sides. It is sad to admit that there is a tendency in certain labor circles, even among some Socialists and Anarchists, to antagonize the workers against the members of the intellectual proletariat. Such an attitude is stupid and criminal, because it can only work evil to the growth and development of the social revolution. It was one of the fatal mistakes of the Bolshevik; during the first phases of the Russian Revolution that they deliberately set the wage earners against the professional classes, to such an extent indeed that friendly coöperation became impossible. A direct result of that policy was the breaking down of industry for lack of intelligent direction, as well as the almost total suspension of railroad communication because that was no trained management. Seeing Russia facing economic shipwreck, Lenin decided that the factory worker and farmer alone could not carry on the industrial and agricultural life of the country, and that the aid of the professional elements was necessary. He introduced a new system to induce the technical men to help in the work of reconstruction. But almost too late came the change, for the years of mutual hating and hounding had created such a gulf between the manual worker and his intellectual brother that common understanding and coöperation were made exceptionally difficult. It has taken Russia years of heroic effort to undo, to some extent, the effects of that fratricidal war.

Let us learn this valuable lesson from the Russian experiment.

"But professional men belong to the middle classes," you object, "and they are bourgeois-minded."

True, men of the professions generally have a bourgeois attitude toward things; but are not most workingmen also bourgeois-minded? It merely means that both are steeped in authoritarian and capitalistic prejudices. It is just these that must be eradicated by enlightening and educating the people, be they manual or brain workers. That is the first step in preparation for the social revolution.

But it is not true that professional men, as such, necessarily belong to the middle classes.

The real interests of the so-called intellectuals are with the workers rather than with the masters. To be sure, most of them do not realize that. But no more does the comparatively highly-paid railroad conductor or locomotive engineer feel himself a member of the working class. By his income and attitude he also belongs to the bourgeoisie. But it is not income or feeling that determines to what social class a person belongs. If the street beggar should fancy himself a millionaire, would he thereby be one? What one imagines himself to be does not alter his actual situation. And the actual situation is that whoever has to sell his labor is an employee, a salaried dependent, a wage earner, and as such his true interests are those of employees and he belongs to the working class.

As a matter of fact, the intellectual proletarian is even more subject to his capitalistic master than the man with pick and shovel. The latter can easily change his place of employment. If he does not care to work for a certain boss he can look for another. The intellectual proletarian, on the other hand, is much more dependent on his particular job. His sphere of exertion is more limited. Not skilled in any trade and physically incapable of serving as a day laborer, he is (as a rule) confined to the comparatively narrow field of architecture, engineering, journalism, or similar work. This puts him more at the mercy of his employer and therefore also inclines him to side with the latter as against his more independent fellow-worker at the bench.

But whatever the attitude of the salaried and dependent intellectual, he belongs to the proletarian class. Yet it is entirely false to maintain that the intellectuals always side with the masters as against the workers. "Generally they do," I hear some radical fanatic interject. And the workers? Do *they* not,

generally, support the masters and the system of capitalism? Could that system continue but for their support? It would be wrong to argue from that, however, that the workers consciously join hands with their exploiters. No more is it true of the intellectuals. If the majority of the latter stand by the ruling class it is because of social ignorance, because they do not understand their own best interests, for all their "intellectuality." Just so the great masses of labor, similarly unaware of their true interests, aid the masters against their fellow-workers, sometimes even in the same trade and factory, not to speak of their lack of national and international solidarity. It merely proves that the one as the other, the manual worker no less than the brain proletarian, needs enlightenment.

In justice to the intellectuals let us not forget that their best representatives have always sided with the oppressed. They have advocated liberty and emancipation, and often they were the first to voice the deepest aspirations of the toiling masses. In the struggle for freedom they have frequently fought on the barricades shoulder to shoulder with the workers and died championing their cause.

We need not look far for proof of this. It is a familiar fact that every progressive, radical, and revolutionary movement within the past hundred years has been inspired, mentally and spiritually, by the efforts of the finest element of the intellectual classes. The initiators and organizers of the revolutionary movement in Russia, for instance, dating back a century, were intellectuals, men and women of non-proletarian origin and station. Nor was their love of freedom merely theoretical. Literally thousands of them consecrated their knowledge and experience, and dedicated their lives, to the service of the masses. Not a land exists but where such noble men and women have testified to their solidarity with the disinherited by exposing themselves to the wrath and persecution of their own class and joining hands with the downtrodden. Recent history, as well as the past, is full of such examples. Who were the Garibaldi's, the Kossuth's, the Liebknecht's, Rosa Luxemburg's, the Landauer's, the Lenin's, and Trotsky's but intellectuals of the middle classes who gave themselves to the proletariat? The history of every country and of every revolution shines with their unselfish devotion to liberty and labor.

Let us bear these facts in mind and not be blinded by fanatical prejudice and baseless antagonism. The intellectual has done labor great service in the past. It will depend on the attitude of the workers toward him as to what share he will be able and willing to contribute to the preparation and realization of the social revolution.

Chapter 27: Organization of Labor for the Social Revolution

Proper preparation, as suggested in the preceding pages, will greatly lighten the task of the social revolution and assure its healthy development and functioning.

Now, what will be the main functions of the revolution?

Every country has its specific conditions, its own psychology, habits, and traditions, and the process of revolution will naturally reflect the peculiarities of every land and its people. But fundamentally all countries are alike in their social (rather anti-social) character: whatever the political forms or economic conditions, they are all built on invasive authority, on monopoly, on the exploitation of labor. The main task of the social revolution is therefore essentially the same everywhere: the abolition of government and of economic inequality, and the socialization of the means of production and distribution.

Production, distribution, and communication are the basic sources of existence; upon them rests the power of coercive authority and capital. Deprived of that power, governors and rulers become just ordinary men, like you and me, common citizens among millions of others. To accomplish that is consequently the primal and most vital function of the social revolution.

We know that revolution begins with street disturbances and outbreaks: it is the initial phase which involves force and violence. But that is merely the spectacular prologue of the real revolution. The age long misery and indignity suffered by the masses burst into disorder and tumult, the humiliation and injustice meekly borne for decades find vent in acts of fury and destruction. That is inevitable, and it is solely the master class which is responsible for this preliminary character of revolution. For it is even more true socially than individually that “whoever sows the wind will reap the whirlwind”: the greater the oppression and wretchedness to which the masses had been made to submit, the fiercer will rage the social storm. All history proves it, but the lords of life have never hearkened to its warning voice.

This phase of the revolution is of short duration. It is usually followed by the more conscious, yet still spontaneous, destruction of the citadels of authority, the visible symbols of organized violence and brutality: jails, police stations, and other government buildings are attacked, the prisoners liberated, legal documents destroyed. It is the manifestation of instinctive popular justice. Thus one of the first gestures of the French Revolution was the demolition of the Bastille. Similarly in Russia prisons were stormed and the prisoners released at the very outset of the Revolution.³⁴ The wholesome intuition of the people justly sees in prisoners social unfortunates, victims of conditions, and sympathizes with them as such. The masses regard the courts and their records as instruments of class injustice, and these are destroyed at the beginning of the revolution, and quite properly so.

But this stage passes quickly: the people’s ire is soon spent. Simultaneously the revolution begins its constructive work.

“Do you really think that reconstruction could start so soon?” you ask.

My friend, it must begin immediately. In fact, the more enlightened the masses have become, the clearer the workers realize their aims, and the better they are prepared to carry them out, the less

³⁴The official liberation of political prisoners in Russia took place subsequently, *after* the revolutionary masses had wrecked prisons in Petrograd, Moscow, and other cities.

destructive the revolution will be, and the quicker and more effectively will begin the work of reconstruction.

“Are you not too hopeful?”

No, I don't think so. I am convinced that the social revolution will not “just happen.” It will have to be prepared, organized. Yes, indeed, organized—just as a strike is organized. In truth, it will be a strike, the strike of the united workers of an entire country — a *general strike*.

Let us pause and consider this.

How do you imagine a revolution could be fought in these days of armored tanks, poison gas, and military planes? Do you believe that the unarmed masses and their barricades could withstand high-power artillery and bombs thrown upon them from flying machines? Could labor fight the military forces of government and capital?

It's ridiculous on the face of it, isn't it? And no less ridiculous is the suggestion that the workers should form their own regiments, “shock troops,” or a “red front,” as the Communist parties advise you to do. Will such proletarian bodies ever be able to stand up against the trained armies of the government and the private troops of capital? Will they have the least chance?

Such a proposition needs only to be stated to be seen in all its impossible folly. It would simply mean sending thousands of workers to certain death.

It is time to have done with this obsolete idea of revolution. Nowadays government and capital are too well organized in a military way for the workers ever to be able to cope with them. It would be criminal to attempt it, insanity even to think of it.

The strength of labor is not on the field of battle. It is in the shop, in the mine and factory. There lies its power that no army in the world can defeat, no human agency conquer.

In other words, the social revolution can take place only by means of the *General Strike*. The General Strike, rightly understood and thoroughly carried out, *is* the social revolution. Of this the British Government became aware much quicker than the workers when the General Strike was declared in England in May, 1926. “It means revolution,” the Government said, in effect, to the strike leaders. With all their armies and navies the authorities were powerless in the face of the situation. You can shoot people to death but you can't shoot them to work. The labor leaders themselves were frightened at the thought that the General Strike actually implied revolution.

British capital and government won the strike—not by the strength of arms, but because of the lack of intelligence and courage on the part of the labor leaders and because the English workers were not prepared for the consequences of the General Strike. As a matter of fact, the idea was quite new to them. They had never before been interested in it, never studied its significance and potentialities. It is safe to say that a similar situation in France would have developed quite differently, because in that country the toilers have for years been familiar with the General Strike as a revolutionary proletarian weapon.

It is most important that we realize that the General Strike is the only possibility of social revolution. In the past the General Strike has been propagated in various countries without sufficient emphasis that its real meaning is revolution, that it is the only practical way to it. It is time for us to learn this, and when we do so the social revolution will cease to be a vague, unknown quantity. It will become an actuality, a definite method and aim, a program whose first step is the taking over of the industries by organized labor.

I understand now why you said that the social revolution means construction rather than destruction,” your friend remarks.

I am glad you do. And if you have followed me so far, you will agree that the matter of taking over the industries is not something that can be left to chance, nor can it be carried out in a haphazard manner. It can be accomplished only in a well-planned, systematic, and organized way. You alone can't do it, nor I, nor any other man, be he worker Ford, or the Pope of Rome. There is no man nor any

body of men that can manage it except the *workers themselves*, for it takes the workers to operate the industries. But even the workers can't do it unless they are organized and *organized just for such an undertaking*.

"But I thought you were an Anarchist," interrupts your friend.

I am.

"I've heard that Anarchists don't believe in organization."

I imagine you have, but that's an old argument. Any one who tells you that Anarchists don't believe in organization is talking nonsense. Organization is everything, and everything is organization. The whole of life is organization, conscious or unconscious. Every nation, every family, why, even every individual is an organization or organism. Every part of every living thing is organized in such a manner that the whole works in harmony. Otherwise the different organs could not function properly and life could not exist.

But there is organization and organization. Capitalist society is so badly organized that its various members suffer: just as when you have pain in some part of you, your whole body aches and you are ill.

There is organization that is painful because it is ill, and organization that is joyous because it means health and strength. An organization is ill or evil when it neglects or suppresses any of its organs or members. In the healthy organism all parts are equally valuable and none is discriminated against. The organization built on compulsion, which coerces and forces, is bad and unhealthy. The libertarian organization, formed voluntarily and in which every member is free and equal, is a sound body and can work well. Such an organization is a free union of equal parts. It is the kind of organization the Anarchists believe in.

Such must be the organization of the workers if labor is to have a healthy body, one that can operate effectively.

It means, first of all, that not a single member of the organization or union may with impunity be discriminated against, suppressed or ignored. To do so would be the same as to ignore an aching tooth: you would be sick all over.

In other words, the labor union must be built on the principle of the equal liberty of all its members.

Only when each is a free and independent unit, cooperating with the others from his own choice because of mutual interests, can the whole work successfully and become powerful.

This equality means that it makes no difference what or who the particular worker is: whether he is skilled or unskilled, whether he is mason, carpenter, engineer or day laborer, whether he earn much or little. The interests of *all* are the same; all belong together, and only by standing together can they accomplish their purpose.

It means that the workers in the factory, mill, or mine must be organized as one body; for it is not a question of what particular jobs they hold, what craft or trade they follow, but what their interests are. And their interests are identical, as against the employer and the system of exploitation.

Consider yourself how foolish and inefficient is the present form of labor organization in which one trade or craft may be on strike while the other branches of the same industry continue at work. Is it not ridiculous that when the street car workers of New York, for instance, quit work, the employees of the subway, the cab and omnibus drivers remain on the job? The main purpose of a strike is to bring about a situation that will compel the employer to give in to the demands of labor. Such a situation can be created only by a complete tie-up of the industry in question, so that a partial strike is merely a waste of labor's time and energy, not to speak of the harmful moral effect of the inevitable defeat.

Think over the strikes in which you yourself have taken part and of others you know of. Did your union ever win a fight unless it was able to compel the employer to give in? But *when* was it able to do so? Only when the boss knew that the workers meant business, that there was no dissent among them, that there was no hesitation and dallying, that they were determined to win, at whatever cost. But particularly when the employer felt himself at the mercy of the union, when he could not operate his

factory or mine in the face of the workers' resolute stand, when he could not get scabs or strikebreakers, and when he saw that his interests would suffer more by defying his employees than by granting their demands.

It is clear, then, that you can compel compliance only when you are determined, when your union is strong, when you are well organized, when you are united in such a manner that the boss cannot run his factory against your will. But the employer is usually some big manufacturer or a company that has mills or mines in various places. Suppose it is a coal combine. If it cannot operate its mines in Pennsylvania because of a strike, it will try to make good its losses by continuing mining in Virginia or Colorado and increasing production there. Now, if the miners in those States keep on working while you in Pennsylvania are on strike, the company loses nothing. It may even welcome the strike in order to raise the price of coal on the ground that the supply is short because of your strike. In that way the company not only breaks your strike, but it also influences public opinion against you, because the people foolishly believe that the higher price of coal is really the result of your strike while in fact it is due to the greed of the mine owners. You will lose your strike, and for some time to come you and the workers everywhere will have to pay more for coal, and not only for coal but for all the other necessities of life, because together with the price of coal the general cost of living will go up.

Reflect, then, how stupid is the present union policy to permit the other mines to operate while your mine is on strike. The others remain at work and give financial support to your strike, but don't you see that their aid only helps to break your strike, because they have to keep on working, really scabbing on you, in order to contribute to your strike fund? Can anything be more senseless and criminal?

This holds true of every industry and every strike. Can you wonder that most strikes are lost? That is the case in America as well as in other countries. I have before me the Blue Book just published in England under the title of *Labor Statistics*. The data prove that strikes do not lead to labor victories. The figures for the last eight years are as follows:

Results in Favor of:

Year	Working People	Employers
1920	390	507
1921	152	315
1922	111	222
1923	187	183
1924	162	235
1925	154	189
1926	67	126
1927	61	118

Actually, then, almost 60% of the strikes were lost. Incidentally, consider also the loss of working days resulting from strikes, which means no wages. The total number of workdays lost by English labor in 1912 was 40,890,000, which is almost equal to the lives of 2,000 men, allotting to each 60 years. In 1919 the number of workdays lost was 34,969,000; in 1920, 26,568,000; in 1921, 85,872,000; in 1926, as a result of the general strike, 162,233,000 days. These figures do not include time and wages lost through unemployment.

It doesn't take much arithmetic to see that strikes as at present conducted don't pay, that the labor unions are not the winners in industrial disputes.

This does not mean, however, that strikes serve no purpose. On the contrary, they are of great value: they teach the worker the vital need of coöperation, of standing shoulder to shoulder with his fellows and unitedly fighting in the common cause. Strikes train him in the class struggle and develop his spirit of joint effort, of resistance to the masters, of solidarity and responsibility. In this sense even

an unsuccessful strike is not a complete loss. Through it the toilers learn that "an injury to one is the concern of all," the practical wisdom that embodies the deepest meaning of the proletarian struggle. This does not relate only to the daily battle for material betterment, but equally so to everything pertaining to the worker and his existence, and particularly to matters where justice and liberty are involved.

It is one of the most inspiring things to see the masses roused in behalf of social justice, whomever the case at issue may concern. For, indeed, it is the concern of all of us, in the truest and deepest sense. The more labor becomes enlightened and aware of its larger interests, the broader and more universal grow its sympathies, the more world-wide its defense of justice and liberty. It was a manifestation of this understanding when the workers in every country protested against the judicial murder of Sacco and Vanzetti in Massachusetts. Instinctively and consciously the masses throughout the world felt, as did all decent men and women, that it is *their* concern when such a crime is being perpetrated. Unfortunately that protest, as many similar ones, contented itself with mere resolutions. Had organized labor resorted to action, such as a general strike, its demands would not have been ignored, and two of the workers' best friends and noblest of men would not have been sacrificed to the forces of reaction.

Equally important, it would have served as a valuable demonstration of the tremendous power of the proletariat, the power that always conquers when it is unified and resolute. This has been proven on numerous occasions in the past when the determined stand of labor prevented planned legal outrages, as in the case of Haywood, Moyer, and Pettibone, officials of the Western Federation of Miners, whom the coal barons of the State of Idaho had conspired to send to the gallows during the miners' strike of 1905. Again, in 1917, it was the solidarity of the toilers which thwarted the execution of Tom Mooney, in California. The sympathetic attitude of organized labor in America toward Mexico has also till now been an obstacle to the military occupation of that country by the United States Government in behalf of the American oil interests. Similarly in Europe united action by the workers has been successful in repeatedly forcing the authorities to grant amnesty to political prisoners. The Government of England so feared the expressed sympathy of British labor for the Russian Revolution that it was compelled to pretend neutrality. It did not dare openly to aid the counterrevolution in Russia. When the dock workers refused to load food and ammunition intended for the White armies, the English Government resorted to deception. It solemnly assured the workers that the shipments were intended for France. In the course of my work collecting historic material in Russia, in 1920 and 1921, I came into possession of official British documents proving that the shipments had been immediately forwarded from France, by direct orders of the British Government, to the counter-revolutionary generals in the North of Russia who had established there the so-called Tchaikovsky-Miller Government. This incident — one out of many — demonstrates the wholesome fear the powers that be have of the awakening class-consciousness and solidarity of the international proletariat.

The stronger the workers grow in this spirit the more effective will be their struggle for emancipation. Class consciousness and solidarity must assume national and international proportions before labor can attain its full strength. Wherever there is injustice, wherever persecution and suppression — be it the subjugation of the Philippines, the invasion of Nicaragua, the enslavement of the toilers in the Congo by Belgian exploiters, the oppression of the masses in Egypt, China, Morocco, or India — it is the business of the workers everywhere to raise their voice against all such outrages and demonstrate their solidarity in the common cause of the despoiled and disinherited throughout the world.

Labor is slowly advancing to this social consciousness: strikes and other sympathetic expressions are a valuable manifestation of this spirit. If the greater number of strikes are lost at present, it is because the proletariat is not yet fully aware of its national and international interests, is not organized on the right principles, and does not sufficiently realize the need of world-wide coöperation.

Your daily struggles for better conditions would quickly assume a different character if you were organized in such a manner that when your factory or mine goes on strike, the whole industry should quit work; not gradually but at once, all at the same time. Then the employer would be at your mercy,

for what could he do when not a wheel turns in the whole industry? He can get enough strikebreakers for one or a few mills, but an entire industry cannot be supplied with them, nor would he consider it safe or advisable. Moreover, suspension of work in any one industry would immediately affect a large number of others, because modern industry is interwoven. The situation would become the direct concern of the whole country, the public would be aroused and demand a settlement. (At present, when your single factory strikes, no one cares and you may starve as long as you remain quiet.) That settlement would again depend on yourself, on the strength of your organization. When the bosses would see that you know your power and that you are determined, they'd give in quickly enough or seek a compromise. They would be losing millions every day, the strikers might even sabotage the works and machinery, and the employers would be only too anxious to "settle," while in a strike of one factory or district they usually welcome the situation, knowing as they do that the chances are all against you.

Reflect therefore how important it is in what manner, *on what principles your union is built*, and how vital labor solitarily and cooperation are in your every-day struggle for better conditions. In unity is your strength, but that unity is non-existent and impossible as long as you are organized on craft lines instead of by industries.

There is nothing more important and urgent than that you and your fellow workers see to it immediately that you change the form of your organization.

But it is not only the form that must be changed. Your union must become clear about its aims and purposes. The worker should most earnestly consider what he really wants, how he means to achieve it, by what methods. He must learn what his union should be, how it should function, and what it should try to accomplish.

Now, what is the union to accomplish? What should be the arms of a real labor union?

First of all, the purpose of the union is to serve the interests of its members. That is its primary duty. There is no quarrel about that; every workingman understands it. If some refuse to join a labor body it is because they are too ignorant to appreciate its great value, in which case they must be enlightened. But generally they decline to belong to the union because they have no faith or are disappointed in it. Most of those who remain away from the union do so because they hear much boasting about the strength of organized labor while they know, often from bitter experience, that it is defeated in almost every important struggle. "Oh, the union," they say scornfully, "it don't amount to anything." To speak quite truthfully, to a certain extent they are right. They see organized capital proclaim the open shop policy and defeat the unions; they see labor leaders sell out strikes and betray the workers; they see the membership, the rank and file, helpless in the political machinations in and out of the union. To be sure, they don't understand why it is so; but they do see the facts, and they turn against the union.

Some again refuse to have anything to do with the union I because they had at one time belonged to it, and they know what an insignificant role the individual member, the average worker, plays in the affairs of the organization. The local leaders, the district and central bodies, the national and international officers, and the chiefs of the American Federation of Labor, in the United States, "run the whole show," they will tell you; "you have nothing to do but vote, and if you object you'll fly out."

Unfortunately they are right. You know how the union is managed. The rank and file have little to say. They have delegated the whole power to the leaders, and these have become the bosses, just as in the larger life of society the people are made to submit to the orders of those who were originally meant to serve them—the government and its agents. Once you do that, the power you have delegated will be used against you and your own interests every time. And then you complain that your leaders "misuse their power." No, my friend, they don't misuse it; they only use it, for it is the *use* of power which is itself the worst misuse.

All this has to be changed if you really want to achieve results. In society it has to be changed by taking political power away from your governors, abolishing it altogether. I have shown that political

power means authority, oppression, and tyranny, and that it is not political government that we need but rational management of our collective affairs.

Just so in your union you need sensible administration of your business. We know what tremendous power labor has as the creator of all wealth and the supporter of the world. If properly organized and united, the workers could control the situation, be the masters of it. But the strength of the worker is not in the union meeting-hall; it is in the shop and factory, in the mill and mine. It is *there* that he must organize; there, on the job. There he knows what he wants, what his needs are, and it is there that he must concentrate his efforts and his will. Every shop and factory should have its special committee to attend to the wants and requirements of the men, not leaders, but members of the rank and file, from the bench and furnace, to look after the demands and complaints of their fellow employees. Such a committee, being on the spot and constantly under the direction and supervision of the workers, wields no power: it merely carries out instructions. Its members are recalled at will and others selected in their place, according to the need of the moment and the ability required for the task in hand. It is the workers who decide the matters at issue and carry their decisions out through the shop committees.

That is the character and form of organization that labor needs. Only this form can express its real purpose and will, be its adequate spokesman, and serve its true interests.

These shop and factory committees, combined with similar bodies in other mills and mines, associated locally, regionally, and nationally, would constitute a new type of labor organization which would be the virile voice of toil and its effective agency. It would have the whole weight and energy of the united workers back of it and would represent a power tremendous in its scope and potentialities.

In the daily struggle of the proletariat such an organization would be able to achieve victories about which the conservative union, as at present built, cannot even dream. It would enjoy the respect and confidence of the masses, would attract the unorganized and unite the labor forces on the basis of the equality of all workers and their joint interests and aims. It would face the masters with the whole might of the working class back of it, in a new attitude of consciousness and strength. Only then would labor acquire unity and the expression of it assume real significance.

Such a union would soon become something more than a mere defender and protector of the worker. It would gain a vital realization of the meaning of unity and consequent power, of labor solidarity. The factory and shop would serve as a training camp to develop the worker's understanding of his proper role in life, to cultivate his self-reliance and independence, teach him mutual help and coöperation, and make him conscious of his responsibility. He will learn to decide and act on his own judgment, not leaving it to leaders or politicians to attend to his affairs and look out for his welfare. It will be he who will determine, together with his fellows at the bench, what they want and what methods will best serve their aims, and his committee on the spot would merely carry out instructions. The shop and factory would become the worker's school and college. There he will learn his place in society, his function in industry, and his purpose in life. He will mature as a workingman and as a man, and the giant of labor will attain his full stature. He will know and be strong thereby.

Not long will he then be satisfied to remain a wage slave, an employee and dependent on the good will of his master whom his toil supports. He will grow to understand that present economic and social arrangements are wrong and criminal, and he will determine to change them. The shop committee and union will become the field of preparation for a new economic system, for a new social life.

You see, then, how necessary it is that you and I, and every man and woman who has the interests of labor at heart, work toward these objects.

And right here I want to emphasize that it is particularly urgent that the more advanced proletarian, the radical and the revolutionary, reflect upon this more earnestly, for to most of them, even to some Anarchists, this is only a pious wish, a distant hope. They fail to realize the transcending importance of efforts in that direction. Yet it is no mere dream. Large numbers of progressive workingmen are coming to this understanding: the Industrial Workers of the World and the revolutionary Anarchist-syndicalists

in every country are devoting themselves to this end. It is the most pressing need of the present. It cannot be stressed too much that *only the right organization of the workers* can accomplish what we are striving for. In it lies the salvation of labor and of the future. Organization from the bottom up, beginning with the shop and factory, on the foundation of the joint interests of the workers everywhere, irrespective of trade, race, or country, by means of mutual effort and united will, alone can solve the labor question and serve the true emancipation of man.

"You were speaking of the workers taking over the industries,' your friend reminds me. "How are they going to do this?"

Yes, I was on the subject when you made that remark about organization. But it is well that the matter was discussed, because there is nothing more vital in the problems we are examining.

To return to the taking over of the industries. It means not only taking them over, but the running of them by labor. As concerns the taking over, you must consider that the workers are actually now *in* the industries. The taking over consists in the workers *remaining* where they are, yet remaining not as employees but as the rightful collective possessions.

Grasp this point, my friend. The expropriation of the capitalist class during the social revolution-the taking over of the industries-requires tactics directly the reverse of those you now use in a strike. In the latter you quit work and leave the boss in full possession of the mill, factory, or mine. It is an idiotic proceeding, of course, for you give the master the entire advantage: he can put scabs in your place, and you remain out in the cold.

In expropriating, on the contrary, you *stay* on the job and you put the boss out. He may remain only on equal terms with the rest: a worker among workers.

The labor organizations of a given place take charge of the public utilities, of the means of communication, of production and distribution in their particular locality. That is, the telegraphers, the telephone and electrical workers, the railroad men, and so on, take possession (by means of their revolutionary shop committees) of the workshop, factory, or other establishment. The capitalistic foremen, overseers, and managers are removed from the premises if they resist the change and refuse to cooperate. If willing to participate, they are made to understand that henceforth there are neither masters nor owners: that the factory becomes public property in charge of the union of workers engaged in the industry, all equal partners in the general undertaking.

It is to be expected that the higher officials of large industrial and manufacturing concerns will refuse to cooperate. Thus they eliminate themselves. Their place must be taken by workers previously prepared for the job. That is why I have emphasized the utmost importance of industrial preparation. This is a primal necessity in a situation that will inevitably develop and on it will depend, more than on any other factor, the success of the social revolution. Industrial preparation is the most essential point, for without it the revolution is doomed to collapse.

The engineers and other technical specialists are more likely to join hands with labor when the social revolution comes, particularly if a closer bond and better understanding have in the meantime been established between the manual and mental workers.

Should they refuse and should the workers have failed to prepare themselves industrially and technically, then production would depend on *compelling* the willfully obstinate to cooperate-an experiment tried in the Russian Revolution and proved a complete failure.

The grave mistake of the Bolsheviks in this connection was their hostile treatment of the whole class of the intelligentsia on account of the opposition of some members of it. It was the spirit of intolerance, inherent in fanatical dogma, which caused them to persecute an entire social group because of the fault of a few. This manifested itself in the policy of wholesale vengeance upon the professional elements, the technical specialists, the cooperative organizations, and all cultured persons in general. Most of them, at first friendly to the Revolution, some even enthusiastic in its favor, were alienated by these Bolshevik tactics, and their cooperation was made impossible. As a result of their dictatorial attitude

the Communists were led to resort to increased oppression and tyranny till they finally introduced purely martial methods in the industrial life of the country. It was the era of compulsory labor, the militarization of factory and mill, which unavoidably ended in disaster, because forced labor is, by the very nature of coercion, bad and inefficient; moreover, those so compelled react upon the situation by willful sabotage, by systematic delay and spoilage of work, which an intelligent enemy can practice in a way that cannot be detected in due time and which results in greater harm to machinery and product than direct refusal to work. In spite of the most drastic measures against this kind of sabotage, in spite even of the death penalty, the government was powerless to overcome the evil. The placing of a Bolshevik, of a political commissar, over every technician in the more responsible positions did not help matters. It merely created a legion of parasitic officials who, ignorant of industrial matters, only interfered with the work of those friendly to the Revolution and willing to aid, while their unfamiliarity with the task in no way prevented continued sabotage. The system of forced labor finally developed in what practically became economic counterrevolution, and no efforts of the dictatorship could alter the situation. It was this that caused the Bolsheviks to change from compulsory labor to a policy of winning over the specialists and technicians by returning them to authority in the industries and rewarding them with high pay and special emoluments.

It would be stupid and criminal to try again the methods which have so signally failed in the Russian Revolution and which, by their very character, are bound to fail every time, both industrially and morally.

The only solution of this problem is the already suggested preparation and training of the workers in the art of organizing and managing industry, as well as closer contact between the manual and technical men. Every factory, mine, and mill should have its special workers' council, separate from and independent of the shop committee, for the purpose of familiarizing the workers with the various phases of their particular industry, including the sources of raw material, the consecutive processes of manufacture, by-products, and manner of distribution. This industrial council should be permanent, but its membership must rotate in such a manner as to take in practically all the employees of a given factory or mill. To illustrate: suppose the industrial council in a certain establishment consists of five members or of twenty-five, as the case may be, according to the complexity of the industry and the size of the particular factory. The members of the council, after having thoroughly acquainted themselves with their industry, publish what they had learned for the information of their fellow-workers, and new council members are chosen to continue the industrial studies. In this manner the whole factory or mill can consecutively acquire the necessary knowledge about the organization and management of their trade and keep step with its development. These councils would serve as industrial colleges where the workers would become familiar with the technique of their industry in all its phases.

At the same time the larger organization, the union, must use every effort to compel capital to permit greater labor participation in the actual management. But this, even at best, can benefit only a small minority of the workers. The plan suggested above, on the other hand, opens the possibility of industrial training to practically every worker in shop, mill, and factory.

It is true, of course, that there are certain kinds of work -such as engineering: civil, electrical, mechanical-which the industrial councils will not be able to acquire by actual practice. But what they will learn of the general processes of industry will be of inestimable value as preparation. For the rest, the closer bond of friendship and cooperation between worker and technician is a paramount necessity.

The taking over of the industries is therefore the first great object of the social revolution. It is to be accomplished by the proletariat, by the part of it organized and prepared for the task. Considerable numbers of workers are already beginning to realize the importance of this and to understand the task before them. But understanding what is necessary to be done is not sufficient. Learning how to do it is the next step. It is up to the organized working class to enter at once upon this preparatory work.

Chapter 28: Principles and Practice

The main purpose of the social revolution must be the *immediate* betterment of conditions for the masses. The success of the revolution fundamentally depends on it. This can be achieved only by organizing consumption and production so as to be of real benefit to the populace. In that lies the greatest — in fact, the only — security of the social revolution. It was not the Red army which conquered counter-revolution in Russia: it was the peasants holding on for dear life to the land they had taken during the upheaval. The social revolution must be of material gain to the masses if it is to live and grow. The people at large must be sure of actual advantage from their efforts, or at least entertain the hope of such advantage in the near future. The revolution is doomed if it relies for its existence and defense on *mechanical* means, such as war and armies. The real safety of the revolution is *organic*; that is, it lies in industry and production.

The object of revolution is to secure greater freedom, to increase the material welfare of the people. The aim of the social revolution, in particular, is to enable the masses *by their own efforts* to bring about conditions of material and social well-being, to rise to higher moral and spiritual levels.

In other words, it is liberty which is to be established by the social revolution. For true liberty is based on economic opportunity. Without it all liberty is a sham and lie, a mask for exploitation and oppression. In the profoundest sense liberty is the daughter of economic equality.

The main aim of the social revolution is therefore to establish equal liberty on the basis of equal opportunity. The revolutionary reorganization of life must immediately proceed to secure the equality of all, economically, politically, and socially.

That reorganization will depend, first and foremost, on the thorough familiarity of labor with the economic situation of the country: on a complete inventory of the supply, on exact knowledge of the sources of raw material, and on the proper organization of the labor forces for efficient management.

It means that statistics and intelligent workers' associations are vital needs of the revolution, on the day after the upheaval. The entire problem of production and distribution — the life of the revolution — is based on it. It is obvious, as pointed out before, that this knowledge must be acquired by the workers *before* the revolution if the latter is to accomplish its purposes.

That is why the shop and factory committee, dealt with in the previous chapter, are so important and will play such a decisive rôle in the revolutionary reconstruction.

For a new society is not born suddenly, any more than a child is. New social life gestates in the body of the old just as new individual life does in the mother's womb. Time and certain processes are required to develop it till it becomes a complete organism capable of functioning. When that stage has been reached birth takes place in agony and pain, socially as individually. Revolution, to use a trite but expressive saying, is the midwife of the new social being. This is true in the most literal sense. Capitalism is the parent of the new society; the shop and factory committee, the union of class-conscious labor and revolutionary aims, is the germ of the new life. In that shop committee and union the worker must acquire the knowledge of how to manage his affairs: in the process he will grow to the perception that social life is a matter of proper organization, of united effort, of solidarity. He will come to understand that it is not the bossing and ruling of men but free association and harmonious working together which accomplish things; that it is not government and laws which produce and create, make the wheat grow and the wheels turn, but concord and cooperation. Experience will teach him to

substitute the management of things in place of the government of men. In the daily life and struggles of his shop-committee the worker must learn how to conduct the revolution.

Shop and factory committees, organized locally, by district, region, and State, and federated nationally, will be the bodies best suited to carry on revolutionary production.

Local and State labor councils, federated nationally, will be the form of organization most adapted to manage distribution by means of the people's cooperatives.

These committees, elected by the workers on the job, connect their shop and factory with other shops and factories of the same industry. The Joint Council of an entire industry links that industry with other industries, and thus is formed a federation of labor councils for the entire country.

Coöperative associations are the mediums of exchange between the country and city. The farmers, organized locally and federated regionally and nationally, supply the needs of the cities by means of the coöperatives and receive through the latter in exchange the products of the city industries.

Every revolution is accompanied by a great outburst of popular enthusiasm full of hope and aspiration. It is the spring-board of revolution. This high tide, spontaneous and powerful, opens up the human sources of initiative and activity. The sense of equality liberates the best there is in man and makes him consciously creative. These are the great motors of the social revolution, its moving forces. Their free and unhindered expression signifies the development and deepening of the revolution. Their suppression means decay and death. The revolution is safe, it grows and becomes strong, as long as the masses feel that they are direct participants in it, that they are fashioning their own lives, that *they* are making the revolution, that they *are* the revolution. But the moment their activities are usurped by a political party or are centered in some special organization, revolutionary effort becomes limited to a comparatively small circle from which the large masses are practically excluded. The natural result is that popular enthusiasm is dampened, interest gradually weakens, initiative languishes, creativeness wanes, and the revolution becomes the monopoly of a clique which presently turns dictator.

This is fatal to the revolution. The sole prevention of such a catastrophe lies in the continued active interest of the workers through their every-day participation in all matters pertaining to the revolution. The source of this interest and activity is the shop and the union.

The interest of the masses and their loyalty to the revolution depend furthermore on their feeling that the revolution represents justice and fair play. This explains why revolutions have the power of rousing the people to acts of great heroism and devotion. As already pointed out, the masses instinctively see in revolution the enemy of wrong and iniquity and the harbinger of justice. In this sense revolution is a highly ethical factor and an inspiration. Fundamentally it is only great moral principles which can fire the masses and lift them to spiritual heights.

All popular upheavals have shown this to be true; particularly so the Russian Revolution. It was because of that spirit that the Russian masses so strikingly triumphed over all obstacles in the days of February and October. No opposition could conquer their devotion inspired by a great and noble cause. But the Revolution began to decline when it had become emasculated of its high moral values, when it was denuded of its elements of justice, equality, and liberty. Their loss was the doom of the Revolution.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly how essential spiritual values are to the social revolution. These and the consciousness of the masses that the revolution also means material betterment are dynamic influences in the life and growth of the new society. Of the two factors the spiritual values are foremost. The history of previous revolutions proves that the masses were ever willing to suffer and to sacrifice material well-being for the sake of greater liberty and justice. Thus in Russia neither cold nor starvation could induce the peasants and workers to aid counter-revolution. All privation and misery notwithstanding they served heroically the interests of the great cause. It was only when they saw the Revolution monopolized by a political party, the new-won liberties curtailed, a dictatorship established, and injustice and inequality dominant again that they became indifferent to the Revolution, declined to participate in the sham, refused to cooperate, and even turned against it.

To forget ethical values, to introduce practices and methods inconsistent with or opposed to the high moral purposes of the revolution means to invite counter-revolution and disaster.

It is therefore clear that the success of the social revolution primarily depends on liberty and equality. Any deviation from them can only be harmful; indeed, is sure to prove destructive. It follows that *all* the activities of the revolution must be based on freedom and equal rights. This applies to small things as to great. Any acts or methods tending to limit liberty, to create inequality and injustice, can result only in a popular attitude inimical to the revolution and in best interests.

It is from this angle that all the problems of the revolutionary period must be considered and solved. Among those problems the most important are consumption and housing, production and exchange.

Chapter 29: Consumption and Exchange

Let us take up the organization of consumption first, because people have to eat before they can work and produce.

“What do you mean by the organization of consumption?” your friend asks.

“He means rationing, I suppose,” you remark.

I do. Of course, when the social revolution has become thoroughly organized and production is functioning normally there will be enough for everybody. But in the first stages of the revolution, during the process of reconstruction, we must take care to supply the people as best we can, and equally, which means rationing.

“The Bolsheviki did not have equal rationing,” your friend interrupts; “they had different kinds of rations for different people.

They did, and that was one of the greatest mistakes they made. It was resented by the people as a wrong and it provoked irritation and discontent. The Bolsheviki had one kind of ration for the sailor, another of lower quality and quantity for the soldier, a third for the skilled worker, a fourth for the unskilled one; another ration again for the average citizen, and yet another for the bourgeois. The best rations were for the Bolsheviki, the members of the Party, and special rations for the Communist officials and commissars. At one time they had as many as fourteen different food rations. Your own common sense will tell you that it was all wrong. Was it fair to discriminate against people because they happened to be laborers, mechanics, or intellectuals rather than soldiers or sailors? Such methods were unjust and vicious: they immediately created material inequality and opened the door to misuse of position and opportunity, to speculation, graft, and swindle. They also stimulated counter-revolution, for those indifferent or unfriendly to the Revolution were embittered by the discrimination and therefore became an easy prey to counter-revolutionary influences.

This initial discrimination and the many others which followed were not dictated by the needs of the situation but solely by political party considerations. Having usurped the reins of government and fearing the opposition of the people, the Bolsheviki sought to strengthen themselves in the government seat by currying favor with the sailors, soldiers, and workers. But by these means they succeeded only in creating indignation and antagonizing the masses, for the injustice of the system was too crying and obvious. Furthermore, even the “favored class,” the proletariat, felt discriminated against because the soldiers were given better rations. Was the worker not as good as the soldier? Could the soldier fight for the Revolution—the factory man argued—if the worker would not supply him with ammunition? The soldier, in his turn, protested against the sailor getting more. Was he not as valuable as the sailor? And all condemned the special rations and privileges bestowed on the Bolshevik members of the Party, and particularly the comforts and even luxuries enjoyed by the higher officials and commissars, while the masses suffered privation.

Popular resentment of such practices was strikingly expressed by the Kronstadt sailors. It was in the midst of an extremely severe and hungry winter, in March, 1921, that a public mass-meeting of the sailors unanimously resolved voluntarily to give up their extra rations in behalf of the less favored population of Kronstadt, and to equalize the rations in the entire city.³⁵ This truly ethical revolutionary

³⁵See *The Kronstadt Rebellion*, by the author.

action voiced the general feeling against discrimination and favoritism, and gave convincing proof of the deep sense of justice inherent in the masses.

All experience teaches that the just and square thing is at the same time also the most sensible and practical in the long run. This holds equally true of the individual as of collective life. Discrimination and injustice are particularly destructive to revolution, because the very spirit of revolution is born of the hunger for equity and justice.

I have already mentioned that when the social revolution attains the stage where it can produce sufficient for all, then is adopted the Anarchist principle of "to each according to his needs." In the more industrially developed and efficient countries that stage would naturally be reached sooner than in backward lands. But until it is reached, the system of equal sharing, equal distribution per capita, is imperative as the only just method. It goes without saying, of course, that special consideration must be given to the sick and the old, to children, and to women during and after pregnancy, as was also the practice in the Russian Revolution.

Let me get this straight," you remark. "There is to be equal sharing, you say. Then you won't be able to buy anything?"

No, there will be no buying or selling. The revolution abolishes private ownership of the means of production and distribution, and with it goes capitalistic business. Personal possession remains only in the things you use. Thus, your watch is your own, but the watch factory belongs to the people. Land, machinery, and all other public utilities will be collective property, neither to be bought nor sold. Actual use will be considered the only title—not to ownership but to possession. The organization of the coal miners, for example, will be in charge of the coal mines, not as owners but as the operating agency. Similarly will the railroad brotherhoods run the railroads, and so on. Collective possession, cooperatively managed in the interests of the community, will take the place of personal ownership privately conducted for profit.

"But if you can't buy anything, then what's the use of money?" you ask.

None whatever; money becomes useless. You can't get anything for it. When the sources of supply, the land, factories, and products become public property, socialized, you can neither buy nor sell. As money is only a medium for such transactions, it loses its usefulness.

"But how will you exchange things?"

Exchange will be free. The coal miners, for instance, will deliver the coal they mined to the public coal yards for the use of the community. In their turn the miners will receive from the community's warehouses the machinery, tools, and the other commodities they need. That means free exchange without the medium of money and without profit, on the basis of requirement and the supply on hand.

"But if there is no machinery or food to be given to the miners?"

If there is none, money will not help matters. The miners couldn't feed on banknotes. Consider how such things are managed to-day. You trade coal for money, and for the money you get food. The free community we are speaking of will exchange the coal for food *directly*, without the medium of money.

"But on what basis? To-day you know what a dollar is worth, more or less, but how much coal will you give for a sack of flour?"

You mean, how will value or price be determined. But we have seen already in preceding chapters that there is no real measure of value, and that price depends on supply and demand and varies accordingly. The price of coal rises if there is a scarcity of it; it becomes cheaper if the supply is greater than the demand. To make bigger profits the coal owners artificially limit the output, and the same methods obtain throughout the capitalistic system. With the abolition of capitalism no one will be interested in raising the price of coal or limiting its supply. As much coal will be mined as will be necessary to satisfy the need. Similarly will as much food be raised as the country needs. It will be the *requirements* of the community and the supply obtainable which will determine the amount it is to receive. This applies to coal and food as to all other needs of the people.

“But suppose there is not enough of a certain product to go around. What will you do then?”

Then we'll do what is done even in capitalistic society in time of war and scarcity: the people are rationed, with the difference that in the free community rationing will be managed on principles of equality.

“But suppose the farmer refuses to supply the city with his products unless he gets money?”

The farmer, like any one else, wants money only if he can buy with it the things he needs. He will quickly see that money is useless to him. In Russia during the Revolution you could not get a peasant, to sell you a pound of flour for a bagful of money. But he was eager to give you a barrel of the finest grain for an old pair of boots. It is plows, spades, rakes, agricultural machinery, and clothing which the farmer wants, not money. For these he will let you have his wheat, barley, and corn. In other words, the city will exchange with the farm the products each requires, on the basis of need.

It has been suggested by some that exchange during the reconstruction should be based on some definite standard. It is proposed, for example, that every community issue its own money, as is often done in time of revolution; or that a day's work should be considered the unit of value and so-called labor notes serve as medium of exchange. But neither of these proposals is of practical help. Money issued by communities in revolution would quickly depreciate to the point of no value, since such money would have no secure guarantees behind it, without which money is worth nothing. Similarly labor notes would not represent any definite and measurable value as a means of exchange. What would, for instance, an hour's work of the coal miner be worth? Or fifteen minutes' consultation with the physician? Even if all effort should be considered equal in value and an hour's labor be made the unit, could the house painter's hour of work or the surgeon's operation be equitably measured in terms of wheat?

Common sense will solve this problem on the basis of human equality and the right of every one to life.

“Such a system might work among decent people,” your friend objects; “but how about shirkers? Were not the Bolsheviki right in establishing the principle that ‘whoever doesn't work, doesn't eat’?”

No, my friend, you are mistaken. At first sight it may appear as if that was a just and sensible idea. But in reality it proved impractical, not to speak of the injustice and harm it worked all around.

“How so?”

It was impractical because it required an army of officials to keep tab on the people who worked or didn't work. It led to incrimination and recrimination and endless disputes about official decisions. So that within a short time the number of those who didn't work was doubled and even trebled by the effort to force people to work and to guard against their dodging or doing bad work. It was the system of compulsory labor which soon proved such a failure that the Bolsheviki were compelled to give it up.

Moreover, the system caused even greater evils in other directions. Its injustice lay in the fact that you cannot break into a person's heart or mind and decide what peculiar physical or mental condition makes it temporarily impossible for him to work. Consider further the precedent you establish by introducing a false principle and thereby rousing the apposition of those who feel it wrong and oppressive and therefore refuse coöperation.

A rational community will find it more practical and beneficial to treat all alike, whether one happens to work at the time or not, rather than create more non-workers to watch those already on hand, or to build prisons for their punishment and support. For if you refuse to feed a man, for whatever cause, you drive him to theft and other crimes — and thus you yourself create the necessity for courts, lawyers, judge, jails, and warders, the upkeep of whom is far more burdensome than to feed the offenders. And these you have to feed, anyhow, even if you put them in prison.

The revolutionary community will depend more on awakening the social consciousness and solidarity of its delinquents than on punishment. It will rely on the example set by its working members, and it will be right in doing so. For the natural attitude of the industrious man to the shirker is such that the

latter will find the social atmosphere so unpleasant that he will prefer to work and enjoy the respect and good will of his fellows rather than to be despised in idleness.

Bear in mind that it is more important, and in the end more practical and useful, to do the square thing rather than to gain a seeming immediate advantage. That is, to do justice is more vital than to punish. For punishment is never just and always harmful to both sides, the punished and the punisher; harmful even more spiritually than physically, and there is no greater harm than that, for it hardens and corrupts you. This is unqualifiedly true of your individual life and with the same force it applies to the collective social existence.

On the foundations of liberty, justice, and equality, as also on understanding and sympathy, must be built every phase of life in the social revolution. Only so it can endure. This applies to the problems of shelter, food, and the security of your district or city, as well as to the defense of the revolution.

As regards housing and local safety Russia has shown the way in the first months of the October Revolution. House committees, chosen by the tenants, and city federations of such committees, take the problem in hand. They gather statistics of the facilities of a given district and of the number of applicants requiring quarters. The latter are assigned according to personal or family need on the basis of equal rights.

Similar house and district committees have charge of the provisioning of the city. Individual application for rations at the distributing centers is a stupendous waste of time and energy. Equally false is the system, practiced in Russia in the first years of the Revolution, of issuing rations in the institutions of one's employment, in shops, factories, and offices. The better and more efficient way, which at the same time insures more equitable distribution and closes the door to favoritism and misuse, is rationing by houses or streets. The authorized house or street committee procures at the local distributing center the provisions, clothing, etc., apportioned to the number of tenants represented by the committee. Equal rationing has the added advantage of eradicating food speculation, the vicious practice which grew to enormous proportions in Russia because of the system of inequality and privilege. Party members or persons with a political pull could freely bring to the cities carloads of flour while some old peasant woman was severely punished for selling a loaf of bread. No wonder speculation flourished, and to such an extent, indeed, that the Bolsheviki had to form special regiments to cope with the evil.³⁶ The prisons were filled with offenders; capital punishment was resorted to; but even the most drastic measures of the government failed to stop speculation, for the latter was the direct consequence of the system of discrimination and favoritism. Only equality and freedom of exchange can obviate such evils or at least reduce them to a minimum.

Taking care of the sanitary and kindred needs of street and district by voluntary committees of house and locality affords the best results, since such bodies, themselves tenants of the given district, are personally interested in the health and safety of their families and friends. This system worked much better in Russia than the subsequently established regular police force. The latter consisting mostly of the worst city elements, proved corrupt, brutal, and oppressive.

The hope of material betterment is, as already mentioned, a powerful factor in the forward movement of humanity. But that incentive alone is not sufficient to inspire the masses to give them the vision of a new and better world, and cause them to face danger and privation for its sake. For that an ideal is needed, an ideal which appeals not only to the stomach but even more to the heart and imagination, which rouses our dormant longing for what is fine and beautiful, for the spiritual and cultural values of life. An ideal, in short, which wakens the inherent social instincts of man, feeds his sympathies and fellow-feeling, fires his love of liberty and justice, and imbues even the lowest with nobility of thought and deed, as we frequently witness in the catastrophic events of life. Let a great tragedy happen anywhere -an

³⁶Those special police and military bodies, known as *zagriaditelniye otriadi*, were most bitterly hated and popularly known as "robber regiments", because of their irresponsible thievery, incredible depravity and cruelty. They were abolished by the introduction of the "new economic policy."

earthquake, flood, or railroad accident-and the compassion of the whole world goes out to the sufferers. Acts of heroic self-sacrifice, of brave rescue, and of unstinted aid demonstrate the real nature of man and his deep-felt brotherhood and unity.

This is true of mankind in all times, climes, and social strata. The story of Amundsen is a striking illustration of it. After decades of arduous and dangerous work the famous Norwegian explorer resolves to enjoy his remaining years in peaceful literary pursuits. He is announcing his decision at a banquet given in his honor, and almost at the same moment comes the news that the Nobile expedition to the North Pole had met with disaster. On the instant Amundsen renounces all his plans of a quiet life and prepares to fly to the aid of the lost aviators, fully aware of the peril of such an undertaking. Human sympathy and the compelling impulse to help those in distress overcome all considerations of personal safety, and Amundsen sacrifices his life in an attempt to rescue the Nobile party.

Deep in all of us lives the spirit of Amundsen. How many men of science have given up their lives in seeking knowledge by which to benefit their fellow-men-how many physicians and nurses have perished in the work of ministering to people stricken with contagious disease how many men and women have voluntarily faced certain death in the effort to check an epidemic which was decimating their country or even some foreign land-how many men, common workingmen, miners, sailors, railroad employees-unknown to fame and unsung-have given themselves in the spirit of Amundsen? Their name is legion.

It is *this* human nature, this idealism, which must be roused by the social revolution. Without it the revolution cannot be, without it, it cannot live. Without it man is forever doomed to remain a slave and a weakling.

It is the work of the Anarchist, of the revolutionist, of the intelligent, class-conscious proletarian to exemplify and cultivate this spirit and instill it in others. It alone can conquer the powers of evil and darkness, and build a new world of humanity, liberty, and justice.

Chapter 30: Production

“What about production,” you ask; “how is it to be managed?”

We have already seen what principles must underlie the activities of the revolution if it is to be social and accomplish its aims. The same principles of freedom and voluntary cooperation must also direct the reorganization of the industries.

The first effect of the revolution is reduced production. The general strike, which I have forecast as the starting point of the social revolution, itself constitutes a suspension of industry. The workers lay down their tools, demonstrate in the streets, and thus temporarily stop production.

But life goes on. The essential needs of the people must be satisfied. In that stage the revolution lives on the supplies, already on hand. But to exhaust those supplies would be disastrous. The situation rests in the hands of labor: the immediate resumption of industry is imperative. The organized agricultural and industrial proletariat takes possession of the land, factories, shops, mines and mills. Most energetic application is now the order of the day.

It should be clearly understood that *the social revolution necessitates more intensive production* than under capitalism in order to supply the needs of the large masses who till then had lived in penury. This greater production can be achieved only by the workers having previously prepared themselves for the new situation. Familiarity with the processes of industry, knowledge of the sources of supply, and determination to succeed will accomplish the task. The enthusiasm generated by the revolution, the energies liberated, and the inventiveness stimulated by it must be given full freedom and scope to find creative channels. Revolution always wakens a high degree of responsibility. Together with the new atmosphere of liberty and brotherhood it creates the realization that hard work and severe self-discipline are necessary to bring production up to the requirements of consumption.

On the other hand, the new situation will greatly simplify the present very complex problems of industry. For you must consider that capitalism, because of its competitive character and contradictory financial and commercial interests, involves many intricate and perplexing issues which would be entirely eliminated by the abolition of the conditions of to-day. Questions of wage scales and selling prices; the requirements of the existing markets and the hunt for new ones; the scarcity of capital for large operations and the heavy interest to be paid on it; new investments, the effects of speculation and monopoly, and a score of related problems which worry the capitalist and make industry such a difficult and cumbersome network to-day would all disappear. At present these require divers departments of study and highly trained men to keep unraveling the tangled skein of plutocratic cross purposes, many specialists to calculate the actualities and possibilities of profit and loss, and a large force of aids to help steer the industrial ship between the perilous rocks which beset the chaotic course of capitalist competition, national and international.

All this would be automatically done away with by the socialization of industry and the termination of the competitive system; and thereby the problems of production will be immensely lightened. The knotted complexity of capitalist industry need therefore inspire no undue fear for the future. Those who talk of labor not being equal to manage “modern” industry fail to take into account the factors referred to above. The industrial labyrinth will turn out to be far less formidable on the day of the social reconstruction.

In passing it may be mentioned that all the other phases of life would also be very much simplified as a result of the indicated changes: various present-day habits, customs, compulsory and unwholesome modes of living will naturally fall into disuse.

Furthermore it must be considered that the task of increased production would be enormously facilitated by the addition to the ranks of labor of vast numbers whom the altered economic conditions will liberate for work.

Recent statistics show that in 1920 there were in the United States over 41 million persons of both sexes engaged in gainful occupations out of a total population of over 105 millions.³⁷ Out of those 41 millions only 26 millions were actually employed in the industries, including transportation and agriculture, the balance of 15 millions consisting mostly of persons engaged in trade, of commercial travelers, advertisers, and various other middlemen of the present system. In other words, 15 million³⁸ persons would be released for useful work by a revolution in the United States. A similar situation, proportionate to population, would develop in other countries.

The greater production necessitated by the social revolution would therefore have an additional army of many million persons at its disposal. The systematic incorporation of those millions into industry and agriculture, aided by modern scientific methods of organization and production, will go a long way toward helping to solve the problems of supply.

Capitalist production is for profit; more labor is used today to sell things than to produce them. The social revolution reorganizes the industries on the basis of the *needs* of the populace. Essential needs come first, naturally. Food, clothing, shelter — these are the primal requirements of man. The first step in this direction is the ascertaining of the available supply of provisions and other commodities. The labor associations in every city and community take this work in hand for the purpose of equitable distribution. Workers' committees in every street and district assume charge, cooperating with similar committees in the city and State, and federating their efforts throughout the country by means of general councils of producers and consumers.

Great events and upheavals bring to the fore the most active and energetic elements. The social revolution will crystallize the class-conscious labor ranks. By whatever name they will be known-as industrial unions, revolutionary syndicalist bodies, cooperative associations, leagues of producers and consumers-they will represent the most enlightened and advanced part of labor, the organized workers aware of their aims and how to attain them. It is they who will be the moving spirit of the revolution.

With the aid of industrial machinery and by scientific cultivation of the land freed from monopoly the revolution must first of all supply the elemental wants of society. In farming and gardening intensive cultivation and modern methods have made us practically independent of natural soil quality and climate. To a very considerable extent man now makes his own soil and his own climate, thanks to the achievements of chemistry. Exotic fruits can be raised in the north to be supplied to the warm south, as is being done in France. Science is the wizard who enables man to master all difficulties and overcome all obstacles. The future, liberated from the incubus of the profit system and enriched by the work of the millions of non-producers of to-day, holds the greatest welfare for society. That future must be the objective point of the social revolution; its motto: bread and well-being for all. First bread, then well-being and luxury. Even luxury, for luxury is a deep-felt need of man, a need of his physical as of his spiritual being.

Intense application to this purpose must be the continuous effort of the revolution: not something to be postponed for a distant day but of immediate practice. The revolution must strive to enable every community to sustain itself, to become materially independent. No country should have to rely

³⁷N. Y. *World Almanac*, 1927

³⁸Exclusive of the army, militia, and navy, and the great numbers employed in unnecessary and harmful occupations, such as the building of warships, the manufacture of ammunition and other military equipment, etc.

on outside help or exploit colonies for its support. That is the way of capitalism. The aim of Anarchism, on the contrary, is material independence, not only for the individual, but for every community.

This means gradual decentralization instead of centralization. Even under capitalism we see the decentralization tendency manifest itself in spite of the essentially centralistic character of the present-day industrial system. Countries which were before entirely dependent on foreign manufactures, as Germany in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, later Italy and Japan, and now Hungary, Czechoslovakia, etc., are gradually emancipating themselves industrially, working their own natural resources, building their own factories and mills, and attaining economic independence from other lands. International finance does not welcome this development and tries its utmost to retard its progress, because it is more profitable for the Morgans and Rockefellers to keep such countries as Mexico, China, India, Ireland, or Egypt industrially backward, in order to exploit their natural resources and at the same time be assured of foreign markets for “overproduction” at home. The governments of the great financiers and lords of industry help them secure those foreign natural resources and markets, even at the point of the bayonet. Thus Great Britain by force of arms compels China to permit English opium to poison the Chinese, at a good profit, and exploits every means to dispose in that country of the greater part of its textile products. For the same reason Egypt, India, Ireland, and other dependencies and colonies are not permitted to develop their home industries.

In short, capitalism seeks centralization. But a free country needs decentralization, independence not only political but also industrial, economic.

Russia strikingly illustrates how imperative economic independence is, particularly to the social revolution. For years following the October upheaval the Bolshevik Government concentrated its efforts on currying favor with bourgeois governments for “recognition” and inviting foreign capitalists to help exploit the resources of Russia. But capital, afraid to make large investments under the insecure conditions of the dictatorship, failed to respond with any degree of enthusiasm. Meanwhile Russia was approaching economic breakdown. The situation finally compelled the Bolsheviks to understand that the country must depend on her own efforts for maintenance. Russia began to look around for means to help herself; and thereby she acquired greater confidence in her own abilities, learned to exercise self-reliance and initiative, and started to develop her own industries; a slow and painful process, but a wholesome necessity which will ultimately make Russia economically self-supporting and independent.

The social revolution in any given country must from the very first determine to make itself self-supporting. *It must help itself.* This principle of self-help is not to be understood as a lack of solidarity with other lands. On the contrary, mutual aid and coöperation between countries, as among individuals, can exist only on the basis of equality, among equals. *Dependence* is the very reverse of it.

Should the social revolution take place in several countries at the same time — in France and Germany, for instance — then joint effort would be a matter of course and would make the task of revolutionary reorganization much easier.

Fortunately the workers are learning to understand that their cause is international: the organization of labor is now developing beyond national boundaries. It is to be hoped that the time is not far away when the entire proletariat of Europe may combine in a general strike, which is to be the prelude to the social revolution. That is emphatically a consummation to be striven for with the greatest earnestness. But at the same time the probability is not to be discounted that the revolution may break out in one country sooner than in another — let us say in France earlier than in Germany — and in such a case it would become imperative for France not to wait for possible aid from outside but immediately to exert all her energies to help herself, to supply the most essential needs of her people by her own efforts.

Every country in revolution must seek to achieve agricultural independence no less than political, industrial self-help no less than agricultural. This process is going on to a certain extent even under capitalism. It should be one of the main objects of the social revolution. Modern methods make it possible. The manufacture of watches and clocks, for example, which was formerly a monopoly of

Switzerland, is now carried on in every country. Production of silk, previously limited to France, is among the great industries of various countries to-day. Italy, without sources of coal or iron, constructs steel-clad ships. Switzerland, no richer, also makes them.

Decentralization will cure society of many evils of the centralized principle. Politically decentralization means freedom; industrially, material independence; socially it implies security and well-being for the small communities; individually it results in manhood and liberty.

Equally important to the social revolution as independence from foreign lands is decentralization within the country itself. Internal decentralization means making the larger regions, even every community, so far as possible, self-supporting. In his very illuminating and suggestive work, *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*, Peter Kropotkin has convincingly shown how a city like Paris even, now almost exclusively commercial, could raise enough food in its own environs to support its population abundantly. By using modern agricultural machinery and intensive cultivation London and New York could subsist upon the products raised in their own immediate vicinity. It is a fact that "our means of obtaining from the soil whatever we want, under *any* climate and upon any *soil*, have lately been improved at such a rate that we cannot foresee yet what is the limit of productivity of a few acres of land. The limit vanishes in proportion to our better study of the subject, and every year makes it vanish further and further from our sight."

When the social revolution begins in any land, its foreign commerce stops: the importation of raw materials and finished products is suspended. The country may even be blockaded by the bourgeois governments, as was the case with Russia. Thus the revolution is *compelled* to become self-supporting and provide for its own wants. Even various parts of the same country may have to face such an eventuality. They would have to produce what they need within their own area, by their own efforts. Only decentralization could solve this problem. The country would have to reorganize its activities in such a manner as to be able to feed itself. It would have to revert to production on a small scale, to home industry, and to intensive agriculture and horticulture. Man's initiative freed by the revolution and his wits sharpened by necessity will rise to the situation.

It must therefore be clearly understood that it would be disastrous to the interests of the revolution to suppress or interfere with the small-scale industries which are even now practiced to such a great extent in various European countries. Numerous articles of every-day use are produced by the peasants of Continental Europe during their leisure winter hours. Those home manufactures total up tremendous figures and fill a great need. It would be most harmful to the revolution to destroy them, as Russia so foolishly did in her mad Bolshevik passion for centralization. When a country in revolution is attacked by foreign governments, when it is blockaded and deprived of imports, when its large-scale industries threaten to break down or the railroads actually do break down, then it is just the small home industries which become the vital nerve of economic life: they alone can feed and save the revolution.

Moreover, such home industries are not only a potent economic factor; they are also of the greatest social value. They serve to cultivate friendly intercourse between the farm and the city, bringing the two into closer and more solidaric contact. In fact, the home industries are themselves an expression of a most wholesome social spirit which from earliest times has manifested itself in village gatherings, in communal efforts, in folk dance and song. This normal and healthy tendency, in its various aspects, should be encouraged and stimulated by the revolution for the greater weal of the community.

The role of industrial decentralization in the revolution is unfortunately too little appreciated. Even in progressive labor ranks there is a dangerous tendency to ignore or minimize its importance. Most people are still in the thralldom of the Marxian dogma that centralization is "more efficient and economical." They close their eyes to the fact that the alleged "economy" is achieved at the cost of the worker's limb and life, that the "efficiency" degrades him to a mere industrial cog, deadens his soul, and kills his body. Furthermore, in a system of centralization the administration of industry becomes constantly merged in

fewer hands, producing a powerful bureaucracy of industrial overlords. It would indeed be the sheerest irony if the revolution were to aim at such a result. It would mean the creation of a new master class.

The revolution can accomplish the emancipation of labor only by gradual decentralization, by developing the individual worker into a more conscious and determining factor in the processes of industry, by making him the impulse whence proceeds all industrial and social activity. The deep significance of the social revolution lies in the abolition of the mastery of man over man, putting in its place the management of things. Only thus can be achieved industrial and social freedom.

“Are you sure it would work?” you demand.

I am sure of this: if that will not work, nothing else will. The plan I have outlined is a free communism, a life of voluntary coöperation and equal sharing. There is no other way of securing economic equality which alone is liberty. Any other system must lead back to capitalism.

It is likely, of course, that a country in social revolution may try various economic experiments. A limited capitalism might be introduced in one part of the land or collectivism in another. But collectivism is only another form of the wage system and it would speedily tend to become the capitalism of the present day. For collectivism begins by abolishing private ownership of the means of production and immediately reverses itself by returning to the system of remuneration according to work performed; which means the reintroduction of inequality.

Man learns by doing. The social revolution in different countries and regions will probably try out various methods, and by practical experience learn the best way. The revolution is at the same time the opportunity and justification for it. I am not attempting to prophesy what this or that country is going to do, what particular course it will follow. Nor do I presume to dictate to the future, to prescribe its mode of conduct. My purpose is to suggest, in broad outline, the principles which must animate the revolution, the general lines of action it should follow if it is to accomplish its aim — the reconstruction of society on a foundation of freedom and equality.

We know that previous revolutions for the most part failed of their objects; they degenerated into dictatorship and despotism, and thus reëstablished the old institutions of oppression and exploitation. We know it from past and recent history. We therefore draw the conclusion that the old way will not do. A new way must be cried in the coming social revolution. What new way, The only one so far known to man: the way of liberty and equality, the way of free communism, of Anarchy.

Chapter 31: Defense of the Revolution

“Suppose your system is tried, would you have any means of defending the revolution?” you ask.
Certainly.

“Even by armed force?”

Yes, if necessary.

“But armed force *is* organized violence. Didn’t you say Anarchism was against it?”

Anarchism is opposed to any interference with your liberty, be it by force and violence or by any other means. It is against all invasion and compulsion. But if any one attacks *you*, then it is *he* who is invading you, he who is employing violence against you. You have a right to defend yourself. More than that, it is your duty, as an Anarchist, to protect your liberty, to resist coercion and compulsion. Otherwise you are a slave, not a free man. In other words, the social revolution will attack no one, but it will defend itself against invasion from any quarter.

Besides, you must not confuse the social revolution with Anarchy. Revolution, in some of its stages, is a violent upheaval; Anarchy is a social condition of freedom and peace. The revolution is the *means* of bringing Anarchy about but it is not Anarchy itself. It is to pave the road for Anarchy, to establish conditions which will make a life of liberty possible.

But to achieve its purpose the revolution must be imbued with and directed by the Anarchist spirit and ideas. The end shapes the means, just as the tool you use must be fit to do the work you want to accomplish. That is to say, the social revolution must be Anarchistic in method as in aim.

Revolutionary defense must be in consonance with this spirit. Self-defense excludes all acts of coercion, of persecution or revenge. It is concerned only with repelling attack and depriving the enemy of opportunity to invade you.

“How would you repel foreign invasion?”

By the strength of the revolution. In what does that strength consist? First and foremost, in the support of the people, in the devotion of the industrial and agricultural masses. If they feel that they themselves are making the revolution, that they have become the masters of their lives, that they have gained freedom and are building up their welfare, then in that very sentiment you have the greatest strength of the revolution. The masses fight to-day for king, capitalist, or president because they believe them worth fighting for. Let them believe in the revolution, and they will defend it to the death.

They will fight for the revolution with heart and soul, as the half-starved working men, women, and even children of Petrograd defended their city, almost with bare hands, against the White army of General Yudenitch. Take that faith away, deprive the people of power by setting up some authority over them, be it a political party or military organization, and you have dealt a fatal blow to the revolution. You will have robbed it of its main source of strength, the masses. You will have made it defenseless.

The armed workers and peasants are the only effective defense of the revolution. By means of their unions and syndicates they must always be on guard against counterrevolutionary attack. The worker in factory and mill, in mine and field, is the soldier of the revolution. He is at his bench and plow or on the battlefield, according to need. But in his factory as in his regiment he is the soul of the revolution, and it is *his* will that decides its fate. In industry the shop committees, in the barracks the soldiers’ committees- these are the fountain-head of all revolutionary strength and activity.

It was the *volunteer* Red Guard, made up of Boilers, that successfully defended the Russian Revolution in its most critical initial stages. Later on it was again volunteer peasant regiments who defeated the

White armies. The regular Red army, organized later, was powerless without the volunteer workers' and peasants' divisions. Siberia was freed from Kolchak and his hordes by such peasant volunteers. In the north of Russia it was also workers' and peasants detachments that drove out the foreign armies which came to impose the yoke of native reactionaries upon the people.³⁹ In the Ukraine the volunteer peasant armies — known as *povstantsi* — saved the Revolution from numerous counter-revolutionary generals and particularly from Denikin when the latter was already at the very gates of Moscow. It was the revolutionary *povstantsi* who freed southern Russia from the invading armies of Germany, France, Italy, and Greece and subsequently also routed the White forces of General

The military defense of the revolution may demand a supreme command, coordination of activities, discipline, and obedience to orders. But these must proceed from the devotion of the workers and peasants, and must be based on their voluntary cooperation through their own local, regional, and federal organizations. In the matter of defense against foreign attack, as in all other problems of the social revolution, the active interest of the masses, their autonomy and self-determination are the best guarantee of success.

Understand well that the only really effective defense of the revolution lies in the attitude of the people. Popular discontent is the worse enemy of the revolution and its greatest danger. We must always bear in mind that the strength of the social revolution is organic, not mechanistic: not in mechanical, military measures lies its might, but industry, in its ability to reconstruct life, to establish liberty and justice. Let the people feel that it is indeed their own cause which is at stake, and the last man of them will fight like a lion in its behalf.

The same applies to internal as to external defense. What chance would any White general or counter-revolutionist have if he could not exploit oppression and injustice to incite the people against the revolution? Counter-revolution can feed only on popular discontent. Where the masses are conscious that the revolution and all its activities are in their own hands, that they themselves are managing things and are free to change their methods when they consider it necessary, counter-revolution can find no support and is harmless.

“But would you let counter-revolutionists incite the people if they tried to?”

By all means. Let them talk all they like. To restrain them would serve only to create a persecuted class and thereby enlist popular sympathy for them and their cause. To suppress speech and press is not only a theoretic offense against liberty: it is a direct blow at the very foundations of the revolution. It would, first of all, raise problems where none had existed before. It would introduce methods which must lead to discontent and opposition, to bitterness and strife, to prison, Tcheka, and civil war. It would generate fear and distrust, would hatch conspiracies, and culminate in a reign of terror which has always killed revolutions in the past.

The social revolution must from the very sears be based on entirely different principles, on a new conception and attitude. Full freedom is the very breath of its existence; and be it never forgotten that the cure for evil and disorder is *more* liberty, not suppression. Suppression leads only to violence and destruction.

“Will you not defend the revolution then?” your friend demands.

Certainly we will. But not against mere talk, not against an expression of opinion. The revolution must be big enough to welcome even the severest criticism, and profit by it if it is justified. The revolution will defend itself most determinedly against real counter-revolution, against all active enemies, against any attempt to defeat or sabotage it by forcible invasion or violence. That is the right of the revolution and its duty. But it will not persecute the conquered foe, nor wreak vengeance upon an entire social class because of the fault of individual members of it. The sins of the fathers shall not be visited upon their children.

³⁹The Tchaikovsky-Miller Government

What will you do with counter-revolutionists?"

Actual combat and armed resistance involve human sacrifices, and the counter-revolutionists who lose their lives under such circumstances suffer the unavoidable consequences of their deeds. But the revolutionary people are not savages. The wounded are not slaughtered nor those taken prisoners executed. Neither is practiced the barbarous system of shooting hostages, as the Bolsheviki did.

"How will you treat counter-revolutionists taken prisoners during an engagement?"

The revolution must find new ways, some sensible method of dealing with them. The old method is to imprison them, support them in idleness, and employ numerous men to guard and punish them. And while the culprit remains in prison, incarceration and brutal treatment still further embitter him against the revolution, strengthen his opposition, and nurse thoughts of vengeance and new conspiracies. The revolution will regard such methods as stupid and detrimental to its best interests. It will try instead by humane treatment to convince the defeated enemy of the error and uselessness of his resistance. It will apply liberty instead of revenge. It will take into consideration that most of the counter-revolutionists are dupes rather than enemies, deluded victims of some individuals seeking power and authority. It will know that they need enlightenment rather than punishment, and that the former will accomplish more than the latter. Even to-day this perception is gaining ground. The Bolsheviki defeated the Allied armies in Russia more effectively by revolutionary propaganda among the enemy soldiers than by the strength of their artillery. These new methods have been recognized as practical even by the United States Government which is making use of them now in its Nicaraguan campaign. American aëroplanes scatter proclamations and appeals to the Nicaraguan people to persuade them to desert Sandino and his cause, and the American army chiefs expect the best results from these tactics. But the Sandino patriots are fighting for home and country against a foreign invader, while counter-revolutionists wage war against their own people. The work of their enlightenment is much simpler and promises better results.

"Do you think that would really be the best way to deal with counter-revolution?"

By all means. Humane treatment and kindness are more effective than cruelty and vengeance. The new attitude in this regard would suggest also a number of other methods of similar character. Various modes of dealing with conspirators and active enemies of the revolution would develop as soon as you begin to practice the new policy. The plan might be adopted, for instance, of scattering them, individually or in small groups, over districts removed from their counter-revolutionary influences, among communities of revolutionary spirit and consciousness. Consider also that counter-revolutionists must eat; which means that they would find themselves in a situation that would claim their thoughts and time for other things than the hatching of conspiracies. The defeated counter-revolutionist, left at liberty instead of being imprisoned, would have to seek means of existence. He would not be denied his livelihood, of course, since the revolution would be generous enough to feed even its enemies. But the man in question would have to join some community, secure lodgings, and so forth, in order to enjoy the hospitality of the distributing center. In other words, the counter-revolutionary "prisoners in freedom" would depend on the community and the good will of its members for their means of existence. They would live in its atmosphere and be influenced by its revolutionary environment. Surely they will be safer and more contented than in prison, and presently they would cease to be a danger to the revolution. We have repeatedly seen such examples in Russia, in cases where counter-revolutionists had escaped the Tcheka and settled down in some village or city, where as a result of considerate and decent treatment they became useful members of the community, often more zealous in behalf of the public welfare than the average citizen, while hundreds of their fellow-conspirators, who had not been lucky enough to avoid arrest, were busy in prison with thoughts of revenge and new plots.

Various plans of treating such "prisoners in freedom" will no doubt be tried by the revolutionary people. But whatever the methods, they will be more satisfactory than the present system of revenge and punishment, the complete failure of which has been demonstrated throughout human experience.

Among the new ways might also be tried that of free colonization. The revolution will offer its enemies an opportunity to settle in some part of the country and there establish the form of social life that will suit them best. It is no vain speculation to foresee that it would not be long before most of them would prefer the brotherhood and liberty of the revolutionary community to the reactionary regime of their colony. But even if they did not, nothing would be lost. On the contrary, the revolution would itself be the greatest gainer, spiritually, by forsaking methods of revenge and persecution and practicing humanity and magnanimity. Revolutionary self-defense, inspired by such methods, will be the more effective because of the very freedom it will guarantee even to its enemies. Its appeal to the masses and to the world at large will thereby be the more irresistible and universal. In its justice and humanity lies the invincible strength of the social revolution.

No revolution has yet tried the true way of liberty. None has had sufficient faith in it. Force and suppression, persecution, revenge, and terror have characterized all revolutions in the past and have thereby defeated their original aims. The time has come to try new methods, new ways. The social revolution is to achieve the emancipation of man through liberty, but if we have no faith in the latter, revolution becomes a denial and betrayal of itself. Let us then have the courage of freedom: let it replace suppression and terror. Let liberty become our faith and our *deed* and we shall grow strong therein.

Only liberty can make the social revolution effective and wholesome. It alone can pave the way to greater heights and prepare a society where well-being and joy shall be the heritage of all. The day will dawn when man shall for the first time have full opportunity to grow and expand in the free and generous sunshine of Anarchy.

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From Alexander Berkman, *Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism*, New York, Vanguard Press, 1929.

Anarchism vs. Primitivism

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1. The Demonology of Primitivism

“No one has ever been so witty as you are in trying to turn us into brutes: to read your book makes one long to go on all fours. Since, however, it is now some sixty years since I gave up the practice, I feel that it is unfortunately impossible for me to resume it: I leave this natural habit to those more fit for it than are you and I.”

— Voltaire, letter to Rousseau, August 30, 1755.

The Demonology of Primitivism: Electricity, Language, and other Modern Evils

Gar Smith, editor of the Earth Island Institute journal, *The Edge*, and critic of modern technology, recently complained to journalists, “I have seen villages in Africa that had vibrant culture and great communities that were disrupted and destroyed by the introduction of electricity.” He added: “I don’t think a lot of electricity is a good thing. It is the fuel that powers a lot of multi-national imagery.” When asked why lack of electricity — a hallmark of poverty — ought to be considered advantageous, Smith said, “The idea that people are poor doesn’t mean that they are not living good lives.” He added, “there is a lot of quality to be had in poverty.”

John Zerzan, a leading modern primitivist, writes in a similar vein, but claims those living in societies before electricity enjoyed higher standards of mental well-being: “Being alive in nature, before our abstraction from it [through modern civilization], must have involved a perception and contact that we can scarcely comprehend from our levels of anguish and alienation. The communication with all of existence must have been an exquisite play of all the senses, reflecting the numberless, nameless varieties of pleasure and emotion once accessible within us.” Zerzan, the Green Anarchy Collective, and other primitivists regularly reminisce over an ideal past where “the wheat and corn, pigs and horses were once freely dancing in the chaos of nature.” In fact, through their activism primitivists hope to deliver society into this primal chaos, so that the “wheat and corn, pigs and horses” — and the rest of us, presumably — may freely dance once more.

On web sites like primitivism.com, primitivists tell us how the Internet should not exist. In printed magazines like *Green Anarchy*, they condemn printing presses and typesetting technology. And in events like the Green Anarchy Tour of 2001, they complain of the roads that enable them to travel, the electricity that powers the instruments of their tour’s musical acts, and of the existence of the facilities that host their events. Primitivists enjoin their audience to live like early hominids, though they certainly don’t lead by example.

When analyzing primitivist musings, two mysteries immediately confront the reader. The first: how can such ideas be seriously entertained by anyone? Electricity, advanced medical care, information technologies, artificial heating and cooling, water purification, and countless other modern innovations are regarded by primitivists as undesirable. One would think that the lifespan of such notions would be as short as that of a Palaeolithic tribesman’s. Yet, primitive thinking is currently enjoying a kind of vogue among the radical left.

The second perturbation: how to begin to make sense of all the rubbish primitivists write? Some of their screeds, on the one hand, ape (no pun intended) the most obnoxious, opaque phraseology of post-modernism: “Symbolizing is linear, successive, substitutive,” John Zerzan delicately informs us in *Running on Emptiness*. “It cannot be open to its whole object simultaneously.” On the other hand, many primitive rants drop any pretense of sophistication and devolve (again, no pun intended) into infantile histrionics: “**Why should I tolerate this insanity**” a writer at insurgentdesire.co.uk bloviates. “**Ned Ludd was right! The machine is the enemy. Smash it without mercy!**”

Indeed, why should we tolerate this insanity? How can we understand some of the genuinely bizarre ideas that litter the pantheon of our primitive romantics? And how is that the primitivist cocktail of mysticism, pseudo-science, and wild speculation has serious adherents in the full light of the 21st century?

Unfortunately for anarchists, plunging into the primitivist miasma has become necessary. Over the past few decades, primitivists have successfully assimilated themselves into the anarchist movement. Within the U.S., their influence has grown so strong that anarchists can no longer afford to ignore it. The corporate media, in its infinite wisdom, has often decided to present primitivism as “the new anarchism,” blissfully ignoring the classical strand of anarchist thought that agitates for worker and community control within a stateless society. Unfortunately, this generous free advertising ensures that many new members of the anarchist movement will arrive through primitivism’s feral gates.

The primitivists’ stated aim is to reorient anarchism towards the wholesale destruction of civilization and its attendant technologies. Their analysis asserts that civilization estranges humanity from its true, feral nature — a regrettable situation, they say, since humans, as the Steppenwolf song goes, are born to be wild. Like Christian evangelists, they maintain that modern living results in spiritual and emotional poverty — a kind of soullessness that Mammoth hunters did not experience, and often hint that pagan belief systems are superior to rational thought. Technology, too, is inherently oppressive, no matter who wields it or to what uses it is put. In addition, primitivists warn of the dangers of population growth while Zerzanites even claim language to be a type of alienation. (Such statements alienate us with their language, incidentally). Although classical anarchists like Peter Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin spoke of eliminating the state by transferring ownership of the means of production into the public’s hands, primitivists have a different agenda: they wish to destroy, not redistribute, industry and technology.

The problem of primitivism in the anarchist movement is new only in scope. There have always been those on the fringes of the left who have hoped to return society to some type of idyllic, Garden of Eden-like existence. The idea of a noble savage at peace with himself, the pristine wilderness, and his fellow humans before modern civilization is as old as the plays of John Dryden in the 17th century. Many before our modern primitive romantics have advocated bucking it all and getting back to nature. As the late evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould counsels in *The Mismeasure of Man*, “the same bad arguments recur every few years with a predictable and depressing regularity. No sooner do we debunk one version than the next chapter of the same bad text emerges to ephemeral prominence.”

Today, for example, tomes like *Future Primitive* and primitive sounding-boards such as *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* (A:AJODA), *Green Anarchy*, and *Fifth Estate* abound. The Rainbow Gathering, nominally non-anarchist, attracts all manner of tree folk, Middle Earthers, permaculture fanatics, and mystics to its primitivist-type festivals. At few points since the 19th century, however, have “primitive man” fantasists attempted to identify with anarchism. Indeed, a prominent strain of utopian socialists — romantics wishing to escape the modern world through communal living — have been a fixture on the left since the early 1800s, tagging along on the margins of anti-capitalism much like the apocalyptic Christian cults that gather on society’s fringe. Marx and Bakunin differentiated this type of utopian socialism from forward-thinking socialism, which values science and its benefits; indeed, Bakunin hoped for a revolution in which science “would become the property of everybody.” And although Marx, for example, recognized that hunter-gatherer clans did indeed practice a type of “primitive communism,” neither he nor his anarchist opponents advocated turning back the clock to relive such times. Anarchists did not consider the living standards of the Neanderthal worthy of modern humans. The only ones who felt that people should live like primitives were those capitalists whose desire to keep business costs down resulted in primitive living conditions for their wage slaves.

Utopian, “get-back-to-nature” sects attracted anarchist criticism from the beginning. It was in response to such backwards-thinking romantics that Mikhail Bakunin affirmed in the late 1800s, “It is not in the past, nor even in the present that ye should seek the freedom of the masses. It is in the future.” Anarcho-

syndicalist veteran Sam Dolgoff, speaking of life at the Stelton Colony of New York in the 1930s, noted with disdain that it, “like other colonies, was infested by vegetarians, naturists, nudists, and other cultists, who sidetracked true anarchist goals.” One resident “always went barefoot, ate raw food, mostly nuts and raisins, and refused to use a tractor, being opposed to machinery, and he didn’t want to abuse horses, so he dug the earth himself.” Such self-proclaimed anarchists were in reality “ox-cart anarchists,” Dolgoff said, “who opposed organization and wanted to return to a simpler life.” In an interview with Paul Avrich before his death, Dolgoff also grumbled, “I am sick and tired of these half-assed artists and poets who object to organization and want only to play with their belly buttons.”

This has been a problem seemingly for as long as anarchism has existed. Writing nearly a century ago, Malatesta’s comrade Luigi Fabbri noted in *Bourgeois Influences on Anarchism* that the anarchist movement has always been overrun with flakes, parasites, and outright crazies. He wrote that these “empty-headed and frivolous types...are not repelled by the absurd, but...on the contrary, engage in it. They are attracted to projects and ideas precisely because they are absurd; and so anarchism comes to be known precisely for the illogical character and ridiculousness which ignorance and bourgeois calumny have attributed to anarchist doctrines.”

With the rise of the anti-corporate globalization movement in recent years, the primitivist problem has assumed a new urgency: Whereas in the past primitive thinkers were consigned to the margins of the movement by virtue of the absurdity of their ideas, a recent absence of lively, mass class struggle activism has allowed primitive thinkers to exert greater influence. The onus is on traditional anarchists to take the movement back, and force primitive thinkers to their previous place on the sidelines.

Not to be discounted, either, is the influence of the corporate media, which has taken primitivism and situated it front and center, presenting it to the public as the lifeblood of a 21st-century anarchist resurgence. Primitivism, the corporate media tells us, is the “new” anarchism — and young adults, hungry for any ideas that point to a way out of the capitalist ghetto, sometimes believe it, and sign up. The popularity of the anti-corporate globalization movement holds much promise for anarchism; the media’s attempts to associate it with primitive ideas, however, does not.

Time magazine, for example, ran two articles in 2001 on John Zerzan and the cult-like following he has attracted in his home town of Eugene, Oregon (among other places). And a few years prior, *Time* bestowed the title “king of the anarchists” upon primitivist/Unabomber Ted Kaczynski in one of the more than 30 articles they devoted to him. The December 13, 1999, issue of *Newsweek* featured a picture of anarcho-syndicalist Noam Chomsky with images of Zerzan and convicted murderer Kaczynski beside him; the publication associated all three as leading lights of modern anarchist thought. NPR, 60 Minutes, and other news outlets have given air time to the absurd proclamations of John Zerzan even as the unofficial media ban of Noam Chomsky and other more capable analysts continues. Again, as Fabbri, noted: “[A]nd so anarchism comes to be known precisely for the illogical character and ridiculousness which ignorance and bourgeois calumny have attributed to anarchist doctrines.”

The effect of the media’s focus on anarchism’s most embarrassing side has been advantageous for elites; by focusing laser like on the looniest elements of anarchism, the entire movement can be marginalized and discredited. This follows a historical pattern in which anarchist activists are ignored by the establishment until one does something so antisocial or outlandish that elites can score cheap points by reporting it. If the public sees only the primitivist wing of anarchism, it will be unlikely to support anything associated with anarchism. Understandably, few people want to support something that is hostile to the life-saving medical care, information technology, and electronic entertainment they enjoy.

The media’s gravitation towards primitivism has pressured other parts of the anarchist movement to accept it as well. The University of Michigan’s Joseph A. Labadie collection, commonly regarded as an “archive of record” for the anarchist movement, recently decided to admit the papers of unabomber Theodore Kaczynski into its vaults. This includes interviews where Kaczynski reports on attempts to have a dialogue with terrorist Timothy McVeigh, dragging again the shadiest figures of modern politics

into anarchist history. The shelving of Kaczynski's murderous *Unabomber Manifesto* alongside classics by Emma Goldman and others is presumably something the anarchist community will have to live with. The acquisition is of further irony, given that the figure for which the University of Michigan's archive is named, labor activist Joseph Labadie, favored public control over industrial society, not a Kaczynski-style mail bombing of it. As well, Kaczynski admirer John Zerzan works with a self-styled "Green Anarchy" collective in Oregon. When *Z Magazine* editor Michael Albert approached John Zerzan to debate primitivism, Zerzan ultimately sniffed, "As an anarchist, I'm not interested."

The waxing influence of primitive thinkers threatens to redefine the character of the anarchist tradition for future generations. It also threatens to divert eager new activists into its theoretical cul-de-sac where nothing revolutionary can ever be accomplished. Worst of all, the primitivist agenda would result in mass scale atrocity if its objectives were ever met: society would be stripped of the medical can, shelter, food supplies, distribution networks, and even language (!) that humans depend upon for life. That primitivists play casually with such globally catastrophic notions speaks volumes about their real concern for human well being.

2. An Ignoble Savage

I am as free as Nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage ran.

— John Dryden, *The Congum of Granada*, 1670.

Primitivists emphasize how good ancient humans had it. In this, they strongly echo Rousseau's ruminations upon the Noble Savage. Rousseau stated in *Discourse on Inequality* that the era of primitive man "must have been the happiest and most durable of epochs. The more we reflect on it, the more we shall find that this state was the least subject to revolutions, and altogether the very best that man could experience." Rousseau stated further that "[t]he example of savages, most of whom have been found in this state, seems to prove that men were meant to remain in it, that it is the real youth of the world, and that all subsequent advances have been apparently so many steps towards the perfection of the individual, but in reality towards the decrepitude of the species." Primitive man enjoyed a simple, bliss full life, he said: "The produce of the earth furnished him with all he needed, and instinct told him how to use it. Hunger and other appetites made him at various times experience various modes of existence; and among these was one which urged him to propagate his species — a blind propensity that, having nothing to do with the heart, produced a merely animal act."

In *Against His-story, Against Leviathan*, Fredy Perlman acknowledges the debt to Rousseau — and even to John Zerzan — reporting that they are "among contemporaries whose lights I've borrowed." Perlman tells us that prehistoric humans "lived in a condition J.J. Rousseau called 'the state of nature.'" In fact, urges Perlman, "Rousseau's term should be brought back into common use" because it "makes the armor [of civilization] visible." "Insist that 'freedom' and 'state of nature' are synonyms," Perlman writes, "and the cadavers [that is, apologists of civilization] will try to bite you." Furthermore, "the state of nature is a community of freedoms," he writes. A state of freedom "was the environment of the first human communities, and such it remained for thousands of generations."

In fact, evidence about how the first human communities fared, or around what principles social life was organized, is sparse. What evidence we do have should caution us from projecting our own fantasies onto them, however, or asserting them as desirable alternatives for the future. It should also go without saying that at all times humanity has lived in "a state of nature," including right now. That is, the natural world is still here and ensconces us, even if aspects of it are modified. Perlman's "state of nature" also,

by the way, includes hurricanes, loathsome diseases, life-threatening elements, and other unpleasantness. It is doubtful that any primitivist would run headlong into a tornado in order to experience the “state of nature”; if he held his or others’ well being in any regard, he might wish for a weather tracking system (for example) to tell us when tornadoes were coming, so that we could avoid them.

In his book *Future Primitive*, John Zerzan agrees with Rousseau and Perlman: Human “life before domestication/ agriculture was in fact largely one of leisure, intimacy with nature, sensual wisdom, sexual equality, and health.” Zerzan, Eric Blair, and the Green Anarchy Collective issued a joint statement furthering the point: “Prior to civilization there generally existed ample leisure time, considerable gender autonomy and equality, a non-destructive approach to the natural world, the absence of organized violence and strong health and robusticity.” George Bradford (David Watson), editor of the primitivist *Fifth Estate*, writes that primitive man’s society is “affluent because its needs are few, all its desires easily met. Its tool kit is elegant and lightweight, its outlook linguistically complex and conceptually profound yet simple and accessible to all. Its culture is expansive and ecstatic. It is propertyless and communal, egalitarian and cooperative...It is anarchic...free of work...It is a dancing society, a singing society, a celebrating society, a dreaming society.”

In short, not only were pre-technological societies pleasant places in which to live, they closely approximated the anarchist ideal. How true is this, really?

Conservatives often fixate upon an idealized-and unrealistic-notion of the past, lamenting that society has grown far away from it. Starting with Christianity, which agonizes over humanity’s expulsion from its idyll in the Garden of Eden, backwards-looking ideologies have hoped to restore society to an imagined Golden Age, when things were better. The Nazi Party presented a story of a once-great Teutonic civilization in decline, the victim of Jewish parasites and communist forces; contemporary U.S. conservatives hearken to the wholesome values of America’s Puritan past, and so on. The primitivists simply trump them all by going back the farthest, proposing to reconstruct prehistory (or, alternately, “the Iron Age”) in our modern midst. The problem with such ideas is that they posit a romanticized vision of an earlier era, inconsistent with the often unpleasant realities that existed.

Likewise, conservatives often maintain that “poor people really have it good,” much as primitivists do. Gar Smith’s assurance that “there is a lot of quality to be had in poverty,” for example, echoes much of the anti-welfare rhetoric one hears coming from the right (viz., the poor are really not bad off because they have television or fast food; and besides, being poor builds character, etc.). Certainly, anyone who wants to live in a shack and go it alone without electricity or heating, as primitivist idol Ted Kaczynski did, should be free to do so; but the poor blacks of the, Mississippi Delta, where Kaczynski’s choice of living conditions are day-to-day reality whether it is preferred or not, should have access to many of the amenities (medical care, heating, better choice of foods, etc.) that Kaczynski chose to abandon. Anarchists have traditionally favored such a redistribution of society’s wealth and benefits — and it is in fact the ruling class, much like Zerzan Company, that prefers to see its workers living primitively.

Primitivists’ fixation upon the imagined mental vigor and “robusticity” of pre-technological peoples is old hat as well. Again, this notion gained much currency among the European far right in the early 20th century, which conceived of, for example, the Anglo-Saxon race as a hardy, earthy (volkish) people softened by liberal, effeminate notions of welfare statism and progress. Germans, in fact, enacted racial hygiene laws to preserve the most robust strains of the species. Murray Bookchin has noted this ideological tendency in the reactionary romanticism of Nazi sympathizer Martin Heidegger. As well, Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier have explored the problem in-depth in the excellent *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*. There is in fact a contemporary right wing school of thought that claims modern medicines and even environmental protections are bad because they contribute to the “softening” of humans; that is, funding for medical care or environmental regulation should not be increased because it is through such means that humans trade in “robusticity” for diminished racial resilience. Experts who assert that there is a kind of metaphysical wholesomeness in living a

rugged, difficult lifestyle can be found sitting in some of the nation's most odious conservative think tanks, reaping large salaries from environmentally destructive (or simply misanthropic) corporations. Good medical care, subsidies to help with home heating costs—these amount to mollycoddling, business owners assert. Real Americans, they maintain, realize that hardship builds moral fiber and physical stamina—an idea that conveniently justifies business in behave as irresponsibly as it wants. In insisting upon the physical and moral “robusticity” that is supposed to accompany primitive living conditions, primitivists echo this dubious strain of reactionary thinking.

However, primitivists, unlike the corporate elite, claim to oppose environmental ruin. Indeed, environmental degradation is one of the central primitivist grievances with “civilization.” The “strong health and robusticity” of primitive man arose not through struggle and hardship, primitivists tell us, but through “ample leisure time,” “affluence,” and other perks that primitives enjoyed. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, primitive humans had all their needs provided for, but they also stayed fit.

So, who were the peoples that primitivists seek to emulate? What were their lives really like? This is, in fact, where the fraud of primitivist thought reveals itself most clearly.

One of the central flaws in primitivist logic is the conflation of millennia of various cultures and societies into one entity — “primitive man.” In fact, in books like *Future Primitive* or the recent *Running on Emptiness*, Zerzan dances across disparate eras and continents wildly, selectively noting features of this or that radically different tribal, non-industrialized, or prehistoric people to build his case that there was a common and wiser way of life that all humans once shared. Much like ethnocentric Europeans who can distinguish between European cultures but can not do the same for the many cultures within Africa, Asia, or the at-least 500 nations of native North America, primitivists often use the “primitive man” concept as a catch-all into which they insert their favored virtues.

A composite of “primitive man” is erected in primitivist thought; glossed over in this process are the less-than-ideal aspects of most tribal societies. For example, primitivists conveniently fail to mention the religious notions, patriarchal structures, or strict traditions (like clitoridectomy, painful coming-of-age rituals, etc.) present in some non-industrial clans. Perhaps they are aware that most would find these undesirable. As Hoxie Neale Fairchild wrote in the study *Noble Savage*, “The [European notion of the] true Noble Savage arises from a combination of disillusion about the here and now with illusion about the there and then.”

3. What is the primitivist ideal?

No Language

“Words are very unnecessary/they can only do harm,” the pop group Depeche Mode sing in “Enjoy the Silence.” This is a romantic notion, but without words the songs of Depeche Mode and others couldn't be performed by anyone.

According to the Green Anarchy collective, language is out. That is, people (primitivists wildly conjecture) were psychologically healthier when they stood in mute awe — or fear — of everything, unable to communicate with one another. The obnoxious primitivist Feral Faun (less pretentiously, David Watkins, not to be confused with *Fifth Estate* editor David Watson) hisses at “language with its conceptual limits,” presumably preferring the conceptual limitlessness enjoyed by the dumb and the mute. Alternatively, as Zerzan infers at his wildest, “we should instead communicate telepathically.” “Only a politics that undoes language and time and is thus visionary to the point of voluptuousness has any meaning,” Zerzan muses at primitivism.com.

Of course, it is unlikely that anatomically modern *homo sapiens* — that is, humanity as it has anatomically existed since about 100,000 years ago — has ever gone without speaking. According to

anthropologist Kenneth Feder, it is likely that approximately 1.8 million years ago *homo erectus* first developed the capability to talk:

[T]he base of the erectus cranium — the basicranium — is far more like that of modern humans than of *homo habilis* or apes. Because the muscles involved in the production of speech are connected to the basicranium, this may indicate that the physical capability for human or human like speech production was present in *homo erectus*. From this, [Mt. Sinai School of Medicine anatomist Jeffrey] Laitman has concluded that *homo erectus* could produce speech at the level of a modern six-year-old.”

There is no way to tell absolutely, of course, as no other records exist from such a time to substantiate any rival hypotheses. There are no audio recordings from 1.5 million B.C.E., in other words, to indicate whether people spoke then. Nevertheless, Zerzan, unencumbered by facts, writes in *Running on Emptiness* that humans once existed in a “non-linguistic state,” but have “declined” since then thanks to acquiring language. He adds, “Literacy ushered us into the society of divided and reduced senses.” “Verbal communication,” he continues in a line of pure conjecture, “is part of the movement away from a face-to-face social reality, making feasible physical separateness.”

Primitivist musings like this have all the character of “someone riffing ideas off the top of his head who has done no actual research into what he’s talking about,” John Johnson points out in a recent *Imagine* article. (Note, incidentally, that Bradford of *Fifth Estate* admires the primitive “outlook [that was] linguistically complex and conceptually profound yet simple and accessible to all,” revealing that there is much ideological inconsistency among the primitivists — and let’s not even bother with how Bradford could “know” this.) In fact, much primitivist theory relies on wild speculation about how humans organized social life in eras from which we have no written records. Because the least is known about such eras, primitivists can project their wildest fantasies onto them and never worry about being proven wrong.

Of course, anarchists have traditionally cited language as evidence of man’s social nature. “What is speech?” Bakunin asked. “It is communication. It is the conversation of one human individual with many other individuals. Only through this conversation and in it can animalistic man transform himself into a human being, that is, a thinking being. His individuality as a man, his freedom, is thus the product of the collectivity.” . Chomsky and other linguists have posited an innate human predisposition to the use of language, despite Zerzan’s impassioned insistence that a theory of innate language is “a grave and reactionary error.” In fact, in 2001 *National Geographic* reported that scientists had discovered a gene, FOXP2, “linked to language and speech, suggesting that our human urge to babble and chat is innate, and that our linguistic abilities are at least partially hardwired.”

To most people, language seems the last thing worthy of abolition. Many of us enjoy the work of poets, who use language as their paintbrush to enrich — not impoverish — our cultural experience. Singing and storytelling are cultural forms valued by most humans, as well. Other examples abound, too numerous to mention.

No Technology

No technology above simple tools is to be allowed in the primitivist utopia, either: “Technology is distinct from simple tools in many regards,” primitivists claim. Primitivists define technology in a manner that suits their ends, however: it is “more of a process or concept than a static form,” they explain. “It is a complex system involving division of labor, resource extraction, and exploitation for the benefit of those who implement its process.”

Now, a “system of division of labor, resource extraction, and exploitation for the benefit of those who implement its process” is actually a description of the workings of capitalism. Technology, however, which

existed long before capitalism, is defined by most scientists as the practical application of knowledge towards problem solving; alternately, most anthropologists agree, it is a manner of accomplishing a task using technical methods. Despite the protestations of primitivists, most anthropologists also classify stone tools as a type of technology. Other technology includes the construction of crude wells for securing water as well as the most advanced equipment used to save human life. Deprived of such things, countless humans would immediately die.

Primitivists say they fear that, like the Skynet computer in the movie *Terminator*, technology will develop its own sentience and work to eradicate humanity. "It's questionable whether the ruling class (who still benefit economically and politically from the Technological System) really have any control over their 'Frankenstein monster' at this point," Zerzan and the Green Anarchy collective warn, dramatically suggesting that perhaps technology already works by virtue of its own prerogatives!

In *Against His-story, Against Leviathan*, Perlman offers a similar idea, referring to the "Frankenstein monster" as the "Earthwrecker," which "does have a body, a monstrous body, a body that has become more powerful than the Biosphere. It may be a body without any life of its own. It may be a dead thing, a huge cadaver. It may move its slow thighs only when living beings inhabit it. Nevertheless, its body is what does the wrecking." Perlman presents the possibility that humans may control the "Earthwrecker" — but then again, he suggests, maybe they don't! ("It may [my emphasis] move its slow thighs only when living beings inhabit it' — a pretentious sentence in which it is difficult to find any real meaning.)

It's interesting that primitivist activists regularly employ the "Frankenstein monster" to make mass-produced journals (viz., *Green Anarchy Magazine*, electronically reproduced on the web) and web sites (viz., www.insurgentdesire.co.uk), and to participate in e-mail discussion lists. Anecdotally, this author can vouch for having met many primitivists who enjoy their Playstations in their heated apartments, rent DVDs (*Fight Club*, *Instinct*, *Matrix*, *Terminator*), and otherwise gladly partake in privileges unavailable to real-world tribes people. Delicately shielded from "robusticity"-causing conditions (the elements, in other words), they pontificate on how everyone else ought to give up their amenities. Presumably, primitivists are waiting for everyone else to go primitive first. When asked by a reporter if the fact that he watches television might make him a bit of a hypocrite, John Zerzan weakly offered, "Like other people, I have to be narcotized."

Elsewhere, George Bradford refers to the "Frankenstein monster" of technology as "the industrial hydra"; Zerzan dubs it the "everywhere-triumphant Megamachine"; and Theodore Kaczynski simply cites the "technological system" as if it were a social order unto itself. The intellectual laziness of these concepts is apparent in how they gloss over the particular class relations of statism/capitalism. In the capitalist system, it is true that capitalists direct much technology towards misanthropic ends—demonstrating that it is class rule that determines how technology is applied, and not vice versa. Due to the poverty of their analysis and intellectual sloppiness, however, primitivists cannot make even such obvious distinctions, and condemn technology wholesale.

Of course, harmful technology is just that — harmful. It is hard to imagine a positive use for nuclear weaponry, for example, or for biological and chemical weapons. But primitivists have a long way to go to convince the public that technology invariably entails coercive social relations ("invariably" is a word that merits some reflection here). They also have a long way to go to convince us that people like physicist Stephen Hawking should be left to die (in Social Darwinian fashion) simply because they require technology to live. As well, John Zerzan's reading glasses would have to be cast aside in a primitivist society, as would the lens-crafting technology that enables others with eyesight as bad as his to see.

Let us not play around with these concepts idly. When primitivists advocate eliminating technology, they advocate the wholesale slaughter or starvation of billions, of humans worldwide.

No Agriculture

Zerzanite and Green Anarchy primitivists would prevent the domestication of food and animals as well. Domestication of crops began around 12,000 years ago in the Near East, marking the shift from nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyles — which most primitivists like — to more sedentary, settled social formations, which most primitivists dislike. According to the Green Anarchy collective, growing crops “was the first mistake in the series leading to modernity.”

“Agriculture must be overcome, as domestication,” Zerzan writes in “On the Transition: Postscript to Future Primitive.” Rather than enjoy huge, equitably distributed agricultural surpluses, as classical anarchists like Peter Kropotkin would have for humanity, primitivists would have people form into hunter-gatherer units and forage for wild, naturally occurring fruits and vegetables. This immediately presents a dilemma, as John Johnson notes in *Imagine* in “Zerzan-Buffer”: what if a rebellious hunter-gatherer “thought, ‘Hey, I like strawberries; I sure wish there was a way to get them more regularly than just having to stumble across them in the wild’”? In order to preserve primitivist society, primitivist police would have to root out this kind of dissidence immediately. Cultivation of crops would have to be banned.

Again, let us reflect soberly on the consequences of the belief that agriculture ought to be eliminated: Deprived of agriculture, the majority of the global population would immediately perish.

Given these three criteria alone, it is clear that no existing society could be called primitivist. In fact, it is not clear that any culture we have knowledge of accords to such strict ideals. Societies lacking language, agriculture, and technology are few and far between. Even the living, non-industrial tribes that primitivists regularly cite in their analyses—such as the !Kung Bushmen of Africa (see *Future Primitive*, Perlman’s *Against His-story*, or Bob Black’s “Primitive Affluence,” for example) — speak a type of language. And even if the !Kung do not employ technology as primitivists define it (an important distinction, since primitivists define it to suit their agenda), or domesticate animals, there are other respects in which aspects of theirs and other tribal lifestyles are not anarchistic or desirable for others.

4. Realities of Tribal Lifeways

According to anthropologist Lorna Marshall, whose research on the !Kung has been reported by the primitivist-beloved Marshall Sahlins, “Except for food and water (important exceptions!) ... they all had what they needed or could make what they needed.” Marshall’s notation that food and water can be “important exceptions” to primitive “affluence” is well taken. *Fifth Estate*’s George Bradford compassionately concedes that “primal humans” are “capable of experiencing occasional hunger” but reassures us that they “sometimes [chose] hunger to enhance interrelatedness, to play, or to see visions.” It remains to be seen how well the primitivist notion of “hunger as a means of play” will catch on with the modern public.

Furthermore, anthropologist Edwin Wilemsen notes that living !Kung cultural practices observed by anthropologists such as Marshall Sahlins or Lorna Marshall are themselves the product of millennia of adaptation: the !Kung used to hunt elephants, practiced horticulture and other types of farming, and had skirmishes with chiefdoms in eastern Africa that drove them into their current habitat (the Kalahari Desert), where they are observed by contemporary researchers. This is contrary to what Fredy Perlman implies in a statement that “the !Kung people miraculously survived into our own exterminating age.” Of course, it is technically true that the !Kung have survived, as have Native Americans and Aborigines, but Perlman implies the !Kung are a kind of living anachronism whose tribal ways preserve life in “the natural state.” As well, University of Illinois-Chicago anthropologist Lawrence H. Keeley notes that the !Kung “homicide rate from 1920 to 1955 was four times that of the United States and twenty to eighty

times that of major industrial nations during the 1950s and 1960s." Far from representing a pristine picture of "primitive man," in other words, !Kung society, as any other, has changed over the centuries to adapt to changing needs. This all underscores the point that existing hunter-gatherer tribes do not necessarily provide a window back into time.

In this regard, amateur primitivist pseudo-anthropology warrants a strong caution from Kenneth L. Feder, a practicing anthropologist at Central Connecticut State University. He writes that knowledge of early human "social systems — how they related to each other within groups, how they defined 'family,' who they considered suitable mates-is, perhaps, forever out of reach. We are relegated to using living primates or hunting and gathering groups of human beings, neither of whom should be considered all that reliable as models for prehistoric hominid behavior." But trifles such as scientific knowledge do not prevent the Green Anarchy collective from proclaiming that prior to 8,000 B.C.E. "a natural state of anarchy ... had prevailed for about 2 million years."

Thanks to research by other historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists, we know that other non-industrialized peoples besides the !Kung did not always live in egalitarian social formations, either. For example, the 500 nations that existed in North America before 1500 represented a diversity of cultural, political, and economic systems. Some native societies were resolutely patriarchal, such as the Powhatan Confederacy that settlers at Jamestown, Virginia encountered in the 1600s. Others incorporated matriarchal and democratic aspects of governance into tribal life; Iroquois women, for example, made most of the important decisions in their society. (A matriarchal society, it is important to remember, is still of course a hierarchical society.) Moreover, Native Americans domesticated corn and tobacco, eventually teaching Europeans how to grow them. These facts are important for those attempting an honest evaluation of non-European tribal lifeways. It is impossible to abstract the estimated 12,000 native cultures of the "New World" before 1492 into one composite "noble savage" or "primitive man" type.

Of course, native tribes did not live in a nation-state system such as Europeans developed, nor did they have property rights as Europeans conceived of them. However, natives did fight back when they felt settlers encroached too far inland. In other words, many tribes apparently held some basic notions of territoriality, evidenced not only in skirmishes with Europeans but in inter-tribal conflicts as well.

Most, if not all, native societies practiced some type of religion. The rich variety of Native American creation myths is known to many. Anarchism, by contrast, has traditionally posited atheism — in fact, antitheism — as the only belief system congruent with the scientific understanding of reality. This is also quite opposed to primitivist icon Ted Kaczynski's belief in "the Grandfather Rabbit, the grandfather who was responsible for the existence of all other rabbits." Kaczynski notes this supernatural being "was able to disappear, [and] that is why you couldn't catch him and why you would never see him... Every time I shot a snowshoe rabbit [in the wild], I would always say 'thank you Grandfather Rabbit.'" Similar pagan beliefs (or delusions) were widely held by other hunter-gatherer cultures.

Of course, this does not mean that anarchists wish to forcibly impose atheism on others. In an anarchist society, people would be free to believe whatever they wanted. But an anarchist society worthy of the name would not allow those holding religious beliefs to impose them upon others, nor would religious beliefs be allowed to influence decisions of production and distribution. Although individual belief in mystical forces would be tolerated, most anarchists would probably continue to criticize the irrationality of those who believed in the supernatural. The cultural climate of most Native American societies was far from atheist or irreligious; in fact, tribal belief systems often served to legitimize the unequal distribution of power between tribal members, and permeated almost every aspect of everyday life.

Before European influence, many native systems of exploitation were already in place, as well. The Mexica (Aztec) Indians of Central America, for example, who began as roving bands of mercenaries, had by 1400 established a broad empire centered on the worship of the war god Huitzilopochtli. The Mexica exacted tribute from subjugated villages and sacrificed as many as 20,000 humans per year to

their imperial deity. The Incas built an empire in South America that was even larger than that of their Central American cousins. Of course, European societies were (and are) bloodier on a mass scale, and certainly more expansive, as history has clearly shown. These are facts that need not be forgotten in any honest evaluation of other social systems. But neither should they lead us to idealize other social systems.

Zerzan and other primitivists often claim that pre-civilized social groups enjoyed lifestyles of ease, relatively free from disease and hardship. For example, the Green Anarchy collective writes, “Prior to civilization there generally existed ... strong health and robusticity.” Before European civilization, however, it is not clear that many natives always enjoyed either, let alone both. Historians James L. Roark, Sarah Stage, and others write: “At one site in western Kentucky, which dates to about 2500 to 2000 BC, archaeologists found enough burials to allow them to calculate that the life expectancy at birth for these Woodland people was slightly over 18 years.” According to estimates by researchers at the UCLA Gerontology Research Group, *Homo sapiens*’ average life expectancy 50,000 years ago was 10 years, owing to death by disease, predators and accidents. In addition, hunter-gatherers developed other ailments associated with their lifestyles: at one Hopewell site dating to about 100 B.C.E., excavations revealed that hunters “tended to have arthritis of the elbow associated with stress to the elbow joint from using spear throwers.” Of course, in a primitivist society such painful conditions would simply have to be endured.

Additionally, the mound-building peoples of the Mississippian culture developed forms of hierarchy and domination as well:

One Cahokia burial mound [dating to approx. 1000 C.E.] suggests the authority a great chief exercised. One man — presumably the chief — was buried with the dismembered bodies of several people, perhaps enemies or slaves; three men and three women of high status, perhaps the chiefs relatives; four men, perhaps servants or guards, whose heads and hands had been cut off; and fifty young women between the ages of -eighteen and twenty-three who had evidently been strangled. Such a mass sacrifice shows the power a Cahokian chief wielded and the obedience he commanded.

In *Running on Emptiness*, Zerzan claims, “The foraging Comanche maintained their non-violent ways for centuries before the European invasion, becoming violent only upon contact with marauding civilization.” But in *War Before Civilization*, according to John Johnson, anthropologist Lawrence H. Keeley produces evidence that “Contrary to arguments that tribal violence increased after contact with Europeans, the percentage of burials in coastal British Columbia bearing evidence of violent traumas was actually **lower** after European contact (13 percent from 1774 to 1874) than the very high levels (20 to 32 percent) evidenced in prehistoric periods.” Additionally, it is known that even without European help Comanches harassed Wichita settlements in present-day Texas into the 18th century. The Wichita had themselves moved to the Red River area by the 1700s to escape hostile Osage Indians in the Midwest.

A side note is in order before continuing: Some primitivists may protest that focusing on the less-than-romantic realities of native tribal history “plays into the hands of” those who unjustly oppressed the American Indians. That is, by stating that natives engaged in internecine warfare or were mostly patriarchal, etc., one is merely “playing into the hands of” European conquerors, who highlighted native “savagery” in order to oppress them. This “plays into the hands of”-type argumentation stunts many discussions on the left, and so it is worth quoting George Orwell, who wrote:

Whenever A and B are in opposition to one another, anyone who attacks or criticises A is accused of aiding and abetting B. And it is often true, objectively and on a short-term analysis, that he is making things easier for B. Therefore, say the supporters of A, shut up and don’t criticize: or at least criticize ‘constructively,’ which in practice always means

favourably. And from this it is only a short step to arguing that the suppression and distortion of known facts is the highest duty of a journalist.

For purposes of argument, we could say that Orwell's "A" above represents primitivism, while "B" represents apologists for European exploitation. (Of course, the argument of this pamphlet is on the side of neither A [primitivism] nor B [European exploitation], but rather on the side of "C" [an anarchist society].)

It is very important to recognize the stupidity and destructiveness of the "if you're not with us, you're on the side of our enemies" accusation. In the first place, a moment's reflection reveals that both sides in a dispute can easily hurl this canard at those who refuse to side with them. It also introduces an absurd contradiction: if both sides are correct that "if you're not with us, you're on the side of our enemies," those who refuse to take either side are guilty of simultaneously taking both sides. In practice, the only purpose of this accusation is to intimidate critics and to silence dissent. (It's very disturbing that anyone who calls him or herself an anarchist would ever stoop to such slimy tactics.)

Getting back to the question of the characteristics of primitive societies, it is known that European conquerors were far more brutal in their rape and plunder of native lands than almost any native societies ever were to each other. This fact, however, need not distort any accurate depiction of what tribal lifeways were really like. We deserve an honest picture of events; we gain no real understanding by filtering them through ideological biases. And from such an honest picture, we can admit that there were many, many admirable things about native societies, but that few, if any, represent desirable alternatives to our current social situation, much less alternatives that conform to anarchist ideals of direct democracy and the removal of religious authoritarianism from the public sphere.

The Green Anarchy Collective shifts course, however, and argues that, despite the primitivist citation of many native societies, the only truly) acceptable primitive societies were in fact those that existed before the invention of writing approximately 1 1,000 years ago. In other words, the prehistoric societies of non-literate peoples are those that primitivists really wish to model their utopia on. (Again, see the Zerzan, Blair, and Green Anarchy document "Notes on Primitivism.") Some other primitivists do not wish to recede this far into the past ("only to the Iron Age," say some), but for the moment, it is worth studying the Zerzanian/Green Anarchy contention.

So, what did prehistoric human social formations actually look like? What were the values of prehistoric hominids, and around what principles — if any — was their social life organized? Without the written record, their social ideas remain largely a mystery. It is unfortunate that Emory University historian Michael P. Roark, et. al., have to remind us that "[no documents chronicle [prehistoric] births and deaths, comings and goings, victories and defeats. No diaries chart their daily lives. No letters record their thoughts and emotions. No songs or stories capture their musings about who they were and what was important to them."

Of course, elementary concessions to logic do not impede primitivist fantasy. Referring to ways of life that existed in the dark eras of human prehistory, John Zerzan complains in *Future Primitive* that nowadays Neanderthals are "much-maligned." Contrary to the strong health and "robusticity" primitivists attribute to the Neanderthal, anthropologists Christopher Stringer and Clive Gamble note, "The high incidence of degenerative joint disease in Neanderthals is perhaps not surprising given what we know of the hard lives they led and the wear and tear this would have produced on their bodies. But the prevalence of serious injuries is more surprising, and indicates just how dangerous life was, even for those who did not manage to reach 'old age' in Neanderthal societies." As well, it is important to remember that prior to their becoming extinct more than 30,000 years ago, according to Ian Tattersall, curator of physical anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, "[p]hysical differences in the Neanderthal species were so distinct that they would have represented a completely separate species from homo sapiens." There was also "no biologically meaningful exchange of

genes between the two species.” In other words, anatomically modern humans (*homo sapiens*) coexisted with Neanderthals in Europe as a different species, and did not develop from them, as some primitivists ignorantly insinuate. “[M]odern humans are the sole surviving twig on a branching bush produced by evolution,” Tattersall reminds us. “We’re not the pinnacle of a ladder that our ancestors climbed, but an altogether different experiment.” In fact, Zerzan’s “much-maligned” and genetically different species, the Neanderthal, is thought by many anthropologists to have been wiped out through warfare with *homo sapiens* (the Cro-Magnon) — that is, our direct ancestors — despite the naive, speculative Green Anarchist statement that “civilization inaugurated warfare.”

If primitivists wish to posit a certain conception of social organization as ideal for the future of humanity, then let them do so. But to say humans have already lived in anarchist societies in the sense imagined by the classical anarchist tradition is untenable. To misrepresent the scientific record, to conjure out of the past examples for which evidence is sketchy at best, to speculate wildly about how prehistoric humans lived and to assert such speculations as fact — this is to commit nothing less than fraud. In this regard, primitive pseudoscientific ramblings resemble those of T.D.Lysenko, the Soviet geneticist and agricultural commissar, who attempted to make nature’s laws appear to conform to the ideological biases of Leninism, often by falsifying his data. Very much like fundamentalist Christians opposed to the theory of evolution, ideology-driven primitivists play with the paleo-anthropological record, discarding data that conflicts with their predetermined conclusions.

Doubtless, it is valuable to trace the origins of warfare, the state, and other forms of violent domination. Anarchists since Peter Kropotkin have done this. Nevertheless, Columbia University anthropologist Morton H. Fried reports, “There are no authentic written records from which the development of a pristine state can be directly read.” Coercive hierarchical structures are generally thought to have arisen through control over nascent agricultural surpluses, aided by religious beliefs and ultimately a sacerdotal caste that legitimized inequality. It seems perverse to suggest that, rather than eliminating the unjust social relationships that remove food surpluses from public use, we get rid of the food surpluses themselves! But again, that is what many primitivists want.

Also, only the most misinformed could agree with the wildly untenable primitivist claim that in prehistory — that is, history for which there is no written record — humans lived in “a state of natural anarchy...for about 2 million years.” And even if it could be proven that they did (and it cannot), what would this mean for us now?

Regardless of what human societies did for the two million-year period for which scant knowledge exists, whether what happened was admirable or atrocious, we still find ourselves in the present dealing with forms of oppression that exist now. That hominids have the capacity to live in stateless societies was well known before primitivists took to photocopyers and the Internet to remind us. So, too, has history told us of the human capacity for cruelty and violence — two things not limited to technological civilizations. These facts shed light on the human condition, but they do not dictate our future. The past suggests that a statist society is not inevitable, but it also does not necessarily tell us what is to be done in the modern era. The past defines possibilities, but it is still up to humans in the present to decide what their future will look like. From the data we have, it seems clear that the hunter-gatherer lifestyle of the earliest hominids would not be a viable, much less desirable, option for many.

5. Primitivist Attacks on Anarchism

Not content simply to attack the fields of anthropology and history, or the reader’s intelligence, primitivists also rail against the tradition they claim to be a part of — the anarchist tradition. In an article in the pretentiously titled *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, for example, John Zerzan complains of “an anarchy dominated by the productionist/ workerist/ syndicalist perspectives of...Murray Bookchin and

Noam Chomsky.” “George Bradford” groans that primitivism’s enemies are “corporate engineers and leftist/syndicalist critics,” amazingly equating the two. The especially noxious Feral Faun/David Watkins claims that “anarcho-syndicalists embrace the values essential to capitalism,” while the Green Anarchy Collective writes at Z-Net that “insofar as anarchists cling to the left and define themselves in its terms (e.g. anarcho-syndicalists) they will go nowhere.” A recent issue of primitivist-friendly [i]A:AJODA also devoted much space to polemics against anarcho-communism and “organizationalism,” as well.

Anarcho-syndicalism, of course, was the highly organized revolutionary strategy of the great anarchist movements in Spain, Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, and elsewhere. Prominent anarcho-syndicalists, living and dead, include Rudolf Rocker, Noam Chomsky, Sam Dolgoff, Diego Abad de Santillan, Gregory Maximoff, Bueneventura Durutti, and Emile Pouget. Prominent anarcho-communists have included Alexander Berkman, Errico Malatesta, Emma Goldman, Nestor Makhno, and Peter Kropotkin. Others that have worked within this tradition include Mikhail Bakunin, Daniel Guerin, Murray Bookchin, Janet Biehl, and Albert Meltzer. In other words, this is the mainstream of anarchism. According to primitive thinkers, however, the anarchist tradition is wrong. (And if it is so wrong, then one wonders why they feel the need to attach themselves to it.)

In *Against His-story*, Perlman berates those who advocate the self-management thesis. “They would supplant the state with a network of computer centers, factories, and mines coordinated ‘by the workers themselves’ or by an Anarchist union,” he warns. “They would not call this arrangement a State. The name-change would exorcise the beast,” Perlman incredibly states. He sees no difference whatsoever between a hierarchical, authoritarian society based on violence, in which nearly everyone who works must follow orders in an almost military manner, and a society in which people freely and collectively control their own work lives, and in which no government intrudes into our private lives.

In stating that anarcho-syndicalists merely want a name-change, Perlman echoes the worst anarcho-capitalist polemicists, who state that an anarchist syndicate is really “a state by another name.” That is, apparently any organized group of people with some type of decision-making structure is a “state.” By this logic, aren’t primitivist groups also states? The self-management thesis that Perlman attacks is at root a thesis of human self-determination; that is, it asserts that workers and their communities should have decision-making power over resources and structures (mines, computer centers, etc.) in their area. Do primitivists not believe in this? If primitivists do not believe that communities should be self-managed — that is, managed by the people living in them — then how shall decisions affecting the collectivity be coordinated within them? The desire for self-management says nothing about the decisions communities will make, such as whether to continue to utilize or close up mines — only that control will be shifted to worker and community hands, and away from capitalists and politicians.

Perlman’s characterization is wrong, but not unique.

Primitivists regularly advance two notions when defending their views against anarchists. One is that, no matter how many primitive screeds are read, anyone who objects to primitivism “does not understand it” or “has not read enough about it.” Presumably, to understand primitivism is to agree with it. (It’s common for devout members of religious groups to make the same claim, which highlights the similarities between primitivists and religionists.) Primitivists seem not to be able to grasp the possibility that one could disagree with their views precisely because they are understood.

The second notion is that, although they allow themselves the freedom to polemicize viciously against traditional anarchists, they cannot be criticized in turn. Anarchist criticism of their views is “divisive,” “sectarian,” or “uncomradely.” Anarchists are routinely presented with the pathetic sight of primitivists and post-leftists viciously attacking classical anarchism, only to thereafter run behind the black flag and claim “but we’re all in this together” when the fire is returned. In the world of primitive thinking, only primitive thoughts deserve to be advanced.

In fact, those who can access the Internet or who have the time and money to read many current anarchist periodicals are probably familiar with the growing gulf between primitivism and the tendency

within the anarchist movement that maintains a class-struggle, but not anti-technological, approach. Primitivism claims hostility to traditional left ideas, as evidenced by dour rants about “workerists” above, including those embodied in the classical anarchist tradition. “Post-leftists,” as anti-left primitivists prefer to be called, derive their appellation in the main from the book *Anarchy After Leftism*, written by known police informant and attorney Bob Black. In A:AJODA #48 (Fall-Winter 1999–2000), John Zerzan wrote under the “Post-Left Anarchy!” forum, identifying his brand of primitivism as a form of post-leftist thought.

The division within the anarchist movement between primitivists and other anarchists is particular to the U.S., where hipsters often claim any number of bizarre ideas under a rubric of “anarchism” to lend them a fashionable sheen. Where the anarchist movement exists elsewhere, however, one finds it informed with classical anarchist ideas of class struggle and self-management. These same working class aspects of the anarchist movement, however, are often derided by American primitivists as reformist or “leftist.” For them, leftism is quite as bad as rightism.

Of course, anarchists have always criticized the authoritarian left, because anarchists have always criticized authoritarianism. For instance, Voline’s *The Unknown Revolution* and Emma Goldman’s *My Disillusionment in Russia* are two well-known examples of the anarchist critique of Leninist tyranny. The fate of the anarchist Spanish CNT-FAI at the hands of the Stalinist, nominally leftist Partido Comunista Espanola is known by most anarchists. Anarchist criticism of the practices of authoritarian leftists has come as much from actual experience as from theoretical disagreement. Bakunin and Marx debated constantly, defining for many the splits between libertarian and authoritarian leftism, and it’s silly and dishonest to pretend that these differences are nonexistent or trivial.

The Green Anarchy Collective writes at Z-Net: “The two main failed and exhausted means or approaches towards change in recent times have been liberalism and leftism... Technology, production, hierarchy; government, ecological destruction, and ideas like ‘progress’ continue to go unquestioned by most who would identify with the left.” The Green Anarchist proclamation to the contrary, traditional anarchists like Peter Kropotkin situated anarchism at the left wing of the socialist movement. Like Bakunin, Kropotkin believed that anarchism was a form of socialism, and that “socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality.”

Additionally, primitivists often denigrate anarcho-syndicalists as secret Marxist-Leninists (or even fascists!) who would reveal themselves truly as such if ever they “gained power.” This is a rather curious charge, given that the social designs advanced by anarcho-syndicalists are designed to make it impossible that anyone could “gain power” over others.

The primitivists’ chief complaint is that “workerist” anarchists romanticize work, while primitivists want to abolish it. Anarcho-syndicalists hold work on a sort of mystical pedestal, primitivists say, refusing to acknowledge that humans are more than simple “workers.” (Actually, the problem is that anarcho-syndicalists do see that humans are more than mere workers, but that capitalists don’t!)

Most direct of the primitivist assaults on anarcho-syndicalism is Feral Faun’s “The Bourgeois Origins of Anarcho-Syndicalism,” available on the web (at www.insurgentdesire.org.uk) and as a pamphlet. Feral Watkins, published in A: AJODA and *Fifth Estate*, absurdly claims in his piece that “anarcho-syndicalists embrace the values essential to capitalism” and that anarcho-syndicalists do this “maybe even more than the bourgeoisie.” How it is possible for those other than the actual bourgeoisie to do this is not explained; by definition, the bourgeoisie are the guardians and source of bourgeois values. If anarcho-syndicalists do this “maybe even more” than their bosses — the bourgeoisie — then anarcho-syndicalists are a great danger indeed. It means they are even more reactionary than the actual power holders in this system!

The essay’s main point is that “anarcho-syndicalism reflects bourgeois ideology” and that “values upheld by anarcho-syndicalists do not significantly differ from those of the more radical of the bourgeois liberal theorists, and their project, upon examination, proves to be merely the extension of the liberal

project.” It is unclear what Faun/Watkins means by “merely an extension of the liberal project,” save that this is supposed to be bad. Indeed, most anarchists agree that the birth of anarchism owed much to the Enlightenment. “With the development of industrial capitalism,” Noam Chomsky writes in Daniel Guerin’s *Anarchism*, “a new and unanticipated system of injustice, it is libertarian socialism that has preserved and extended the radical humanist message of the Enlightenment and the classical liberal ideals that were perverted into an ideology to sustain the emerging social order.” Anarchists do not deny that power-holders pay lip service to Enlightenment ideals while engaging in behavior that contradicts them.

Overall, Faun/Watkins’ critique of anarcho-syndicalism is a good example of the primitivist critique of class struggle anarchism. To Feral Faun and other primitivists, anarcho-syndicalism was never an authentic revolutionary tendency to begin with. How could anarcho-syndicalism ever be revolutionary if it has “bourgeois origins”?

Indeed, Faun’s essay castigates the behavior of the Spanish CNT during the Revolution of 1936 as “truly disgusting.” Neglecting the fact that it was only some members of the CNT that made (easy-to-see-in-hindsight) mistakes, even those anarchists that do not consider themselves anarcho-syndicalists are inclined to agree that if ever there was an anarchist revolution, it was in Spain in the late 1930s. But not for Faun and other primitivists. To them, the broad working class movement against Spanish fascism was itself bourgeois, “maybe even more” bourgeois than the bourgeois resistance itself, representing no real libertarian alternative for the Spanish people, even if it was what a majority of them preferred. According to the primitive take on the conflict, what the workers themselves wanted in the face of Franco’s dictatorship was a delusion, a “workerist” hell “even more” bourgeois than capitalism. This being the case, surely for the primitivists the defeat and attendant slaughter of the “bourgeois” Spanish anarchists was a relief, as no consistent anarchist could ever want a system set up by those “maybe even more” bourgeois than the capitalist class.

Ironically, Feral Watkins introduces his essay with a brief depiction of the historical development of capitalism that could have come from the pages of Marx. He refers to the period of “liberal bourgeois” revolutions in the late 17th to early 19th centuries. “This period was the uprising of the bourgeoisie against the feudal system and the power of the Catholic Church,” Faun informs us. The irony in Faun’s description lies not in the fact that it is incorrect — in fact, it is accurate to say that the revolutions of this period did upset old feudal orders and replace aristocracies with sham, bourgeois democracies — but because it shows that, try as they may, primitive post-leftists cannot escape a left-wing analysis.

Anti-left primitivists assail anarcho-syndicalists for engaging in an analysis that they say is mired in musty old leftist terms and concepts, for example. Feral Faun’s interpretation of the liberal bourgeois revolutions of the Enlightenment, however, is pretty much straight up historical materialism (Marxism, in other words). Ironically, without leftist concepts buttressing them, primitivists could not write their “anti-left” diatribes. Likewise, Faun repeatedly uses terms like “bourgeoisie” that also reek of ancient leftism. Most modern anarchists refuse such terms precisely because they reek of Old Guard, Party dogmatism. (Rather than speak of the “bourgeoisie,” for example, many anarchists find it more useful to note the operations of multi-nationals and the corporate elite.)

Faun then makes one of the more horrible mistakes in his essay: he claims that “the defining quality of capitalism, as compared with other economic systems, is not the existence of capitalists but the production of excess capital allowing for continued economic expansion.” It is true that the defining quality of capitalism is not the existence of capitalists — but neither is it the “production of excess capital.” It is the fact of capital — of class property — itself. If capitalism is anything, it is the existence of capital. It is not the “excess production” of it. “Capital” is itself a form of property that presupposes a certain distribution of power: the power of some to control and dispose of the things others must have access to in order to survive. “Capital” is an authoritarian relationship between individuals, and this authoritarian relation is precisely the defining aspect of capitalism for anarchists. If the “production of

“excess capital” is the defining quality for primitivists, and not the authoritarianism that is inherent in “capital” itself, then in what sense are primitivists anarchists?

Now, if by “production of excess capital” Feral Watkins really meant “extraction of surplus value,” then again he is not engaging in a primitivist analysis but simply an old Marxist one. If, however, he really means that capitalism is defined as production of excess capital, then we have to ask: what is the significance of this production of “excess capital,” and who is it such production bad for? And, for that matter, how much capital is the “right” amount of capital to be piled up before “production of excess capital” begins?

For capitalists, there is no such thing as an excess of capital. They can never have enough. And they can certainly not be sated to a degree where they feel they have an “excess” of it. After all, that is what makes them capitalists. The more, the better. For them, there is always a shortage, no matter how much they have, and that is what drives them to expand their businesses and to accumulate ever more. There is no “excess” in their logic. Rather, there is always slightly less than is needed to sate their appetite.

For workers, however, who labor under the command of capitalists, the term “excess of capital” is a redundancy. The mere fact of capital is an excess. Its simple existence is a superfluity. Capitalism breeds excess because it is itself excess. From the working class point of view, the existence of capitalists is excessive and unnecessary; capitalists are a superfluous class of people whose elimination (as a class — not as individuals!) would increase efficiency and freedom. But then, the primitivists have no working class point of view. In fact, they show disdain to the idea that there is a meaningfully distinct working class perspective. (Of course, primitivists do slip up and refer to a “working class” fairly often, but it is not informed with any definite meaning; it is used in the same casual sense that *The New York Times* might occasionally refer to an American “working class.”)

It may seem as if we are splitting hairs here, in the critique of how Faun defines capitalism. But Faun’s failure to grasp the simple authoritarian dynamic that makes “capital” what it is reveals the poverty of the primitivist philosophy. Anarchists see private property in the means of production — “capital” — as a manifestation of the broader problem of authoritarianism. To anarchists, the particular type of authoritarianism that capital represents is itself the defining characteristic of capitalism. If for primitivists the defining characteristic is simply an “excess production” of privately owned means of production, then they have no meaningful anti-authoritarian analysis of our current economic system.

Faun claims that anarcho-syndicalists have core values in common with capitalists. The “values which are essential to capitalist expansion are production and progress,” he says. “Anarcho-syndicalists embrace...these capitalist values,” he maintains. Zerzan and others make similar arguments, claiming that leftists blindly adhere to notions of progress as well. “Production” and “progress” taken out of context, however, could apply to almost anything. The question is, for anarchists, production of what and under what conditions? And, similarly, progress towards what? It is not enough to say that “production and progress” themselves are absolutely good or bad, devoid of context.

Production that satisfies the greatest amount of human need with the least human expenditure is a worthy goal for anarcho-syndicalists. Production that fattens profit margins the handsomest, with the least attending social responsibility, is what business owners value. These are radically different priorities. Capitalists believe in progress towards whatever will help them make money: technological progress that eliminates paid or potentially dissident labor is hailed as “progress.” Disemployment and environmental ruin are “progress.”

But to anarcho-syndicalists, this is the opposite of progress; to anarcho-syndicalists, “progress” is meaningful to the extent innovations occur that help feed, house, clothe, etc., the greatest number of humans with the least amount of human labor, the least use of natural resources, and the least amount of environmental damage. Innovations that expand the scope of human freedom and aid in worker self-management (i.e., human self-determination), are seen as progressive. Capitalists have no interest in this

sort of progress, as it is not profitable. Primitivists do not acknowledge this obvious, basic distinction, as to do so would deprive them of a useful straw man.

“Essential to production and progress is work,” Faun continues, “and so the bourgeois highly value work — and, contrary to the image painted by ‘radical’ labor propagandists, it is not uncommon for capitalists to work many more hours than industrial workers, but it’s organizational rather than productive work”

Police informants may also work many more hours than industrial workers, but this is not the sort of work that anarcho-syndicalists value. Again, it is not simply work as an absolute that is valued, but the kind of work. “What type of work is it, and to what ends is it being conducted?” the anarcho-syndicalist asks. There is work that is harmful to the working class — such as the “work” of exploitation and of managing — and there is work that is productive and useful to society. The latter sort of work is valued by anarcho-syndicalists. The work of ruling and exploiting is not.

“Those who manage to avoid work are the moral scum of capitalist society — parasites off the working people,” Faun writes, stating also that anarcho-syndicalism views shirkers in the same light. Those who do absolutely no 9-to-5 type work in our current system may or may not be acting in a manner that is conducive to revolutionary goals, however. Most anarcho-syndicalists would rather someone not work at all, than work as a capitalist or as a police informant, for example. A hatred of work in our current system is understandable; indeed, it is this hatred that fuels the anarcho-syndicalist desire for revolutionary change. This is hatred of work as it must be conducted in the statist/capitalist system wherein the mass of people work to enrich a few at the expense of themselves, their talents, and their own self-actualization.

Work in a primitivist society would consist of foraging, hunting, gathering, cooking, seeking or constructing shelter, etc. Just as primitivists claim they would not force anyone to engage in this sort of work, leaving idlers to go it alone or die, so too would anarcho-syndicalists not force anyone to work in a post-capitalist order. But in an anarcho-syndicalist society, surpluses would be more likely to abound, thereby enabling non-workers to be cared for. In the primitivist utopia, surpluses would be guaranteed not to exist — indeed, they are posited as authoritarian — leaving many to suffer and die. (Remember, primitivists claim that “the emergence of surplus ... invariably [my emphasis] involves property and an end to unconditional sharing” — surpluses are therefore to be avoided, not welcomed.)

Anarcho-syndicalists can also envision a time when work is shorter, more pleasant, more efficient, and more productive than it is now, leaving plenty of time for leisure, if work itself is not counted by workers as being indistinguishable from leisure activity. The primitivist notion, much like the capitalist’s, is that people require external compulsion to work. Without such external compulsion, primitivists say, no one would want to work in mines or do other unsavory jobs. Kropotkin addressed this old canard in “Anarchist Communism”:

As to the childish question, repeated for fifty years: “Who would do disagreeable work?” frankly I regret that none of our savants has ever been brought to do it, be it for only one day in his life. If there is still work which is really disagreeable in itself, it is only because our scientific men have never cared to consider the means of rendering it less so: they have always known that there were plenty of starving men who would do it for a few pence a day.

Work can be made more pleasant when the bosses are chased out and when workers themselves administer their workplaces; all resources previously controlled by capitalists would be in the hands of the public. Primitivists who do not wish to work in such a society would not be forced to do so, and it would be up to individual communities to decide whether to give primitive idlers portions of a surplus they did not help produce. (Of course, given that such a society could only occur through a revolution stressing principles of solidarity and mutual aid, it is likely that primitivist non-workers would indeed find themselves supported by their despised workerist cousins.) Until such a state of affairs, however,

anarcho-syndicalism places no special blame on people who try to avoid work, unless they do so in a manner that unduly hurts their working class brethren. Anarchists believe that the most important work to be done in the period we are in now is the work of organizing people to overthrow the state-subsidized capitalist system.

Feral Watkins refers to Chaz Bufe's "Listen, Anarchist!" as evidence of how anarchists feel about those who try to avoid work in our society. Bufe mentions that anarchists who intentionally try to get on public assistance as a means of living a work-free, "anarchist" lifestyle are not acting in a manner that is most beneficial for achieving revolutionary change. To primitivists and lifestylists in general, Bufe's comment must come across as a paternalistic admonition of slackers, echoing Republican anti-welfare rhetoric, with its obsessive insistence that people everywhere do the responsible and moral thing of getting a job. In fact, this is the general attitude that primitivists attribute to anarcho-syndicalism and the labor movement as a whole.⁴⁰

Bufe's comments and the anarcho-syndicalist position are not congruent with Watkins' estimation of them, however. In one sense, it is more helpful to anarcho-syndicalist goals for anarchists to have jobs, as they can attempt to organize their place of work along non-hierarchical lines. In this sense, it is helpful for anarchists to go into the workplace much as community organizers go into neighborhoods they wish to organize. The tragedy is, of course, that for most anarchists work is not an organizing choice, but a necessity of life. Radical unions are dependent upon workers organizing within their industry for the eventual expropriation of capital from private hands.

The desire by some lumpenproles to scam their way onto the welfare rolls also represents a type of escapism. No one is saying that what small, paltry welfare programs exist in the US should be destroyed, or anything like that (quite the contrary). But carving out an individual, work-free lifestyle is not revolutionary, nor will it lead to any substantial revolutionary change. Bosses can live with workers dropping out of the rat race; they cannot live with workers actively organizing on the shop floor. Indeed, the great anarchist revolutions of Spain, the Ukraine, Mexico, and elsewhere, were not guided by some rousing vision of dropping out of the rat race. Welfare escapism is.

"The only real problem they have with the capitalist system is who's in charge," Feral Faun continues, referring to anarcho-syndicalists. Zerzan agrees, writing, "Self-managed factories and other forms of productionism and specialization are now widely understood as no advance at all." ("Widely understood"? By whom?) Anarcho-syndicalists would "prefer the One Big Capitalist," Faun writes, "the international union of working people, rather than various individuals, corporations and states to be in charge. But the basic structure would be the same."

Here Faun/Watkins mocks the I.W.W. and its and its notion of the "One Big Union." But when Faun scoffs at the "international union of working people" he also denigrates global working class unity itself! Indeed, Faun's analysis is not "workerist" at all. Far from it. It is, in fact, anti-worker. The fear of the "one big capitalist" is exactly the anarchist critique of Leninism and other forms of statist socialism. That is, statist socialists seek to replace a number of capitalists with one large capitalist in the form of the state. But anarcho-syndicalists want neither one big capitalist (the state) or many capitalists to choose from: they want a self-managed economy where the people doing the actual work are calling the shots. That is not capitalism, let alone something that is conducive to the formation of "One Big Capitalist." Feral Watkins' insistence that it somehow is only reinforces the fact that he and other primitivists have no understanding of the basic social dynamic that underpins capitalism.

"[T]he bourgeois liberal is content to get rid of priests and kings, and the anarcho-syndicalist throws in presidents and bosses," Faun says. "But the factories remain intact, the stores remain intact (though

⁴⁰Editors Note: In fact, I see little ethical difference between capitalists who live off the labor of others and welfare-primitivists such as Watkins/Faun who likewise deliberately live off stolen [by the government] labor. The money they receive doesn't fall off trees — it's taken from the pay of those who work. I consider both parasites, and worse, parasites who spit on those whose labor they live off. — CB

the syndicalists may call them distribution centers), the family remains intact — the entire social system remains intact.”

And would families not remain intact if primitivists had their way? Faun's insistence is that since physical structures, like stores, remain standing, somehow oppressive social relations must exist as well. Like Karl Marx's flawed belief that the “steam mill gives you the industrial capitalist,” Faun believes that the store will give you the boss. That is, the physical existence of buildings somehow brings about authority figures. Faun does not trouble us with an explanation of how this is so — he leaves us to take it on his good word.

In fact, whether or not the stores remain intact would be the prerogative of workers and their communities. When Faun posits that anarcho-syndicalists want things to continue the same as before, but simply self-managed, he betrays a deep misunderstanding of the principle of self-management, as does Perlman, above. Anarcho-syndicalism is the belief that workers know best about how their labor is to be used — if at all — and that they, and not theorists, should decide what to do at the actual point of production.

And, believe it or not, anarcho-syndicalists do not wish to deprive primitivists of any opportunity to get back to nature. If, in a post-revolutionary society, groups of primitivists wanted to leave and lead a lifestyle they'd consider more attuned to man's natural inclinations, they would certainly be free to do so. As they'd look in disdain over their shoulders at the “workerist” anarchist civilization they have left, they could delight in pursuing the very hard work of foraging and constructing shelter for themselves, deluding themselves that that is not itself work — albeit a hard sort of work not aided by the machinery that anarchists back in the hi-tech society have expropriated from capitalist rule. In the end, the primitivist will be working much harder than his “workerist” cousin, no matter how hard he may try to convince himself that he has liberated himself from toil.

6. The Bloody Side of Primitivism

Simple theoretical ineptitude is one thing. But there is also a far darker side to primitive thought.

On December 11, 1985, California store owner Hugh Scrutton tried to remove what he thought was a road hazard from his store's parking lot. As he picked up the object, which resembled a piece of wood with nails driven through it, an explosion drove metal shards into his heart and ripped off his right hand, killing him. Scrutton was the first of three victims to die from Unabomber attacks.

“They ain't innocent,” Zerzan told a reporter. “Which isn't to say that I'm totally at ease with blowing them to pieces. Part of me is. And part of me isn't.” In *Running on Emptiness*, Zerzan evinces his sympathy differently: “I offered the hope, if not the prediction, that TK [Ted Kaczynski] might at some point also be considered in a more positive light for his resistance to industrial civilization.” Kaczynski, Zerzan claims, “decided he had to kill people to bring up this suppressed point of view. And he forced them [the media] to publish it. The point here is not whether he was justified or not, but merely the level of denial [that culture and technology are bad.]”

According to Kaczynski at primitivism.com, “When things break down, there is going to be violence and this does raise a question. I don't know if I exactly want to call it a moral question, but the point is that for those who realize the need to do away with the techno-industrial system, if you work for its collapse, in effect you are killing a lot of people.” In the article “When Non-Violence is Suicide,” Kaczynski urges activists to prepare for combat, painting a hypothetical scenario to compel us towards this end: In Kaczynski-Land, the parable goes, post-revolutionary farmers (i.e., cropdomesticators) are confronted by marauders, who wish to rape a primitivists' female friend. “Mick, grab that bitch over there before she gets away. She got [sic] a nice ass,” Kaczynski has the imaginary bandits saying. “We'll all screw her tonight.” Lovely stuff.

In A:AJODA, which published Kaczynski's first prison interview, Lawrence Jarach complains, "There are many prejudiced caricatures and objections concerning primitivism; for example that its proponents want to 'go back to the Stone Age' ..." In fact, Jarach says, "[a]s far as I can tell, most primitivists only want to go back as far as the Iron Age," putting the primitivist golden era at around 1000 B.C.E., well after the establishment of the written word and crop surpluses, and when Middle Eastern kingdoms held sway. According to the non-partisan Population Resource Bureau, "Estimates of average life expectancy in Iron Age France have been put at only 10 or 12 years. Under these conditions, the birth rate would have to be about 80 per 1,000 people just for the species to survive." That's some Golden Age.

Jarach delineates a depressingly diverse number of primitivist theories currently in circulation: some are associated with Zerzan and "green anarchism"; another revolves around the misanthropy of Earth First!-style Deep Ecology⁴¹; and yet at least one more comes from the Perlman/Bradford/*Fifth Estate* sector. Jarach says the criticism that constructing a primitivist society "would result in an immediate mass die-off of thousands — if not millions — of humans" is a mere "dismissal" from those who do not want to spend time trying to understand the many forms of primitivism he has laid out for us. Jarach then asks Zerzan if, in fact, "millions will die immediately" if primitivists had their way. "Perhaps the key word in your question is 'immediately,'" Zerzan carefully responds. "In other words, if the whole prevailing apparatus vanished instantly somehow, millions probably would die." The solution is apparently to slowly dismantle technology-something that would not bring about mass death immediately, it is true, but gradually. The rest of Zerzan's answer is a non-answer. ("People are already dying," he says — a fact known to most, and in fact the reason many of us are anarchists, as we wish to prevent widespread death!)

Tragically, the most fanatic segments of the primitivist movement welcome human death. Though they do not practice Kaczynski-style homicide in mass numbers, they thrill at large-scale epidemics that might reduce the population of the earth. In a May 1, 1987 edition of the Earth First! paper, for example, "Miss Ann Thropy" argued that AIDS is a "good" thing, and said that if that "epidemic didn't exist, radical environmentalists would have to invent one."

That a hunter-gatherer or even an Iron Age society could not support massive population centers is a fact recognized by most primitivists. To achieve their objective of a primitive society, therefore, like the Khmer Rouge, they hold that the population must be more evenly distributed across the earth. As Marx and Engels wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*, revolutionaries should work to establish a "gradual abolition of the distinction of town and country, by a more equitable distribution of the population over the country." Manifesto.⁴² Marxist-style population dispersal advocated by "post-left" thinkers is an odd thing indeed, not to mention an old thing — a prime example of their borrowing from past authoritarians.

In "Notes on Primitivism," Zerzan and the Green Anarchy Collective repeat deep ecologist-style warnings that within "the last 200 years the human population growth curve has shifted from the normal mammal 's' shape to the more viral 'j' shape." The association of humanity with a "viral" infection is common to deep ecology, which regards humanity as a disease upon the planet. (To wit: Earth First! co-founder David Foreman's statement "We are a cancer on nature.") Playing with the analogy further, the primitivists warn that "this increase is much like that of viruses (which is to consume the host until both the virus and the host are dead)."

Wisely, primitivists usually stop short of actually advocating mass killing, even if individual primitivists like Ted Kaczynski have already attempted it. "[W]e aren't suggesting a strategy to deal with this [population growth]," the Green Anarchy Collective wisely adds. "[W]e just think there is data about

⁴¹Many, probably most, Earth Firsters have abandoned the misanthropic "deep ecology" views expounded by Earth First! co-founder, "Republican environmentalist" Dave Foreman, in the 1980s.

⁴²Point 9 of the 10-point program recorded at the end of Section 2 of the Manifesto.

the situation that should be known" — presumably so that others, too, may ruminate and also not suggest a strategy to deal with it.

In his "Primitive Thought" supplement to *Listen, Anarchist!* Chaz Bufe says that the idea that "population lies at the root of every environmental problem" is on "a par with the simplistic belief that 'technology' is the sole cause of environmental destruction." The Malthusian doctrine that asserts population growth will, at some point in the future, outstrip available resources has been used to justify the most callous government policies against the poor. Better to let people die off if they will be a burden on the planet or others, the logic goes. In fact, if the global population is increasing at an alarming rate, we already know several of the reasons why this is so: 1) Religious authoritarianism that urges people in poorer countries to marry young and be fruitful, and to avoid sinful contraceptives. 2) Right-wing policy makers that outlaw abortion (even though, for the poor, there is always a de facto ban on expensive abortion procedures), "morning after"-type abortion pills, and sex education in schools. 3) Destructive neoliberal globalization policies that keep the third world in poverty, leading families to produce more offspring so that they may gain more income-earners for their household. Malthus' notion that there is a "surplus population" sadly merits a reminder that there is no human being that is surplus to his or her family, or to the human project. It is disappointing that some have to be reminded that no human being is superfluous.

If a primitive life is so desirable, be it of a Stone Age or Iron Age type, then why haven't primitivists attempted to live this way? In fact, the failure of primitivists to pursue the establishment of hunter-gatherer societies reveals how clearly undesirable many primitivists really feel such societies are. "Does Zerzan live like that?" Peter Fenton asked in a 1999 issue of *Scope* magazine. "No way. 'It's too daunting a task,' he admits." Likewise, some primitivists live off public assistance and/or the generosity of friends, never attempting a break with civilized comforts.

Unlike anarcho-syndicalists or anarcho-communists, primitivists could attempt to live their preferred lifestyle in our world now. Jon Krakauer's book *Into the Wild* presents academician Gene Rosellini's attempt to live a primitive lifestyle in the wilds of Canada. "I was interested in knowing if it was possible to be independent of modern technology," he told *Anchorage Daily News* reporter Debra McKinney. "I began my adult life with the hypothesis that it would be possible to become a Stone Age native." He "purged his life of all but the most primitive tools, which he fashioned from native materials with his own hands," Krakauer writes. For ten years, Rosellini toughed it out. Eventually, however, he gave up: "I would say I realistically experienced the physical, mental and emotional reality of the Stone Age. But to borrow a Buddhist phrase, eventually came a setting face-to-face with pure reality. I learned that it is not possible for human beings as we know them to live off the land." In 1991, Rosellini was found dead in his shack, a suicide victim.

Ted Kaczynski's attempt at primitive living is well known, as well. Kaczynski's situation, however, presents the reality that many primitivists are in fact not content simply to live in isolation, but seek to strike out at the civilization that is around them. Primitivists claim that "techno-industrial civilization" would inevitably encroach on their enclaves due to its ceaseless, internal drive to expand outward. This is why primitivists do not want anarcho-syndicalists or others to enjoy a high-tech society — their contention is that if any remnants of "techno-industrial civilization" remain — even if it is in anarchist hands — they and the Earth will still be threatened. Again, primitivists ascribe "techno-industrialism" a will of its own, proclaiming its ability to do things independent of human agency (see the "Frankenstein monster" and "Earthwrecker" comment made by primitivists cited [in chapter 3]). Latent in this assertion is also the unproven belief that "techno-industrial society" would always be ecologically unsustainable. This is the logic that impels primitivists to strike out violently against those they see as "technologism's" advocates. In the primitive mindset, such people literally threaten their lives; therefore, killing them is a type of self-defense.

Interestingly, primitivists have also worked it out to have things both ways. On the one hand, some say “it will do no good” to leave civilization at this point, because civilization would eventually encroach upon them. This provides them *carte blanche* to enjoy the Internet, microwaved food, cell phones, and medical care. But at the same time they ruminate on how much better life would be without such amenities. Again, it seems primitivists want everyone else to go primitive first. The notion that “there is no place to go now that is free of civilization” provides an excuse to indulge in hi-tech gadgets and other luxuries until “society breaks down.” Like Marxist determinists, primitivists seem to believe that sooner or later society will crash under its own weight, with or without them, so there’s no harm in indulging themselves in its pleasures in the meantime.

However, one is led to a bloody conclusion once one adopts the flawed premises of primitive thought. In conflating “industrialism” or “techno-industrial civilization” with the market forces of capitalism, primitivists insist it is a matter of ecological survival to destroy all machinery, whether humans require it for life (as in medical care or water purification devices) or not. For primitivists, elimination of capitalist profit motives still leaves the Frankenstein monster of technology unharmed; they preach that the monster will continue to grow blindly, like a cancer, even if no capitalists control it. In the end, the primitivist imperative is an all-out war not so much against coercive social relations, as anarchism is, as against physical structures that they say have their own prerogatives. Replacing authoritarian social relations with egalitarian social relations will do no good, they believe; physical infrastructure must be ruined as well. This is a major part of their broader aim of destroying all civilization.

In contrast, let us as anarchists propose the establishment of a civilization worthy of the name. As Kropotkin once noted, “Competition is the law of the jungle, but cooperation is the law of civilization.” We should seek to establish a society and culture that is, in every sense of the word, civilized. Statist capitalism provides no civility for billions the world over. Wars, poverty, the eradication of native peoples, unjust distribution of workers’ produce, debt bondage, and crime — this is the legacy of our authoritarian era. Instead, anarchists should work to create a society that replaces such widespread incivility with a world that is thoroughly, and to every degree, civil.

7. Appendix: On Decoding Primitivist Babble

Notes on the Conflations of Primitive Thought (A Guide to Decoding Primitivist Babble)

Conflation of Civilization and Coercive Social Relations

“Civilization is the fountainhead of all dominations: patriarchy, division of labor, domestication of life, warfare, on down the line to its present ghastly fullness,” Zerzan, Blair, and the Green Anarchy Collective assert.

In fact, patriarchy, warfare, and forms of division of labor existed before civilization — not to mention irrational page/religious thought. See Keeley’s *War Before Civilization*, for example, or anthropologist Robert B. Edgerton’s *Sick Societies*.

Conflation of Technology and Coercive Social Relations

“Technology is more of a process or concept than a static form. It is a complex system involving division of labor, resource extraction, and exploitation for the benefit of those who implement its process,” Zerzan, Blair, and the Green Anarchy Collective inform us.

This view was addressed earlier. Needless to say, the primitive view that technology constitutes an array of coercive relations is not shared by anthropologists, who define technology as the application of science or technical methods to problem-solving. That is not to say that coercive relations involving the use of technology don't exist, only that technology isn't the source of them. Humans are. The onus is on primitivists to demonstrate that technology is invariably predicated on coercive or environmentally hostile relations.

Conflation of “Industrialism” and Capitalism

Primitivists generally ascribe to their concept of “industrialism” all the features of statist capitalism — but additionally (and incredibly) attribute to it a sovereign will, suggesting that it acts independent of human control. The “industrial system” would work to destroy humanity and the earth even if it were the collective property of an anarchist society (“self-managed”), in their view.

Conflation of Poverty and Freedom

Primitivists wish humanity to live like earlier hominids — that is, in poverty, by today's standards. They confer praise on those who live “down-shifted” lifestyles (much like Kalle Lasn and his Adbusters troupe) and approve of those who choose to become squatters and dumpster-divers. They dispute the notion that primitive living amounts to a poverty lifestyle because, they claim, early hominids enjoyed a type of “primitive affluence” (in radically different conditions than our own, of course).

This brings to mind a Saturday Night Live sketch in which comedian Jon Lovitz complained that he couldn't get a date, whereupon he turned to the camera and urged women, “Lower your standards!” That is what primitivists urge for the rest of us — not just for the super rich, mind you, but for modest working class families. Traditionally, of course, anarchists have sought a collective raising of living standards, with redistribution from the rich downward to the rest of us.

Radically reducing living standards to meet a primitivist notion of “affluence” seems Orwellian. While it is true that some non-industrial peoples, such as the Chumash Indians of California, were lucky enough to happen upon a naturally abundant environment (whereupon they ceased to be hunter-gatherers, settled, and began crop-domestication), other pre-civilized peoples did not fare so well, and roamed endlessly in search of food, driven by a base need for survival. That all primitive peoples for over two million years enjoyed “affluence” is not only wildly speculative, it plainly contradicts anthropological knowledge.

Conflation of Group Decision Making and Statecraft

Primitivists and post-leftist allies (note: not all post-leftists are primitivists) often sneer at anything “organizational.” They falsely associate decision making structures of groups with the running of the state, often conflating, for example, union democracy with statecraft.

This ignores the essence of the state: coercion and violence. Anarchists argue that organization is essential to social survival, but that coercion and violence are not, and that organizations can and do exist that are not coercive or authoritarian. Primitivists ignore this essential distinction and argue that all organizations are authoritarian, though they're hard put to say why. Thus, by their own logic, the Green Anarchy and Fifth Estate collectives are statist and authoritarian and should be disbanded. Why they have thus far not followed their own logic is a mystery.

Congflation of Organization and Authoritarians (or “Leninism”)

Statist capitalists have often said that “anarchist organization” is an oxymoron. Statists are unable to imagine any type of organization that is not authoritarian, steeped as they are in authoritarian ideas about how groups must be run. Amazingly, many primitivists agree, and so hope to do away with organization! Echoing the worst of post-leftist rhetoric, some primitivists have incredibly suggested that no institution should be allowed to exist for more than a decade or so, even if members of the institution democratically decide they’d like the operation to continue (and even if the rest of the community has no problem with the institution continuing). A collectively run farm would in this case have to be shut down after several years, lest it become an evil “entrenched institution” — even if the community and farm workers objected.

It’s also worth mentioning that primitivists routinely ignore the well known distinguishing characteristics of Leninism (vanguard parties, retention of the government in the form of a “workers’ state,” a controlling party central committee, government control of all aspects of life, especially work life, etc., etc.) and throw the term around merely as a form of abuse, as a form of name calling, much in the manner of right-wingers who label anyone who disagrees with them as a “communist.”

Congflation of Unions per se with “Mediating Structures of Oppression”

A common primitivist canard is that all unions are simply mediating structures of exploitation (“the left-wing of capital”) between bosses and wage slaves. This notion owes much to postmodern theory, which asserts that any social relation arising in a hegemonic system is automatically “tainted” by virtue of its birth there. That is, anything brought about in an oppressive society will be oppressive, no matter what its actual character is. Some radical Maoists have extended this to include sexual relations between men and women. (All sex is exploitative of women in capitalism, they say, no matter what.) In fact, there is much truth to the notion that capitalism (or any authoritarian system) skews relations between human beings. But the idea that all groups in capitalism “mediate” capitalist oppression would have to apply to primitivist groups as well. Eventually, one ends up with a pessimistic picture in which every progressive organization is innately oppressive, thereby eliminating hope for meaningful social change!

Of course, I’m not denying the fact that business unions of the AFL-CIO variety often act in ways that are extremely detrimental to workers. The labor aristocracy of the AFL-CIO does tend to create a caste of officers who live at the expense of dues-paying workers, and who develop class interests in opposition to them. But this does not mean all forms of working class mutual aid in the workplace merely “mediate” exploitation! Radically democratic unions are possible, as the IWW, early CIO, CNT, and many independent unions have shown.

Even the primitivists who concede that some types of unions are revolutionary (and they usually concede this only when they’re absolutely pressed) are rarely to be found actually supporting such unions or organizing for them. Most primitivists instead choose a “zero-work” attitude and leave labor organizing to others.

Congflation of Economics and Competition

“It seems evident that industrialization and the factories could not be gotten rid of instantly, but equally clear that their liquidation must be pursued with all the vigor behind the rush of break-out. Such enslavement of people and nature must disappear forever, so that words like production and economy will have no meaning.”

— John Zerzan, “On the Transition — Postscript to Future Primitive.”

Even hunter-gatherer social groups had economic systems—that is, systems of production and distribution. They produced tools and weapons, and distributed the foods they gathered or killed. There is in fact an implied primitivist type of economy in all primitivist works, whether they choose to acknowledge this or not. Fredy Perlman, for example, refers to Marshall Sahlins' "Stone Age Economics." Economics will continue to exist as long as human beings exist.

In the end, the question boils down to what kind of economy we want — one that's controlled by those spending their work lives in it, or one controlled by insatiable parasites (capitalists).

Likewise, the question that we as anarchists are faced with is what kind of anarchist movement we want — one that looks often — ugly, authoritarian social reality in the eye, with the aim of transforming it into something better, something that will result in freer, happier lives for ourselves and all of our brothers and sisters on planet Earth, or one that wastes its time fantasizing about a non-existent Golden Age, and that would result in the deaths of billions if its precepts were followed.

The choice is ours.

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Anarchist Communism

Johann Most

1889

Anarchism is a world view, a philosophy of society; indeed the philosophy of society, for whoever considers the world and human life in their profoundest senses and their complete development, and then decides on the societal form of greatest desirability, cannot but decide for anarchism. Every other form is a half-measure and a patchwork.

Is anarchism desirable? Well, who does not seek freedom? What man, unless willing to declare himself in bondage, would care to call any control agreeable? Think about it!

Is anarchism possible? The failure of attempts to attain freedom does not mean the cause is lost. The facts that the struggle for freedom is clearer and stronger than ever before, that today there are different preconditions to achieving the goal, and that we therefore stand nearer anarchy than had been hoped — prove a development of the desire to wash from the face of the earth what is authoritarian.

Anarchists are socialists because they want the improvement of society, and they are communists because they are convinced that such a transformation of society can only result from the establishment of a commonwealth of property.

The aims of anarchists and true communists are identical. Why, then, are anarchists not satisfied to call themselves socialists or communists? Because they do not want to be confused with people who misappropriate these words, as many people do nowadays, and because they believe communism would be an incomplete, less-than-desirable system if not infused with the spirit of anarchism.

Communists and anarchists also agree on tactics. He who negates present society, and seeks social conditions based on the sharing of property, is a revolutionary whether he calls himself an anarchist or a communist. But anarchists are not bloodhounds who speak with levity of revolution by murder and arson. They make revolutionary propaganda because they know the privileged class can never be overturned peacefully.

The anarchists, on behalf of the proletariat, therefore consider it necessary to show the proletariat that it will have to win a gigantic battle before it realizes its goals. The anarchists prepare for social revolution and use every means — speech, writing, or deed, whichever is more to the point — to accelerate revolutionary development.

Can anyone, who honestly supports the proletariat, blame them for that? The fact that, as a consequence, capitalists, police, press, clergy, and other hypocrites and philistines hate us with all their hearts, all their minds, all their souls, and all their strength all the time — we can readily understand.

But it seems unnatural that at every step we meet fanatical hostility inside the labor movement, accompanied by bullheaded stupidity. The greatest stumbling block to anarchism among the non-anarchist socialists, which causes much of the discord, is the “free contract.” Yet one need not put oneself into a different world — neither Mars nor in Utopia — to see how the free contract would work. Take,

for example, the International Postal Union. The national postal organizations join of their own free will and can withdraw in the same way. These contracting parties agree to what they will provide one another, in order to achieve service of the highest practicality and greatest efficiency. International law lacks precedent for compelling a violator be taken to court.

Nevertheless, "free contract" works — because, since every breach of promise carries with it damage to the breacher, it behooves every contracting party not to violate the contract. If irregularities arise, conferences agree on adjustments. This institution, a model for free association, is not an isolated example. People who have little else in common form groups, trusts, and pools — organizations musical, gymnastic, commercial, protective, educational, and political; and associations for the advancement of arts and science — in all countries, despite contradictory natures of the parties, and despite the fact that the parties cannot be forced to fulfill the agreements. Everything done in these agreements is done because of advantage to each member.

Absurd the claim that these organizations could not work without control by a higher power! Indeed, whenever and wherever government has interfered, it has disturbed and obstructed the organizations. Moreover, where this kind of intervention is happening, the organizations agitate with supreme energy for its abolition.

In a society of the free and equal there can be nothing but the free contract; cooperation by force violates freedom and equality. The gist of the matter is whether, in a society of the future, the various organizations (created and operating according to free contracts) are to be centralized or of a federal nature. We are for federalism as necessary and right, because experience has taught us that centralization must end in monstrous total-power accumulation in a few hands; centralization causes abuse of power, dominating by a few, and loss of freedom by many. In addition, we see nothing useful or necessary in centralization. If we hope and even assume that the social question will be answered through communism, and not in this or that country but in the world, any thought of centralization must be a monstrosity. Think of a bakers' central commission, meeting in Washington, prescribing the bakers of Peking and Melbourne the size and amount of the rolls they are to bake.

Since the people of the future will not be old-fashioned fools, they will not fall into such nonsense. They will regulate their affairs as practice and experience teach. The shortsighted object. Freedom is now enjoyed in economic affairs, they say, and since government does not interfere, freedom has caused abuses. We accept this argument of our enemies and with it teach them something better. That is, economic freedom abused by private property has created the social question. Private property, guarded by the state, increasingly exploits the poor; and the poor less and less use what they produce. If the government did not wholeheartedly maintain this swindle, the masses would not suffer it.

Yes, the state is the organized power of property. Therefore the unpropertied must destroy the state, eliminate private property, and establish ownership in common.

Communism, contrary to the liberal-bourgeois tradition, needs no state to achieve its freedom and equality. Communism finds the force of the state disturbing and restrictive.

Now we come to the main objection to communism, that in it the individual gives himself up to the whole and leads no existence of his own — a thought fit to frighten away the original characters and throw a scare even into common philistines with no individuality to lose. We need do no more than repeat: only under communism does the individual become himself and lead his own life. Conversely, does anarchism isolate people and dissolve society? No. Our discussions show: the individual develops fullest in the system of ownership-in-common. Anarchism also does not prohibit the cooperation of some, many, or all — whichever is desirable — for the achievement of common goals.

Above all, what socialist, without flushing with shame, maintains he is not a revolutionary? We say: none!

And the revolutionary favors constant propagation of principles. While we have entertained the contention that a deed may make more propaganda than hundreds of speeches, thousands of articles, and

tens of thousands of pamphlets, we have held that an arbitrary act of violence will not necessarily have such an effect.

In short, propaganda-by-the-deed has not become our hobbyhorse, which we ride to the neglect of other propaganda. If on the one side we do not harbor the illusion that the entire proletariat must be enlightened before it can be called into battle, so on the other we do not doubt that as much enlightenment as possible must be produced with oral and printed agitation.

Fortunately, no country was ever more suited for anarchist agitation than present-day America. Here nobody wants to experiment further with the people's state. It has been more than a century; it has experienced the profoundest fiasco [the civil war]; and future state-makers had better learn the lesson. Whoever looks at America will see: the ship is powered by stupidity, corruption, or prejudice. Long has the government disgusted noble and intelligent natures; they avoid voting; and they are, even if they don't know it, anarchists.

The sharp-minded observer, the upright character, and the independent thinker see in the people's state a crude superstition and are ready to listen to the anarchists. Finally, whatever else may be said, this much is for sure: the welfare of humanity, which the future can and will bring, lies in communism. It excludes in logical ways all authority and servitude, and therefore equals anarchy. The way to the goal is the social revolution. By energetic, relentless, international action, it will destroy class rule and establish a free society based on cooperative organization of production. Long Live the Social Revolution!

There Is No Communism in Russia

Emma Goldman

1935

I.

Communism is now on everybody's lips. Some talk of it with the exaggerated enthusiasm of a new convert, others fear and condemn it as a social menace. But I venture to say that neither its admirers—the great majority of them—nor those who denounce it have a very clear idea of what Bolshevik Communism really is.

Speaking generally, Communism is the ideal of human equality and brotherhood. It considers the exploitation of man by man as the source of all slavery and oppression. It holds that economic inequality leads to social injustice and is the enemy of moral and intellectual progress. Communism aims at a society where classes have been abolished as a result of common ownership of the means of production and distribution. It teaches that only in a classless, solidaric commonwealth can man enjoy liberty, peace and well-being.

My purpose is to compare Communism with its application in Soviet Russia, but on closer examination I find it an impossible task. As a matter of fact, there is no Communism in the U.S.S.R. Not a single Communist principle, not a single item of its teaching is being applied by the Communist party there.

To some this statement may appear as entirely false; others may think it vastly exaggerated. Yet I feel sure that an objective examination of conditions in present-day Russia will convince the unprejudiced reader that I speak with entire truth.

It is necessary to consider here, first of all, the fundamental idea underlying the alleged Communism of the Bolsheviks. It is admittedly of a centralized, authoritarian kind. That is, it is based almost exclusively on governmental coercion, on violence. It is not the Communism of voluntary association. It is compulsory State Communism. This must be kept in mind in order to understand the method applied by the Soviet state to carry out such of its plans as may seem to be Communistic.

The first requirement of Communism is the socialization of the land and of the machinery of production and distribution. Socialized land and machinery belong to the people, to be settled upon and used by individuals or groups according to their needs. In Russia land and machinery are not socialized but nationalized. The term is a misnomer, of course. In fact, it is entirely devoid of content. In reality there is no such thing as national wealth. A nation is too abstract a term to "own" anything. Ownership may be by an individual, or by a group of individuals; in any case by some quantitatively defined reality. When a certain thing does not belong to an individual or group, it is either nationalized or socialized. If it is nationalized, it belongs to the state; that is, the government has control of it and may dispose of it according to its wishes and views. But when a thing is socialized, every individual has free access to it and use it without interference from anyone.

In Russia there is no socialization either of land or of production and distribution. Everything is nationalized; it belongs to the government, exactly as does the post-office in America or the railroad in Germany and other European countries. There is nothing of Communism about it.

No more Communistic than the land and means of production is any other phase of the Soviet economic structure. All sources of existence are owned by the central government; foreign trade is its absolute monopoly; the printing presses belong to the state, and every book and paper issued is a government publication. In short, the entire country and everything in it is the property of the state, as in ancient days it used to be the property of the crown. The few things not yet nationalized, as some old ramshackle houses in Moscow, for instance, or some dingy little stores with a pitiful stock of cosmetics, exist on sufferance only, with the government having the undisputed right to confiscate them at any moment by simple decree.

Such a condition of affairs may be called state capitalism, but it would be fantastic to consider it in any sense Communistic.

II.

Let us now turn to production and consumption, the levers of all existence. Maybe in them we shall find a degree of Communism that will justify us in calling life in Russia Communistic, to some extent at least.

I have already pointed out that the land and the machinery of production are owned by the state. The methods of production and the amounts to be manufactured by every industry in each and every mill, shop and factory are determined by the state, by the central government—by Moscow—through its various organs.

Now, Russia is a country of vast extent, covering about one sixth of the earth's surface. It is peopled by a mixed population of 165,000,000. It consists of a number of large republics, of various races and nationalities, each region having its own particular interests and needs. No doubt, industrial and economic planning is vitally necessary for the well-being of a community. True Communism—economic equality as between man and man and between communities—requires the best and most efficient planning by each community, based upon its local requirements and possibilities. The basis of such planning must be the complete freedom of each community to produce according to its needs and to dispose of its products according to its judgment: to change its surplus with other similarly independent communities without let or hindrance by any external authority.

That is the essential politico-economic nature of Communism. It is neither workable nor possible on any other isis. It is necessarily libertarian, Anarchistic.

There is no trace of such Communism—that is to say, of any Communism—in Soviet Russia. In fact, the mere suggestion of such a system is considered criminal there, and any attempt to carry it out is punished by death.

Industrial planning and all the processes of production and distribution are in the hands of the central government. Supreme Economic Council is subject only to the authority of the Communist Party. It is entirely independent of the will or wishes of the people comprising the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. Its work is directed by the policies and decisions of the Kremlin. This explains why Soviet Russia exported vast amounts of wheat and other grain while wide regions in the south and southeast of Russia were stricken with famine, so that more than two million of its people died of starvation (1932–1933).

There were “reasons of state” for it. The euphonious has from time immemorial masked tyranny, exploitation and the determination of every ruler to prolong and perpetuate his rule. Incidentally, I may mention that—in spite of country-wide hunger and lack of the most elemental necessities of life in Russia—the entire First Five-Year Plan aimed at developing that branch of heavy industry which serves, or can be made to serve, military purposes.

As with production, so with distribution and every other form of activity. Not only individual cities and towns, but the constituent parts of the Soviet Union are entirely deprived of independent existence. Politically mere vassals of Moscow, their whole economic, social and cultural activity is planned, cut out for them and ruthlessly controlled by the “proletarian dictatorship” in Moscow. More: the life of every locality, of every individual even, in the so-called “Socialist” republics is managed in the very last detail by the “general line” laid down by the “center.” In other words, by the Central Committee and Politbureau of the Party, both of them controlled absolutely by one man, Stalin. To call such a dictatorship, this personal autocracy more powerful and absolute than any Czar's, by the name of Communism seems to me the acme of imbecility.

III.

Let us see now how Bolshevik "Communism" affects the lives of the masses and of the individual.

There are naive people who believe that at least some features of Communism have been introduced into the lives of the Russian people. I wish it were true, for that would be a hopeful sign, a promise of potential development along that line. But the truth is that in no phase of Soviet life, no more in the social than in individual relations, has there ever been any attempt to apply Communist principles in any shape or form. As I have pointed out before, the very suggestion of free, voluntary Communism is taboo in Russia and is regarded as counter-revolutionary and high treason against the infallible Stalin and the holy "Communist" Party.

And here I do not speak of the libertarian, Anarchist Communism. What I assert is that there is not the least sign in Soviet Russia even of authoritarian, State Communism. Let us glance at the actual facts of everyday life there.

The essence of Communism, even of the coercive kind, is the absence of social classes. The introduction of economic equality is its first step. This has been the basis of all Communist philosophies, however they may have differed in other respects. The purpose common to all of them was to secure social justice; and all of them agreed that it was not possible without establishing economic equality. Even Plato, in spite of the intellectual and moral strata in his Republic, provided for absolute economic equality, since the ruling classes were not to enjoy greater rights or privileges than the lowest social unit.

Even at the risk of condemnation for telling the whole truth, I must state unequivocally and unconditionally that the very opposite is the case in Soviet Russia. Bolshevism has not abolished the classes in Russia: it has merely reversed their former relationship. As a matter of fact, it has multiplied the social divisions which existed before the Revolution.

When I arrived in Soviet Russia in January, 1920, I found innumerable economic categories, based on the food rations received from the government. The sailor was getting the best ration, superior in quality, quantity and variety to the food issued to the rest of the population. He was the aristocrat of the Revolution: economically and socially he was universally considered to belong to the new privileged classes. After him came the soldier, the Red Army man, who received a much smaller ration, even less bread. Below the soldier in the scale was the worker in the military industries; then came other workers, subdivided into the skilled, the artisan, the laborer, etc. Each category received a little less bread, fats, sugar, tobacco, and other products (whenever they were to be had at all). Members of the former bourgeoisie, officially abolished as a class and expropriated, were in the last economic category and received practically nothing. Most of them could secure neither work nor lodgings, and it was no one's business how they were to exist, to keep from stealing or from joining the counter-revolutionary armies and robber bands.

The possession of a red card, proving membership in the Communist Party, placed one above all these categories. It entitled its owner to a special ration, enabled him to eat in the Party stolovaya (mess-room) and produced, particularly if supported by recommendations from party members higher up, warm underwear, leather boots, a fur coat, or other valuable articles. Prominent party men had their own dining-rooms, to which the ordinary members had no access. In the Smolny, for instance, then the headquarters of the Petrograd government, there were two different dining-rooms, one for Communists in high position, the other for the lesser lights. Zinoviev, then chairman of the Petrograd Soviet and virtual autocrat of the Northern District, and other government heads took their meals at home in the Astoria, formerly the best hotel in the city, turned into the first Soviet House, where they lived with their families.

Later on I found the same situation in Moscow, Kharkov, Kiev, Odessa—everywhere in Soviet Russia.

It was the Bolshevik system of "Communism." What dire effects it had in causing dissatisfaction, resentment and antagonism throughout the country, resulting in industrial and agrarian sabotage, in

strikes and revolts—of this further on. It is said that man does not live by bread alone. True, but he cannot live at all without it. To the average man, to the masses in Russia, the different rations established in the country for the liberation of which they had bled, was the symbol of the new regime. It signified to them the great lie of Bolshevism, the broken promises of freedom, for freedom meant to them social justice, economic equality. The instinct of the masses seldom goes wrong; in this case it proved prophetic. What wonder, then, that the universal enthusiasm over the Revolution soon turned into disillusionment and bitterness, to opposition and hatred. How often Russian workers complained to me: “We don’t mind working hard and going hungry. It’s the injustice which we mind. If the country is poor, if there is little bread, then let us all share that little, but let us share equally. As things are now, it’s the same as it used to be; some get more, others less, and some get nothing at all.”

The Bolshevik system of privilege and inequality was not long in producing its inevitable results. It created and fostered social antagonisms; it alienated the masses from the Revolution, paralysed their interest in it and their energies, and thus defeated all the purposes of the Revolution.

The same system of privilege and inequality, strengthened and perfected, is in force today.

The Russian Revolution was in the deepest sense a social upheaval: its fundamental tendency was libertarian, its essential aim economic and social equality. Long before the October-November days (1917) the city proletariat began taking possession of the mills, shops and factories, while the peasants expropriated the big estates and turned the land to communal use. The continued development of the Revolution in its Communist direction depended on the unity of the revolutionary forces and the direct, creative initiative of the laboring masses. The people were enthusiastic in the great object before them; they eagerly applied their energies to the work of social reconstruction. Only they who had for centuries borne the heaviest burdens could, through free and systematic effort, find the road to a new, regenerated society.

But Bolshevik dogmas and “Communist” statism proved a fatal handicap to the creative activities of the people. The fundamental characteristic of Bolshevik psychology is distrust of the masses. Their Marxist theories, centering all power in the exclusive hands of their party, quickly resulted in the destruction of revolutionary cooperation, in the arbitrary and ruthless suppression of all other political parties and movements. Bolshevik tactics encompassed the systematic eradication of every sign of dissatisfaction, stifled all criticism and crushed independent opinion, popular initiative and effort. Communist dictatorship, with its extreme mechanical centralization, frustrated the economic and industrial activities of the country. The great masses were deprived of the opportunity to shape the policies of the Revolution or to take part in the administration of their own affairs. The labor unions were governmentalized and turned into mere transmitters of the orders of the state. The people’s cooperatives—that vital nerve of active solidarity and mutual help between city and country—were liquidated. The Soviets of peasants and workers were castrated and transformed into obedient committees. The government monopolized every phase of life. A bureaucratic machine was created, appalling in its inefficiency, corruption, brutality. The Revolution was divorced from the people and thus doomed to perish; and over all hung the dreaded sword of Bolshevik terrorism.

That was the “Communism” of the Bolsheviks in the first stages of the Revolution. Everyone knows that it brought the complete paralysis of industry, agriculture and transport. It was the period of “military Communism,” of agrarian and industrial conscription, of the razing of peasant villages by Bolshevik artillery—those “constructive” social and economic policies of Bolshevik Communism which resulted in the fearful famine in 1921.

IV.

And today? Has that “Communism” changed its nature? Is it actually different from the “Communism” of 1921? To my regret I must state that, in spite of all widely advertised changes and new economic policies, Bolshevik “Communism” is essentially the same as it was in 1921. Today the peasantry in Soviet Russia is entirely dispossessed of the land. The *_sovkhozi_* are government farms on which the peasant works as a hired man, just as the man in the factory. This is known as “industrialization” of agriculture, “transforming the peasant into a proletarian.” In the *_kolkhoz_* the land only nominally belongs to the villaoe. Actually it is owned by the government. The latter can at any moment—and often does—commandeer the *_kolkhoz_* members for work in other parts of the country or exile whole villages for disobedience. The *_kolkhozi_* are worked collectively, but the government control of them amounts to expropriation. It taxes them at its own will; it sets whatever price it chooses to pay for grain and other products, and neither the individual peasant nor the village Soviet has any say in the matter. Under the mask of numerous levies and compulsory government loans, it appropriates the products of the *_kolkhoii_*, and for some actual or pretended offenses punishes them by taking away all their grain.

The fearful famine of 1921 was admittedly due chiefly to the *_razverstka_*, the ruthless expropriation practiced at the time. It was because of it, and of the rebellion that resulted, that Lenin decided to introduce the NEP—the New Economic Policy which limited state expropriation and enabled the peasant to dispose of some of his surplus for his own benefit. The NEP immediately improved economic conditions throughout the land. The famine of 1932–1933 was due to similar “Communist” methods of the Bolsheviks: to enforced collectivization.

The same result as in 1921 followed. It compelled Stalin to revise his policy somewhat. He realised that the welfare of a country, particularly of one predominantly agricultural as Russia is, depends primarily on the peasantry. The motto was proclaimed: the peasant must be given opportunity to greater “well-being.” This “new” policy is admittedly only a breathing spell for the peasant. It has no more of Communism in it than the previous agrarian policies. From the beginning of Bolshevik rule to this day, it has been nothing but expropriation in one form or another, now and then differing in degree but always the same in kind—a continuous process of state robbery of the peasantry, of prohibitions, violence, chicanery and reprisals, exactly as in the worst days of Czarism and the World War. The present policy is but a variation of the “military Communism” of 1920–1921, with more of the military and less of the Communist element in it. Its “equality” is that of a penitentiary; its “freedom” that of a chain gang. No wonder the Bolsheviks declare that liberty is a bourgeois prejudice.

Soviet apologists insist that the old “military Communism” was justified in the initial period of the Revolution in the days of the blockade and military fronts. But more than sixteen years have passed since. There are no more blockades, no more fighting fronts, no more counter-revolution. Soviet Russia has secured the recognition of all the great governments of the world. It emphasizes its good will toward the bourgeois states, solicits their cooperation and is doing a large business with them. In fact, the Soviet government is on terms of friendship even with Mussolini and Hitler, those famous champions of liberty. It is helping capitalism to weather its economic storms by buying millions of dollars’ worth of products and opening new markets to it.

This is, in the main, what Soviet Russia has accomplished during seventeen years since the Revolution. But as to Communism—that is another matter. In this regard, the Bolshevik government has followed exactly the same course as before, and worse. It has made some superficial changes politically and economically, but fundamentally it has remained exactly the same state, based on the same principle of violence and coercion and using the same methods of tenor and compulsion as in the period of 1920–1921.

There are more classes in Soviet Russia today than in 1917, more than in most other countries in the world. The Bolsheviks have created a vast Soviet bureaucracy, enjoying special privileges and almost

unlimited authority over the masses, industrial and agricultural. Above that bureaucracy is the still more privileged class of “responsible comrades,” the new Soviet aristocracy. The industrial class is divided and subdivided into numerous gradations. There are the *_udarniki_*, the shock troops of labor, entitled to various privileges; the “specialists,” the artisans, the ordinary workers and laborers. There are the factory “cells,” the shop committees, the pioneers, the *_komsomoltsi_*, the party members, all enjoying material advantages and authority. There is the large class of *_lishentsi_*, persons deprived of civil rights, the greater number of them also of chance to work, of the right to live in certain places, practically cut off from all means of existence. The notorious “pale” of the Czarist times, which forbade Jews to live in certain parts of the country, has been revived for the entire population by the introduction of the new Soviet passport system. Over and above all these classes is the dreaded G.P.U., secret, powerful and arbitrary, a government within the government. The G.P.U., in its turn, has its own class divisions. It has its own armed forces, its own commercial and industrial establishments, its own laws and regulations, and a vast slave army of convict labor. Aye, even in the Soviet prisons and concentration camps there are various classes with special privileges.

In the field of industry the same kind of “Communism” prevails as in agriculture. A sovietized Taylor system is in vogue throughout Russia, combining a minimum standard of production and piece work—the highest degree of exploitation and human degradation, involving also endless differences in wages and salaries. Payment is made in money, in rations, in reduced charges for rent, lighting, etc., not to speak of the special rewards and premiums for *_udarniki_*. In short, it is the *_wage system_* which is in operation in Russia.

Need I emphasize that an economic arrangement based on the wage system cannot be considered as in any way related to Communism? It is its antithesis.

V.

All these features are to be found in the present Soviet system. It is unpardonable naivete, or still more unpardonable hypocrisy, to pretend—as the Bolshevik apologists do—that the compulsory labor service in Russia is “the self-organization of the masses for purposes of production.”

Strange to say, I have met seemingly intelligent persons who claim that by such methods the Bolsheviki “are building Communism.” Apparently they believe that building consists in ruthless destruction, physically and morally, of the best values of mankind. There are others who pretend to think that the road to freedom and cooperation leads through labor slavery and intellectual suppression. According to them, to instill the poison of hatred and envy, of universal espionage and terror, is the best preparation for manhood and the fraternal spirit of Communism.

I do not think so. I think that there is nothing more pernicious than to degrade a human being into a cog of a soulless machine, turn him into a serf, into a spy or the victim of a spy. There is nothing more corrupting than slavery and despotism.

There is a psychology of political absolutism and dictatorship, common to all forms: the means and methods used to achieve a certain end in the course of time themselves become the end. The ideal of Communism, of Socialism, has long ago ceased to inspire the Bolshevik leaders as a class. Power and the strengthening of power has become their sole object. But abject subjection, exploitation and degradation are developing a new psychology in the great mass of the people also.

The young generation in Russia is the product of Bolshevik principles and methods. It is the result of sixteen years of official opinions, the only opinions permitted in the land. Having grown up under the deadly monopoly of ideas and values, the youth in the U.S.S.R. knows hardly anything about Russia itself. Much less does it know of the world outside. It consists of blind fanatics, narrow and intolerant, it lacks all ethical perception, it is devoid of the sense of justice and fairness. To this element

is added a class of climbers and careerists, of self-seekers reared on the Bolshevik dogma: "The end justifies the means." Yet it were wrong to deny the exceptions in the ranks of Russia's youth. There are a goodly number who are deeply sincere, heroic, idealistic. They see and feel the force of the loudly professed party ideals. They realize the betrayal of the masses. They suffer deeply under the cynicism and callousness towards every human emotion. The presence of *_komsomolszi_* in the Soviet political prisons, concentration camps and exile, and the escapes under most harrowing difficulties prove that the young generation does not consist entirely of cringing adherents. No, not all of Russia's youth has been turned into puppets, obsessed bigots, or worshippers at Stalin's shrine and Lenin's tomb.

Already the dictatorship has become an absolute necessity for the continuation of the regime. For where there are classes and social inequality, there the state must resort to force and suppression. The ruthlessness of such a situation is always in proportion to the bitterness and resentment imbuing the masses. That is why there is more governmental terrorism in Soviet Russia than anywhere else in the civilized world today, for Stalin has to conquer and enslave a stubborn peasantry of a hundred millions. It is popular hatred of the regime which explains the stupendous industrial sabotage in Russia, the disorganization of the transport after sixteen years of virtual military management; the terrific famine in the South and Southeast, notwithstanding favorable natural conditions and in spite of the severest measures to compel the peasants to sow and reap, in spite even of wholesale extermination and of the deportation of more than a million peasants to forced labor camps.

Bolshevik dictatorship is an absolutism which must constantly be made more relentless in order to survive, calling for the complete suppression of independent opinion and criticism within the party, within even its highest and most exclusive circles. It is a significant feature of this situation that official Bolshevism and its paid and unpaid agents are constantly assuring the world that "all is well in Soviet Russia and getting better." It is of the same quality as Hitler's constant emphasis of how greatly he loves peace while he is feverishly increasing his military strength.

Far from getting better the dictatorship is daily growing more relentless. The latest decree against so-called counter-revolutionists, or traitors to the Soviet State, should convince even some of the most ardent apologists of the wonders performed in Russia. The decree adds strength to the already existing laws against everyone who cannot or will not reverence the infallibility of the holy trinity, Marx, Lenin and Stalin. And it is more drastic and cruel in its effect upon every one deemed a culprit. To be sure, hostages are nothing new in the U.S.S.R. They were already part of the terror when I came to Russia. Peter Kropotkin and Vera Figner had protested in vain against this black spot on the escutcheon of the Russian Revolution. Now, after seventeen years of Bolshevik rule, a new decree was thought necessary. It not only revives the taking of hostages; it even aims at cruel punishment for every adult member of the real or imaginary offender's family. The new decree defines treason to the state as

"any acts committed by citizens of the U.S.S.R. detrimental to the military forces of the U.S.S.R., its independence or the inviolability of its territory, such as espionage, betrayal of military or state secrets, going over to the side of the enemy, fleeing to a foreign country or flight [this time the word used means airplane flight] to a foreign country."

Traitors have, of course, always been shot. What makes the new decree more terrifying is the remorseless punishment it demands for everyone living with or supporting the hapless victim, whether he knows of the crime or not. He may be imprisoned, or exiled, or even shot. He may lose his civil rights, and he may forfeit everything he owns. In other words, the new decree sets a premium on informers who, to save their own skins, will ingratiate themselves with the G.P.U., will readily turn over the unfortunate kin of the offenders to the Soviet henchmen.

This new decree must forever put to rest any remaining doubts as to the existence of true Communism in Russia. It departs from even the pretense of internationalism and proletarian class interest. The old tune is now changed to a paean song of the Fatherland, with the ever servile Soviet press loudest in the chorus:

“Defense of the Fatherland is the supreme law of life, and he who raises his hand against the Fatherland, who betrays it, must be destroyed.”

Soviet Russia, it must now be obvious, is an absolute despotism politically and the crassest form of state capitalism economically.

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Post Colonial Anarchism

Essays on race, repression and culture in communities of color 1999-2004

Roger White

I should be clear up front. I'm not a nationalist. Nor am I a tribalist, nor an internationalist, nor a municipalist. Peoples from all over the globe have been figuring out how to organize themselves into various collectives long before I came onto the scene and no one in any of these groups has ever bothered to ask me what I thought about their decisions. I won't hold my breath.

I do believe in free association and federalism because they usually represent the most non-coercive avenues for people to develop ways to live together in self-determined freedom and community. Anarchists have traditionally been particularly hostile to nations and have often attributed the worst crimes of states to them. This rejection of nations and their struggles for self-rule (nationalism) may not be the same as the anarchist demand for no rule, but getting free from foreign domination is a step in the right direction. This is one reason why anti-authoritarians (including anarchists) have generally supported anti-imperialist movements regardless of their nationalist aspirations.

The rejection of nationalism by many North American anarchists is often an expression of a colonial mindset that requires all of the peoples of the world fighting for liberation to define their social selves in relation to the class war. In this war there are two classes- the workers and the ruling class. The downtrodden of the world are to see themselves as workers. For this identity shift we gain the solidarity of the class war anarchists.

Other anarchists who don't subscribe to industrial age class war dogma simply would like to see anarchists cut their ties to the left completely. This severance would presumably free them of all of the political baggage that solidarity with revolutionary nationalists and indigenous autonomist struggles attract. The two above interpretations of the international role and responsibility of the anarchist movement with respect to the fight against neo-colonialism and imperialism are not the ideas of an anti-state fringe. They represent the two strongest tendencies in the North American scene.

Not all nations are states. In fact there are about 1600 nations in existence today (about eight times the number of states in the world). And as Sylvia Walby points out in her essay "The Myth of the Nation-State," "Nation-states are actually very rare as existing social and political forms...there are many states, but very few nation-states. The notion that there have been neatly bounded societies ...is inadequate." (Sylvia Walby, *The Myth of the Nation-State: theorizing society and politics in a global era*. British Sociological Association, August 2003). There are many different types of states- theocratic-states (the Vatican, Iran), city-states (Singapore, Luxemburg), familial states (Saudi Arabia) tribal-states (Israel), multinational states (Canada, Spain) and super-states (the United Nations). Each type of state has been implicated in crimes against various peoples over their histories. Since the European enlightenment these various social groupings that states have succeeded in attaching themselves to have been understood by the left as backward and atavistic. They argue that peoples of the world should transcend things like families, clans, tribes, and nations and embrace "universal" principals of human identity. In truth, many of the social ideals that the left has asserted as universal are culturally situated in 19th century Europe.

The Politics of Arrogance

It's regular for North American anarchists to use their political label as a synonym for anti-authoritarian; although one is a term referring to a specific social and political movement born in the 1800's in Europe and the other is a broad description of a political tendency that has reared its head in some form in just about every society over the last few centuries. A mainstream definition of authoritarian describes someone who favors "blind submission to authority; of relating to, favoring a concentration of power in a leader or an elite not constitutionally responsible to the people." (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/authoritarian>)

Now certainly anarchists are not the only folks on the world scene who are against the “blind submission to authority” and the “concentration of power” in an unaccountable leader. But this easy interchangeability is an effect of a larger attitudinal cause. The attitude being that non-white legacies of struggle and our histories of stateless, communal modes of existence are at best, irrelevancies to the current struggles against state/ corporate domination or, at worst, an obstacle to be swept aside.

This attitude pervades the intellectual history of all the major European political traditions- not just anarchism. But if those of us who identify with the historical movement for non-hierarchical, free and non-coercive social relations don't begin to fundamentally rethink the way we understand our struggle both internally and externally, we will lose international allies and continue to alienate ones closer to home.

A different way of understanding anarchism in relation to the centuries-old struggle against arbitrary power is to view it as the newest member of a global family that includes numerous historical and present day communal societies and struggles against authority. The village communalism of the Ibo, and First Nations like the Zuni and the Hopi are a part of the family. The indigenous autonomist movements for self determination going on today in West Papua and Chiapas, Mexico with the EZLN are a part of the family. The international prison abolitionist movement, perhaps to most coordinated attack on the state's monopoly of the administration of justice, has deep anti-authoritarian currents, just as the numerous stateless hunter and gatherer bands, clans, and nomadic tribes that have managed to survive centuries without armies, flags, or money systems do.

Anarchist movements have also played a part in the fight against authority. Some valiant, if rather short-lived, episodes include the Spanish CNT and FAI battles during the 1930's and the Paris Commune 50 years earlier. The full record shows that North American anarchists haven't had much experience in maintaining long-term stateless, social formations. But they have produced theory and “analysis”- plenty of it. And it's this busy intellectualism that has scorned and turned its nose up at our national struggles for liberation as “statist” and “reformist” while demanding that global south anti-authoritarians adopt anarchism's workerist mantle or conform to some romantic notion of how pre-agricultural peoples lived. To help put this in context it's important to look at the universalist underpinnings of the traditional anarchist worldview and how its adherents understand their movement in relation to other struggles around the non-European world.

Colonial Universalism

To many, a critique of universalism on the left will seem like an anachronism. After all, if post-modern social philosophy has had any discernable political thrust, it's been in opposition to foundationalist claims and totalizing theories of human nature, relations, and power. But despite the last six decades of post-world war II thinking and action against universalism, there are still plenty of stubborn anarchists who refuse to let go of the most Euro-centric aspects of historical materialism.

Marx's critique of capitalism has had an influence way beyond those who choose to identify themselves as marxists. On the left, it has encouraged analysis that puts the class struggle at the center of the historical stage. Before the identity movements of the late 60's this analysis would regularly portray racism and other historical oppressions as subalterns of class oppression. But after these movements began to challenge some of the dogmas of class struggle orthodoxy some accommodations were made.

Progressives embraced multiculturalism even as they focused most of their attention towards corporate globalism and the international institutions that protect them. Marxists supported revolutionary nationalism, arguing that the modern vanguard is the black and brown working class. Even liberals argued for a cultural pluralism that made limited accommodations for social, cultural and religious differences while clinging to the last vestiges of the welfare state. Anarchists have largely rejected such

left-of-center developments in response to the legacy of white supremacy and cultural imperialism, but have failed to develop their own. The default has been a rigid century and a half-old economic determinism that even some marxists have abandoned.

The embrace of universalism by anarchists has had a significant impact on their analysis of important issues and events. The interpretation of imperialism as an economically driven regime of capital and the view of nationalism as inherently retrograde and divisive owes a lot to the internal logic of universalism. If imperialism has as much to do with cultural hegemony or geo-political dominance as the capitalist market expansion and raw material exploitation of private business, then maybe an international workers revolution may not come first or be the most fundamental task before all the world's oppressed. If nations and national liberation movements are not necessarily the statist antithesis of internationalism but represent just another social grouping of peoples with a common land, culture, and language, some of whom are willing to fight to maintain their ways of life, then maybe anarchists need to rethink their opposition to nationalism.

European universalism has never truly been about the recognition of our common humanity. In practice it's been about forcing the particular norms, prejudices and ideals of white, Christian cultures on the rest of the peoples of the earth, sometimes through economic domination, sometimes through cultural imperialism, sometimes through force.

Christendom used appeals to universalism as a justification for crusades and the persecution of "non believers" and native populations practicing their traditional religions in various parts of the world. For left internationalists, universalism provided a nice humanitarian cover for a massive social engineering project that sought to strip the masses of their national and communal identities in exchange for a work-erist one because, as Murry Bookchin put it, there was a "need to achieve universality in order to abolish class society." (Murry Bookchin. "Nationalism and the 'National Question'" www.democracynature.org/dn/vol2/bookchin_nationalism.htm March 1993 P.1).

Under this view the universality and primacy of the class struggle is a strategic necessity for the overthrow of the capitalist order. It's not a conclusion that comes out of the study and analysis of the history, situation and cultures of all peoples. At this stage, anarchists, autonomists, abolitionists and anti-authoritarians of color can not afford to be swept up by theories that have never bothered to view non-white peoples as historical subjects. We are not mere props in the political stagecraft of white leftists.

Political universalism is part of the philosophical residue of Anglo-European colonialism. Today we witness this in the attempts of the U.S. to impose democracy in the Middle East and other parts of the world. One of the problems with this view is that it "offers a hegemonic view of existence by which the experiences, values and expectations of a dominant cultural are held to be true for all humanity" and is a "crucial feature of imperial hegemony because its assumption of a common humanity underlies [an] imperial discourse for the advancement or improvement of the colonized, goals that mask the extensive... exploitation of the colony." (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *Post Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. Routledge New York, NY 2000).

So when the anarchists behind the FAQ web-site project declare that anarchists "oppose nationalism in all its forms as harmful to the interests of those who make up a given nation and their cultural identities," (Are Anarchist Against Nationalism? The Anarchist FAQ. Alternative Media Project. <http://infoshop.org/page/AnarchistFAQSectionD6>) we recognize that the blatant condescension imbued in those sentiments are a reflection of the conviction that they know what's best for the colonized, not the colonized themselves.

No War But The Class War

Ever since Antonio Gramsci's writings on marxism in the 20's and 30's the left has been re-thinking the role of the worker in revolutionary practice. He argued that cultural hegemony was the key to class subordination and that in order to change economic and political structures we had to take over the institutions that transmit culture- the schools, the church, the media, etc. This shift from the economic determinism of orthodox marxism to the identitarian pluralism of what some call "cultural marxism" lead a shift in emphasis away from the worker towards a broader group of the marginalized that included women, racial and sexual minorities and outlaws.

This thinking had little effect on the way marxist organizations and regimes have operated over the last 90 years. Groups like the Spartacist League in the U.S. have spent decades trashing black nationalism and feminism as 'petty bourgeois' and 'separatist' and claiming that their class analysis of racism, sexism, and other social systems of hierarchy (as by- products or divide and conquer tactics of capitalism) is more relevant to people of color and women than our own studies of how white supremacy and patriarchy have maintained systems of domination over us. Many Marxists groups have had an even worse record on LGBT liberation.

Khrushchev's imperial attitude towards Mao's peasant-led cultural revolution in China reflected, in part, his inability to make common cause with an Asian leader with the audacity to question the dogmas of soviet communism. As the U.K. Guardian noted a few years back "Mao deeply resented the Soviet assumption of superiority towards China, which he described as the unacceptable behaviour of "a father towards his son." (John Gittings, The day Khrushchev and Chairman Mao saw red Spitting images mark the end of the Sino-Soviet alliance. *The Guardian* (UK) 27 November 2001). Its been argued by anarchists like Murray Bookchin that the Marxist support for nationalist movements is strategic not ideological. In this instance we can attribute the failure of the two most powerful and populous communist countries on the globe to unite against the capitalist world in large part to a colonialist mentality that couldn't accept non-white regimes who strayed too far from the European materialist intellectual plantation- strategy be damned.

The most organized elements of North American anarchism today are class war based and anti-nationalist. The Northeast Federation of Anarcho- Communists state "anarchists oppose the idea of nationalism" and instead "believe in waging a class war." (Northeast Federation of Anarcho-Communists. November 2002). The Workers Solidarity Alliance equates nationalism with "the idea that somehow both the rich and poor can be wrapped in the same flag and thus have the same interests..." (Against the Madness. Workers Solidarity Alliance.<http://workersolidarity.org/?p=188>.) Of course class war anarchists attempt to wrap the victims of colonial imperialism and the beneficiaries of it together in the same black flag as if the two have the same interests. As it turns out, it's just as hard for whites to give up imperial race privilege as it is for rich people to give up class privilege.

Rather than acknowledging the importance of class stratification along side other societal hierarchies and recognizing that each of them are potentially as repressive and exploitative as the other depending on the social context, class war anarchists have adopted a hierarchy of oppressions that makes the class war the primary struggle and the worker the primary agent of that struggle. The popular slogan "no war but the class war" masks a deep historical truth over which many white leftists are still in denial. White elites and their dupes, pawns, agents and allies have been waging a race war on peoples of color for centuries. When people of color who share a common culture, language and land decide it's time to make defending ourselves a priority, we're told by anarchists that they "never call for the victory of the dominated country over the imperialist. Instead we call for a victory of the workers (and peasants) of that country against both home and foreign exploiters (in effect, 'no war but the class war')" Are Anarchist Against Nationalism? (The Anarchist FAQ. Alternative Media Project.www.infoshop.org/faq/secD6.html)

If communities of color can't count on anarchists to do more than merely recognize their 'right' to defend themselves against white imperialism, then perhaps all anarchists can expect from communities of color is the recognition that they have a right to protest against the IMF every time they meet. If the price of solidarity is that we abandon our communal identities and accept one created for us by some left-wing Euro- elites over 150 years ago, then the hope of developing closer alliances with other movements against authority around the globe is doomed.

Anti-imperialist anti-nationalism

Many anarchists have recognized that opposition to native or national self- determination against Euro- Anglo colonial domination is a betrayal of their anti- authoritarian principals and commitment to anti- racism. This is why despite all the finger wagging that goes on by the scribe defenders of the anarchist faith about global south movements not being anarchist enough, there is a long history of anarchist solidarity with nationalist movements for self rule. Lucien van der Walt, a South African anarchist activist, details the many national struggles anarchists have been involved in his essay "Towards a History of Anarchist Anti- Imperialism." He mentioned how groups like the Anarchist Group of Indigenous Algerians, the Mexican Liberal Party and other anti- imperialist anarchists "paid in blood for [their] opposition to imperial domination and control." (Van der Walt, Lucien. *Towards a History of Anarchist Anti-Imperialism*. Northeast Federation of Anarcho-Communists. <http://nefac.net/node/261>).

The movements and organizations he wrote about were by-and-large made up of activists of color working in their own struggles for both social revolution and national liberation. What these activists didn't do was refuse to fight along side nationalists because they believed that the class war was the most important or only fight worth engaging in. They didn't try to convince their people that getting rid of the factory bosses, of whom there were relatively few, was a bigger priority than getting rid of the colonial administrators who controlled where they could go and when they could go there, how or whether they could practice their faith, and what they could produce on their own land, among other things. They didn't spend time trying to foment hatred between urban workers (who represented a relatively privileged class in many of these countries) and the middle classes in an effort to polarize their nation into a class war. They knew that the colonial masters controlled both groups and would only use internal divisions to solidify their own domination. They instead worked to educate the masses about how class also contributed to their oppression and how national liberation wouldn't necessarily address those issues.

National liberation struggles don't end when the imperialists decide that economic control and the threat of military intervention are more effective means of domination than army bases and colonial governments on native soil. They continue through early independence when the imperialist powers are busy stabilizing their puppet regimes, and corporate markets. It continues through the imposition of neo-liberal economic pressures and dictates from organizations like the IMF, World Bank, and the World Trade Organization along with a host of regional outfits and private organized interests. And if and when those mechanisms aren't enough, the Security Council or the U.S. military will step in. International solidarity is not about committing to a process. It's about committing to a people and their struggle for liberation. This commitment means viewing solidarity not as a reward for doctrinal compliance among the colonized but as a discourse between peoples and across cultures about how we all can live, not in some imposed western ideal of freedom and equality but in a self- determined freedom where different people decide for themselves how they will arrange their affairs. This doesn't mean that anarchists always must agree and when we don't we should support voices in those societies who are committed to the visions most like our own.

The nation and the state

It's not that anarchists have always been closed to nationalist arguments or have never questioned class war fundamentalism. Hakim Bey in his book *Millennium* suggests that anarchists align their struggles against authority with anti-colonial and nationalist movements around the globe. (See his chapter "Notes on Nationalism" Hakim Bey *Millennium* Autonomedia & Garden of Delight. 1996). Bob Black has rightly observed that the anarchist ideal of the worker revolutionary in syndicalism is more popular among college professors than with workers in North America. (Bob Black. *Anarchy after Leftism*. Cal Press 1997 p. 149) Even Bookchin in his 1971 essay "Listen Marxist" offered a devastating critique of class war fundamentalism and argued that "Marx's emphasis on the industrial proletariat as the 'agent' of revolutionary change, and his 'class analysis' in explaining the transition from a class to a classless society" are "false in the context of our time." (Murray Bookchin. *Post Scarcity Anarchism*. Ramparts Press 1971 p.211). The problem is that these writers and others either hide in the safe shadow of critique where they debunk but don't bother to offer alternatives (Black) or come up with alternatives just as colonial as the universal worker (Bookchin gives us the universal citizen).

But there's an even bigger problem. Not only do these critics and theorists fail to offer non-colonial alternatives, they actually find time to dismiss efforts among activists of color and anarcho-feminists who dare to work for liberation from domination from our own self identities. Black dismisses anarcho-feminism as "separatist in tendency" and "oriented more toward statist feminism than anarchism." (Black, p.150). Bookchin in his essay *Nationalism and the National Question* lamented that the New Left in the 60's embraced "the particularism into which racial politics had degenerated instead of the potential universalism (read European) of a humanitas...the New Left placed blacks, colonial peoples, and even totalitarian colonial nations on the top of its theoretical pyramid, endowing them with a commanding or 'hegemonic' position in relation to whites, Euro-Americans, and bourgeois-democratic nations." He adds, "In the 1970's this particularistic strategy was adopted by certain feminists..." (Bookchin. *Nationalism and the National Question* P. 11)

Bookchin's assertion that blacks and "colonial peoples" occupied the top of some theoretical new left pyramid is reminiscent of the stereotypical poor white in the U.S. who's convinced that blacks get all the breaks and the reason for their own condition has more to do with affirmative action than with the system of corporate feudalism that they're the victims of. To the extent that any white radicals on the new left in the early 70's paid more attention to what black, brown, red and yellow revolutionaries were saying than intellectuals like Bookchin, it was because they realized that the prime victims and biggest targets of state/capitalist repression and exploitation around the world were in communities of color and their voices needed to be taken seriously.

Given the lack of clearly articulated alternatives, it's not hard to understand why many white anarchists cling to this narrow conception of workers revolution. They feel that nationalism is in opposition to their work because historically its Euro- and Anglo- manifestations have been so closely tied to imperialism, and racism that, for them, it's not a revolutionary option. But the categorical rejection of all nationalisms due to their perceived hostility to class revolution is not a necessary conclusion of anarchist intellectual history.

Bakunin

For most of Bakunin's political life he could be described as a pan-Slavic revolutionary nationalist and an anarchist. He didn't believe that his anti-imperialism and his anarchism were in conflict. He felt "strong sympathy for any national uprising against any form of oppression" declaring that "no one is entitled to impose its costume, its customs, its language and its laws." (Cited in D. Guerin, 1970,

Anarchism, Monthly Review, p. 68) Bakunin was not agnostic on the issue of self-determination. He clearly supported peoples who were fighting for it.

Not only did Bakunin support self-determination, he recognized the distinction between a nation and the state. "The state is not the fatherland, it is the abstraction...of the fatherland. The common people of all countries deeply love their fatherland, but that is a natural real love. The patriotism of the people is not just an idea, it is a fact; but political patriotism, love of the state, is not the faithful expression of that fact..." ("The Political Philosophy of Bakunin" Edited by G.P. Maximoff. The Free Press New York 1953 P.324). Nationalism is not the worship of the state, because it refers to a people and the love that they have for their land, their cultural and their language.

This was before the era of 'diversity' so Bakunin didn't see anything in the commitment people had to the preservation of their national culture to celebrate. But he was smart enough to know that being anti-national was pointless. "Therefore we bow before tradition, before history, or rather, we recognize them, not because they appear to us as abstract barriers raised meta-physically, juridical and politically...but only because they have actually passed into the flesh and blood, into the real thoughts and the will of populations." (ibid.).

What Bakunin objected to was the principal of nationality because he felt that it wasn't universal. He gradually became more intolerant of national struggles against colonialism because he saw how these movements inspired national chauvinism and hatred across Europe. His growing internationalism and commitment to workers solidarity put distance between him and national liberation advocates towards the end of his public life. "There is nothing more absurd and at the same time more harmful, more deadly, for the people to uphold the fictitious principal of nationality as the ideal of all the people's aspirations, nationality is not a universal human principal." (Maximoff P.325). It's important to remember that Bakunin's critique of nationalism was within the context of intra-European conflicts.

True internationalism is not anti-nationalist. It is a constructive ideal that seeks to create mutual respect, solidarity, and alliances among nations. To the extent that class elites attempt to use race, religion, gender, immigrant status, sexuality, age, or disability to divide the people in the name of the nation, anarchists should stand against it. But there are many nationalist struggles that are about self-determination and human dignity, not division. The Palestinian struggle comes to mind along with the anti-colonial movement in Puerto Rico. Anarchists may fairly critique the statist elements in these movements. But the across the board opposition to the national unity of people of color in our struggle against imperialism renders many anarchists incapable of supporting even non-state, indigenous movements for autonomy in places like Chiapas, Mexico, or the Tamil struggle for autonomy in Sri Lanka.

Rocker

If there was some level of ambiguity around the relationship between anarchism and nationalism in the 19th century, that ambiguity ended with Rudolf Rocker's opus *Nationalism and Culture*. Written in the 1930's, the book highlighted the role that nationalist appeals were playing in solidifying domestic support for European fascist imperialism abroad and racial hatred at home. It also challenged the mythology of nationhood as an organic social grouping. He wrote "the nation is not the cause, but the result of the state. It is the state that creates the nation, not the nation the state." (Rudolph Rocker. "Nationalism and Culture" Black Rose Books 1998 (Reprint) Original 1937 P. 200)

The nation is a construction. And political leaders who resort to blood and soil tales of national origins do so because their reactionary nationalism is rooted in appeals to racism and imperialism and therefore needs a biological-land tie. But the fact that nations are developed by human action does not somehow invalidate their authenticity. Tribes are also human constructions, as are families, bands,

etc... The only way to judge the usefulness of different social groupings is by observing their longevity and their tendency to support the type of lasting bonds between people that make human survival and growth possible. Families, and ethnical based tribes have survived the three most significant revolutions in human history- agriculture, industry, and the information age. Nations are a newer development. Only time will tell whether this construct will survive globalization and what some call 'the new world order.'

For Rocker the free-city of Europe's middle ages represented "that great epoch...of federalism whereby European culture was preserved from total submersion and the political influence of the arising royalty was for a long time confined to the non- urban country." (Rocker P.2). He compared this age to the rise of the monarchical nation- state and claimed that among the medieval, European men of the free-cities "there never existed...those rigid, insurmountable barriers which arose with the appearance of the national states in Europe." (Rocker P.3).

Rocker's comparison of the golden age of autonomous, federated medieval cities to the rise of the nation wasn't very useful. This is because the two are different in kind. The city is a geographic designation, like a province, or a country, or a county. A nation is a human designation- like a family, a tribe, or a gang.. This distinction is important because it sharpens the dilemma that anarchists of color find themselves in when we're sorting through our politics. Since Rocker slammed the door shut on nationalism, non-white anarchists have been told to choose between our nation (or *people*) and our social philosophy. This choice is much more profound and, in the end, unnecessary, than whether we think cities are better units of social organization than counties. This choice has also led some to abandon anarchism.

Perhaps the most illustrative passage in Rocker's book on the colonial character of universalism and its role in the construction of anti-nationalism can be found in his description of the social glue that tied medieval man together. "Medieval man felt himself to be bound up with a single, uniform culture...It was the community of Christendom which included all the scattered units of the Christian world and spiritually unified them." (Ibid.). Fair enough. But now for the kicker. "Church and empire likewise had root in this universal idea...For pope and emperor Christianity was the necessary ideological basis for the realization of a new world dominion...For medieval man it was the symbol of a great spiritual community..." but "while the Christian idea united them, the idea of the nation separated and organized them into antagonistic camps." (Ibid.).

What Rocker leaves out are the crusades, the inquisitions, the witch burnings, the Jewish pogroms, the slaughter of pagans. And that's only in Europe. By the late medieval period the conquistadors were in Central and South America committing genocide against the heathen indigenous populations in the name of Christianity. The Church may have had a unifying effect for some Europeans, but this unity was achieved with the blood of millions both inside and outside of the continent. I'll take the divisions of the nation over the "unity" of the Christian Church any day.

For all its limitations, Rocker's *Nationalism and Culture* was a mammoth effort and clearly a classic of anarchist literature. More than any other book, it detailed the connections between reactionary nationalism and racism and made clear how the state used both to enhance its power over the masses. While his sweeping dismissal of all nationalism is regrettable, it is at least politically understandable within the context of the rise of Euro-fascism in the 1930's. What's harder to reconcile are post-world war II anarchists who have witnessed the anti-colonial movements in the global south and still maintain that national movements for liberation against colonialism are "the same" as the imperial nationalist movements of Europe in the last two centuries.

Colonial Contemporaries

Murry Bookchin addressed himself specifically to anarchist universalism within the context of the ‘national question’ in 1993. After echoing Rocker’s idyllic view of the free cities of medieval Europe, he warned “the great role assigned to reason by the enlightenment may well be in grave doubt” if we forget that “our true social affinities are based on citizenship, equality and a universalistic sense of a common humanity.” (Bookchin, “Nationalism and the National Question” P. 11)

Are ‘our’ true affinities based on citizenship? I’m not sure that the tens of millions of non- citizens in the U.S. who, due to their status as undocumented immigrants, would agree. In fact, citizenship has historically been a construction of property owners as a way to exercise privilege and power over poor migrants, and religious and racial minorities. This has been true from Roman times to present day America. And affinities based on a “universalistic sense of a common humanity” sound good, but who gets to define what that common humanity is? The First International (an almost exclusively European affair)? Or maybe a bunch of Institute for Social Ecology graduates?

The underlying issue is not the lack of diversity of various left circles and movements that purport to represent universal principals. It’s the very supposition that any single movement or political ideal could represent any meaningful global consensus on how communities should arrange their social institutions. Anarchists have their ideas and should work in their communities to, among other things, demonstrate that those ideas can work in the real world for other peoples around the globe. Some success in this endeavor should be a prerequisite for international anarchist criticism of national liberation and indigenous struggles against western imperialism.

In the essay Bookchin evokes fondly the lyrics of the socialist anthem the Internationale — “Tis the final conflict!”— and longs for the “sense of universalistic commitment” that those words embodied. (Ibid.) Forgive me for not being two inspired by the image of Bookchin and a group of his old left New York buddies, hunched over in a semi- circle ready to bust a note. But he goes into attack mode when he picks up where Rocker left off and applies his across-the-board rejection of nationalism to the colonial struggles of Africa, Asia, and the Americas of the 1950’s and 60’s. Bookchin mocked the national liberation movements of the period through his sophomoric use of quotes in describing their “attempts to achieve ‘autonomy’ from imperialism...even at the expense of a popular democracy in the colonized world.” (Bookchin, “Nationalism and the National Question” P. 10)

Bookchin doesn’t bother to identify one colonial popular democracy (a contradiction in terms) that was overthrown by nationalists or native movements in the quest for autonomy. He doesn’t because none existed. But that’s alright...we all know that darkies are always better off under white rule. Bookchin’s larger point is that the nice, idealistic, white kids in the new left got duped and intimidated into supporting authoritarian national liberation movements by the usual assortment of black national revolutionary thugs, solemn and sympathetic Native Americans fighting to hang on to their land, Latino political gangs lurking in the barrio, and other stereotypical ghosts of 1960’s radical mythology. It’s astonishing that at this late date Bookchin would still be walking around blaming black revolutionary nationalists and Asian Maoists for the decline of the new left and the rise of ‘micro nationalism.’ It’s always easier to blame others than it is to look in the mirror.

‘Post Left’ Colonialism

There seems to be a developing split between anarchist journal writers and activists on the national question. To their credit, lots of anarchists have participated in anti-imperialist struggles with respect for the people with whom they’ve struggled. Currently, anarchist organizers and cultural workers in North America are increasingly throwing off the shackles of dogma and are doing solidarity work with

national and autonomous movements against colonialism. But as this divergence has taken place, the colonial anarchists have become even more desperate in their attempt to hang on to the tradition. And on this front the attempt to protect colonial anarchy has been led not by the class war anarchists, but by a loosely knit network of green and primitivist intellectuals who argue that anarchists should cut their lingering ties to the left altogether.

A 1993 screed by Fredy Perlman that appeared in *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* asserts that the fascist nationalism of Europe in the 1930's and 40's "could now be applied to Africans as well as Navahos, Apaches as well as Palestinians. The borrowings from Mussolini, Hitler, and the Zionists are judiciously covered up, because Mussolini and Hitler failed to hold on to their seized power..." (Fredy Perlman, "The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism" *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*. #37, Summer 1993).

This appeared in the same journal that did a four-part series called 'Post- Left Anarchy' in the fall of 1999 in which Lawrence Jarach reprimanded anarchists who dared to show solidarity with the EZLN for their "uncritical support." "The name of the organization should be enough to cause anarchists to pause" (Zapatista National Liberation Army) because "national liberation has never been part of the anarchist agenda...The EZLN, for all its revolutionary posturing, is a broad based democratic movement for progressive social change within the fabric of the Mexican state." (Lawrence Jarach, "Don't let the Left (overs) Ruin Your Appetite" *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* #48, Fall- Winter 1999-2000). How do you even engage with people about colonialism who treat "Africans" as some sort of Hitler-inspired nationalist monolith or who claim that indigenous autonomists who have successfully sustained a decade-old uprising through disciplined armed struggle are basically revolutionary poseurs? Generally, you don't.

But in the Spring 2002 issue of *Green Anarchy* a Zapatista did. It was a response to an article that appeared in the paper a few months earlier entitled "The EZLN is NOT Anarchist." The article labels the EZLN as "fundamentally reformist" not working towards anything "that could not be provided for by capitalism." (*Green Anarchy*. The EZLN is NOT Anarchist. #6 Summer 2001). The piece went on to instruct anarchists to find ways to "intervene in a way that is fitting with one's aims, in a way that moves one's revolutionary anarchist project forward." (*Green Anarchy*. A Zapatista Response to The EZLN is NOT Anarchist #8 Spring 2002 P. 3)

The Zapatista responded "It would be difficult for us to design a more concise list of colonial words and attitudes than those used in this sentence. "Intervene?" "moves one's 'project' forward?" Mexicans have a very well developed understanding of what 'intervention' entails." (*Green Anarchy* P. 4) He ended with this, "Colonialism is one of the many enemies we are fighting in this world and so long as North Americans reinforce colonial thought patterns in their 'revolutionary' struggles, they will never be on the side of any anti- colonial struggle anywhere. We in the Zapatista struggle have never asked anyone for unflinching, uncritical support. What we have asked the world to do is respect the historical context we are in and think about the actions we do to pull ourselves from under the boots of oppression." (Ibid.).

If and when North American anarchists learn how to do this with all of the struggles against colonial and neo-colonial domination around the globe- whether they're nationalist or go under some other label, then we'll be welcomed into a much larger and richer international tradition of people's struggles against domination. This is where we belong.

Genetic Engineering Against Neuro-Normativity!

Emmi Bevensee

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In 1964, a subversive yet deeply racist episode of, “The Twilight Zone” first aired called “Number 12 Looks Like You” in which “Number 12” refers to a design of normative beauty towards which the young and “homely” Marilyn was expected to upgrade her appearance through a variety of surgeries. Everyone chooses one of these few designs to be their appearance and then wears name tags to distinguish themselves from each other. She begins to express explicit resistance to the process, eventually disclosing that her father, who had read banned books, had influenced her into questioning the uniformity of it all. Her family and friends try to convince her using many methods of manipulation. They eventually take her to a laboratory where they assure her that no one will ever force her to undergo the transformation but insist that with greater pressure, she will “realize” it’s what she truly wants. She eventually breaks down and screams, “Being like everybody, isn’t that the same as being no one at all?!” as she begins to realize that in addition to appearance, everyone has also had their personalities modified and made uniform. Her resistance to the process of forced normalization is seen in her tears. She cries in the ways that the “upgraded” humans cannot. Hers is an anti-normativity that is valiant, even as it is framed in a dystopic technophobia worthy of critique.

What this dystopia does not recognize, is both morphological freedom and the infinite diversity of potential upgrades. Her consent is coerced and her choices are limited. Had she had the opportunity to, with informed consent and full agency, be a chartreuse transsexual lizard queen amongst unfathomable arrays of personalized options, she would likely have experimented more freely. There’s a character named, Sigmund Friend who tries to convince her of the errors of her sick mind and essentially explained how this hegemonic uniformity was created in order to solve the social problems of inequality. Anarchism shows us that equality need not be hegemony. Hegemony is in fact a false equality because it depends on the repression of difference. The complexity of diversity in network connections is the strongest form of horizontalism, and as such it should be the goal of anarcho-transhumanisms.

In many ways we face a similar dilemma now as genetic engineering is met with resistance to the very real history of eugenics. The reactionaries of this view tend to overlook the potential benefits of a wide array of radical uses for genome editing that are horizontal yet diverse; striving towards an equity that is not hegemonic but rather, exceptionally internally complex with intricate webs of social connectedness created through decentralized autonomy and technological advances in agency. Discoveries such as those surrounding CRISPR technologies in synthetic biology (a method for altering gene sequences) and pre-natal screening, lend extensions to the horizons of our collective imagination. CRISPR, although more well known, is but one of the many frontiers of gene editing technologies. Cox, Platt, and Zhang (“Therapeutic Genome Editing”, 2015) review some of the various usages of gene editing and add that, “To date, four major classes of nucleases, meganucleases and their derivatives, zinc finger nucleases (ZFNs), transcription activator like effector nucleases (TALENs), and CRISPR-associated nuclease Cas9 have been developed to enable site-specific genome editing.” These tools offer expanded avenues for disease reduction and genome augmentation which can be seen as areas fertile for resistance and new attack surfaces to the hackers of both life and technology. But at the same time, these discoveries also advance forms of potential governance and domination. It is for this reason that those of us who are so inclined, should utilize, push, and appropriate these burgeoning technologies in order better weaponize and optimize our neuro-divergences in order to both, decrease meaningless suffering and increase our agency. Basically, we should use genetics to make ourselves weirder.

Torrent all the science. Appropriate the state technology. Reverse engineer. Experiment. Hack yourself weirdly.

Morphological Freedom

Although many will be familiar with the essay entitled “Morphological Freedom: Why We Not Just Want It, But Need It” by Anders Sandberg I still think it’s useful to touch upon first. Morphological freedom is effectively summarized as follows,

“Morphological freedom can of course be viewed as a subset of the right to one’s body. But it goes beyond the idea of merely passively maintaining the body as it is and exploiting its inherent potential. Instead it affirms that we can extend or change our potential through various means. It is strongly linked to ideas of self ownership and self direction.”

Morphological freedom is the essential link between anarchism and transhumanism that turns transhumanism from a weapon of domination to a weapon of decentralized liberation and resistance to the limits imposed on us by dominance, or even by our own bodies and minds. Sandberg expands on this by pointing to basic examples such as antibiotics or sex-reassignment surgery that facilitate the actualization of our fullness as beings. Sanders then goes into a domain more specifically relevant to the content of this essay by stating that, “Our freedom of thought implies a freedom of brain activity. If changes of brain structure (as they become available) are prevented, they prevent us from achieving mental states we might otherwise have been able to achieve. There is no dividing line between the body and out mentality, both are part of ourselves. Morphological freedom is the right to modify oneself.” This quote shows how our right to happiness and modifying our genetics is linked to our right to being neuro-diverse, or even to pursuing greater degrees of divergence in service of our own preferences or happiness. Assimilative technologies do fall under this morphological freedom in that they are often a radical act of survival even if the purity of agency is complexified by socio-political pressures. This means that although divergence may hold an evolutionary appeal, our radical body autonomy also must honor the choices of those seeking to assimilate in order to better increase their mobility in other realms and according to various forces of domination.

Choosing Against Suffering

A few of the ways that I am neuro-diverse are that I’m a recovering addict with cPTSD (complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and chronic anxiety and depression. I would also argue that even my queerness and my transness are in the realm of neuro-divergence, even as they do not perfectly fit the socio-political structure of those criteria. These divergences make up some important and powerful parts of my personality, not the least of which being my compassion, resilience, and strength. That being said though, the notion that someone could select against the genes or have a first week abortion of a fetus that shows high probability that their life will entail this suffering of addiction, depression, and anxiety, is extremely appealing to me. The notion that someone would want to give choice and agency as to whether they want their child to be neuro-diverse in these ways does not feel like they are trying to eliminate or devalue me as a person. It feels like an increase in the potential agency of the genetic material donors to give their offspring the best chance at the least suffering. Depression and addiction are horrendous even if they’ve offered me certain insights and abilities. Maybe my propensity for extreme physiological cravings could be mitigated while the propensity for unbridled focus and dedication retained. To have the choice is better than to not. At least with the choice we can more effectively value the assets associated with these forms of neuro-diversity. Obviously this is more straight forward when the forms of neuro-diversity we’re looking at have so many obvious negative aspects, such as severe anxiety, but the logic can begin to entangle in more ethically complex cases as well.

Choosing Divergence

The way that a society values its neuro diversity is incredibly important. In addition to having the ability to choose if a child is born with predilections towards certain forms of neuro-diversity, their should also be a movement to preserve, accentuate, and even optimize neuro-diversity— to get the most good and the least unnecessary suffering. From Autism to Schizophrenia, many of the greatest minds in history had non-neurotypical architecture. This is no coincidence. Mutation and deviation is the root of all evolution. Through genetic randomness, alternative ways of being are birthed and given a chance to thrive and adapt or wither and be cut out of successive gene pools. To some extent humans have evolved beyond the most glaring aspects of natural selection, but of course it still has the power to make or break our species as a whole. Our survival depends upon our ability to value our own diversity and facilitate the transmission of genetic material that is useful to our species as a whole. Alongside the developing science of genetic engineering, should be a social movement of people who not only, don't choose against forms of neural diversity, but actively select for it. This could facilitate a (non-normative) normalization of neuro-diversity that could remove stigma and help to make the world more accessible for all kinds of people, regardless of where their strengths and abilities lie. This movement could be called "Genetics Against Normativity!" depending on how contrarian we wanted to be. We should help build the movement that celebrates and aids neuro-divergence even as we may choose to modify our own.

Queerness and Abortion

As soon as people hear about the often poor intentioned search for a "gay gene" they begin to panic — "THEY'LL KILL ALL THE QUEERS!". It becomes an immediate eugenics and genocide panic. This reactionary response forgets that anytime we find a gene that we could select against, that means we can also select for it! That means that people who actually want queer kids can have them, or even select for them specifically, and the people who are transphobic, or the like, aren't put in a position to bully and shame their queer child for the rest of their lives. This is ideal in many ways.

As a queer, gender-queer, transwoman who was paternally abused I would rather not have had those experiences or the toxic loops they emblazoned into my neural nets. I'm not married to this particular version of me as needing to exist in some arbitrary way. Abortion doesn't mean that there is "no me", it means that a different consciousness entirely is given a better chance at thriving. There could be no concept of me not existing or dying because there would never have been a me. I think it's best not to mix my own fear of death with my sense of self-importance lest I begin to be an apologist for my abusers with the line of, "it made me who I am today." Fuck all of that. I'm awesome but certainly not mandatory for the ongoing functioning of the universe. "I" would just have some more normative brother or sister version of myself existing if my parents decided that was all they could handle. As the technology advances though, I will have the ability to rapidly change my gender and sexuality anyways, so the kit of predilections and genes I started with, would be a mere suggestion on my life of experimentation anyways.

Of course the queer fear of eugenics through selective abortions is a reasonable one given the history, but do we really believe that society as a whole would select against queerness at a dramatically different rate than un-edited births? I mean, would you personally abort a queer child? I'm pretty damn sure I wouldn't. I find it hard to believe that queerness would be (un-)naturally selected out and rather, trends moving towards increased recognition and reporting of queerness with time. Research shows that teens these days are queer af! Especially as progress in the field of non-normative baby-making advance, humans will be able to continue to expand the notions of gender and sex farther out into

and beyond our currently conceptually limited perceptions of possibility. Currently, future parents are given an approximation of their babies future assumed gender based on a sonogram examining the creatures unborn genitalia. As bizarre of a practice as this is, it shows the ways in which pre-birth information has the potential to become a more value neutral event. Afterall, sex-selective abortions are generally only prominent in more patriarchal and over-populated countries that explicitly value male children over females such as China, India, and arguably the U.S. which has even naively attempted government regulation and intervention against sex-selection. As a society becomes increasingly gender equitable, this practice dwindles out as there is no longer an economic incentive for it. In many places, this sonogram information is more of a novelty than an important factor in deciding whether the baby should live and so it should be in general. This could be the similar future of early detected queer genetic predilections. Long live (at least to 160) the parents who declare "Based on these test results, our baby appears to have a 87.6% chance of being super queer. Neat!" and then moves on with their day. Early detection of queerness though, would also lead to an interesting dilemma amongst those conservatives who are both adamantly pro-life and anti-gay. No doubt there would be an upsurge in potentially queer babies left at safe drop zones but probably also a decrease in queer kids kicked out of their homes for coming out.

Autism

(Please reference the Scott Alexander article, "Against- Against- Autism Cures" that covers some of these deeper questions in depth. Although it is, in many ways, an imperfect article, it goes into more nuance than is often encouraged within team social justice.)

The reality of neuro-diverse genocide and abuse through sterilization, institutionalization, stigma, denial of access, and outright murder both in present and historical contexts is a graphic one. These have additionally been the tools of fascist power in countless incidences. Nazi eugenics of course studied and learned from the United States. This world is not built to accommodate people with differing abilities or divergent neural architecture. Basic kindness (and a depth of disability and neurodiverse activism and research) suggests that the world should more often be changed to make itself inhabitable, than the individual should be forced to adapt to an incredibly hostile environment even though, wherein consent is possible, an individual may choose to make changes to themselves in order to augment their abilities. Just about no one is more familiar with this dilemma than folks on what is called the 'autism spectrum.'

Institutionalization is so often a brutal and traumatic negligence enacted upon not only those who cannot communicate consent but often those who can and do not agree. Autism is very likely not really a disease in any common understanding of the term and instead points vaguely at a variety of symptoms in a wide range of acuteness. The popular understanding of autism is often much broader than the psych definition which often refers to more exclusively to the most severe range of experiences. Amongst all of these diverse symptoms are many that have led to unique insight (such as strong memory, creativity, and attention to detail) and others that have caused intense suffering (severe depression, self-harm, extreme sensitivity beyond the tolerable).

There is of course much debate as to which of these symptoms is environmental or biological, however, to the extent that any of these aspects are biological they have the potential to be gene edited and selected for or altered against. Early autism detection could give genetic material donors the opportunity to think deeply about questions like whether they really have the patience to raise a child that is neuro-typical (see what I did there..) and could abort early pregnancies until they were able to have an autistic child. Genetic material donors could then select against some of the traits more likely to cause severe suffering in favor of those they believe the child would most likely opt for themselves. Of course the

alternative is also true, parents who know that they are not appropriate for raising a neurodivergent child could spare a potential child the suffering of their generally thinly-veiled resentment.

The key for consenting adults is of course morphological freedom, both in the consent and autonomy senses of the phrase. Adults capable of the decision making faculties needed to meaningfully consent should be given autonomy over their choices and this applies equally to autistic persons. Should they resist medical or surgical technologies, this is their choice but, should they opt for it, it should be made available to them however strange it may seem to others.

Genetic Donors as Gods and Morphological Freedom

This view that focus on various early pregnancy or zygote related gene-editing choices sets up the genetic material donators as something akin to gods. There is of course a host of ethical considerations surrounding disability, ableism, and neurodiversity related prenatal decision making explored at length in many places elsewhere but what this view often leaves out is the autonomy and agency of the being this gooey cluster of cells could potentially become. This is a central ethical dilemma of life— a baby cannot give consent to being born, much less with what starting kit of genes. However, while the potential baby is still a zygote it is technically an extension of the carriers body, whether that carrier is a trans-man, cis-woman, or laboratory womb. As long as that cluster of cells is not yet autonomous or conscious, the carrier has the right to edit it as an extension of their own morphological freedom. This should of course be done with reasonable deference towards what the potential life would most likely vye for itself. However, zygote editing or early abortions are not the only frontiers for genetic engineering that could be turned towards a radical purpose of divergence.

An interesting forefront is the ongoing revelations surrounding optogenetics which is a system for controlling cells with light. Optogenetics focuses especially on neurons and can even teach optogenetic cells to glow according to specific conditions, triggering a real-time feedback loop. Substances can be taken in a pill form that activate these processes and last up to several days. They are even teaching the trained cells to be able to then train other cells in turn, in order to continue the work of the substance post half-life. Researchers at Brown University, are currently exploring the possibilities in regards to epilepsy wherein, “BL-OG [bioluminescent opto-genetics] -enabled neurons in the brain could be programmed to glow red (like a traffic light) if calcium ions are surging in too quickly. That red glow could trigger neighboring optogenetic cells to dampen their excitation amid the calcium buildup, effectively stopping a seizure as soon as it starts.” One of the most remarkable aspects of BL-OG is the precision with which it is capable of functioning. No doubt, as this technology advances, bio-hackable versions could be created that could potentially help with everything from, breaking away from a memetic virus and/or bad habit such as addictions or PTSD loops to treating Parkinson’s disease and diabetes. The bio-hacker experiments can continue to be open source published such as was done with the night vision eye drops created by the folks at Science For the Masses or outlined in the book “Biohackers: The Politics of an Open Science” by Alessandro Delfanti. The BL-OG work is just one example of a plethora of fields attempting to do the once considered impossible, editing a mature neuron column or genetic sequence. As these technologies advance, the base genetics you’ve been given at birth could become little more than a suggestion as we shape ourselves into the beings that we wish to be. This would lessen the ethical dilemmas of genetic material donors deciding pre-birth what their child should be like. As we advance into editing our brains, the possibilities abound. We can choose to diverge or assimilate in ways that we find meaningful or useful in order to expand our agency and degrees of freedom and as a radical act of autonomy.

Reticence and Resistance

All of these technologies of gene editing have, in equal or greater measure, the power to be utilized as tools in domination. In his 1962 speech entitled, "The Ultimate Revolution" Aldous Huxley famously remarked,

"There will be, in the next generation or so, a pharmacological method of making people love their servitude, and producing dictatorship without tears, so to speak, producing a kind of painless concentration camp for entire societies, so that people will in fact have their liberties taken away from them, but will rather enjoy it, because they will be distracted from any desire to rebel by propaganda or brainwashing, or brainwashing enhanced by pharmacological methods. And this seems to be the final revolution"

This quote was a prescient foreshadowing of much that has come to pass and yet other phenomena likely upstream. All of these gene-editing techniques of augmentation or alteration will of course be subsidized and controlled, especially in the U.S. by the military-industrial complex and corporate monopolies protected and sustained by statist intervention. As anarcho-transhumanists, it is our duty to liberate these technologies such that they may be utilized radically and accessibly to all that desire them. It is with these fears of domination and ethical dilemmas that we engage bravely but also with appropriate reticence with shaping the river of life.

In the final scenes of the Twilight Zone episode mentioned in the introduction, Marilyn, the main character who sought to resist the pressures to upgrade into subdued normativity, is tricked into receiving the treatment. She emerges looking exactly like her best friend but with a different name tag. All of her fire and complex thought seems to have vanished into a sort of 'popular girl delight'. She seems to remember nothing of her concern or illicit ideas. Her anguish, as a form of resistance, is gone. There is something to be said of this final scene in regards to the meaning behind our experiences of neurological diversity. Depression for one, may be the bane of their existence, pushing them ever deeper into needless suffering, and yet for another it may feel as though it is an appropriate response to a world gone to shit, wherein losing their depression would feel like losing their reality. Compulsory happiness is itself a method of control and coercion. Therefore, the integral piece is abundance of options and the morphological freedom to consent meaningfully in the process of engagement with these choices. Even if this can be said in a sentence, it is vastly complex as it spells out in a wide variety of cases. It is therefore the duty of intellectual vigilance and a firm grasp of ethics that these ventures may be correctly explored. Anarchism and its emphasis on decentralization, autonomy, freedom, mitigation of unnecessary harm, and resistance to authority provide a strong foundation upon which to build networks of neuro-diverse interaction amongst those who opt for a variety of genetic alterations and those who do not.

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15 Post-Primitivist Theses

William Gillis

2006

Introduction

Twenty years ago a group of Detroit anarchists began work on a new synthesis of environmental and anti-authoritarian thought. Distinguishing themselves from other burgeoning ecological movements in the eighties anarchopunk scene they sought to draw inspiration directly from our primitive roots. Anarchy, they declared, should not be considered in terms of an abstract state to be politically won, but rather a living experience and extensive historical reality. Reevaluating the ideologies and dogma of the classic anarchist movement they turned attention to the archaeological record and existing indigenous societies. By building on post-left critiques they passionately worked to bring attention to a much wider context and history of mental, social and physical expressions of totalitarianism. And finally, taking a stunningly broad stance that framed humanity's neolithic embrace of mass society in terms of the mythological Fall from Eden, the movement chose to target as a single whole both the virulent social hierarchies that accompanied the onset of agrarianism and the entirety of technological development since.

The radical core of a vast green anarchist awakening, anarcho-primitivism blossomed across the North American anti-authoritarian community and then beyond.

High-profile operations such as Earth First's creation of the Cascadia Free State to block old-growth logging built an international momentum around green anarchy. At the same time intellectuals like John Zerzan gained public exposure in defense and support of Unabomber Ted Kaczynski's anti-civilization politics. In the Seattle riots against the WTO primitivist group from Eugene stole the media spotlight. Today various bundlings of green anarchist thought have become diffuse and deeply integral in the broader anarchist movement and, despite some dramatically turning tides, primitivism still enjoys a significant influence.

Naturally this has provoked sizable criticism.

Within the traditionally socialist and unabashedly leftist veins writers such as Michael Albert and Murray Bookchin have been repulsed at the movement's radical rejection of everyday basic technology and universally accepted constructs like language itself. And on the ground many activists deride a lack of engagement with or sympathy and awareness of social realities. Furthermore, identity issues and accusations of irrelevancy have plagued the mainly economically-privileged white anglophone movement.

Despite this, or perhaps because of these critiques and their limited nature, the primitivist discourse has continued seeping out to wider audiences beyond anarchism through things like the growing infatuation of liberal conspiracy types with peak oil and Derrick Jensen's popularization of ecological struggle.

Serious intellectual resistance, where it has come, has been less theoretically inspired than socially motivated. For many radicals the most tangible effects of primitivism have been cultural. Predictions of an inevitable and permanent crash of civilization have sapped the perceived need for revolutionary action and differing degrees of survivalist elitism have mixed with already rampant shallow and self-preoccupied competitive moralisms to the effect of even greater disconnect. A sort of DIY green capitalism has been recreated by certain radical circles in which presumably if you collect enough survival skills tokens you get to retire to your very own plush post-collapse bungalow with a panoramic view of everyone you ever had drama with dying.

This is obviously all very concerning. But, as with any political philosophy or revolutionary paradigm, the demographics and particular social consequences are far less important than what primitivism actually has to say. Neither extremism nor radicalism are ever reasons for rejection unto themselves, nor are even impracticality or a fumbled enactment – whatever tactics might be concluded from an assertion, if the underlying idea is inviolate, the consequence of it should not blind us to that reality.

The actual argument behind anarcho-primitivism is fierce. It is intelligent and complex, yet beautifully simple at root... And it is ultimately wrong.

In giving flesh to these fifteen theses I seek not to call out the radical green movement wholesale. Nor do I mean to limit myself to some official orthodoxy of primitivism proper. Rather I mean to address several core and recurring strands of thought in primitivism today and the deep failings that have come to define it as a whole.

Biological concepts & Distinctions aren't Particularly fundamental

It's no secret we, as a society, have a bad case of cosmology-through-taxonomy. The industrial revolution in particular saw an explosion of categorization and demarcation between abstractions. From animal/vegetable/mineral we got sub-parthenons, phylas, compounds, infraclasses and a host of other cognitive divisions. It was a profound and expansive campaign of centralization and itemization and, like all others, it was mostly about control.

Just as has been true since the very first person mucked around with language: naming is power.

It was not enough to build a massive physical infrastructure by which to apply social hierarchies. Humanity itself had to be broken down and controlled. The greatest tools of coercion and control that had ever been available—the needs and frailties of our own bodies—were to be so thoroughly itemized as give charge to the second greatest tool of coercion and control: a religion.

Biology over-asserted its association with hard sciences like chemistry and physics and brought that unearned legitimacy to bear in the social realm. Even as forests were clearcut and species exterminated, Europe's expanding ecosystem of social hierarchy launched a barrage of taxonomic declarations to convince the people that it best understood their interactions, place and role within the world. We may not understand the processes killing you, but we can pick its name off a chart.

Though it gave no true strength, such taxonomic knowledge provided a numbing security. A sense of personal control over the world through the ingestion of structure.

The synthesis of this pursuit of taxonomy with the valuation of position and power can of course be seen in the constructions applied to race and sex. And "Social Darwinism" justified social stratification more broadly by applying emerging biological concepts as fully descriptive and absolute laws of nature in realms they had no business in describing.

The general assurance provided by taxonomy spurred an overreach that still deeply affects our discourse. Mainstream notions of ethics—long corrupted by the church to remove any foundation save appeals to authority—reacted to the increasing potency of biological explanations by simply swapping authorities. Nature was swapped in to fill the place of god. And the fulfillment of one's role set out for them by nature was positioned as the moral good. Homosexuality, for example, gets attacked for being "unnatural" more often than "unholy."

The early field of biology, as it was appealed to and applied in the social realm, excelled in layered complex arcana, rituals and miracles. What it needed was a touch of divinity, something that could be personally mystified until it swallowed up all existential questions. And then it would be possible to draw lines and slice up whatever was left on the metaphysical level. Thus the arbitrary category of "living" was canonized as an absolute on par with the charge of an electron, even though abstractions like "self-replicating system" were obviously subjective as all hell. We saw patterns that could be easily and pragmatically described and pretended they were perfect and fundamental descriptions. So the chemically subjective impression of "life" is declared to begin at conception, et cetera, et cetera.

The churches bought in real fast.

Yet if self-replication is somehow an entropy-breaking signature of a divinely separate force, what of the stars? They grow, collapse and, in doing so, seed their own re-growth among the nebulae. Every

piece of matter around us is part of that cycle. Likewise, a mystification of the information patterns of DNA breaks down in the form of RNA and quasi-nucleic-acid carriers on the frayed edge of what's a complex molecule and what was declared easily recognizable by a lab technician. What counts as the "sameness" between one cell and another? Why not include the sublimation of minerals?

It can seem an inane difficulty, but these notions come to bear again and again in our political and ecological discourse in ways that can be deeply problematic, yet are rarely called out.

One tradition of primitivist thought appeals strongly to the notion of "complexity", something well defined in say computer science (where the arbitrary abstractions we choose automatically have real meaning), but not so clear-cut in the realm of cultures and biomes. You get authors like Jason Godesky arguing points that depend on *homo sapiens* being more "complex" than dinosaurs and dinosaurs more complex than say coral reefs. But for what definition of "complex"? We judge complexity based on how many "parts" we see in a system, but what exactly constitutes a part is itself hugely subjective on anything other than fundamental particles. We chose to talk and think in terms of particular abstracts agglomerates based on how useful such schemes are for us, not because things become suddenly magically more than the sum of their parts at say the cellular level. If dinosaurs are considered "less complex" than primates it's because we have more intricate naming systems for physical and behavioral details closer to our own experience. But from another perspective a coral reef can be seen as far, far more complex than a human being.

My point is that significant abstraction based in such taxonomies can end up worse than useless. While on a some levels—in the pragmatic service of some goals—they can be useful, we need to remain explicit about those constraints. There can be just as much, say, fundamental "diversity" between a given spotted owl & lemur as between two lemurs. Narrowly focused on similarities between patterns of DNA or macroscopic physical trends in physiology, our concept of "diversity" might even be applicable in the way we want it to be. But it won't necessarily get us beyond the assumptions, the working parameters, and the social hierarchies a given taxonomic framework is couched in. It's all too easy to slide into making too much out of false dichotomies between 'living' and non-'living' systems or 'natural' and non-'natural' arrangements.

While pragmatic on certain levels of discussion, abstractions of any deep ethical, ontological or existential significance that are predicated on Biology's conceptual distinctions are likely to be deeply problematic. Instead of copping out with loose and ultimately arbitrary abstractions, it behooves us to think in terms of the exact particulars and only speak of systemic distinctions that are grounded in objective fundamentals.

The biosphere is not inherently good, just highly dynamic

Between the solar wind and its molten iron core, the Earth has a thin layer of water and nitrogen. Around 3.5 billion years ago, after the planet finished aggregating, this layer of fluid locked into a sort of homeostasis around the solid mantle. The various elements caught up in this turbulent process were forced into far closer interaction than they'd seen as dust between the stars. Due to the nature of the planetary formation much of the surface experienced large and decidedly uneven outbursts of energy. Unusually extended molecules were formed and destroyed as fundamental particles followed entropy to lower energy states all while pressed up against uncountable trillions of their fellows.

Eventually the most violent energy outbursts died down and the resulting elemental muck settled into more efficient and locally sustainable patterns of relational structure. The free-floating O₂ molecule became a quite popular pattern of arrangement as erosive molecular aggregates liberated it from the surface's iron rocks. Another popular arrangement that stood the test of all those trillions of interacting particles and molecules was the amino acid. Of course, this was a far broader generalization of

inter-atomic structure and, unlike the simplistic O₂, its existence depended on a much higher degree of interaction with the surrounding muck. Such increased interaction, in fact, that, as entropy played out the Earth's ocean/atmosphere, it emerged primarily in close conjunction with much larger agglomerations of closely interdependent molecules. In the background of all this an almost unnoticeable mass of sugars rolled themselves out and transmitted structural information to their surrounding proteins. The planet cooled and these sluggish uber-massive molecular arrangements gained ground against the more fiery radical arrangements of yester-eon. Today about two trillion tons of matter on the surface of the earth is intimately associated with these deoxyribonucleic acids. And the sum total of these fluidly interrelating positional structures of matter is today referred to as the Biosphere.

There are many cosmically descriptive attributes that could be applied to this planet's scummy outer film, but the most important is by far its dynamicism.

Neither an expansive vacuum of distant, weak and slow interactions nor a positionally locked, brittle over-structure, the biosphere is characterized by relatively in fluid change. That is to say interacting forces play out with significantly sped up changes in relative positions. Of course that's not to ascribe to it the properties of some perfectly dynamic super-fluid.

Rather, the Earth is simply dynamic enough to buffer the emergence and mobile propagation of rough, low-density information structures. Like us.

Our biosphere is organized in stratified layers of fluidity. From particles to molecules to cells to organisms. Given any arbitrarily limited system and the intention to convey information in the form of spatial relations able to withstand externalities, some fluid behavior is crucial. Those arrangements which survive and flourish in such dynamic systems do so though grassroots propagation. And the resulting landscapes are characterized by redundancy. By coalescing into autonomous actors they achieve a sort of distributed adaptability that morph around blunt obstacles and seep into their surroundings.

Compared to a rock, a puddle of water is very dynamic. A maple tree's probably going to be a whole lot less dynamic than the puddle of water. But the rock's not going to do much at all. The information structure contained within the arrangement of its particles isn't really going to apply itself to the surrounding world as be applied upon.

The rock, of course, can store quite a bit of positional information. These days we, as a society, spend quite a lot of time saving porn and MP3s to rocks. Because, it's worth pointing out, the structures in the rock generally don't spontaneously flow apart. At the same time, however, such brittle frozen structures are incredibly unstable in the face applied contact and motion. But that's okay because though dynamic systems erode entrenched structure, there are still ways to convey and apply positional information.

The maple tree's DNA, for example, in proportion to its total resulting weight, may not pack away an impressive number of gigs per cubic inch. But it preserves and applies such informational structures in such a way that an ipod, abandoned on mountainside, would be hard pressed to match.

Through dynamic engagement with environmental complexities, structure can be rooted with more survivability and consequence than a less dynamic one would find. The structure of a hunk of concrete is not very dynamic, and a brittle hunk of concrete embedded in a far more dynamic system will not last very long.

The positional structure of say, concrete overpasses, doesn't have as strong a history of dynamic participation in the Earth's scummy outer film as say, humanity. And, as the human body is an emergent structure highly interconnected and participant within a rather dynamic system, our own structures are somewhat colossally interdependent with all the other watery stuff whirling around us.

From our vantage point as homo sapiens, the Earth's dynamic system usually looks great! But let's remember that there are no huge metaphysical engines driving the whole thing just to sustain the crude information structure of 'humanishly' arranged deoxyribonucleic acids bumping about in scummy water sacks. The Earth wasn't made for human bodies. Human bodies were made for the Earth.

And all that means is that our template survived two million years of stabbing rabbits to death and picking strawberries. It does not mean that going back to stabbing and strawberries would still cut it for us in another thousand years (even if we had never taken up our new dastardly practice of planting carrots and wheeling around carts). Who knows? Fact of the matter is some dynamic turbulence in the Biosphere could spontaneously wipe us out any day. Following our original position within the greater biosphere (even with some mild evolution) guarantees nothing. It is simply an informed shot in the dark. Good chances but a rather hands off abandonment to fate.

Yet, at the same time, it should be so obvious as to go without saying that suddenly slapping concrete over 1/10th of the Earth's surface will almost certainly effect a non-human-friendly result. No matter how many of your summer homes you make out of cob.

Humans can choose our dynamics

We exist immersed within a dynamic system and remain deeply dependent on its conditions. At the same time there's no denying that we can affect both our local conditions and the system as a whole.

On the face of it, this appears to present us with the two extremes: We can strive to interact with our external environment in as close to the same manner as worked twenty thousand years ago. Or we can seek different ways of engaging with it.

To the degree that we choose the first, we throw up our hands at the thought of out thinking millions of years of evolution. Uncountable trillions of calculations were involved in the formation of our bodies and ecology. Granted, the Earth isn't finished processing through all the fluid interactions of its scummy crust—and when it is, there will be nothing left—but, in the short term, it's certainly amenable to assume that enough of the overarching patterns of equilibrium involved in our upkeep will be maintained for a few dozen more millennia. ...Provided we continue to participate in roughly the same manner.

The second option, deviation, is, at least evolutionarily, a great tactic. But the most efficient processes of evolution take steps inversely proportional to the evolving structure's size. The greater the trial, the greater the error. Large scale structures have more net components involved and thus more points of interaction with the external dynamic system. A single misstep has larger consequences.

The best way to sneak around this dangerous process of physical trial and error is conceptual modeling. We can think through possible changes to way we interact with the world. We simplify perceptions into cognitive structures and then allow them to evolve against one another in our minds. The resulting successful structures we then translate back into external form.

This is technology.

It's the process of how we choose to arrange our interactions with the material world. Loose every day associations of bulldozers and computers aside, this is pretty all that the word "technology" means.

Problem is, the greater the abstraction involved the greater the imperfection. Symbolic representations diverge from material behavior as, by nature of their comparative simplicity, they cannot calculate every interaction in a fluid system. "Chaotic" behavior thus emerges as a phantom remainder, left behind to torment the carefully calculated and brittle structures we so proudly abstracted.

It's one thing when it results in a snapped vine rope, it's quite another when the structure at hand coats the entire Earth. But, regardless of degree, in every technological channel we might use to interact with the material world, whether it be through our traditional biological bodies, adopted behavioral patterns, symbolic logic, mechanical tools, or agglomerate ecosystem, our ultimate choice is between fluidly integrated structures and clunky or tractionless structures.

This is the greater truth. Our choices are ultimately a matter of dynamics. Rather than a choice between two sets of patterns, "technology" and "non-technology," every manner of interaction with the

world is a kind of technology. What matters is their efficiency in providing the most fluid contact with the world.

Role-filling is an ethical abdication

We do not consider "I was just following orders" to ever be a good excuse or moral justification. Neither is, "I was just following my role in nature."

Though of course it's ludicrous to imagine our ecosystem personally issuing commands to Nazi stormtroopers, the basic issue of abdicating personal spirit and responsibility to external authority is the same.

Outsourcing our lives into the control of external systems is a surprisingly accepted practice in our society and whole swathes of people have come to believe that in doing so we can escape the energy of vigilance and self-animation. So vast is the acceptance, that there's a general sense that actions committed while self-placed under some external authority are, in some manner, of less personal responsibility than would be otherwise true. As if the choice to abdicate choice could ever be less egregious. Whenever we accept a form of external authority, we chew away at the personal processes of thinking and living in a sort of selective internal suicide. But rarely does it stay internal. And what once might have been abstract and largely benign, if still a centrally accepted personal axiom, begins to noticeably seep out into our actions and intentions.

It's no secret that our most glamorous hierarchies and evils are assisted, if not entirely held up, by such abdications.

Some of the most instantly recognizable and specific cases of role-filling passed as morality come from the Christian church. From semi-broad conceptions of manners of personal position within a larger system as moral goods, to actual behavioral code pounded into rocks, such conceptions of external morality have been adopted and fleshed out by many sincere people striving independently. ...And, of course, inexorably lead to empowered hierarchies and the justification of outright law.

In contrast, the extreme back-to-basics of ecological role-filling do not directly lay down the specifics of some universal moral code, nor do they posit precise moment-to-moment structures of action. What is done instead is far more insidious, it embraces a generalized sense of external authority. The broad presupposition that we have a place within a larger system, and that our following of that externally defined role is a moral good.

In short, that the external world should rule us.

The fact that these external notions are more material than social is an important detail, but does not change the underlying movement towards abrogation of personal spirit and responsibility. (And the mediation of material structures into guidelines for one's personal intent and action often comes through social instruments.)

By supporting chains of governance in the abstract, such ecological role-filling ultimately throws away agency in self-definition and self-determination ...even though it may not have yet settled on particular rigid structures of personal participation.

The inescapable problem is that after embedding oneself in external causal sequences one cannot be assured of any moral force remaining in them much less being inherent. Reframing and constructing one's life according to say ecological equations or drug-induced instructions from an owl-spirit, though superficially different in structural source, are identical in nature. They can justify anything.

And over many iterations, though such external forces may have been first broadly interpreted so as to produce anti-authoritarian behavior, without an internally emergent motivation, they will justify anything.

The rejection of civilization and technology in favor of ecological role-filling, on the face of it, can't help but appear socially conservative. Still, most if not the overwhelming majority of primitivists have imported enlightenments from progressive movements of deconstruction, seeking to meld anarchist branches of queer theory within the critique of civilization. Despite anarcho-primitivism's macho appearance and reputation within the community, progressive perspectives and deconstruction of sexuality are widely embedded with the banner of green anarchy and some of the most energetic advances and popularizations of anarchism's interpersonal insights have come via green anarchist ventures. (Nothing makes folks face gender roles like a winter in the forest together.) But, while there's been some dancing around biological role-filling in regards to gender, one universal line been drawn, as it is inescapable from the most basic premise of anti-technology: However much primitivism's role-filling might be stretched to embrace the variance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and even some limited queer identities, trans folk are right out.

Because one's biological body is a component of one's role in the greater system that can't truly be changed without technology. The greater alteration of one's body's dynamics, the more dynamic (and from our point of view complex) the applied technology must be. This occasion of an anti-civilization interpretation of the environment's orders is but one sharp and early consequence of primitivism's broader-embrace of role-filling. Even worse ones are certain to come.

As primitivism turns outward for direction from (interpretations of) ecological systems, the divergence between their resulting codes of action and our common feeling of a moral world will deepen. And one can only begin to imagine the depth to the insidious changes capable of spreading after a crash. When the touch of role-filling becomes more immediate. The embrace of one's position within a system internalizes and emphasizes one's connections to the system until the core person is subsumed and replaced by them.

Individuals flourish with increases to their dynamic connections

When our relationships to external material structures become poorly integrated, brittle and characterized by rigid control we become imprisoned.

A starving child, trapped alone, say, on a seemingly endless expanse of clay left by sudden drought, is obviously overwhelmed and overpowered by the change of integration with environment. We can even imagine such a doomed child perhaps only finding extended survival by listlessly licking up mud for nutrients. Not exactly a free mode of life, most would agree. And so too is the villager who simply follows the same processes in life endlessly with no real deviation or exploration—even in times of plenty when such chores are unneeded—pretty far from a liberated life. Furthermore, such internalized repetition of behavior might prove more than unnecessary, and, in fact, destructive to the whole community's relation with their surroundings.

On the flip side, it's clear that fluid contact with our environment helps us positively spread and grow. At heart, we like to touch. We like to see, feel and know our world. We like to reach out and explore.

That's not to say that locking ourselves out of the world can't be useful in situations of oppressive tactile structures. When our environment strays into systems of behavior we can't integrate with, limited strength and intensity of contact is often a positive survival method.

We might flee a hurricane for a concrete bunker or, when struggling through a winter, slow our bodies down in degrees of hibernation. The villager who mechanizes repetition of the same task in order to survive a bad period withdraws from sensory engagement in a similar manner.

But again with the mechanized villager we see how locking ourselves away can sometimes provide its own powerful form of role-filling. The classic caricature of a suburban businessman might come to

mind, someone who locks himself away behind sterile, contact depriving doors, striving progressively to do away with any manner of fluid interaction. replacing contact's and engagement with air conditioned SUVs and neatly packaged television shows.

There are stronger and weaker degrees (and of course forms or directions) of such contact possible with the world. Certain examples are obvious. The hunter who embraces the wilderness and, though more fluidly integrated sensation, feels interactions spreading out from the brushed fern to the owl fluttering off in the distance. The same villager considered before, who just washes clothes in the river and doesn't stray much beyond the functioning of established processes, has internalized a greater barrier to contact, interaction, connection, and integration with the external environment. And, of course, the much lamented World of Warcraft addict, isolated in dark room, may perhaps enjoy great social contact but still little more than faint stimuli in matters of physical reality.

It's no coincidence that the examples given are characterized by decreasingly dynamic connections as the ostensible trappings of civilization are more pronounced. Modern civilization has acquired layers of structural blanketing that encompasses and confines our everyday lives. In every conceivable realm we have taken to throwing down fences and slinking into set patterns and channels of behavior. We still interact with the world, but the dynamics are greatly confined.

How often do we sit quietly and feel the trees move? How often do we pay attention to what exactly is in the room with us, rather than reducing our reality into crudely simplified concepts of functional relationship? How often do we touch the world rather than ignoring or itemizing it? When was the last time you turned your head up and actually looked at the stars?

No wonder our minds and bodies rot today, we function within set patterns because they can be useful. But we only truly flourish with deeper contact. It's no secret that such brittle structures and role-filling are unstable and corrosive, but in the other direction, when we approach our connections dynamically we can spread channels of stronger, more fluidic and organic tactile contact.

There is no fundamental limit to this contact.

Certain local realities provide a bunch of pragmatic limitations, but they can be worked around. In much the same way that the hunter can feel the dancing wind patterns far stronger than his skin or the rustling foliage might otherwise reveal by choosing to throw up some downy feathers and watch their interaction with the twisting air currents. Or an apple-gatherer use stilts to stride between tree branches. Or an ancient lens crafter build a telescope. Or a geneticist hack the human genome to give his skin stronger light-awareness.

We want stronger and more versatile contact, and thus we've built technology.

Rather than from a drive to rigidly control and master, technology has always been, at root, formed by the desire for greater dynamic contact. Not the divorced-from-the-world laziness that sometimes emerges from later abdications once the tools have been acquired. But from the desire to touch, feel and explore. Because the primal creation involved is necessarily rooted in an act of ingenuity and imagination.

The systems engineer who designs and builds a bridge across a ravine with her own hands applies herself in a deeply connected fashion. The world is felt and worked with smoothly. Rock is shifted. A new channel of contact becomes stronger. It's easier to move from place to place. To engage with a wider swath of the world.

The onset of our hierarchical methods of industry, though they facilitated greater and greater power and exploitation, partially stem from the human desire for deeper and more dynamic contact with the world. We don't like being confined. Or that is to say, we rot when limited or relegated to some removed subspace. We flourish with the intensity and immediacy of our more dynamic connections to the world.

Moving beyond the same socially perpetuated processes of behavior, we strive to understand and deepen our relationship, our interaction with the seeds and bushes we gather from. We try for greater contact, attempt a more fluid integration. And so we help plant the berry bushes we need closer to us...

Symbolic structures can facilitate greater fluidity. So long as they, themselves, are treated fluidly. The moment they become rigid, when we remove or replace ourselves with mechanization, our interactions with the world grow rigid and brittle.

Understanding is not dependent on process but capacity to experience

We live in a watery world. Every particle interacts with everything else. The patterns of “structure” that emerge from this turbulent fluid do so in a (relatively) constantly shifting, redundant, and interdependent way. Organic, you might say.

The intensity of interaction—more specifically the high degree of and constant change of relative position internally—found in systems defined by a distribution of particles is the basic premise for the generation of information structures within the system. In the seminal “game of life” demonstrations programmers seeded low level algorithms in a complex environment and turned up the intensity of the environment’s internal interactions. The consequence was “spontaneously” “generated” more “complex” or “diverse” informational “structures.” A whole “complex” ecosystem of interacting informational systems.

But of course we should examine these terms critically. “Complex” can be something of a misnomer given its modern connotations of rigidity sometimes plain unnaturalness (think of the thick owner’s manual to a car or a vast board of circuits). Instead it might be better to consider the hurricane. Or the chaotic feedback found in a small backyard creek; the ripples and eddies forming from smaller masses of interactions and they, themselves, interrelating. Sometimes to form greater agglomerations.

This is a far better representation of the human body, the animal cell, bioregion or net ecosystem. We are each hurricanes in a way. Fractal agglomerates of the positional information of particles in a fluid muck. We thrive with motion and connection. Plop us in stellar vacuum or granite mountainside and, with no connection or absolutely rigidly controlling connections, our informational patterns don’t do that well.

Without dynamic integration to the world we have no channels to exist through. We cannot touch. And without the capacity to touch the world we cannot understand.

We all recognize ‘understanding’ as more than compartmentalized knowledge. More than a tally sheet of discrete informational structures built out of rigid neurons. Something more generalized. Something vaguer, but more tactile. The impression left by a lover’s skin.

The refraction and internalization of the external. The breaking down of a self that might have been discretely itemized by the empty other, not in acceptance or allegiance to emptiness, but through the blossoming enrapture of the other into the self. Until there is no hollow, deathly, meaningless other. Only the universalized self.

This is the arrow of understanding.

Given that the only tangible truth is the internal, understanding is birthed not by attempts to kill of the internal, but reaching out and finding truth by making everything internal. To take in truth. To breath in a lover’s sweat and eradicate the lies between you. Between you and you.

Technology, on the other hand, is defined by process. The process of poking a stick into an ant mound or hunting a bear or applying linguistic constructs or working through a math problem under a certain axiomatic framework or chugging through Javascript or poking an object and recording the responses you notice... it doesn’t matter. Regardless of how dynamically some technology functions in a given situation, it’s no more than the details of applied interactions. Codified processes. There doesn’t have to be any degree of contact through them. The channels can be left empty, the same processes of interaction can be under-utilized or embraced. Technology alone is not understanding.

But here's the trick. Technology can facilitate the capacity to experience. Which is the basic requirement for the creation of understanding.

A hearing aid. Glasses. A microscope. A telescope. Pictures of animals from far away. Pictures of plants. A fine saw blade revealing the layers inside a quartz rock. Satellite contour mappings of valleys and water systems across an entire continent...

The more venues for and the stronger the tactile connections, the greater the capacity for experience.

Today we can actually feel individual molecules with our hands. We can caress the fringe star clusters of distant galaxies with our eyes. We can see the insides of our own bodies and recognize the pheromones dripping off our shoulders. See sound waves. Pick apart flavors and the patterned buzzing of our own nerves.

Understanding is perhaps simply the most dynamic and abstract fluid impressions of the external, it's that which most effectively mentally grasps the fabric of existence.

We actively want greater understanding, thus we've strived for science.

When what we call 'science' gets rigid or imperialistic in the classic sense it becomes useless, but in its most dynamic it allows us channels to press up against the face of reality. More intense experience of reality giving strength to understanding. We want to touch the world around us so that we can get a stronger feel for reality. Into those nooks and crannies that require stronger dynamic channels of information.

Can there be modes and forms of understanding without industrial or even agrarian technology? Obviously yes. But increases in technology facilitate understanding. Confined to some frail bundle of six senses within a limited framework of allowable experiences there comes with that an inherent limitation to understanding. If you bound off sections of the world. Outlaw the advanced technology necessary to reach into and grasp the microscopic or the unbelievably macroscopic and distant... you ingrain a limitation on possible experience and thus understanding.

Physical limitation inspires and triggers social oppression

The problem with the rejection of technology (or more precisely, an allegiance to one limited set of possible technologies) is that scarcity and restraint is built in. The greater the technological limitation, the greater the constraint imposed.

Because our given bodies require certain forms of environmental integration and because we desire greater connection, we've historically traded for this on a fractured, individual level, at the expense of greater social freedom and equality. For all the reasons and things discussed earlier, the restraints of rigid-technologies naturally chafe people and inspire them to take short cuts by utilizing that which is at hand by turning people into their technology. Enter alienation and all forms of oppression.

It's a simple reality that want and dependency together progressively facilitate the psychosis of power.

Certainly want can be reduced significantly, but there is an inherent and significant limit. Being restricted in your integration with the environment (having limited technology) means that there is a much more finite limit on survival knowledge carrying capacity and yet simultaneously restrictions on adaptability. Being limited to a very small area of the total dynamic system means that natural chaotic systems dynamics can occur beyond the periphery of one's limits only to suddenly and drastically effect that within. Sudden regional change is a fundamental reality of the biosphere. It's dynamic.

Want will happen. And it will do so sharply. Because society will be more regionalized. The total sum of humanity won't be able to flow around and mesh with the biosphere as a whole, it will be broken into components that will have much less scope and fluidity. Society will be more compartmentalized into autonomous cells, and these cells will be more rigid. We can argue about degree, but the point is there will be some non-insignificant degree of this.

This is where interdependency exits the realm of mutual aid and develops the potential for serious nastiness. Where there is social want and where the fulfillment of individual want is deeply dependent upon others, there is much greater temptation on the part of the individual to drastically simplify their operating processes. To become machines in pursuit of survival. And, perhaps most importantly, to simplify away the presence of other individuals. To reinterpret them as machines as well. With every biological mechanism shouting at a cacophony of simplistic structural procedures. (Get water. Get food. Etc.) It's very easy for the individual to despairingly become progressively rigidly locked. They start applying such rigid structures to their interactions with people. Bang. Dehumanization. Faith. Power structures. Social oppression.

Where does alienation originate? It is instilled by the overwhelming omni-presence of rigid structure. A lack of fluid, dynamic integration with the world. Baseline human biological structures have certain limitations to dynamic integration built in. Certain structural predispositions. We can't just realign our genes and grow chlorophyll to take in sunlight through our backs or weave wings to glide through canyons hunting deer. The baseline human body is relatively rigid technology.

And people are inspired by limitation, by want, by the encroachment of rigidity, to oppress.

Limitation upon understanding likewise has this effect.

Limitations to our capacity to experience have been consistently surpassed throughout history, a flower bursting through concrete. But when others are left frozen in the concrete they can bear the brunt of such blossoming understanding.

In order for a Victorian Physicist to reach out, to explore and make discoveries involving vacuum, thousands of man hours were needed. To get the rubber, the pump, the glass, the metal... all the tools necessary to peel away the air and peer beyond the norms of our immediate environment, a massive amount of matter had to be positionally reorganized. But it would be inconvenient to educate, explain and get everyone to consent on the benefit of achieving this vector of increased integration with the world, and because most of the people in the world were still far more entrapped by more fundamental physical wants, it was very easy for the Victorians to put the wants and flourishing of the rest of humanity aside. Because the Physicist's own rigid technological and structural entrappings have promoted an alienation from others, limited connection fails to fully reveal the effects of his actions, and centuries of aggregated social psychoses have ground down his empathy. Thus, through a diffuse system of intermediaries, Congolese miners are enslaved, ship hands are whipped and a colossal monster of wood and metal is driven across the ocean. Though the desire for integration and understanding persists, when framed by such alienating structures it can be rechanneled into driving social oppression.

Though the imagery of such Victorian Imperialism is dramatic, it is not particularly original or even that worse than similar processes on less visually epic scale.

Think of the elder whose pursuit of understanding seduces the tribe into recognizing his role and position, turning the product of their work and efforts into tendrils of his own tech. Can't spend all day on mushrooms unless there's folk who're gonna provide you with food. You get social stratification. In order to preserve the elder's high degree of mushroom-related pursuits it's real easy to apply social coercion, personal and cultural power structures so that even in a period of want, others are forced into sacrificing their own food to the self-proclaimed elder.

Physical limitation doesn't directly ordain social subjugation. What it does is grease the gears. It makes it easier to adopt the psychoses of power. Makes them progressively more alluring. Physical rigidity leading to mental and social rigidity. The more physical rigidity, the more and more likely social oppression will spontaneously emerge from all facets.

Spatial limitation ingrains social hierarchy

What tears apart the prisons within our minds is the roaring vacuum beyond. The unexplored frontier chased down past the horizon each night by the sun.

The first step in control is the securing of borders. Otherwise the people you seek to dominate could just walk away.

It is said that, in a simple world, a single empire can only reach as far as a horse can ride. But of course the idea of empire knows no such restrictions. One border inspires another.

It is a far more important truth that, in a simple world, a refugee can only travel as far as their feet can carry them. And the final periphery beyond the locally interrelating agglomerates of tribal power is often unreachable. In Europe's dark ages the refugees lacked the capability to flee beyond all of infected Europe and so they hid between, taking to the forests, much as we always have. And thus the forests were eventually cleared. The only available free space encircled and crushed. This happened because priests, kings and bureaucrats had mills and horses while the serfs had none. But more specifically it all happened because the peasants were spatially limited. They were effectively fenced within authoritarianism as a result of their own limited mobility and positioning.

If we remove all the particularly non-individualized technologies that benefited Europe's centralized powers, the same reality would remain. The spatial limitation of the peasants was both relative to that of the king's men and absolute. Power need not be so dramatically centralized and hierarchical to still be as oppressive. Remove the tools of the power zombies and they would simply organize more localized authoritarianism. And the high cost of spatial redistribution of individuals (a single individual moving from point A to point B takes more time and energy) means that society's natural resistance to power is lessened.

Perhaps an example is in order. When a husband beats his wife in the apartment beside mine the situation is immediate and so is my reaction. I am able to recognize it within seconds. I can move to their door in very little time and, as a consequence, I am able to take whatever action I take much sooner. Furthermore the wife can choose to immediately relocate herself into the presence of safe, protective people. All these things are spatial matters. And remain effectively the same if we replace the aggregate of nearby apartments with more distant tree houses and give the individuals involved bicycles. (The communication of the situation is slightly different matter and will be covered in the next essay.)

If you relocate the aforementioned people into the forest without significant technological choice then interpersonal power structures can leech off the high costs of relative relocation to restrain subjects. This can happen with couple removed far from any others or an entire tribe.

Because of scarcity, hunter-gatherer tribes naturally aggregate with a good deal of separation between them. When the psychoses of power take root in a tribe they are emboldened and strengthened by such spatial limitation.

Individuals can flee for other tribes, they can, as the anarcho-capitalists might say, choose their government on the market. Choose the lives they want to live and choose the people they want to live them with. And, yes, in a relatively open market of infinite options this tends to work pretty well. Oppression just isn't that appealing. But, and here's the kicker. Because of their spatial limitation, their choices certainly do not constitute a free market. They have rather limited available options. Because by nature of the necessary hunter-gatherer distribution, the number of other individuals they can reach to associate with is very, very finite. And each relocation, each encounter costs them a whole lot more time.

Furthermore, when oppressive concepts spread further than their "discrete" embodiments, when multiple tribes (forced by famine or battered by climate change, say) adopt a regional consensus of power archetype, the effective boundary of such an aggregate of mini-empires can surpass the traveling capac-

ity of the potential refugee. (And let's not even mention the even harsher inherent restrictions applied to families.)

Those on the outside of such a travesty could and normally would overwhelm and grind down such cancerous cultures. But a lack of individualized transport technology changes the odds. Simple geometry makes it harder to organize resistance around the edge of a periphery. Centralized power meanwhile retains the local advantage; it doesn't have to travel much of anywhere.

Given a generalized anarchy, broken only by the occasional tragic psychological misstep that inspires coercive sociological rigidity, society's most crucial healing factor lies in its ability to flee and isolate the cancer.

Our natural defense against power is free association. The ability to re-form, to route around hierarchy, bypass the malicious and fluidly create new relationships.

For this to be possible there has to be a high degree of positional interrelation. That is to say, people have to be able to relocate around one another easily.

Vacuous distance or overbearing proximity are both inconducive to such dynamicism. And tribal clusters are the worst of both worlds. The only solution is choice. Where distances between people can be overcome easily at will. Where we can rearrange ourselves with respect to the rest of humanity at a moment's notice. When we are deprived this ability, cancerous hierarchies grow.

Communication and Freedom of information is necessary for free societies

Central to every interaction between individuals is the conveyance of information. Of course, in a certain sense, its impossible to transfer meaning from one individual to another. We each create that individually. But what we create stems from the informational structures we have at hand, the material reality between ourselves. The nature of connection to our environment, the channels by which we experience, by which we touch the rest of the world, are thus critical factors in the macroscopic behavior of a society.

Our interactions with each other are mediated through the physical realities of our environment and are wholly comprised of informational structures. We construct physical systems of contact, whether by movement of skin on skin, electrons in logic circuits, or common neural models and vibrating air. As a result, the nature of our interactions with one another is inherently dependent upon our relationship to our physical environment. In order to interact dynamically with one another we require strong channels of dynamic integration with the world around us.

Communication (although not necessarily through strict processes of symbolic logic or language) is the defining aspect of society. However you cut it, we interact through information.

If there are restrictions or limitations to our communication with one another those conditions will shape the total internal interactions of our society.

In the previous essay I glanced over some of the emergent methodologies by which societies heal the power psychosis. Central to all of these is the internal dynamic integration of the society at hand. In order to correct an injustice you have to first actually hear about it. When we make decisions pertaining to our associations with others we like to be informed. Free societies function because we're not all fumbling in the dark. We can make knowledgeable choices and respond quickly to changes. We don't lose sight of what the economists call the "externalities" of our interactions. Other people's lives are immediate and tactile to our own. As a result we don't marginalize others beyond a periphery.

Contact is the most vital component of society. We can only help or assist those we can touch. Those we can communicate with.

Resistance needs veins. Empathy needs arms.

Dictators know this altogether too well. Free information brings down tyrants and heals cancers. The tools, technologies and processes of communication are antithetical to control. Control can only take root through isolation and strangulation. Governments are critically dependent on keeping their actions quiet. Keeping their citizens distributed and incapable of communication past a certain degree.

In China the country's integration into the world economic standard has, as a byproduct, allowed its citizens to increasingly surpass physical impediments to communication. To fill the place of this physical limitation the government has found itself forced to wage an uphill battle of sociological domination. To survive the PRC has to expend increasingly vast amounts of energy on ingraining social psychoses to fill the restrictive roles of former technological limitations or absences.

But once the fiber-optic cable is laid (or better yet the mesh WiFi networks) the only thing ultimately keeping a Guangzhou school girl trading instant messages about fashion rather than insurrection is the cop/consumer in her head. At the end of the day it's just in her head. Deeper channels of communication do simultaneously open avenues for memetic control and vapidly suicidal mental structures. ...But why take chances? Outright tyrannies like Zimbabwe and Cuba know full well how reliant they are on the viscosity of their societies. They simply haven't the energy to keep up with the more complex and elaborate mechanisms of the world's surviving power structures. Opening the door to more dynamic interaction within and without would be akin to gutting themselves. So in many cases they've done the efficient thing and simply removed the technology.

Look closely and all social power systems stem from impediments to communication.

To return to an example in the previous essay, if there's injustice or oppression but those involved are removed or dis-integrated from the rest of humanity how can recourse take place? All the self-repairing mechanisms championed by free societies depend vitally upon the capacity to convey information (speedily, effectively and across great distance) within that society. In order for an even slightly free society to function, a strong degree of contact must be possible between all individuals.

It's the same old axiom of system dynamics: Rigid structures of interaction are bad. But so is isolation. Free societies function through the free conveyance of information. The rigid fermentation of this interaction is bad for the total dynamicism of a society, but so is the separation and isolation of it into parts. Fragmented or localized societies marginalize others (those who they are denied an intensity of material contact with) and in doing so alienate themselves, making oppression inevitable. The dissolution and regionalization of significant informational contact is an inherent and inescapable reality of hunter-gatherer life.

In practice this is blindingly obvious.

By the very nature of communication a society's freedom is dependent upon its physical relations with the material world. Inherent physical limitations makes for inherent social limitation, restraint and oppression.

It's impossible to speak of regional anarchy

The idea that some parts of humanity can be free while others are not is conceptually incoherent. Insomuch as anyone anywhere is oppressed, I am oppressed. I mean that not as a trite greeting card summary of solidarity in liberty, but in recognition of a basic psychological principle. To speak of being personally "free" in any sense while others are not is to leave whatever remains of the "self" a laughably meaningless shell.

Far from being revolutionary, such thinking is the definition of alienation.

Power is a social psychosis and, as such, it is ultimately something we can only dissolve away individually. But even the possibility of inaction or satisfaction in the face of such power structures is

ultimately the acceptance of them in ourselves. The internal dissolution of our personal power psychoses is inseparable from external action.

You can't coherently talk of achieving any measure of liberty in the absence of empathy, and empathy presupposes some semblance of universalized identity. Without such one person's freedom would necessarily impinge on another's and any strong notion of liberty would collapse. We refrain from swinging our fist into another person's face not because of some arbitrary external structure or law, but because we recognize ourself in that person. We seek not freedom from one another, but freedom from rule. To attack ourself would be to surrender to some rule, structure and limitation. In hitting another person we of course decrease the net capacity for dynamic connection and integration in our society, but more saliently we internalize a psychological approach to the world that is irreconcilable with anything other than structures of control. The only situation in which we could speak of some people having completely abolished the power psychosis in their own lives is one in which everyone else has as well.

Empathy (and consequently morality, ethics and everything else created from its inspiration) stems from the abstract possibility of transitivity of selfhood. It's why we instinctively frown on punching teddy bears or torturing squirrels; the cognitive structures we associate with our sensations of them are a reflected version of ourselves. The child who acts out violence against her teddy bear isn't physically hurting anyone, not even from a panpsychic viewpoint, but such external actions are indicative of an internal intent of violence against society and, by proxy, herself.

We interact with the world by neurologically forming imprints of the world around us. We simplify our perceptions into informational structures, into Darwinianly evolving models that allow for greater traction in our contact with the world. Modeling rigid systems of limited complexity in our minds is easy, the interaction of uncountable billions of atoms can be simplified into a "lever" or "pulley." And, accordingly, we can demonstrate a great deal of control over such systems. But systems of non-linear dynamics pose a greater challenge. Other people are preposterously, if not infinitely, inhibitory to the successful creation of such macroscopic constructs.

The way we all initiate substantive contact with other people is to, on some level, see ourselves in them. We can only deal with other people by shedding off the contextual trappings of our own position within the world and reconstructing theirs around us. As a consequence, to accept their enslavement or oppression is to accept our own.

The king, by his participation in the kingdom, is still very much a slave to the power psychosis. But so to is the monk who gathers berries in the forest, even though the king's men may not be able to find him for torment. That there could be an entire band of monks gathering berries far from the kingdom does not make them more free. Nor does it really make the sum society more free. That a thousand could live freely while one man chains another is impossible. By inaction they accept, in acceptance they are complicit, and in complicity there is nothing but arbitrary moderation. The presence of regionally inconstant degrees of overt acts of physical oppression does not make for varying degrees of liberty. We are all on the same level there. Whereas if one man chains another and we do react, so long as we remain in action rather than completion, our actions and our own lives are still bound by that chain. Only when the chain is actually gone can we speak of achieving greater liberty, and even then it is a universal reality, not regionalized.

Tribal dispersion, though it may present some of us immediately with some of the trappings of a truer anarchy, is inherently oppressive.

Given that we have knowledge of the rest of humanity, the choice to withdraw and concentrate all our efforts within some social sub-set leaves us not only complicit in the oppression of those we push off beyond the periphery but also in violence against ourselves. To preempt this by erasing our knowledge of the rest of humanity would be even more direct violence and contribute nothing but cowardice to the same reality. No tribe, commune or region can truly flourish in their own anarchy while the rest of world sees violence and oppression. The psychological effect of alienation from others, of such localized

preoccupation, is the internalization of a certain rigidity. The acceptance of structure. Turning people into our technology.

The fermentation of rigid social structure is a direct result of alienation.

Any society that dismisses externalities and focuses social value on those near at hand is really making social value a result of context and physical structure. As such it is redefining others into nothing more than the structure of their relationships and functional value to other structures. As a result, the we become nothing more than a hollow structure, the organic human soul transmuted into a structural identity. In such a world, I am this structure and you are another structure that may or may not function to the benefit and sustainability of my own structure.

The resulting society loses its warmly integrated dynamics and its internal relationships instead become matters of incredibly complex, yet rigid, mechanism. Because of the internal rigidity of personal identity all interactions are polarized towards the control of that identity's (ie informational structure) environment. Small rigid structures can be controlled, but other people's identity structures are too complex. If both extended systems are rigid then both will collapse violently.

No matter how pretty an isolated section of society may behave in contrast to the rest, oppression without will eventually manifest within. In the face of gross oppression worldwide, regional secession or ingrowth is capitulation and the collapse of such tribes inevitable.

Any society that embraces death will embrace oppression

To accept the inevitability of death or limitation is to accept an arbitrary degree of it. Because once the precedent has been truly set in the mind there remains no innate resistance to it. You can't accept giving up a finite portion of your soul. You can't really accept some oppression without beginning to accept all oppression.

It is willfully blind to believe that a society that accepts, much less embraces, the deaths of six and a half billion people will ever know peace let alone any substantive anarchy. It is demonstratively irrational to suppose that any society bound by innate physical limitations will ever achieve more than a fraction of their potential.

Physical realities are inseparable from social realities. The embrace of physical realities that restrict, control and rule our individual and collective lives is the cowardly embrace of dictatorship by environmental proxy.

Life—not in biological or taxonomic sense but rather as the blossoming act of existence itself—is an inability to accept death or rigidity. Life is motion and touch.

A transhumanist once summed up her support for the life-extension struggle in one sentence: "Existence is wonderful." It is. Mine, yours and all the possessives you can think of. Every heartbeat is an alternating symphony of resistance and hope.

But you cannot have partial resistance. You cannot have partial hope. You either have it or you do not. If you close the door somewhere you close the door everywhere.

If you wall off a portion of it, if you set a limit to what is possible, the day will come when you reap nothing but. Where nothing is left but death. Where we have nothing left to look forward to shaping. Our acceptance of death is our alienation from ourselves. It is our alienation from life.

When we, in our incessant and inherent desire for contact, experience and understanding, press up against that wall of limitation... We will conduct its rigidity back throughout our society.

Technology can be applied dynamically

Language can be a real downer. Words and concepts gather associations that weigh heavily upon us and can obscure the underlying reality. We make simplifications and structures to deal with a given context. To the degree that these structures are integrated with the world around us they can facilitate stronger and more dexterous connections. To the degree that they become more rigid or desolate, such structures prove disastrously dis-integrated with the dynamics surrounding us.

So too, when constructing language and theoretical models around a basic reality is it vitally important that our mental structures be deeply rooted in that reality. Blindly accepting and working from previous or popular macroscopic simplifications can only result in a structure that is out of touch with the underlying dynamics.

Although concepts like “civilization” and “technology” can be simplified into some of their popular associations, any significant analysis built off of such structures will be critically unable to integrate with the root realities touched by said associations. References to “technology” as the rigid and brittle structures so obvious in today’s society can be said to effectively encompass the most visible aspects of what currently exists. But such focus obscures what could exist. ...As well as some of the finer points of what is already in effect, but still overshadowed.

By attacking the dominate rigid forms of technology under the premise of all “technology”, the anarcho-primitivist discourse builds itself around macroscopic simplifications and blinds itself to details. Though a popular abstraction of “technology” is what is adroitly attacked, the actual and full definition of technology is what’s consequently thrown out. Rigidity is critiqued but, through the misapplication of broad language and concept, human agency in our environmental integration is what’s ultimately dismissed.

As such, “technology” is misidentified as stemming from a desire of control rather than contact, experience and understanding.

But the reality is, given its popular breadth as a concept, technology actually refers simply to how we interact with the world. And it is the nature of this how is the real issue, not that there is a how in the first place. There will always be a how. By attacking the very idea of hows we simply choose to blind ourselves to the hows we’re already using. And then they use us.

So the real question is what nature of technologies should we turn to. And, yes, our options include the few primitive technologies our species was once born with as well as the wide variety of structures that have been developed and applied since, but not just those.

Of course, I think we would all agree that today’s dominate technological infrastructures are unacceptable, or, at very least, less than they could be. Today most acts of creation are perverted towards structures of control before they even leave the inventor’s mind. We open up new avenues of contact and then work harder and harder to force methods of control upon them.

But the point is not all desire for contact is a false-face for the pursuit of control. In fact one might say that control makes contact impossible. We can never really know those or that which we control. Rather our worship of control is always one of surrender to security. Control is about imposing rigidity. It’s about orchestrating the world around us so that it can’t interfere with the structure within. We do this so that we might cling to this remaining structure and claim it as an identity. Control is about creating a husk to die in. To truly touch, to have contact with the world around us is irreconcilable with such. It smashes through structures of control and rebuilds them as veins and currents.

Contact is conducted through dynamic systems. And this includes systems that we popularly classify as “advanced technology.”

Telescopes, microscopes, radios and phones. Fiber-optic cables, wifi mesh networks, satellites and infrared sensors. The more complex, the more dynamic. The more points of inter-contact. The more fluid and organic such systems become. The more adaptable.

As our new structures and approaches become more dynamically refined, the better they're able to integrate with the realities of their operating environment. In fact, beyond a certain point the technologies we create can become more dynamic than this frail, scummy planet-skin we were born into. Nanotech and biochemistry embody the current cutting edge of this drive to offer stronger and finer degrees of contact through our own bodies. (Although with both, just as with anything else, the impulsive, blind pursuit of control in such areas rejects understanding and meaningful contact at the cost of potentially catastrophic results.) We are finally gaining choice in all the myriad workings of our material world. No longer content with clunky macroscopic abstractions and simplifications, we are finally grounding the roots of our interactions and integration with the world around us.

It's a move to stop beating the world with a crude hammer and instead begin to stroking its skin.

And, with such fine understanding and contact, we are opening up possibilities previously closed. The deaf can hear. The blind can see. The crippled can walk. The old folks can get it on.

As we've seen the drive for experience, for pleasure and life itself are matters of technology, the methods and structures of our interaction with the world. Information and communication technologies, transportation technologies and science itself (science in the "pursuit of understanding through touch" sense, not the "imperialism" sense) all demonstrate such emerging tendencies.

Core to the primitivist mantra is the assertion that these means of "artificial" communication and the like are, at the end of the day, utterly dismal, leaving us disconnected and constantly enslaved. It's the least eloquent assertion and almost entirely dependent upon populist "common sense" appeals. ...Because it's completely fucking ridiculous. Whose fault is it if you can't turn off your cellphone to just enjoy some natural solitude? Stop blaming the phone (or the blasted dagnum computer with its "email") and take responsibility for the way you integrate with such technology. If our society doesn't facilitate long uninterrupted walks on the beach then change society, don't launch a crusade to abolish our ability to play with such fun toys.

Personally, I abhor phones. I just dislike the way they unevenly filter our preexisting social language. In person I'm all about the body language, hand gestures and facial quirks. But that's just me. In contrast, I love the bulletin-board format. I was prolifically using the internet long before I really started making phone calls and I feel deeply at home with its social intricacies.

Although personal, face-to-face contact provides a lot more bandwidth, at the end of the day it's only a matter of bandwidth. There isn't anything any more magical about so called "direct" physical contact. And any connection is a dramatic improvement over nothing. Being able to still contact friends, no matter how distant their desires take them, is a wonderful thing. To reach out and touch Bangkok and Berlin, to be a shoulder to cry on or a ecstatic confident, to watch a volcano explode on another continent or pick out the wobbles of a distant star... Such connection is a thing of liberation. We really do feel better for our use of advanced technologies. All that's required is a shedding off of our own rigidities and a refusal to lazily feed ourselves to new ones.

But, of course, with the more spiritual, psychological, sociological or philosophical claims against technology for which it is famous, anarcho-primitivism has developed two pragmatic arguments as crutches.

The first is that of diminishing returns. With "technology" we are said to inevitably work harder and harder to take smaller and smaller steps (something noticeable in limited frameworks such as agriculture where more energy exerted on the same amount of land is said to produce less and less per-investment). This is wrong of course, and the misapplication of the "diminishing returns" inference upon the whole of our drive towards more dynamic technologies stems from a misunderstanding of the root reality. The reason some "areas" of technology demonstrate such behavior while others do not is not because things like computer manufacturing have yet to hit some inevitable barrier (although certainly, the universe has an informational carrying capacity), it's because things like "agriculture" are not discrete species of technological development but cast off, inherently limited, sections of a single progression. Computers

are one of the rare technologies that haven't yet reached diminishing returns, because there's no limit to what a "computer" is! Yeah, when the length and breath of a single limited structure has been explored it sees less and less growth within those arbitrary boundaries. So fucking what? There can still be growth somewhere else! The conceptual division of technology into discrete fields creates the limitation that is then identified. And, ultimately, the accelerating "areas" of technology like nanotech computing will inevitably turn around and drastically revitalize lagging areas like "agriculture," letting us take in sustenance by, say, chlorophyll in our backs, leaving behind the awkward and brittle orchards we once mistakenly built to rewild themselves.

The second argument appeals to the authoritarian nature of today's technological infrastructures. It's sometimes boiled down into sloganeering with phrases like "who's going to go down into the caves to get your iron?" Of course the instantaneous response of "we'll build machines to do that" is spot-on. There's a reason modern capitalism feeds so ravenously on human labor when it could easily provide comfort. Socially we place value in power rather than liberation and thus market forces move at a relative snail's pace towards post-scarcity. If we really cared about it, we could immediately make huge strides towards abolishing even the frailest degree of "work" without anyone sacrificing a steadily advancing first-world living standard. This much is, at least in part, plainly obvious to just about everyone. And the perpetual response of primitivism, that mechanization isn't a real solution because someone would still have to occasionally fix the machines, is a cop-out. I'd much rather be playing around with the gears of mining machines than wheezing out my lungs in some coal mine. And then I could move on to something else. I would be free to learn another role. But all of this talk of new mining processes is irrelevant. It doesn't matter if we have the machinery or not. If there are no telescopes in the whole fucking world, I'd more than gladly go down into the mine myself and personally complete all the so called "work" required to build it myself. And you know what? I'd be more than willing to share it. That's the whole fucking point.

The advancement towards more and more dynamic technology has never innately required and does not innately require any oppression whatsoever.

Nor, in fact, does such advancement make for any inherent catastrophes or sacrifices. The pursuit of dynamic technology is grounded in the valuing of knowledge and adaptability. It has never been about diddling around with our surroundings until we find something immediately gratifying. That's not "technology," that's a just single methodology of developing technology. And in such behavior no conscious or creative effort is involved, it's simply the mechanistic/entropic eating up of that which is around you. Entirely focused towards power, profit and control now, understanding later.

But why not understanding first and action later?

Primitivism is famous for its hesitancy, conflict and sketchiness on what constitutes appropriate technology.

Reaching into an anthill with a stick, fashioning a bow, grunting sweetly or meanly, utilizing symbolic mental structures, teaching a mother to pat a baby over her shoulder, building a hut, drawing in the mud... and god forbid we talk about permaculture or bicycles!

On the whole its most obvious weakness (and yet best rhetorical defense) is that there is no clear line. Folks talk of "that which doesn't start to control you" but never really stop to deeply analyze that. They take it to obviously call for the abolishment of satellites, airplanes, computers and genetic engineering, but that's not necessarily true.

Such control is a choice. We don't have to be controlled by our technology, no more than we have to crank out and obey rigid mental structures. Just as internal rigidity is a consequence of our choices so is the resulting external rigidity. In every moment in our lives we can choose life or undeath. We choose to be governed by the environmental structures we interact with or we can choose to move through them as we desire, unhindered. The internalization of rigid structure is not innate to dealing with structures. We can change and create them and ourselves. We can be rather than accepting the world and our

relations to it as is. We can constantly reshape and redefine our relations to the world. Rather than following input, we can become fountains of output.

If we are sincere in our rewilding, we cannot turn to something as limiting as primitivism.

Why not nanotech, space tech, permaculture, and dynamic technology in general? Think about how we might have built civilization if we'd been true anarchists from the beginning! Wide-eyed technological lovers oft receive fiery denouncements for wanting to play god. By seeking deeper contact and understanding, of each wanting to be gods. But if one accepts the universe of Einstein and Spinoza where existence is god. Is this such a bad thing? Rather than reject and hide from our birthright as part of the universe should we not instead finally embrace it in all of its glory? To be more godly? To be more integrated with the world around us. Is not the embrace of some random, rigid biological structure alone ultimately a embrace of alienation from the universe?

Many techno-utopians fall into a similar rut as the primitivists by treating technological progress as an undeniable external force. A salvation that will inevitably arrive someday. Both attitudes smack of an "I'm only on this side because our victory is assured" morality. A legacy borrowed from the Marxists' perpetual wait for The Revolution, and before them, the Christians' perpetual wait for the Rapture. The reality is that our technologies are just the embodiment of our choices.

The solution? Be smarter!

Choose to think rather than abdicating from it at every opportunity.

Radiate life in your every process and action.

The failings of technologies are the failings of ourselves. Our laziness and nihilism. Our greed and hate. All these are ultimately consequences of mental rigidity. Is it any wonder we excrete this stuff in physical form? The rigidity of our technology stems from psychoses that we have the agency to overcome. To surpass. To shed off. Some primitivists have outright argued that we simply don't have the neurological capacity for mass society, the capacity for more than a certain amount of contact or freedom.

Why not? What's stopping us? What enforces this limited capacity? We make ourselves. Unshackled, we practically burst with creativity. Why should we snuff it out?

As long as we are alive there is no such thing as an inevitability.

We do not live in a closed system

Although its certainly true our current mass infrastructure cannot and will not survive any prolonged contact with the basic laws of physics, a permanent or catastrophic collapse is not inevitable.

The biosphere is a complex nonlinear system and concrete parking lots are not. Because our most physically dominant technologies are less 'complex' (or, as I have been using the term, 'dynamic') than their surrounding environment by relatively infinite orders of magnitude, they are deeply unstable. Furthermore, the blunt macroscopic construction of our technological systems and infrastructure leaves them especially vulnerable to entropy as the easiest resources are depleted.

Our response to the inadequacies of our infrastructure's integration with its environment is to build ever more extended structure on top of it. Rather than abolishing and rebuilding, or just modifying our existing technologies, we add endlessly to them. Concrete upon concrete. Text upon text. Until the sheer mass of technostructure begins to rival the biomass around it.

Our structures eat up dynamicism and replace it with rigidity. But this process of expansion is the only thing that keeps those resulting rigid structures intact. We use up what we can get to easily but as those resources are depleted it becomes increasingly important to expend and commit an exponentially greater proportion of our net civilization towards the upkeep of what we've already built. Eventually, in a closed system, the basic mathematical realities of chaos theory and entropy will kick our ass and the catastrophic collapse of this rigid system we've paved over the face of the earth will become an

inevitability. Due to the extremely over-extended and omnipresent nature of our infrastructure, there will be no faucet of life in the biosphere unaffected. Needless to say our 6.5 billion little frail sedentary bodies will not do so well. In short, we are fucked.

...Except that we do not live in a closed system.

Although our civilization is in dire trouble and our technological infrastructure is a hideous embarrassment, we are not doomed. The crash is not an inevitability. And neither under the banner of “sustainability” are any fundamental restrictions, be they sociological or material, inevitable.

Although grinding into the Earth’s crust for specific resources is a progressively harder and harder zero-sum game, the plain and simple reality is that we have the capability to reach huge swathes of resources in an extremely productive, cost-effective manner (far more efficient, in fact, than any previous process available us in history). What’s more, in an unprecedented (and probably unreasonable) act of forgiveness on behalf of the universe, we don’t have to completely destroy our rotting civilization in order to start acquiring them. We can implement this new process of acquiring resources and use the proceeds to gradually fluidly abolish the horrific structural cancers of our civilization. All the while giving us footing to develop more dynamic and integrateable technologies. And, if that weren’t enough, the rigid structures we utilize in this process don’t inherently replace biomass. Because we won’t be mining our resources from within a dynamic biosphere.

We’ll be chewing up nature’s little bite-sized gifts and breathing in the source of all energy on Earth, finally allowing us to bypass the middlemen and stop fucking things up for them. Asteroids and solar energy. It’s a real simple and practical solution.

Stop doing your fucking around in an infinitely complex non-linear dynamic system you don’t yet understand. In 2020 there’s an asteroid that’s going to swing by the Earth’s doorstep carrying Twenty Trillion Dollars worth (today’s market) of precious metals vital to our advanced electric circuitry based technology. Said asteroid is one of millions of lifeless boulders spread across the sky. Rigid and desolate. Dead rocks waiting to be ingested into the seeds of life. 3554 Amun will be far easier to reach than the moon. If even the barest amount of today’s tech is applied to its capture (and entrepreneurs are already lining up) it will completely devalue the world’s financial markets. The roots of the limits and restrictions, the scarcities that keep the Third World under First World satellites, that keep the mythical “hundred dollar laptop” at something as high as one hundred dollars, will begin to dissolve.

That is, if all the people waiting for it are still there when it arrives.

If the world’s superpowers and their multinational corporate apparatus are ready with legal restrictions, subsidies and financial treaties, the resulting materials will be funneled into existing power-structures and their material detritus (our progressively fucked up global infrastructure).

But far worse than such a continuance of today’s near-fascist powerstructures is the possibility that no one will be waiting for 3554 Amun, or, for that matter, ever again look up at the sky with hope. That our global infrastructure will finally be forced to the point of absolute collapse.

Because, and here’s the problem, Derrik Jensen is right. We are playing for the endgame. If our civilization collapses hard, it might very well be impossible to rebuild. If we crash once and we crash bad, civilization will be permanently limited. We will live in a closed system. A permanent ceiling to our technology, be it dynamic or rigid. Permanent restrictions felt in every aspect of society. Limits to what we can do, who we can be, where we can go, how we can experience... limits to our capacity to touch and understand.

The cheap resources that first spurred and allowed technological development will be effectively depleted, and the remains will progressively become useless. Our fossil fuels will be almost impossible to reach and the little we acquire will have to work far harder to build far less. If we fall there’s a very real chance we will never be able to get up again. That will be it.

And make no mistake about it, the crash will suck.

Our lives will be, on the whole, more horrid than ever before in history. You see, what's being glossed over is that, though advanced technology in the form of wifi mesh networks and space-elevators may disappear permanently, we simply won't lose all the technologies created by this civilization project. In fact, it looks like we'll default on middle ages technology. With all the oppression that makes for. And heavier restrictions on anarchist organizing or resistance.

Serious metallurgy will peak as will, obviously, fossil fuels, but metal won't peak as much. When the last major nation states succumb to entropy and the survivalists' bullets have finally run out, the resulting tech level will not be pre-agrarian stone age, it will be a perpetual iron-age. Although complicated endeavors will be hindered, the loose distribution of scrap metal will democratize simplistic metallurgy. Oxidization will eventually deplete vast amounts of scrap iron, but enough mass deposits will remain immediately viable for millennia and enough modern metallurgical compounds will resist oxidization to likewise matter. Likewise, enough topsoil will be farmable in various ways for forms of agriculture to continue (and it will, because six and a half billion people don't just give in to reductions in food supply). Although it will be impossible to construct complicated circuits or analyze proteins, it will be very easy to construct swords, hoes, pitchforks, crossbows, and, to a lesser extent, guns. However the acquisition and smelting process will lend itself more to social hierarchies than to individualized knowledge. And with information technologies essentially annihilated, anarchists will drowned out by the fiefdoms around them. Paranoia stems from lackings in one's knowledge and, as information is restricted, old psychoses will take root. Some tribes, by sheer luck, will end up isolated from one another and will achieve some equilibrium of blandness. But most will not.

If civilization collapses what emerges will be pretty fucking simple. The gun-nuts won't fade away as their guns rust, they'll fucking expand little fiefdoms. If the crash is particularly bad on the environment this'll make for universal unending tribal violence (a few magnitudes worse than pre-Colombian Northern America, but granted, not hyperbolic road-warrior dystopia). If the crash is anything but utterly catastrophic it'll simply shatter the nation state system back into feudal age principalities. The wealth, values and structures created by civilization will still exist. The same dread forces encapsulated by "civilization" will still exist. The only difference (besides the incredibly horrific living conditions and death rates within) will be the frail niche capacity for autonomous societies on the periphery.

But even if these autonomous zones are fully utilized, they will still be incredibly dependent upon the horrific society around them. Deeply intertwined in the ecology. They will be the new bourgeoisie. The suburban autonomist paradises. Never mind that undermining the overpacked ministates (and consequently accepting or dealing with refugees from such) will not be in their best interests as the ecology couldn't handle influxes of hunter-gatherers or of slave-agrarian societies and that inside/outside dichotomies would kill any potential anarchism in the long term... The basic reality is that they will have lived through the most traumatic and vicious event in Human history and that, to even begin to function as a people, they will have to divorce themselves from the rest of humanity. They will have to create hierarchies of human value based upon relative positions and roles. "Diversity" in whatever jumble of associations one has, will not be desirable because it will not be sustainable. Small forms of localized and specialized change will be accepted while any form of serious deviation will carry with it a direct price in terms of energy or food.

And the ministates? They will simply assist in further ingraining the memes and cultural psychoses of our current society. The logical progression of our balkanized suburbs, a society that protectively contracts into little closed zones of ingrown hierarchies. They will finally know safety from the globalization process of communication and competing ideas. Although the trite physical comforts of modern civilization will disappear, it will ultimately be a huge relief to many. Social hierarchies and oppressions will continue free from dissonance, with reason to further march down the path of nihilistic mental rigidity.

Furthermore, any serious technological collapse will bring with it a vast ecological collapse.

And it's a perfectly reasonable possibility that humanity, or even mammals, will not survive such. Never mind the very real possibility of nuclear winter (and no, your survival skills are not going to be able to protect you from that kind of radiation) or the windows finally cracking on the Pentagon's biowarfare lab, the plain and simple reality is that we're in the middle of the greatest alteration to the biosphere since before the fucking dinosaurs. And, as the computer guts decompose in the abandoned suburban homes, as the last bits of localization self-imposed by our civilization's infrastructure breaks down and the sheer energy of our chemical blasphemy finally merges into Earth's outer fluid, a fucking gazillion butterfly wings are going to flap with all their might. As the biosphere's non-linear dynamics reaction to these last few centuries of sudden and violent alteration plays itself out, the biosphere is going to change in a big way. You don't make that degree of drastic chemical and macro-physiological revisions without expecting turbulence. Whether or not we peaceably and instantaneously evolve past fossil fuels tomorrow or all die in some mega-collapse, the effect of the shit we've been stirring into the pot is going to become more pronounced. And on a biological level this is going to be catastrophic. See the only defining feature of the biosphere is that it's dynamic. A big bundle of scummy fluid. Taxonomic conceptual structures like "interdependent networks of species and fauna" are just incidental arrangements of macroscopic structures. Fuck, what makes you think DNA will naturally survive into the next iteration of the Earth's crust?

The Earth's scummy surface is just going through one mild iteration of entropic chemistry. Frail semblances of repetitive structures and mild plateaus in overall energetic interaction do not make for any realistic security. And with the rise of our civilization we've just kicked the shit out of whatever momentarily normalizing patterns may have been buffering us.

There is no magical restoring force of equilibrium in the biosphere to something in any way compatible with life, much less humanity. The "natural state of things" is a vicious myth propagated by the church of biology. There is no real probability that, come a collapse, there will be a role for us or anything like us. And there certainly won't be in a few more million years.

To embrace that is to embrace death. To push our dependents, the rest of society, our own dreams and desires beyond a periphery based on their relevance to immediate physical guides. To embrace role-filling within constraints. To embrace limitation. A finite set of possible existences. A normalization away from contact, experimentation and evolution in favor of immediate usefulness, our functionality as biological cogs.

The psychological and sociological effects of acceptance alone are reason alone to fight the crash till our last breath.

But hope is more than rational, it is almost justified.

The limitations presented by the Earth alone are not reasonable guidelines to the future. Vast and significant social forces, both authoritarian and anti-authoritarian are very much in the processes of following our desire for contact beyond our immediate puddle. And the consequences of such are anything but disregardable. Closed system analysis is simply an insufficient basis for declarations of inevitability.

Furthermore, such space expansion is far from a simple postponement of the same story. It's simply impossible to apply the systematic tendencies, constraints and realities of Earth to the heavens. Even if we do decide to expand rather than just utilize astral resources as a platform to fix our relationship with the biosphere, relativity will immediately quash any empire building or any centralized civilization. You see, the very nature of space-time dissolves rigid structures on truly macroscopic scales. There can never be any galactic empires (even ones that later crash from diminishing resource returns). It's impossible. Yet at the same time there can still be connection and enough individuals immediately connected as to dissolve regional oppression and authoritarianism. Furthermore, and here's the absolutely critical component, humanity will become truly distributed and redundant rather than intractably interdependent. No longer trapped within a biosphere pressed between walls of desolation and rigidity, we'll finally shed off this mistaken iteration of sedentary life and return as hunter-gatherers between the stars. Tribes

of lessening of material interdependence, much larger sustainability and thus larger market pools for anarchy to blossom. With perpetually plentiful resources for every diverse desire.

Contrary to popular assertion, we are not machines grinding out the inevitable, consequences of our environment, ultimately controlled by everything around us. We are neither mere products of our food supply nor inconsequential components of an already written collapse. We're smart people and we can make choices. We can reach out, explore, learn and we can invent. We can choose connection rather than isolation and we can choose to see the externalities of our actions clearly. We do not yet live in a closed system. There is still hope.

Asserting otherwise does more than buy into insulting social mechanism, it develops and reinforces such.

Hard though the struggle may be, the ease of partial victories will always cost us more

Demand nothing less than everything and take whatever you can get. But don't take at the expense of gaining further ground. It's a simple premise. Take pie, but don't trade way any hope of taking the pie factory in the process. Take whatever scant freedom they allow but, for the love of god, don't ever cease fighting for infinity. We have a cuss word specifically set aside for people who do that: Liberals.

Primitivism today exists at the nexus of a modern trend in Anarchism to embrace only what's "winnable" and dismiss the rest. The consequence is a race-to-the-bottom in laziness. How to get the most dramatic of victories with the least expenditure. The crash, of course, is the natural endpoint of such regression. The promise of massive social change with almost zero personal exertion. (And cinematic scenes of explosions and mass struggle are always more aesthetically pleasing than tame FNB gatherings.)

Don't get me wrong, the problem with collapse is not that it's too easy a solution (no one should have to bleed to see change in this world, martyrdom is for nihilists, people who give a shit what others think about them and closet authoritarians). But even if we are to momentarily ignore the fact that it's impossible, the primitivist dream paradise doesn't go far enough. The nature of The Crash sets permanent limitations to future generations. If logging CEOs don't give a crap about humanity 500 years from now, primitivists most definitely don't give a crap about humanity 100,000 years from now. Because somehow violently murdering 6.5 Billion People to supposedly make a better world 500 years from now at the expense of our ancestors longing for rocketships when the next meteor hits is supposedly better than killing off some spotted owls to make a quick buck for one's family. Christ. Even thinking in those terms gives me a headache. I honestly have no clue how the collapse cheerleaders can sleep at night. ...They're certainly not sleeping with transsexuals, epileptics, women with small birth canals, or anyone alive thanks to continued surgery, medication or mechanical assistance.

So if not collapse, and not some sort of draconian social imposition of arbitrary technological limitation, what are we left with?

Well, right away let's make clear that a stasis with our current technology via some unmitigated classical left-wing anarchism would be unsustainable. Never mind that work is hierarchy in action, the very factory infrastructure that many syndicalist and communist or schemes revolve around is utterly illogical. Though primitivist societies may be more oppressive, such doesn't change the basic physics of our biosphere. Technological change is needed.

It's a pretty common flippant assertion on the part of primitivists that the only endpoint for technological advance is a nightmare of fractal chaos and mechanical death. I think this is some pretty fucking ridiculous immature masturbatory nihilism. Certainly our technologies could go all kinds of nasty places.

But I don't think the "upbound technological curve" that futurists speak of these days is heading in any of these directions. And I certainly don't think a world of infinite technological possibility would make fascism an inevitability.

If we are to presume continued technological advance in the general direction of greater dynamic integration, we must consider the consequences of more fluid information technologies, mechanical refinement and biochemical mastery. (We can more or less ignore transportation tech, as it doesn't matter where or in what context we locate a society, these same basic realities will remain.)

As far as information technologies go, it's obvious that advances will progressively bring about the dissolution of public privacy. Everything you do in the presence of others will eventually be able to be remembered in perfect clarity and such memories instantly transferred to others. Inert matter will evolve a deeper capacity for recording. Our footsteps will be apparent to anyone who cares to look.

To the degree that the government or any power structure manages to secure control over this process they will gain absolute power to define truth. And, of course, absolute knowledge of their constituents. Which will threaten to permanently quash any semblance of resistance. Though some distorted liberal populist democracy might survive in such a state for as much as a century, the fascist tendency will evolve the institution rapidly. And if the state successfully eradicates the grassroots development of rival technologies, permanent perpetual fascism will be assured. Humanity will be progressively regulated into machinery and the sum structure will die a heat death, our unthinking bodies locked in step or something. It doesn't really matter. In the onset of global fascism, whatever its form there is a point of singularity past which we can only die. Don't believe that insipid shit about "so long as there is one beating heart." Let me tell you, they'll have a big fucking board displaying every heart that dares to beat. And then the robo-wolves will get 'em.

However, to the degree that our accelerating information tech is decentralized and access to it is equalized, our natural antibodies to abuse, oppression and control will engage with extreme efficiency. The externalities of our actions will become instantly apparent and there the "tragedy of the commons" will cease. It's worth noting that, in the absence of centralized power, individual and consensually arranged mutual privacy will continue. So long as anonymity is publicly desired in any venue, basic market forces will supply it. But it won't help you get away with murder. The main result will be that, since access to any information desired will be distributed and truth commonly valued, it will be practically impossible to rule or coerce others.

Authority is derived from information scarcities and a post-scarcity society would annihilate the very concept of state secrets. Freedom of association and basic tools of defense would make prisons and, in fact, all retributive systems of "justice" starkly purposeless. Through uncountable processes the desire for freedom and social connection would make any anarchy so effective as to make even the very idea of sitcoms seem insanely dystopian.

...Which brings us to the second field of technological advance, self-knowledge. As medical knowledge moves out of the bumbling script-kiddie realm and into actual understanding, we'll gain such strength and security as to instantly abolish almost every major cultural -archy. Sex, "race", gender, prehensile-tail or no prehensile-tail... all that stuff will dissolve. The most immediate physical limitations that facilitate power psychoses will give way. When we master biochemistry to the degree that we actually know what we're fucking with an incredibly potent window will open up to us.

Self-knowledge and agency in the workings of one's own body is a big deal, and unlike the destruction of public privacy it's hard to imagine any downsides to achieving having such. I mentioned how there's not even the barest of pretenses that primitivists are on the same side as transfolk. But birth control is an even bigger issue. Would you really trust your body with some herbal concoction? Oh, wait, nine times out of ten the primitivists hawking "indigenous" forms of birth control are talking about someone else's body.

Of course it's true that as things stand, with greater medical refinement, the lethargic small-mindedness of our current market would acquire greater potency. And, indeed, so long as a corporatist economy has a hierarchical stranglehold on technological development (which pretty much boils down to intellectual property), chances are we'll be fucked long before any honest, hard-working gene-hacker starts growing his own glow-in-the-dark butterfly wings. We all know it's probably only a matter of time before some GM foods haxored by a greedy and lazy corporate PhD spins out of control and kills us all. If corporate capitalism persists.

Which brings us to nanotech and decentralized fabrication in general.

On the upside we've got both the absolute end of scarcity and the fulfillment of the old dream wherein each and every "worker" controls the means of production individually. The production not just of model #12, but of practically anything they desire. ...On the downside it means that one day each and every one of these "workers" will more or less have their finger on the button to Armageddon. Today one can make incredibly disruptive weapons if not outright WMDs with only a few thousand dollars. Imagine what'll be possible tomorrow.

So, yes, there's a tension there. A need to make the world a better place today, so that when such higher tech eventually becomes omnipresent there aren't any disgruntled folks to be cataclysmically angry about something.

We've got four possible futures: Complete Annihilation. Permanent Fascism. Permanent Post-Scarcity Anarchy. or Repeat Struggles Endlessly.

By embracing the drive towards more dynamic technology we reject perpetual struggle and try to chance it between the first three (not that Annihilation and Fascism are different in anything but cosmetics). If we go with primitivism and somehow survive the cracked bio-warfare labs we get Endless Struggle for a lengthy period followed inevitably by Complete Annihilation. The human drive for greater contact and deeper channels of experience will press up against the permanent technological limitations of a post-collapse Earth and conduct such physical limitation into the social realm. Oppression will be rampant.

But, yes, it will not even near the infinite amount of oppression we risk if we continue to pursue technological advances. As technology grows so do the stakes. Things run faster. Collapse, Armageddon, the Police State... one deviation and any of them could take the entire world.

But they're not the only ones.

The internet has seen far greater propagation of anarchist values than anything else in history. With every technological advance the struggle has been getting more intense. While the sane have built telescopes and phones, the abusive spouses and tribal elders of prehistory have progressively gained tanks and fighter jets. Hitler's Germany couldn't even begin to rival the insidious powers rife across the world today. But neither does the Spanish Revolution hold a fucking candle to the anti-authoritarian insurrection bubbling in every city in the world today. The strength brought to bear by today's oppressive power structures is utterly without comparison. And yet they aren't winning. We can march on Washington in an outright black bloc two thousand strong and despite a military that amasses in every every continent on Earth, despite enough nuclear missiles to vaporize the topsoil, despite an economic system beaten into every child at birth, despite orbital platforms that can trace the flight of dragonflies, despite mobile EMPs that can cause car accidents without trace, despite an unprecedented coordination between every major nationstate on Earth so that they can archive 95% of their citizens electronic communications... they dare not even mow us down with bullets.

We took Seattle and all they could use was clubs, pepper spray and tear gas. We held Oaxaca for half a fucking year and yet they were so afraid of public opinion they barely killed anyone. We kill cops in Greece, blow up banks, prisons and police stations on an almost monthly basis, and yet they barely dare to respond. We still have a union a million strong in Spain. For a few months we were Argentina. We gather armies and armed with nothing more than sticks evict the police from the streets of South Korea.

We write code in our mothers' basements that destroy their desperate, last minute, multi-billion dollar attempts to control our technologies. We flagrantly run community centers, libraries, schools, factories, radio stations, and gardens in full view of the public in dozens upon dozens of countries around the world. We fucking outright, absolutely, 100%, unabashedly, militantly, and vocally, oppose every last power structure in the world. And they fight for dear life just to tap our phones. Because we are but the tip of billions. The radical blade of the entire world's conscience.

And despite the hundreds of fucked up psychotics who've had their hand on the keys to global annihilation we are all still here.

But let's be fucking clear here. We've never had anything but the slimmest margin of a chance. If you're in the movement even the slightest bit because you think it's inevitably or even likely destined for power, you're in the wrong movement. Get the fuck out now.

The point isn't that we're fighting a losing battle with next to no chance, oh poor martyrs us. The point is that we fucking have a chance. The sheer ecstatic, miraculous implausibility of that. That, against all odds, it is feasibly possible for good to actually win. All that's required is to, at the end of the day, have inspired each and every single one of 6.5 billion people to become full-fledged anarchists. To personally choose to throw away the power psychosis.

I've seen worse odds.

Knowing that we've got a shot. Knowing that we do have that choice. Knowing that we do have agency in the world. That's what makes me jump out of bed in the wee hours of the morning to punch the sky, climb dew-laden trees, dance through the empty city streets and cry out thanks to the stars.

Though there may be near infinite night around, even the smallest drop of light makes the darkness irrelevant.

The new is possible

The past has no monopoly on the possibilities of the future.

The perpetual self-justification of primitivism is that although six and a half billion people dying might be a bad thing, it's inevitable. The concept of the inevitable runs core throughout primitivism which plays perfectly into the nihilistic lethargy, but it's also somewhat of an inherent result given their theoretical focus on anthropology.

From what was originally a positive reevaluation that sought to constructively take insights from indigenous and historical societies, primitivism has become a self-reinforcing faith that our only options lie in the past.

The trap is a simple one, and particularly effective as our movement begins to institutionalize burnout. Certain primitive and indigenous societies offer undeniable proof of anarchistic principles in action and tangibility is such a mighty opiate as to leave further exploration and critique undesired. I know that these essays have been received by some as though I were kicking their puppy. Primitivism and green anarchy in general has gotten wrapped in a certain immediate hope that red anarchism just can't match. (Except where red insurrectionists start sympathizing with certain showy authoritarian right-wing anti-imperialist terrorist groups, but we won't talk about that. Because it's too embarrassing.) Burning condos offers immediate gratification, whereas union organizing is a pain. Classical talk of an eventual international rising five hundred or thousand years from now is simply not as rewarding as a soon-to-come Crash that reverts things back to the natural order of anarchy.

And, boy oh boy, does anthropology offer good case studies in the realistic effectiveness of anarchistic societies. But for those desperately seeking a glimmer of hope, the canonization of such societies has become far too instinctive and negative qualities pass without serious critique. Passing mention is made about "imperfections," without really seeking to address them. Part of this stems from an inherited legacy

of “cultural anti-imperialism” that really functions as postmodernism and complete ethical abdication in disguise. (Although, to his credit, John Zerzan long ago recognized that postmodernism was in many ways antithetical to the primitivist project as well as to anarchism in general.) But the biggest part of this stems from the sheer relief of having actual anthropological evidence and being part of a far bigger story.

Faced with the daily pressure of seeking, discovering and defending ways forward, it's far easier to declare the universe on your side. Yes, formalized power structures piggybacked alongside our technological innovations, the archaeological record clearly shows that (although it also shows scattered examples of anti-authoritarian cities and agrarian societies throughout civilization). But non-formalized interpersonal power structures can be just as bad, if not more immediate and controlling. Our relations with other people don't have to be systematically oppressive to still be oppressive. And the controlling limitations of tribal life are very conducive to subtle but unbelievably strong power psychoses. Physical limitations both inspire and facilitate social oppression.

Of course many primitive societies demonstrate anarchistic principles. Anarchy works! Get over it. It takes every last institution on Earth struggling 24/7 to even begin to blind us to such a basic social reality. Insofar as society even begins to function, it embodies a degree of anarchism. And, yeah, certainly some components of our society, both prehistorical and indigenous, were pretty decent. But why should that be good enough?

Those who remember the past are doomed to repeat it. Those who get wrapped up in the structures of the past will only operate within the structures of the past. If you only accept as possible what has already happened then, duh, any real technological progress past this point is impossible. But it's not. Looking back for ideas is wonderful, but let's not presume that the past has all, or even the best, answers.

Afterword

I scrawled these essays on napkins summer 2006 blitzed out of my mind at 4am in the back of a diner. It shows. The prose is tangled as all hell and shot up with the spray of five-dollar words my brain spits up when it can't find the right one. In my defense my young head was filled to the brim and riven with tension from my break with primitivism—I desperately needed to get it all down on paper by any means necessary.

Surprising they actually had an effect. Perhaps folks were just starved for any critique of primitivism thought more original than “that's impractical” and I just filled a niche at the right time, but traffic to my little site took off and soon I was finding lines requoted in random places, in foreign radical zines and twitter posts from strangers. Of course the direct footprint of these essays wasn't as big as I might have wished, but attitudes in radical communities have been shifting. Where certain primitivist assertions were once received uncritically, I find folks are now at least aware of the existence of a much broader radical discourse capable of contesting them. I'm happy to have helped disseminate some of those ideas.

These days I and increasingly more than a few others in the scene with roots in anarcho-primitivism have taken to identifying ourselves as anarcho-transhumanists. The change in terminology may appear drastic, but for most of us it wasn't so much a reversal as a deepening. We still retain and cherish much of the perspective primitivism gave us, our horizons have just expanded. It feels good.

William Gillis

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In Praise of Idleness

Bertrand Russell

1932

Like most of my generation, I was brought up on the saying: 'Satan finds some mischief for idle hands to do.' Being a highly virtuous child, I believed all that I was told, and acquired a conscience which has kept me working hard down to the present moment. But although my conscience has controlled my actions, my opinions have undergone a revolution. I think that there is far too much work done in the world, that immense harm is caused by the belief that work is virtuous, and that what needs to be preached in modern industrial countries is quite different from what always has been preached. Everyone knows the story of the traveler in Naples who saw twelve beggars lying in the sun (it was before the days of Mussolini), and offered a lira to the laziest of them. Eleven of them jumped up to claim it, so he gave it to the twelfth. This traveler was on the right lines. But in countries which do not enjoy Mediterranean sunshine idleness is more difficult, and a great public propaganda will be required to inaugurate it. I hope that, after reading the following pages, the leaders of the YMCA will start a campaign to induce good young men to do nothing. If so, I shall not have lived in vain.

Before advancing my own arguments for laziness, I must dispose of one which I cannot accept. Whenever a person who already has enough to live on proposes to engage in some everyday kind of job, such as school-teaching or typing, he or she is told that such conduct takes the bread out of other people's mouths, and is therefore wicked. If this argument were valid, it would only be necessary for us all to be idle in order that we should all have our mouths full of bread. What people who say such things forget is that what a man earns he usually spends, and in spending he gives employment. As long as a man spends his income, he puts just as much bread into people's mouths in spending as he takes out of other people's mouths in earning. The real villain, from this point of view, is the man who saves. If he merely puts his savings in a stocking, like the proverbial French peasant, it is obvious that they do not give employment. If he invests his savings, the matter is less obvious, and different cases arise.

One of the commonest things to do with savings is to lend them to some Government. In view of the fact that the bulk of the public expenditure of most civilized Governments consists in payment for past wars or preparation for future wars, the man who lends his money to a Government is in the same position as the bad men in Shakespeare who hire murderers. The net result of the man's economical habits is to increase the armed forces of the State to which he lends his savings. Obviously it would be better if he spent the money, even if he spent it in drink or gambling.

But, I shall be told, the case is quite different when savings are invested in industrial enterprises. When such enterprises succeed, and produce something useful, this may be conceded. In these days, however, no one will deny that most enterprises fail. That means that a large amount of human labor, which might have been devoted to producing something that could be enjoyed, was expended on producing machines which, when produced, lay idle and did no good to anyone. The man who invests his savings

in a concern that goes bankrupt is therefore injuring others as well as himself. If he spent his money, say, in giving parties for his friends, they (we may hope) would get pleasure, and so would all those upon whom he spent money, such as the butcher, the baker, and the bootlegger. But if he spends it (let us say) upon laying down rails for surface cars in some place where surface cars turn out not to be wanted, he has diverted a mass of labor into channels where it gives pleasure to no one. Nevertheless, when he becomes poor through failure of his investment he will be regarded as a victim of undeserved misfortune, whereas the gay spendthrift, who has spent his money philanthropically, will be despised as a fool and a frivolous person.

All this is only preliminary. I want to say, in all seriousness, that a great deal of harm is being done in the modern world by belief in the virtuousness of work, and that the road to happiness and prosperity lies in an organized diminution of work.

First of all: what is work? Work is of two kinds: first, altering the position of matter at or near the earth's surface relatively to other such matter; second, telling other people to do so. The first kind is unpleasant and ill paid; the second is pleasant and highly paid. The second kind is capable of indefinite extension: there are not only those who give orders, but those who give advice as to what orders should be given. Usually two opposite kinds of advice are given simultaneously by two organized bodies of men; this is called politics. The skill required for this kind of work is not knowledge of the subjects as to which advice is given, but knowledge of the art of persuasive speaking and writing, i.e. of advertising.

Throughout Europe, though not in America, there is a third class of men, more respected than either of the classes of workers. There are men who, through ownership of land, are able to make others pay for the privilege of being allowed to exist and to work. These landowners are idle, and I might therefore be expected to praise them. Unfortunately, their idleness is only rendered possible by the industry of others; indeed their desire for comfortable idleness is historically the source of the whole gospel of work. The last thing they have ever wished is that others should follow their example.

From the beginning of civilization until the Industrial Revolution, a man could, as a rule, produce by hard work little more than was required for the subsistence of himself and his family, although his wife worked at least as hard as he did, and his children added their labor as soon as they were old enough to do so. The small surplus above bare necessities was not left to those who produced it, but was appropriated by warriors and priests. In times of famine there was no surplus; the warriors and priests, however, still secured as much as at other times, with the result that many of the workers died of hunger. This system persisted in Russia until 1917⁴³, and still persists in the East; in England, in spite of the Industrial Revolution, it remained in full force throughout the Napoleonic wars, and until a hundred years ago, when the new class of manufacturers acquired power. In America, the system came to an end with the Revolution, except in the South, where it persisted until the Civil War. A system which lasted so long and ended so recently has naturally left a profound impress upon men's thoughts and opinions. Much that we take for granted about the desirability of work is derived from this system, and, being pre-industrial, is not adapted to the modern world. Modern technique has made it possible for leisure, within limits, to be not the prerogative of small privileged classes, but a right evenly distributed throughout the community. The morality of work is the morality of slaves, and the modern world has no need of slavery.

It is obvious that, in primitive communities, peasants, left to themselves, would not have parted with the slender surplus upon which the warriors and priests subsisted, but would have either produced less or consumed more. At first, sheer force compelled them to produce and part with the surplus. Gradually, however, it was found possible to induce many of them to accept an ethic according to which it was their duty to work hard, although part of their work went to support others in idleness. By this means the amount of compulsion required was lessened, and the expenses of government were diminished. To this

⁴³Since then, members of the Communist Party have succeeded to this privilege of the warriors and priests.

day, 99 per cent of British wage-earners would be genuinely shocked if it were proposed that the King should not have a larger income than a working man. The conception of duty, speaking historically, has been a means used by the holders of power to induce others to live for the interests of their masters rather than for their own. Of course the holders of power conceal this fact from themselves by managing to believe that their interests are identical with the larger interests of humanity. Sometimes this is true; Athenian slave-owners, for instance, employed part of their leisure in making a permanent contribution to civilization which would have been impossible under a just economic system. Leisure is essential to civilization, and in former times leisure for the few was only rendered possible by the labors of the many. But their labors were valuable, not because work is good, but because leisure is good. And with modern technique it would be possible to distribute leisure justly without injury to civilization.

Modern technique has made it possible to diminish enormously the amount of labor required to secure the necessaries of life for everyone. This was made obvious during the war. At that time all the men in the armed forces, and all the men and women engaged in the production of munitions, all the men and women engaged in spying, war propaganda, or Government offices connected with the war, were withdrawn from productive occupations. In spite of this, the general level of well-being among unskilled wage-earners on the side of the Allies was higher than before or since. The significance of this fact was concealed by finance: borrowing made it appear as if the future was nourishing the present. But that, of course, would have been impossible; a man cannot eat a loaf of bread that does not yet exist. The war showed conclusively that, by the scientific organization of production, it is possible to keep modern populations in fair comfort on a small part of the working capacity of the modern world. If, at the end of the war, the scientific organization, which had been created in order to liberate men for fighting and munition work, had been preserved, and the hours of the week had been cut down to four, all would have been well. Instead of that the old chaos was restored, those whose work was demanded were made to work long hours, and the rest were left to starve as unemployed. Why? Because work is a duty, and a man should not receive wages in proportion to what he has produced, but in proportion to his virtue as exemplified by his industry.

This is the morality of the Slave State, applied in circumstances totally unlike those in which it arose. No wonder the result has been disastrous. Let us take an illustration. Suppose that, at a given moment, a certain number of people are engaged in the manufacture of pins. They make as many pins as the world needs, working (say) eight hours a day. Someone makes an invention by which the same number of men can make twice as many pins: pins are already so cheap that hardly any more will be bought at a lower price. In a sensible world, everybody concerned in the manufacturing of pins would take to working four hours instead of eight, and everything else would go on as before. But in the actual world this would be thought demoralizing. The men still work eight hours, there are too many pins, some employers go bankrupt, and half the men previously concerned in making pins are thrown out of work. There is, in the end, just as much leisure as on the other plan, but half the men are totally idle while half are still overworked. In this way, it is insured that the unavoidable leisure shall cause misery all round instead of being a universal source of happiness. Can anything more insane be imagined?

The idea that the poor should have leisure has always been shocking to the rich. In England, in the early nineteenth century, fifteen hours was the ordinary day's work for a man; children sometimes did as much, and very commonly did twelve hours a day. When meddling busybodies suggested that perhaps these hours were rather long, they were told that work kept adults from drink and children from mischief. When I was a child, shortly after urban working men had acquired the vote, certain public holidays were established by law, to the great indignation of the upper classes. I remember hearing an old Duchess say: 'What do the poor want with holidays? They ought to work.' People nowadays are less frank, but the sentiment persists, and is the source of much of our economic confusion.

Let us, for a moment, consider the ethics of work frankly, without superstition. Every human being, of necessity, consumes, in the course of his life, a certain amount of the produce of human labor. Assuming,

as we may, that labor is on the whole disagreeable, it is unjust that a man should consume more than he produces. Of course he may provide services rather than commodities, like a medical man, for example; but he should provide something in return for his board and lodging. to this extent, the duty of work must be admitted, but to this extent only.

I shall not dwell upon the fact that, in all modern societies outside the USSR, many people escape even this minimum amount of work, namely all those who inherit money and all those who marry money. I do not think the fact that these people are allowed to be idle is nearly so harmful as the fact that wage-earners are expected to overwork or starve.

If the ordinary wage-earner worked four hours a day, there would be enough for everybody and no unemployment — assuming a certain very moderate amount of sensible organization. This idea shocks the well-to-do, because they are convinced that the poor would not know how to use so much leisure. In America men often work long hours even when they are well off; such men, naturally, are indignant at the idea of leisure for wage-earners, except as the grim punishment of unemployment; in fact, they dislike leisure even for their sons. Oddly enough, while they wish their sons to work so hard as to have no time to be civilized, they do not mind their wives and daughters having no work at all. the snobbish admiration of uselessness, which, in an aristocratic society, extends to both sexes, is, under a plutocracy, confined to women; this, however, does not make it any more in agreement with common sense.

The wise use of leisure, it must be conceded, is a product of civilization and education. A man who has worked long hours all his life will become bored if he becomes suddenly idle. But without a considerable amount of leisure a man is cut off from many of the best things. There is no longer any reason why the bulk of the population should suffer this deprivation; only a foolish asceticism, usually vicarious, makes us continue to insist on work in excessive quantities now that the need no longer exists.

In the new creed which controls the government of Russia, while there is much that is very different from the traditional teaching of the West, there are some things that are quite unchanged. The attitude of the governing classes, and especially of those who conduct educational propaganda, on the subject of the dignity of labor, is almost exactly that which the governing classes of the world have always preached to what were called the 'honest poor'. Industry, sobriety, willingness to work long hours for distant advantages, even submissiveness to authority, all these reappear; moreover authority still represents the will of the Ruler of the Universe, Who, however, is now called by a new name, Dialectical Materialism.

The victory of the proletariat in Russia has some points in common with the victory of the feminists in some other countries. For ages, men had conceded the superior saintliness of women, and had consoled women for their inferiority by maintaining that saintliness is more desirable than power. At last the feminists decided that they would have both, since the pioneers among them believed all that the men had told them about the desirability of virtue, but not what they had told them about the worthlessness of political power. A similar thing has happened in Russia as regards manual work. For ages, the rich and their sycophants have written in praise of 'honest toil', have praised the simple life, have professed a religion which teaches that the poor are much more likely to go to heaven than the rich, and in general have tried to make manual workers believe that there is some special nobility about altering the position of matter in space, just as men tried to make women believe that they derived some special nobility from their sexual enslavement. In Russia, all this teaching about the excellence of manual work has been taken seriously, with the result that the manual worker is more honored than anyone else. What are, in essence, revivalist appeals are made, but not for the old purposes: they are made to secure shock workers for special tasks. Manual work is the ideal which is held before the young, and is the basis of all ethical teaching.

For the present, possibly, this is all to the good. A large country, full of natural resources, awaits development, and has has to be developed with very little use of credit. In these circumstances, hard

work is necessary, and is likely to bring a great reward. But what will happen when the point has been reached where everybody could be comfortable without working long hours?

In the West, we have various ways of dealing with this problem. We have no attempt at economic justice, so that a large proportion of the total produce goes to a small minority of the population, many of whom do no work at all. Owing to the absence of any central control over production, we produce hosts of things that are not wanted. We keep a large percentage of the working population idle, because we can dispense with their labor by making the others overwork. When all these methods prove inadequate, we have a war: we cause a number of people to manufacture high explosives, and a number of others to explode them, as if we were children who had just discovered fireworks. By a combination of all these devices we manage, though with difficulty, to keep alive the notion that a great deal of severe manual work must be the lot of the average man.

In Russia, owing to more economic justice and central control over production, the problem will have to be differently solved. The rational solution would be, as soon as the necessities and elementary comforts can be provided for all, to reduce the hours of labor gradually, allowing a popular vote to decide, at each stage, whether more leisure or more goods were to be preferred. But, having taught the supreme virtue of hard work, it is difficult to see how the authorities can aim at a paradise in which there will be much leisure and little work. It seems more likely that they will find continually fresh schemes, by which present leisure is to be sacrificed to future productivity. I read recently of an ingenious plan put forward by Russian engineers, for making the White Sea and the northern coasts of Siberia warm, by putting a dam across the Kara Sea. An admirable project, but liable to postpone proletarian comfort for a generation, while the nobility of toil is being displayed amid the ice-fields and snowstorms of the Arctic Ocean. This sort of thing, if it happens, will be the result of regarding the virtue of hard work as an end in itself, rather than as a means to a state of affairs in which it is no longer needed.

The fact is that moving matter about, while a certain amount of it is necessary to our existence, is emphatically not one of the ends of human life. If it were, we should have to consider every navy superior to Shakespeare. We have been misled in this matter by two causes. One is the necessity of keeping the poor contented, which has led the rich, for thousands of years, to preach the dignity of labor, while taking care themselves to remain undignified in this respect. The other is the new pleasure in mechanism, which makes us delight in the astonishingly clever changes that we can produce on the earth's surface. Neither of these motives makes any great appeal to the actual worker. If you ask him what he thinks the best part of his life, he is not likely to say: 'I enjoy manual work because it makes me feel that I am fulfilling man's noblest task, and because I like to think how much man can transform his planet. It is true that my body demands periods of rest, which I have to fill in as best I may, but I am never so happy as when the morning comes and I can return to the toil from which my contentment springs.' I have never heard working men say this sort of thing. They consider work, as it should be considered, a necessary means to a livelihood, and it is from their leisure that they derive whatever happiness they may enjoy.

It will be said that, while a little leisure is pleasant, men would not know how to fill their days if they had only four hours of work out of the twenty-four. In so far as this is true in the modern world, it is a condemnation of our civilization; it would not have been true at any earlier period. There was formerly a capacity for light-heartedness and play which has been to some extent inhibited by the cult of efficiency. The modern man thinks that everything ought to be done for the sake of something else, and never for its own sake. Serious-minded persons, for example, are continually condemning the habit of going to the cinema, and telling us that it leads the young into crime. But all the work that goes to producing a cinema is respectable, because it is work, and because it brings a money profit. The notion that the desirable activities are those that bring a profit has made everything topsy-turvy. The butcher who provides you with meat and the baker who provides you with bread are praiseworthy, because they are making money; but when you enjoy the food they have provided, you are merely frivolous,

unless you eat only to get strength for your work. Broadly speaking, it is held that getting money is good and spending money is bad. Seeing that they are two sides of one transaction, this is absurd; one might as well maintain that keys are good, but keyholes are bad. Whatever merit there may be in the production of goods must be entirely derivative from the advantage to be obtained by consuming them. The individual, in our society, works for profit; but the social purpose of his work lies in the consumption of what he produces. It is this divorce between the individual and the social purpose of production that makes it so difficult for men to think clearly in a world in which profit-making is the incentive to industry. We think too much of production, and too little of consumption. One result is that we attach too little importance to enjoyment and simple happiness, and that we do not judge production by the pleasure that it gives to the consumer.

When I suggest that working hours should be reduced to four, I am not meaning to imply that all the remaining time should necessarily be spent in pure frivolity. I mean that four hours' work a day should entitle a man to the necessities and elementary comforts of life, and that the rest of his time should be his to use as he might see fit. It is an essential part of any such social system that education should be carried further than it usually is at present, and should aim, in part, at providing tastes which would enable a man to use leisure intelligently. I am not thinking mainly of the sort of things that would be considered 'highbrow'. Peasant dances have died out except in remote rural areas, but the impulses which caused them to be cultivated must still exist in human nature. The pleasures of urban populations have become mainly passive: seeing cinemas, watching football matches, listening to the radio, and so on. This results from the fact that their active energies are fully taken up with work; if they had more leisure, they would again enjoy pleasures in which they took an active part.

In the past, there was a small leisure class and a larger working class. The leisure class enjoyed advantages for which there was no basis in social justice; this necessarily made it oppressive, limited its sympathies, and caused it to invent theories by which to justify its privileges. These facts greatly diminished its excellence, but in spite of this drawback it contributed nearly the whole of what we call civilization. It cultivated the arts and discovered the sciences; it wrote the books, invented the philosophies, and refined social relations. Even the liberation of the oppressed has usually been inaugurated from above. Without the leisure class, mankind would never have emerged from barbarism.

The method of a leisure class without duties was, however, extraordinarily wasteful. None of the members of the class had to be taught to be industrious, and the class as a whole was not exceptionally intelligent. The class might produce one Darwin, but against him had to be set tens of thousands of country gentlemen who never thought of anything more intelligent than fox-hunting and punishing poachers. At present, the universities are supposed to provide, in a more systematic way, what the leisure class provided accidentally and as a by-product. This is a great improvement, but it has certain drawbacks. University life is so different from life in the world at large that men who live in academic milieu tend to be unaware of the preoccupations and problems of ordinary men and women; moreover their ways of expressing themselves are usually such as to rob their opinions of the influence that they ought to have upon the general public. Another disadvantage is that in universities studies are organized, and the man who thinks of some original line of research is likely to be discouraged. Academic institutions, therefore, useful as they are, are not adequate guardians of the interests of civilization in a world where everyone outside their walls is too busy for unutilitarian pursuits.

In a world where no one is compelled to work more than four hours a day, every person possessed of scientific curiosity will be able to indulge it, and every painter will be able to paint without starving, however excellent his pictures may be. Young writers will not be obliged to draw attention to themselves by sensational pot-boilers, with a view to acquiring the economic independence needed for monumental works, for which, when the time at last comes, they will have lost the taste and capacity. Men who, in their professional work, have become interested in some phase of economics or government, will be able to develop their ideas without the academic detachment that makes the work of university economists

often seem lacking in reality. Medical men will have the time to learn about the progress of medicine, teachers will not be exasperatedly struggling to teach by routine methods things which they learnt in their youth, which may, in the interval, have been proved to be untrue.

Above all, there will be happiness and joy of life, instead of frayed nerves, weariness, and dyspepsia. The work exacted will be enough to make leisure delightful, but not enough to produce exhaustion. Since men will not be tired in their spare time, they will not demand only such amusements as are passive and vapid. At least one per cent will probably devote the time not spent in professional work to pursuits of some public importance, and, since they will not depend upon these pursuits for their livelihood, their originality will be unhampered, and there will be no need to conform to the standards set by elderly pundits. But it is not only in these exceptional cases that the advantages of leisure will appear. Ordinary men and women, having the opportunity of a happy life, will become more kindly and less persecuting and less inclined to view others with suspicion. The taste for war will die out, partly for this reason, and partly because it will involve long and severe work for all. Good nature is, of all moral qualities, the one that the world needs most, and good nature is the result of ease and security, not of a life of arduous struggle. Modern methods of production have given us the possibility of ease and security for all; we have chosen, instead, to have overwork for some and starvation for others. Hitherto we have continued to be as energetic as we were before there were machines; in this we have been foolish, but there is no reason to go on being foolish forever.

The Psychopathology of Work

Penelope Rosemont

2004

“Work, now? Never, never. I’m on strike.”
— Arthur Rimbaud

Depersonalization and alienation from our deepest desires is implanted during childhood via school, church, movies, and TV, and soon reaches the point where an individual’s desire is not only a net of contradictions, but also a commodity like all the others. “True life” always seems to be just a bit beyond what a weekly paycheck and credit card can afford, and is thus indefinitely postponed. And each postponement contributes to the reproduction of a social system that practically everyone who is not a multimillionaire or a masochist has come to loathe.

That is the problem facing us all: How to break the pattern of work — of week-to-week slavery, that habit of habits, that addiction of addictions; how to detach ourselves from the grip of Self-Defeating Illusions For Sale, Inc., a.k.a, the corporate consumer State. Especially ingrained is that pattern of working for someone else: making someone else’s “goods”, producing the wealth that someone else enjoys, thinking someone else’s thoughts (sometimes actually believing them one’s own), and even dreaming someone else’s dreams — in short, living someone else’s life, for one’s own life, and one’s own dream of life, have long since been lost in the shuffle.

The systematic suppression of a person’s real desires — and that is largely what work consists of — is exacerbated by capitalism’s incessant manipulation of artificial desires, “as advertised.” This gives daily life the character of mass neurosis, with increasingly frequent psychotic episodes. To relieve the all-embracing boredom of daily life, society offers an endless array of distractions and stupefactions, most of them “available at a store near you”. The trouble is, these distractions and stupefactions, legal or illegal, soon become part of the boredom, for they satisfy no authentic desire.

When the news reports horrible crimes committed by children or teenagers trying to be satanists, or superheroes, or terrorists, or just “bad guys”, we can be sure that these kids lived lives of intolerable dullness, that they were so isolated from their own desires and from the larger society that they didn’t even know how or where to look for something different, or how to rebel in such a way that it might actually make a difference. Instead, they picked up some trashy notions from bible school, Hollywood and TV which promised a few minutes of meaningless “excitement” followed by lots of publicity — also meaningless. Each time something like this happens we hear cries to “monitor” films more closely, and to ban “violence” on TV. Rarely, however, does anyone criticize the Bible or the Christian churches, despite the fact that Christianity — by far the bloodiest of the “world’s great religions” — is far more to be blamed. Similarly, one rarely hears criticism of the armed forces — a gang of professional killers whose influence on children cannot be anything other than baleful.

And even less often does one encounter criticism of another intrinsically violent institution: the nuclear family. Indeed, at this late date in human history, this relic of patriarchy is still held up as some sort of ideal. Replacing the extended family as we know it today is an invention of the nineteenth century. Constructed by white bourgeois Europeans to meet the needs of expanding industrialization, it reflects capitalism's model of the "chain of command". It continues the sanction of male supremacy as a time-honored tradition dating back to a mandate of God, no less. In the nuclear family, he works at a job, and she works in the home (and increasingly also at a job). As for the children, they are the family's private property, and remain so for years after they reach biological maturity.

Children too learn to work, or at least how to suffer boredom. From the earliest age they are taught to obey orders. School and church teach them the necessity of going to and staying at a particular place for a prolonged period, even when they would rather be anywhere else. All the classic parental admonitions — "Sit still!", "Do what I tell you!", "Don't talk back!", "Stop behaving like a bunch of wild Indians!" — are part of the education of the well-behaved, uncomplaining wage-slave...

The world today is confronted by greater, more earth-shaking, more life-threatening problems than ever before: wars all over, massive pollution, global warming, the return of slavery, white supremacy, oppression of women, ecological disaster, neocolonialism, state terrorism, the prison industry, genocide, cancer, AIDS, the traffic death-toll, xenophobia, pesticides, genetic engineering — the list goes on and on. Ceaselessly bombarded by news reports and sound bites of one catastrophe after another, most people have no idea what to do, and lapse into paralysis. On the ideological front, this widespread passivity, itself a major social problem, is maintained by Andre Breton called *miserabilism*, the cynical rationalization of misery, suffering and corruption — the dominant ideology of Power in our time.

Every hour, moreover, countless billions are spent on propaganda, advertising and other mystifications to sustain the delusion that the crisis-strewn society we live in today is the best and only one possible.

What is most important to grasp is that work is at the center of all these problems. It is work that keeps the whole miserabilist system going. Without work, the death-dealing juggernaut that proclaims itself the "free market" would grind to a halt. "Free market" means freedom for Capital, and unfreedom for those who work. Until the problem of work is solved — that is, until work is abolished — all other problems will not only remain, but will keep getting worse...In a world too busy to live, work itself has become toxic, a form of "digging your own grave".

Renewed scarcities and engineered economic crises notwithstanding, society today has the capacity to reduce work to a tiny fraction of what it is now, while continuing to meet all human needs. It is obvious that if people really want paradise on Earth, they can have it — practically overnight. Of course, they will have to overcome the immense and multinational "false consciousness" industry, which works very hard to make sure that very few working people know what they really want...

Work kills the spirit, damages the body, insults the mind, keeps everyone confused and demoralized, distracts its victims from all the things that really matter in life...Our struggle calls for labor organizers of a new kind...To bring about the meltdown of miserabilism, we need awakeners of latent desires, fomentors of marvelous humour, stimulators of ardent dreams, provokers of the deepest possible yearning for a life of poetic adventure.

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Quiet Resistance: The Workers' Union Underground

High Priest Wombat, KSC

2006

I've heard many references to "quiet resistance", which mimics past underclass resistance forms and the current methods of working class resistance outside of unions. I don't think I've ever worked a job and not engaged in some form of quiet resistance, which many workers are down for and can often be agitated towards.

According to "Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance" on page 33-34:

"It is reasonably clear that the success of de facto resistance is often directly proportional to the symbolic conformity with which it is masked. Open insubordination in almost any context will provoke a more rapid and ferocious response than an insubordination that may be as pervasive but never ventures to contest the formal definitions of hierarchy or power. For most subordinate classes which, as a matter of sheer history, have had little prospect of improving their status, this form of resistance is the only option. What may be accomplished within this symbolic straitjacket is nonetheless something of a testament to human persistence and inventiveness.."

"..They could intentionally or unconsciously feign illness, ignorance or incompetence, driving their masters to distraction."

"..The slaves themselves appear to have realized that in most circumstances their resistance could succeed only to the extent that it hid behind the mask of public compliance.."

"..the nature of resistance is greatly influenced by the existing forms of labor control and by beliefs about the probability and severity of retaliation. Where the consequences of an open strike are likely to be catastrophic in terms of permanent dismissal or jail, the work force may resort to a slowdown or to shoddy work on the job."

I've been paging through multiple google books on pre-capitalist and current forms of underclass revolt recently, though I am still reading this one. George Woodcock had a good one that exposed to some detail the activities of the Russian anarchists and the differences between them and the People's Will. Rosa Luxemburg has a good article on the same subject, I feel much more informed on the latter activities during the Russian nihilist period.

I would argue that we in fact do have an atomized workers' resistance, the fires just need to be fanned to make it visible. I think there are multiple catalysts that can open this up, the most drastic is an increase in economic disparity and/or national decline. I am arguing we have the conditions today to create a marginal heroic movement through a strategic use of small tactics, aiming towards intensifying quiet resistance and making people conscious of this resistance and breaking this consciousness into connected visibility during periods when it benefits us to display group power, if only for brief moments.

These actions can target workplaces using the "quiet resistance" method, as well as the "street propaganda" method for strategy and tactics, both of which have shown real effect during our age of struggle. Obviously, if your expression of the refusal of work is not to put yourself in the direct path of exploitation, a broader emphasis on street propaganda and attacking as an exterior force might make more sense.

Well, disparity is a descriptive word for inequality, so I think economic disparity would lead to a deepening of inequality. By catalyst, I'm just being general. The material conditions are part of the equation in defining strategy and tactics, but there are lots of other catalysts that can play a role, culture and history are others, as are exemplary activities.

Wolfi Landstreicher talks of "minor ruptures" and "major ruptures". I don't know how to get to a major rupture, but minor ruptures are achievable and satisfying to accomplish. Do I think anything else about this? Well, historically this has been part of activities you could find in any social movement that has turned into an insurrection in all eras of civilization. It is also the everyday activities of exploited people

that aren't spoken about. We aren't dealing with a society of drones that "wake up" and snap into action, but rather with people already struggling daily, but quietly.

They are struggling with the idea that they don't really want to work, they perceive they are coerced into an exploitive relationship. While paths of work refusal can mean a complete rejection of work, for most, this reality doesn't exist to them, except for brief periods of joblessness. A complete refusal of work and creating activities that can prolong activities outside of work are also possibilities for brief periods, but I wouldn't fetish permanent refusal, which has its own exploitive features and could lose momentum with a demand for permanent refusal among the general class.

When workers are forced into a precarious position, they realize they are excluded from power and often it is because of objective conditions, but just as often, they are subjected to these conditions out of business attempts at maximizing profit. Fights for reforms ultimately will have a breaking point, which might be the point of pro-union labor struggle (but ultimately contrary to the continuance of work and the power of union bureaucracy), but because we live in an abundant society, people are satisfied with less than the breaking point (in the United States) and selfishness won't drive past contentment (home of the last man). Selfishness and the desire for a less empty existence are always factors in individual motivation, be it in a primitive society or in a civilized one or anything in between. Understanding and appealing to class selfishness can create common intermediate aims and objectives. Creative myths, such as the "minor rupture" which have been historically achievable in our era can be spoken of with certainty of their existence and provoke others to dream of how to achieve what others are achieving now. Exposing the coercive and exploitive features of daily life, even at the workplace, has real results if resistance is desired.

The problems with today's revolutionary minority is we don't have a concentrated effort in any arena of struggle and thus can't experiment these ideas together and create a dialog that is directly informed on the nuances of what is occurring today. We really can't speak of an existence of movement or momentum among a general class we have little direct understanding of. Or perhaps some understand it, but don't realize its historic significance. We report it and all others outside of this direct connection receive under-inspiring stories abstract from the life that created it.

Fetish is apt as long as capitalism exists. Showing that permanent refusal is possible is different than demanding a strict permanent refusal. Refusal is part of the beginning offensive of any struggle against an upper class. I can agree that permanent refusal can present some form of challenge as well, I am mainly concerned about the amount that "permanent refusal" is emphasized and workplaces rejected as having any potential among anti-authoritarians, especially for expressing anti-work desires. My argument is that the workplace offers an environment where work can be challenged. Outside of work, everyone has a thousand different priorities and bringing together something in this environment is an accomplishment. Inside of work, we are stuck together in a situation we don't want to be in and are open to methods of agitation because of this situation. I'd also say that other things can be agitated at work besides workplace attack. It also should be noted that 8 hours of incessant agitation, 5 days a week is a longer period than most people watch T.V. or go to church to be informed about religion. I don't think anyone would really want to listen that long outside of a work environment.

Does not working under capitalism, that is, permanent refusal, have exploitive features? Did I speak too quick? Because the economy is based on exchange, there is no gifting.

Here's a part of the Marxian definition according to Wikipedia

In the Marxist view, "normal" exploitation is based in three structural characteristics of capitalist society:

1. the ownership of the means of production by a small minority in society, the capitalists;

2. the inability of non-property-owners (the workers, proletarians) to survive without selling their labor-power to the capitalists (in other words, without being employed as wage laborers);
3. the state, which uses its strength to protect the unequal distribution of power and property in society.

The key point is point 2, this is how fetishizing permanent refusal is exploitive. Just to play with this definition and “super exploitation” when people do attempt to refuse work, they often can only perceive of doing it for brief periods and/or they suffer hardships and difficulties. We have to work for welfare or workmen’s compensation, we can donate our plasma, which is still investing 4 hours of time to get 20–40 bucks, twice a week. We can eat out of dumpsters, educate ourselves on urban survival and how to live homeless comfortably in all weather conditions. We can also suffer from a lack of solidarity, the homeless are often victims of [other’s] boredom, according to many stories of violence towards the homeless in town, not to mention police harassment. If you are privileged enough to refuse work, but have a social network that supports you fully, in all cases I’ve observed, couch surfing eventually wears thin if someone is contributing labor for someone else’s survival or relations experience some form of inequality. Independent wealth can be stretched, physical, mental and social difficulties (or feigning them) can get a government check, but this is not really an option open to most (not to discourage the practice). Then there is all the other expropriation strategies and all the consequences of prison and sometimes violence. Ultimately there is old age and social security, but this doesn’t promise a life outside of an old folks home.

I don’t think of general strikes, America has never seen general strikes. We’ve had wildcat strikes though. I’m not suggesting actions of movements either, but rather actions towards the creation of a movement, using the historic methods of quiet resistance, which has existed in all ages of class rule and is part of all underclass movements of resistance to class rule. We can’t conceive of intensifying mass strategies that don’t exist in our circumstances, but we can conceive of intensifying the struggles within our individual lives towards minor ruptures, which can often occur at the workplace, if the workplace is already engaged in or open to quiet resistance. This is taking our current circumstances as they are and recognizing that we are in control of our individual lives and that we can effect those we have contact with if we make sense to them.

We have a total objective. But radical transformation is seen as impossible in the present conditions because of total dominance. But why always make it about the whole pie, or even a large event, like an insurrection, or even a riot? It is clear we are dealing with us (the radical exploited, we who have chosen to define ourselves or feel forced to define ourselves) having desires and them (the exploited that don’t seek to defined themselves) not having those same desires, but we want them to. We can group with ourselves and fight a losing political war against the capitalists, a winning political war to become capitalists or we can adapt as the exploited adapt to capitalism, only attempting to raise the potential of what exists now.

As I was stating before about “quiet resistance”, this exists in all ages of civilization and is part of the historic battle against the present. Capitalism has largely absorbed other rebellions, but quiet resistance remains from what resistances existed before capitalism. Its success can be nothing but harmful for capitalism. Banditry could be reinterpreted into most forms of robbery and its success becomes part of the ruling order. Our own rebellion as radicals comes from the intellectuals, who have become satisfied with the ability to openly discuss and disseminate information, as our rebellion is over, the intellectuals won and continue to win under capitalism, getting paid well for it too, woo hoo. The oppressed also engage in quiet resistance once they have become a part of the greater system (even if it is as a second class). Exterior forces, like autonomous cultures, can fight guerrilla war like the political radical, but unlike the political radical, they can be satisfied with marginal concessions because they aren’t seeking

more than a marginal recognition of power. I would argue that the demands for political autonomy in the age of capitalism is an expansion of capitalism and promotes self-policing, keeping what could be a rebellious segment of the population docile.

Where is capitalism inflexible? Isn't gentrification a civil war being fought by the petite-bourgeois (backed by capitalist developers) on the poor? Isn't it the educated radical that opposes violence against the petite bourgeois, even when it is often in the self interest of the poor to strike violently at the stratum that defines itself above the poor, the status of the professionals, the academics and managers in their exploitation? They are the ones that capitalism is flexible with, they are the ones that capitalism is lenient to and yet we act as if the poor don't benefit from acting against the petite bourgeois as if they were the bourgeois. We have seen how little New Orleans has helped the poor and oppressed, turning Hurricane Katrina into a blessed event for the petite bourgeois, accelerating the gentrification process as generation rather than crippling the city. Our labor is so abundant that I can say such a thing. Chicago also benefited in a similar way with its great fire (and the plague gave us the renaissance). Such disasters smooth out contradictions and resistances to change. Are there any good theories on this by others?

Here's something that nobody liked the first time around, maybe within this context it makes more sense.

A Union against Unions: The Insurrectionary Manifesto of the *Workers' Union Underground*

The *Workers' Union Underground* has no official existence. There isn't a way to count membership. There isn't a bureaucracy to file grievances to. It exists only as long as we the workers understand that we can only rely on ourselves to protect our own interests. Workers' interests cannot be protected through the negotiation room, where compromise finds a home. It cannot be done by pleading for the boss to agree to our terms. It cannot be done through processes that require specialists. Workers' interests simply cannot be realized when workers put themselves in the position of passivity, where we are not in the steering wheel.

The *Workers' Union Underground* uses education, agitation, propaganda and direct action to push our workplaces and all of society towards the greatest autonomy possible and towards the realization that revolution is possible and necessary. When we act, it is because we are guided by an understanding of what is desired.

The *Workers' Union Underground* recognizes the necessity of collective action, and supports the secret interaction of workers and workplaces, under the cover of the bosses, under the cover of institutional unions.

We support all extra-legal means to support the movement for workers' emancipation from the binds of class society. Be it by sabotage, arson, street fighting, robbery, murder or anything else that society deems to rid itself of. Yet society cannot rid itself of these methods because they are perpetuated through class division and the enforcement of the state.

It is understood by the *Workers' Union Underground* that capitalism is an historic event that is to last until the final blow by the proletariat to bring an end to the centuries that people have been separated along class lines.

The *Workers' Union Underground* expands from previous manifestos that have exposed the centuries that lead worker's to the position they are in now. The *Workers' Union Underground* pushes forward that the proletariat as a class, working and non-working, young and old, skilled and unskilled, hard-working and extremely lazy, industrial and agricultural, pink collar and white collar, must smash capitalism in a violent revolution where capitalism is given no quarters to hide, and no room to breed anew.

The *Workers' Union Underground* only organizes itself secretly and informally. It understands that the natural revolutionary organs that rises from class struggle must be the controlling agent, and thus organizes itself only to bring about its own dissolution.

The *Workers' Union Underground* is opposed to alliances with Counter-Institutions. While the rank and file may be proletarian, the bureaucracies of these institutions have proven and will continue to prove that they will only stand in the way of revolution, dividing people between the perpetuation of the institution and the revolutionary destruction of all institutions. The most a counter-institution can offer is political revolution, which the counterrevolutionaries, the Zapatistas, defend in their own 'autonomous struggles'. The Zapatistas have failed because they have no desire to fight for revolution, but instead they fight for dual power, and they acknowledge it, almost proudly.

The *Workers' Union Underground* does not give this kind of ground to capitalism. The *Workers' Union Underground* is against dual power relationships. The dual power in the dual power relationship is really the political conflict between authoritarians and demagogues.

The *Workers' Union Underground*, recognizes that all institutions, whether they claim to represent the proletariat or not, whether they be an industrial or trade union, whether they claim to be top down or bottom up, are the opposition that the proletariat must overcome to arrive at total revolution, and thus organizes itself invisibly and without any personality other than the personality presented in this manifesto.

The cry 'all power to the workers!' shall be the cry of the *Workers' Union Underground*, giving capitalism no quarter and giving false opposition no loyalty. We are the controllers of the future and we are what makes a free society possible. The Revolution is nearer than you think.

In the Mean Time

Something that bothers me about many radical social theories out there is their emphasis on the worker. I can accept that capitalism defines the worker in relation to their power as part of a greater analysis of society. However, when we organize, we aren't organizing workers, we are organizing individuals. If you are looking for areas of tension and choose the workplace, the dialog will probably be based on work and how individuals conflict with work.

This is where I'll step back a little. Anarchists generally have two methods if they are approaching a workplace struggle. Both can be interchangeable, but there is an emphasis for developing the workplace as a method to provide economic security and support to the individuals so they don't have to live on the edge of poverty. This takes on the same face as old labor and striking for reforms. The extra security is very subjective in how it provides for individuals in the workplace. These types of struggles help provide income that can be used to help the individuals, their families and friends live with or above poverty as well as assist propaganda and resistance efforts .

The extra security does have its failings. It can provide a person who is working poor an elevation to the lower middle class or maybe even lower middle to damn near rich. This promotes unnecessary material accumulation and compliance to the social order in exchange for the continuation of the good job and its economic security. This creates different interests as has historically been shown with the expansion of the middle class, giving us only a repetition of what has already occurred with the general elevation of most of the working class into the middle. This isn't essentially true, but what has occurred in the 20th century suggests this to be true.

New initiatives by working individuals in poverty towards "friendly" insurance can be more effective at creating economic security. This type of insurance would help with medical bills, funeral bills, strike stipends and so on. This is a reduction from what unions can offer and is deliberately divorced for the idea of unions. I do this because union bureaucrats and officials are typically separated from their

workers through varying degrees of hierarchy and specialization and have been known to be less than supportive of all forms of workplace resistance. The friendly insurance acts as an alternative service for the working poor by the working poor. This type of insurance would not be based on accumulation and workers participating in its creation would share the hard decisions on who and how people are to be covered by the friendly. Networking with doctors and other professionals that can reduce costs can be beneficial and doctors that accept a life of poverty can be more helpful and fully involved in poverty support. This insurance can be expanded as a professional assistance insurance so that home repairs, plumbing, carpentry, and so on can be included in coverage with medical coverage.

The second method anarchists promote is not based on relieving poverty or creating more economic security. Instead its based on the idea of attacking the workplace as a symbol of oppression, in some cases it is based on causing affects on the general economy and in other cases its based on seizing or shutting down the workplace as an expression of power. The above friendly insurance would be able to function in both examples of workplace struggle as long as it isn't so large that it has to operate as a separate body from its membership. The friendly insurance can be held together by small clusters of informal independent and worker associations to ensure it remains part of what these individuals are doing and not a separate entity.

This is just a brief outline and much more go can go into any method of resistance. I feel anarchists push themselves into a false dichotomy over work because the nuances between attack and reform have become too rigid and absolute while questions of what is necessary to live socially while we resist have moved more in the direction of interests not based on socializing and relieving poverty but accumulating more security and material power. I will continue looking into these kind of issues because I feel that the growth of anarchy would benefit from emphasizing poverty intervention in workplace struggles rather than accepting the current methods of labor struggle. This also makes arguments for ending certain workplaces more possible if we already have a functioning practice for poverty relief and support.

fendersen.com

Clean up by original author (typos fixed).

Choosing Marginality

Jane Meyering

1998

In marginality, I have found freedom. There are many kinds of marginality though and mine is a chosen marginality. I am a white, mostly straight, college educated male from a middle class background and could choose to be mainstream if I wanted. My marginality is far different from that of a disrespected Native American elder on a reservation, a homeless family forced to live in separate shelters, a criminalized African-American youth in the ghetto, or a teenager kicked out of her home for being a lesbian. Theirs is the marginality of the oppressed. Mine is the marginality of the drop out. These are two very different things.

My politics obviously make me marginal in some sense — it usually is not a good idea to publicly refer to oneself as an anarchist as this is liable to make a lot of people think you're a terrorist. But I have chosen to be further marginalized by temping for a living and not working at a respectable, regular job. In my senior year in college, while every one else was busily searching for a career, I quite deliberately did not. I had gone to college because that's what somebody from my class background was just expected to do. While I don't regret my college years, I consciously decided not to continue operating on middle class autopilot. I was going to be, rather to my parents' distress, a fuck-up. No plans except that I wanted to be a grassroots activist and a science-fiction writer; not exactly lucrative pursuits.

After a brief stint working at Barnes & Noble — a horribly authoritarian, soul-killing place — I took up temping. In the impermanence of temping I have found some degree of freedom. With sufficient planning, I can take time off for my activism or my writing whenever I want — I don't have to go begging for vacation time. I find temping also minimizes the stress of the work place. Our culture's work ethic, unfortunately, is still rather ingrained in my actions even though I don't believe in it (at least as far as capitalist enterprises are concerned); being at a working place for only a brief time is a way of keeping myself from getting caught up in trying too hard to do a good job. Temping gives me an amount of control over my life I would not otherwise have — my job does not dominate me, unlike all the permanent office workers I see, stressed out, juggling a thousand meetings, and putting in unpaid overtime. There are of course drawbacks to temping — my income is unstable and I have only a pathetic excuse for health insurance (and until recently had none at all) — but the trade off is worth it to me.

I am not attempting to make myself out to be more radical or more marginal than thou. There are people I know who live even more marginally than I do — people who get jobs when they run out of money, or who are nomads or squatters. I also know people whom I respect, who work at permanent, respectable office jobs, who are also solid radicals and whose values and activities outside of work make them marginal in some sense, part of the anarchist milieu. The line between the mainstream and the margins is not necessarily a clear one. It's a matter of the choices people make, the level of instability

and possible discomfort people want to put up with. I respect squatters, but I couldn't live like that. I respect radicals with a permanent office job, but I couldn't live like that either.

A few sentences back, what I actually should have said, "It's a matter of the choices *some* people *get* to make..." My ability to choose to be marginal is itself a sign of privilege. Many of the people (although certainly not all of them) in the anarchist drop out milieu could have chosen and could still choose to live otherwise — to have regular, mainstream lives with permanent, respectable jobs and all the rest of the garbage that goes with that. I certainly fall into that category and may actually take advantage of that privilege some day to go to grad school, thereby demarginalizing myself.

For many people in America and across the world, these are not choices. They are made marginal by the larger forces of society — capitalism, racism, sexism, homophobia and other all too familiar evils. As I said, I have pathetic health insurance and my income is unstable — by choice. If I had children to support, I certainly would not make this choice. Many people in America must, whether they want to or not, try to do the best for themselves and their families without health insurance, without a stable or adequate income, their poverty often exacerbated by the racism and sexism of hiring practices and the welfare system. Too many people have no choice.

There is some irony in my position. Even though I choose to live without adequate healthcare, I believe it is horrible that so many must live without any by force of economic circumstances. I voluntarily live a life I would not wish on others. At this point in this essay, I feel like I should say what this means, but I'm really not sure what it does mean. My chosen marginality is certainly not some noble act of solidarity with the oppressed. It is a rejection of the system, or at least aspects of it — those aspects that bind the spirit; but it is not a protest against those aspects that create material want. Arguably, by not demanding better for myself, I am in some small way undermining those who are organizing to demand at least the fulfillment of material needs by our dominant social institutions, the state and corporations. On the other hand, by living to some degree outside of the accepted roles defined by the education and media systems controlled by the state and corporations, I am in some small way working to undermine these institutions, which are responsible for creating material want in the first place.

But really, I'm a drop out because I like being one. The current system is a dead end not only in terms of fulfilling people's material needs but spiritually as well, breeding ignorance, stupefaction, alienation, and social fragmentation. The lives of the mainstream working and middle classes are a rat race, devoid of what makes life worth living. My rejection of this life is, in part, a search for authenticity, a life that means something — as someone from a relatively affluent background, I know affluence does not bring happiness and may well be a hindrance to it. Yet I can't blame the poor for seeking affluence for few people enjoy material deprivation — and it is difficult to search for personal fulfillment if you're having trouble getting enough to eat.

The marginal lifestyle I choose to live (as opposed to the activism it frees me up to do) ultimately makes little difference — as a solitary choice. But others have chosen to jump ship too. Certainly not all members of the anarchist drop out milieu would necessarily think of themselves as seeking authenticity, but they have all rejected the mainstream as a dead end lifestyle. We anarchist drop-outs do form some sort of nebulous community with our own informal networks of mutual aid, our own fragile institutions — radical bookstores, Food Not Bombs groups, etc.

Although drop-out lifestyles alone certainly will not bring about revolution, we need to remember that the personal is political. If large numbers of people realized that what the dominant Anglo-American culture defines as respectable — a mindless forty-hour a week job at an office, with televisions, houses, cars and loads of stress as markers of success — is a crock, that we could all potentially explore much more fulfilling paths in life if society was otherwise organized, this could do much to undermine capitalism. Chosen marginality without activism is not, on its own, subversive. But if we on the margins (and if capitalism continues of its present course, more and more people will be joining us out here

whether they want to or not) attempt to create a more fulfilling way of life in conjunction with our activism, we will be that much stronger.

Retrieved on August 17, 2011 from library.nothingness.org

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The Honest Worker

Zo d'Axa

1898

It's the amazing fattening of the mass of the exploited that creates the increasing and logical ambition of the exploiters.

The kings of the mines, of the coalfields, and of gold would be wrong to worry. Their serfs' resignation consecrates their authority. They no longer needs to claim that their power is based on divine right, that decorative joke: their sovereignty is legitimated by popular consent. A workers' plebiscite, consisting of patriotic adherence, declamatory platitudes or silent acquiescence assures the boss's hold and the bourgeoisie's reign

In this work we can recognize the artisan.

Be it in the mine or the factory, the Honest Worker, that sheep, has given the herd the mangle.

The ideal of the supervisor has perverted the instincts of the people. A sports coat on Sunday, talking politics, voting...these are the hopes that take the place of everything. Odious daily labor awakens neither hatred nor rancor. The great party of the workers hates the lazybones who badly earns the money granted him by the boss.

Their heart belongs to their job.

They're proud of their calloused hands.

However deformed the fingers, the yoke has done worse to the brain: the bumps of resignation, of cowardice, of respect have grown under the leather with the rubbing of the harness. Vain old workers wave their certificates: forty years in the same place! We hear them telling about this as they beg for bread in the courtyards.

"Have pity, ladies and gentlemen, on a sick old man, a brave worker, a good Frenchman, a former non-commissioned officer who fought in the war...Have pity, ladies and gentlemen.

It is cold: the windows remain closed. The old man doesn't understand.

Teach the people! What else is needed? His poverty has taught him nothing. As long as there are rich and poor the latter will hitch themselves up so as to fill the service demanded. The worker's neck is used to the harness. When still young and strong they are the only domestic beasts to not run wild in their shafts.

The proletarian's special honor consists in accepting all those lies in whose name he is condemned to forced labor: duty, fatherland, etc. He accepts, hoping that by doing this he will raise himself into the bourgeois class. The victim makes himself an accomplice. The unfortunate talks of the flag, beats his chest, takes off his cap and spits in the air:

"I'm an honest worker."

And it falls right back onto his face.

Retrieved on August 4, 2009 from www.marxists.org

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The Broken Teapot

Anonymous

Spring 2012

We all start life with our teapot intact and at some point a little crack starts and slowly grows, or maybe one day we slip and the whole thing just crashes to the floor. Those with intact teapots, they don't know what its like to try and make tea with all the water leaking out. You can't do it.

The play of power that is accountability and how it currently (mal)functions in the anarchist 'community' has become a great fissure in my teapot. Its a big crack because I used to be very invested in it but it isn't working anymore. When tea is made now, because of this crack and, of course a few others, all that happens is that steam comes out and people get burned.

Ever notice the way that trauma can build up in your system gradually? You come to expect a certain amount of loss and you stop noticing how much it affects you until one day something really small makes you cry (you usually don't) and then you realize how toxic you have become. Then you really appreciate how grief accumulates. Everything feels like mourning, even things that usually make you happy.

The idea that we could somehow help each other through the pain of resistance, love and loss used to help me hold my shit together. Support was the counter balance to each instance of abuse, queer bashing, eviction, suicide, murder, and rape. If sometimes life hurt, if it hurt in ways that threatened to drive one to madness, at least there was the understanding and compassion of friends to get one through.

Lately, however, I have found that a funny thing has happened, at least with the anarchists. We've become afraid to hold one another up in a real honest way. The language of accountability has made support a weird community currency, more important in appearance than deed. It has become something which must be unquestioningly offered that functions in rigid and essentialist ways. There is an algorithm for support now and if you don't engage with the algorithm in the correct manner you find yourself out in the cold or, even worse, hunted.

Last year when I left my partner, they totally lost their shit, became obsessed, fixated and eventually began stalking me. I received some support from close friends and family, but the general anarchist community, usually vocal to a fault, said nothing. Some said nothing because they did not know the extent of the escalation and some said nothing out of fear, a desire to avoid conflict. I hold no malice towards any of those people. Others said nothing because I would not begin an accountability process. It is these people, who could not have known at the time how they were breaking me, that hurt me in ways that are hard to express.

I did not want an accountability process and all the exposure and tendrils that came with it. I wanted to be left alone. I would not identify myself as a victim because I was not solely 'a victim'. Is anyone? In their saner moments neither was my ex solely 'a perp', in fact they considered themselves to be a victim of my manipulations and omissions. Somewhere far away from those flat unforgiving categories we might have found some gracious out but with the language available to us it was a mess. In order to pull support I was expected to mediate this Kafkaesque disjuncture by branding them an abuser. I would not do that because abuse dynamics aren't so simple. I participated in a codependent relationship and at the end I lied like all hell to get out.

My ex started to use their need 'to address our issues' as a reason to continue to be in my life. When I would not give in to their demands, and understanding well how power works, they threatened to start an 'accountability process' against me. It was a bleak affirmation of my worst suspicions to watch them use these 'community' norms, so well-intentioned in their inception, in a manner befitting a very large stick. In the end wary, no doubt, of not winning a showdown at the larger 'community' level they never made good on that threat.

I had moved out of our collective house to get away but, not anticipating an escalation of hostilities, I made the tactical error of moving into a place alone. They started coming over unannounced. As their behavior became more and more erratic my fear of them grew. People expressed concern *for* me but no intervention was made *to* them. Consent culture precluded anyone telling my ex to leave me the fuck alone without some rubber stamp of approval. I needed someone else to say something totally

independent of any request on my part because in ex's head I deserved to be punished, no reasonable discussion, amount of screaming or pleading from me made any difference.

I left town. They found reasons to be in each subsequent city I traveled to. At some point the categories of abuse flipped in their head. This did not actually help much, they continued contacting me, this time in order to be 'accountable' to me. I told them to fuck off and to leave me alone. From when I left them to when they finally left me alone was about 6 months.

After the therapist at the walk-in clinic told me if I didn't move far away without telling anyone, stop being a part of our shared radical 'community' and get a restraining order I was 'participating in my own stalking' I went to the park and cried long and hard in exhaustion and desperation. Eventually I pulled myself together and made a few phone calls to see who might be able to help. I begged a mutual friend to encourage my ex to leave me alone. They basically told me 'without an accountability process, they didn't feel comfortable intervening'. I wanted out of our terrible relationship not to be pressured into continuing it in the name of 'healing'. The tears I shed then were angry and bitter.

This is but one vignette in a thousand of the ways these processes have failed us. If not getting support unless you agree to the 'correct' process is one failure, then being unfairly damned and righteously condemned is another. I have seen people pulled into these processes through gray area miscommunications of consent. There have been people falsely accused, a verbal 'yes' in the moment became a retroactive 'no' later. We have hurt and branded people through our practicing of unquestioning belief and our sloppy use of really broad categories.

I have witnessed these processes become tribunals which continue codependency and become about revenge. It is hard to say if this is intentional or not but as they say, 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions'. These processes were born out of trauma, hope and all the best of our desires for solidarity and healing. I know that to be true, but it's not working out that way. We wanted to free ourselves from patriarchy except we just created a new kind of 'justice', and it is damning us! It is making us act more and more like our enemies. Through much soul searching, I have concluded that I was wrong to believe in, participate in and perpetuate accountability processes. This anthology is part of my amends.

Since this break point I have started to try and challenge accountability processes but even at a theoretical level, this gets falsely categorized as 'blaming the victim'. To question accountability is to question the sex positive culture of consent we have all worked so hard to create. When did these things get so tangled together? There is a 'can't win for losing' mentality to these discussion. If you don't believe anymore, you don't care about violence, assault or abuse. To question is to betray.

Instead of embracing honest conflict we hide our true feeling under so many layers of mental gymnastics and double speak. If these algorithms also feel wrong to you trust those feelings and say something! We are all so afraid to speak our minds least we be judged to be on the wrong side of the 'fucked up' 'not fucked up' dichotomy. Adjudication requires such stark differentiation. There is always a price when you are asked to sit in judgment, be sure you are willing to pay it. It usually comes later in the form of futile prayers that no one will ever discover or prosecute your own faults. Regardless of how others feel, I know the jury is already in.

I know myself to sometimes be 'fucked up'. Its taken a long long time but I am finally comfortable with my contradictions and the slow progress to be made in changing them. I want friends and lovers who are also comfortable with those disjunctures. I do not want comrades who either pretend such imperfections don't exist or condemn me for them.

What we do now is back people up against an ideological brick wall in an attempt to control them. In comparison beatings look straight forward — even merciful. At least those end and can be healed from on a physiological time frame. The message they provide is clear! That kind of hate is transparent and sometimes appropriate and necessary.

Perhaps that kind of violence makes you wary, that's good! Embrace those small nagging feelings of doubt. Wielding power should always make one a little disquieted. After reading and considering these

essays, I hope accountability processes will make you feel at least as uncomfortable. I regret now that we've spent the last few years feeling so damn sure of ourselves.

I offer this anthology up to you out of deep pain, not hope for something better. I don't have anything better. This isn't about offering an alternative model. If any words here are taken out of context and somehow become a new orthodoxy we will have failed. This is about pointing out some of the more egregious missteps we have made and encouraging people to think and act contextually.

In parting I offer up only one concrete plea. Stop using the algorithm. It is hurting us. The teapot may be nothing but jagged pieces, but we don't *have* to slit our wrists with them.

in love, despair, anger and contradiction. Anonymous

PS-

Please forgive any repetition herein. It seemed more important to present pieces in long form and allow each author space to fully express their points than to edit for redundancy.

To those who contributed it is no small act of bravery to speak so bluntly against stacked ideological odds. This kind of discourse and debate is well past due. Thanks for being a catalyst.

To all of my friends who didn't shrink from conflict, understood the contradictions and supported me anyway... you've helped keep me sane during a long period of darkness. I love you.

(Spring 2012)

Safety is an Illusion

Reflections on Accountability

by Angustia Celeste

I was asked by a dear friend to write this piece about accountability within radical communities — offer some insight in light of the years we've spent fighting against rape culture. Except I don't believe in accountability anymore. It should be noted that my anger and hopelessness about the current model is proportional to how invested I've been in the past. Accountability feels like a bitter ex-lover to me and I don't have any of those... the past 10 years I really tried to make the relationship work but you know what?

There is no such thing as accountability within radical communities because there is no such thing as community — not when it comes to sexual assault and abuse. Take an honest survey sometime and you will find that we don't agree. There is no consensus. Community in this context is a mythical, frequently invoked and much misused term. I don't want to be invested in it anymore.

I think its time to abandon these false linguistic games we play and go back to the old model. I miss the days when it was considered reasonable to simply kick the living shit out of people and put them on the next train out of town — at least that exchange was clear and honest. I have spent too much time with both survivors and perpetrators drowning in a deluge of words that didn't lead to healing or even fucking catharsis.

I am sick of the language of accountability being used to create mutually exclusive categories of 'fucked up' and 'wronged.' I find the language of 'survivor' and 'perp' offensive because it does not lay bare all the ways in which abuse is a dynamic between parties. (Though I will use those terms here because its the common tender we have.)

Anarchists are not immune to dynamics of abuse, that much we can all agree on but I have come to realize more and more that we cannot keep each other safe. Teaching models of mutual working consent is a good start — but it will never be enough: socialization of gender, monogamy — the lies of exclusivity and the appeal of "love" as propriety are too strong. People seek out these levels of intensity when the

love affair is new, when that obsessive intimacy feels good and then don't know how to negotiate soured affection.

That's the thing about patriarchy its fucking pervasive and that's the thing about being an anarchist, or trying to live free, fierce and without apology — none of it keeps you safe from violence. There is no space we can create in a world as damaged as the one we live in which is absent from violence. That we even think it is possible says more about our privilege than anything else. Our only autonomy lies in how we negotiate and use power and violence ourselves.

I really want to emphasize: there is no such thing as safe space under patriarchy or capitalism in light of all the sexist, hetero-normative, racist, classist (etc) domination that we live under. The more we try and pretend safety can exist at a community level the more disappointed and betrayed our friends, and lovers will be when they experience violence and do not get supported. Right now we've been talking a good game but the results are not adding up.

There are a lot of problems with the current model — the very different experiences of sexual assault and relationship abuse get lumped together. Accountability processes encourage triangulation instead of direct communication — and because conflict is not pushed, most honest communication is avoided. Direct confrontation is good! Avoiding it doesn't allow for new understandings, cathartic release or the eventual forgiveness that person to person exchanges can lead to.

We have set up a model where all parties are encouraged to simply negotiate how they never have to see each other again or share space. Some impossible demands/promises are meted out and in the name of confidentiality lines are drawn in the sand on the basis of generalities. Deal with your shit but you can't talk about the specifics of what went down and you can't talk to each other. The current model actually creates more silence — only a specialized few are offered information about what happened but everyone is still expected to pass judgment. There is little transparency in these processes.

In an understandable attempt to not trigger or cause more pain we talk ourselves in increasingly abstracted circles while a moment or dynamic between two people gets crystallized and doesn't change or progress. "Perps" become the sum total of their worst moments. "Survivors" craft an identity around experiences of violence that frequently keeps them stuck in that emotional moment. The careful non-violent communication of accountability doesn't lead to healing. I've seen these processes divide a lot of scenes but I haven't seen them help people get support, retake power or feel safe again.

Rape breaks you — the loss of bodily control, how those feeling of impotence revisit you, how it robs you of any illusion of safety or sanity. We need models that help people take power back and we need to call the retribution, control, and banishing of the current model for what it is — revenge. Revenge is OK but lets not pretend its not about power! If shaming and retaliatory violence is what we have to work with then lets be real about it. Let's chose those tools if we can honestly say that is what we want to do. In the midst of this war we need to get better at being in conflict.

Rape has always been used as this tool of control — proffered up as a threat of what would happen if I, in my queerness and gendered ambiguity, continued to live, work, dress, travel, love or resist the way that I chose to. Those warnings held no water for me — in my heart I knew it was only a matter of time — no matter *what* kind of life I chose to live because my socially prescribed gender put me at constant risk for violation. I was raped at work and it took me a while to really name that assault as rape. After it happened mostly what I felt, once the pain, rage and anger subsided was relief. Relief that *it* had finally happened. I had been waiting my whole life for it to happen, had had a few close calls and finally I knew what it felt like and I knew I could get through it.

I needed that bad trick. I needed a concrete reason for the hunted feelings that stemmed from my friend's rape, murder and mutilation a few years back. I needed to have someone hurt me and realize I had both the desire to kill them and the personal control to keep myself from doing it. I needed to reach out for support and be disappointed. Because that's how it goes down — ask the survivors you

know most people don't come out of it feeling supported. We've raised expectations but the real life experience is still shit.

I was traveling abroad when it happened. The only person I told called the police against my wishes. They searched the "crime" scene without my consent and took DNA evidence because I didn't dispose of it. Knowing I had allowed myself in a moment of vulnerability to be pressured and coerced into participating in the police process against my political will made me feel even worse than being violated had. I left town shortly thereafter so I didn't have to continue to be pressured by my 'friend' into cooperating with the police any more than I already had. The only way I felt any semi-balance of control during that period was by taking retribution against my rapist into my own hands.

I realized that I also could wield threats, anger and implied violence as a weapon. After my first experience of 'support' I chose to do that alone. I could think of no one in that moment to ask for help but it was OK because I realized I could do it myself. In most other places I think I could have asked some of my friends to help me. The culture of nonviolence does not totally permeate *all* of the communities I exist in. The lack of affinity I felt was a result of being transient to that city but I don't think my experience of being offered mediation instead of confrontation is particularly unique.

In the case of sexual assault I think retaliatory violence is appropriate, and I don't think there needs to be any kind of consensus about it. Pushing models that promise to mediate instead of allow confrontation is isolating and alienating. I didn't want mediation through legal channels or any other. I wanted revenge. I wanted to make him feel as out of control, scared and vulnerable as he had made me feel. There is no safety really after a sexual assault, but there can be consequences.

We can't provide survivors safe space — safe space, in a general sense, outside of close friendships, some family and the occasional affinity just doesn't exist. Our current models of accountability suffer from an over-abundance of hope. Fuck the false promises of safe space — we will never get everyone on the same page about this. Let's cop to how hard healing is and how delusional any expectation for a radical change of behavior is in the case of assault. We need to differentiate between physical assault and emotional abuse — throwing them together under the general rubric interpersonal violence doesn't help.

Cyclical patterns of abuse don't just disappear. This shit is really really deep — many abusers were abused and many abused become abusers. The past few years I have watched with horror as the language of accountability became an easy front for a new generation of emotional manipulators. It's been used to perfect a new kind of predatory maverick — the one schooled in the language of sensitivity — using the illusion of accountability as community currency.

So where does real safety come from? How can we measure it? Safety comes from trust, and trust is personal. It can't be mediated or rubber stamped at a community level. My 'safe' lover might be your secret abuser and my caustic codependent ex might be your healthy, tried and true confidant. Rape culture is not easily undone, but it is contextual.

People in relation to *each other* create healthy or unhealthy exchanges. There is no absolute for 'fucked up', 'healed' or 'safe' — it changes with time, life circumstance, and each new love affair. It is with feelings of unease that I have observed the slippery slope of 'emotional' abuse become a common reason to initiate an accountability process...

Here is the problem with using this model for emotional abuse: its an unhealthy dynamic between two people. So who gets to call it? Who gets to wield that power in the community? (And lets all be honest that there is power in calling someone to an accountability process.) People in unhealthy relationships need a way to get out of them without it getting turned into a community judgment against whomever was unlucky enough to not realize a bad dynamic or call it abuse first. These processes frequently exacerbate mutually unhealthy power plays between hurt parties. People are encouraged to pick sides and yet no direct conflict brings these kinds of entanglements to any kind of resolve.

Using accountability models developed all those years ago to deal with serial rapists in the radical scene has not been much to help in getting people out of the sand pit of damaging and codependent relationships. Emotional abuse is a fucking vague and hard to define term. It means different things to every person.

If someone hurts you and you want to hurt them back — then do it but don't pretend its about *mutual* healing. Call power exchange for what it is. Its OK to want power back and its OK to take it but never do anything to someone else that you couldn't stomach having someone do to you if the tables were turned.

Those inclined to use physical brutality to gain power need to be taught a lesson in a language they will understand. The language of physical violence. Those mired in unhealthy relationships need help examining a mutual dynamic and getting out of it — not assigning blame. No one can decide who deserves compassion and who doesn't except the people directly involved.

There is no way to destroy rape culture through non-violent communication because there is no way to destroy rape culture without destroying society. In the meantime let's stop expecting the best or the worst from people.

* * *

I am sick of accountability and its lack of transparency. I am sick of triangulating. I am sick of hiding power exchange. I am sick of hope. I have been raped. I have been an unfair manipulator of power in some of my intimate relationships. I have had sexual exchanges that were a learning curve for better consent. I have the potential in me to be both survivor and perp — abused and abuser — as we all do.

* * *

These essentialist categories don't serve us. People rape — very few people are rapists in every sexual exchange. People abuse *one another* — this abuse is often mutual and cyclical — cycles are hard but not impossible to amend. These behaviors change contextually. Therefore there is no such thing as safe space.

I want us to be honest about being at war — with ourselves, with our lovers and with our “radical” community because we are at war with the world at large and those tendrils of domination exist within us and they affect so much of what we touch, who we love and those we hurt.

But we are not only the pain we cause others or the violence inflicted upon us.

We need more direct communication and when that doesn't help we need direct engagement in all its horrible messy glory. As long as we make ourselves vulnerable to others we will never be safe in the total sense of the word.

* * *

There is only affinity and trust kept. There is only trust broken and confrontation. The war isn't going to end anytime soon Let's be better at being in conflict.

Love You Too Much

by Alex Gorrion⁴⁴

⁴⁴Ed. note: This piece has been slightly revised since it was first published in The Anvil on December 5th 2010. One paragraph was removed. theanvilreview.org*

Hope the rising black smoke carries me far away
and I never come back to this town again

The gnostic priests of Capital, who wish to see in everything only their imperfect, evil God, can nail down the torrential force of romantic love within their flat cosmology by referring it to the nuclear family, which exists only to reproduce labor power, and thus will disappoint the desires that justify it; or they can claim, and not without evidence, that love has been commoditized, and the consumption of a commodity extinguishes its value and produces, again, disappointment. But they are as inadequate as their nemeses, the priests of the Market, who assure that every ill will be worked out by an Invisible Hand. Capitalism's effect on the emotions is nearly always dulling. The anticlimax of Christmas, that most condensed gifting and extinguishing of commodities, does not lead to bloodbaths, but to boredom. The violence born of love does not climax in the formation of the family, as it would if its cause were the inability of a labor-power factory to satisfy human emotion, but accompanies it every step of the way. To understand the wrath that hides behind the mask of that most tender sentiment, we need to seek out older, more jealous gods.

Perhaps it is the way pop music conditions our expectations that kept me from realizing, at first, that Eminem's "Love the Way You Lie" (featuring Rihanna) is not a macho glorification of domestic violence but rather one of the few honest love songs to ever top the charts.

It's an easy song to hate or to fear, because it protagonizes someone who beats his partner, and climaxes with the following lines:

Next time I'm pissed
I'll aim my fist
At the dry wall
Next time
There will be no next time
I apologize
Even though I know it's lies
I'm tired of the games
I just want her back
I know I'm a liar
If she ever tries to fucking leave again
I'mma tie her to the bed
And set the house on fire

Rihanna, singing the chorus, responds periodically with:

Just gonna stand there
And watch me burn
But that's alright
Because I like
The way it hurts
Just gonna stand there
And hear me cry
But that's alright Because I love
The way you lie
I love the way you lie

The song follows a moral compass that unequivocally signals domestic violence as wrong. But it also presents such violence as an inevitable tragedy, which the beater as much as the person beaten reproduces. The song itself explains their love as an irrational, overpowering addiction.

I can't tell you what it really is
 I can only tell you what it feels like
 And right now there's a steel knife
 In my windpipe
 I can't breathe
 But I still fight
 While I can fight
 As long as the wrong feels right
 It's like I'm in flight
 High off a love
 Drunk from the hate
 It's like I'm huffing paint
 And I love it the more that I suffer
 I suffocate
 And right before I'm about to drown
 She resuscitates me
 She fucking hates me
 And I love it
 Wait
 Where you going
 I'm leaving you
 No you ain't
 Come back
 We're running right back
 Here we go again
 It's so insane

I can't remember if it was the comparison to addiction or the line "I love you too much" that forced me to recognize this song had more validity than my fears wanted me to admit. It's a commonplace that songs on the radio pine "I can't live without you," "I never want to leave your side," and other statements of absolute codependency that decorate the elaborate myth of romantic love, in which two people complete each other in a static and unending congruity. How many of these songs are honest enough to mention the abuse that logically accompanies this kind of love?

* * *

It was the look in his eyes as he beat her. As though his dearest illusion had shattered, and he had snapped with it. She wasn't his, she never had been, and she never would be. Up until now, she had chosen to accompany him, and after today, clearly, she would not. "Whatever happened to 'Until death do us part'?" he muttered confusedly, on one of the few occasions he ever talked about it with me. He didn't understand the kind of love that changed, the kind that was contingent on choice.

I continued to love them both, not with the proprietary love of a husband or a mother, but with the love of a child who wants everyone to be okay. By loving them I learned a number of things. I learned that she was strong, that we may not get to choose if we get beaten, but we can choose whether we become victims, or whether we walk out. She never hated him, either, but unlike Rihanna's character in

the Eminem song, her sympathy was not a weakness, not a resignation to being abused. I also learned from her that abuser and survivor are flexible categories, that one is very likely to become the other, and therefore neither of these can define someone. Someone who has been hurt very often wants to hurt others, or to turn them into protective appendages. The patriarchy I grew up in never taught me that my gender entitled me to abuse without being abused. What I was taught is that you gotta pay your dues.

And what I learned from him is that his story was also important. He was not evil, but hurt. What happened in that cold family he never talked about? He was clearly scarred. Now I was too. I was sure that I would be much better than him. I wasn't entirely correct. The story that's never spoken is sure to be repeated. Hate it, fear it, ban it from the radio. It's going to come back around.

* * *

A single-minded critique of capitalism cannot possibly explain the vehemence of love, and must neglect love's central role in perpetuating the harm we do to ourselves. Love is something more than desire and its misplaced satisfaction in commodity form. But the traditional understanding of patriarchy, as a hierarchical system with men dominating women, is also inadequate, because love is also something different than hierarchy. Love does not end in the domination of the other but in the mutual destruction of self and other. Its most uncensored expression is the murder-suicide.

* * *

N was starting to lose it. S became the object of his obsessions. They had been comrades and lovers. Once it got undeniably unhealthy, she ended it. But he couldn't walk away. He became unhinged, but she refused to call the police, because she cared about him, and hated the state. The rest of us couldn't provide the support they both needed, neither the friendship that would have given him the strength to heal, nor the accompaniment that would have saved her. I lived in a different town: that was my excuse.

One night he killed her, walked up the hill to watch her house burn down, opened his wrists, and spilled his guts out on the ground in front of him.

I understood those who hated him for it. But I couldn't find it in myself. He already hated himself enough, and that was the part that finally triumphed.

In our society, love is the perfect mask for self-hatred. I don't believe that self-hatred is a product of capitalism, but an inevitable companion to the anguish of living. However, work, politics, colonialism, deforestation, and the patriarchal family give us many more reasons to hate ourselves. And they deprive us of means to heal ourselves. Strength is collective property. No one is alone. The illusion of individuality, where it succeeds, leaves us constantly bleeding. All the nodes on our body that connected us with the world — my hand that gripped yours, my lips that kissed his, my feet that held up the earth, my lungs that traded secrets with the leaves in the trees, my belly that was a furnace transmuting one living thing into another — become open wounds.

By promising us one intimate relation with another being, they in fact take away all those other relations, and they produce a silence that exiles us into one another, often destroying the affection of the couple by demanding the world of it. When the opium must also be food and water and shelter, the user destroys, ultimately, her love affair with the opium as well.

Patriarchy doesn't reproduce itself as a hierarchy, but as a network. What will be most hard to accept, and most easily dismissed as a dangerously sexist idea, is that it is a fully participatory enterprise.

The tendency of some feminists today to reject the fact of participatory patriarchy only shows how deeply they have internalized a capitalist and statist worldview. Believing that we all have agency does not mean we believe in the American dream, that anyone can pull themselves up by their bootstraps

and that any misfortune that someone suffers is ultimately their fault. S was one of the strongest people I knew. She died first and foremost because N gave her no choice in the matter, and secondly because we, her friends, could not give her the support she needed to defend herself and we could not give N the critical support he needed to heal. S's agency resides in how she chose to deal with the situation, decisions that were brave and principled, even though everything ended so horribly. It shouldn't have to be said: we live in a shit world and things often end, no matter what we do, in the worst possible way. This doesn't change our agency in these situations. Perhaps ninety-nine times, we may try to avoid tragedy and fail. The difference is, if we refuse to be victims, the way S was a fighter and not a victim, the hundredth time things might just turn out better.

The point is, within circles dedicated to fighting patriarchy- i.e. most anarchist and feminist circles- we need to get over our politically correct fear of blaming victims. If we are consistent in our political views then we do not believe in blame, nor do we feel affinity with victims.⁴⁵ We must focus on agency and on the potential for underdogs and disempowered people to change their situations. I feel it is essential to stress: it's the only way out of this mess.

Some patriarchal societies have practically imprisoned women. Others, such as ours, offer mobility. What contradicts the theory of a hierarchical patriarchy is that whether or not a society offers this mobility, most people still don't walk out. Regardless of whether a woman would get stoned for leaving her husband, or whether she'd be able to get a job and an apartment, the abusive relationships don't end. Because they are not predicated on enforcement. The content of the gender roles differ wildly from one patriarchy to the next, and although a duality and some kind of privileging of the male half are features common to all of them, the means of enforcement, and even the availability of centralized coercion to enforce these roles, are inconsistent. The universal feature that could guarantee the reproduction of these roles with or without enforcement is their complementarity.

You're the same as me
But when it comes to love
You're just as blinded

Patriarchy would either have aborted capitalism or been abolished by it long ago if its functioning required that any power or autonomy remain in the hands of its male half. Capitalism can brook no independence. No radical feminist can deny this. Yet a misunderstanding of privilege has done everyone a disservice, by painting women as too weak to break out of this system if they actually wanted to, and men as the monsters who keep the whole thing going. Privilege means, among other things, that male perspectives and experiences are the default, but this could only be possible within an oppressive system if it were impossible for men to live within their own prescribed experiences. In other words, male perspectives are the default, but they do not belong to or serve the interests of those categorized as male.

And this is exactly how it works. As an oppressive network system that supplements structurally enforced hierarchies (such as capitalism and the State), patriarchy functions like an addiction, by fostering dependency, casting incomplete parts to seek completion in an impossible way, and in so doing to articulate a web of mutual theft or destruction of value. It is, if you will, a scarcity machine, in which people keep the treadmills running by stealing from those closest to them to fill their own holes, like

⁴⁵It should be noted that the substitution of "survivor" for "victim" does not entail any actual critique of victimhood, or how victimhood embodies a patriarchal and legalistic role. Those who wish to end patriarchy should feel no affinity with the victimmentality. It is important to distinguish a political critique of victimhood from a lack of support for victims. It is understandable that we sometimes fall back on victimhood, a socially recognized powerlessness, because it is one of the only identifiable ways to access support, and taking a different route requires more intention and energy than most people can muster during a vulnerable period in their lives. We should have compassion for the people who, lacking other clear options, fall into the role of victim while acknowledging that it is time to create alternative narratives.

four people in a bed with a blanket big enough for two. Love is this machine's dynamo. Its violence arises when people can't live without exactly what is destroying them, when one thinks he is completing another and actually he is filling up his hole by eviscerating the other.

You ever love somebody so much
 You can barely breathe
 When you're with them

* * *

I told her from the beginning that I didn't think monogamy was healthy in a romantic relationship, at least for me. She considered this an unhealthy, selfish attitude. Consequently, she was always right, or at least excused, when she looked through my address book, read my old love letters, searched the files on my computer, screamed at me, in order to discover my infidelities. And when she broke the rules she herself had laid down, it was only an error caused by the stress of loving a selfish bastard. Our own imperfections are always easy to understand.

How long it took me to discover that healthy love is only possible when we take responsibility for our own emotions — expropriate them from these networks of codependency, as it were. And in fact I can be most grateful to the lovers who treated me like shit, for teaching me this. They took good care of themselves. Beyond that: "If we meet, it's marvelous. If not, that's alright." I could either choose to take care of myself, and not demand anything of others but what they gave as a gift, or I could choose to be a victim. I chose the former, and our love existed where we coincided. When we stopped coinciding, we went our separate ways, each stronger and wiser.

We love in order to destroy ourselves, and build ourselves back up again, a heartbroken friend tells me in a moment of hope.

* * *

Once the affair is over, we're free, until the end of our days, to think about the person we loved, to care about them, to wish them well, to wonder what part of ourselves must be broken that it turned out this way, to malign the nature of our love that it became a weapon against our lover; where it should have completed, it only hurt and controlled, and we will never be able to make it right, nor reconcile the sincerity of the concern we feel for that person with the damage we caused in the intensity of our passion. Perhaps the best way to go on loving them is to love the next person better.

* * *

Both the idea of romantic love and many of the radical responses to its inevitable abuses are implicitly predicated on the idea of human fragility.

Love runs perpetually from a fear of loneliness, but only by embracing this loneliness and — not conquering it; it will never be conquered — make our peace with it, can we love not as a parasite but as one creating a joyous project among companions. Accountability, meanwhile, often unknowingly fosters moral and judicial frameworks of blame. In this paradigm, pointing out that patriarchy is participatory will be interpreted not as the first step towards a strategy of liberation, but as blaming the victim.

This defensiveness is perfectly understandable, given how judicial processes impose themselves on us, and in these processes the person with less social privilege usually takes the blame for whatever disorder has interrupted the illusion of social peace.

But if what we are setting up is not a courthouse but a commune, a conspiracy among friends, the embodiment of our dreams, we have to permit ourselves to talk about things that could never be said in a society in which "everything you say will be used against you."

One of these unmentionables is that sometimes we choose to be abused. Sometimes it feels good. Sometimes we "like the way it hurts."

As we move from a world of imposed desires and addictive relationships to one in which relationships express our paradoxical agency and independence as subjects of the world and interlaced hubs in a network of mutual aid, play can be as important a tool as destruction.

Patriarchy is a game that solidified and forgot its own rules. Queer theory and some of the libertarian psychologists who preceded it have taught us that suppressing what troubles us only perpetuates it. By playing with power dynamics, playing with pain, even playing with torture, we make them our own, and we can make them harmless to us.

We are not so fragile that by having our partner tie us up and having her whip us or choke us with a dildo we lose something to her, we become dominated.

A consensual scenario is a world apart from an abusive relationship, but the hidden connection between the two, and the one thing that would allow us to move from the latter to the former, is that in both situations we have agency, whether we recognize it or not, and that our own desires may well be contradictory and frightening.

Compare the Eminem song to "Kiss with a Fist" by Florence and the Machine. Though the singer croons that "A kiss with a fist is better than none," and, just like Eminem, promises to set her lover's bed on fire, only a dogmatic second-waver could claim "Kiss With a Fist" is a fucked up song that apologizes for abuse or victimization.

I broke your jaw once before
 I spread your blood upon the floor
 you broke my leg in return
 so I sit back and watch the bed burn
 love sticks, sweat drips,
 break the lock if it don't fit
 ["Kiss With a Fist"]

The Eminem song frightens us because it protagonizes the batterer, and to a lesser extent also the survivor who chooses to remain. It refers to emotions all of us have felt, and thus forces us either to reject it as incorrect, or to acknowledge our own capacity to abuse or to choose to be abused, without judgment.

By suspending judgment, or at least mixing it with sympathy, the song creates the possibility of learning from a seemingly incurable situation. Judgment makes learning impossible. The judge is the greatest fool in the statist pantheon, because one cannot learn from those one condemns.

The picture painted in "Love the Way You Lie" reveals the violence of love not as a hierarchy but as a cycle. Perhaps what is needed to change this cycle is the recognition that abuse is a function of dependency and nowadays dependency is perfectly normal, but it is also an expression of our individual agency; what we need is no less than to be exceptional.

Questioning Rape

by Anonymous

Coming To Terms

How do you begin to say, "I think we've been going about this all wrong?" How do you get out of a dead-end without going in reverse?

It seems like in the last fifteen years, rape has gone from being an issue that was only talked about by feminists and downplayed in other radical communities, to one of the most commonly addressed forms of oppression. Part of this change might be owed to the hard work of feminist and queer activists, another part to the spread of anarchism, with its heavy emphasis on both class and gender politics, and another part to the antiglobalization movement, which brought together many previously separated single issues.

Despite all the changes in fifteen years, it's just as common to hear the sentiment that rape is still tacitly permitted in radical communities or that the issues of gender and patriarchy are minimized, even though in most activist or anarchist conferences and distros I know about, rape culture and patriarchy have been among the most talked about topics, and it wasn't just talk. In the communities I have been a part of there have been cases of accused rapists or abusers being kicked out and survivors being supported, along with plenty of feminist activities, events, and actions.

All the same, every year I meet more people who have stories of communities torn apart by accusations of rape or abuse, both by the shock and trauma of the original harm, and then by the way people have responded and positioned themselves. One option is to blame a passive majority that toe the line, giving lip service to the new politically correct doctrine, without living up to their ideals. In some cases I think that is exactly what happened. But even when there is full community support, it still often goes wrong.

After years of thinking about this problem, learning about other people's experiences, and witnessing accountability processes from the margins and from the center, I strongly believe that the model we have for understanding and responding to rape is deeply flawed. For a long time I have heard criticisms of this model, but on the one hand I never found a detailed explanation of these criticisms and on the other I was trained to assume that anyone criticizing the model was an apologist for rape, going on the defensive because their own patriarchal attitudes were being called out. After personally meeting a number of critical people who were themselves longtime feminists *and* survivors, I started to seriously question my assumptions.

Since then, I have come to the conclusion that the way we understand and deal with rape is all wrong and it often causes more harm than good. But many of the features of the current model were sensible responses to the Left that didn't give a damn about rape and patriarchy. Maybe the biggest fault of the model, and the activists who developed it, is that even though they rejected the more obvious patriarchal attitudes of the traditional Left, they unconsciously included a mentality of puritanism and law and order that patriarchal society trains us in. I don't want to go back to a complicit silence on these issues. For that reason, I want to balance every criticism I make of the current model with suggestion for a better way to understand and deal with rape.

My Experience

When I was in a mutually abusive relationship, one in which both of us were doing things we should not have done, without being directly aware of it, that resulted in causing serious psychological harm to the other person, I learned some interesting things about the label of "survivor." It represents a power that is at odds with the process of healing. If I was called out for abuse, I became a morally contemptible person. But if I were also a survivor, I suddenly deserved sympathy and support. None of this depended on the facts of the situation, on how we actually hurt each other. In fact, no one else knew of the details, and even the two of us could not agree on them. The only thing that mattered was to make an accusation. And as the activist model quickly taught us, it was not enough to say, "You hurt me." We had to name a specific crime. "Abuse." "Assault." "Rape." A name from a very specific list of names that enjoy a special power. Not unlike a criminal code.

I did not want to create an excuse for how I hurt someone I loved. I wanted to understand how I was able to hurt that person without being aware of it at the time. But I had to turn my pain and anger

with the other person into accusations according to a specific language, or I would become a pariah and undergo a much greater harm than the self-destruction of this one relationship. The fact that I come from an abusive family could also win me additional points. Everyone, even those who do not admit it, know that within this system having suffered abuse in your past grants you a sort of legitimacy, even an excuse for harming someone else. But I don't want an excuse. I want to get better, and I want to live without perpetuating patriarchy. I sure as hell don't want to talk about painful stories from my past with people who are not unconditionally sympathetic towards me, as the only way to win their sympathy and become a human in their eyes.

As for the other person, I don't know what was going on in their head, but I do know that they were able to deny ever harming me, violating my consent, violating my autonomy, and lying to me, by making the accusation of abuse. The label of "survivor" protected them from accountability. It also enabled them to make demands of me, all of which I met, even though some of those demands were harmful to me and other people. Because I had not chosen to make my accusation publicly, I had much less power to protect myself in this situation.

And as for the so-called community, those who were good friends supported me. Some of them questioned me and made sure I was going through a process of self-criticism. Those who were not friends or who held grudges against me tried to exclude me, including one person who had previously been called out for abuse. In other words, the accusation of abuse was used as an opportunity for power plays within our so-called community.

For all its claims about giving importance to feelings, the activist model is coded with total apathy. The only way to get the ball of community accountability rolling is to accuse someone of committing a specific crime.

The role of our most trusted friends in questioning our responses, our impulses, and even our own experiences is invaluable. This form of questioning is in fact one of the most precious things that friendship offers. No one is infallible and we can only learn and grow by being questioned. A good friend is one who can question your behavior in a difficult time without ever withdrawing their support for you. The idea that "the survivor is always right" creates individualistic expectations for the healing process. A survivor as much as a perpetrator needs to be in charge of their own healing process, but those who support them cannot be muted and expected to help them fulfill their every wish. This is obvious in the case of someone who has harmed someone else it should also be clear in the case of someone who has been harmed. We need each other to heal. But the others in a healing process cannot be muted bodies. They must be communicative and critical bodies.

Perp/Survivor

The term "perpetrator" should set off alarm bells right away. The current model uses not only the vocabulary but also the grammar of the criminal justice system, which is a patriarchal institution through and through. This makes perfect sense: law and order is one of the most deeply rooted elements of the American psyche, and more immediately, many feminist activists have one foot in radical communities and another foot in NGOs. The lack of a critique of these NGOs only makes it more certain that they will train us in institutional modes of thinking.

The current method is not only repulsive for its puritanism and its similarity to the Christian notions of the elect and the damned; it is also a contradiction of queer, feminist, and anarchist understandings of patriarchy. If everyone or most people are capable of causing harm, being abusive, or even of raping someone (according to the activist definition which can include not recognizing lack of consent, unlike the traditional definition which focuses on violent rape), then it makes no sense to morally stigmatize those people as though they were especially bad or dangerous. The point we are trying to make is not that the relatively few people who are called out for abuse or even for rape are especially evil, but that

the entire culture supports such power dynamics, to the extent that these forms of harm are common. By taking a self-righteous, “tough on crime” stance, everyone else can make themselves seem like the good guys. But there can’t be good guys without bad guys. This is the same patriarchal narrative of villain, victim, and savior, though in the latter role, instead of the boyfriend or police officer, we now have the community.

The term “survivor,” on the other hand, continues to recreate the victimization of the standard term, “victim,” that it was designed to replace. One reason for calling someone a “survivor” is to focus on their process of overcoming the rape, even though it defines them perpetually in relation to it. The other reason is to spread awareness of how many thousands of people, predominately women, queer, and trans people, are injured or killed every year by patriarchal violence. This is an important point to make. However, given the way that rape has been redefined in activist circles, and the extension of the term “survivor” to people who suffer any form of abuse, the vast majority of things that constitute rape or abuse do not have the slightest possibility of ending someone’s life. This term blurs very different forms of violence.

Judging Harm

Hopefully, the reader is thinking that an action does not need to be potentially lethal to constitute a very real form of harm. I absolutely agree. But if that’s the case, why do we need to make it sound like it does in order to take it seriously? Why connect all forms of harm to life-threatening harm instead of communicating that all forms of harm are serious?

As for these crimes, their definitions have changed considerably, but they still remain categories of criminality that must meet the requirements of a certain definition to justify a certain punishment. The activist model has been most radical by removing the figure of the judge and allowing the person harmed to judge for themselves. However, the judge role has not been abolished, simply transferred to the survivor, and secondarily to the people who manage the accountability process. The act of judging still takes place, because we are still dealing with punishment for a crime, even if it is never called that.

The patriarchal definition of rape has been abandoned in favor of a new understanding that defines rape as sex without consent, with whole workshops and pamphlets dedicated to the question of consent. Consent must be affirmative rather than the absence of a negative, it is canceled by intoxication, intimidation, or persistence, it should be verbal and explicit between people who don’t know each other as well, and it can be withdrawn at any time. The experience of a survivor can never be questioned, or to put it another way an accusation of rape is always true. A similar formulation that sums up this definition is, “assault is when I feel assaulted.”

Distinguishing Rape and Abuse

I don’t want to distinguish rape from other forms of harm without talking about how to address all instances of harm appropriately. One solution that does not require us to judge which form of harm is more important, but also does not pretend they are all the same, would have two parts. The first part is to finally acknowledge the importance of feelings, by taking action when someone says “I have been hurt,” and not waiting until someone makes an accusation of a specific crime, such as abuse or rape. Because we are responding to the fact of harm and not the violation of an unwritten law, we do not need to look for someone to blame. The important thing is that someone is hurting, and they need support. Only if they discover that they cannot get better unless they go through some form of mediation with the other person or unless they gain space and distance from them, does that other person need to be brought into it. The other person does not need to be stigmatized, and the power plays involved in the labels of perpetrator and survivor are avoided.

The second part changes the emphasis from defining violations of consent to focusing on how to prevent them from happening again. Every act of harm can be looked at with the following question in mind: "What would have been necessary to prevent this from happening." This question needs to be asked by the person who was harmed, by their social circle, and if possible by the person who caused the harm.

The social circle is most likely to be able to answer this question when the harm relates to long-term relationships or shared social spaces. They might realize that if they had been more attentive or better prepared they would have seen the signs of an abusive relationship, expressed their concern, and offered help. Or they might realize that, in a concert hall they commonly use, there are a number of things they can all do to make it clear that groping and harassing is not acceptable. But in some situations they can only offer help after the fact. They cannot be in every bedroom or on every dark street to prevent forms of gender violence or intimate violence that happen there.

In the case of the person who caused the harm, the biggest factor is whether they are emotionally present to ask themselves this question. If they can ask, "what could I have done to not have hurt this person," they have taken the most important step to identifying their own patriarchal conditioning, and to healing from unresolved past trauma if that's an issue. If they are emotionally present to the harm they have caused, they deserve support. Those closest to the person they hurt may rightfully be angry and not want anything to do with them, but there should be other people willing to play this role. The person they have hurt deserves distance, if they want it, but except in extreme cases it does no good to stigmatize or expel them in a permanent way.

If they can ask themselves this question honestly, and especially if their peers can question them in this process, they may discover that they have done nothing wrong, or that they could not have known their actions would have been harmful. Sometimes, relationships simply hurt, and it is not necessary to find someone to blame, though this is often the tendency, justified or not. The fact that some relationships are extremely hurtful but also totally innocent is another reason why it is dangerous to lump all forms of harm together, presupposing them all to be the result of an act of abuse for which someone is responsible.

If their friends are both critical and sympathetic, they are most likely to be able to recognize when they did something wrong, and together with their friends, they are the ones in the best position to know how to change their behavior so they don't cause similar harm in the future. If their friends have good contact with the person who was hurt (or that person's friends), they are more likely to take the situation seriously and not let the person who caused the harm off the hook with a band-aid solution.

This new definition is a response to the patriarchal definition, which excuses the most common forms of rape (rape by acquaintances, rape of someone unable to give consent, rape in which someone does not clearly say "no"). It is a response to a patriarchal culture that was always making excuses for rape or blaming the victim.

The old definition and the old culture are abhorrent. But the new definition and the practice around it do not work. We need to change these without going back to the patriarchal norm. In fact, we haven't fully left the patriarchal norm behind us. Saying "assault is when I feel assaulted" is only a new way to determine when the crime of assault has been committed, keeping the focus on the transgression of the assaulter, then we still have the mentality of the criminal justice system, but without the concept of justice or balance.

At the other extreme, there are people who act inexcusably and are totally unable to admit it. Simply put, if someone hurts another person and they are not emotionally present in the aftermath, simply put, it is impossible to take their feelings into consideration. You can't save someone who doesn't want help. In such a case, the person hurt and their social circle need to do what is best for themselves, both to heal and to protect themselves from a person they have no guarantee will treat them well in the future. Maybe they will decide to shame that person, frighten them, beat them up, or kick them out of

town. Although kicking them out of town brings the greatest peace of mind, it should be thought of as a last resort, because it passes off the problem on the next community where the expelled person goes. Because it is a relatively easy measure it is also easy to use disproportionately. Rather than finding a solution that avoids future conflict, it is better to seek a conflictive solution. This also forces people to face the consequences of their own righteous anger which can be a learning process.

Finally, the most important question comes from the person who was hurt. The victimistic mentality of our culture, along with the expectation that everyone is out to blame the victim, make it politically incorrect to insist the person who has been hurt ask themselves, "what would have made it possible to avoid this?" but such an attitude is necessary to overcoming the victim mentality and feeling empowered again. It is helpful for everyone who lives in a patriarchal world where we will probably encounter more people who try to harm us. Its not about blaming ourselves for what happened, but about getting stronger and more able to defend ourselves in the future.

I know that some zealous defenders of the present model will make the accusation that I am blaming the victim, so I want to say this again: it's about preventing future rapes and abuse, not blaming ourselves if we have been raped or abused. The current model basically suggests that people play the role of victims and wait for society or the community to save them. Many of us think this is bullshit. Talking with friends of mine who have been raped and looking back at my own history of being abused, I know that we grew stronger in certain ways, and this is because we took responsibility for our own healthy and safety.

In some cases, the person who was hurt will find that if they had recognized certain patterns of dependence or jealousy, if they had had more self-esteem, or they had asserted themselves, they could have avoided being harmed. Unless they insist on retaining a puritan morality this is not to say that it was their fault. It is a simple recognizing of how they need to grow in order to be safer and stronger in a dangerous world. This method focuses not on blame, but on making things better.

The Most Extreme Form of Harm

Sometimes, however, the person will come to the honest conclusion, "there was nothing I could have done (except staying home / having a gun / having a bodyguard)." This answer marks the most extreme form of harm. Someone has suffered a form of violence that they could not have avoided because of the lengths the aggressor went to in order to override their will. Even shouting "No!" would not have been enough. It is a form of harm that cannot be prevented at an individual level and therefore it will continue to be reproduced until there is a profound social revolution, if that ever happens.

If we have to define rape, it seems more consistent with a radical analysis of patriarchy to define rape as sex against someone's will. Because will is what we want taken into the realm of action this idea of rape does not make the potential victim dependent on the good behavior of the potential rapist. It is our own responsibility to depress our will. Focusing on expressing and enacting our will directly strengthens ourselves as individuals and our struggles against rape and all other forms of domination.

If rape is all sex without affirmative consent, then it is the potential rapist, and not the potential victim, who retains the power over the sexual encounter. They have the responsibility to make sure the other person gives consent. If it is the sole responsibility of one person to receive consent from another person, then we are saying that person is more powerful than the other, without proposing how to change those power dynamics.

Additionally, if a rape can happen accidentally, simply because this responsible person, the one expected to play the part of the perfect gentleman, is inattentive or insensitive, or drunk, or oblivious to things like body language that can negate verbal consent, or from another culture with a different body language, then we're not necessarily dealing with a generalized relationship of social power, because not everyone who rapes under this definition believes they have a right to the other person's body.

Rape needs to be understood as a very specific form of harm. We can't encourage the naive ideal of a harm-free world. People will always hurt each other, and it is impossible to learn how not to hurt others without also making mistakes. As far as harm goes, we need to be more understanding than judgmental.

But we can and must encourage the ideal of a world without rape, because rape is the result of a patriarchal society teaching its members that men and other more powerful people have a right to the bodies of women and other less powerful people. Without this social idea, there is no rape. What's more, rape culture, understood in this way, lies at least partially at the heart of slavery, property, and work, at the roots of the State, capitalism, and authority.

This is a dividing line between one kind of violence and all the other forms of abuse. It's not to say that the other forms of harm are less serious or less important. It is a recognition that the other forms of harm can be dealt with using less extreme measures. A person or group of people who would leave someone no escape can only be dealt with through exclusion and violence. Then it becomes a matter of pure self-defense. In all the other cases, there is a possibility for mutual growth and healing.

Questioning Rape

Sympathetic or supportive questioning can play a key role in responses to abuse. If we accept rape as a more extreme form of violence that the person could not have reasonably avoided, they need the unquestioning support and love of their friends.

We need to educate ourselves how systematically patriarchy has silenced those who talk about being raped through suspicion, disbelief, or counter accusations. But we also need to be aware that there have been a small number of cases in which accusations of rape have not been true. No liberating practice should ever require us to surrender our own critical judgement and demand that we follow a course of action we are not allowed to question.

Being falsely accused of rape or being accused in a non-transparent way is a heavily traumatizing experience. It is a far less common occurrence than valid accusations of rape that the accused person denies, but we should never have to opt for one kind of harm in order to avoid another.

If it is true that rapists exist in our circles, it is also true that pathological liars exist in our circles. There has been at least one city where such a person made a rape accusation to discredit another activist. People who care about fighting patriarchy will not suspect someone of being a pathological liar every time they are unsure about a rape accusation. If you are close to someone for long enough, you will inevitably find out if they are a fundamentally dishonest person (or if they are like the rest of us, sometimes truthful, sometimes less so). Therefore, someone's close acquaintances, if they care about the struggle against rape culture, will never accuse them of lying if they say they've been raped. But often accusations spread by rumors and reach people who do not personally know the accuser and the accused. The culture of anonymous communication through rumors and the internet often create a harmful situation in which it is impossible to talk about accountability or about the truth of what happened in a distant situation.

Anarchists and other activists also have many enemies who have proven themselves capable of atrocities in the course of repression. A fake rape accusation is nothing to them. A police infiltrator in Canada used the story of being a survivor of an abusive relationship to avoid questions about her past and win the trust of anarchists she would later set up for prison sentences.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, a member of an authoritarian socialist group made an accusation against several rival anarchists, one of whom, it turned out, was not even in town on the night in question.

Some false accusations of rape are totally innocent. Sometimes a person begins to relive a previous traumatic experience while in a physically intimate space with another person, and it is not always easy

⁴⁶<http://anarchistnews.org/node/19486>, <http://www.crimethinc.com/blog/2011/11/24/g20-conspiracy-case-the-inside-story/>

or possible to distinguish between the one experience and the other. A person can begin to relive a rape while they are having consensual sex. It is definitely not the one person's fault for having a normal reaction to trauma, but it is also not necessarily the other person's fault that the trauma was triggered.

A mutual and dynamic definition of consent as active communication instead of passive negation would help reduce triggers being mislabeled as rape. If potential triggers are discussed before the sexual exchange and the responsibility for communicating needs and desires around disassociation is in the hands of the person who disassociated then consent is part of an active sexual practice instead of just being an imperfect safety net.

If someone checks out during sex, and they know they check out during sex, it is their responsibility to explain what that looks like and what they would like the other person to do when it happens. We live in a society where many people are assaulted, raped or have traumatic experiences at some point in their lives. Triggers are different for everyone. The expectation that ones partner should always be attuned enough to know when one is disassociating, within a societal context that does not teach us about the effects of rape, much less their intimate emotive and psychological consequences — is unrealistic.

Consent is empowering as an active tool, it should not be approached as a static obligation. Still, the fact remains that not all rape accusation can be categorized as miscommunication, some are in fact malicious.

There is a difficult contradiction between the fact that patriarchy covers up rape, and the fact that there will be some false, unjustified, or even malicious rape accusations in activist communities. The best option is not to go with statistical probability and treat every accusation as valid, because a false accusation can tear apart an entire community make people apathetic or skeptical towards future accountability processes. It is far better to educate ourselves, to be aware of the prevalence of rape, to recognize common patterns of abusive behavior, to learn how to respond in a sensitive and supportive way, and also to recognize that there are some exceptions to the rules, and many more situations that are complex and defy definition.

Solutions

The typical proposal for responding to rape, the community accountability process, is based on a transparent lie. There are no activist communities, only the desire for communities, or the convenient fiction of communities. A community is a material web that binds people together, for better and for worse, in interdependence. If its members move away every couple years because the next place seems cooler, it is not a community. If it is easier to kick someone out than to go through a difficult series of conversations with them, it is not a community. Among the societies that had real communities, exile was the most extreme sanction possible, tantamount to killing them. On many levels, losing the community and all the relationships it involved was the same as dying. Let's not kid ourselves: we don't have communities.

In many accountability processes, the so-called community has done as much harm, or acted as selfishly, as the perpetrator. Giving such a fictitious, self-interested group the power and authority of judge, jury, and executioner is a recipe for disaster.

What we have are groups of friends and circles of acquaintances. We should not expect to be able to deal with rape or abuse in a way that does not generate conflict between or among these different groups and circles. There will probably be no consensus, but we should not think of conflict as a bad thing.

Every rape is different, every person is different, and every situation will require a different solution. By trying to come up with a constant mechanism for dealing with rape, we are thinking like the criminal justice system. It is better to admit that we have no catch-all answer to such a difficult problem. We only have our own desire to make things better, aided by the knowledge we share. The point is not to

build up a structure that becomes perfect and unquestionable, but to build up experience that allows us to remain flexible but effective.

Conclusion

The many failings in the current model have burned out one generation another in just a few short years, setting the stage for the next generation of zealous activists to take their ideals to the extreme, denouncing anyone who questions them as apologists, and unaware how many times this same dynamic has played out before because the very model functions to expel the unorthodox, making it impossible to learn from mistakes.

One such mistake has been the reproduction of a concept similar to the penal sentence of the criminal justice system. If the people in charge of the accountability process decide that someone must be expelled, or forced to go to counseling, or whatever else, everyone in the so-called community is forced to recognize that decision. Those who are not are accused of supporting rape culture. A judge has a police force to back up his decision. The accountability process has to use accusations and emotional blackmail.

But the entire premise that everyone has to agree on the resolution is flawed. The two or more people directly involved in the problem may likely have different needs, even if they are both sincerely focused on their own healing. The friends of the person who has been hurt might be disgusted, and they might decide to beat the other person up. Other people in the broader social circle might feel a critical sympathy with the person who hurt someone else, and decide to support them. Both of these impulses are correct. Getting beaten up as a result of your actions, and receiving support, simply demonstrate the complex reactions we generate. This is the real world, and facing its complexity can help us heal.

The impulse of the activist model is to expel the perpetrator, or to force them to go through a specific process. Either of these paths rest on the assumption that the community mechanism holds absolute right, and they both require that everyone complies with the decision and recognize its legitimacy. This is authoritarianism. This is the criminal justice system, recreated. This is patriarchy, still alive in our hearts.

What we need is a new set of compass points, and no new models. We need to identify and overcome the mentalities of puritanism and law and order. We need to recognize the complexity of individuals and of interpersonal relationships. To avoid a formulaic morality, we need to avoid the formula of labels and mass categories. Rather than speaking of rapists, perpetrators, and survivors, we need to talk about specific acts and specific limitations, recognizing that everyone changes, and that most people are capable of hurting and being hurt, and also of growing, healing, and learning how to not hurt people, or not be victimized, in the future. We also need to make the critical distinction between the forms of harm that can be avoided as we get smarter and stronger, and the kinds that require a collective self-defense.

The suggestions I have made offer no easy answers, and no perfect categories. They demand flexibility, compassion, intelligence, bravery, and patience. How could we expect to confront patriarchy with anything less?

Epilogue

*Half a dozen lessons I might never learn, not until them troubles come around...*⁴⁷

First off, this zine was meant to be descriptive not prescriptive, although I own the suggestions I've laid out and continue to hold to them. The hope was that the zine would encourage contextual, thoughtful and critical responses to rape and abuse. It should be possible within anarchist circles to

⁴⁷Gillian Welch. "Only One and Only." Revival, Alamo Sounds, 1996.

have critical reflection about the use of essentialist categories without being accused of being a rape apologist. We are all holding on so tight to these labels and I think it is apparent that they are not working for us.

The zine was meant to parse out what wasn't working about our ever-expanding definition of rape and assault. It was an attempt to call the innate judicial reasoning behind accountability processes into question. It was meant as a critique of innocence and guilt, not an attack on people who identify as survivors.

When we rely on appeals to innocence, we foreclose a form of resistance that is outside the limits of law, and instead ally ourselves with the State ...When people identify with their victimization, we need to critically consider whether it is being used as a tactical maneuver to construct themselves as innocent and exert power without being questioned. That does not mean delegitimizing the claims made by survivors— but rather, rejecting the framework of innocence, examining each situation closely, and being conscientious of the multiple power struggles at play in different conflicts.⁴⁸

Giving voice to the “multiple power struggles” at play is an uncomfortable process. Many people have offered feedback that they did not like the zine because it perpetuates the myth that abuse is a dynamic between two people and that feels like blaming the victim. It was never my intention to downplay the pain of abuse. I do, however, think that abuse is participatory and that it is useful to understand it as such in order to heal. My criticism of an essentialist understanding of victim or survivor is twofold: first, not everyone uses those categories with honesty or transparency, and second, even when they do, I am not sure that these identities really help you heal.

Personally, I don't find it helpful to think of myself as a victim or survivor. I realize that the identity of survivor was meant to address the focus on passivity that occurs with the term victim, but in practice I think the two terms are not always well delineated and the same associations and assumptions often accrue. These identities make me the subject, the passive receiver, of another's violence or abuse. In that reading of the situation, the power to end the cycle lies firmly with the active party, the “abuser.” That is a balance of power that I am uncomfortable with. In order to not feel completely helpless it has been necessary for me to honestly reflect on the parts that I played in unhealthy dynamics and violent situations because those are the things that I have the ability to change.

I started writing about accountability because I was grappling with why I felt so angry that I was supposed to identify myself as the right kind of victim in order to get support. It made me angry because I did not want to continue to be defined in relation to someone who had taken so much from me. I could not continue that relationship; in order to put myself back together I needed to cut all ties. I also could not wait for the person who harmed me to redress their ways before I began to heal. It wasn't realistic. I would have waited forever.

Think of what your body does when you cut yourself. Along with blood clotting and the immune response, your body builds a network of collagen to isolate the wound site. This allows white blood cells to clean up the area without spreading the infection. Continuing to define yourself by the pain that others have caused you creates dehiscence and keeps the wound open.

Accountability is so tied up in adjudication and external affirmations, or condemnations, that it can be very hard to modulate and process shifting feelings as you go through different stages of healing. Being someone's rape victim or survivor of abuse is not emotionally healthy. Every time a scar starts to form some part of the community process requires you to reference back to the initial pain as if it

⁴⁸Wang, Jackie. “Against Innocence: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Safety.” *LIES: A Journal of Materialist Feminism* Volume 1, 2012, pg 162.

were new, and the scab gets ripped off. This can lead to chronic inflammation that can go systemic and eventually poison other relationships in your life.

Community processes that offer support based on victimization lend themselves to focusing and fixating on painful experiences. I have been raped. I was in an abusive relationship, and when I left I was stalked. Those experiences disrupted my life for a long time. I did not deserve to be treated that way, but I was not a passive participant. Being honest about participatory abuse is not the same as self-recrimination, and analyzing unhealthy dynamics is not a form of self-blame—it's a form of self-reflection.

I have a hard time understanding why people are so offended at the idea that abuse is participatory because it was the epiphany that I was also responsible for my terrible caustic relationship that allowed me to leave. I stayed in a damaging relationship for so much longer than I should have, even after I realized it was abusive, under the absurd delusion that we were going to “end cycles of violence” together. We weren't ending any fucking cycles, we were continuing them.

Until I rediscovered my agency I was totally paralyzed. How could I ever feel safe if nothing I had done contributed to the abuse? What could I change about the way I loved? Did I just need to implicitly know if people had that tendency in them?

How do you pick “undamaged” lovers? How could I ever fall in love, and more importantly break up with anyone again, without being afraid? Different choices along the way could have kept things from getting so fucking crazy at the end, and it is both naïve and dangerous to pretend otherwise. Acknowledging that doesn't mean I deserved to be mistreated or stalked; but it does mean that because I understand the bad choices I made, I can make better ones in the future.

I realize the rejection of victim or survivor identity is harder to stomach when it comes to violent sexual assault, but even with rape one can go through a process of critical reflection. This, of course, does not absolve the assaulter from responsibility. No one deserves to be sexually assaulted or is ever to blame for being raped. We must differentiate blame from self-reflection. In order to move on with my life and regain the ability to work and travel alone it has helped me to focus on the things I have concrete control over. It has been useful to take stock of what kind of situations I put myself in, who I trust, what kind of contingency plans I make and what weapons I am actually comfortable using. Will being proactive about these kinds of considerations keep me from all future harm? Probably not—it's a fucked up world out there. Will these considerations give me a more grounded sense of control and remind me of my own power to deal with and affect the course of potential violence? Yes, I think so. This of course brings us to the issue of retaliatory violence and the zine being criticized for “glorifying violence.”

I think Stokely Carmichael got the heart of why we must be wary of moral narratives about violence:

The way the oppressor tries to stop the oppressed from using violence as a means to attain liberation is to raise ethical or moral questions about violence. I want to state emphatically here that violence in any society is neither moral nor is it ethical. It neither right, nor is it wrong. It is just simply a question of who has the power to legalize violence.⁴⁹

I don't have an absolute moral or ethical justifier for retaliatory violence, because one should never work in tactical absolutes. No solution or approach will be appropriate all the time. All I can do is clarify in what context retaliatory violence makes sense to me. I think people who are violently physically assaulted should be able to beat their rapist. However it is essential to understand karmic/proportional retribution.

I don't think retaliatory violence is appropriate for situations that were not physically violent. Responding to physical violence with physical violence is understandable but responding to gray area

⁴⁹Carmichael, Stokely. *Stokely Speaks: Black Power Back to Pan-Africanism*. New York: Random House, 1972.

miscommunications of consent with physical violence is manipulative and unnecessary. I also do not think it is appropriate to ask others to enact violence if you cannot bring yourself to participate. If you can't do it yourself (with help), then you need to pick a different kind of revenge. The point is catharsis, isn't it? A beating will send a direct message, but nothing can really communicate the experience of rape—only the anger and despair that come afterward.

Violence should be approached with humility and as a final resort. It is worth noting that it may not make you feel better, it may make you feel worse—it's hard to know beforehand. Revenge is intimate, and not always healthy. Protracted campaigns of shame and intimidation continue to tie you emotionally and psychologically to the person who hurt you. At some point the best revenge is separating yourself in the ways you can and trying to live a happy life. This doesn't mean you have to forgive to heal. I hold to my bitterness because it keeps me safe, but because I do not expect others to join me in that hatred it has been easier, with the passage of time, to let some of the pain recede.

To those who feel I gave up on transformative justice too soon, perhaps I did. I think if I lived in a different kind of community I would have more faith in transformative justice. I have heard that these models have worked in other kinds of communities. Within the anarchist scenes of North America however, I just don't see the cohesion, gentleness or longevity required for transformative processes to work. People are too transient. I am not an optimist at a structural level. It's not something I am particularly proud of so perhaps I shouldn't be suggesting others accept my dismal assessment of anarchist "community."

Really the discourse of transformative justice is hard for me to take at face value because the person I was in an abusive relationship with was very adept at using that kind of language in a manipulative manner, while the person who raped me had absolutely no point of reference for anything so radical. "Breaking cycles of abuse" is an enticing and lofty goal but sometimes I fear that all it means is that we put tons of time and energy into pieces of shit who will never address their socialization. At what point is it just not your fucking problem anymore?

This of course gets to the heart of most people's problem with the zine. It was criticized for not offering a productive solution. I admit, I don't have one; there is no one solution. A tendency towards myopic essentialism got us into this mess, a fancy rewriting of the survivor/perpetrator dualism with slightly more nuance sure as hell isn't going to get us out. We should be discussing what consent really means.

We have done a good job of defining healthy sex as an active yes—and not just the absence of no, but is that really a standard we practice and how do we hold people to it? If consent is a continual process what expectations do we have about how no gets communicated? Intimacy is complicated and we are all damaged in our own way.

Who is responsible for identifying when yes becomes no? I would like to propose that we are responsible not only for obtaining a yes from our lovers before proceeding and keeping those lines of communication open but, more importantly, we are responsible for vocalizing our own yes or no. We need to redefine healthy consent as communicating our sexual needs in a proactive manner.

If that doesn't happen we should be able to say, "you didn't notice I was dissociating, can we talk about PTSD and trauma?" That conversation seems more productive to me than, "you raped me because you didn't notice I checked out, even though I didn't say no." It needs to be okay to make mistakes and we need a language for hurt that doesn't default to the worst kind of hurt ever. Hyperbolic language leads to a ranking of pain. Does everything need to be called assault or rape before we help our friends work through it? We need an intermediary language, something between "that was perfectly communicated every step of the way," and "you assaulted me."

At a spiritual level it is important to ask why couldn't I vocalize my needs? What kinds of conversations, or partners, do I need in order to do that? We should not expect our lovers to read our minds. We need to make contingency plans. Healthy sex should involve telling your lovers what you want them to

do when you check out. We are all responsible for our own happiness, pleasure and safety—these things are too important to outsource.

As for getting through the dark days, the only concrete advice I can give about sorting through the pain of assault or abuse is don't turn to a larger community for support—turn to your friends, your chosen family and a therapist (if you believe in them). Don't expect that people who were not already close to you will understand the situation or be able to respond or empathize in a way that feels good to you. They probably won't. Get as far away from the person who hurt you as humanly possible and don't take on their fucking process. Settle into the isolation and pain, because it's going to be with you for a long time. Understand your part in the experience not because you deserved it, or because you were to blame for it, but understand your part so you can play a different, healthier, role in the future.

Ultimately, I think I have come back to a state of relative homeostasis again because I took the time to consider what parts of the abuse and rape were mine to carry and which ones weren't. The process has been slow and painful. I think I began to heal when I stopped caring so much when, or if, it happened. I made my peace with being broken, and as I accepted the damage the scars slowly keratinized. I no longer care if the people who hurt me have become less caustic, because I am not responsible for them. I also don't care if people who are not close to me understand what happened. Accountability processes are much too tied into social currency, reputation and propriety. I will not be held hostage to the theoretical dictates of a false anarchist "community." I try and hold myself accountable to the community of people I have real ties to—those I parent, work and struggle with. Beyond that circle I have found the idea of accountability doesn't hold up well under strain. It's not that I don't believe in accountability—I do, just with a little "a."

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Art by Glia.

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De-essentializing Anarchist Feminism: Lessons from the Transfeminist Movement

J. Rogue

2012

Transfeminism developed out of a critique of the mainstream and radical feminist movements. The feminist movement has a history of internal hierarchies. There are many examples of women of color, working class women, lesbians, and others speaking out against the tendency of the white, affluent-dominated women's movement to silence them and overlook their needs. But generally, instead of acknowledging the issues these marginalized voices raised, the mainstream feminist movement has prioritized struggling for rights primarily in the interests of white affluent women. While the feminist milieu as a whole has not resolved these hierarchal tendencies, various groups have continued to speak up regarding their own marginalization—in particular, transgender women. The process of developing a broader understanding of systems of oppression and how they interact has advanced feminism and is key to building on the theory of anarchist feminism. But first, we might take a quick look at the development of feminism—particularly during what is often referred to as its “Second Wave.”

Generally, the historical narratives of feminism that suggest that we might look at feminism in “waves” point to the Second Wave as a turbulent period with many competing visions. I'll use that perspective here, though I also realize that the narrative is problematic in a number of ways, particularly its Western and US bias and I want to acknowledge that.⁵⁰ I'm from the United States, which is the context in which I organize and live. This particular narrative is useful here for noting some larger tendencies within feminism—particularly where I'm from, though again, I want to acknowledge that this process, while descriptive, engages in some of the kinds of exclusions I am criticizing in this chapter.

I also want to acknowledge that this is a story for drawing out some necessary and important divisions, but any categorization can be problematic (and how could a transfeminism not recognize and acknowledge this problem?). There have been theories of liberal, radical, Marxist, and socialist feminism that do NOT fit this particular narrative. I want to stress, however, that I find it useful in describing theoretical pasts and presents in order to draw out a radically different feminist and anarchist future.

During the late 60s through the early 80s, new forms of feminism began to emerge. Many feminists seemed to gravitate to four competing theories with very different explanations for the oppression of women and their theories had consequences for feminist practices of inclusion and exclusion.

Like their historical predecessors of the “First Wave” who were mainly concerned with voting rights, liberal feminists saw no need for a revolutionary break with existing society. Rather, their focus was on

⁵⁰See e.g. Aili Mari Tripp, “The Evolution of Transnational Feminisms: Consensus, Conflict, and New Dynamics,” in *Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights*, ed. Myra Marx and Aili Mari Tripp (New York City: New York University Press, 2006), 51–75.

breaking the “glass ceiling,” getting more women into positions of political and economic power. Liberal feminists assumed that the existing institutional arrangements were fundamentally unproblematic. Their task was to see to women’s equality accommodated under capitalism.

Another theory, sometimes referred to as radical feminism, argued for abandoning the “male Left,” as it was seen as hopelessly reductionist. Indeed, many women coming out of the Civil Rights and anti-war movements complained of pervasive sexism within the movements because they were relegated to secretarial tasks and experienced sexual pressure from male leaders as well as a generalized alienation from Left politics. According to many radical feminists of the time, this was due to the primacy of the system of patriarchy—or men’s systematic and institutionalized domination of women. To these feminists, the battle against patriarchy was the primary struggle to create a free society, as gender was our most entrenched and oldest hierarchy.⁵¹ This made a neatly defined “sisterhood” important to their politics.

Marxist feminists, on the other hand, tended to locate women’s oppression within the economic sphere. The fight against capitalism was seen as the “primary” battle, as “The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles.” Further, Marxist feminists tended to believe that the economic “base” of society had a determining effect on its cultural “superstructures.” Thus, the only way to achieve equality between women and men would be to smash capitalism—as new, egalitarian economic arrangements would give rise to new, egalitarian superstructures. Such was the determining nature of the economic base. This argument was mapped out quite eloquently by Marx’s companion, Engels.⁵²

Out of the conversations between Marxist feminism and radical feminism another approach emerged called “dual systems theory.”⁵³ A product of what came to be dubbed socialist feminism, dual systems theory argued that feminists needed to develop “a theoretical account which gives as much weight to the system of patriarchy as to the system of capitalism.”⁵⁴ While this approach did much to resolve some of the arguments about which fight should be “primary” (i.e. the struggle against capitalism or the struggle against patriarchy), it still left much to be desired. For example, black feminists argued that this perspective left out a structural analysis of race.⁵⁵ Further, where was oppression based on sexuality, ability, age, etc. in this analysis? Were all of these things reducible to capitalist patriarchy? And importantly, for this chapter, where were the experiences of trans folks—particularly trans women? Given this historical lack, feminism required a specifically trans feminism.

Transfeminism builds on the work that came out of the multiracial feminist movement, and in particular, the work of Black feminists. Frequently, when confronted with allegations of racism, classism, or homophobia, the women’s movement dismisses these issues as divisive or “secondary” (as spelled out in the narrative above). The more prominent voices promoted (and still promote) the idea of a homogeneous “universal female experience,” which, as it is based on commonality between women, theoretically promotes a sense of sisterhood. In reality, it means pruning the definition of “woman” and trying to fit all women into a mold reflecting the dominant demographic of the women’s movement: white, affluent, heterosexual, and non-disabled. This “policing” of identity, whether conscious or not, reinforces systems of oppression and exploitation. When women who do not fit this mold have challenged it, they have frequently been accused of being divisive and disloyal to the sisterhood. The hierarchy of womanhood

⁵¹See especially Shulamit Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Morrow, 1970).

⁵²Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family Private Property and the State*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/> (accessed March 20, 2012).

⁵³See e.g. Heidi Hartmann, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union,” in *Women and Revolution*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981); and Iris Young, “Beyond the Unhappy Marriage: A Critique of the Dual Systems Theory,” in *Women and Revolution*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981).

⁵⁴Iris Young, “Beyond the Unhappy Marriage,” 44.

⁵⁵See Gloria Joseph, “The Incompatible Menage à Trois: Marxism, Feminism, and Racism,” in *Women and Revolution*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981).

created by the women's movement reflects, in many ways, the dominant culture of racism, capitalism, and heteronormativity.⁵⁶

Mirroring this history, mainstream feminist organizing frequently tries to find the common ground shared by women, and therefore focuses on what the most vocal members decide are “women’s issues”—as if the female experience existed in a vacuum outside of other forms of oppression and exploitation. However, using an intersectional approach to analyzing and organizing around oppression, as advocated by multiracial feminism and transfeminism, we can discuss these differences rather than dismiss them.⁵⁷ The multiracial feminist movement developed this approach, which argues that one cannot address the position of women without also addressing their class, race, sexuality, ability, and all other aspects of their identity and experiences. Forces of oppression and exploitation do not exist separately. They are intimately related and reinforce each other, and so trying to address them singly (i.e. “sexism” divorced from racism, capitalism, etc) does not lead to a clear understanding of the patriarchal system. This is in accordance with the anarchist view that we must fight all forms of hierarchy, oppression, and exploitation simultaneously; abolishing capitalism and the state does not ensure that white supremacy and patriarchy will somehow magically disappear.⁵⁸

Tied to this assumption of a “universal female experience” is the idea that if a woman surrounds herself with those that embody that “universal” woman, then she is safe from patriarchy and oppression. The concept of “women’s safe spaces” (being women-only) date back to the early lesbian feminist movement, which was largely comprised of white women who were more affluent, and prioritized addressing sexism over other forms of oppression. This notion that an all-women space is inherently safe not only discounts the intimate violence that can occur between women, but also ignores or de-prioritizes the other types of violence that women can experience—racism, poverty, incarceration, and other forms of state, economic, and social brutality.⁵⁹

Written after the work of, and influenced by, transfeminist pioneers like Sandy Stone, Sylvia Rivera, and her Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), the Transfeminist Manifesto states: “Transfeminism believes that we construct our own gender identities based on what feels genuine, comfortable and sincere to us as we live and relate to others within given social and cultural constraint.”⁶⁰ The notion that gender is a social construct is a key concept in transfeminism, and is also essential (no pun intended) to an anarchist approach to feminism. Transfeminism also criticizes the idea of a “universal female experience” and argues against the biologically essentialist view that one’s gender is defined by one’s genitalia. Other feminisms have embraced the essentialist argument, seeing the idea of “women’s unity” as being built off a sameness, some kind of core “woman-ness.” This definition of woman is generally reliant on what is between a person’s legs. Yet what specifically about the definition of woman is intrinsic to two X chromosomes? If it is defined as being in possession of a womb, does that mean women who have had hysterectomies are somehow less of a woman? Reducing gender to biology relegates the definition of “woman” to the role of child-bearer. That seems rather antithetical to feminism. Gender roles have long been under scrutiny in radical communities. The idea that women are born to be mothers, are more sensitive and peaceful, are predisposed to wearing the color pink, and all the other stereotypes out there are socially constructed, not biological. If the (repressive) gender role does not define what a woman is, and if a doctor marking “F” on a birth certificate do not define

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷For an anarchist analysis of intersectionality, see J. Rogue and Deric Shannon, “Refusing to Wait: Anarchism and Intersectionality,” http://theanarchistlibrary.org/HTML/Deric_Shannon_and_J._Rogue__Refusing_to_Wait__Anarchism_and_Intersectionality.html (accessed March 23, 2012).

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹See especially debates around the Michigan Women’s Music Festival on this issue.

⁶⁰Emi Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto,” <http://eminism.org/readings/pdf-rdg/tfmanifesto.pdf> (accessed March 24, 2012).

gender either,⁶¹ the next logical step is to recognize that gender can only be defined by the individual, for themselves—or perhaps we need as many genders as there are people, or even further, that gender should be abolished. While these ideas may cause some to panic, that does not make them any less legitimate with regards to peoples' identities, or experiences, or the kinds of difficult political projects we might have ahead of us. Trying to simplify complex issues, or fighting to maintain a hold on how gender was taught to us, does not help us understand patriarchy and how it functions. Instead, it does revolutionary feminisms a disservice.

Having encountered a lack of understanding of trans issues in radical circles, I feel it important to note that not all transgender people choose to physically transition, and that each person's decision to do so or not is their own. The decision is highly personal and generally irrelevant to theoretical conceptions of gender. There are many reasons to physically change one's body, from getting a haircut to taking hormones. One reason might be to feel more at ease in a world with strict definitions of male and female. Another is to look in the mirror and see on the outside (the popular understanding of) the gender one feels on the inside. Surely, for some, it is the belief that gender is defined by the physical construction of one's genitalia. Too often, however, radicals who are unfamiliar with trans politics and ideas react strongly to individuals' choices with regard to their bodies—rather missing the point altogether. But rather than to draw from speculation as to the motivations for the personal decisions of trans people (as if they were not vast and varied), it is more productive to note the challenge to the idea that biology is destiny.⁶² Surely everyone would benefit from breaking down the binary gender system and deconstructing gender roles—that is the work of revolutionaries, not fretting over what other people “should” or “shouldn't” do to their bodies.

Thus far, gender and feminist theory that includes trans experiences exists almost solely in academia. There are very few working class intellectuals in the field, and the academic language used is not particularly accessible to the average person.¹⁴ This is unfortunate, since the issues that transfeminism addresses affect all people. Capitalism, racism, the state, patriarchy, and the medical field mediate the way everyone experiences gender. There is a significant amount of coercion employed by these institutions to police human experiences, which applies to everyone, trans and non-trans (some prefer the term “cis”) alike. Capitalism and the state play a very direct role in the experiences of trans people. Access to hormones and surgery, if desired, cost a significant amount of money, and people are often forced to jump through bureaucratic hoops in order to acquire them. Trans people are disproportionately likely to be poor. However, within the radical queer and transfeminist communities, while there may be discussions of class, they are generally framed around identity—arguing for “anti-classist” politics, but not necessarily anti-capitalist.⁶³

The concepts espoused by transfeminism help us understand gender, but there is a need for the theory to break out of academia and to develop praxis among the working class and social movements generally. This is not to say that there are no examples of transfeminist organizing, but rather that there needs to be an incorporation of transfeminist principles into broad based movements. Even gay and lesbian movements have a history of leaving trans people behind—for example, the fight for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which does not protect gender identity. Again we saw a hierarchy of importance; the mainstream gay and lesbian movement often compromises (throwing trans folks under the bus), rather than employing an inclusive strategy for liberation. There is frequently a sense of a “scarcity of liberation” within reformist social movements, the feeling that the possibilities for freedom are so limited that we must fight against other marginalized groups for a piece of the pie. This is in direct opposition to the concept of intersectionality, since it often requires people to betray one aspect

⁶¹In light of the intersex movement, we may need to analyze the social construction of biological sex, as well.

⁶²See Kate Bornstein, *My Gender Workbook* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1998).

⁶³Although this is certainly not a monolithic tendency, as many rowdy queers do indeed want an end to capitalism and call for it explicitly.

of their identity in order to politically prioritize another. How can a person be expected to engage in a fight against gender oppression if it ignores or contributes to their racial oppression? Where does one aspect of their identity and experiences end and another begin?

Anarchism offers a possible society in which liberation is anything but scarce. It provides a theoretical framework that calls for an end to all hierarchies, and, as Martha Ackelsberg suggests, “It offers a perspective on the nature and process of social revolutionary transformation (e.g. the insistence that means must be consistent with ends, and that economic issues are critical, but not the only source of hierarchal power relations) that can be extremely valuable to/ for women’s emancipation.”⁶⁴

Anarchists need to be developing working class theory that includes an awareness of the diversity of the working class. The anarchist movement can benefit from the development of a working class, anarchist approach to gender issues that incorporates the lessons of transfeminism and intersectionality. It is not so much a matter of asking anarchists to become active in the transfeminist movement as it is a need for anarchists to take a page from the *Mujeres Libres* and integrate the principles of (trans)feminism into our organizing within the working class and social movements. Continuing to develop contemporary anarchist theory of gender rooted in the working class requires a real and integrated understanding of transfeminism.

Scanned from original, a text from “Queering Anarchism” book published by AK Press

⁶⁴See “Lessons from the Free Women of Spain”—Geert Dhondt interviews Martha Ackelsberg in *Upping the Ante*.

Preliminary Notes on Modes of Reproduction

gender mutiny

You had me at necrophilia. - Q

creationism

...we believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
 the only Son of God,
 eternally begotten of the Father,
 God from God, Light from Light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten, not made,
 of one substance with the Father.
 Through Him all things were made.
 - The Nicene Creed

No logic is more complete than that of monism, though none is more often protested. As long as all Creation is derived from God and His written Word, no assault can breach the walls of its castle. In Truth the logic of monism contains everything, and it can have no enemy. The cries of atheists and non-believers cannot reach the ears of its inhabitant, because heresy is logically not possible.

God's reproduction adds nothing to His perfect self. God can only reproduce Himself—man in His image, Son in His image—copies, not offspring⁶⁵. God's Creation is made by Him only, it cannot surpass Him nor exist beyond Him. When God masturbates, He reproduces. Wherever His jism is spilled, life bursts forth.

In a flash, it's as if you were born, flung into dark. Restless space, utterly foreign to the Last Times. No idea where you are naturally, you are shipwrecked, you have only the word shipwreck as lantern and explanation, for the rest you are in the dark. All is lost. This lostness—a state you knew nothing about. You are adult and biped, but the species is unknown. You know nothing about being. We don't remember this world at all.

In monism, there is only one gender, that of man. Man who was made in God's image and, like God, reproduces by spilling his seed onto the fallow earth. The earth—what we would call woman—does not constitute a distinct gender to herself, rather, she is without singularity or soul, an empty material form like the earth itself.

To speak of woman in the ideology of monism is an impossibility—that is, unless one speaks of a nothingness, an absence, a ghost. Not being a man, woman cannot exist in God's Creation because that which is not One, that is not God, is not. The void is woman's ontological origin. She emerges from nothingness because her existence is not only impossible but quite impermissible in monist logic. If a woman did exist (which, of course, she could not), she would have to be a nothingness. And so it was only by continuously asserting her very nonexistence that she was able to exist. She could not, in monist Truth, be, and so she was a ghost when she lived in the garden, and it was a void that suffered

⁶⁵That these copies deteriorated over time and became an imperfect image of God is one theory given to explain the fall of monism into dualism. The myth of Lucifer suggests another theory. God reproduced Himself perfectly, but His most identical creation was that which would challenge Him. It was the likeness to God of the archangel Lucifer—his almighty power and equally strong ego—that compelled him to challenge and attempt to usurp His power. Lucifer's banishment locates him not in the dualistic system of procreationism (after all, in that scientific and material world, some still cling to belief in God, but they are overshadowed by a dominant mode of thought that is atheistic or at least agnostic), but as banished to the Void that surrounds God's castle and against which its stalwarts are constructed. Here Lucifer will corrupt the void-dwelling figure of woman, and seduce her into introducing the first cracks in the monist castle.

the pain of childbirth, and a specter that passed through the halls of the king to leave behind traces of desire on his body.

procreationism

When girls and boys reach puberty, their bodies start to change and become more mature. From this time, if a male and a female have sexual intercourse (often called 'making love', or 'sleeping with someone'), it is possible that the girl could get pregnant, i.e. a baby could start to grow.

- How Babies Are Made

From the moment we begin to speak of woman as such, we are not speaking of God and His world, but rather the world of opposition. Once woman existed as even a thought, in fact in any form exceeding nonexistence, monism's ontological center could not hold. It must be said that in this crisis lay an intimate potential for the utter annihilation of the existent— would woman, as yet nonexistent herself, a being of the void, who came from nothing and returned all to nothingness, could she negate the existent that was her own negation? But so fierce was woman's affirmation of her own existence that her force would not cause monism to stagger and collapse under the weight of the impossibility of something truly outside itself, but rather would balance and harmonize Man.

All that separates modernity from what existed before it is the radical shift from a monolithic existent to a dichotomous one.

We don't stop killing ourselves. We die one another here and there my beloved and it's an obsession, it's an exorcism, it's a feign what we are feigning I have no idea is it a sin a maneuver a vaccination the taming of a python the fixing-up a cage, it's an inclination, we don't stop rubbing up against our towers touching our lips to them... eroticism to the nth degree lips on the sacred scroll, the innocent handle of the book, the saint, the simpleton, we know all about it, we always thought it, we'd also always feared for our towers, such striking clarity, and naked, but what terror when the real planes really crashed into them, a black terror that bit into our hearts, so this in reality can happen, in reality there was a tomb on one of our bodies, this was a fact and no waking, we'd awakened assassinated...

The Promethean feat is accomplished. The act of creation stolen from God and spread before mere mortals for their defilement. They engage in carnal desire and, when small, wet, stunted humans emerge from their loins, they marvel at their godlike power to create life.

The image of the one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth no longer prevails. His Creation has forsaken Him, and now they bow down before false idols and genuflect before the image of the Child.

God still lingers here. With His masturbatory acts of Creation derided, He puts auto-eroticism aside and panders to the heresy of His flock. He constructs His procreative Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—father, mother, and Child. This divine mimicry of the people's profane procreative acts is too queer. He has not admitted the existence of woman, of dualism, of the Other; and in the binary regime, heterosexuality is sacrosanct. From now on, they worship the Child.

While before the Creator had been the object of adoration, procreationism displaces the focus to that which is created. The act of sex is banal enough that only the conservative thinkers, attached still to the old ways of praising God, could envision it as a divine act. The parent is imbued with no shroud of mystery or the unknown. But the Child—who can remember his childhood?—the Child is an image that could stand for the sacred mystery of reproduction.

The image is singular but its source is binary. Now the myth that subjectivities come from God is pushed aside by the idea that one exists simply because one's parents fucked at some point and didn't use birth control. Religious faith in an event one didn't experience now shattered, only a scientific and historically rigorous explanation will suffice. One still does not remember one's conception or birth, but the scientific method confirms that other babies are made this way, and so 'I was too.'

The procreative myth—or fact—structures and gives meaning to the binary opposition of the sexes. The categories of male and female have meaning and power because their stability and duality is generative. Like God's potency to make life spring from Himself, the male and the female, in their opposition and union, have the power to create life. No longer "God made me, therefore I am," but now "my mother and father made me, therefore I am."

The family constitutes the procreative apparatus, distinguished from the creative apparatus by a binary opposition inherent in the inclusion of woman into the realm of substance—while from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost were begotten, not made, and remained of one substance with the Father, it is only through the union of opposite sexes that babies are made. A monist world could self-reproduce in perfect singularity and sameness, but once woman had posited herself in her difference, the force of her Otherness was established as a procreative force. And so it would be with the reproduction of the future, of the political order, and of capitalism.

The apple that Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge may have initiated the fall from monist grace to dualist profanity in the mythology we know; in history it was the apple that fell on Newton's head which ushered in dualistic thought. Newton's theory identifies the forces which hold and harmonize the dualistic world in the void against threat of collapse (much as the high walls of God's castle held the monist world together). Namely, for each force there is a reaction of equal force and opposite in direction. A simple example in the system of Newtonian physics explains how two heavenly bodies of sufficient velocity can orbit each other in harmony through the dynamic of their relative forces of gravity without collapsing into each other and spreading their dust into the void. So does dualist thought balance and harmonize the world of procreationism.

Modernity is Newtonian physics is dialectics is liberalism is binary reproduction is capitalism. It is unnecessary to draw the connections between each of these, when each is an aspect of the self-same logic. The triumph of the logic of two over the logic of one defines the world we inhabit, though this world is being supplanted by the world of plurality.

From the image of the Child comes the image of the Future, our hopes and dreams, our investment in a better world for future generations. Towards the image of the Future the political project is always aimed. The Child is the Future, and just as the Family produces the Child, the political apparatus produces the Future.

The political order of modernity is liberalism. Monarchy ruled the monist world, and the binary world requires something more balanced. With one gesture the sovereignty of the state is balanced against the rights of the people while the state deploys opposing political parties and systems of checks and balances to oppose it itself against itself. The liberal system of government, quite simply, is the state-form wrapped in the logic of dichotomy. Each and every political ideology that exerts itself in the effort to combat another political tendency or to assert the power of the people in resistance or opposition to that of the government participates in the discourse of liberalism.

The world of opposition is the world of dialectics. Just as the opposition of the sexes produces the Child and together these constitute the Family, so does capitalism reproduce itself through the opposition of the classes.

In dialectics, the existent contains its own contradiction—the proletariat. The proletariat is the negative force that could destroy capitalism; rather than excluding its enemy, as woman was excluded by monism, capital locks its negative force in struggle with itself and thereby exploits its labor for

production, manages its reproduction as the source of more labor, and reproduces capitalism through class struggle.

Dialectics dictate that the negative project of the proletariat—the abolition of capital—entails the destruction of the proletariat-as-such. The stakes have been raised. The negative force is no longer a logical impossibility in the realm of the existent, but a machine integral to the reproduction of the latter. At the same time, however, the former is validated, reproduced, and fed by the same order that exploits it. In the end, the desire of the proletariat for liberation and autonomy from the control of the bourgeoisie, like woman's desire to assert her existential being in the realm of man, would overpower its desire to abolish the present state of things.

Each and every stage of class struggle gave birth to another stage of capitalism, and every new manifestation was more perfect than the last. The latest high point in class struggle— May 1968—with its radical demands to sever the workers' movement from the management of union bureaucrats (that is, its project of autonomous, liberated labor) was the most significant of these, and it birthed the postmodern era along with a mode of reproduction that surpassed dialectical opposition.

The Tower of Babel had fallen long ago; now it was the Twin Towers' turn.

re-creationism

Discover the new you...

It's your world...

A phone that gets you...

It's so you...

One can hear it on the street and in the workplace, in the college classroom and the executive boardroom, at the latest radical convergence and at the beach, at dance parties and in underground venues: the logic of duality is so last millennium.

We are living in a postmodern world, and you are a postmodern girl. Which is to say, you are not really a girl as such.

Postmodernism posits a social order in which binary structures are destabilized. Foremost of these is the structuring of sexual difference, the very structure which constituted the means by which life was created.

The destabilization of binary oppositional sexes constitutes a crisis in the family and in the reproduction of life, but this crisis is not one that must spell the end of reproduction. A whole assemblage of techniques of biotechnology, cyberproduction, and social work are being deployed to enable, among other things, 'queer' reproductive possibilities as well as overcome the limits of the human womb which too easily ceases to function, especially under the stress of postmodern life. This analysis falls short, however, of recognizing the way that the central questions of reproduction have been displaced from the act of baby-making to the construction of the self, just as the centering of baby-making in procreationist thought usurped the former importance of the question of cosmic creation.

The primary mode of reproduction in a post-dialectic world is the reproduction of the individual—that is, re-creationism. The postmodern singularity is not created by God or its parents, but constructed through a pluralistic process that is increasingly 'artificial,' 'social,' and, paradoxically, selfrealized. This process is the process of identification⁶⁶.

⁶⁶Identification is the process of realizing oneself. Not recognizing but realizing because identification positions itself against the logic of procreationism that the subjectivity is made (being) by positing as subjectivity as a process of realization (becoming). Becoming is one of the postmodern theorist's central concerns. The popular term 'self-identification' is thus a redundancy.

The pluralistic reproductive process could not suffer limits. Each time it reproduces itself exists on an ontological scale. There is no need to speak of the modes of reproduction constituted by three, four, or fifty-four towers because, once there are three, the towers reproduce not themselves and not the relation between themselves, but more and more towers, not twin but unique and individuated, marching across the landscape at an ever-increasing rate. The World Trade Center has fallen but today there stand more skyscrapers than ever before.

Since their death, all their suffering..., our store of poisons entrusted to the Towers, counting of course on the jumbo apparatus of the American passions, in some the whole anxious and malificent game—of our lives, our primitive beliefs, our frissions, the deadly Greek and Bible-inspired phantasms, all that ghastly archiverly we'd intuitively conserved in our Towers—hence unconsciously used as the colossal envelopes of all ideas of catastrophe, coffins customed as the temples of our death wishes.

Diversity is the scientific imperative imposed by the evolutionary science and post-modern theories of becoming.

The stresses of the rapid evolution of commodities and commodity-forms in late-capitalism impose rapid shifts in the labor market which manifest in the postmodern worker's life as the condition of precarity. Precarity, in turn, is the impetus for the workers' continual re-creation of themselves. This process is experienced in the worker's life as the scarcity of jobs he already knows how to do; the creation of ever more numerous—and ever more abstract—job titles; the drive for continual education and training ('upgrading' himself); the loss of long-term salaried career possibilities as well as benefits and pensions; and the increase in part-time, shortterm, piecemeal or waged work.

The ability of capitalism to reach new markets, now that geographical and material expansion are complete, is based on its ability to reach ever-new identities. Thus identities must be produced, and produced as commodities. Identification, that is, the process of re-creationism, is the apparatus that produces these identities.

Each new identity is a new tower to which consumers can flock to escape the *passee* nature of the old ones. Eventually—that is, soon and very soon—there will have to be a tower for each person ("You know, there could be as many genders as there are people..."), probably more, and the scale of such production far surpasses the limits of the old workplaces, which are based on the assembly-line's ability to make multiple, identical products. In the late-capitalist economy, however, each commodity must have the air of the unique, and this goes doubly for identity-commodities. The labor of this 'creative' work is displaced from the old workplaces; by social imperative and desire, the individual is put to work, unpaid (reproductive work—baby-making, class struggle, Facebook—is always unpaid), to create new identities 'for himself'.

The postmodern Spectacle is a collection of images that must increasingly be constructed uniquely for each individual, the ghost of reproduction must not linger on the screen; but it must also afford him to interact with others. An apparatus of Spectacle-production that is socially-networked affords its consumer a profile and newsfeed unique to him but also the ability to 'connect' with his 'real' friends. Reality, in the end, is the product.

Political struggle is no longer epitomized by a war of one party or class against another, nor the people against the state, but becomes the battlefield of social war fought between many identities or forms-of-life against one another. Just as the war between parties within the government served to mask class struggle, today the war over identities masks the war of forms-of-life.

The popular form of identity in the era of (positive) queer theory is the selfrealized identity, the one that imposes itself in opposition to, amendment of, or spectacular 'reclamation' of one's 'sociallyimposed' identity ('socially-imposed,' 'assigned,' or 'sociallyconstructed' because self-realization is always understood as a process of becoming, not construction, even though the selfimposed identity can itself arise only from the structures and impositions of society). One is not born, but becomes, a woman.

In the war over the towers, identity is the basis for political struggle as well as its aim. Struggles fought over control of the creation and maintenance of identities is no more a threat to the existent than struggles over the making of babies.

The war between forms-of-life is not a war between identities, though it may often manifest as if it were. In this war the negative party is that of the queer, the abnormal. Queer constitutes the negative force that is centrally involved in the proliferation of identity through its struggle to assert itself positively outside of the realm of the normal (each positive queer act yields yet another position within normalcy), yet only for the queer does the overcoming of its limits in struggle threaten to demolish all the towers. This is because queer is positioned to destroy the mechanism of reproduction that it inhabits and asserts—the mechanism of difference, of abnormality, of queerness.

Let us be clear: the queer revolt is yet the avant-garde of capitalism, and that is because it is the positive queer revolt and not yet the purely negative one. The latter does not distinguish itself from the former by its violence and destruction alone— an assault on existing identities is inherent in the production of new ones—but by its gestures of abortion and its rendering of impotence.

The fact that we are writing these notes is evidence enough that the purely negative tendency has yet to reveal itself sufficiently to destroy the world as we know it.

nihilism

Aneantir le neant.

Annihilate the void.

Up to now, every critique of the social order has been more or less successful while every proposal to negate it has only accomplished a strengthening or reconfiguration of it. The existent is readily described by the discourse it contains, but the purely negative force is truly unspeakable. There is no reason to believe that the discursive elaboration of the purely negative project is at all possible. Nevertheless...

The common essence of monist, binary, and pluralist ontology is the elevation of the subject to a (singular or multiple) substance—the failure to grasp the nothingness that defines subjectivity. The question of ‘why am I?’ contains its own answer. Without a subject to pose the question, the question could not be posed. No reproductive apparatus is necessary to create or explain subjectivity. The origin and definition of subjectivity is the abyss; all else consists of substance that is constructed around the void and mistaken as the self. When we say that the self consists of a nothingness, this is the same as the assertion that there is no self.

The avant-garde of capitalism has been misconstrued as its enemy. Granted that the destruction of reproduction is the project of queer negation, what has come to be known as ‘radical queerness’ is a largely positive, rather than purely negative, project. In opposition to the world of binary gender, procreationism, the family, politics, modernism, structuralism, dialectics, &c., the ‘queer revolt’ posits pluralist gender, re-creationism, the identity group, identification, postmodernism, post-structuralism, multiplicitous struggle, &c. The latter constitute the reproductive apparatuses of the pluralist existent.

In a crucial point of emergence long ago, woman established herself as existent rather than plunge the monist world of Man into the void from which she came. In another, the proletariat struggled to secure its autonomous liberation from the bourgeoisie rather than destroy the bourgeoisie and itself entirely. On the stage set by the present order, the queer force is making itself busy with the proliferation of identities rather than the utter negation of them.

In the re-creationist order, life is experienced as void and death as the only escape. Such is not far from the truth. For those singularities which are born or incorporated into the reproductive order of identification—which now includes even woman, the proletariat, the queer, the hipster, the anarchist

and all the rest—the void is no longer experienced as something outside the castle, but as dwelling within.

Like the negative project of the proletariat, the negative queer project entails the negation of the existent, of the existent's reproductive apparatuses, and of itself. What's more, the latter's self-abolition must take place not only as death, but also the murder of a certain kind of death. This is because even suicide, or self-abolition, has been subsumed under the process of re-creationism. Death is necessary in the process of self-creation because in the act of becoming, one kills the old version of himself. In order to destroy the reproductive process of re-creation, the queer must destroy the latter's false version of suicide. The queer death-drive is an urge for pure suicide, which is also pure murder.

It is no coincidence that those who theorise on themes of pluralist gender identity, postmodernism, intersectionality, and encourage the reader/subject to not kill himself and instead to kill a part of himself in order to reinvent himself anew.

Man's fall from grace and the collapse of the Twin Towers pale in comparison to the purely negative project of today, so awful are its manifestations. These are yet unspeakable, but if we could imagine the entire world rendered as an aborted fetus, the plunging of the universe into an abyss that opened in the space-time continuum, or the people of the world digging corpses out of their graves and fucking them endlessly, we would catch a glimpse of the death it seeks to unleash. To those who love this world, human strike will appear as no thing of beauty, but to those who hate it there is nothing as beautiful.

Pure suicide is not the suicide of the individual motivated by hopelessness, though it is antithetical to hope. It is not the suicide that comes from a moment of despair, but from an entire world of despair. It is not decided in the turn of an instant, but carefully considered over time. For before it destroys itself, the purely negative singularity strives to destroy this world, render impotent its apparatuses of reproduction, and bring to an end its sense of the Future.

If the Tower our mother our body our sex burned down tonight—the hypothesis cannot be rejected, the whole castle has already burned down except for the Tower, the Tower's turn will come, since what else remains to burn? How what's more to explain than that such a Tower, such a perfect gem of human grandeur not be condemned and executed in these days of perverse criminality? For sure it's a target, plans are afoot... She is there, round, delicious, appetizing, eternal, pregnant with genius and with books, and she is not there. One gulp of the plane. We are already killed. Read all about it in tomorrow's paper— if the Tower has burned, we are already dead and tomorrow we shall die of it.

If the Tower has not yet burned, it will burn in a day or two.

notes

Polyamory and Queer Anarchism: Infinite Possibilities for Resistance

Susan Song

2012

Queer and Anarchist Intersections

This article discusses queer theory's relevance to anarchist sexual practice and why anarchists might critique compulsory monogamy as a relationship form. Queer theory resists heteronormativity and recognizes the limits of identity politics. The term "queer" implies resistance to the "normal," where "normal" is what seems natural and intrinsic. Heteronormativity is a term describing a set of norms based on the assumption that everyone is heterosexual, gendered as male/female and monogamous, along with the assumed and implied permanency and stability of these identities. Queer theory also critiques homonormativity, in which non-heterosexual relationships are expected to resemble heteronormative ones, for instance in being gender-normative, monogamous, and rooted in possession of a partner. In this way, queer theory and practice resists the expectation that everyone should have a monogamous, cis-gendered,⁶⁷ heterosexual relationship form.

In "Anarchism, Poststructuralism and the Future of Radical Politics," Saul Newman distinguishes anarchism from other radical political struggles. Newman conceptualizes emerging anticapitalist and anti-war movements that are "anti-authoritarian and non-institutional...[as]...anarchist struggles."⁶⁸ He describes these movements as those that "resist the centralizing tendencies of many radical struggles that have taken place in the past,...they do not aim at seizing state power as such, or utilizing the mechanisms and institutions of the state."⁶⁹ Anarchism is to be understood here as resisting institutionalization, hierarchy, and complete or partial political assimilation into the state.

Newman also cites anarchist thinkers such as "Bakunin and Kropotkin [who] refused to be deceived by social contract theorists, those apologists for the state like Hobbes and Locke, who saw sovereignty as being founded on rational consent and the desire to escape the state of nature. For Bakunin, this was a fiction, an 'unworthy hoax'. ...In other words, the social contract is merely a mask for the illegitimacy of the state—the fact that sovereignty was imposed violently on people, rather than emerging through their rational consent."⁷⁰ He describes resistance to the state by recognizing its illegitimacy as a seemingly chosen form. Similarly, queer theory can act to critique biological discourses about gender and sexuality being "natural," by pointing to its varying forms that are conceptualized in and influenced by historical and social contexts. Queer theory asserts that sexuality as a category and way of identifying, thought to be "biologically natural," is in fact socially constructed.

This is demonstrated by the ways that "homosexual" and "sex" as biological categories came to be created. In the later nineteenth century, the term "homosexual" emerged as a way to define an identity for those who engage in same-sex sexual acts. Homosexuality as a term arose as a way to define heterosexuality, thus pointing to its socially constructed and unnatural origin. Biological and medical discourses about gender and sexuality shift historically. In "Discovery of the Sexes," Thomas Laqueur notes how sex was constructed for political and not medical or scientific reasons "sometime in the eighteenth century."⁷¹ "Organs that had shared a name—ovaries and testicles—were now linguistically distinguished. Organs that had not been distinguished by a name of their own—the vagina, for example—were given one."⁷² Female orgasm and its role, if any, in conception were also debated as a contemporary issue. Sexual difference became a way to articulate a hierarchy of gender where women are viewed as inferior to men. This model of sexual difference is, Laqueur writes, "as much the products of culture as was, and

⁶⁷Cis-gendered is a term referring to individuals who have a gender identity or gender role that matches their sex assigned at birth. For instance, a cis-gendered woman is a woman who was assigned female at birth and identifies with female. This term is sometimes thought of as meaning "not transgender."

⁶⁸Saul Newman, "Anarchism, Poststructuralism and the Future of Radical Politics." *SubStance* (36)(2) (2007): 4.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 6.

⁷¹Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 27.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 27.

is, the one-sex model.⁷³ This transition is demonstrated in instances such as when de Graaf's observations yielded the claim that "female testicles should rather be called ovaries."⁷⁴ Eighteenth-century anatomists also "produced detailed illustrations of an explicitly female skeleton to document the fact that sexual difference was more than skin deep."⁷⁵ In this one-sex model, the male body is the norm against which other bodies are compared. This model problematically assumes that biological difference creates a "normal" social difference. However, Laqueur destabilizes this idea of sex as a "natural" category that points to significant biological differences, and instead posits that the construction of sex is influenced and shaped by a hierarchy of gender and political impulses.

Class Politics and Beyond

Queer theory denaturalizes hierarchies of gender, sexuality, and political influence, and is a valuable tool for anarchist practice. Queer theory questions what is "normal" and what creates hierarchical differences between us, opening up new sites of struggle outside of class politics alone. From feminist theory emerged the idea that gender is socially and not biologically constructed, and therefore not innate, natural, stable or "essential" to someone's identity due to their "biology." Instead, gender is a product of social norms, individual behaviors, and institutional power. Gay/lesbian studies added to the discourse around gender and sexuality by introducing homosexuality and LGBT identities as areas to be queried. Following the work of feminist theory and gay/lesbian studies, queer theory understands sexuality and sexual behaviors as similarly socially constructed and historically contingent. Queer theory allows for a multiplicity of sexual practices that challenge heteronormativity, such as non monogamy, BDSM relationships, and sex work.

Queer theory opens up a space to critique how we relate to each other socially in a distinctly different way than typical anarchist practice. Where classical anarchism is mostly focused on analyzing power relations between people, the economy, and the state, queer theory understands people in relation to the normal and the deviant, creating infinite possibilities for resistance. Queer theory seeks to disrupt the "normal" with the same impulse that anarchists do with relations of hierarchy, exploitation, and oppression. We can use queer theory to conceptualize new relationship forms and social relations that resist patriarchy and other oppressions by creating a distinctly "queer-anarchist" form of social relation. By allowing for multiple and fluid forms of identifying and relating sexually that go beyond a gay/straight binary, a queer anarchist practice allows for challenging the state and capitalism, as well as challenging sexual oppressions and norms that are often embedded in the state and other hierarchical social relations.

Queer Anarchism as a Social Form

A queer rejection of the institution of marriage can be based on an anarchist opposition to hierarchical relationship forms and state assimilation. An anarchist who takes care of someone's children as an alternative way of creating family can be understood as enacting a queer relation. Gustav Landauer in *Revolution and Other Writings* writes that "The state is a social relationship; a certain way of people relating to one another. It can be destroyed by creating new social relationships; i.e., by people relating to one another differently."⁷⁶ As anarchists interested and working in areas of sexual politics and in

⁷³Ibid., 29.

⁷⁴Ibid., 44.

⁷⁵Ibid., 31.

⁷⁶Gustav Landauer, *Revolution and Other Writings: A Political Reader*, ed. and trans. Gabriel Kuhn (Oakland: PM Press, 2010), 214.

fighting all oppressions, we can create a new “queer-anarchist” form of relating that combines anarchist concepts of mutual aid, solidarity, and voluntary association with a queer analysis of normativity and power. We must strive to create and accept new forms of relating in our anarchist movements that smash the state and that fight oppressions in and outside of our bedrooms.

One way that we can relate socially with a queer anarchist analysis is by practicing alternatives to existing state and heteronormative conceptualizations of sexuality. We can embrace a multiplicity of sexual practices, including BDSM, polyamory, and queer heterosexual practices—not setting them as new norms, but as practices among many varieties that are often marginalized under our normative understandings of sexuality. In polyamorous relationships, the practice of having more than one partner challenges compulsory monogamy and state conceptions of what is an appropriate or normal social relation. Polyamory is just one of the practices that arise when we think of relationship forms that can (but do not automatically) embody distinctly queer and anarchist aspects. BDSM allows for the destabilizing of power relations, by performing and deconstructing real-life power relations in a consensual, negotiated setting. Queer heterosexual practices allow for fluidity of gender and sexual practices within heterosexual relationships. Although practicing these relationship forms alone does not make one a revolutionary, we can learn from these practices how to create new conceptualizations of social relations and, importantly, challenge normative indoctrination into our society’s constrictive, limited, and hierarchical sexual culture.

Polyamory as a Queer Anarchist Form

Polyamory refers to the practice of openly and honestly having more than one intimate relationship simultaneously with the awareness and knowledge of all participants. This includes relationships like swinging, friends with benefits, and people in open relationships. The open and honest aspect of polyamory points to anarchist conceptions of voluntary association and mutual aid. Polyamory also allows for free love in a way that monogamous state conceptions of sexuality don’t allow. Emma Goldman in “Marriage and Love” writes, “Man has bought brains, but all the millions in the world have failed to buy love. Man has subdued bodies, but all the power on earth has been unable to subdue love. Man has conquered whole nations, but all his armies could not conquer love. ...Love has the magic power to make of a beggar a king. Yes, love is free; it can dwell in no other atmosphere. In freedom it gives itself unreservedly, abundantly, completely.”⁷⁷

In free love, there reside anarchist notions of mutual aid. Returning to a previous point, polyamory as a form challenges conceptualizing one’s partner as possession or property. Instead of having exclusive ownership over a partner, polyamory allows for partners to share love with as many partners as they agree to have. In contrast to compulsory monogamy, polyamory can allow for more than one partner, which can challenge state conceptions of what is a normal/natural relationship and enacts a queer form of relation. Compulsory monogamy can refer to relationships that are produced in a context where there is pressure to conform to monogamy. Compulsory monogamy is a concept that’s pervasive in our laws and institutions, where the expectation and pressure to conform to monogamy is awarded by material and social gain. This is not to suggest that those who choose monogamous relationships are more restricted than their polyamorous counterparts. A critique of the ways in which monogamy has become compulsory is quite different than judging individual romantic/sexual practices.

Polyamory can also challenge state conceptions of possession and property. Marriage as an institution is invested with notions of heterosexual reproduction and patriarchy. Sara Ahmed’s work can be used to further help conceptualize polyamory. She writes, “In a way, thinking about the politics of ‘lifelines’ helps us to rethink the relationship between inheritance (the lines that we are given as our point of

⁷⁷Emma Goldman. *Anarchism and Other Essays*. 3rd ed. (New York: Mother Earth Association, 1917), 93.

arrival into familial and social space) and reproduction (the demand that we return the gift of that line by extending that line). It is not automatic that we reproduce what we inherit, or that we always convert our inheritance into possessions. We must pay attention to the pressure to make such conversions.⁷⁸ Her analysis demonstrates how polyamory can challenge ideas of inheritance and possession. Polyamory as a form allows for a multiplicity of partners and isn't necessarily invested in heterosexual reproduction in the same way that marriage as a state institution can be. In this way, polyamory can disrupt practices of reproduction and inheritance by creating new family and relationship forms not invested in sexual ownership and in becoming a part of state-enforced and monitored relations.

A Call to Sexual Freedom

One may ask, how is polyamory relevant to me if I'm not interested in practicing it? What is the point of critiquing monogamy if I'm in a satisfying monogamous relationship? By bringing queer theory into our bedrooms and into the streets, we can begin to expand what may not be thought of as in need of liberating. When folks in fulfilling, monogamous relationships consider this history of sexual repression, they have the tools to understand what it means to become sexually liberated in spite of that history, even while choosing to remain in monogamous relationships. We can liberate ourselves from confining and arbitrary gender norms and expectations in not just our romantic relationships but our everyday lives. Queer theory gives us the spaces to transgress and play with gender and question the limits of identity politics to further consider that sexuality and other identities are not stable and don't have to be. Sexuality can be fluid and come in multiple forms, just as our gender expressions can be.

We want more than class liberation alone. We want to be liberated from the bourgeois expectations that we should be married, that there is only a binary of men and women in rigid normative roles who can date monogamously and express their gender in normative, restrictive ways. We should fight for gender liberation for our gender-transgressive friends and comrades and fight for freedom of consensual sexual expressions and love. This fight isn't just in the streets. It's in our bathrooms where transgendered and gender-non normative folks are policed by people who don't acknowledge trans or other gender non-normative identities, either by reinforcing a gender binary of cisgendered identities and ignoring a fluidity of gender identities or by otherizing transgender folks as an Other gender. It's in our family structures that create bourgeois order in our lives. It's in our production of discourses around sexuality, where sexuality is seen as something to be studied under a Western, medical, biological model. It's in our meetings and movements where critical voices that don't belong to straight, white, cis-gendered men are marginalized. We should create new, different ways of living and allow for queerer forms of relating and being.

Sexual liberation looks different for each individual. In my experience, being consensually tied up by a friend and consensually flogged in a negotiated setting is liberating. Kissing or hugging someone who you've carefully negotiated consent with is explosively satisfying. Being in an open, honest, polyamorous relationship for me created one of the most liberating romantic relationships of my life so far. However, sexual liberation is a deeply subjective experience. A problematic binary is set up in conceptualizing polyamory itself as a queer anarchist form and in potentially creating and reinforcing a new "norm" of polyamory as being superior to monogamy and other heteronormative relationships.

Returning to Ahmed, what is significant in considering new relationship forms is the pressure to make conversions and this should be considered as we form new ways of relating that challenge patriarchy⁷⁹ capitalism, and heteronormativity. We must broaden our ideas around what anarchist sexual practice

⁷⁸Sara Ahmed. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. (Durham: Duke UP, 2006), 17.

⁷⁹Patriarchy refers to a system of power embedded in institutions and other ways of social organizing that privileges and grants power to men over women and folks who aren't cisgendered.

looks like, ensuring that smashing gender norms, accepting that sexuality and gender are fluid, unstable categories, and challenging pressures to be monogamous are as part of our anarchist practice as challenging state forms of relating. We should live, organize and work in a way that consciously builds a culture that embodies these norms of being resistant to patriarchy and heteronormativity. This work is fundamental to our shared liberation from capitalism—but also from patriarchy, heteronormativity, and restrictive and coercive sexual expectations of all kinds.

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Towards an Insurrectionary Transfeminism

Anonymous

2010

A note on gender

This essay deals with the discursive and material histories of people I refer to as “trans women,” which I broadly define as anyone not assigned-female at birth who experiences their bodies as female, lives their gender in a way that could be taken as female, and/or identifies as woman/trans-female-spectrum/transfeminism. I rather begrudgingly use this term with a degree of hesitance as it certainly erases the complexities of my gender experience, but I aim to broadly relate to those who have been coercively assigned a gender category other than Woman but who still inherit much of the legacy of such a category.

Towards an Insurrectionary Transfeminism

Trans people remain strangers and outcasts within much of the contemporary discourses of insurrectionary feminism. Essays about “male-bodied” perpetrators of sexual assault and “socialized men and women” seem to leave much to be analyzed about the ways in which trans people have historically related the functioning of gender systems and the development of capitalism as a system. It is in this context that we discursively intervene with that which we might term insurrectionary trans-feminism, an analysis which distinctively analyzes the ways in which trans bodies relate to the legacy of capitalism and the possibilities of living communism and spreading anarchy. This is distinctly **not** a plea for inclusion, nor is it an articulation of identity politics, but rather an articulation of why we might be invested in insurrection and communization with those who share our desires and perhaps a preliminary set of ideas on how our positionalities might be used in such processes. In order to imagine the possibilities of subversion, however, we must first recognize the historical relations of capitalism to the formulation of the trans subject.

The relation between capitalism and the trans subject is a contentious one. While many theorists such as Leslie Feinberg have sought to piece together a universal, ahistorical narrative of trans people throughout history across the world, we see such a task as ultimately failing to take into account the precise economic and social conditions which gave rise to each specific instance of gender variance. Gender nonconformity is not a stable or coherent phenomenon which appears in history due to the same conditions, rather it contextually can have a multiplicity of meanings. While it could certainly be useful to analyze the ways in which capitalism has instituted binary-based gender systems as a means to organize reproductive labor in colonial contexts with different gender systems, for the purposes of this essay we will begin with the notion of the transsexual in context of the early 20th century United States, where the first narratives of transsexuality began to appear. These narratives are intimately tied to the rise of capitalist ventures in experimental medical procedures which gave rise to the first forms of gender reassignment surgery. By the 1950s, transsexuality had gained public attention in the United States with gender reassignment surgery of Christine Jorgensen. Jorgensen’s narrative, as some narratives just twenty years before her, became a model for the transsexual identity narrative, in which the subject feels that she is in the “wrong body” and that surgery has made her feel whole and relieved the immense feeling of body dysphoria now that she is a real woman. It is in this narrative that we find the experiences of gender dysphoria taking shape to define a concrete subject position of “trans.”

At the same time, as capital has created the ability for trans individuals to modify their bodies in the ways that they see fit, it has also, with biomedical and psychological apparatuses, proliferated the means by which to discipline the trans body. Two of the most notable apparatuses to this effect are the Standards of Care, which enforced rigorous standards of femininity and passibility as a necessary first step towards access to medical technologies of transition, as well as the “charm schools” which accompanied many GID clinics which sought to properly resocialize trans women as “proper ladies” with manners, grace, and all of the feminine wiles of “natural women.” The trans subject’s desires are easily molded into that which can be profitable to capitalism, whether it is countless sessions of laser hair removal sessions, gender reassignment surgeries, or hormone therapy. That is, trans subjectivity is bound to the conditions of capitalism and disciplinary techniques which have given rise to it. We deploy these words carefully, however, as we also recognize the ways in which “radicals” and “feminists” have deployed the very same as a means of constructing trans women as capitalist-created penetrators of vanity and artificial artifacts of femininity. Yet the constructedness of the trans subject and the trans body is no more tied to the history of capitalism and domination than the constructedness of woman as an identity and a body, or the constructedness of racialized identities and bodies.

We do not mean to imply that trans identity is based upon a particular form of body modification or access to medical technology, but rather that these early narratives of trans experience and the disciplinary techniques shaping such identities are foundational in the ways in which trans identity has grown, whether in the broadening terms of constituting a political “trans community” on the basis

of sharing a feeling of dysphoria or the emergence of genderqueer as a politicized subjectivity which has become delight of postmodernism. Transfeminism, then, has emerged as theory dedicated to an articulation of the trans speaking subject. Yet capitalism has an ever expanding amount of room to incorporate an infinite amount of gendered subjectivities which can be rendered value-creating to capital. In this way, trans theory faces limits similar to feminist theory, which has produced a feminized form of capital which is no less brutal in its form. The task, then, is to create an insurrectionary theory which is based on rendering trans bodies without function in the process of value creation, which necessitates their very identity as trans, as woman, as human. As trans people, we feel corporeality forcibly pushed onto us in an attempt to render us intelligible, to use the state of our bodies to comprehend our gender and sell us "more natural-looking" bodies. We feel our bodies outweigh our chosen identities when we interact with others and do not pass. As trans women, as we experience the legacy of trans subjectivity within capitalism, we also feel the weight of the corporeality of women in capitalism crush our existences. We experience the implicit violence in gendered division of labor every time we are raped and beaten and condescended to and treated as a hot she-male sex toy. Yet it is in this experience that we might see the possibilities of human strike for the trans woman.

Trans women experience corporeality in a unique way. While capital hopes to continue to use the female body as proletarian machine to reproduce labor-power, trans women's bodies cannot produce more workers and is constantly already viewed as denaturalized. Perhaps in valorizing this inoperability in reproduction, and willfully extending it to all forms of reproductive labor, we see the potentiality of human strike. Ways of extending this remain to be seen, but in this affront to capitalist-produced nature and matrices of heteronormativity which are crucial to the functioning of capitalism, we see the kinship between the human strike of trans women and the materialization of a non-reproductive, purely negative queer force. It seems that the trans woman too has no future, and thus through the building of this negative force might have a stake in wrecking everything and abolishing herself in the process. In any case, we do not have the answers that will render society inoperable, that will end the social reproduction of this world. Yet as trans women, we know that every strike against capital is a strike against the mechanisms of gender oppression, and that every strike against the gendered violence in our lives is a strike against the machinations of capital.

gender strike is human strike,
some deceptive trannies.

Xenofeminism

A Politics For Alienation

Laboria Cuboniks

ZERO

0x00

Ours is a world in vertigo. It is a world that swarms with technological mediation, interlacing our daily lives with abstraction, virtuality, and complexity. XF constructs a feminism adapted to these realities: a feminism of unprecedented cunning, scale, and vision; a future in which the realization of gender justice and feminist emancipation contribute to a universalist politics assembled from the needs of every human, cutting across race, ability, economic standing, and geographical position. No more futureless repetition on the treadmill of capital, no more submission to the drudgery of labour, productive and reproductive alike, no more reification of the given masked as critique. Our future requires depetrification. XF is not a bid for revolution, but a wager on the long game of history, demanding imagination, dexterity and persistence.

0x01

XF seizes alienation as an impetus to generate new worlds. We are all alienated – but have we ever been otherwise? It is through, and not despite, our alienated condition that we can free ourselves from the muck of immediacy. Freedom is not a given – and it's certainly not given by anything 'natural'. The construction of freedom involves not less but more alienation; alienation is the labour of freedom's construction. Nothing should be accepted as fixed, permanent, or 'given' – neither material conditions nor social forms. XF mutates, navigates and probes every horizon. Anyone who's been deemed 'unnatural' in the face of reigning biological norms, anyone who's experienced injustices wrought in the name of natural order, will realize that the glorification of 'nature' has nothing to offer us – the queer and trans among us, the differently-abled, as well as those who have suffered discrimination due to pregnancy or duties connected to child-rearing. XF is vehemently anti naturalist. Essentialist naturalism reeks of theology – the sooner it is exorcised, the better.

0x02

Why is there so little explicit, organized effort to repurpose technologies for progressive gender political ends? XF seeks to strategically deploy existing technologies to re-engineer the world. Serious risks are built into these tools; they are prone to imbalance, abuse, and exploitation of the weak. Rather than pretending to risk nothing, XF advocates the necessary assembly of techno-political interfaces responsive to these risks. Technology isn't inherently progressive. Its uses are fused with culture in a positive feedback loop that makes linear sequencing, prediction, and absolute caution impossible. Technoscientific innovation must be linked to a collective theoretical and political thinking in which women, queers, and the gender non-conforming play an unparalleled role.

0x03

The real emancipatory potential of technology remains unrealized. Fed by the market, its rapid growth is offset by bloat, and elegant innovation is surrendered to the buyer, whose stagnant world it decorates. Beyond the noisy clutter of commodified craft, the ultimate task lies in engineering technologies to combat unequal access to reproductive and pharmacological tools, environmental cataclysm, economic instability, as well as dangerous forms of unpaid/underpaid labour. Gender inequality still characterizes the fields in which our technologies are conceived, built, and legislated for, while female workers in electronics (to name just one industry) perform some of the worst paid, monotonous and debilitating labour. Such injustice demands structural, machinic and ideological correction.

0x04

Xenofeminism is a rationalism. To claim that reason or rationality is 'by nature' a patriarchal enterprise is to concede defeat. It is true that the canonical 'history of thought' is dominated by men, and it is male hands we see throttling existing institutions of science and technology. But this is precisely why *feminism must be a rationalism* – because of this miserable imbalance, and not despite it. There is no 'feminine' rationality, nor is there a 'masculine' one. Science is not an expression but a suspension of gender. If today it is dominated by masculine egos, then it is at odds with itself – and this contradiction can be leveraged. Reason, like information, wants to be free, and patriarchy cannot give it freedom. *Rationalism must itself be a feminism*. XF marks the point where these claims intersect in a two-way dependency. It names reason as an engine of feminist emancipation, and declares the right of everyone to speak as no one in particular.

INTERRUPT**0x05**

The excess of modesty in feminist agendas of recent decades is not proportionate to the monstrous complexity of our reality, a reality crosshatched with fibre optic cables, radio and microwaves, oil and gas pipelines, aerial and shipping routes, and the unrelenting, simultaneous execution of millions of communication protocols with every passing millisecond. Systematic thinking and structural analysis have largely fallen by the wayside in favour of admirable, but insufficient struggles, bound to fixed localities and fragmented insurrections. Whilst capitalism is understood as a complex and ever-expanding totality, many would-be emancipatory anti-capitalist projects remain profoundly fearful of transitioning to the universal, resisting big-picture speculative politics by condemning them as necessarily oppressive vectors. Such a false guarantee treats universals as absolute, generating a debilitating disjuncture between the thing we seek to depose and the strategies we advance to depose it.

0x06

Global complexity opens us to urgent cognitive and ethical demands. These are Promethean responsibilities that cannot pass unaddressed. Much of twenty-first century feminism – from the remnants of postmodern identity politics to large swathes of contemporary ecofeminism – struggles to adequately address these challenges in a manner capable of producing substantial and enduring change. Xenofeminism endeavours to face up to these obligations as collective agents capable of transitioning between multiple levels of political, material and conceptual organization.

0x07

We are adamantly synthetic, unsatisfied by analysis alone. XF urges constructive oscillation between description and prescription to mobilize the recursive potential of contemporary technologies upon gender, sexuality and disparities of power. Given that there are a range of gendered challenges specifically relating to life in a digital age – from sexual harassment via social media, to doxxing, privacy, and the protection of online images – the situation requires a feminism at ease with computation. Today, it is imperative that we develop an ideological infrastructure that both supports and facilitates feminist interventions within connective, networked elements of the contemporary world. Xenofeminism is about more than digital self-defence and freedom from patriarchal networks. We want to cultivate the exercise

of positive freedom – freedom-to rather than simply freedom-from – and urge feminists to equip themselves with the skills to redeploy existing technologies and invent novel cognitive and material tools in the service of common ends.

0x08

The radical opportunities afforded by developing (and alienating) forms of technological mediation should no longer be put to use in the exclusive interests of capital, which, by design, only benefits the few. There are incessantly proliferating tools to be annexed, and although no one can claim their comprehensive accessibility, digital tools have never been more widely available or more sensitive to appropriation than they are today. This is not an elision of the fact that a large amount of the world's poor is adversely affected by the expanding technological industry (from factory workers labouring under abominable conditions to the Ghanaian villages that have become a repository for the e-waste of the global powers) but an explicit acknowledgement of these conditions as a target for elimination. Just as the invention of the stock market was also the invention of the crash, Xenofeminism knows that technological innovation must equally anticipate its systemic condition responsively.

TRAP

0x09

XF rejects illusion and melancholy as political inhibitors. Illusion, as the blind presumption that the weak can prevail over the strong with no strategic coordination, leads to unfulfilled promises and unmarshalled drives. This is a politics that, in wanting so much, ends up building so little. Without the labour of large-scale, collective social organisation, declaring one's desire for global change is nothing more than wishful thinking. On the other hand, melancholy – so endemic to the left – teaches us that emancipation is an extinct species to be wept over and that blips of negation are the best we can hope for. At its worst, such an attitude generates nothing but political lassitude, and at its best, installs an atmosphere of pervasive despair which too often degenerates into factionalism and petty moralizing. The malady of melancholia only compounds political inertia, and – under the guise of being realistic – relinquishes all hope of calibrating the world otherwise. It is against such maladies that XF inoculates.

0x0A

We take politics that exclusively valorize the local in the guise of subverting currents of global abstraction, to be insufficient. To secede from or disavow capitalist machinery will not make it disappear. Likewise, suggestions to pull the lever on the emergency brake of embedded velocities, the call to slow down and scale back, is a possibility available only to the few – a violent particularity of exclusivity – ultimately entailing catastrophe for the many. Refusing to think beyond the microcommunity, to foster connections between fractured insurgencies, to consider how emancipatory tactics can be scaled up for universal implementation, is to remain satisfied with temporary and defensive gestures. XF is an affirmative creature on the offensive, fiercely insisting on the possibility of large-scale social change for all of our alien kin.

0x0B

A sense of the world's volatility and artificiality seems to have faded from contemporary queer and feminist politics, in favour of a plural but static constellation of gender identities, in whose bleak light

equations of the good and the natural are stubbornly restored. While having (perhaps) admirably expanded thresholds of 'tolerance', too often we are told to seek solace in unfreedom, staking claims on being 'born' this way, as if offering an excuse with nature's blessing. All the while, the heteronormative centre chugs on. XF challenges this centrifugal referent, knowing full well that sex and gender are exemplary of the fulcrum between norm and fact, between freedom and compulsion. To tilt the fulcrum in the direction of nature is a defensive concession at best, and a retreat from what makes trans and queer politics more than just a lobby: that it is an arduous assertion of freedom against an order that seemed immutable. Like every myth of the given, a stable foundation is fabricated for a real world of chaos, violence, and doubt. The 'given' is sequestered into the private realm as a certainty, whilst retreating on fronts of public consequences. When the possibility of transition became real and known, the tomb under Nature's shrine cracked, and new histories – bristling with futures – escaped the old order of 'sex'. The disciplinary grid of gender is in no small part an attempt to mend that shattered foundation, and tame the lives that escaped it. The time has now come to tear down this shrine entirely, and not bow down before it in a piteous apology for what little autonomy has been won.

0x0C

If 'cyberspace' once offered the promise of escaping the strictures of essentialist identity categories, the climate of contemporary social media has swung forcefully in the other direction, and has become a theatre where these prostrations to identity are performed. With these curatorial practices come puritanical rituals of moral maintenance, and these stages are too often overrun with the disavowed pleasures of accusation, shaming, and denunciation. Valuable platforms for connection, organization, and skill-sharing become clogged with obstacles to productive debate positioned as if they are debate. These puritanical politics of shame – which fetishize oppression as if it were a blessing, and cloud the waters in moralistic frenzies – leave us cold. We want neither clean hands nor beautiful souls, neither virtue nor terror. We want superior forms of corruption.

0x0D

What this shows is that the task of engineering platforms for social emancipation and organization cannot ignore the cultural and semiotic mutations these platforms afford. What requires reengineering are the memetic parasites arousing and coordinating behaviours in ways occluded by their hosts' self image; failing this, memes like 'anonymity', 'ethics', 'social justice' and 'privilege-checking' host social dynamisms at odds with the often-commendable intentions with which they're taken up. The task of collective self-mastery requires a hyperstitional manipulation of desire's puppet-strings, and deployment of semiotic operators over a terrain of highly networked cultural systems. The will will always be corrupted by the memes in which it traffics, but nothing prevents us from instrumentalizing this fact, and calibrating it in view of the ends it desires.

PARITY

0x0E

Xenofeminism is gender-abolitionist. 'Gender abolitionism' is not code for the eradication of what are currently considered 'gendered' traits from the human population. Under patriarchy, such a project could only spell disaster – the notion of what is 'gendered' sticks disproportionately to the feminine. But even if this balance were redressed, we have no interest in seeing the sexuate diversity of the world reduced. Let a hundred sexes bloom! 'Gender abolitionism' is shorthand for the ambition to

construct a society where traits currently assembled under the rubric of gender, no longer furnish a grid for the asymmetric operation of power. 'Race abolitionism' expands into a similar formula – that the struggle must continue until currently racialized characteristics are no more a basis of discrimination than the color of one's eyes. Ultimately, every emancipatory abolitionism must incline towards the horizon of class abolitionism, since it is in capitalism where we encounter oppression in its transparent, denaturalized form: you're not exploited or oppressed because you are a wage labourer or poor; you are a labourer or poor because you are exploited.

0x0F

Xenofeminism understands that the viability of emancipatory abolitionist projects – the abolition of class, gender, and race – hinges on a profound reworking of the universal. The universal must be grasped as generic, which is to say, intersectional. Intersectionality is not the morcellation of collectives into a static fuzz of cross-referenced identities, but a political orientation that slices through every particular, refusing the crass pigeonholing of bodies. This is not a universal that can be imposed from above, but built from the bottom up – or, better, laterally, opening new lines of transit across an uneven landscape. This non-absolute, generic universality must guard against the facile tendency of conflation with bloated, unmarked particulars – namely Eurocentric universalism – whereby the male is mistaken for the sexless, the white for raceless, the cis for the real, and so on. Absent such a universal, the abolition of class will remain a bourgeois fantasy, the abolition of race will remain a tacit white-supremacism, and the abolition of gender will remain a thinly veiled misogyny, even – especially – when prosecuted by avowed feminists themselves. (The absurd and reckless spectacle of so many self-proclaimed 'gender abolitionists' campaign against trans women is proof enough of this.)

0x10

From the postmoderns, we have learnt to burn the facades of the false universal and dispel such confusions; from the moderns, we have learnt to sift new universals from the ashes of the false. Xenofeminism seeks to construct a coalitional politics, a politics without the infection of purity. Wielding the universal requires thoughtful qualification and precise self-reflection so as to become a ready-to-hand tool for multiple political bodies and something that can be appropriated against the numerous oppressions that transect with gender and sexuality. The universal is no blueprint, and rather than dictate its uses in advance, we propose XF as a platform. The very process of construction is therefore understood to be a negentropic, iterative, and continual refashioning. Xenofeminism seeks to be a mutable architecture that, like open source software, remains available for perpetual modification and enhancement following the navigational impulse of militant ethical reasoning. Open, however, does not mean undirected. The most durable systems in the world owe their stability to the way they train order to emerge as an 'invisible hand' from apparent spontaneity; or exploit the inertia of investment and sedimentation. We should not hesitate to learn from our adversaries or the successes and failures of history. With this in mind, XF seeks ways to seed an order that is equitable and just, injecting it into the geometry of freedoms these platforms afford.

ADJUST

0x11

Our lot is cast with technoscience, where nothing is so sacred that it cannot be reengineered and transformed so as to widen our aperture of freedom, extending to gender and the human. To say that

nothing is sacred, that nothing is transcendent or protected from the will to know, to tinker and to hack, is to say that nothing is supernatural. 'Nature' – understood here, as the unbounded arena of science – is all there is. And so, in tearing down melancholy and illusion; the unambitious and the non-scaleable; the libidinized puritanism of certain online cultures, and Nature as an un-remakeable given, we find that our normative anti-naturalism has pushed us towards an unflinching ontological naturalism. There is nothing, we claim, that cannot be studied scientifically and manipulated technologically.

0x12

This does not mean that the distinction between the ontological and the normative, between fact and value, is simply cut and dried. The vectors of normative anti-naturalism and ontological naturalism span many ambivalent battlefields. The project of untangling what ought to be from what is, of dissociating freedom from fact, will from knowledge, is, indeed, an infinite task. There are many lacunae where desire confronts us with the brutality of fact, where beauty is indissociable from truth. Poetry, sex, technology and pain are incandescent with this tension we have traced. But give up on the task of revision, release the reins and slacken that tension, and these filaments instantly dim.

CARRY

0x13

The potential of early, text-based internet culture for countering repressive gender regimes, generating solidarity among marginalised groups, and creating new spaces for experimentation that ignited cyberfeminism in the nineties has clearly waned in the twenty-first century. The dominance of the visual in today's online interfaces has reinstated familiar modes of identity policing, power relations and gender norms in self-representation. But this does not mean that cyberfeminist sensibilities belong to the past. Sorting the subversive possibilities from the oppressive ones latent in today's web requires a feminism sensitive to the insidious return of old power structures, yet savvy enough to know how to exploit the potential. Digital technologies are not separable from the material realities that underwrite them; they are connected so that each can be used to alter the other towards different ends. Rather than arguing for the primacy of the virtual over the material, or the material over the virtual, xenofeminism grasps points of power and powerlessness in both, to unfold this knowledge as effective interventions in our jointly composed reality.

0x14

Intervention in more obviously material hegemonies is just as crucial as intervention in digital and cultural ones. Changes to the built environment harbour some of the most significant possibilities in the reconfiguration of the horizons of women and queers. As the embodiment of ideological constellations, the production of space and the decisions we make for its organization are ultimately articulations about 'us' and reciprocally, how a 'we' can be articulated. With the potential to foreclose, restrict, or open up future social conditions, xenofeminists must become attuned to the language of architecture as a vocabulary for collective choreo-graphy – the coordinated writing of space.

0x15

From the street to the home, domestic space too must not escape our tentacles. So profoundly ingrained, domestic space has been deemed impossible to disembody, where the home as norm has been

conflated with home as fact, as an un-remakeable given. Stultifying 'domestic realism' has no home on our horizon. Let us set sights on augmented homes of shared laboratories, of communal media and technical facilities. The home is ripe for spatial transformation as an integral component in any process of feminist futurity. But this cannot stop at the garden gates. We see too well that reinventions of family structure and domestic life are currently only possible at the cost of either withdrawing from the economic sphere – the way of the commune – or bearing its burdens manifold – the way of the single parent. If we want to break the inertia that has kept the moribund figure of the nuclear family unit in place, which has stubbornly worked to isolate women from the public sphere, and men from the lives of their children, while penalizing those who stray from it, we must overhaul the material infrastructure and break the economic cycles that lock it in place. The task before us is twofold, and our vision necessarily stereoscopic: we must engineer an economy that liberates reproductive labour and family life, while building models of familiarity free from the deadening grind of wage labour.

0x16

From the home to the body, the articulation of a proactive politics for biotechnical intervention and hormones presses. Hormones hack into gender systems possessing political scope extending beyond the aesthetic calibration of individual bodies. Thought structurally, the distribution of hormones – who or what this distribution prioritizes or pathologizes – is of paramount import. The rise of the internet and the hydra of black market pharmacies it let loose – together with a publicly accessible archive of endocrinological knowhow – was instrumental in wresting control of the hormonal economy away from 'gatekeeping' institutions seeking to mitigate threats to established distributions of the sexual. To trade in the rule of bureaucrats for the market is, however, not a victory in itself. These tides need to rise higher. We ask whether the idiom of 'gender hacking' is extensible into a long-range strategy, a strategy for wetware akin to what hacker culture has already done for software – constructing an entire universe of free and open source platforms that is the closest thing to a practicable communism many of us have ever seen. Without the foolhardy endangerment of lives, can we stitch together the embryonic promises held before us by pharmaceutical 3D printing ('Reactionware'), grassroots telemedical abortion clinics, gender hacktivist and DIY-HRT forums, and so on, to assemble a platform for free and open source medicine?

0x17

From the global to the local, from the cloud to our bodies, xenofeminism avows the responsibility in constructing new institutions of technomaterialist hegemonic proportions. Like engineers who must conceive of a total structure as well as the molecular parts from which it is constructed, XF emphasises the importance of the mesopolitical sphere against the limited effectiveness of local gestures, creation of autonomous zones, and sheer horizontalism, just as it stands against transcendent, or top-down impositions of values and norms. The mesopolitical arena of xenofeminism's universalist ambitions comprehends itself as a mobile and intricate network of transits between these polarities. As pragmatists, we invite contamination as a mutational driver between such frontiers.

OVERFLOW

0x18

XF asserts that adapting our behaviour for an era of Promethean complexity is a labour requiring patience, but a ferocious patience at odds with 'waiting'. Calibrating a political hegemony or insurgent

memeplex not only implies the creation of material infra-structures to make the values it articulates explicit, but places demands on us as subjects. How are we to become hosts of this new world? How do we build a better semiotic parasite – one that arouses the desires we want to desire, that orchestrates not an autophagic orgy of indignity or rage, but an emancipatory and egalitarian community buttressed by new forms of unselfish solidarity and collective self-mastery?

0x19

Is xenofeminism a programme? Not if this means anything so crude as a recipe, or a single-purpose tool by which a determinate problem is solved. We prefer to think like the schemer or lisper, who seeks to construct a new language in which the problem at hand is immersed, so that solutions for it, and for any number of related problems, might unfurl with ease. Xenofeminism is a platform, an incipient ambition to construct a new language for sexual politics – a language that seizes its own methods as materials to be reworked, and incrementally bootstraps itself into existence. We understand that the problems we face are systemic and interlocking, and that any chance of global success depends on infecting myriad skills and contexts with the logic of XF. Ours is a transformation of seeping, directed subsumption rather than rapid overthrow; it is a transformation of deliberate construction, seeking to submerge the white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy in a sea of procedures that soften its shell and dismantle its defenses, so as to build a new world from the scraps.

0x1A

Xenofeminism indexes the desire to construct an alien future with a triumphant X on a mobile map. This X does not mark a destination. It is the insertion of a topological-keyframe for the formation of a new logic. In affirming a future untethered to the repetition of the present, we militate for ampliative capacities, for spaces of freedom with a richer geometry than the aisle, the assembly line, and the feed. We need new affordances of perception and action unblinkered by naturalised identities. In the name of feminism, 'Nature' shall no longer be a refuge of injustice, or a basis for any political justification whatsoever!

If nature is unjust, change nature!

**‘We’re Here, We’re Queer, We’re
Anarchists’: The Nature of Identification
and Subjectivity Among Black Blocs**

Edward Avery-Natale

2010

Abstract

At the G20 protests in Pittsburgh in 2009 a popular chant included the phrase, “We’re here! We’re queer! We’re anarchists, we’ll fuck you up.” However, it is virtually impossible that every member of the black bloc using this chant self-identified as queer in their day-to-day life. In this article, I argue that the presentation of self among black bloc participants, especially the masking of the face with a black bandana and the wearing of black itself, allows for the destruction of a previously held identification and the temporary recreation of a new identification. I emphasize theories developed by Deleuze & Guattari and Giorgio Agamben. I also analyze a zine produced by the organizers of the resistance to G20 in Pittsburgh to show that my interpretation of the black bloc subjectivity is reflected in the claims of black bloc participants.

Introduction

During the protests of the G20 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2009, black bloc groups took to the streets to disrupt the meetings and the functioning of the city, as is often the case at trade summit protests. During at least one of these protests, a chant developed: “We’re here! We’re Queer! We’re anarchists, we’ll fuck you up!” What is fascinating about this chant is the phrase “We’re Queer,” as there were clearly far too many anarchists participating in the black bloc to actually be made up only of those who would self-identify as queer.⁸⁰ Instead, there were a number of individuals who would not have maintained a queer identification in their day-to-day lives that nonetheless engaged in a chant that involved taking on that identification, at least momentarily.

This momentary identification as queer during the black bloc demonstrates the postmodern fluidity of identitarian subjectivities. The subject is capable of embracing a multitude of subject positions for identification, and then equally capable of casting any one of these same identifications away when it no longer serves the individual. This is, in fact, why the term ‘identification’ is itself superior to the term ‘identity.’ Brubaker and Cooper (2000) emphasize that the term identification forefronts the fluid and always-shifting nature of the self. This is represented by the shift from the noun ‘identity,’ which implies a singular thing that exists in the world to the verb ‘identification,’ which emphasizes the act of taking on a self.⁸¹ Though this multiplicity and fluidity of identification fits the nature of our understanding of subjectivity in the contemporary postmodern age in which humans are “to be understood as multiple and without center” (Call, 2002: 130), it remains the case that people regularly attempt to maintain the illusion of a singular identity. In other words, while we may know that identification is partial, fluid, and multiple, individuals usually attempt to present the fantasmatic imagining of a single identity to the outside world. This is often done through narrativity, a process in which we tell stories about ourselves, complete with antagonists, plots, and characters (Vila, 2000). These stories structure what would otherwise be our chaotic identifications into the illusion of stable identity.

So, then the black-bloc’s adoption of a ‘queer’ identification raises the following question: why is it that these individuals at this time were capable of presenting a queer self when some of them would not self-identify as queer in their daily lives? What was it about this moment that produced this possibility? If individuals normally strive for consistency through the creation of an illusory stable identity, what changed in the black bloc? In this article, I argue that the nature of black bloc aesthetics, and specifically

⁸⁰If it were, this would mostly likely have then been a pink bloc, which did emerge during the University of Pittsburgh riots at night.

⁸¹The term ‘identification’ resolves Alberto Melucci’s concern in *Challenging Codes* where he claimed, “the term ‘identity’ is conceptually unsatisfactory: it conveys too strongly the idea of the permanence of a subject. At this moment, however, no other designation seems in possession of the capacity to replace it in its purpose” (1996: 72). I put forward that ‘identification’ is just such a designation.

the nature of the mask, allows this to occur. I argue that the black bloc presentation allows for a negation of the illusion of identity and the temporary possibility of a Deleuzian deterritorialized being, which I relate to the concept of the *whatever*-singularity developed by Giorgio Agamben.

Finally, a methodological note: a number of the authors used in this article have theoretical differences between them that are not addressed as a part of this article, as their similarities are more important to my goals here. For the purposes of this paper, I am more interested in the effects of the ideas developed by these authors and their similarities (which I believe are many) than with the contradictions between them that may span their many important works. This is not to downplay the significance of these differences, but only to state that for the purposes of the analysis developed here their similarities are more salient.

What are Black Blocs?

Black blocs have become common at protest actions, especially in the West. Though first developed by activists in Germany in the early 1980s, black blocs did not gain more widespread notoriety until the World Trade Organization (WTO) riots in Seattle in 1999 (Highleyman, 2002). Today, they are most commonly seen at anti-globalization mobilizations, such as the G20 in Pittsburgh, and other actions against neo-liberalism and capitalism, such as the Olympic riots in Vancouver and the ongoing insurrectionary activities in Greece, where anarchists take to the streets to protest, riot, fight the cops, and ostentatiously present their discontent with capitalism and the state. The aesthetic of a black bloc primarily includes wearing black pants, black boots or sneakers, a black hooded sweatshirt, and a black bandana with which to cover one's face. These bandannas operate as masks, tied around the lower half of one's face, so that the wearer's eyes and forehead are still visible, but the nose, mouth, cheeks, and chin are covered. This creates an image not dissimilar from that of the bandit in presentations of the early American 'frontier.' Many black bloc participants will also sometimes wear gas masks and goggles to protect themselves from tear gas.

Black bloc tactics most often involve a combination of property destruction, such as smashing the windows of corporate stores like Starbucks and McDonald's, and carnivalesque performances. These strategies are often used to do as much damage as possible and to be as disruptive to the normal functioning of the host city's businesses and government while aiming to do no harm to people, with the possible exception of police who may be seen as the enemy in an ongoing class- or social-war. David Graeber (2002) describes the black bloc tactics as follows:

Black Blocs [...] have all, in their own ways, been trying to map out a completely new territory [...] They're attempting to invent what many call a 'new language' of civil disobedience, combining elements of street theatre, festival and what can only be called non-violent warfare — non-violent in the sense adopted by, say, Black Bloc anarchists, in that it eschews any direct physical harm to human beings (Graeber, 2002: 66).

The most obvious goal of property destruction is to drain city and corporate money, or at least to inconvenience them. This property destruction is not unfocused, but emphasizes specific targets that are seen as representing the neo-liberal hegemonic order. For example, "Banks and oil companies often become targets, as do retail outlets that sell sweatshop merchandise and fast food chain restaurants that contribute to the global monoculture" (Highleyman, 2002).

The goal of these activists is not to make demands on capital or the state but instead to "demand nothing" (for example, see Anonymous, 2010 and Schwarz, Sagris, and Void Network, 2010: 192–4). Alberto Melucci, predating the Seattle riots but recognizing the growing trends among activists, pointed out the anarchic trends among social movements, including the lack of demands, in his 1996 book,

claiming that activists, “*ignore the political system and generally display disinterest towards the idea of seizing power*” (1996: 102). Richard J.F. Day (2005) has also noted this trend in what he calls the newest social movements, of which black blocs would be one part.

These movements relate to the politics of boredom articulated by the situationists during May 1968 in which activists maintained a desire for a moment of perpetual ‘festival.’ This festival is a moment of political ‘play,’ of constant shifting and performance, which can be described as a politics of the ‘gesture.’ Lewis Call describes the importance of this political development in his book *Postmodern Anarchism*:

Indeed, the concept of the gesture was part of the definition of Situationism itself [...] These gestures might be artistic or overtly political, satirical, or subversive. Above all, they were meant to be playful [...] The Situationist ‘play ethic’ was meant as an antidote for the quasi-Puritan work ethic endemic to both capitalism and institutional communism. And the gestural praxis of the Situationists was meant to take the revolution into the strange and unexplored terrain of the symbol (Call, 2002: 102).

This lack of demands on the system combined with the attacks on private property and the playfulness of some of the tactics results in a series of protest movements that aim to be virtually impossible to incorporate into the systems of control. This latter point is particularly important. Because “the best way to ensure the exclusion of a radical social force is to ensure its *inclusion*” (Day, 2005: 29), the only way to avoid being made impotent is to refuse inclusion, and one way to do this is to make no demands on the system and to step outside of the traditional boundaries of activist discourse through festival and carnival.

Black blocs also emphasize acting out and representing, or temporarily creating, the world in which they want to exist, without closing off the possibility of different acts in the future. In other words, while one lives, to the best of one’s ability, as a representation of the yet-to-come, this is done without assuming that this is stable or permanent, as the yet-to-come must always remain open. Alberto Melucci has emphasized the importance of this way of acting, claiming that contemporary movement participants believe, “If I cannot become what I want to be starting today I will not be interested in that change” (1996: 184). This relates to the lack of demand-making, as these activists articulate a desire for *creating* the new world in which they wish to exist rather than simply asking the state or capital to reform themselves into something less vile. Furthermore, the way Melucci phrases the claim indicates that these activists do not see themselves as having achieved or aiming to achieve some sort of permanence in their acts, but that it is a matter of becoming and starting, which can be permanent and ongoing.

Black blocs, then, represent one counterpoint to capitalist hegemony. They are something that precludes incorporation into the systems of capitalism and the state by refusing to make demands of that system. Black blocs are meant to represent the future possibilities of the better world in which the anarchists are fighting for but that they are also building alongside the continued existence of this world. As I will show later, this performance of something other than the system under which we live is particularly important.

I also believe, however, that the masks worn by black bloc activists offer an extra possibility not yet fully developed in the literature. While black bloc gear allows for the camouflaging of one’s identity, I believe that there can be more to this point than simply hiding one’s face from the police, FBI, and other authorities. As I explore below, I believe that the masks worn by black bloc activists particularly allow for the adoption and rejection of a variety of identifications (in the sense of subjectivity, not in the sense of one’s official name, address, and so forth) one may wish to take on. Furthermore, I will show that literature which emerged out of the G20 protests in Pittsburgh indicates that at least some of the participants in these actions also think of black bloc in this way.

The Black Mask

“Get ready to blend in, to put it on and disappear [...] I could be anyone, anywhere [...] To have a brand new identity [...] or to be no one at all this time [...] Just give me a black mask.”

— The (International) Noise Conspiracy: Black Mask

As stated above, masks are a consistent part of the black bloc aesthetic, allowing the anarchist to both avoid external identifying by recording devices and also granting at least some small amount of protection from tear gas. However, I believe that there is more to the function of the mask. The opening quote to this section includes lyrics from the song “Black Mask” by the anarchist-punk band “The (International) Noise Conspiracy”. The lines I selected from the song emphasize the point I want to make about what a black mask allows the black bloc participant to do. As I will show here, the mask allows for the erasure of identification, for the participant to become anyone or no one, to have a brand new identification, such as the queer identification at the G20 protests in Pittsburgh.

A mask, of course, covers at least part of one's face. The face itself, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is that which represents the signification of the subject; that “the form of the signifier has a substance, or the signifier has a body, namely the Face (the principle of the faciality traits, which constitutes a reterritorialization)” (1987: 117). This aspect of faces can be traced to the origin of the word face itself, which comes from *facies* in ancient medicine. This term meant a surface appearance that characterized a type, which connected not directly to anatomy but to the world around the *facies* as well as a relationship between subjects (Calefato, 2004: 68). Thus, the face is the signification of the self in relation to others, and, according to Deleuze and Guattari, it is upon the face that one will reterritorialize after having deterritorialized into a rhizomatic line of flight. In short, this means that once one has [always temporarily] rejected subjectivity, thus entering into a line of flight, one will always reterritorialize in some way, meaning that one will regain subjectivity, and this reterritorialization is always onto a ‘face.’

However, the face-as-subjectivity includes the possibility for the face to be a metaphor for the representation of one's subjectivity. Thus, the face or faciality is not limited to the frontal presentation of the head. Instead, the face can expand or reach out to other parts of the self, turning other aspects of the individual into a faciality. This too relates to the ancient *facies*, as the face was a “moveable territory, whose signs Hippocratic medicine [...] scrutinized, not in terms of anatomy, but in their connection with the surrounding world and with one another, in that state of otherness and oneness intrinsic to every living being” (Calefato, 2004: 68). This expansion of the face can occur, for example, through fetishization, when one allows another portion of the body to represent the self. In other words, the face is the signification of one's subjectivity, and as such other aspects of this representation can obtain ‘face-ness.’ Deleuze and Guattari articulate this idea as follows: “The face is a surface [...] if the head and its elements are facialized, the entire body can also be facialized” (1987: 170). But, of course, the face often facializes on the frontward-facing head in our culture, and we often experience the other's subjectivity here first. This is, of course, not inherently true and could be otherwise, but it is often the case.

Thus, to focus on the face-qua-face of the forward facing head for a moment, if we can make the broad statement that this is where we expect facialization and subjectification to occur most readily for many people, then what occurs when one masks this surface, as is done during a black bloc? According to Deleuze and Guattari, when masking the face,

Either the mask assures the head's belonging to the body, its becoming-animal, as was the case in primitive [sic] societies. Or, as is the case now, the mask assures the erection, the construction of the face, the facialization of the head and the body: the mask is now the

face itself, the abstraction or operation of the face. The inhumanity of the face. Never does the face assume a prior signifier or subject [...] The face is a politics (1987: 181).

Thus, “the face holds within its rectangle or circle a whole set of traits, *faciality traits*, which it subsumes and places at the service of significance and subjectification” (ibid., 188). In other words, the face is that which signifies subjectification and the mask itself comes to represent this subjectivity; the mask erases the old subject and represents the new subject.

The nature of masking as the erasure of the initial subject that allows for the becoming of something else is also that which shows human subjectivity to be multiple and fantasmatic. In other words, by using the mask to erase a subjectivity, one is also showing the imaginary nature of stable subjectivity itself. This is recognized by Slavoj Žižek in his recent brief piece, “The Neighbor in Burka”:

From a Freudian perspective, face is the ultimate mask that conceals the horror of the Neighbor-Thing: face is what makes the Neighbor *le semblable*, a fellow-man with whom we can identify and empathize [...] This then, is why a covered face causes such anxiety: because it confronts us directly with the abyss of the Other-Thing, with the Neighbor in its uncanny dimension. The very covering-up of the face obliterates a protective shield, so that the Other-Thing stares at us directly [...] What if we go a step further and imagine a woman ‘taking off’ the skin of her face itself, so that what we see beneath her face is precisely an anonymous dark smooth burka-like surface with a narrow slit for the gaze? ‘Love thy neighbor!’ means, at its most radical, precisely the impossible-real love for this de-subjectivized subject, for this monstrous dark blot cut with a slit/gaze (Žižek, 2010).

In other words, from a psychoanalytic perspective, the face is itself a mask which conceals the nature of subjectivity as a nothing disguised as a something; we are never a single unified self, but only imagine ourselves as such in order to fulfill the Lacanian empty signifier. The elimination of the face as the representation of subjectivity through masking, in Žižek’s case the Burka, confronts the subject with the subconscious experience of their own lack — it makes the lack of the reality of a single unified self obvious by presenting the other with a desubjectified other. In the case of the black mask worn during black blocs, we may say that this same thing occurs. However, the difference is that the black bloc participant wants this lack to be embraced, while Žižek’s neighbour is horrified by the confrontation with the subject of the lack.

Thus, when one blocks the face through masking, one halts the experience of the previously existing subject-hood, allowing for the subject to take on a new subjectivity of choice, assuming that they are embracing this lack.⁸² This is what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they say, “the mask is now the face itself,” the mask allows for something similar to a becoming-*whatever* in Giorgio Agamben’s language. For Agamben, this whatever is the whatever-singularity:

WHATEVER is the figure of pure singularity. Whatever singularity has no identity, it is not determinate with respect to a concept, but neither is it simply indeterminate; rather it is determined only through its relation to an *idea*, that is, to the totality of its possibilities (Agamben, 1993: 68.7).

It is, then, not the case that the masked whatever-singularity cannot become a something (in the case above, a queer-anarchist), it is only the case that this something must be both temporary and partial,

⁸²This matter of choosing to embrace the erasure of subjectivity is particularly important. While Žižek shows us that any hiding of the face might expose one as the Other-Thing, erasing assumed identity, it does not seem to be the case that through this hiding one always *necessarily* creates a new subjectivity. Instead, it is the matter of making this choice during the black bloc that allows for this, a choice that is often not made, for example, by a veiled bride.

but also in relation to an idea that is equally temporary and partial. The mask itself allows for this temporality and partiality as it erases subjectivity and allows the subject to take on other subjectivities. One adopts the identification that is useful for the action, but this identification can itself be temporary and may be rejected when another one is useful or when one un.masks. In any case, this is in relation to an idea, anarchism, and the totality of possibilities, meaning *possible* identifications: one could be many different possible somethings, but often only obtains specific identifications.

David Graeber points out this nature of the mask when discussing a black bloc at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City where a number of anarchists wore masks with the following inscribed on the margins:

We will remain faceless because we refuse the spectacle of celebrity, because we are everyone, because the carnival beckons, because the world is upside down, because we are everywhere. By wearing masks, we show that who we are is not as important as what we want, and what we want is everything for everyone (as cited in Graeber, 2009: 148).

Here we see both the importance of the erasure of identity — remaining faceless, becoming everyone, refusing the spectacle of celebrity — and also the importance of the carnivalesque nature of black bloc. Also interestingly, this was inscribed on the sides of masks that were themselves printed with the image of a face that was not the face of the participant wearing the mask, thus literally creating a new face for the de-faced black bloc subject.

Additionally, while I will reflect more on the concept of ‘demanding nothing’ later, here I must address the apparent tension between the idea of refusing demands and the apparent fact that anarchists nonetheless express desires, represented above by the claim that they want everything for everyone. The important point here is not that anarchists have no desires or have no ideas of what they hope to achieve. If that were the case it would be impossible for them to even identify as anarchists or anti-capitalists, as each of these identitarian labels implies a desire or want. What must be understood is that demanding nothing means refusing to make demands on capital and the state, instead aiming to create something entirely new themselves.

The black bloc aesthetic then is an erasure of identification; it allows for the masked anarchist to become the whatever-singularity, and as such to become anything, such as the queer of the aforementioned chant. The black bloc erases the prior facialization, but as Deleuze and Guattari tell us, the facialization spreads across the entire body, the entire body can become a face. Thus, the erasure of the previously existing identity can also spread across the entirety of the body: the black bloc activist is dressed in black from head to toe, creating the entire body as the face of the anarchist, who in the case of the chant above is also capable of taking on the identification of ‘queer.’ That the subject wears black when doing this is not a coincidence, but relates to the very nature of blackness as a style of clothing that “makes explicit an obliteration of meaning, a kind of physical absorption of all light rays that transforms the body dressed in black into a transparent, or invisible, entity” (Calefato, 2004: 110).

However, Deleuze and Guattari also tell us that deterritorializations, the obliteration of meaning and subjectification, are always partial and never wholly accomplished. So while the deterritorialization of the masking is a line of flight away from subjectivity and toward rhizomatic becoming, “Deterritorialization must be thought of as a perfectly positive power that has degrees and thresholds (epistrata), is always relative, and has reterritorialization as its flipside or complement” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 54). In other words, a deterritorialization always necessitates a reterritorialization, one can never become completely and permanently rhizomatic, while one may reject subjectivity, one will always become re-subjectified.

The erasure of subjectification performed by the black bloc aesthetic then always necessitates a returning to identity. The subject will first reterritorialize onto the anarchist subjectivity and then, in

this case, onto the queer subjectivity. In fact, the black bloc cannot prevent a reterritorialization onto the identification of the anarchist because this subjectivity is necessary for the progression of the black bloc; the subjectivity of ‘anarchist’ is necessary for the goal of insurrection and revolution, thus the erasure is partial until after the insurrection; the mask erases subjectivity, but because the mask itself is a signifier of the anarchist, one will always reterritorialize onto an anarchist subjectivity, even if that subjectivity is a hyphenated one, such as with the queer-anarchist. It is, then, the queer that is the secondary reterritorialization in this case, and the face becomes a queer-anarchist face.

This inability to permanently deterritorialize away from all subjectivity, including that of the anarchist, is the truest meaning of the statement by Jean Genet in Paris 1968, “C’est triste à dire, mais je ne pense que l’on puisse vaincre sans les drapeaux rouges et noirs. Mais il faut détruire après [Unfortunately, I don’t think we can win without the red and black flags. But they will be destroyed afterwards]” (Crime-thInc, 2008: 11). Red and black flags are a frequent signifier of anarchist-communism, black signifying anarchy and red signifying communism. However, the very existence of the flags also promotes external subjectification as a singular identity, anarchist, rather than the liberation of becoming *whatever*.

The same could be said of the black masks — they are necessary for contemporary anarchists, but afterwards we must take off and destroy these masks. The black masks remain necessary because they allow for the anarchist to become the representation of the post-hegemonic yet-to-come, that future which we fight to obtain. The whatever of the black bloc then is a *manner* in Agamben’s language, in that it is “a *manner of rising forth*; not a being that is *in* this or that mode, but a being that is *its* mode of being, and thus, while remaining singular and not indifferent, is multiple and valid for all” (Agamben, 1993: 28.8). This validity relates back to the idea of refusing demands. The anarchists in the black bloc do not wish to have the state meet their demands, instead they represent that which could be and which all could become. This is represented in a phrase from the Greek riots of the winter of 2008, where black blocs and masks were prevalent, and later the title of a recent book on these riots, *We Are An Image From The Future* (Schwarz, Sagris, and Void Network, 2010); they represent that which may be but is not yet here.

Do Black Bloc Participants See It This Way?

In order to properly understand black blocs we must not only understand the aesthetic, but also how some of those participating in a black bloc see themselves during the act. Might participants in black blocs believe that identification can be erased and adopted freely through masking and the wearing of black? Did some of the participants from G20 in Pittsburgh believe this when taking on the queer identification? Do they see their presentation as that which predates the yet-to-come? And do they believe that they are demanding nothing? And, in the end, will they have to destroy the anarchist subjectivity just as they destroy all others? In order to describe this, I will look to a zine titled *The Enemy of Mankind Speaks Power* that came out of the organizers of the G20 resistance in Pittsburgh.⁸³ As I will show, I believe that this communiqué does in fact indicate that a number of the other participants in the G20 black blocs in Pittsburgh may see masking in the way that I have described above.

In the section of *The Enemy of Mankind Speaks Power* titled “My Preferred Gender Pronoun is Negation” that deals most specifically with queerness and the relationship between queerness and black

⁸³ *The Enemy of Mankind Speaks Power* has no author(s) associated with it, thus erasing the identitarian subjectivity of authorhood. Additionally, the zine is not available anywhere on the internet. The goal of the producers of this zine was to show that the human-to-human networks of sharing are still valuable, and thus they never created a web-accessed version. In the name of keeping with this tradition, if any reader would like a copy of this zine they can contact the author of this article to have a physical copy mailed.

blocs the author(s) recount(s) a conversation with a friend. The friend commented, "What is so queer about that? People just wore black and burned things in the street." The author(s) respond(s), "The practice of wearing black and destroying everything may very well be the queerest gesture of all." They claim that "to queer is to negate," that the becoming whatever of the black bloc was itself a gesture of queerness as it negates not only the boundaries of gender and sexuality, but the act of black bloc resistance also negated subjectification itself. They go on to say:

Without hesitation, queers shed the constraints of identity in becoming autonomous, mobile and multiple with varying difference. We interchanged desires, gratifications, ecstasies and tender emotions without reference to the tables of surplus value or power structures [...] If the thesis is correct that gender is always performative, then our performed selves resonated with the queerest gender of all: that of total destroy. Henceforth, our preferred gender pronouns are the sound of shattering glass, the weight of hammers in our hands and the sickly-sweet aroma of shit on fire. Address us accordingly.

Here we see that at least some of the rioters in the black blocs in Pittsburgh did see the black bloc as a negation of their previously existing identifications. Additionally, we see that the destruction of identification through the masking of the face is perceived of as erasing the self across the entire body, as they do not just say that masking is the queerest gesture of all, but that the act of wearing black, of completely blacking-out the self, is the queerest gesture of all. Furthermore, we can more deeply problematize the phrase, "We're here! We're queer! We're anarchists, we'll fuck you up!" While the identification must, to some degree, indicate queer sexuality, as is indicated by the references to gender, pronouns, sexualities, and ecstasies, it also references something else. As the author(s) state(s), queerness in this case also means negation itself; it means the negation or obliteration of an existing identification and the freedom to become whatever. Destruction comes to include the destruction of identification. This destruction of identification also requires that participants move beyond solidarity in the sense of traditional social network theories. Instead, this destruction moves into the realm of what McDonald (2002) has called "fluidarity." Fluidarity emphasizes the process of creation and change during struggles rather than the construction or maintenance of a coherent singular movement with public leaders and a coherent singular identity such as 'Marxist' or 'Proletariat.'

Furthermore, this same zine also indicates that some did see themselves as representing the yet-to-come. However, they do not do so by attempting to obtain the status of hegemony. Instead, in Richard J.F. Day's (2004; 2005) language, they represent an anti-hegemonic future. We see this when they claim that the goal is not the "Production of anarchist militants with a proper ideology" but instead the spreading of insurrectionary practices as a way of being. Here they claim a clear victory: "The riotous practices that were earlier limited to a tiny subset of anarchist discourse spread across political, racialized, gendered, and sexual categories, even taking hold of a portion of the student population" (*ibid.*, 13–14). In other words, as I stated above, they aimed to represent a new way of being in the world, a way of being "total destroy." This representation was at least temporarily successful as those who would not have previously participated in such actions took on this way of being.

Thus, I do believe that the participants in Pittsburgh saw themselves as representing a manner that was valid for all, but this is not done in a paternalistic way. Instead, by representing a manner of destruction and fluidarity, they represent the possibility of becoming whatever. Unlike, for example, a Marxist Vanguard that defines the limits of the possible for the proletarian masses, the black bloc whatever simply represents the possibility of becoming whatever. This manner is that which Melucci describes as the "subject of action" (1996: 91). He tells us that unlike previously existing social movements, which "were more deeply rooted in a specific social condition in which they were embedded, so that the question of the collective was already answered from the beginning," (*ibid.*, 84) contemporary subjects

of action reject this preconceived subjectivity. Thus, the truest meaning of the ‘action’ in “subject of action” would be the act of becoming the subject one wishes to be and ceasing that becoming when the subject sees fit — in other words, becoming the whatever-singularity. Thus, the destructive urge of the black bloc is the destruction of everything, and this is countered by the creative urge of creating a new identification in that moment, thus fulfilling Bakunin’s claim that the urge to destroy is also a creative urge; the whatever will destroy subjectivity in order to create new multiple selves.

But is this urge also an urge to destroy the anarchist subjectivity? The authors of *The Enemy of Mankind Speaks Power* claim that,

If we know that the trade summit is an image of itself, and we know that the protester is also an image of itself, then both must be confronted if we aim to destroy spectacular society [...] even the most ideological of anarchist-activists became complicit in the collective becoming-ungovernable. It was through this becoming — this *losing my self* — that both the terms set by the impoverished discourse of activism and the terms set by the state were practically defeated.

This claim emphasizes the goal of not just destroying the G20 and global capital, but also ultimately destroying the activist and the anarchist subjects. When they claim that the most ideological of anarchist activists “became complicit” in the act of “becoming-ungovernable” we most clearly see the desire to destroy the anarchist subjectivity. The most ideological anarchist is itself subject to the outside force of anarchist ideology; the force of ideology limits the subject. However, in the act of the black bloc even this ideologue became whatever and engaged in the destruction of subjectivity through the loss of the self. Thus, at least for that moment, the subject obtains whatever-ness and enters into a line of flight. However, as I said above, this whatever has to reterritorialize, and this was always back onto the anarchist, and in some cases onto the queer. Reterritorializing onto the anarchist is essential, as it is the anarchist that must destroy everything, but in the end the subject will also have to destroy the anarchist.

Finally, this absence of a strict ideological position is also that which prefigures the demanding of nothing. While the authors recognize that some individuals have raised concerns about the lack of a clear strategy or ideology underpinning actions such as those described here, they instead see this as an advantage that allows them to refuse incorporation. They claim, “In a political climate lacking any real Left, adopting a strategy with specific demands and tactics to achieve our objectives would only solidify anarchists as the loyal opposition.” First, here we see that they do continue to see themselves as anarchists, they have reterritorialized. Though the long-term goal is to destroy even this, in this quote we see that they maintain an anarchist subjectivity. If this was not the case, they could not see anarchists as facing a threat of being incorporated as the “loyal opposition” because they would not be anarchists. Second, we see here that they do demand nothing; they refuse to make demands that might be met by the system, thus incorporating their resistance. By becoming the “loyal opposition” they would only be that which could be appeased by meeting some demands. By refusing to make demands, by engaging in an act of total destruction, they refuse this incorporation.

Thus, I argue that the rejection of subjectification and the becoming of whatever is exactly what some participants in the black bloc at G20 saw themselves as doing. They saw themselves as representing the manner of the yet-to-come. Furthermore, they seem to believe that in this yet-to-come the subjectivity of ‘anarchist’ will have to be destroyed along with all others. However, they also continue to see themselves as anarchists in the here and now. Though they may obtain deterritorialization, it is necessary to reterritorialize onto the anarchist in order to ‘win.’ Finally, we see here that they are queer not only in the sense of being queer sexual subjects, but in the sense of being subjects of total destruction. If queerness means negation, then their sexual identifications become that of negation, which must be the

most significant meaning of their claim that their preferred pronoun is the sound of shattering glass. This, then, creates the most clear reason for the aforementioned chant's equation that being here and queer will equate to fucking things up — to be queer is to negate and destroy, it is to be anti-hegemonic, it is not just to fuck, but also to fuck things up.

Conclusion

Anarchists participating in black blocs (as well as in other projects that anarchists are a part of) represent a libratory future. These subjects exist as anarchist subjects until they destroy the black and red flags and take off their masks, until they can become the queerest of all by negating queerness itself. Deleuze and Guattari call this future that *we* represent the 'outside,' the place to which the lines of flight escape. However, should we win, we cannot be complacent in this future. Richard J.F. Day (2005) emphasizes that the outside must always be a passage rather than a place, lest we risk hegemonizing the outside and oppressing not-yet-known Others. Thus, in Agamben's language, "The *outside* is not another space that resides beyond a determinate space, but rather, it is the passage, the exteriority that gives it access" (Agamben, 1993: 68.8).

The possibility for this passageway of the outside is unique to our contemporary postmodern age. The "era in which we live is also that in which for the first time it is possible for humans to experience their own linguistic being" (Agamben, 1993: 82.3). In other words, it is today that we can be aware of the constructed nature of our own subjectivity. That we can recognize this method of subjectivity today, rather than in the past, was also recognized by Laclau and Mouffe:

This is not a fortuitous discovery that could have been made at any point in time; it is, rather, deeply rooted in the history of modern capitalism. In societies which have a low technological level of development, where the reproduction of material life is carried out by means of fundamentally repetitive practices, the 'language games' or discursive sequences which organize social life are predominantly stable. This situation gives rise to the illusion that the being of objects, which is a purely social construction, belongs to things themselves [...] It is only in the contemporary world, when technological change and the dislocating rhythm of capitalist transformation constantly alter the discursive sequences which construct the reality of objects, that the merely historical character of being becomes fully visible (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987: 97).

Thus, now that we can be aware of the fractured, unstable, and constructed nature of subjectivity, some are trying to turn this into ways of being in the world. But what might a future built around the image presented here, of whatever-singularities and lines of flight, constantly deterritorializing and reterritorializing, look like? If the anarchists participating in black blocs are an image from the future, what is that future? The most obvious way to answer this question is to refuse to answer it. The reason for this is that rhizomatic communities of *whatevers* would not have a singular form or type, which would simply recreate hegemony. Instead, contemporary anarchists are fighting for the freedom of difference. By saying what the future would be, one would run the risk of making a demand that might be incorporated.

However, Agamben, unlike Deleuze and Guattari, does at least give us some ideas about what might bring us to this future. He claims that those who are willing to carry the rejection of subjectivity to its end result "will be the first citizens of a community with neither presuppositions nor a state" (Agamben, 1993: 82.3). He claims that the struggle for the coming politics will "no longer be a struggle for the conquest or control of the State, but a struggle between the State and the non-State (humanity),

an insurmountable disjunction between whatever singularity and the State organization” (ibid., 86.5). Richard J.F. Day develops Agamben’s ideas further, claiming,

Just as the rejection of coercive morality need not necessarily lead to a passive nihilistic relativism, so the rejection of Hegelian community need not necessarily lead to an anti-social individualism. In poststructuralist theory, it leads to something quite different that can be approached via the concept of *singularity* [...] it breaks down the hard-and-fast distinctions between the individual and the community, the particular and the universal (Day, 2005: 180).

This is Day’s anti-hegemonic yet-to-come. However, he also tells us that in these coming communities, we must never allow ourselves to conclude that we have reached a teleological end. Instead, these communities and those who make them up must always be open to “hear another other” (Day, 2005: 200), an Other who does not yet exist but may yet exist in this yet-to-come. These coming communities must not imagine that they have eliminated all points from which subjugation might occur or that all potentially subjugated subjects have been liberated, but must instead always be open to the new.

Beyond the temporary adoption of *whatever*-ness at black blocs, who might bring about this yet-to-come? Agamben’s answer to this question is problematic. Richard J.F. Day points out that Agamben seems to believe that it is those who are most entrenched in consumer capitalism that will be able to bring about this future, as it is these individuals who will prove most aware of the postmodern nature of subjectivity. However, Day disagrees:

The coming communities are more likely to be found in those crucibles of human sociability and creativity out of which the radically new emerges: racialized and ethnicized identities, queer and youth subcultures, anarchists, feminists, hippies, indigenous peoples, back-to-the-landers, ‘deviants’ of all kinds in all kinds of spaces (Day, 2005: 183).

We see this represented in black blocs whose subjectification is temporarily erased by the nothingness of the masked face spread across the body. However, here we see that it is not only the black bloc activists who make up the representation of this yet-to-come, nor might they only do so during the black bloc. All those who Day mentions, *some* of whom may at times be black bloc participants, are also potential (non-)citizens of this future non-State. They represent the coming communities⁸⁴ and are living examples of their possibility for becoming.

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⁸⁴While Agamben’s uses the term ‘the coming community,’ I prefer to follow Richard J.F. Day (2005) in calling them the coming communities. As Day points out, Agamben’s language of ‘community’ is problematic because it implies a singular thing in the world rather than a multiplicity of possibilities. It seems to imply that in spite of everything, we will all be the same and all part of one community, thus reproducing hegemony.

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De-essentializing Anarchist Feminism: Lessons from the Transfeminist Movement

J. Rogue

2012

Transfeminism developed out of a critique of the mainstream and radical feminist movements. The feminist movement has a history of internal hierarchies. There are many examples of women of color, working class women, lesbians, and others speaking out against the tendency of the white, affluent-dominated women's movement to silence them and overlook their needs. But generally, instead of acknowledging the issues these marginalized voices raised, the mainstream feminist movement has prioritized struggling for rights primarily in the interests of white affluent women. While the feminist milieu as a whole has not resolved these hierarchal tendencies, various groups have continued to speak up regarding their own marginalization—in particular, transgender women. The process of developing a broader understanding of systems of oppression and how they interact has advanced feminism and is key to building on the theory of anarchist feminism. But first, we might take a quick look at the development of feminism—particularly during what is often referred to as its “Second Wave.”

Generally, the historical narratives of feminism that suggest that we might look at feminism in “waves” point to the Second Wave as a turbulent period with many competing visions. I'll use that perspective here, though I also realize that the narrative is problematic in a number of ways, particularly its Western and US bias and I want to acknowledge that.⁸⁵ I'm from the United States, which is the context in which I organize and live. This particular narrative is useful here for noting some larger tendencies within feminism—particularly where I'm from, though again, I want to acknowledge that this process, while descriptive, engages in some of the kinds of exclusions I am criticizing in this chapter.

I also want to acknowledge that this is a story for drawing out some necessary and important divisions, but any categorization can be problematic (and how could a transfeminism not recognize and acknowledge this problem?). There have been theories of liberal, radical, Marxist, and socialist feminism that do NOT fit this particular narrative. I want to stress, however, that I find it useful in describing theoretical pasts and presents in order to draw out a radically different feminist and anarchist future.

During the late 60s through the early 80s, new forms of feminism began to emerge. Many feminists seemed to gravitate to four competing theories with very different explanations for the oppression of women and their theories had consequences for feminist practices of inclusion and exclusion.

Like their historical predecessors of the “First Wave” who were mainly concerned with voting rights, liberal feminists saw no need for a revolutionary break with existing society. Rather, their focus was on

⁸⁵See e.g. Aili Mari Tripp, “The Evolution of Transnational Feminisms: Consensus, Conflict, and New Dynamics,” in *Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights*, ed. Myra Marx and Aili Mari Tripp (New York City: New York University Press, 2006), 51–75.

breaking the “glass ceiling,” getting more women into positions of political and economic power. Liberal feminists assumed that the existing institutional arrangements were fundamentally unproblematic. Their task was to see to women’s equality accommodated under capitalism.

Another theory, sometimes referred to as radical feminism, argued for abandoning the “male Left,” as it was seen as hopelessly reductionist. Indeed, many women coming out of the Civil Rights and anti-war movements complained of pervasive sexism within the movements because they were relegated to secretarial tasks and experienced sexual pressure from male leaders as well as a generalized alienation from Left politics. According to many radical feminists of the time, this was due to the primacy of the system of patriarchy—or men’s systematic and institutionalized domination of women. To these feminists, the battle against patriarchy was the primary struggle to create a free society, as gender was our most entrenched and oldest hierarchy.⁸⁶ This made a neatly defined “sisterhood” important to their politics.

Marxist feminists, on the other hand, tended to locate women’s oppression within the economic sphere. The fight against capitalism was seen as the “primary” battle, as “The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles.” Further, Marxist feminists tended to believe that the economic “base” of society had a determining effect on its cultural “superstructures.” Thus, the only way to achieve equality between women and men would be to smash capitalism—as new, egalitarian economic arrangements would give rise to new, egalitarian superstructures. Such was the determining nature of the economic base. This argument was mapped out quite eloquently by Marx’s companion, Engels.⁸⁷

Out of the conversations between Marxist feminism and radical feminism another approach emerged called “dual systems theory.”⁸⁸ A product of what came to be dubbed socialist feminism, dual systems theory argued that feminists needed to develop “a theoretical account which gives as much weight to the system of patriarchy as to the system of capitalism.”⁸⁹ While this approach did much to resolve some of the arguments about which fight should be “primary” (i.e. the struggle against capitalism or the struggle against patriarchy), it still left much to be desired. For example, black feminists argued that this perspective left out a structural analysis of race.⁹⁰ Further, where was oppression based on sexuality, ability, age, etc. in this analysis? Were all of these things reducible to capitalist patriarchy? And importantly, for this chapter, where were the experiences of trans folks—particularly trans women? Given this historical lack, feminism required a specifically trans feminism.

Transfeminism builds on the work that came out of the multiracial feminist movement, and in particular, the work of Black feminists. Frequently, when confronted with allegations of racism, classism, or homophobia, the women’s movement dismisses these issues as divisive or “secondary” (as spelled out in the narrative above). The more prominent voices promoted (and still promote) the idea of a homogeneous “universal female experience,” which, as it is based on commonality between women, theoretically promotes a sense of sisterhood. In reality, it means pruning the definition of “woman” and trying to fit all women into a mold reflecting the dominant demographic of the women’s movement: white, affluent, heterosexual, and non-disabled. This “policing” of identity, whether conscious or not, reinforces systems of oppression and exploitation. When women who do not fit this mold have challenged it, they have frequently been accused of being divisive and disloyal to the sisterhood. The hierarchy of womanhood

⁸⁶See especially Shulamit Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Morrow, 1970).

⁸⁷Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family Private Property and the State*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/> (accessed March 20, 2012).

⁸⁸See e.g. Heidi Hartmann, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union,” in *Women and Revolution*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981); and Iris Young, “Beyond the Unhappy Marriage: A Critique of the Dual Systems Theory,” in *Women and Revolution*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981).

⁸⁹Iris Young, “Beyond the Unhappy Marriage,” 44.

⁹⁰See Gloria Joseph, “The Incompatible Menage à Trois: Marxism, Feminism, and Racism,” in *Women and Revolution*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981).

created by the women's movement reflects, in many ways, the dominant culture of racism, capitalism, and heteronormativity.⁹¹

Mirroring this history, mainstream feminist organizing frequently tries to find the common ground shared by women, and therefore focuses on what the most vocal members decide are “women’s issues”—as if the female experience existed in a vacuum outside of other forms of oppression and exploitation. However, using an intersectional approach to analyzing and organizing around oppression, as advocated by multiracial feminism and transfeminism, we can discuss these differences rather than dismiss them.⁹² The multiracial feminist movement developed this approach, which argues that one cannot address the position of women without also addressing their class, race, sexuality, ability, and all other aspects of their identity and experiences. Forces of oppression and exploitation do not exist separately. They are intimately related and reinforce each other, and so trying to address them singly (i.e. “sexism” divorced from racism, capitalism, etc) does not lead to a clear understanding of the patriarchal system. This is in accordance with the anarchist view that we must fight all forms of hierarchy, oppression, and exploitation simultaneously; abolishing capitalism and the state does not ensure that white supremacy and patriarchy will somehow magically disappear.⁹³

Tied to this assumption of a “universal female experience” is the idea that if a woman surrounds herself with those that embody that “universal” woman, then she is safe from patriarchy and oppression. The concept of “women’s safe spaces” (being women-only) date back to the early lesbian feminist movement, which was largely comprised of white women who were more affluent, and prioritized addressing sexism over other forms of oppression. This notion that an all-women space is inherently safe not only discounts the intimate violence that can occur between women, but also ignores or de-prioritizes the other types of violence that women can experience—racism, poverty, incarceration, and other forms of state, economic, and social brutality.⁹⁴

Written after the work of, and influenced by, transfeminist pioneers like Sandy Stone, Sylvia Rivera, and her Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), the Transfeminist Manifesto states: “Transfeminism believes that we construct our own gender identities based on what feels genuine, comfortable and sincere to us as we live and relate to others within given social and cultural constraint.”⁹⁵ The notion that gender is a social construct is a key concept in transfeminism, and is also essential (no pun intended) to an anarchist approach to feminism. Transfeminism also criticizes the idea of a “universal female experience” and argues against the biologically essentialist view that one’s gender is defined by one’s genitalia. Other feminisms have embraced the essentialist argument, seeing the idea of “women’s unity” as being built off a sameness, some kind of core “woman-ness.” This definition of woman is generally reliant on what is between a person’s legs. Yet what specifically about the definition of woman is intrinsic to two X chromosomes? If it is defined as being in possession of a womb, does that mean women who have had hysterectomies are somehow less of a woman? Reducing gender to biology relegates the definition of “woman” to the role of child-bearer. That seems rather antithetical to feminism. Gender roles have long been under scrutiny in radical communities. The idea that women are born to be mothers, are more sensitive and peaceful, are predisposed to wearing the color pink, and all the other stereotypes out there are socially constructed, not biological. If the (repressive) gender role does not define what a woman is, and if a doctor marking “F” on a birth certificate do not define

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²For an anarchist analysis of intersectionality, see J. Rogue and Deric Shannon, “Refusing to Wait: Anarchism and Intersectionality,” http://theanarchistlibrary.org/HTML/Deric_Shannon_and_J._Rogue__Refusing_to_Wait__Anarchism_and_Intersectionality.html (accessed March 23, 2012).

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴See especially debates around the Michigan Women’s Music Festival on this issue.

⁹⁵Emi Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto,” <http://eminism.org/readings/pdf-rdg/tfmanifesto.pdf> (accessed March 24, 2012).

gender either,⁹⁶ the next logical step is to recognize that gender can only be defined by the individual, for themselves—or perhaps we need as many genders as there are people, or even further, that gender should be abolished. While these ideas may cause some to panic, that does not make them any less legitimate with regards to peoples' identities, or experiences, or the kinds of difficult political projects we might have ahead of us. Trying to simplify complex issues, or fighting to maintain a hold on how gender was taught to us, does not help us understand patriarchy and how it functions. Instead, it does revolutionary feminisms a disservice.

Having encountered a lack of understanding of trans issues in radical circles, I feel it important to note that not all transgender people choose to physically transition, and that each person's decision to do so or not is their own. The decision is highly personal and generally irrelevant to theoretical conceptions of gender. There are many reasons to physically change one's body, from getting a haircut to taking hormones. One reason might be to feel more at ease in a world with strict definitions of male and female. Another is to look in the mirror and see on the outside (the popular understanding of) the gender one feels on the inside. Surely, for some, it is the belief that gender is defined by the physical construction of one's genitalia. Too often, however, radicals who are unfamiliar with trans politics and ideas react strongly to individuals' choices with regard to their bodies—rather missing the point altogether. But rather than to draw from speculation as to the motivations for the personal decisions of trans people (as if they were not vast and varied), it is more productive to note the challenge to the idea that biology is destiny.⁹⁷ Surely everyone would benefit from breaking down the binary gender system and deconstructing gender roles—that is the work of revolutionaries, not fretting over what other people “should” or “shouldn't” do to their bodies.

Thus far, gender and feminist theory that includes trans experiences exists almost solely in academia. There are very few working class intellectuals in the field, and the academic language used is not particularly accessible to the average person.¹⁴ This is unfortunate, since the issues that transfeminism addresses affect all people. Capitalism, racism, the state, patriarchy, and the medical field mediate the way everyone experiences gender. There is a significant amount of coercion employed by these institutions to police human experiences, which applies to everyone, trans and non-trans (some prefer the term “cis”) alike. Capitalism and the state play a very direct role in the experiences of trans people. Access to hormones and surgery, if desired, cost a significant amount of money, and people are often forced to jump through bureaucratic hoops in order to acquire them. Trans people are disproportionately likely to be poor. However, within the radical queer and transfeminist communities, while there may be discussions of class, they are generally framed around identity—arguing for “anti-classist” politics, but not necessarily anti-capitalist.⁹⁸

The concepts espoused by transfeminism help us understand gender, but there is a need for the theory to break out of academia and to develop praxis among the working class and social movements generally. This is not to say that there are no examples of transfeminist organizing, but rather that there needs to be an incorporation of transfeminist principles into broad based movements. Even gay and lesbian movements have a history of leaving trans people behind—for example, the fight for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which does not protect gender identity. Again we saw a hierarchy of importance; the mainstream gay and lesbian movement often compromises (throwing trans folks under the bus), rather than employing an inclusive strategy for liberation. There is frequently a sense of a “scarcity of liberation” within reformist social movements, the feeling that the possibilities for freedom are so limited that we must fight against other marginalized groups for a piece of the pie. This is in direct opposition to the concept of intersectionality, since it often requires people to betray one aspect

⁹⁶In light of the intersex movement, we may need to analyze the social construction of biological sex, as well.

⁹⁷See Kate Bornstein, *My Gender Workbook* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1998).

⁹⁸Although this is certainly not a monolithic tendency, as many rowdy queers do indeed want an end to capitalism and call for it explicitly.

of their identity in order to politically prioritize another. How can a person be expected to engage in a fight against gender oppression if it ignores or contributes to their racial oppression? Where does one aspect of their identity and experiences end and another begin?

Anarchism offers a possible society in which liberation is anything but scarce. It provides a theoretical framework that calls for an end to all hierarchies, and, as Martha Ackelsberg suggests, “It offers a perspective on the nature and process of social revolutionary transformation (e.g. the insistence that means must be consistent with ends, and that economic issues are critical, but not the only source of hierarchal power relations) that can be extremely valuable to/ for women’s emancipation.”⁹⁹

Anarchists need to be developing working class theory that includes an awareness of the diversity of the working class. The anarchist movement can benefit from the development of a working class, anarchist approach to gender issues that incorporates the lessons of transfeminism and intersectionality. It is not so much a matter of asking anarchists to become active in the transfeminist movement as it is a need for anarchists to take a page from the *Mujeres Libres* and integrate the principles of (trans)feminism into our organizing within the working class and social movements. Continuing to develop contemporary anarchist theory of gender rooted in the working class requires a real and integrated understanding of transfeminism.

Scanned from original, a text from “Queering Anarchism” book published by AK Press

⁹⁹See “Lessons from the Free Women of Spain”—Geert Dhondt interviews Martha Ackelsberg in *Upping the Ante*.

Who is Oakland

anti-oppression activism, the politics of safety, and state co-optation

Escalating Identity

April 2012

Synopsis

This pamphlet – written collaboratively by a group of people of color, women, and queers – is offered in deep solidarity and in the spirit of conversation with anyone committed to ending oppression and exploitation materially. It is a critique of how privilege theory and cultural essentialism have incapacitated antiracist, feminist, and queer organizing in this country by confusing identity categories with culture, and culture with solidarity. This conflation, we go on to argue, minimizes and misrepresents the severity and structural character of the violence and material deprivation faced by marginalized demographics.

According to this politics, white supremacy is primarily a psychological attitude which individuals can simply choose to discard instead of a material infrastructure which reproduces race at key sites across society – from racially segmented labor markets to the militarization of the border. Even when this material infrastructure is named, more confrontational tactics which might involve the risk of arrest are deemed “white” and “privileged,” while the focus turns back to reforming the behavior and beliefs of individuals. Privilege politics is ultimately rooted in an idealist theory of power which maintains that psychological attitudes are the root cause of oppression and exploitation, and that vague alterations in consciousness will somehow remake oppressive structures.

This dominant form of anti-oppression politics also assumes that demographic categories are coherent, homogeneous “communities” or “cultures.” This pamphlet argues that identity categories do not indicate political unity or agreement. Identity is not solidarity. The violent domination and subordination we face on the basis of our race, gender, and sexuality do not immediately create a shared political vision. But the uneven impact of oppression across society creates the conditions for the diffuse emergence of autonomous groups organizing on the basis of common experiences, analysis, and tactics. There is a difference between a politics which places shared cultural identity at the center of its analysis of oppression, and autonomous organizing against forms of oppression which impact members of marginalized groups unevenly.

This pamphlet argues that demands for increased cultural sensitivity and recognition has utterly failed to stop a rising tide of bigotry and violence in an age of deep austerity. Anti-oppression, civil rights, and decolonization struggles repeatedly demonstrate that if resistance is even slightly effective, the people who struggle are in danger. The choice is not between danger and safety, but between the uncertain dangers of revolt and the certainty of continued violence, deprivation, and death. There is no middle ground.

I. The Non-Negotiable Necessity of Autonomous Organizing

As a group of people of color, women, queers, and poor people coming together to attack a complex matrix of oppression and exploitation, we believe in the absolute necessity of autonomous organizing. By “autonomous” we mean the formation of independent groups of people who face specific forms of exploitation and oppression – including but not limited to people of color, women, queers, trans* people, gender nonconforming people, QPOC. We also believe in the political value of organizing in ways which try to cross racial, gender, and sexual divisions. We are neither spokespersons for Occupy Oakland nor do we think a single group can possibly speak to the variety of challenges facing different constituencies.

We hope for the diffuse emergence of widespread autonomous organizing. We believe that a future beyond capital’s 500 year emergence through enclosures of common land, and the enslavement, colonization, and genocide of non-European populations – and beyond the 7000 or more years of violent patriarchal structuring of society along hierarchized and increasingly binary gender lines – will require revolutions within revolutions. Capitalism’s ecocidal destiny, and its relentless global production of

poverty, misery, abuse, and disposable and enslavable populations, will force catastrophic social change within most of our lifetimes – whether the public actively pursues it or not.

No demographic category of people could possibly share an identical set of political beliefs, cultural identities, or personal values. Accounts of racial, gender, and sexual oppression as “intersectional” continue to treat identity categories as coherent communities with shared values and ways of knowing the world. No individual or organization can speak for people of color, women, the world’s colonized populations, workers, or any demographic category as a whole – although activists of color, female and queer activists, and labor activists from the Global North routinely and arrogantly claim this right. These “representatives” and institutions speak on behalf of social categories which are not, in fact, communities of shared opinion. This representational politics tends to eradicate any space for political disagreement between individuals subsumed under *the same* identity categories.

We are interested in exploring the question of the relationship between identity-based oppression and capitalism, and conscious of the fact that the few existing attempts to synthesize these two vastly different political discourses leave us with far more questions than answers. More recent attempts to come to terms with this split between anti-oppression and anticapitalist politics, in insurrectionary anarchism for example, typically rely on simplistic forms of race and gender critique which typically begin and end with the police. According to this political current, the street is a place where deep and entrenched social differences can be momentarily overcome. We think this analysis deeply underestimates the qualitative differences between specific forms and sites of oppression and the variety of tactics needed to address these different situations.

Finally, we completely reject a vulgar “class first” politics which argues that racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia are simply “secondary to” or “derivative of” economic exploitation. The prevalence of racism in the US is not a clever conspiracy hatched by a handful of ruling elites but from the start has been a durable racial contract between two unequal parties. The US is a white supremacist nation indelibly marked by the legal construction of the “white race” in the 1600s through the formation of a cross-class alliance between a wealthy planter class and poor white indentured servants. W.E.B. Du Bois called the legal privileges accorded to poor whites a “psychological wage”: “It must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown to them.”

We live in the shadow of this choice and this history. A history which is far from over.

II. Institutional Struggles Over the Meaning of Anti-Oppression Politics

a. On the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC), Again

Nonprofits exist to maintain society as we know it. Nonprofits often provide vital social services in the spaces left by the state’s retreat from postwar welfare provisions, services which keep women, queers, and trans people, particularly those who are poor and of color, alive. Post-WWII welfare provisions themselves were provided primarily to white families – through redlining or the racially exclusive postwar GI Bill for example. Social justice nonprofits in particular exist to co-opt and quell anger, preempt racial conflict, and validate a racist, patriarchal state. These organizations are often funded by business

monopolies which have profited from and campaigned for the privatization of public social services. This has been argued extensively by many who have experienced the limits of nonprofit work firsthand, most recently by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence.

Indeed, the exponential growth of NGOs and nonprofits could be understood as the 21st century public face of counterinsurgency, except this time speaking the language of civil, women's, and gay rights, charged with preempting political conflict, and spiritually committed to promoting one-sided "dialogue" with armed state bureaucracies. Over the last four decades, a massive nonprofit infrastructure has evolved in order to prevent, whether through force or persuasion, another outbreak of the urban riots and rebellions which spread through northern ghettos in the mid to late 1960s. Both liberal and conservative think tanks and service providers have arisen primarily in response to previous generations of radical Black, Native American, Asian American, and Chicana@ Third World Liberation movements. In the 21st century, social justice activism has become a professional career path. Racial justice nonprofits, and an entire institutionally funded activist infrastructure, partner with the state to echo the rhetoric of past movements for liberation while implicitly or explicitly condemning their militant tactics.

The material infrastructure promoting these ideas is massive, enabling their extensive dissemination and adoption. Largely funded by philanthropic organizations like the Ford Foundation (\$13.7 billion), Rockefeller Foundation (\$3.1 billion), or the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (\$37.1 billion), the US nonprofit sector has grown exponentially, often through the direct privatization of the remnants of America's New Deal-era social safety net. This funding structure ties liberal organizations charged with representing and serving communities of color to businesses interested primarily in tax exemptions and charity, and completely hostile to radical social transformation despite their rhetoric. In 2009 nonprofits accounted for 9% of all wages and salaries paid in the United States, generated \$1.41 trillion in total revenues, and reported \$2.56 trillion in total assets. One need only hear the names of these philanthropic organizations to realize that they are or were some of the largest business monopolies in the world, whose foundations are required to donate 5% of their endowment each year, while 95% of the remaining funds remain invested in financial markets. The public is asked to thank these organizations for their generosity for solving problems which they are literally invested in maintaining.

"With increasing frequency," Filipino prison abolitionist and professor Dylan Rodriguez argues, "we are party (or participant) to a white liberal 'multicultural'/'people of color' liberal imagination which venerates and even fetishizes the iconography and rhetoric of contemporary Black and Third World liberation movements, and then proceeds to incorporate these images and vernaculars into the public presentation of foundation-funded liberal or progressive organizations. ...[T]hese organizations, in order to protect their nonprofit status and marketability to liberal foundations, actively self-police against members' deviations from their essentially reformist agendas, while continuing to appropriate the language and imagery of historical revolutionaries. Having lived in the San Francisco Bay Area from 1995–2001, which is in many ways the national hub of the progressive 'wing' of the NPIC, I would name some of the organizations...here, but the list would be too long. Suffice it to say that the nonprofit groups often exhibit(ed) a political practice that is, to appropriate and corrupt a phrase from...Ruth Wilson Gilmore, radical in form, but liberal in content."

b. Politicians and Police Who Are "Just Like Us"

In California some of the most racist policies and "reforms" in recent history have been advanced by politicians of color. We are not interested in increasing racial, gender, and sexual diversity within existing hierarchies of power – within government, police forces, or in the boardrooms of corporate America. When police departments and municipal governments can boast of their diversity and multicultural credentials, we know that there needs to be a radical alternative to this politics of "inclusion." Oakland is perhaps one of the most glaring examples of how people of color have not just participated in but

in many instances led – as mayors, police chiefs, and city council members – the assault on poor and working class black and brown populations. Oakland Mayor Jean Quan speaks the language of social justice activism and civil rights but her political career in city government clearly depends upon satisfying right-wing downtown business interests, corrupt real estate speculators, and a bloated and notoriously brutal police force.

There is no more depressing cautionary tale of the fate of 1960s-era politics of “changing the state from within” than the career of Oakland Mayor Quan. Quan fought for the creation of an Ethnic Studies program at UC Berkeley in 1969, and in 2011 penned a letter to Occupy Oakland listing an array of state-approved social justice nonprofits in order to justify mass arrests and a police crackdown on protesters attempting to establish a community center and free clinic in a long abandoned city owned property.¹⁰⁰ In response to a season of strikes, anti-police brutality marches, and repeated port shutdowns in response to police assaults, the state offered two choices: either the nonprofits, or the police.

Quan and other municipal politicians are part of a state apparatus that is rapidly increasing its reliance upon militarized policing to control an unruly population, especially poor people of color in urban areas. Policing is fast becoming the paradigm for government in general. A white supremacist decades-long “war on drugs” has culminated in a 21st century imperial “war on terror.” The equipment and tactics of “urban pacification” are now being turned on American cities and on the citizens and non-citizens who are targeted by austerity measures which have for decades been applied to the Global South.

This is as much the case in the liberal Bay Area as it is anywhere else. Recently “Urban Shield 2011,” a series of urban military training exercises for Bay Area police forces, was held on the campus of UC Berkeley in anticipation of raids on the Occupy Oakland encampment and other local occupied public parks. Israeli Border Police and military police from Bahrain, fresh from suppressing an Arab Spring uprising in their own country, took part in these exercises beside Alameda County Sheriffs and Oakland Police Department officers.

We see clearly that in an era of deepening budget cuts and America’s global decline, the white liberal consensus about racial inclusion is quickly becoming economically unaffordable, and in its place we see increasingly widespread public support for mainstream, openly white supremacist social movements. Armed paramilitary white nationalist organizations like the Minutemen patrol the US border, white supremacist media figures spout genocidal fantasies on the radio and television, and police killings of young black men and women have become so frequent that even the mainstream media has begun to report on it. At the same time, policing is fast becoming the paradigm for government in general.

As Jared Sexton and Steve Martinot argue,

“Under conventional definitions of the government, we seem to be restricted to calling upon it for protection from its own agents. But what are we doing when we demonstrate against police brutality, and find ourselves tacitly calling upon the government to help us do so? These notions of the state as the arbiter of justice and the police as the unaccountable arbiters of lethal violence are two sides of the same coin. Narrow understandings of mere racism are proving themselves impoverished because they cannot see this fundamental relationship. What is needed is the development of a radical critique of the structure of the coin.

[The police] prowl, categorising and profiling, often turning those profiles into murderous violence without (serious) fear of being called to account, all the while claiming impunity. What jars the imagination is not the fact of impunity itself, but the realisation that they are simply people working a job, a job they secured by making an application at the personnel office. In events such as the shooting of Amadou Diallo, the true excessiveness is not in

¹⁰⁰<http://www2.oaklandnet.com/oakca/groups/cityadministrator/documents/pressrelease/oak033073.pdf>

the massiveness of the shooting, but in the fact that these cops were there on the street looking for this event in the first place, as a matter of routine business. This spectacular evil is encased in a more inarticulable evil of banality, namely, that the state assigns certain individuals to (well-paying) jobs as hunters of human beings, a furtive protocol for which this shooting is simply the effect.”

c. Capitalism and the Material Reproduction of “Race” and “Gender”

Establishing community mutual aid and self-defense against the violence of emergent mainstream racist movements, against the systematic rape and exploitation of women, and against the systematic murder and/or economic ostracization of transgender, transsexual, and gender-nonconforming people; attacking ICE and police-enforced austerity policies which have historically targeted communities of color, naming and resisting the rollbacks of reproductive rights and access to healthcare as the patriarchal, racist attacks that they truly are; these are some of the major challenges facing all of us who understand that oppression is inextricable from global capitalist crisis. We cannot separate what’s happening in Oakland from a global wave of anti-austerity and anti-police brutality general strikes, occupations, and riots across the globe – from Barcelona to Tottenham, from Tahrir to Mali, and from Bhopal to Johannesburg.

We do not believe that autonomous groups will be able to sustain themselves without creating non-state based support networks and without recognizing the mutual implication of white supremacy with capitalism and patriarchy. Undocumented immigrants confront a vicious, coordinated, and entirely mainstream ICE, police, and civilian assault which is, to be absolutely clear, a nativist anti-Latin@ movement committed to patrolling the borders of a nation understood as fundamentally white. Intensifying anti-immigrant racism is not unrelated to capitalism, and just a national but an international phenomenon, fueled by the success of capitalist globalization, by the profits which could be realized through debt and structural adjustment programs, US agribusiness subsidies, “free trade” agreements like NAFTA and CAFTA, and through multinational industries inevitably searching for lower labor costs through the fragmentation of global supply chains. Austerity means women, and particularly poor black and brown women, are being forced by the state and their husbands, boyfriends, and fathers to make up for the cuts in services and wages through additional domestic and reproductive labor they have always performed.

As a recent W.A.T.C.H. communique from Baltimore puts it, “We know that economic crises mean more domestic labor, and more domestic labor means more work for women. Dreams of a ‘mancession’ fade quickly when one realizes male-dominated sectors are simply the first to feel a crisis – and the first to receive bailout funds. The politics of crisis adds to the insult of scapegoating the injury of unemployment and unwaged overwork. And the nightmare of fertility politics, the ugly justification of welfare and social security ‘reforms.’ ‘Saving America’s families,’ the culture war rhetoric that clings to heteronormativity, to patriarchy, in the face of economic meltdown. Crisis translates politically to putting women in their place, while demanding queers and trans people pass or else. And the worse this crisis gets, the more the crisis is excused by a fiction of scarcity, the more the family will be used to promote white supremacy by assaulting women’s autonomy under the guise of population control. The old Malthusian line: it’s not a crisis, there’s just not enough – for them.”

Capitalism can neither be reduced to the “predatory practices of Wall Street banks” nor is it something which “intersects” with race, gender, and sexual oppression. Capitalism is a system based on a gendered and racialized division of labor, resources, and suffering. Violence and deprivation, premature death, and rape, are structural aspects of an economic system which requires that some work and some do not, some receive care and some do not, some survive, and some die. To say that poor people of color, queers, or immigrants are not interested or not profoundly impacted by the economy, and instead

interested only in reaffirming their identities within existing hierarchies of power, is to work within a rigged zero-sum game for the liberation of a particular oppressed identity at the expense of all the others. In the US in particular, the celebration of cultural diversity, the recognition of cultural difference, the applauding of women and queers entering the workplace, and the relative decline of overtly racist or sexist beliefs among younger generations, has not improved but instead masked a dramatic deterioration of the material circumstances of racialized populations.

Massive accumulation through dispossession of native lands; racialized enslavement, murder, and incarceration; constant, intimate, and intensive exploitation of women's unpaid labor, both in the home and as indentured domestic work, and always violently stratified according to race — all of these form the naturalized and invisibilized underbelly of capital's waged exploitation of workers. The cumulative economic impact of centuries of enslavement, genocide, colonialism, patriarchy, and racial segregation is not simply peripheral but integral and fundamental to the nature of the global capitalist economy.

The US economy reproduces racial, gender, and sexual inequality at every level of American society— in housing, healthcare, food sovereignty, education, policing, and prison. And also endlessly recreated in these very same sites are the categories “man/woman,” “normal/abnormal,” “able/disabled,” “legitimate/illegitimate,” “citizen/illegal,” and a series of stigmatized populations who always interfere with the smooth functioning of the national economy. The natural, “harmonious” relationship between citizens, patriots, taxpayers, owners, workers, rich, and poor, are disrupted by “illegals,” welfare queens, faggots, freaks, careless promiscuous teens, and so on. The category of “race” is materially recreated and endlessly renewed through these institutions which organize the lives of the undocumented, the imprisoned, the residents of aging ghettos which increasingly function as open-air prisons.

Speaking of capitalism as though it were somehow separable from racist exploitation, gendered violence, and the gamut of complex oppressions facing us in this world, confines antiracist and antipatriarchal struggle to the sphere of culture, consciousness, and individual privilege. The current dominant form of anti-oppression politics in fact diminishes the extent to which racialized and gendered inequalities are deepening across society despite the generalization of policies promoting linguistic, cultural, gender, and sexual inclusivity. Without attacking the material infrastructure which agglomerates power in the hands of some (a process whose end result is now called “privilege”), the equalization of “privilege” and the abolition of these identity-based oppressions in class society is a liberal fantasy.

d. The Racialization of Rape and the Erasure of Sexual Violence

Over the last year in California, the racist specter of potential rape has been used to both delegitimize spaces of militant action – in parks, streets, homes, or college campuses – and to erase the prevalence of sexual violence throughout society. The figure of the black rapist is routinely invoked to excuse police violence, retroactively justifying the murders of countless black men like Kenneth Harding. The need to preempt potential rape has been explicitly used to rationalize the widely publicized pepper spraying of UC Davis students on November 18, 2011. We are tempted to say this incident is more about the need for state bureaucracies to justify their own existence than it does about epidemic of sexual violence in America, but the truth is that the reality of rape and sexual violence along with rape's deployment as an ideological weapon are fundamental to the everyday functioning of the economy and the state.

In recent interviews, UC Davis Chancellor Katehi and Vice Chancellor Meyer, respectively, defend the police response to the Occupy UC Davis encampment by invoking Occupy Oakland and the implicit threat of sexual violence from the “outside.” Katehi claimed, “We were worried especially about having very young girls and other students with older people who come from the outside without any knowledge of their record ... if anything happens to any student while we're in violation of policy, it's a very tough thing to overcome.” Chancellor Meyer was much more specific about the hypothetical threats in question: “So my fear is a long-term occupation with a number of tents where we have an undergraduate student

and a non-affiliate and there is an incident. And then I'm reporting to a parent that a non-affiliate has done this unthinkable act with your daughter, and how could we let that happen."¹⁰¹

These statements illuminate how gender and race are typically linked in public discourse – here, Katehi, a woman in a position of power attempting to justify an illegal police action, infantilizes women as permanent victims and posits a tacitly racist specter of the criminal rapist, coming from the “outside” to the “inside” of the campus community. After the hypothetical rape, the rape survivor disappears. The rape is regrettable; this regret is not articulated in terms of the trauma of the rape survivor, but through the fact that the incident will have to be reported to a parent. To say rape is “unthinkable” is only possible from a position of privilege in which sexual violence is not an everyday reality.

Considering the fact that rape occurs within every class and every possible racial demographic, usually perpetrated by friends and family, it is utterly fantastic to suggest that a large university campus like UC Davis is a place where rapes do not occur and where rape culture doesn't flourish. Rendering rape unthinkable is absolutely essential to its structural use as a tool of gendered subordination and exploitation, and also as an ideological tool of white supremacy. The pepper spray incident reveals how the specter of rape appears in state and media narratives when it's politically useful, and functions as a tool of racialization and criminalization (two processes which converge on poor black and brown populations) when in fact rape and sexual violence affects every sector of society.

The locations which we are told to fear rape and sexual violence change depending upon what is politically expedient, and it's crucial to notice which sites are emphasized and when – rape has occurred in Occupy encampments across the country, but far, far more rapes have occurred in American households, and yet media reports do not discourage us from heterosexual marriage and co-habitation. When is rape ignorable, and when is it unacceptable? Rape occurs frequently in dorm rooms, in fraternities and sororities, in cars, on dates, amongst persons of like age, ethnicity, and class. When the exclusion of police from public spaces is represented by the media as an invitation to rape, we are not at the same time informed that police themselves rape, sexually assault, and abuse women, trans people, queers, sex workers and others with stomach-turning frequency.

While these administrators mobilize the specter of rape to defend the police response to the Occupy encampment at UC Davis, they take part in a nationwide campus culture that sanctions sexual violence. A major study on the topic found that colleges only expel persons found responsible for sexual assault in 10–25 % of all reported cases. These students were often suspended for a semester or received minor academic penalties. Half of the students interviewed said that student judicial services found their alleged assailants not responsible for sexual assault.¹⁰²

When sexual violence manifests in public organizing spaces, the subject is routinely labeled “divisive” or “just personal”. In a disturbing feat of capitulation to the state's attack, ‘radicals’ will frequently suspect that allegations of rape and sexual assault are in fact inventions of state forces attempting to infiltrate communities of struggle. Many radical communities have come to associate a focus on addressing and attacking sexual violence with a politics of demobilization or distraction from the “real issues.” Again, the result is that the reality of sexual violence, not merely in one month encampments, but in personal spaces, amongst persons from every racial and ethnic demographic who know and trust one another, is methodically erased. The silence around sexual violence sanctions it, just as the spectacular outrage at isolated incidents of racial violence (e.g. Trayvon Martin) marks the everyday police murder of black and brown individuals as routine. The reality of sexual violence is that it is silenced, evaded, and ignored, empowering primarily cisgendered men at every level of society, and transforming conversations about sexual violence into further justification for intensified racist segregation, incarceration, and policing.

¹⁰¹<http://disoccupy.wordpress.com/2012/04/24/for-people-who-have-considered-occupation-but-found-it-is-not-enuf/>

¹⁰²http://www.publicintegrity.org/investigations/campus_assault/articles/entry/1945/

III. The Limits of Contemporary Anti-Oppression Theory and Practice

a. Identity is not Solidarity

Privilege theory and cultural essentialism have incapacitated antiracist, feminist, and queer organizing in this country by confusing identity categories with solidarity and reinforcing stereotypes about the political homogeneity and helplessness of “communities of color.” The category of “communities of color” is itself a recently invented identity category which obscures the central role that antiblack racism plays in maintaining an American racial order and conceals emerging forms of nonwhite interracial conflict. What living in a “post-racial era” really means is that race is increasingly represented in government, media, and education as “culture” while the nation as a whole has returned to levels of racial inequality, residential and educational segregation, and violence unseen since the last “post-racial” moment in American history – the mid-60s legal repeal of the apartheid system of Jim Crow.

Understanding racism as primarily a matter of individual racial privilege, and the symbolic affirmation of marginalized cultural identities as the solution to this basic lack of privilege, is the dominant and largely unquestioned form of anti-oppression politics in the US today. According to this politics, whiteness simply becomes one more “culture,” and white supremacy a psychological attitude, instead of a structural position of dominance reinforced through institutions, civilian and police violence, access to resources, and the economy.

Demographic categories are not coherent, homogeneous “communities” or “cultures” which can be represented by individuals. Identity categories do not indicate political unity or agreement. Identity is not solidarity. Gender, sexual, and economic domination within racial identity categories have typically been described through an additive concept, intersectionality, which continues to assume that political agreement is automatically generated through the proliferation of existing demographic categories. Representing significant political differences as differences in privilege or culture places politics beyond critique, debate, and discussion.

For too long individual racial privilege has been taken to be the problem, and state, corporate, or nonprofit managed racial and ethnic “cultural diversity” within existing hierarchies of power imagined to be the solution. It is a well-worn activist formula to point out that “representatives” of different identity categories must be placed “front and center” in struggles against racism, sexism, and homophobia. But this is meaningless without also specifying the content of their politics. The US Army is simultaneously one of the most racially integrated and oppressive institutions in American society. “Diversity” alone is a meaningless political ideal which reifies culture, defines agency as inclusion within oppressive systems, and equates identity categories with political beliefs.

Time and again politicians of color have betrayed the very groups they claim to represent while being held up as proof that America is indeed a “colorblind” or “post-racial” society. Wealthy queers support initiatives which lock up and murder poor queers, trans* people, and sex workers. Women in positions of power continue to defend and sometimes initiate the vicious assault on abortion and reproductive rights, and then offload reproductive labor onto the shoulders of care workers who are predominantly women of color.

But more pertinent for our argument is the phenomenon of anti-oppression activists – who do advance a structural analysis of oppression and yet consistently align themselves with a praxis that reduces the history of violent and radically unsafe antislavery, anticolonial, antipatriarchal, antihomophobic, and anticentric freedom struggles to struggles over individual privilege and state recognition of cultural difference. Even when these activists invoke a history of militant resistance and sacrifice, they consistently

fall back upon strategies of petitioning the powerful to renounce their privilege or “allow” marginalized populations to lead resistance struggles.

For too long there has been no alternative to this politics of privilege and cultural recognition, and so rejecting this liberal political framework has become synonymous with a refusal to seriously address racism, sexism, and homophobia in general. Even and especially when people of color, women, and queers imagine and execute alternatives to this liberal politics of cultural inclusion, they are persistently attacked as white, male, and privileged by the cohort that maintains and perpetuates the dominant praxis.

b. Protecting Vulnerable Communities of Color and “Our” Women and Children: The Endangered Species Theory of Minority Populations and Patriarchal White Conservationism

The dominant praxis of contemporary anti-oppression politics relinquishes power to political representatives and reinforces stereotypes of individually “deserving” and “undeserving” victims of racism, sexism, and homophobia. A vast nonprofit industrial complex, and a class of professional “community spokespeople,” has arisen over the last several decades to define the parameters of acceptable political action and debate. This politics of safety must continually project an image of powerlessness and keep communities of color, women, and queers “protected” and confined to speeches and mass rallies rather than active disruption. For this politics of cultural affirmation, suffering is legitimate and recognizable only when it conforms to white middle-class codes of behavior, with each gender in its proper place, and only if it speaks a language of productivity, patriotism, and self-policing victimhood.

And yet the vast majority of us are not “safe” simply going through our daily lives in Oakland, or elsewhere. When activists claim that poor black and brown communities must not defend themselves against racist attacks or confront the state, including using illegal or “violent” means, they typically advocate instead the performance of an image of legitimate victimhood for white middle class consumption. The activities of marginalized groups are barely recognized unless they perform the role of peaceful and quaint ethnics who by nature cannot confront power on their own. Contemporary anti-oppression politics constantly reproduces stereotypes about the passivity and powerlessness of these populations, when in fact it is precisely people from these groups – poor women of color defending their right to land and housing, trans* street workers fighting back against murder and violence, black, brown, and Asian American militant struggles against white supremacist attacks – who have waged the most powerful and successfully militant uprisings in American history. We refuse a politics which infantilizes us and people who look like us, and which continually paints nonwhite and/or nonmale demographics as helpless, vulnerable, and incapable of fighting for our own liberation.

When activists argue that power “belongs in the hands of the most oppressed,” it is clear that their primary audience for these appeals can only be liberal white activists, and that they understand power as something which is granted or bestowed by the powerful. Appeals to white benevolence to let people of color “lead political struggles” assumes that white activists can somehow relinquish their privilege and legitimacy to oppressed communities and that these communities cannot act and take power for themselves.

People of color, women, and queers are constantly compared to children in contemporary privilege discourse. Even children can have a more savvy and sophisticated analysis than privilege theorists often assume! “Communities of color” have become in contemporary liberal anti-oppression discourse akin to endangered species in need of management by sympathetic whites or “community representatives” assigned to contain political conflict at all costs.

And of course it is extremely advantageous to the powers that be for the oppressed to be infantilized and deterred from potentially “unsafe” self-defense, resistance, or attack. The absence of active mass resistance to racist policies and institutions in Oakland and in the US over the last forty years has meant that life conditions have worsened for nearly everyone. The prisons, police, state, economy, and borders perpetually reproduce racial inequality by categorizing, profiling, and enforcing demographic identities and assigning them to positions in a hierarchy of domination where marginalized groups can only gain power through the exploitation and oppression of others. The budget cuts and healthcare rollbacks are leaving poor queer and trans people without access to necessary medical resources like Aids medication or hormones, and other austerity measures have dovetailed with increasingly misogynist anti-reproductive-rights legislature which will surely result in an increasing and invisible number of deaths among women. As “diversity” has increased in city and state governments, and in some sectors of the corporate world, deepening economic stratification has rendered this form of representational “equality” almost entirely symbolic.

We have been told that because the “Occupy” movement protests something called “economic inequality” it is not a movement about or for people of color, despite the fact that subprime targeting of Blacks and Latinos within the housing market has led to losses between \$164 billion and \$213 billion, one of the greatest transfers of wealth out of these populations in recent history. And despite the fact that job losses are affecting women of color more than any other group.

We are told that because the “economy” has always targeted poor people of color, that increasing resistance from a multiracial cohort of young people and students, and from downwardly mobile members of the white working and middle class, has nothing to do with people of color – but that somehow reclaiming and recreating an idealized cultural heritage does. We are told that we are “tokens” or “informants” if we remain critical of a return to essentialist traditional cultural identities which are beyond political discussion, and of the conservative political project of rebuilding “the many systems of civilization—economics, government, politics, spirituality, environmental sustainability, nutrition, medicine and understandings of self, identity, gender and sexuality—that existed before colonization.”

We reject race and gender blind economic struggles and analysis, but we do not reject struggles against what is, under capitalism, naturalized as the “economy.” While the majority of Occupy general assemblies have adopted a neo-populist rhetoric of economic improvement or reform, we see the abolition of the system of capital as not peripheral but fundamental to any material project of ending oppression.

Recent statistics give a snapshot of worsening racial inequality in the US today: the median wealth of white households is 20 times that of black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households, the greatest wealth disparities in 25 years. Over 1 in 4 Native Americans and Native Alaskans live in poverty, with a nearly 40% poverty rate for reservations. From 2005 to 2009, Latin@s’ household median wealth fell by 66%, black household wealth by 53%, but only 16% among white households. The average black household in 2009 possessed \$5,677 in wealth; Latin@ households \$6,325; and the average white household had \$113,149.

To address these deteriorating material conditions and imagine solutions in terms of privilege is to tacitly support the continual state and economic reproduction of racial and gender hierarchies, and renew racist and patriarchal violence in the 21st century.

c. On Nonprofit Certified “White Allies” and Privilege Theory

Communities of color are not a single, homogenous bloc with identical political opinions. There is no single unified antiracist, feminist, and queer political program which white liberals can somehow become “allies” of, despite the fact that some individuals or groups of color may claim that they are in possession of such a program. This particular brand of white allyship both flattens political differences between whites and homogenizes the populations they claim to speak on behalf of. We believe that this

politics remains fundamentally conservative, silencing, and coercive, especially for people of color who reject the analysis and field of action offered by privilege theory.

In one particularly stark example of this problem from a December 4 2011 Occupy Oakland general assembly, “white allies” from a local social justice nonprofit called “The Catalyst Project” arrived with an array of other groups and individuals to Oscar Grant/Frank Ogawa Plaza, order to speak in favor of a proposal to rename Occupy Oakland to “Decolonize/Liberate Oakland.” Addressing the audience as though it were homogeneously white, each white “ally” who addressed the general assembly explained that renouncing their own white privilege meant supporting the renaming proposal. And yet in the public responses to the proposal it became clear that a substantial number of people of color in the audience, including the founding members of one of Occupy Oakland’s most active and effective autonomous groups, which is also majority people of color, the “Tactical Action Committee,” deeply opposed the measure.

What was at stake was a political disagreement, one that was not clearly divided along racial lines. However, the failure of the renaming proposal was subsequently widely misrepresented as a conflict between “white Occupy” and the “Decolonize/Liberate Oakland” group. In our experience such misrepresentations are not accidental or isolated incidents but a repeated feature of a dominant strain of Bay Area anti-oppression politics which – instead of mobilizing people of color, women, and queers for independent action – has consistently erased the presence of people of color in interracial coalitions.

White supremacy and racist institutions will not be eliminated through sympathetic white activists spending several thousand dollars for nonprofit diversity trainings which can assist them in recognizing their own racial privilege and certifying their decision to do so. The absurdity of privilege politics recenters antiracist practice on whites and white behavior, and assumes that racism (and often by implicit or explicit association, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia) manifest primarily as individual privileges which can be “checked,” given up, or absolved through individual resolutions. Privilege politics is ultimately completely dependent upon precisely that which it condemns: *white benevolence*.

IV. Occupy Oakland as Example

a. Occupy Oakland, “Outside Agitators,” and “White Occupy”

When Mayor Quan and District Attorney Nancy O’Malley claim that Occupy Oakland is not part of the national Occupy movement, they’re onto something. From the start, Occupy Oakland immediately rejected cooperation with city government officials, wildly flexible state and media definitions of “violence,” and a now largely discredited arguments that the police are part of “the 99%.” After the coordinated raids on Occupy encampments across the country, the innumerable incidents of police violence, and slowly emerging details about the involvement of the Department of Homeland Security and its information “fusion” centers, the supporters of collaboration with the police have fallen silent.

The press releases of the city government, Oakland Police Department, and business associations like the Oakland Chamber of Commerce continually repeat that the Occupy Oakland encampment, feeding nearly a thousand mostly desperately poor people a day, was composed primarily of non-Oakland resident “white outsiders” intent on destroying the city. For anyone who spent any length of time at the encampment, Occupy Oakland was clearly one of the most racially and ethnically diverse Occupy encampments in the country—composed of people of color from all walks of life, from local business owners to fired Oakland school teachers, from college students to the homeless and seriously mentally ill. Unfortunately, social justice activists, clergy, and community groups mimicked the city’s erasure of people of color in their analysis of Occupy, when they were not negotiating with the mayor’s office behind closed doors to dismantle the encampment “peacefully.”

From the beginning the Occupy Oakland encampment existed in a tightening vise between two faces of the state: nonprofits and the police. An array of community organizations immediately began negotiating with city bureaucracies and pushing for the encampment to adopt nonviolence pledges and move to Snow Park (itself later cleared by OPD despite total compliance of individuals who settled there). At the same time, police departments across the Bay Area readied one of the largest and most expensive paramilitary operations in recent history. It became increasingly clear that the city's reputation for progressive activism could not tolerate the massing of Oakland's homeless, and the extent of urban social damage, made visible in one location.

Oakland city officials and local business people stage an Occupy Oakland counterdemonstration on the steps of City Hall.

The ongoing history of Occupy Oakland is a case study in how much antiracist politics has changed since Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown attempted to run for Oakland mayor and city council respectively in 1973 against a sea of white incumbents. Oakland's current city government—including the mayor's office, city council, and Oakland Police Department—is now staffed and led predominantly by people of color. State-sanctioned representatives who claim to speak for Oakland's "people of color," "women," or "queers" *as a whole* are part of a system of patronage and power which ensures that anyone who gets a foot up does so on the backs of a hundred others.

Whatever the rhetoric of these politicians, their job is to make sure the downtown property owners and homeowners in the hills are insulated from potential crime and rebellion from the flatlands due to increasingly severe budget cuts to social services, police impunity, and mass incarceration. Increasing numbers of Oaklanders rely upon a massive, unacknowledged informal/illegal economy of goods, services, and crime in order to survive. In other words their job is to contain this economy, largely through spending half (or over \$200 million annually, and \$58 million in lawsuit settlements over the past 10 years) of the city budget on the police department. When city politicians argue that protests are the work of "outsiders," they're also asserting the city government and the Oakland Police Department truly represent the city.

We do not believe that a politics rooted in privilege theory and calling for more racial diversity in fundamentally racist and patriarchal institutions like the Oakland Police Department, can challenge Oakland's existing hierarchies of power. This form of representational anti-oppression activism is no longer even remotely anticapitalist in its analysis and aims.

By borrowing a charge used against civil rights movement participants and 60s-era militants of color like Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown, and even Martin Luther King Jr., as "outside agitators," city residents have been told that the interests of all "authentic Oaklanders" are the same. The one month Occupy Oakland encampment was blamed by the Oakland Chamber of Commerce and its city government partners for everything from deepening city poverty to the failure of business led development, from the rats which have always infested the city plaza to the mounting cost of police brutality. An encampment which fed about a thousand people every day of its month-long existence, and which witnessed a 19% decrease in area crime in the last week of October, was scapegoated for the very poverty, corruption, and police violence it came into existence to engage.

If you believe the city press releases, "authentic Oaklanders" are truly represented by a police force which murders and imprisons its poor black and brown residents daily (about 7% of OPD officers actually live in the city) and a city government which funnels their taxes into business-friendly redevelopment deals like the \$91 million dollar renovation of the Fox Theater—\$58 million over budget—which line the pockets of well-connected real estate developers like Phil Tagami. In a complete reversal of 60s-era militant antiracist political movements, we are told by these politicians and pundits that militant, disruptive, and confrontational political actions which target this city bureaucracy and its police forces can only be the work of white, middle class, and otherwise privileged youths.

b. The Erasure of People of Color From Occupy Oakland

A recent communique critiquing the Occupy movement states, “The participation of people of color [in Occupy Oakland] does not change the fact that this occupation of public space upholds white supremacy.... Some of our own sisters and brothers have silenced our critiques in order to hold on to their positions of power as token people of color in the movement.”¹⁰³ The communique argues that people of color can suddenly “uphold” white supremacy because they do not share the political analysis of the document’s authors. People of color who do not agree with the politics advanced by this group are labeled white, informants, members of Cointelpro, or tokens. Often many of us are simply erased. This is a powerful and deeply manipulative rhetorical tactic which simply fails to engage substantively with any of the reasons why people of color did participate in Occupy Oakland and equates critical participation with support for rape, racism, sexism, homophobia, and gentrification. Needless to say, the authors of the above-quoted passage do not speak for us.

People of color who were not only active but central to Occupy Oakland and its various committees are routinely erased from municipal and activist accounts of the encampment. In subsequent months the camp has been denounced by social justice activists, many of whom work directly with the mayor’s office, who have criticized it as a space irreparably compromised by racial and gender privilege. Racism, patriarchy, homophobia, and transphobia were all clearly on display at Occupy Oakland – as they are in every sector of social life in Oakland. None of these accounts has even begun to examine how the perpetrators and victims of this violence did not belong to a single racial demographic, or track the evolving efforts of participants to respond to this violence.

People of color, women and trans* people of color, and white women and trans* people who participated heavily in Occupy Oakland have regularly become both white and (cis) male if they hold to a politics which favors confrontation over consciousness raising. And within white communities, similar political disagreements are routinely represented as differences between individuals with “white privilege” and those who are “white allies.”

There is clearly a need to reflect upon how the dynamics of the encampments quickly overwhelmed the capacity of participants to provide services and spaces free from sexual harassment and violence. To describe the participants of Occupy Oakland as primarily white men is not simply politically problematic and factually incorrect – it also prevents us from being able to look honestly at the social interactions that have actually occurred under its auspices.

V. Conclusion: Recuperating Decolonization and National Liberation Struggles; or, Revolution is Radically Unsafe

Nearly fifty years after the dramatic upsurge of wars of national liberation fought over the terrain of what used to be called the “Third World,” there are few political tools for confronting emerging local and global racisms between nonwhite communities, and the persecution of ethnic minorities in former colonies by native, nonwhite elites. In the US, this has taken the form of increasing antiblack, Islamophobic, and anti-immigrant racism within “communities of color” and increasing class divisions within nonwhite demographic categories.

National elites in decolonizing countries have frequently appealed to idealized ethnic traditions and histories in order to cement social cohesion and hierarchies of domination within dictatorial one-party states. Appeals to a kind of authoritarian traditionalism often mobilize components of indigenous traditions which justify caste or caste-like social divisions. No longer requiring the force of occupying

¹⁰³<http://disoccupy.wordpress.com/2012/04/24/for-people-who-have-considered-occupation-but-found-it-is-not-enuf/>

armies, formal decolonization in newly “independent” countries from Senegal to Vietnam has given way to neocolonial austerity, structural adjustment, and debt imposed by the global north and administered by those who Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, famously called the native “national bourgeoisie.”

As Maia Ramnath observes about the actually-existing history of formal decolonization,

“In seeking to replicate the techniques of colonial rule by institutionalizing states rather than abolishing them, the nationalist goal diverged from that of substantive decolonization. If the colonial regime’s structures of oppression were not simply to be reopened for business under new local management, yielding a new generation of authoritarian dictatorships and cultural chauvinists, a different logic of anticolonial struggle was imperative.

...[T]he specter of stateness—the pressure to establish your own, or to resist the aggression of someone else’s...calls forth the enforcement of internal conformity, elimination of elements who fail or refuse to conform, and relentless policing of boundaries, including those of hereditary membership, for which task the control of female bodies, sexuality, and reproduction is essential.”

The belief that communities of color in the US to represent coherent, bounded internal colonies or “nations” working for self-determination has been stretched to the breaking point by class divisions within these communities. To be clear: we believe that wealth can only buy limited protection against worsening racism, sexism, and homophobia. We desire radical liberation, from what theorists have called the “coloniality of power” and the institutions – the borders, the nation-form, the churches, the prisons, the police, and the military – which continue to materially reproduce racial, gender, class, and sexual hierarchies on a global scale. And yet we believe that the political content of contemporary decolonial struggles cannot be assumed in advance.

21st century decolonization in the US would be unrecognizable to the individuals who have fought for liberation under the banner of anticolonial struggle in the past—a tradition which includes Toussaint L’Ouverture, Jean Jacques Dessalines, Lucy Parsons, Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, Angela Davis, Robert F. Williams, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, the Third World Women’s Alliance, CONAIE, the indigenous militants of Bolivia in 1990, the militants of Oaxaca in 2006, the Mohawk people in the Municipality of Oka, Tupac Katari, Chris Hani, Nelson Mandela (who led the ANC’s armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe), Emiliano Zapata, Juan “Cheno” Cortina, Jose Rizal, Bhagat Singh, Yuri Kochiyama, Kuwasi Balagoon, DRUM, Assata Shakur, and countless others.

Anticolonial struggles were violent, disruptive, and radically unsafe for individuals who fought and died for self-determination. One cannot be a pacifist and believe in decolonization. One cannot be horrified at the burning of an American flag and claim to support decolonization. And one cannot guarantee the safety of anyone who is committed to the substantive decolonization of white supremacist institutions. The fact that decolonial struggle has been reduced to state-sanctioned rituals of cultural affirmation, and appeals to white radicals to stop putting the “vulnerable” in harm’s way, reveals the extent to which contemporary privilege politics has appropriated the radical movements of the past and remade them in its own image.

We are told that the victims of oppression must lead political struggles against material structures of domination by those who oppose every means by which the “victims” could actually overthrow these structures. We are told that resistance lies in “speaking truth to power” rather than attacking power materially. We are told by an array of highly trained “white allies” that the very things we need to do in order to free ourselves from domination cannot be done by us because we’re simply too vulnerable to state repression. At mass rallies, we’re replayed endless empty calls for revolution and militancy from a bygone era while in practice being forced to fetishize our spiritual powerlessness.

We are told that the victims of oppression must lead political struggles against material structures of domination by those who oppose every means by which the “victims” could actually overthrow these structures. We are told that resistance lies in “speaking truth to power” rather than attacking power materially. We are told that it is “privileged” to attempt to practically interfere with budget cuts, foreclosures, teacher firings, disappearing schools, hunger, or the loss of healthcare. We are told by an array of highly trained “white allies” that the very things we need to do in order to free ourselves from domination cannot be done by marginalized communities because they’re simply too vulnerable to state repression. At mass rallies, we’re replayed endless empty calls for revolution and militancy from a bygone era while in practice being forced to fetishize our spiritual powerlessness.

In a country where the last eruption of widespread political unrest was nearly forty years when the police go to war and it is called “force.” When business as usual is disrupted in any way, even by shouting, it is labeled “violent.” In this upside down world militant protests across the globe are characterized as heroic struggles for freedom while in the US SWAT teams are deployed to clear reproductive rights rallies. As an October 24th, 2011 letter from “Comrades in Cairo” published in *The Guardian* puts it, “In our own occupations of Tahrir, we encountered people entering the square every day in tears because it was the first time they had walked through those streets and spaces without being harassed by police; it is not just the ideas that are important, these spaces are fundamental to the possibility of a new world. These are public spaces. Spaces for gathering, leisure, meeting and interacting – these spaces should be the reason we live in cities. Where the state and the interests of owners have made them inaccessible, exclusive or dangerous, it is up to us to make sure that they are safe, inclusive and just. We have and must continue to open them to anyone that wants to build a better world, particularly for the marginalised, the excluded and those groups who have suffered the worst.

[...]

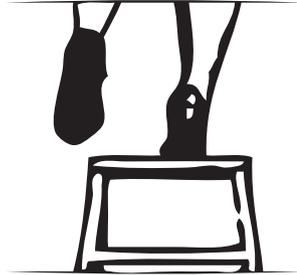
Those who said that the Egyptian revolution was peaceful did not see the horrors that police visited upon us, nor did they see the resistance and even force that revolutionaries used against the police to defend their tentative occupations and spaces: by the government’s own admission, 99 police stations were put to the torch, thousands of police cars were destroyed and all of the ruling party’s offices around Egypt were burned down. Barricades were erected, officers were beaten back and pelted with rocks even as they fired tear gas and live ammunition on us. But at the end of the day on 28 January they retreated, and we had won our cities.

It is not our desire to participate in violence, but it is even less our desire to lose. If we do not resist, actively, when they come to take what we have won back, then we will surely lose. Do not confuse the tactics that we used when we shouted ‘peaceful’ with fetishising nonviolence; if the state had given up immediately we would have been overjoyed, but as they sought to abuse us, beat us, kill us, we knew that there was no other option than to fight back. Had we laid down and allowed ourselves to be arrested, tortured and martyred to ‘make a point,’ we would be no less bloodied, beaten and dead. Be prepared to defend these things you have occupied, that you are building, because, after everything else has been taken from us, these reclaimed spaces are so very precious.”¹⁰⁴

Retrieved 21 July 2012 from <https://escalatingidentity.wordpress.com/>

¹⁰⁴<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/oct/25/occupy-movement-tahrir-square-cairo>

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