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George Barrett
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1920

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Barrett, George (1920). *The Anarchist Revolution*. London: Freedom Press.

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George Barrett

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This is the task of the revolution. It means the destruction of the governing class, which holds the keys of the world's wealth; and it will throw open the treasure-houses of the world to those who have built them and stored them with riches. The policeman's bludgeon, by which authority supersedes justice; the fantastic uniforms of our kings and soldiers, hopeless substitute for manhood and courage; the wigs of our learned judges and men of the law, vain semblance of wisdom — all these and much more shall be pitched into huge bonfires that will glow as the rising sun through the streets of our cities, and at which the poor shall warm their half-starved bodies and hungry souls. The masquerade will have a sudden end, and the whole paraphernalia of destruction, which to-day keeps the world in check, will itself be destroyed by the rising forces of construction — the revolt of the workers. The social system dominated by brute force will give place to the new free society, born of and kept in existence by the free co-operation of those who form it.

And is that the end of all things?

No, that is the foundation of our future greatness, for Anarchy is the necessary condition for human progress.

Is it not now evident that this Anarchist Revolution is *the* revolution towards which the Labour movement has been working so long? It was in spite of the most savage laws that the workers first formed their protective Unions against the brutal exploitation of the capitalists. To-day it is the same struggle, for it is still the representatives of the Government who are bludgeoning the workers down into the mines and back to their factories, to work on the terms that the masters dictate.

On the one side are the disciplined, uniformed ranks of the Government obeying the word of command — they create nothing, their highest virtue is obedience, which means the sacrifice of judgment, the one quality that would make them higher than the beasts. On the other side are the irregular, motley ranks of the workers. In their hearts is rebellion, and their minds are filled with great ideals — ill-formed and imperfect, a dim consciousness of a mighty power to create something infinitely great and beautiful, for it is they who have moulded the wealth of the world into shape.

Who can doubt what is the meaning of this great struggle? Is it to end in a few extra crusts of bread for the workers' army? Is it merely to ensure that they shall be allowed to work rather than starve? Will peace be declared when a new party of politicians sit in Parliament?

It is far greater than all of these; it is the age-long struggle between the past and the future; it is the great war between liberty and slavery. On the one side are the decaying relics of the dead past, and on the other is the ever-growing strength of young ideals. Ignorance and submission against understanding and self-reliance.

There is but one way to understand this great rising of the common people. It is but a feeble mind that sees it merely as an attempt to reform the controlling power. The struggle will continue until each side, by the logic of their actual position in it, will be forced to realise its full significance; and then nothing can stop the final battle, the overthrow of government and the establishment of liberty.

Introduction

An Anarchist is a man who does not believe that government is a good thing for the people. He is, in fact, a man who believes in and strives for liberty. Liberty is to him not a superstition, or a god of which to make images, but a practical theory or plan of action. The first step necessary in establishing liberty will be, clearly, the abolition of government, and this will mean the organisation of industry by the workers themselves, not by any outside power — in other words, the Anarchist Revolution. For the moment this may seem wildly impossible; but if we give it a little consideration, a new side to the question comes into view.

In the first place, is there not something quite wrong and mixed up in your ideas, for I assume you are not an Anarchist? You believe in *Government* as a necessary part of our social life, and yet you will not like to say that you deny and reject *Liberty*. This is so with almost all people who are not Anarchists — they spend one half of their intellect apologising for their belief in government, and the other half in excusing themselves for their love of liberty. They are in just the same position in regard to their political beliefs as the Christians are in regard to their religious ideal. The Christians build churches to the glory of Christ and worship him; should any man speak against him, they are horrified; but when it comes to practical life, they do not in the least apply their religion. "Take no thought for to-morrow" they translate "Keep a good balance at the bank." "Thou shalt not kill" becomes "£60,000,000 annually for the Army and Navy." "Judge not" and "Swear not" is written in the book by which they swear in the courts of judgment. "Call no man your *master*, for ye are all *brothers*," is interpreted to mean that the soldiers must protect their *masters* by shooting their brothers during a strike.

So one could go on till it is proved that every point taught by Christ has been rejected by those who worship him. Exactly the same thing has happened in regard to Liberty. As a people, we

worship it. Our boast is that "where the Union Jack floats Liberty is supreme." We erect statues to it, our poets sing in honour of it, our politicians stir our blood with rhetoric in praise of it; but when it comes to practical life, none of these in the least applies his ideal. "We must have a Government, we must have some one in control," they say; and behind these words are hidden the policeman's bludgeon, the wretched prison system, and the Army ready to shoot down those rebels who dare to attempt to overthrow the politician's ideal of society. Liberty is a fine thing to make speeches about, and to which to erect statues; but for practical politics they demand government.

We begin to see now where the Anarchist comes in. He *really* believes in Liberty, and, as I have said before, he sees that this means the abolition of government.

Those who believe in government, then, are a trifle muddled in their philosophy; but the reader may yet be of the opinion that it would be entirely impossible to overthrow it. The fact is, anything else is impossible.

Does not all history show us a conflict between the dominant or governing class and the people to whom it tries to dictate the conditions of life? Does it not also show that the march of progress is away from government towards liberty?

But what more damning proof of the impossibility of government can we wish for than that which is furnished by the age in which we live? The possibilities of life have become so great, so complete has been our conquest of Nature's wealth, that it seems we have but to ask and we shall receive the full enjoyment of life. The most extravagant fairy story of our childhood is surpassed by the reality of to-day. Our imagination has materialised, our greatest thoughts have been translated into action. Such are the individual and social achievements of man.

In the midst and at the head of the social structure, which comes into existence because our activities are carried on by groups and not by single individuals, is an association of men calling them-

artistic element of the community. Among artists, however, there are many different opinions as to what really is art. If our institution is to be one great affair, with majority rule inside, it is clear that there will be only one class of pictures on the walls, probably painted by popular Academicians, while the progressive section will not be represented in any way. If, on the other hand, we cut out altogether this idea of government, and allow liberty to obtain inside, just as it was liberty which brought our institution into being, we find that it will become representative in detail just as it was in bulk. When these artists meet together, those who are in the majority will not wish to dictate to the minority, but they will simply see that in the design of the building their needs are catered for. The minority, before it agrees to co-operate, will also see that room is made for its ideas.

If these two parties cannot agree to differ in this way, they would split apart entirely and have two separate buildings; but as this would pay neither of them, it is not likely to happen. It is clear also that with such a free method of organisation, not merely two opinions would be represented, but there would be as many different sorts of pictures as there were different ideas in art, except in those cases where two or more sections united in a compromise because they were not strong enough or sufficiently different from their neighbours to stand alone.

Here then, again, we have a truly *representative* institution. Just as we have seen above society growing into existence as the result of the individual need for bread, and just as we have found it impossible to suppose that starvation could exist when this *need* was used as the direct and only driving power behind the bakers and the bakery, so now, when we come to deal with man's higher needs, we find that these can be supplied simply and perfectly by rooting out the last relic of the old-fashioned ideas of authority, and substituting for master and man the equal liberty of all.

* * *

reasons I must be forgiven if the details given in the example here taken are followed far enough to be a little tedious.

It is doubly worth while to answer this difficulty, because, if the explanation is followed, the reader will see that it explains also how he can begin to apply his Anarchist principles — for I am sure by this time he is an Anarchist — to the workers' organisations.

Most of these, alas! while they claim to exist for the purpose of fighting Capitalism and authority, are themselves bossed and controlled exactly as a capitalist institution is. It is clear that the next step towards the revolution will be the reconstruction of these organisations, so that they will be as free from the control of "leaders" and executives as will be the free society they are out to build. This step is already being taken.

To return to my argument: as a contrast to bread-making, we will take art. About this subject few people think alike, and most people don't think at all. If, then, our principles of free agreement are capable of supplying some art institute that will satisfy everyone, we need not fear but that it will hold out all right in simpler cases.

Let us take the thing as it exists to-day, and root out from it the influence of government. Art galleries are now generally run by the corporations of large cities. The money is raised by rates; that is to say, everyone is compelled to pay to buy and house pictures. While a great number absolutely care nothing for them, some may even object to them as being immoral. At the very outside, then, the institution is unrepresentative, and in its small way absolutely tyrannical.

In a free society the art institution, just as the bakeries, would grow into being in direct response to the desire for it. Those in a community who were interested in art would naturally meet together and discuss their plans. It would be their pleasure, and they would not compel anyone to help them who was not in sympathy with their ideas. In this way the size of the institution would exactly represent the amount of interest taken in it. It would represent the

selves the Government. These men are for the most part cultured, and have enjoyed the greatest advantages of education that the system is able to offer them.

Yet what is the result, the gain to humanity, of this wonderfully regulated society which has been built solely to make life richer? Millions are on the verge of starvation, hundreds of thousands are spending their lives in producing instruments for the destruction of human life, and millions again are wasting their existence in a dull tragedy of monotony. In every great industrial centre where wealth is most plentifully produced, there is poverty and want. In the rich town where no production is carried on, there is plenty and enjoyment. He who labours hard or produces wealth is in poverty, he who lives in idleness is rich. When the warehouses are full, there is want and hunger. Those without food are forbidden to produce because the demand is *already* supplied.

In all this, what part does the Government play? It controls and regulates — as if forsooth, invention and production were not in themselves orderly processes. It protects the property necessary for all this production, but, with tragic imbecility, it protects it for the non-producer *against* the producer. It protects the wealth created; but it does not preserve it for those who need it, but for those who are already wealthy — and thus arises the problem of poverty.

What can the politicians say to these appalling facts? From Socialists to Conservatives, they can only raise the pitifully weak appeal: Put us in power and we will do better.

Thus, to detect the Government helping to upset the social equilibrium may not be *proof* that it is necessarily and innately an unsocial factor in our civilisation, but it should at least stake our faith and throw it open to criticism — a criticism not aimed at the particular party in power, but directed to the institution itself.

Custom, in truth, has a marvellous power to paralyse our mind; but if we rid our thoughts of the folly of believing that what is is necessarily right, and if we contrast with it the free society that

might be, it surely becomes difficult to conceive the audacity of the man who could seriously prefer the Government system.

If these arguments are not sufficiently convincing, if it is not enough to remember that the Government is represented by a gang of men armed with bludgeons, who hang about our streets and country roads both day and night, it must at least appear possible that this attempt to keep the dispossessed from the food of the country and the means of production may be a relic of the darkest ages in history.

I. The Labour Movement

It is quite true that we Anarchists are extremists; we want to bring about a complete and far-reaching change in the order of things, and we believe that this change can only be accomplished by rudely disturbing, upsetting, and overthrowing the institutions which belong to to-day, and establishing in their place those of a free society. We believe, in fact, in a revolution, not merely political or constitutional, but a social revolution — a complete change in our relationships one to another.

Thus, for example, in the future society there will be no rich keeping the poor in poverty, since the authority and law by which the one forces the other to give up the wealth it produces will be swept away.

"The result will be chaos," says he who refuses to think; whereas if he would but open his eyes and look round, instead of bending over his employer's desk or bench all the days of his only life, he would see that to-day we were in such a chaos that it would seem the Devil himself had been tempted out of hell to come and live in a climate more congenial to him.

But we will try to get at the whole thing from the simplest point. Let us first of all consider the Labour movement, and try to understand what all the noise and confusion and strife between Labour

industries and begin to *control* their production and interchange, which must in the nature of things already be well adjusted and orderly. Those who control production in this manner are invariably those who enjoy the larger part of that which is produced; that is why the politicians try to insist upon the necessity of such control. Alas! that they should be so tamely followed by so many workers who have not yet cleared their minds of the old slavish instincts.

The structure of this future society, then, must not be centralised; but, growing ever more closely bound together and interwoven by free and mutual agreements, it will be for the first time in human history a society of *representative* institutions, each of which is brought into being and grows or dies out as a direct result of the need for it. It will be a society responsive to the wants of the people; it will supply their everyday needs as quickly as it will respond to their highest aspirations. Its changing forms will be the passing expressions of humanity.

* * *

Anarchism is often brushed aside by the politicians with the remark that it is a beautiful dream, but quite impossible. It is for this reason that I have taken here a purely practical view of it; and now, in order that we may be quite sure of meeting no insurmountable difficulties in running our new society, we must first examine it a little more in detail.

It may be said that, in taking bread-making as an example, I have chosen a subject about which there is little room for a difference of opinion. Everyone agrees on the necessity for bread, and practically everyone as to its method of manufacture. When you get to complex things about which people differ widely, how will you do without law or some form of control from above?

It may well be argued that man cannot live by bread alone, and unless our new form of society has room within it for the highest culture as well as the barest necessities, it is condemned. For these

more benches were needed on which to knead the bread, in just the same way is it not easy to see that the carpenters would supply them? If an intimation were given to the engineers that machinery were wanted, would they not see that this received their immediate attention? The engineers in their turn would apply to the draughtsmen for designs, and to the foundrymen for castings. In turn, again, the draughtsmen apply to the papermakers for paper, and to the workers in the pencil factories for pencils. The foundrymen, in the meantime, apply to the furnacemen, and these in their turn to the miners for more iron ore and coal. So the endless continuity goes on — a well-balanced interdependence of parts is guaranteed, because *need* is the motive force behind it all.

Who bosses, who regulates all this? No one! It starts from below, not from above. Like an organism, this free society grows into being, from the simple unit up to the complex structure. The need for bread, hunger — or, in other words, the individual struggle to live, in its most simple and elementary form — is, as we have seen, sufficient to set the whole complex social machinery in motion. Society is the result of the individual struggle for existence; it is not, as many suppose, opposed to it.

In the same way that each free individual has associated with his brothers to produce bread, machinery, and all that was necessary for life, driven by no other force than his desire for the full enjoyment of life, so each institution is free and self-contained, and co-operates and enters into agreements with others because by so doing it extends its own possibilities. There is no centralised State exploiting or dictating, but the complete structure is supported because each part is dependent on the whole. The bakers, as we have seen, need the carpenters and engineers, and these would be no use if they were not supplied by other workers, who in their turn are just as dependent on yet another branch. What folly if the engineers should presume to dictate to the bakers the conditions of their labour, and it would be equally without reason if a committee, styling itself the Government, should become boss of all these

and Capital is about. Roughly stated, this is what is going on in every great industrial centre. The majority of people spend day after day in huge factories, producing wealth. These factories are not their own, but belong — the law says — to a party of men called shareholders or capitalists. Most of these buildings have high walls round them, so that the workers may not come in and go out when they like, but rather when the owners like. The point about which there has been so much trouble is this. When the workers have produced wealth in these factories for a week, they are given a set of round tokens, called "money," which they can exchange for wealth, food, clothing, etc. The trouble is, however, that they are never given enough money to buy back the wealth they have produced; it is enough only to buy part of it. The remainder is kept by the capitalists and called profit. Profit, therefore, is that part of the wealth produced by the workers for which they are not paid.

In recent years there has been no end of a row kicked up about this. Some of the workers call it robbery. "We have produced all the wealth," they cry, "and from each one of us you have stolen part of what he produced, so that you comparatively few capitalists are immensely rich, enjoying what we have created; while millions of us are struggling with poverty, and all our lives are wasted."

At this the ruling classes and all respectable members of society look most mighty superior and pained. They start professorships of political economy to teach the workers how they have been misled by extremists, Socialists, and Anarchists. "You forget,"; they explain, "that although you supplied the labour in our factories, we supplied the capital. How could you have produced without using *our* machines, in *our* buildings? You must be moderate."

"But," exclaim the workers — or those of them who think — "did not our labour produce these machines, and the machines, again, which made these, right back to the first machine ever produced? All of it was made by us, and you, as owners, did absolutely nothing. Even your useless money, with which you juggle us out of our own, we have dug out of the earth and moulded into shape for you. To

all the wealth of the world we the workers lay claim, for we have created it."

In answer to this, the capitalist does two things. He approaches the workers with a show of friendship. He says: "Shall we share profits?" (knowing that so long as he controls the scheme he can get the same, or even more, for himself.) "Above all things, let us be more moderate. You will only win by moderation. Let us try to establish Conciliation Boards to make Capital and Labour more friendly. Let us remember we are all brothers, and most of all, let us avoid bloodshed — and, we may add," say the capitalists, "that we have decided to give £400 yearly to any of you who will sit in our Parliament.

The other side of their programme is to strengthen the police force throughout the country, and train soldiers to go on strike duty.

That is the position to-day. The wealth which the capitalist has obtained by paying the worker for only a portion of what he produces, is held by brute force — the policeman's bludgeon and the soldier's rifle — while, according to our last Prime Minister, 13,000,000 live on the verge of starvation; and thousands of unemployed are entirely cut off from the means of production while they starve.

This state of affairs is called peace by the respectable members of society, politicians, churchgoers, and business men; while any attempt to break it down and recapture the wealth that is needed for the people is considered a breach of the peace, and the rebels are shot down by the soldiers or bludgeoned by the polite.

Now let us see where the Socialist and the Anarchist come in.

The modern Parliamentary Socialist understands this matter; he sees that what is wrong is this power of the capitalist to dictate the conditions upon which he will allow the workers to work, and he logically argues from this that the capitalist class must be abolished. As to how this will be done, there seems some doubt. However, when it has been accomplished, the State, which until now

do nothing better or more relevant to their case than locking them up in prison.

Here, then, in one of the essential institutions of society we have traced some of the evils due to the authoritarian form of its organisation.

What is the remedy? "Municipalisation, and put our men on the Council," say most of the Socialists and their friends. This, however, obviously does not fill the bill. At the best it would mean that the conditions of labour and the class and quantity of bread produced should be settled by the majority, while there seems no reason to believe that the Council would give up their profit any more willingly than the capitalist or any other dominating class has ever done. No; the revolutionary change must be brought about by an overthrow of the controlling power, not by changing its personnel. The future bread supply will spring up from below in direct response to the need for it. It will not be bossed from above.

What, then, will be the change which the Anarchist Revolution will bring into being? In a free society the baker must be allowed to bake what he believes to be good bread; he must be granted conditions that he judges to be fit for his work. Instead of being robbed of a portion of the fruits of his labour, he will enjoy the full benefits of social life. Finally, the bread supply must be of such a nature that the needs and the tastes of all will be satisfied.

Let us imagine now that the great revolt of the workers has taken place, that their direct action has made them masters of the situation. Is it not easy to see that some man in a street that grew hungry would soon draw up a list of the loaves that were needed, and take it to the bakery where the strikers were in possession? Is there any difficulty in supposing that the necessary amount would then be baked according to this list? By this time the bakers would know what carts and delivery vans were needed to send the bread out to the people, and if they let the carters and vanmen know of this, would these not do their utmost to supply the vehicles, just as the bakers set to work to make the bread? If, as things settled down,

lieved in such things would set to work to rebuild them. On the contrary, if this "hurricane" took the form of a movement of the people themselves, who had outgrown their slavish attitude of mind, then there would be no restoration of the old, but a reconstruction on new and revolutionary lines.

"But what would those lines be" is the natural question. It is no use knowing our power to overthrow and to build unless we have some idea of the structural outline of the new society.

The material out of which we must build the new society is that of the old. The institutions of to-day — our parliaments, town councils, factories, etc. — are all run on government principles. That element of government — a relic of the past which enters into the composition of the whole thing, must be cut out. So far our mission is destructive, but we shall see that it is the necessary step to be taken for the construction of a truly social life.

Since, then, the new is to be but a development of the old, the easiest way to understand it will be to start, where the revolution will start, with existing institutions, and see what we intend doing with them. For example, we will take such an important matter as bread making and supplying. Let us examine this institution as it is to-day and as it will be after the revolution.

The baker who goes to his nightly task is probably making bread according to the recipe of another man. He may know such stuff is almost poison; but it is no business of his, he must do as he is told, and the responsibility rests elsewhere. Perhaps the conditions under which he works are ruining his health and are equally bad for the purity of the bread. It does not matter; the means of life belong to another, and if he would make use of them he must do as he is told. In addition to this, he is robbed of a portion of the fruits of his labour, which we have already agreed disappears as *profits*. The most striking fact of all, however, about this matter of the bread supply is that it is not suited to the needs of the people. There are many who actually lack this common necessity of life. Should they remedy this by taking a loaf, the present society can

has favoured the capitalists, will take over the industries, and everything will be controlled by the politicians. It is, of course, hoped by the Socialists that when this universal nationalisation takes place their own party will be in power; and of course they promise, as all other politicians have promised, that they will act in the interest of the people. Several different electoral systems have been suggested to take the place of the present limited suffrage, most Socialists wishing that every adult should have a vote, and many thinking that the constituencies should be divided according to industries rather than merely geographically as at present.

With this system of State or Government control we Anarchists entirely disagree.

The capitalist is wrong because he *is* a capitalist, and has the power to dictate the conditions of life. If he was one of ourselves or our own brother, it would make no difference; his power as a capitalist must be put an end to. So far we agree, you will see, with the ordinary Parliamentary Socialist; but now we come to consider the men in authority, the Government, and we apply to it the same reasoning, and come to the conclusion that just as the capitalist is wrong because he *is* a capitalist, so the Government *is* wrong because it is a Government. If members of our class, or even our brothers, composed it, still it would make no difference; its power to dictate the conditions of life, which would be complete in a Socialist State, would give it all the evils of Capitalism. The institution of Capitalism is wrong, and the institution of Government, which is a part of the capitalist system, must also be abolished, to give place to the free organisations of the future society.

But, it may be asked why we come so easily to the conclusion that the Government must be abolished; and this question is, of course, equivalent to asking why we are Anarchists, and must be answered in the next chapter.

II. Why We Are Anarchists

It is surprising with what difficult political problems people will concern themselves, although they have not even thought out the most simple questions upon which these are based. For example, we constantly hear groups of people discussing with the utmost enthusiasm the question of taxation. One says we must tax the foreigner, while another declares that in doing so we shall merely increase the price of our own food. Interminable facts and figures are heaped up on both sides, and the question becomes one of national importance.

Now, the Anarchist starts to think at the beginning of things, and he suggests that before we quarrel as to who ought to be taxed we had better discuss what taxation is and who has any right or reason in taxing anyone.

In the same way we find arguments of the most elaborate kind are going on about the vote. It is considered a matter of serious national importance whether a man with a latchkey shall be allowed to vote or not, while a strenuous war is waged by women, who declare that, since they have to obey the law, they have the right to make it. These people also have begun to think in the middle of their problem, instead of at the beginning. How many who have the most decided opinion as to who should have the vote have first of all really inquired, what is the vote?

In all the great political questions we find this is so. When it is discussed who has the right to rule the Irish, we begin by questioning why anyone should have such a power. When they talk of taxing the landlords, we ask, why have landlords? Thus, while the politicians muddle their heads with the most complex theories of reform, the revolutionist may keep his mind perfectly clear if he will but confine himself to what is really essential, and always start to consider social matters from the simplest point.

The fact is, the Government is simply the executive committee of the ruling class. Taxation is its principle source of finance. The

IV. The New Society

"Master and man! Some up and some down! It always has been so and it always will be. You cannot alter human nature."

It is so easy to talk like that, and, if you are of a contented disposition, it is so comforting; but, of course, it is absolute nonsense. Man himself has developed from the lower animals, and surely there are few who would care to boast of any particular resemblance to the cave-dwellers of prehistoric days even. The fact is, human nature is never alike in two parts of the world or in two different ages. As to the master-and-man relationship, it has been so pulled about and buffeted in a comparatively short period of history that to-day many people seem to have a difficulty in recognising it to be the same thing as the more crude slavery of the past. Soon Time will so beat it out of shape that it will become the relationship of man-to-man. The last blow that will reforge it into this form will be the Anarchist Revolution.

What is this Anarchist Revolution?

So that this question may be answered fully, let us suppose that we are agreed on all that has been said in the previous chapters. Let it be granted that we are robbed by the capitalists and the ruling class; that there is no hope of reform from the Government, which is inherently a reactionary force; and that this capitalist and governing class is entirely dependent on us, and hopelessly in our power.

Even so it may be questioned: "What can we do? Smash up the institutions of to day, and what have we? Simply chaos until something similar is put in their place."

This is true in one sense, but it is an argument that cannot be used against us. It is true that the various institutions of slavery which exist to-day are there because people upon whom they depend are slavish in their thoughts. If, therefore, some great hurricane swept through the country, destroying all such institutions and their leaders, it is quite certain that the people who still be-

the change, with the only argument that remains on their side — brute force. While, therefore, it is important to understand that direct action properly applied means the actual "conquest of bread" and the taking possession of the factories, we must be content probably for some little while longer to use our weapon of direct action simply according to the second of the three arguments given above — that is, to demand better conditions from the capitalist class. It is not, however, too much to hope that in the very near future the Anarchists will form a militant section of the workers, which will give to every great industrial rebellion the revolutionary character which is its true meaning. Worker as well as capitalist is beginning to recognise that a well-planned scheme for feeding the strikers is more than possible. Such a scheme would entail the capturing of the bakeries, and this is surely the first step of the revolution.

Beside this real problem, simple but great, how hollow and grotesque are the promises of the politicians. How absurd the idea of gaining liberty through the ballot-box. These hopeless government men, who talk with such sublime imbecility of feeding, housing, and clothing, only add insult to injury. The House they stand in to make their senseless speeches was built and furnished by the workers, and it is the workers who house and feed them.

And beyond our own doubt and hesitation, what, after all, stands in our way? Let us gain inspiration from the hopeless position of our foes. How helpless they are! Is not the policeman's baton shaped by the worker, and his absurd uniform stitched by underpaid women? The soldier's rifle is certainly not made by the master class — in every particular they are hopelessly our dependents. Every instrument of oppression is supplied to them by us, and we keep them alive by feeding them day by day. Surely, then, it is apparent that this change *must* come. Those above are powerless for good, or for evil; the revolution can be brought only by an upheaval from below — from the one *vital* section of society, the workers.

landlords and capitalists are those for whom it keeps the land and means of production, and prevents the producers from taking possession. If instead of the present capitalist class there were a set of officials appointed by the Government and set in a position to control our factories, it would bring about no revolutionary change. The officials would have to be paid, and we may depend that, in their privileged positions, they would expect good remuneration. The politicians would have to be paid, and we already know their tastes. You would, in fact, have a nonproductive class dictating to the producers the conditions upon which they were allowed to make use of the means of production. As this is exactly what is wrong with the present system of society, we can see that State control would be no remedy, while it would bring with it a host of new troubles.

It cannot be too clearly understood that any system of Government control — that is, any system except Anarchism — can at the best do nothing better than enforce the politician's ideal of society upon the people. For example, let us suppose an absolutely ideal Socialist State, where all the Members of Parliament are in agreement, and where their only object is the welfare of society. As a Government, or an executive committee, or an administrative body, or whatever they called themselves, it will be agreed, I think, that they undertake two chief duties. The one is to see that the necessities of life are supplied, and the other is to ensure that the workers shall have proper conditions under which to produce. Now let us suppose that a section of the workers disagree with the Government as to what are proper conditions (for the worker sees the factory from a slightly different point of view from the politician). What takes place? The politicians, we will say, refuse to grant these conditions, which seem to them unfair. This section of the workers consequently come out on strike. They are successful up to the point of causing a serious shortage of the commodity which they produce. The politicians are responsible for the supply of this commodity, and they cannot allow the whole community to

suffer because of the (to them) unreasonable action of an extremist minority. The inevitable conclusion is that the strikers must be forced back into their factories.

Surely from this it is evident that under a governmental system of society, whether it is the capitalism of to-day or a more perfected Government control of the Socialist State, the essential relationship between the governed and the governing, the worker and the controller, will be the same; and this relationship so long as it lasts can be maintained only by the bloody brutality of the policeman's bludgeon and the soldier's rifle.

You cannot put new wine into old bottles. The institutions of the present society, based upon the subjection of the workers, must be thrown aside, for they will not hold the spirit of liberty which will compose the new society.

If we wanted further proof than that furnished by the logic of the position, it would be found in that question so often levelled at the Anarchist: What would you do with the man who would not work? The implication is, of course, that the questioner, a Governmentalist, and generally a Socialist, has a method of dealing with him. What can such a method be, which the Anarchist has not also, except force? Is not the striker one of the most important of the men who will not work? And is not the question, therefore, an admission that force will be brought to bear on the discontented, to compel them to occupy their proper position in society?

Certain it is that to-day the capitalist is compelled to bring out the soldiers and force his slaves back to work; but it is no more certain than the fact that in all societies where there is a central controlling force the same means must be used to crush the rebellious.

That is why we are Anarchists.

We have seen already how inevitably we come to this conclusion, and one labour dispute after another in recent years has shown us the theory in practice; and all this logic and fact brings us to one great truth, the truth upon which is based all the hopes of revolu-

the workers. To unite these two is to accomplish the revolution; for with them will be built the new society.

The capitalist and master class in general can hold their position only so long as they can keep the workers outside the warehouses and factories, for within are the means of life, and the common people must be allowed to use these only on the strict understanding that they make profit and submit to the conditions dictated. To come *out* on strike, then, is merely rebellion, and is essentially not the revolution, however thoroughly it is done; to stay *in* and work in the condition of equality, free from the dictates of a useless master class, is the real object of the revolutionist.

Direct action, therefore, in this strictly revolutionary sense would mean the taking possession of the means of production and the necessities of life by the workers who have produced them, and the reorganisation of industry according to the principles of freedom.

The doctrine of Direct Action does not boast of bringing the workers easy salvation. It is, indeed, a recognition of the terribly simple fact that nothing can save us except our own intelligence and power. We, the workers, are the creative force, for is it not we who have produced all the food, clothing, and houses? Assuredly it is we who need them. What, then, has the politician to do with this? Nothing, absolutely nothing! What use is it to hand over to the master class all that we produce, and then keep up a continuous quarrel as to how much we shall be allowed back? Instead of this we have to stop supplies, reorganise our industries, not from above but from their source below, and see that in future all that is produced goes to the producer and not to the dominant class. This is the meaning of direct action, and it is Anarchism.

But, alas! it is easier to accomplish a revolution on paper with cold logic than it is to bring it about in industrial life. We have to fight the lack of understanding on the part of the worker and the craft of the politician ever at work to increase this; and in addition we have the certainty that the class in power will attempt to resist

clearly in a position to force the masters to give them more food and everything that may be desired; or

3. That since the slave class is the producer of all that is necessary for life, there is no need to either ask or demand anything from the master class. The slave class need simply to cut off supplies to the masters and start feeding themselves.

The first of these arguments, it will be seen, is that of the politicians; and it may be dismissed without further comment, since, as will be understood after what has been already said, it obviously misses the point. It is not a question of who shall be master, but it is a matter of the essential relationship between master and slave, quite irrespective of who either of them may be.

The second argument is that of the non-Parliamentary but non-Revolutionary Trade Unionist. It is right in that it recognises where lies the true power of the workers in their fight against the capitalists, but it is wrong in that it proposes no change in the relationship between these two.

If the slave class is to be better housed, fed, and clothed from the masters' store, it means that the slaves will become more and more completely *owned* by the masters. It is not revolutionary, because it proposes to retain master and slave, and merely attempts to better the conditions of the latter.

The third argument is, of course, that of the revolutionist. It agrees with the second as to the weapon to be used, but it says that the task before the workers is to feed, house, clothe, and educate themselves, and not to spend their energies in making better masters of the capitalists.

To cut off supplies to the capitalist and to retain what is produced for the workers are the main points of the revolutionary fight.

In every industrial dispute there are really two, and only two, essentials. On the one hand are the factories, warehouses, railways, mines, etc., which may be termed industrial property; on the other,

tionary activity. It is obvious to us every day, and yet it is recognised by a comparative few. Many there are who believe that the worker is dependent on the rich capitalist — the governing class; but a few — they are revolutionists — realise that the governing class is entirely impotent itself, and depends most abjectly and helplessly upon the worker. If the workers refuse to work, it can do nothing unless it can induce some of them to leave their jobs and come and shoot down their rebellious mates.

The workers are the only creative, live power in society, and it is for this reason that it must be they who will regenerate society and bring about the revolution. Their task is on, of construction and re-creation, while the utmost that the helpless Governmentalist can do is to stay the onward progress by persuading some of them to forsake their legitimate task and take part in destruction, in which cause to-day they have vast numbers of workers employed.

This truth of the utter *dependence* of the capitalist and governing class is really the starting-point of the revolution.

III. Direct Action

To make it quite clear what is meant by the expression *Direct Action*, let us take an illustration. Not very many years ago, if there was a great national calamity, such as an outbreak of plague, the religious people used to declare that the only remedy was for us as a nation to pray that God might remove his curse. These good people were very much shocked when scientists came along and began taking merely sanitary precautions to stamp out the disease. The first was the *indirect* method: prayers were sent up to heaven so that God might send down his good influence on the plague. This was a very *indirect* route to reach a disease which was, so to speak, next door. The scientist attended to the disease itself, studied its nature, and tried to find a means of stamping it out. This was *direct* action.

To-day in very much the same way the people are divided with two methods. In their factories and homes they find themselves discontented, and some of them propose to influence the chief of society — the Parliament — so that it will exercise its power to put things right. These in their turn are shocked when advanced thinkers come along and declare that the way to get a remedy is to study the nature of the trouble and apply the cure directly to it. The former believe in the indirect or legislative method, for it is a long way from home to Westminster and back home again. The latter are the direct actionists, and they recognise that if anyone is going to put the factories in order, it will be the workers who spend their lives in them, and not the politicians.

Imagine the utter absurdity of a group of politicians sitting in the House of Commons earnestly discussing the welfare of the people. While they are doing so, are there not countless bakers, builders, and tailors walking about the streets, unemployed, and cut off, by the laws which these same politicians have passed, from the means of production, machinery, and tools with which they might produce what they need. To break down the laws and allow these people to produce what is necessary for their welfare, on equal terms with the other workers, is the way to abolish poverty.

It is clear that, if we are to rid ourselves of the troubles that best us at present, we must organise an entirely new system of wealth distribution. I do not mean by this that we must divide up, but I mean that the wealth which is produced must be stopped from flowing to the rich man who produces nothing; the stream must be diverted so that it will come to the producer.

But who is it that distributes the wealth? Is it the politician? Certainly not; as a matter of fact, it is the transport workers. If, then, the workers who produce want an alteration in the present distribution, to whom must they apply? To their comrades, the transport workers, and not to the politicians, who have nothing to do with the matter. Similarly when better conditions are needed in the factories — larger sheds, better floors, and more efficient lighting and

ventilation — who are the only people capable of doing this? It is the workers who need these reforms, and the workers who can carry them out. The task before the worker to-day is as it has been in the past: the slave class must rid itself of the dictating class — *i.e.*, of those in authority.

Such is the simple logic of the Direct Actionist, and it is already clear how it necessarily leads to the Anarchist Revolution. We must, however, be careful how we follow this principle — not that we fear being taken too far, but lest it does not take us far enough. The expression has been used so much in contradistinction to legislation, that anyone who throws a brick through a window is generally supposed to be a Direct Actionist. He may be and he may not.

To be logical and true to the real meaning of the term, every act should, of course, be on the direct road towards the desired end — in our case, the Social Revolution. Sometimes it is difficult to be entirely consistent, but it is nevertheless of the utmost importance that there should be at least a minority of the workers who understand what is the direct road, so that every skirmish may be made by them a step towards the final overthrow of Capitalism.

At the risk of repeating myself, then, let me try to state the position very clearly. We have two classes — the governing, ruling, and possessing people on the one hand, and those governed and without property on the other; in a word, a master class and a slave class.

When this slave class becomes discontented and restive, it has several courses to consider before deciding which will give better conditions. It may be argued:

1. That since the present masters do not give enough of the good things of life, these must be turned out and a new set selected from among the slave class; or

2. That since the slave class is composed of the producers, and the master class is, therefore, dependent on it, the former is