

The STATE & Conscientious Objectors

A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR'S REFLECTIONS ON GOVERNMENT

John Lewis writes in *Pacific Views*, 207 Green Street, San Francisco 77, California:

Pacifists have encountered the State at particularly obnoxious levels since 1940. This has been especially true in the military arrogance of Selective Service and the fetish of discipline found in the Federal courts and prisons. Such a personal experience, on top of the clearly definable trend toward Statism on all sides, has led pacifists to re-examine their theories of government and the State. The result has been a sharp turn toward anarchism in pacifist thought.

In many cases this trend has gone no further than a revived interest in decentralism. On all sides, however, there is an ever-widening circle of pacifist readers of anarchist journals. At bottom, there is a distrust of present institutional arrangements, primarily in government, and a search for a more clearly defined social philosophy of pacifism which will delineate the proper role and form of social institutions most consistent with human freedom.

Anarchist Leaven

This is all to the good. At a time when the blessings of liberty are being forgotten and the Cult of the State is becoming dominant, the anarchist and his writings are a highly desirable leaven. Pacifist social philosophy—if such exists at all—has many unexplored niches, and considerably more discussion is obviously called for. Because pacifism is anti-authoritarian, because it prefers voluntarism and self-discipline to outside authority, it has much in common with anarchism. The anarchists are welcome allies in this search for a more satisfying social philosophy.

But for most of us the anarchist does not offer the key to the ideal relationship between the individual and society, or the proper balance between authority and freedom. When examined in itself, quite apart from its value to other systems of thought, anarchism appears to be begging the question. A form of social organization based on voluntary co-operation would, of course, be the anti-thesis of Statism and authority from the top. But so is Good the anti-thesis of Evil. The anarchist does not answer the question of how to achieve his world of voluntary co-operation, unless we accept his premise that men are basically gods.

[Anarchists may wax poetical, but the above premise has solid grounds in that Labor of mankind has changed our natural habitat to a man created artificial social surround. All that is regarded as wealth to-day—all that constitutes society as an organization—all that impinges upon us as individual members of such a society, war, for example, is the CREATION OF MAN. Gods are therefore no longer necessary as an hypo-

thetical explanation. Man created both the good and the evil in society to-day—but he did not do it consciously. Everything came into being because of the practices of mankind in the earning of his livelihood—in the gaining of food, clothing, and shelter. The "higher" ethical attributes are an emanation from this practice—a by-product, and do not determine the practice. But if enough of us gain a clear view and understanding of what man's practice has resulted in, i.e., a property creating career that bids to the dissolution of society, as Lewis H. Morgan (*Ancient Society*) so clearly saw—we may overcome the results. The anarchists, the socialists, the I.W.W. and others all contribute towards such a realistic understanding.—Interposol by Editor *Workers' Councils*.]

The Nation-State, as every thinking individual knows, rests on conditions that make war a periodic necessity. To follow through with the logic of war resistance, one must, therefore, cut at the roots of the Nation-State. We are saying that this is not to imply a rejection of government, *per se*. But equally important, we are saying that "getting" the Nation-State is not enough.

Even with the passing of nationalism there can be no freedom, and, hence, no creative peace, while men are unwilling to adjust differences and compromise on issues. Freedom can exist only when the major issues of the day are not considered fundamental by men. Freedom can live only when men possess generally acceptable goals, for only then are the major issues in areas where reasonable men can be expected to agree. As long as there are differences on fundamentals, Statism, whether on a national or world level, will continue to exist as the primary enemy of freedom.

The primary task of pacifist thought must, therefore, deal with the development of generally acceptable goals consistent with freedom for all men, while at the same time facing the Facts of Life. . . . —John Lewis.

COMMENT BY EDITOR S.A.W.C.

Views of Conscientious Objectors are mostly ideological. They mostly fail to grasp the extant factual set-up of society, viz., the BASE of present society and THE STATE is the Institution of Property.

Until they become deeply conscious that the individual is continually sacrificed and coerced to the NEEDS OF

PROPERTY and that the State is the organ of Property Owners, pacifists will fail to grasp reality.

The objective of the I.W.W. and socialists in general is the taking over by society of all property necessary to produce the food, clothing and shelter and the civilised social amenities of the whole people and work under democratic control to distribute the products freely to all.

Socialists aim to gain State control so that the armed forces of a property society will not be used against the people.

The I.W.W. aims to control industry and so control the production and transport of supplies of the armed forces that the power of the State will become impotent. Both aims are necessary, and any class conscious worker will see that a unity of action is necessary. The I.W.W. stress factually, even though not theoretically, however, the point that a real political party of Labor can only come out of a consciously organised workers' One Big Union. In actual practice, in dynamic action the theoretical differences will be resolved in a common class consciousness. *Freedom*, the anarchist weekly of London, clearly recognises the role of organised wage-labor. So does *Direct Action*, organ of the Anarchist Federation of Britain.

The ideal relationship between the individual and society is the co-operative working together to produce and create all that we need. The widening of mental horizons will result.

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Anti-Bolshevist Communism in Germany

(PAUL MATTICK)

The process of the concentration of capital and political power forces any socially important movement to attempt either to destroy capitalism or to serve it consistently. The old German labor movement could not do the latter, and was neither willing nor able to do the former. It functioned neither in accordance with its original ideology nor with its real immediate interests. For a time it served as a control instrument of the ruling classes. First losing its

independence, it was soon to lose its very existence.

Essentially the history of this movement is the history of the capitalist market approached from a "proletarian" point of view. The so-called market laws were to be utilised in favor of the commodity labor power. "Economic power" gained in this manner was to be secured by way of social reform. The capitalists, too, increased the organised control over the market. Both sides fostered the monopolistic re-organization of capitalist society, though, to be