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Joseph Labadie
The Aims of Anarchism
1920

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The Aims of Anarchism

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Let me tell you briefly what Anarchism aims to do:

It claims that freedom, liberty, is the greatest factor in bringing material comfort and happiness to the people, and so Anarchism would reduce gradually, even to the vanishing point, the political power and physical control which some people hold over others.

It wants to make all unused land free to those who will use it. This will dispense with the colossal expense of supporting the landlord class, and increase the wealth-producing power by turning landlords and the unemployed poor from parasites to producers...

It wants to do away with patent- and copy-rights. This would turn the vast unearned sums that now go into the pockets of privilege into the comforts and homes of the producers, and increase the amount of machinery, books, etc., and at less cost.

It wants to substitute voluntary co-operation and really free competition for the present State, under which things are worth more than human beings, abolishing the politician, with his arbitrary physical power as manifested by the police, the army and the navy, which are now supported by taxes forcibly collected from the people. It believes soldiers, policemen, politicians and all the other extravagances made necessary to support the present criminal State,

would be very much more useful to society were they to raise their own food, make their own clothes and build their own houses.

Anarchists as a rule know that fundamental social and economic changes come slowly through experiments and thought and necessity and patient toil, and not by wars and violence and disorder and bloodshed; and so they do not expect the millennium to come at beck and call, by ballot or bluff, by bullet or bluster; but that societies grow more just and perfect if permitted, and that violence and disorder but retard symmetrical growth as the vandal hatchet and violent storms maim and disfigure and retard even the most rugged tree. They do hope, however, to better human conditions by clearing away the rubbish injustice, letting the sun of righteousness shine on the dark places. They know that you must become an Anarchist before Anarchism can be; that you must have an intelligent desire to be free before timid freedom ventures within your reach—that freedom is only for those who want it; that you must realise your slavish conditions before slavery can be abolished; that you must comprehend your own degradation and servility before human dignity and self-respect can be yours; that you must know that you are being despoiled of the greater share of the results of your honest efforts before the despoilers will cease their spoliation ; that you must have the knowledge, the will and the courage to take your own and leave what belongs to others before you will be fit to associate with those who love justice and hate wrong, who are wise enough to know their own rights, and strong enough to refrain from aggressing another's security.

Anarchists know that so long as they are few in number they can be overwhelmed by authority and its ignorant and therefore willing victims. This is why they spend so much time and effort and money to reach your thinking machine, so as to lay before it facts and reasons that will influence its mechanism. When this is done successfully your intelligence will no doubt show you how useless and harmful most of our present political machinery is, and you will co-operate with them, be one of them, in the effort

to reduce the powers and functions of the State and increase the beneficent influences of freedom. Every person convinced of the truth of Anarchism sees how liberty enlarges human prosperity and happiness, and becomes, from purely self-interest a propagandist, dreaming of a future when

“For a’ that, and a’ that, ,
It’s comin’ yet for a’ that,
That man to man the world o’er,
Shall brothers be for a’ that.”