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Anarchism

Lucy E. Parsons

February 3, 1906

We are told that the word Anarchy needs constant explanation; that whenever used in its literal sense it must be defined. Is there any other word of which this is not true? The introduction of new ideas into a man's mind is not accompanied by the use of a specially coined word, but by the adaptation of old words to broader uses. Even the word self-government would not convey our meaning in its broadest generalization. This word has been understood since its introduction into general use to mean a system of representative government—the delegation of personal rights to be represented by another person deemed to be the highest approach of liberty possible in a state.

In seeking the establishment, not of a system of government, but of the greater extension of liberty, the use of this word would be far more objectionable than the word Anarchy, and this because it carries with it a recognition of government and the necessity of political action; Earl Derby boasted when Premier in the House of Lords of England's "principles of popular government."

In every instance in which Americans use the word "self-government" it carries with it the idea of representation as

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well as administration. States in the Union by their “residuary rights” possess self-government, and individuals enjoy the fullest self-government; the trouble is, liberty has not yet acquired a substantive tutelage of past ages, has not been outgrown so largely, but that the halo of authority still lingers around all our words.

Nevertheless, humanity tends always more and more toward individualism, that is toward real self-government, which is the only true, just and sane government. Today we are passing out of political into economic problems, over which the state has no influence, being the creature of existing economic conditions; hence, a word is needed which, while not condemning administration, will unequivocally express opposition to political government. The old bottles answered to hold the old wine of politics. Economic questions, not being solvable by political methods, demand new bottles for the new ideas time evolves.

Government is stationary, social growth is progressive; consequently we find ourselves arrived at a point where governments become a barrier to economic progress. True, this position is a reversal of the common accepted belief, which is that government is a help to progress. But a close study of the origin, tendency and operations of all governments will show that they never lead to progress.

Governments always stand for the “established order of things.” Hence, we use the word anarchy, the negative of government, and will retain it when the political state has merged into the social commonwealth.