

What Is Communism? Australian Radical, August 17, 24 and 31, September 7, 1889.

THERE are various ideas going under the names of Individualism and Communism. The name of Communism has repeatedly been appropriated by Collectivist parties, and the early Communists themselves were not really Communists at all, except in so far as the idea that they might have prepared them to become so in fact. 'Individualism' is a word appropriated by the Proprietists, and it is proprietism accordingly that the true Communist or anti-proprietist commonly means in speaking against Individualism. The same word is appropriated by the people who are for the liberty of the individual down to the point at which their own domination comes in, like the Liberty and Property Defence League. These individualists are usually taken as the type of Individualism by the Collectivists. In passing let me observe that though Collectivism is as a rule avowed by State Socialism, there is what some of its adherents call Anarchic Collectivism, the principles of which are identical with those of the Time for Time Individualist Proprietist party as expounded in the late Labor Note discussion and 'An Anarchist Plan of Campaign' by Andrade and Newberry. The Collectivists are divided into Social Democrats, who profess Communist sympathies, and Paepists, who profess to combine the work of the last mentioned Individualist sect, with regard to economics, with State organisation; and are also divided again into Scientific Socialists, who so far as I can judge are against the existing State, but in favor of a new form of State supposed to be defensive and organising, and in this respect differ from the Communalist-Autonomists only in point of centralisation versus decentralisation or rather multiplication of small centres -- and State Socialists proper, who wish to work through the existing State, and who may generally be classed as Republican Socialists.

But in the literal sense of the word, communism is not any of these -- neither is individualism. What are they then? The question may very well be put in this form, for the reply is but one -- true communism, as expressed by the word communist -- anarchism, and true individualism, absolute, pure and unadulterated -- are one and the same thing. What is this perfect individualism? Communism! What is communism? The true, perfect individualism.

... it follows that all professed individualism which is at variance with communism is not individualism, and all professed communism which is not in accord with individualism is not communism. But we cannot say, "This is individualism, and therefore, since your communism disagrees with it, you stand convicted (by a very easy and offhand process) of having the error on your side. We must, must we not, examine carefully to the very bottom of the natural principles to which we look, and see what it is that they really do teach. We have been endeavoring to shape our ideas by these principles, but, whatever those ideas may be, is it not the case in most instances that the ideas have led to the conception we have of the principles rather than that the