

Regeneración

English Section

Edited by WM. C. OWEN

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How Can Freedom Mean Compulsion?

At the end of the year it is customary to take stock, and surely the showing made during the last twelve months is miserable. During that time the workers, who were wont to boast so loudly of their strength, have been either slaughtered by millions in a war they did not start, or have been, at best, mere onlookers, powerless to affect results. Put to the test their vaunted power has turned out to be nothing.

Militarism, which is the deadly enemy of industrialism and, therefore, of the workers, has swept everything before it, but its greatest and most enduring conquests have been in the economic and political domain, wherein precedents have been established and machinery set up which it will take years of energetic and highly intelligent struggle to overthrow. Everywhere the State has clothed itself with powers previously undreamed of, and the powers to which it will not relinquish in a hurry.

Agitation is a seed that comes slowly to fruition, but it finally arrives. In my opinion we are only now beginning to reap the harvest of three-quarters of a century of Socialist propaganda devoted, with a persistence and devotion worthy of a better cause, to glorification of the State. Against that reversion to Toryism and Bourbonism—dressed up to suit the modern taste and masked by huge batteries of pseudo-science—a few thinkers, men of the Herbert Spencer type, have striven valiantly, and in due time their work will bring its harvest. But Labor, the eternal victim of the State, still cannot hear their voices; still looks for sustenance to its mortal enemy; still hopes that politicians will lead it into Paradise; still scoffs at freedom and puts its trust in regulation and restriction. He who believes in regulation obviously desires a regulating apparatus, and the stronger and more efficient that regulating apparatus can be made the better he will like it. In religion he should be a Roman Catholic; in secular affairs the empire of the Caesars or that of Wilhelm II of Germany should be his model.

Against all this the Anarchist movement was supposed to be a protest, but that myth also has been exploded by the stern hand of time. It would be almost impossible, I imagine, to find an informed person of ordinary intelligence who does not know that in Germany the State is everything; that there the philosophy of State Socialism has reached its zenith and saturated the entire political and economic structure. Yet Germany has no more stalwart upholders than many of our would-be Anarchist leaders!

Organized Labor in the United States, as elsewhere, has no idea of freedom, and, therefore, is not revolutionary but reactionary to the last degree. It would turn over everything to the State tomorrow if it could get satisfactory guarantees respecting wages and hours of work, as the English unions attempted recently to get by whom it may be enjoyed, and from them Premier Asquith. For such a miserable mess of potage heritage on which Labor should have entered long ago; the heritage of personal liberty which won by the abolition of special privilege, would give all men equality of opportunity and automatically secure to every worker

the full product of his work. It should be obvious enough that when getting something for nothing is abolished robbery will be dead, but that obvious proposition is one that Organized Labor does not understand. Its leaders have too many political ambitions to wish to understand it. They do not teach the overthrow of the wage system but its perpetuation, to be attained by cornering the job for the benefit of the elite of Labor. Their great aim is the maintenance of the "Closed Shop", a doctrine and tactic that openly disavows Freedom and leads straight to tyranny of the basest type.

Fortunately Life is the one thing which cannot be dethroned, and Life will tutor us. The discontent that now racks society in every civilized country will not be and cannot be appeased until society has put itself at one with the demands of Life. That discontent is not the work of agitators, who usually appeal only to a most limited circle; to the fanatics of some petty fanatical "ism". It springs from the instincts of countless millions who feel that, thanks to science and invention, there is enough and to spare for all; feel that we have reached the point in human development at which want and the fear of want should be entirely out of date; feel that they are artificially excluded from the feast and mean to break their way into it.

Land monopoly, which excludes the masses from their natural heritage, will have to go. It is an obvious monstrosity, and the strong arm of Government alone upholds it. Money monopoly, which confers on the possessors of gold a monopoly of the credit and exchange of the nation, will have to go. It is the direct creation of Government, which called it into existence and upholds it despite its patent absurdities. Special privileges of all kinds will have to go, for it is impossible to confer them on some except at the expense of others, and those others are always the weakest who are least able to protect themselves. Special privileges are always and everywhere the direct creations of Government, and the stronger the Government the more they abound.

We are not near the close of a period of social re-adjustment but at the very entrance, and the rapidity of our advance will depend on the clearness with which we see the road we have to travel. It cannot possibly be otherwise. If Freedom is the goal we worse than waste our time on measures of compulsion whoever fathers them. If justice is the touchstone we cannot desire that special favor shall be shown to any. We do not stand for any one man, or type of man, but for all men. We do not stand for any one class, even though it be what calls itself the working-class, but for the abolishment of classes. We do not seek to aid a certain section of the workers in their endeavor to corner the jobs the master has to give; we seek to give all men the opportunity of working for themselves and being free from masters.

These are definite aims, to be attained by definite methods. If Monopoly is the one enemy, as I maintain, Monopoly, no matter the restoration of the United States merchant marine, and today that merchant marine is the leader than it ever was. Why should a country that cannot maintain its own flag in the competition of the open seas be considered capable of governing peoples who speak another tongue and cherish ideals natural to the tropics but such as form

ing—the task is easy—that Government is always "slow, wasteful, stupid and corrupt," that politicians are not the best and most efficient but the worst and least competent of men; that the best of all existing Governments is, as Jefferson said, the Government that governs least, while the best of all possible Governments is that which governs not at all.

This is unquestionably the conflict not only of the future but of the immediate future, for the world is weary of politicians and of the misery in which they have involved it. Not for much longer will it put up with billion-and-a-quarter dollar Congresses, with the taxes they impose and the fool legislation with which they load the nation. The curtain is about to rise on a tremendous drama, "The Revolt Against Government," and the Anarchist movement, if it understands itself, should be preparing to come into its own.

WM. C. OWEN.

Such Is Life

The "Saturday Evening Post" of December 18, editorializing on the case of Assistant Postmaster Burkitt, dismissed for criticizing President Wilson's second marriage, expresses its astonishment that so significant an event attracted little newspaper comment. As it well says: "You could not imagine a minor employ of a railroad being discharged because he was heard to say the president of the road should not get married," and it goes on to explain that while the railroad company concerns itself only with the man's ability at his desk the government is deeply interested in what he does away from his desk, for on that the fate of the next election may depend. Our readers will remember our immediate comments on this case.

President Wilson's wedding was notable for its freedom from military pomp. Not a uniform was to be seen. However, we should not build too much on that. The "Preparedness" and Pan-American programs nail us to the cross of Militarism.

Barnum said the American people were born to be humbugged, but perhaps he was thinking only of the reformers. For example, the crushing of the Trusts, what a hue and cry was raised four years ago when Standard Oil, the father and arch-type of them all, was finally brought to book and legally dissolved. The market value of its stock immediately began to rise, and today it is worth two and a half times what it was at the date of dissolution!

Why should Mexicans, who are well acquainted with this long history of legislative fiasco, feel the slightest confidence in Wilson's plans for their betterment, via the Carranza and Pan-American route? For at least fifty years every party in the United States has had in its platform some plank calling for the restoration of the United States merchant marine, and today that merchant marine is the leader than it ever was. Why should a country that cannot maintain its own flag in the competition of the open seas be considered capable of governing peoples who speak another tongue and cherish ideals natural to the tropics but such as form

States cannot understand? What sense is there in this pre-emptive slumber and launching to the four winds this formidable phrase: Argentina feel themselves in 'We all have the right to be free natural alliance with the United and happy.' And the people, States simply because they happen to be situated in the same Western hemisphere? There is no sense in it. Geographically Argentina is far nearer to Europe than it is to the United States. Ethnically her affiliations are with the Latins and not with the Anglo-Saxons. Economically her trade relations are with England which has invested several billion dollars in developing the country. And what applies to Argentina applies all round. Pan-Americanism is not a natural growth, but an artificial paper scheme, got up by a few politicians who have been hunting for some gaudy bubble with which to dazzle the public.

WM. C. OWEN.

We Are Moving From Illusions Toward Life.

We Revolutionists are not pursuing a chimera; we are pursuing reality. The peoples nowadays are not taking up arms to impose on others their special Gods or their religions. The Gods are rotting in the holly books. The religions are fading away in the shadow of indifference. The Koran, the Vedas, the Bible, no longer dazzle. Between their yellowing leaves the Gods are passing mournfully, as the sun dies in the twilight of a winter day. We are moving toward Life. Yesterday heaven was the people's objective point; today is the earth. There are no more Crusaders, lance in hand, Allah's cimeter rest in the museum showcase. The herds of the God of Israel are becoming atheists. The dust of dogmas is disappearing before the breath of the years as they go by.

Today the peoples are not in rebellion because they wish to adore one God rather than another. The great social upheavals to which religions gave birth have become petrified in the story of the past. The French Revolution won the right to think, but it did not win the right to live, and to the conquest of that latter right the intelligent of all countries and all races today address themselves.

We have a right to live, the thinkers tell us, and this human doctrine has found its way to the heart of the serf, as dew to the thirsty soil. To live means to be free and happy. All of us, therefore, have the right to liberty and happiness.

Social inequality died, in theory, when the rebellion of free thought killed metaphysics. It is necessary that it should die in fact. To that goal the energies of all free men are marching.

Hence it is that we Revolutionists are not pursuing a chimera. We are not struggling for abstractions but for material facts. We want the earth for all; we want bread for all. What though blood may run, so long as the victory benefits all and not a special social caste!

Because of this the multitude is listening to us. Because of this our voice reaches the masses, shaking and awakening them. Because of this we are able to raise a whole people in revolt.

We are the people; but not the sad and mournful people of the Pharisees; not the abject and servile people of the Caesars; not the people who were wont to clap hands when Porfirio Diaz was passing by. We are people in revolt against the joke; we are the people of Sparta, the people who were with Munser in the proclamation of equality, with Camille Desmoulins in the tearing down of the Bastille, with Hidalgo in the burning of Granaditas, with Juarez in his upholding of regicide and the tropics but such as form

hold their ground. From his Olympus, reared on the rocks of Chapultepec a Jupiter of vaudeville is putting a price on rebel heads: is signing with his aged hands sentences worthy of a cannibal, while his dishonored henchmen bristle like the plait of a wolf attacked by rabies. A reproach to old age this perverse dotard clings to life with the despair of a drowning man. Having taken the lives of thousands, he himself is struggling hand to hand with death to save his own.

No matter; we Revolutionists march onward. The abyss does not stop us, when the water is falling over the precipice it is most beautiful.

If we die we shall die like suns, diffusing light.

RICARDO FLORES MAGON

From our pamphlet "Land and Liberty"—Sold at this Office. Price 10cs.

LAND.

The equal right of all men to the use of land is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air—it is a right proclaimed by the fact of their existence. For we cannot suppose that some men have a right to be in this world and others no right.

The recognition of individual proprietorship of land is the denial of the natural rights of other individuals—it is a wrong which must show itself in the inequitable division of wealth. For as labor cannot produce without the use of land, the denial of the equal right to the use of land is necessarily the denial of the right of labor to its own produce. If one man can command the land upon which others must labor, he can appropriate the produce of their labor as the price of his permission to labor. The fundamental law of nature, that her enjoyment by man shall be consequent upon his exertion, is thus violated. The one receives without producing; the others produce without receiving. The one is unjustly enriched; the others are robbed. To this fundamental wrong we have traced the unjust distribution of wealth which is separating modern society into the very rich and the poor. It is the continuous increase of rent—the price that labor is compelled to pay for the use of land, which strips the many of the wealth they justly earn, to pile it up in the hands of the few, who do nothing to earn it.

Why should they who suffer from this injustice hesitate for one moment to sweep it away? Who are the land holders that they should thus be permitted to reap where they have not sown?

HENRY GEORGE.

From "Liberty and the Great Libertarians."

A GOOD SOLDIER.

Young man, the lowest aim in your life is to be a good soldier. The good soldier never tries to distinguish right from wrong. He never thinks; never reasons; he only obeys. If he is ordered to fire on his fellow citizens, on his friends, on his neighbors, on his relatives, he obeys without hesitation. If he is ordered to fire down a crowded street when the poor are clamoring for bread, he obeys, and sees the gray hairs of age stained with red and the life-tide gushing from the breasts of women, feeling neither remorse nor sympathy. If he is ordered off

as one of a firing squad to execute a hero or benefactor, he fires without hesitation, though he knows the bullet will pierce the noblest heart that ever beat in human breast.

A good soldier is a blind, heartless, soulless, murderous machine. He is not a man. He is not even a brute, for brutes only kill in self-defense. All that is human in him, all that is divine in him, all that constitutes the man, has been sworn away when he took the enlistment oath. His mind, conscience, eye, his very soul, are in the keeping of his officer.

No man can fall lower than a soldier—it is a depth beneath which we cannot go.

Bandits! That is what the defenders of law and order call us. Why? Because while we are teaching our brothers in misery that all should be for the benefit of all, we are also inviting them to take possession of that all.

Who made the land? Did the frock-coated and beloved gentlemen who call it "theirs" make it? No; the land is a natural commodity, for the use of every living creature. Who made the houses, the fabrics and all that goes to render life comfortable? Was it the gentleman we see living in rich palaces and lodged in luxurious hotels? No; all that came from the hands of the poor, who huddle in huts, rot in prison, wither in brothels, and die in hospitals, on the gallows, everywhere, in the noon of life.

Bandits! We who want these things are not the bandits.

R. F. MAGON.

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