Interview with Laurance Labadie

Paul Avrich

1995

My father, as you know, was an anarchist in Detroit. Mother was a devout Catholic, but gentle and undomineering. Neither of them told me what to do and how to behave. They never said, "Don't do this" or "Don't do that," but let me develop in my own way. Father never even spoke to me about anarchism; he thought it was not his business to indoctrinate me in anything. Around our house they were always talking about anarchism, Father with his visitors and friends. That was their life, their overriding interest. They talked about it all the time.

Father met Peter Kropotkin in Detroit in 1901 [actually 1897], in the engineering room of the waterworks. Kropotkin and Elisée Reculus, as I recall it, were building a papier-maché model of the world. Father wrote a note about Kropotkin and inserted it in the bound volume of the journal *Truth*, at a page with a drawing of Kropotkin [in the August 1884 number]: "Kropotkine was a small man, with a large head, bushy hair and whiskers, talked English very well, and his movements were quick, as tho surprised."

James Martin wrote a good book about individualist anarchism, but it leaves out the human element; you don't get the feeling that these people knew each other.

I can see Mussolini being a Stirnerite: Every man for himself. Stirner didn't preach any morality. So Father was right in not taking a stand with Benjamin Tucker [in favor of Stirner's individualism] rather than with Kropotkin's communist anarchism, and that made Tucker angry.

The communistic principle is inherent in the very life process. A new-born child must be given according to his needs; the problem is to wean the child towards self-sufficiency.

What would you think if I told you that anarchism is a pipe-dream? But that's exactly what I've come to believe.

Agnes Inglis was a "beautiful person," to use the current language.

John Scott and Jo Ann Wheeler [Burbank, q.v.] sent me the mimeograph machine from their *Mother Earth*. I repaired it and printed my paper *Discussion* on it.

Steven T. Byington's translation of the Bible, *the Bible in Living English*, was published in 1972 by the Watchtower Society in New York, who bought the rights from his estate.

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Gathered in 1975 and published by Paul Avrich in his book *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America.*

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