Views & Comments Number 11, February 1956

Libertarian League

1955, February

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What We Stand For

Two great power blocs struggle for world domination. Neither of these represents the true interests and welfare of Humanity. Their conflict threatens mankind with atomic destruction. Underlying both of these blocs are institutions that breed exploitation, inequality and oppression.

Without trying to legislate for the future, we feel that we can indicate the general lines along which a solution to these problems can be found.

The exploitative societies of today must be replaced by a new libertarian world which will proclaim—Equal freedom for all in a free socialist society. "Freedom" without socialism leads to privilege and injustice; "Socialism" without freedom is totalitarian.

The monopoly of power which is the state must be replaced by a world-wide federation of free communities, labor councils and/or cooperatives operating according to the principles of free agreement. The government of men must be replaced by a functional society based on the administration of things.

Centralism which means regimentation from the top down must be replaced by federalism which means cooperation from the bottom up.

THE LIBERTARIAN LEAGUE will not accept the old socio-political clichés, but will boldly explore new roads while examining anew the old movements, drawing from them all that which time and experience has proven to be valid.

Libertarian Forum

ROUND TABLE YOUTH DISCUSSIONS Every Friday at 8
LIBERTARIAN CENTER, 813 Broadway (between 11th & 12th Sts.), New York City

For a Constructive Libertarian Movement by Gaston Leval

Anyone who, like myself, has been a long time militant in the international libertarian movement and, who has studied its history without partisan blinders, cannot ignore the fact that, with the exception of pre-Franco Spain and of South Korea before the war, the movement has been stagnating in every sense of the word. And anyone who is not blinded by unintelligent fanaticism is faced with this dilemma: either the libertarian ideas are in contradiction with nature and human possibilities or these ideas have not been able to penetrate the consciousness of the revolutionary minorities who influence, and often determine, social evolution.

Were I not convinced that the second of these two hypotheses is the correct one, I would have ceased to struggle for the dissemination and triumph of our ideas a long time ago. But I am too convinced of the social truth in socialist anarchism (using the word "socialist" in its original sense) to take this attitude. Certainly there are things that must be re-examined in the light of new experiences, as there are in all systems that are the synthesis of long experience, if the doctrines of liberation are not to become dogmas, stultifying thought and action. But the essentials remain. Unfortunately, the mass, and in this case the anarchist mass, has too often not understood these essentials.

I consider it a grave error for us to have defined ourselves with a negation. Anarchy—the negation of "archies," of hierarchies, of diverse social strata, of rich and of poor, of masters and slaves,

of government and governed; from which follows equality in law and in fact, in the political and economic spheres, in the pursuit of liberty and in the possibilities of material, intellectual and moral satisfactions.

Such is the theory. The point of departure remains a negation. And, unfortunately, this negation is what has been spiritually, intellectually and practically imprinted on the minds of everyone from the illiterate to the intellectual. It does not make any difference who declares himself to be an enemy of authority, of law, of government, of the boss, of all discipline and of all responsibility. It suffices to deny in order to be an anarchist. Consequently, these negators have often distorted the profound ideas of our thinkers worthy of the name anarchist—Proudhon, Bakunin, Rocker, Kropotkin—or, most often have ignored them.

Internationally then, aside from several exceptions as in the case of Spain, anarchism has appeared as a collection of negations. It can be said, citing Proudhon, that "all negation implies a subsequent affirmation. In fact, no such implication need exist in the minds of those who would make such a statement. One can theoretically or instinctively deny authority without conceiving of a non-authoritarian society, feeling the need of such a society, or struggling for its realization. One can condemn economic inequality and the exploitation of man by man without considering the ways by which an equalitarian society could be brought into being.

The consequence of negation, or of initial negations as they have emanated from certain thinkers, have not been and are not, compensating affirmations. These affirmations can be found in accidental polemics, but they are absent from the thoughts and permanent attitudes of many anarchists.

This is why the present anarchist propaganda and recruiting techniques are essentially the same as those of fifty years ago. They are anti-authoritarian, anti-militarist, anti-capitalist, anti-God etc. Most of the time there is a repetition of superficial arguments that tire the intelligent listener and discourage the observer. A serious, profound and documented critique can have a constructive character inasmuch as it suggests new solutions. But that which has been done by thinkers and sociologists has been too often scorned by their disciples.

The presentation of anarchist ideas has been reduced to a common denominator of negative mediocrity by the law of least intellectual effort, the lack of mental discipline and the confusion between political authority and the necessary influence of knowledge. If we do not know how to leave these swamps in which we are mired, it is useless to hope for the future of our movement or even for the influence of our ideas on human evolution.

Kropotkin wrote a book entitled *Mutual Aid*. Up until World War II this book was very well known to anarchists entering our movement. It was translated into most of the languages of the culturally developed countries and even published by bourgeois publishers who did not wait for the anarchists to give them a sales guarantee.

Mutual Aid is rightly considered to be the fundamental writing of socialist anarchism. Certainly, Darwin had already suggested in passing, some ideas which showed the way. Certainly, Proudhon with brilliant clarity had indicated the importance of the solidarity of the species in his first writings on the subject of property. And it is likewise true that the very observant Bakunin did not fail to notice the often preponderant character of this factor in the life of all society.

But it was necessary for Kropotkin, a true scientist, a geologist and geographer who at the age of twenty-five had gathered all the necessary material for the revelation to the scientific world of the true orographic structure of eastern Asia, and who, at the age of thirty, was offered the presidency of the Russian Physical Geographic Society for his discoveries regarding the importance

of the glacial period in Europe, and who later replaced Huxley in the Encyclopedia Britannica—it was necessary, I say, to incorporate the factor of sociability and acquired progress into the thought of socialist anarchism and to give it an importance that is recognized, alas, by too few of us.

Kropotkin shows mutual aid to be a biologic law of progress. Starting with the insect, and climbing the zoologic ladder up to man and modern civilization, mutual aid is both a need and a necessary condition for evolution. Those species and those segments of humanity who can best practise mutual aid have the best chance of surviving and progressing in this terrible struggle for life, imposed by a blind fate.

Such, in essence, was the refutation that was used against social Darwinism, in the name of which the apologists for a laissez-faire economy had set up the struggle of all versus all as the fundamental law of progress and, thus, justified their privileges, This was understood by the anarchists who read this book. Those of them who had not been able to study natural history went into ecstasies over the revelations of the concerts of birds, the amusements of colonies of monkeys and of cranes, the beaver villages and the civilization of the termites.

They did not always understand that this book went much farther, that it established a new philosophy of life, that it created new basic theories of socialist anarchism and of socialism itself, and that it was the biologic synthesis of a new humanism.

But, essentially, *Mutual Aid* gave to anarchism the basis of a constructive character. No longer was a dominating negation the sole result of the analysis of history. To the authoritarian interpretation of human evolution and the development of societies, Kropotkin opposed an anti- or an a-authoritarian interpretation; to the belief in the necessity of chiefs and of political frameworks, he opposed the creative effort of man and the self-organization of collectivities. The general sense of his book led to the systematization of a pre-existing social conception which he expected us to enlarge and cause to triumph.

In other writings, Kropotkin insists on the historic importance, for the past and the future, of these practices of mutual aid and of anti-authoritarian organization. In his pamphlet *The State, Its Historic Role*, he is not content with giving the anarchist view of the state and proving that, far from its being merely the instrument of dominant economic forces, as Marx and his followers assert, it is a force that, above all, obeys the dictates of its own institutional and caste interests. As examples of non-statist structures and institutions, he cites the corporations and guild associations of the middle ages, the communes and federations of communes—subjects already amply developed in *Mutual Aid*. And in *The Conquest of Bread* he gives as examples of "free alliance" organizations among the Savages, cultural, scientific and artistic societies, the Red Cross, the boatmen's associations of the Scandinavian countries and even the great international railway companies which had been able to organize themselves without the state and which showed that such organization was possible.

If one remembers only the bird concerts of Mutual Aid and if after reading *The Conquest of Bread* one retains only a few ideas which are poorly expressed when taken literally, such as "the citizens of good will" who will come forward to organize things in the midst of the revolution, one is bound to be greatly mistaken. For, in all of his writings, Kropotkin insisted on the responsibility, the essential role and the pre-revolutionary preparation of minorities. But to work in this largely constructive direction does not appeal to the negating spirit of the majority of his self-proclaimed disciples.

Bakunin has suffered the same fate as Kropotkin. Most anarchists who speak of him are ignorant of his constructive thought and work, seeing in him only the Muscovite Satan that too many biographers have stupidly portrayed. From Proudhon, they retain only the slogan "property is theft." They do not know that, throughout his works, he has denied this sentence in unmistakable terms, that he defended the individual's possession of property and that his constructive ideas (even where they are contradictory) far outweigh his destructive verbiage.

It is obvious that a social movement cannot live on negation. Life is an affirmation and that which destroys more than it can build, only leads to annihilation. That is what so many people whom we approach honestly and sincerely tell us. And that is what we must take into consideration. When one thinks of the spirit and the constructive efforts of our predecessors in the First International, and the emptiness of the generations that have followed them, the contrast is as painful as it is glaring.

Today there are many tens of thousands, especially among those having a certain degree of culture, who, confronted by facts, have arrived at conclusions as negative as our own. They consider the laissez-faire economy, with its capitalist organization and exploitation, to be justly doomed. They have been convinced by depressions (particularly the one of 1929 to 1934), by the general disorder and by the wars for commercial gain or raw materials. Alarmed by the increasing interference of the state in every aspect of social life, and faced by the menace of fascist, bolshevik or pseudo-socialist totalitarianism, they too are forced to the conclusion that man must protest against the universal "governmentalization."

It is useless to talk to these people about the taxes they pay, about the bureaucracy which they see growing before their very eyes or about their shrinking liberties. If one does this at all, one must show them that all these things are in the very nature of the state, as proven by history from the days of the Pharaohs down to Hitler and Stalin. We must enlarge their vision of society. We must give to their observations of the moment a permanent significance.

They must be given an overall picture of our system if they are to learn its mechanism and truly understand its evil character. Above all, they must be told what the possible solutions are. Their negative conclusions concerning the state and the so-called free economy logically lead them toward libertarian socialism. It is for us to show them in what manner libertarian socialism is feasible. We must search along with them but we must also guide them—for we have placed ourselves at the head of the task of demolition.

These people who are repelled by demagogy—demagogy attracts only imbeciles—must be given something better than a repetition of generalized criticisms which have lost their punch. They need constructive ideas, both at the theoretical and the practical levels.

I have often thought, for example, that we ought to widen and extend the road shown by Kropotkin. We ought to re-examine the history of civilization and from this re-examination draw conclusions that would give to the libertarian ideas a value without equal. Elisee Reclus has done this, in *Man And The Earth*, but more could be done and better—more and better than Kropotkin, too. If we take the whole body of human activities that have assured the existence, the development and the progress of the species, we can derive the libertarian interpretation of history that I have already mentioned, and use it against the authoritarians.

Agriculture, animal husbandry and domestication—techniques which' were at first primitive and later brought to perfection—the building of shelters and then of dwellings, handicrafts and trades, arts—all of the arts; sciences—all of the sciences, systems of philosophy, primitive methods of land transport, river and ocean transport—the vast majority of these activities and creations

have been the work of men who were driven by need and by their inexhaustible desire to know the beyond. Such a study, with all that it entails, would give to libertarian thought an incomparable force. Orientating itself along positive lines, it would create a constructive psychology. It would enrich us with a better understanding of man's efforts.

We could take up the study of the great problems of social undertakings and, instead of repeating our little criticisms, we could propose to our fellow citizens a new organization of society, a conception based on a more profound knowledge of all the economic, human, psychological and even ethnic problems—a conception based upon the possession of all the facts concerning agricultural and industrial production, of knowledge of national and international relations, questions of energy and raw materials, transport, economic geography and distribution. In short, we must acquire a training and background which will convince those whom we wish to influence that they are dealing with capable, serious and responsible men—not with simple agitators or dilettantes of revolution.

it is by constructive rather than by negative propaganda that the libertarian movement will attract worthwhile members without whom it can accomplish nothing. At a time when domination by the state is making such formidable progress, the literary defense of the rights of the individual is little more than a pleasant pastime. On the other hand, the great increase in human needs, the interdependence of men and the resulting need for coordinated activity make it necessary to set forth social objectives in a way that will interest serious people.

There are in France, perhaps 100,000 anarchists who don't know it—and they will not be attracted because only "working class" (French: ouvrieriste) propaganda is used. This, in substance, is what a comrade recently wrote. I agree with him. But I do not believe they can be attracted by propaganda which concentrates solely on the rights of the individual. We must offer constructive ideas which embrace society as a whole. For the individual is not independent of the group. Without it he would be nothing—just as the comrade of whom I speak, would not have acquired the culture necessary for the development of his individuality had it not been for the work of all of humanity.

First let there be constructive work. But it must be the work of true sociologists and economists (of specialists, if necessary)—not of abstract theoreticians, of literary dabblers in sociology or of fabricators of utopias. These things are not absolutely useless, but they are absolutely not enough. By taking the essential teachings of our great predecessors and re-adapting them to our time, we can create an intellectual movement, a sociological school that is attuned to the present evolution of the world, so that our efforts will not be doomed to failure. It is by carrying forward the work of construction, even while destroying that which must be destroyed, that the libertarian current of socialism will bring to humanity a new message, a new faith, a force of resurrection that can save us from statism and capitalism alike.

(Translated from *Défense de l'Homme*)

Errata

Views and Comments No. 10: The quotation attributed to Michael Bakunin, on page 6, should have been attributed to Randolph Bourne.

Views and Comments No. 9: At the bottom of page 8, there is an erroneous reference to the Stalinist murders of Durruti, Ascaso and Berneri. Although many people suspected at the time,

and some still believe, that Durruti was assassinated by the Communists, this has never been established. The intricacies of Spanish politics at the time prevented any investigation of the matter.

Francisco Ascaso was killed by the fascists in July 1936, during the assault on the Atarazanas Barracks of Barcelona. His brother, Joaquin, was imprisoned by the Stalinists when they forcibly broke up the agricultural collectives in Aragon. Camilo Berneri, leading Italian Anarchist, was murdered by the Stalinists, together with Barbieri in May 1937.

The Russian GPU operating in Spain was also responsible for the murders of Andres Nin, leader of the POUM, Kurt Landau, Bob Smiley, Hans Freund and innumerable other working class revolutionists of all tendencies that opposed it in its, alas, all-too-successful efforts to strangle the Spanish revolution. Should any of our readers have any doubts on the matter, we submit the following quotation, culled from the pages of *Pravda*, December 17, 1936, a few months after the first big Moscow trials:

"So far as Catalonia is concerned, the cleaning up of the Trotskyist and Anarcho-Syndicalist elements has already begun, and it will be carried out with the same degree of energy as in the USSR."

More Strikes in the Soviet Labor Camps by E.R.

(Translated from *Novoyo Slovo*, December 7, 1955)

As already indicated in our press, the disturbances and strikes which took place in the summer of 1953 in the camps of Vorkuta, Norilsk and Karaganda ended in a partial victory for the prisoners of Communism. Before the heroism, the steadfastness and the good organization of the camp inmates, the regime was forced to retreat. The government acceded to a whole series of demands and, for a time, these demands were carried out. The attempts of the government to withdraw these concessions led to a new wave of strikes in the spring and summer of 1954.

From the 15th to the 27th of July, the second great strike raged in Karaganda. The camp area was surrounded by MVD troops equipped with tanks and machine guns. Several hundred prisoners were killed or wounded. The strike spread from Karaganda to Balkhash. In July of 1954, an insurrection broke out in the concentration camp near the Balkhash copper smelting works. MVD troops opened fire on the insurrectionists. The unarmed prisoners threw up barricades and refused to yield. The firing continued for more than 48 hours. The city of Balkhash itself was put under curfew and the inhabitants forbidden to leave their homes after nightfall. Tanks were sent to the area of insurrection and the city was ringed with a chain of military patrols. Some days later, six thousand prisoners went on strike in the camps along the river Sherubai-Kura, to the south of Karaganda. The strikers demanded that their terms (length) of imprisonment be reviewed. Here, as at Karaganda, the initiators and organizers of the strike were the political prisoners. A commission sent out from the regional center agreed to some of the demands. The strike lasted 7 days. Also at the end of July, another strike broke out in Vorkuta. This time the Vorkuta miners demanded an improvement in the food ration and technical safety measures to be taken in the mines. Here, again, the government was forced to compromise.

In the spring of 1954, a strike-insurrection took place in the camps of Revda, near Sverdlovsk. The inmates, many of them Hungarians and Rumanians, had been promised that their sentences would be shortened in return for their working on the Volga-Don canal. The strike continued

for three days and nights, spreading to the camp near Degtyarevka, a little village in that region. Alarmed by the spreading unrest, the government found itself obliged to make concessions and promises.

In the second half of 1954, an open revolt broke out in the camps of Kintira, Kazakh S.S.R. This was brought on by the administration's attempt to place 400 "blatny" (ordinary criminals) in the barracks of the political prisoners. The camp Administration resorted to the use of fire arms but the opposition of the politicals was so determined that the government was forced to settle the criminals in another camp.

The camp uprisings of 1954 show that the bloody repressive measures taken by the Communist hangmen against the strikers in 1953 failed to break the spirit of active resistance. No sooner does the administration of a camp, under instructions from the MVD, attempt to withdraw some of the bloodily-won concessions than strikes and mutinies flare up anew. The 1954 uprisings indicate that the prisoners are becoming ever more conscious of their own strength, bolder and more insistent in their demands—and that the state, fearing the further spread of rebellion, must yield before its weak, unarmed but organized opponents.

Book Review: Keep the Aspidistra Flying

Keep the Aspidistra Flying by George Orwell. New York. Harcourt, Brace & Co., 248 pp. $3.75

Although this book first appeared in England in 1936 Orwell's reputation has only now achieved enough status to allow publication of an American edition, and while perhaps many will not find this the equivalent in shock value of 1984, or with the broad, biting humor of Animal Farm, it still deserves to stand with these two works as a masterpiece of social satire.

It is with good reason that Orwell has been called "the conscience of his generation." Here we find a myriad of human foibles, faults and fallacies carefully delineated, picked apart and left in all their naked nastiness for the reader to see. But the story itself is concerned with a man, a second-rate poet, so disgusted with the system under which he lives that he attempts to deny it, to refuse money and all it stands for, and above all, to escape from that symbol of middle-class conformity, the aspidistra in the window. Lower he sinks and lower, diving forcefully towards his goal of complete wretchedness, despite the concern of his simple, spinster sister, his girl, and his friend Ravelston, a slashing caricature of the rich, weak, socialist with a conscience.

But when he reaches what he considers the final depths it is only to be confronted by defeat, for he is forced back upward, back to the advertising agency and the lying jingles and ads, back to the small and stodgy flat, and even, through a cruel twist of his own mind, to the aspidistra in the window.

Even in defeat however, Orwell shows us the gleam of hope, the fact that under any system, no matter how bad, birth, life and death go on, that even the rutted, molded middle-class has a life to live, a pride to uphold, an aspidistra to keep flying.

And Gordon Comstock finds that even in apparent defeat he can be happy, that outward conformity does not mean a loss of inward ideas. If you haven't already read this one—do so.

How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying, review by RDE

How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying by Shepherd Mead. New York: Ballantine Books, 129 pp. 35 cents (pocketbook)

An open-handed satire on the business world and all its phony manipulations and throat-cutting practises. Lightly written but with a sharp pen, it provides one of the best (even if unintentional) blasts at the entire Capitalist system I've seen yet. Run serially in Playboy, it reads even better all in one place.

Financial Report for 1955

Libertarian League-Views and Comments

Receipts

New York City
S.W. 23.00
A.F. 21.70
C.B. 3.00
Richard B. 3.00
A.W. 14.00
J.F. 1.00
W.R. 1.00
R.S.B. 53.00
A.Z. 40.50
H.N. 70.00
R.E. 7.75
D.J. 1.00
D. 1.00
D.C. 3.50
H.H. 1.00
F.G. 7.00
Ban. 1.00
W.D. 1.04
R.K. .35
F.F. 2.00
J.P.C. 4.00
Dora 1.00
T. 1.00
Val. 2.00
S.W. 2.00
J.D. 2.00
F.B. 2.00

R. 3.00
G. Bainish 2.00
E.W. 1.00
Dielo Trouda 8.00
Steinberg meeting. 4.00
May Day meeting 6.00
Libertarian Forum 5.00
Lynn Meeting 4.00
Total N.Y.C. $305.80
New York State
Peekskill 5.00
Albany 5.00
California
Berkeley 9.00
Los Angeles, 1.00
Washington
Seattle 5.50
Lakebay 5.00
Illinois
Chicago (J.S. 1.00, J.K. 2.00)
Moline 4.00,
Chi. hts 5.00
Connecticut
New Haven 2.00,
Ohio
Hamilton 1.00
Indiana
Gary 3.00
Pennsylvania
Donora 2.00,
Bath 2.00
Minnesota
St. Paul 1.00
Michigan
Detroit 2.00
Total outside of NYC $53.50
Total Receipts $358.95

Note: This does not include collections taken at the Libertarian Forum (NYC) the surplus of which, after expenses, is contributed towards the upkeep of the hall.

Expenditures

Mimeograph paper $130.05
Mimeograph ink 11.85
Mimeograph stencils 15.09

Postage 117.20
Miscellaneous supplies 11.72
Letterheads 15.00
Printing Mastheads V&C 75.75
Printing Dec. of Principles 10.30
Envelopes 9.64
Typewriter repairs 10.00
Mailbox 4.15
Total Expenditures $410.75

Deficit $51.80

The general operating expenses of the League, including the issuing of Views and Comments, approximates $40-45 per month, leaving us with an ever present deficit and little opportunity for the expansion of our activities. If we are to publish a very important pamphlet that is now held up for lack of funds, and reach our goal of a printed paper, more money will have to be found. While thanking those who have contributed, some of them we feel sure, to the limit of their ability, we can only call on all of our friends and sympathizers to cooperate as much as possible.

Views and Comments is mailed without obligation to anyone requesting it, but since it is supported by voluntary contributions, these must be forthcoming to enable us to continue to expand and improve it.

Fellow worker: How much have you kicked in with?

The Resistance, A short story by GWR

Manolo looked through a crack in the rocks down the mountain at the black hats and green uniforms of the Guardia Civil moving up the slope toward him. He slid his rifle through the crack, aimed carefully and squeezed the trigger. One of the figures slumped to the ground and the others disappeared behind the boulders.

A fine hole to be caught in, Manolo thought. They can't get into it but I can't get out. The solid stone ledge that rose behind him bowed out slightly, so that he was safe from above. The little nest of rocks he was lying in was just an accident of falling boulders and the only approach was from below. He had already killed two civiles, so they probably wouldn't try an assault. If they received no mortars within an hour or so it would be dark and he would try to escape.

Manolo looked down at the little valley. Half was in the shadow of the mountain and half was bright with the evening sun. In the bright half lay a little cottage and on the other side of the valley a train moved slowly around the side of a mountain, its smoke rising straight up in the still air, and the chugging of its engine sounding clearly across the valley. Finally it moved out of sight and the silence of the mountain was only broken by the occasional hollow beat of bells on some cows far below. The thought that down in the valley people were going about their everyday routine made Manolo feel very lonely. It seemed that he was completely apart from the world, there on the mountain, and that his fight was solitary and insignificant. Even if he escaped this time, there would come a day when his bullet-torn body would be found among the rocks, and what difference would it make? He noticed a black hat appear around the corner of a rock and fired at it, knocking off a spray of rock splinters. The sharp flat crack of the rifle echoed in

the mountain, each time more faintly, until it finally died away. He worked the lock of his rifle, throwing out the used case and sliding a new cartridge into place.

Manolo rubbed the rough, battered stock of his rifle. That was no way to think. If he began to think that way he was through. No. It would be dark soon and then he would try to slip down and escape in the confusion. The fight had to go on alone or not.

He slipped his rifle between the rocks and fired again.

Keep open the night of Tuesday, May First

The New York Group of the Libertarian League is making plans for a meeting in commemoration of the martyrs of Chicago who gave their lives in the struggle for the Eight Hour Day.

The South's Negroes are in Motion

All over the world the submerged peoples are rebelling against the imperialist exploitation which is based in large part on the false doctrines of racial superiority. The struggle of the Southern Negroes is part of that movement.

It was the mass pressure of the American Negroes plus the rivalry of the American and Russian power blocs for the allegiance of the "backward peoples" that forced the United States Supreme Court to reverse the decision of 1870 that legalized discrimination and segregation in the public schools.

The joker in the Supreme Court's decision lies in the fact that the Court made no recommendations for the implementation of its decision. It dodged the issue by leaving enforcement to the states involved. The Court perhaps felt that such vigorous champions of racial equality as the Governors and Legislators of Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama could be relied upon to do the right thing. That this law, like so many others, was headed for the legal boneyard was obvious.

However the leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), many labor leaders and liberals as well as many other respectable elements hailed the Supreme Court decision and prepared to carry the fight if need be into every local courtroom of the unenlightened South. These gentlemen did not yet understand that the battle for human rights is not won by the generous use of legal stationery. Conflicts between social classes and groups are decided by struggle, by the direct use of organized economic and social pressure.

The ruling class of the South realized this instinctively and unleashed one of the most violent campaigns in the whole sad history of social terror against the Negro people. The long history of social struggles, since the days of Spartacus, has shown that social change is initiated by the "faceless mass," the plain people, who usually understand far better than their "leaders" what must be done. The actions of the Negro people in the South reaffirm this historic truth.

A recent issue of the *Pittsburgh Courier* printed the following letter from a high school student in Memphis, Tennessee.

"The NAACP can't do the job the Negro needs done alone. All Negroes should help, not for one night or one week or one month. It's a long, hard fight. Negro people like us here in the South have to be willing and able to sacrifice our lives and everything else and fight hard for what is every man's right… the right to feel and live like free human beings."

That this is the true sentiment of the Negro people and that they mean business is demonstrated by recent developments in Montgomery, Alabama. In the New York *Post* (December 29, 1955) Murray Kempton reported the following:

"The great rebellion in Montgomery, Alabama began December 2nd, when a Negro named Roza Parks overlooked the segregation statute by occupying the front seat in an urban bus. Because she was punished for that Montgomery's 40,000 Negroes stopped riding the buses. Their strike is going into its eighth week and is estimated to be 95% effective. (Three-quarters of Montgomery's bus riders under normal circumstances are Negroes and the bus company is on its knees.

"There are Negroes in Montgomery who walk five miles to work without complaint. The Negro taxi companies are ferrying passengers at a dime a head; there are car pools for the others. There are 40,000 people in Montgomery holding together with no organization beyond a committee of teachers and lawyers; it is a thing of awe and mystery and it appears to be all but unpublished outside the south."

The people of Montgomery are still holding firm. In other southern areas the white supremacists are trembling as they see "their own" Negroes developing a greater sense of dignity and will to resistance. From the resistance to the offensive can be but a few short steps. And those steps are now being taken.

There is a further very important aspect of the bus boycott in Montgomery—it shows the power of direct mass action and possibilities, which go far beyond the channels of legalistic action. It shows that the people themselves are fully capable of initiating, organizing and coordinating complex social functions by free agreement, not only without but even against the opposition of the state.

It further demonstrates that the will to freedom is a positive and constructive force in human affairs.

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Libertarian League
Views & Comments Number 11, February 1956
1955, February

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