

Communist-Anarchism V. Individualist Proprietism, Australian Radical, February 2, 9 and 16, 1889.

When Proudhon wrote against communism he meant by the latter an authoritative form of early Socialism which would have imposed upon all the duty of supplying each according to the mere needs of food, clothing etc but which nevertheless sought to impose upon the duty of working to the utmost of their capacity so long as there are any needs to be supplied.

Shortly afterwards the Nihilists, perceiving that these early Communists had made certain advances in social science threw amongst them the propaganda of renouncing authority, which new departure was destined, in its modification of their pre-existing ideas, to lead to the goal of pure Anarchy, and set the new sect thus constituted, known from these obvious developmental reasons as the Communistes-Anarchistes, or Anarchic Communists, and in English speaking countries as the Communist Anarchists, in the main body of the Nihilistic vanguard, the position which it holds in advance of the world today.

These Nihilistic or 'Communist-Anarchist' ideas which are so obnoxious to the 'Individualists' are, for all that, the only ideas that rest upon nature as their foundation, and which do not embrace any artificial system capable of being manipulated by the fraudulent, as the present system is manipulated today.

We say thus: What is it that every man wishes for, except as influenced by the present system to wish for something else as the mere road to it? It is the satisfaction of all his mental and physical needs — needs of consumption — needs of use without consumption, needs of production in order to consume or to enjoy without consuming that which he has produced — needs of production of substantial things, or of ideas, for the production's sake — in a word the satisfaction of his needs.

Malthusians that they are who pretend that if each receives, according to his needs there will be slavery and misery! It is the very justification of exploitation. Prove to mankind that when there is no more monopoly all will be short of what they need if each strives to have according to his needs and sooner than suffer for ever the great majority will cry — "Let us run the risk of exploitation and take its chances; it is better that even one should be happy and the rest a trifle more miserable, than that all should be wretched together!"

But it is not so! It is a libel upon the Universe — a libel upon ourselves since each one of us is the Universe in one particular manifestation. There is enough for all and to spare. What then?

"Oh!" they say, "but if each receives according to his needs some will not receive even as much as the least they need," or if they do not say it in express words, they come so near to the mark that explanation is superfluous. Precisely — if you grant that when each is as he pleases some will be as they

do not please; and that if each received according to his works some will receive less than their works. Till then, permit me to relegate the argument to the inhabitants of the Yarra Bend.

Then they will add, "But look here; if a man can produce more than he needs and another will not produce what he needs, both get according to their needs, but one is compelled to be a slave, while the second is privileged to remain idle.

Paltry subterfuge! Does not that first man need rest, need liberty to devote his energies to the creation of new needs that he may supply them? If he has according to these needs, then the second man must look to his own needs for himself.

Then the not over acute may ask, "Why not say, 'To each according to his works?'"

Because that principle is a lie. Unless, indeed my works are only directed to the supply of what I need to consume, and to no other need whatever — that is, unless I have no other needs but those which can only be satisfied by the destruction of the means of satisfying them.

I have an idea — a burning thought which gives me no rest until I have given it physical embodiment. I need to invent, to endow my invention with tangible form. When I have done, I have no use — no need — for the machine itself. It will serve no purpose of my own. What then? You come along. The sight of the invention inspires you with a sense of your need to use it. Having ascertained that in doing so you are not infringing upon my needs, you are at liberty to do so. But hold! The 'individualist' declares that you must pay me for my labor in inventing or at least in constructing the tool. For what? If you had never been born would I have constructed it any the less? Have I not paid myself in the very fact of a fully accomplished fact, if payment there needs be? To be sure you now do need it, but if I make that the pretext for extorting from you a second 'payment' am I not taking a profit, am I not a tyrant, a capitalist, a slave-driver by the fetishism of property? Rather let us both use it if we need to, or you alone if I need it not. That alone is equity, that alone is Anarchy. The 'individualist' is no Anarchist but a Theocrat, a devotee and a priest of the altar of mammon, a charlatan conjuring from his dupes with the mystic formula of "mine and thine", payment for the almighty consideration of having blessed them by living up to the top of his bent — and that is the very sum and acme of his morality.

Even much as I may need what you produce, if I can compel you to that production by otherwise withholding from you that which I do not need and you do, I am a slave-dealer and a villain. It is the policy of the despot, the usurer, the taskmaster, and it is never the policy of the Anarchist. Less oppressive it might be were the land set free, and the other portions of the profit system abolished, but the Communist-Anarchist knows of No compromise with liberty, and against the 'Individualist' robber, as well as against the Capitalist king, he will battle if needs be to the death.