

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Hostile Methods, Hostile Aims

In a correspondence in the Topeka, Kans., *Advocate*, Mr. William H. Van Ornum denies the assertion made by Mr. H.T. Wakefield in that same journal to the effect the Socialism and Anarchy are “inconsistent theories.” Mr. Van Ornum, whose Anarchy is not of the bomb-throwing but of that variety that is non-bombthrowing, and which style itself “philosophic,” maintains, on the contrary, that there is a “pronounced unity” between the two, and he tries to prove his assertion with the statement that “they each (Socialism and Anarchy) seek to inaugurate an era of equality, fraternity and prosperity.”

Mr. Van Ornum reasons falsely. To ascertain for practical purposes, whether two theories are or are not inconsistent, what must be kept in mind is, not so much the declaration of their ultimate ends, but the declaration concerning the methods they propose to reach their ends by. He, for instance, tells us nothing, who simply says he wants freedom. Lincoln wanted “Freedom;” Wendell Phillips wanted “Freedom;” and no intelligent man in the North would deny that “Freedom” was the aim Jefferson Davis had in view, as he so often stated. But the method for reaching “Freedom” proposed by Jefferson Davis was exactly the reverse of that represented by Lincoln. As the methods differed, so did their essential aims. Despite their “pronounced unity” as to aims, we know that Jefferson Davis’ method led to slavery, and that of Lincoln to freedom.

No doubt the bulk of the free traders, like the bulk of the

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protectionists, are ill-intentioned; nevertheless, no sensible man would deny that many free traders and many protectionists are sincere in the desire to bring on popular well-being. There would be a seemingly “pronounced unity” among them; and yet, guided by sober sense, no thinking man would look to the final aim of these two schools to ascertain whether or not there is unity among them. For all practical purposes, the important thing to ascertain is what are the methods of each, and the inquiry would establish the fact that there is an irreconcilable difference between the two.

Take an other instance. With the word “Freedom” on their lips the Roman conspirators marched out of the Senate chamber, their daggers red and warm with the blood of Cæsar; in the name of “Freedom” Mark Antony stumped the provinces and gathered an army that slew Brutus and Cassius. Yet one side would have given “Freedom” a chance, while the other made tyranny and subsequent ruin inevitable.

It is unnecessary to multiply examples. Whether between Socialism and Mr. Van Ornum’s Anarchy there is or is not a pronounced unity cannot be established by the simple fact that each “seeks to inaugurate an era of equality and prosperity;” here, as in other cases, the method for reaching the “era of equality and prosperity” is the thing of real importance. Now, then, what are the methods these two schools propose?

Socialism recognizes that the system of production and distribution has undergone a thorough revolution. A few generations ago the individual was self-sufficient. Since then instruments of production have become so gigantic and the subdivision of labor has been carried on so far, that no man, or man and his family, can any longer be self-sufficient; SOCIETY now does the producing, not the INDIVIDUAL; and every man in the land is dependent and interdependent for his existence upon every and all the others who directly or indirectly labor in production. Socialism furthermore recognizes the sociologic law that all settled forms of government, or social systems, are the direct reflex of the system under which production and

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distribution are carried on. The present social system is the reflex of an individualistic system of production and distribution; so long as that system of production lasted the present system of government sat firmly in the saddle; but the INDIVIDUALISTIC system of production being now defunct, and having evolved into a SOCIAL system of production, the system of government must eventually and inevitably be made to conform with the change and become as social as production itself; the Co-operative Socialist Commonwealth must follow the individualist system. Accordingly, the method proposed by Socialism to reach the “era of fraternity and prosperity” is to place into the hands of the whole people collectively the nation’s whole machinery of production.

Different and distinct from the Socialist method is that of the Anarchist. He has no inkling of the revolution that has gone on in the system of production; and still less informed is he upon the principles that determine the system of government a people sets up. He sees misery amid plenty, and to inaugurate the “era of fraternity and prosperity” he would restore—well, it is hard to say just what exactly he would restore, each Anarchist, in truly Anarchist style, having his own specific of restoration; but at any rate they all fight the Co-operative Commonwealth, and consequently would either perpetuate existing or introduce greater social misery.

Hostile methods, hostile aims. Anarchy and Socialism are irreconcilable opposites.

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