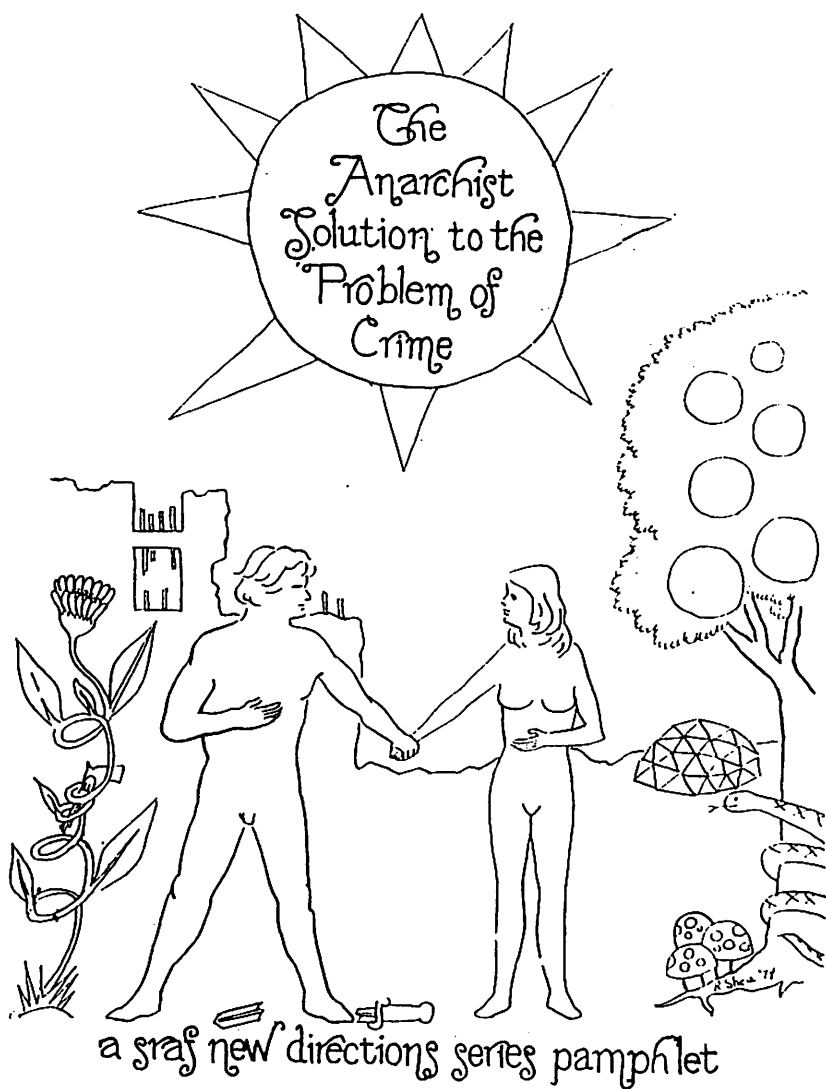




The first thing people want from government is that it maintain the peace and administer justice. Yet governments have killed more people and seized more goods than any private criminal ever has, and today's governments threaten either to wipe out humanity in a nuclear war or to submerge the world in a system of 1984-style superstates. Government and law enforcement actually perpetuate the conditions that breed crime--poverty, racism, alienation, sexual repression. Even as the numbers of laws, judges and jails increases, so do the rates of murder, rape, assault, robbery, burglary and larceny.

Anarchists believe that if government is abolished the evils it causes will disappear and the evil it supposedly prevents--antisocial behavior--will get no worse and may even decrease. A popular misconception of anarchy pictures people running amok, a complete breakdown of humane and sensible behavior. This is not what anarchists aim at, since an orgy of violence would immediately lead to the restoration of government. The basic idea of anarchism is that a peacable, harmonious social system can be founded on the willingness of most people to work together without coercion.

THE FAILURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law supposedly has four functions: 1) to establish the rights, privileges and powers of government and to regulate the economy; 2) to control private activities such as sex, drinking, drug-taking and gambling on the basis of moral judgments; 3) to act as an arbiter of disputes and an enforcer of contracts; 4) to prohibit acts that actually injure people. The first three kinds of law have little intrinsic value except to maintain many of the frustrations and inequities that incite crime, and the forbidding and punishing of antisocial acts doesn't prevent them or help their

victims. Belief in law and law-enforcement diverts attention and effort from solutions that would deal with the cause of crime.

The failure of law-enforcement is dramatically demonstrated by one criminologist's estimate that in New York City in 1972 there were 300,000 robberies and only 20,000 arrests. Police sometimes prevent crimes and jails keep a few criminals off the streets. But this is like trying to cure a fever with an ice pack. Government officials need crime and will consciously or unconsciously promote it and insist that there is no sensible solution to the crime problem except more government. But each step in this direction--each new law and each new bureaucratic office--adds to the tax burden and moves us closer to a society in which all of us are under constant surveillance and totally at the mercy of an all-powerful police.

Punishment, the keystone of crime-control in this society, is an utter failure. Caged and degraded, the condemned man learns only that justice is not rehabilitation but retaliation. The most humane prison system is still based on forcibly depriving people of their freedom, teaching the lesson that it is permissible to use force to impose one's will on others.

Crime is as natural to our kind of coercive society as cirrhosis of the liver is to an alcoholic. Western civilization has for thousands of years inflicted on its children a morality that torments the mind with fear of punishment, frustration, self-loathing, rage. Morality doesn't make people behave themselves, it creates the inner conflicts and repressed rages that provoke crime. Socially sanctioned violence provides a model and often a justification for criminal violence. And the U.S. economic system, which allows most money and property to accumulate in the hands of a few, rewards financial success no matter how attained and provokes and punishes the poor while protecting

the rich, couldn't be better designed to generate an ever-increasing crime rate.

THE ANARCHIST ALTERNATIVE

It may seem hard to imagine that civilization could survive without government, but it once seemed impossible that civilization could exist without slavery. Human nature, contrary to what many people believe, is not dangerous and in need of control.

It is sometimes argued that since man has formed governments throughout history, both government and its abuses are natural to humans. But the fact that people tend to rely informally on leadership does not make monarchies, oligarchies or even republics and democracies inevitable. Most of the preconditions of an anarchist society existed in the more unsettled areas of North America only a century ago. To solve their immediate problems, people decided to surrender some of their freedom to a local sheriff. Only too late did they realize that giving up a little bit of freedom is like contracting a little bit of cancer. The memoirs of old Western settlers are full of regrets for the unfettered individualism of the frontier. The lesson to be drawn is that freedom demands a certain toughness, an insistence on self-reliance and, as the proverb has it, eternal vigilance.

Anarchism doesn't promise a perfect world--only something better than what we've got. The abolition of the state won't instantly transform humanity into a race of kindly, enlightened creatures. But we can rely on the probability that, set free, people will pursue their interests with prudence and enough imagination to be able to envision long-run consequences. That could be and should be enough to make this a happier world.

Libertarian Morality: The violent type of human being is produced by our current methods of child-rearing. The repressive, authoritarian, coercive practices currently used in many families and schools are necessary only to condition children to live in a government-run society. Libertarian, free-form families and schools--the open family, the Summer-hill-type school, the free association of men, women and children without authoritarian control--will not produce the violent, twisted types so common in today's society. The abolition of coercive law will lead to a society free of sexual suppression and sexist male domination. Without the support of force these forms of oppression will be unable to compete with more attractive ideas and practices. As sexual repression disappears, so will violent sex crimes.

The Nonviolent Society: Even in the best of societies it is to be expected that some persons will still make trouble. Murder. Rape. Pilfering. Attempts to defraud. How to deal with these do-badders? Mankind's tribes, clans, bands and free communes have developed a variety of methods for dealing with the person who harms others. Nonviolent approaches include ostracism, public denunciation (especially effective when, as with the Quakers, the culprit is wept over and forgiven), payments by the wrongdoer to his victims, persuasion, education, social pressure, non-compulsory therapy, the help of friends and neighbors, non-collaboration and nonviolent resistance.

In the view of some anarchists, any use of force is coercive, and the evils anarchists are trying to overcome can only be corrected by complete renunciation of force, but others propose a range of self-defense methods which, they believe, are compatible with libertarian principles. One sure deterrent to the criminal is fear of his victim's possible retaliation.

Many anarchists accept the idea of local defense groups; different communities will produce many solutions to the problem of the defense of the peace of the community through free experimentation with any and every appropriate form. The key to every method is that it is to be used defensively only, against persons who initiate violence. Obviously, freedom is based on self-regulation and self-restraint. It is consistent with a belief in the possibility of freedom to expect people to limit their use of violence to defensive measures only.

The Abundant Economy: Prevailing economic systems, whether they call themselves socialist or capitalist; use force to maintain state-sanctioned property relations. Anarchism rejects the use of state power for any purpose. Whatever economic arrangements, collectivist or free-enterprise, people make in a free society will be voluntary. There will probably be freely accepted rules, like the rules of a game, such as, perhaps, that property be respected. But the right of anyone to anything he needs will be equally respected. Enlightened self-interest recognizes that there must be alternatives between refusing the necessities of life to those in want or forcibly making all property communal. Borrowing with mutual consent or sharing, from an individual or from a common store, will probably be the most common kind of property distribution. But in the abundant economy made possible by total freedom individuals will rarely be in want. Historical experience has shown that population declines with the spread of material prosperity and awareness of contraception. Technology can supply the basic needs of the entire human race -- even today this is possible. Total freedom will allow an enormous increase in creativity, inventiveness, productivity. Man enjoys work when it isn't alienating and he isn't coerced into it.

Since general acceptance of anarchist ideas is a necessary precondition to a worldwide liberated society, antisocial behavior within the free community will probably be rare. The remedies will also be individualized and peculiar to each situation. In some cases, undoubtedly, a community will decide that the antisocial person was right and the community was wrong.

Anarchists do not believe in unalterable laws, but only in general policies. The acme of anarchism is the policy of non-invasiveness or non-coercion--Mind Your Own Business. We don't expect people to behave like saints; we expect of them simply that they leave one another alone.

FROM ARCHY TO ANARCHY

The crucial question is, How do we get from where we are to where we want to be? Basically what is needed is a change of attitudes, and the job of today's anarchists is to spread the idea of the stateless society by every available means. Here are some of the things they are doing:

- 1) Thinking about, studying and discussing anarchist ideas. Developing a new attitude toward crime, refusing to see it as a fearsome problem to be solved by more government power. Trying to see the criminal as a fellow human under pressure and asking themselves what he would be like in a free society.

- 2) Devising personal codes of conduct based on non-injury toward others. Self-discipline is the other side of the coin of self-liberation.

- 3) Liberating oneself. The wise anarchist does not think of himself as a liberator of his fellow men, but as one in need of liberation. The main thing anarchism offers right now is not a new social system but an ideal of personal liberation from the attitudes and habits of authoritarian society. The new society

will come to be when enough individuals have freed themselves.

4) After self-liberation, organizing in groups for the liberation of society. These can begin simply as study groups for mutual education and communes for mutual aid. Such groups will help to promote the idea of freedom wherever they are formed.

5) Building regional, continental and world-wide federations of autonomous groups to work together to spread ideas of liberty, encourage self-initiative among people and oppose oppression.

6) Withdrawing support from government by every means. Refusing to obey laws that do not prohibit antisocial behavior but merely assert or enhance the power of government. The ultimate form of non-violent resistance is the general strike, whereby people in all walks of life refuse to work until the state is dismantled.

At the climax of the movie They Might Be Giants, the hero, who thinks he is the great crime-fighter Sherlock Holmes, says, "We're living in the Garden of Eden. We've never left it. This is Paradise all around us." Man is not fallen and in need of control; he is as he is, and that is good enough. To discover Paradise around us we have to give up our distrust of people, which means giving up our distrust of ourselves.

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