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Émile Pouget
Revolutionary Bread
1896

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Revolutionary Bread

Émile Pouget

1896

The ancients said: “The wise man carries his law within him.”
This is all of anarchy in one word.

But it’ll be said: “Sure, but are all men wise?”

This would be misunderstanding the question, for no one has the measuring-stick to size up wisdom. The true wisdom for all would be for everyone to be himself. But to reach this individualism in conditions that can be generalized it has to be recognized that men have points of contact among each other, the result of which is liberties that are praised by all, and whose agreement constitutes the social milieu.

In the first rank of these entities comes the need for bread, which is common to all. Those men who don’t live on bread alone nevertheless have to live in the first place – and then philosophize. However revolutionary you might be its difficult to reverse the order of these two things: the most wild-eyed idealist also eats his daily bread.

We can thus recognize that despite every declaration of political principles and the lying Declaration of Rights, that the most outlaw of individuals, the most outsider to society, is he who will die of hunger. Now legally, any individual can die of hunger, and if the economists were honest that would even say

that he should when the *general* conditions oblige him to do so. Without exaggeration, it can be seen that the whole of our current society rests on the legality of famine, which denies the individual any liberty to reach and to determine himself. It is a crime to be without work – or to not accept it under imposed conditions. And this crime, not spoken of in the Code, is punished with the death penalty.

It's from this point of view that the question of bread assured for all contains in germ the entire social question. If life in its elementary form was made everyone to make common cause, if the social milieu offered this unmoving, this fixed and inflexible point, assured to all, the freedom that would result from it would suffice to constitute a rational society. It would be the basis upon which to build something solid, an entirely new architecture where all social units would be in perfect equilibrium.

Whatever the beauty of the dreams and hoped for horizons, we cannot lose our grip and forget to recognize how essential is the conquest of bread. This minimal right of life, we can't disdain it and we must assure it. The day we have it, without concessions or stooping to low acts, we will have all the benefits of liberty and all rights. The plan of the new world (which will perhaps not conform to the programs we know) must spontaneously grow from this great social principle, like a vigorous oak develops from its seed, solidly implanted in a nourishing terrain.