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Constitution of the Boston Anarchists' Club

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1887

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Published by Benjamin R. Tucker in 1887 as the appendix to a pamphlet version of the Victor Yarros address *Anarchism: Its Aims and Methods*.

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ARTICLE XII.—Any member may secede from the Club at any time by sending a letter of resignation to the Secretary Treasurer, and any member voting with the minority on any question coming before the Club shall, if he requests, have his individual vote placed upon the records by the Secretary Treasurer.

ARTICLE XIII.—Any proposed amendment of this constitution shall not be voted upon until the regular meeting following the meeting at which it is offered, and in the meantime the Secretary-Treasurer shall notify each member by letter that such an amendment is to be voted upon; and no amendment shall be adopted except by a unanimous vote of the members voting. No amendment shall be offered twice within a period of three months.

As a number of persons in as well as out of Boston have expressed a desire to read the constitution of the Anarchists' Club, we print it here, together with some remarks and explanations which, though, perhaps, unnecessary for people intelligently familiar with the central idea of Anarchism, may be of service to those interested in the subject and as yet inadequately informed as to the real aims and objects of the Anarchistic movement. It may be well to mention here the fact that the objections anticipated in the explanatory notes have already been suggested by some local critics, though not in a clear and definite manner.

Constitution of the Anarchists' Club.

ARTICLE I.—We, the undersigned, hereby constitute our selves as an association under the name of the Anarchists' Club.

ARTICLE II.—The purpose of the Club is the abolition of all government imposed upon man by man, by holding public meetings, lectures, and debates, distributing Anarchistic literature, and all other agencies, methods, and measures not themselves partaking of the nature of such government.

ARTICLE III.—Any person may become a member by signing this constitution, and each member shall be entitled to vote on any question coming before the Club.

ARTICLE IV.—There shall be no membership fee, but each member is requested to contribute monthly to the Club's treasury as large a sum as his circumstances will allow.

ARTICLE V.—The only regular official of the Club shall be a Secretary-Treasurer.

ARTICLE VI.—At each regular business meeting of the Club a chairman shall be chosen, by a majority of the members voting, to

preside at that meeting and at all meetings of the Club, public or private, which may be held before the next regular business meeting. In the absence of the chair man thus chosen, the meeting shall be called to order by the Secretary-Treasurer, and a temporary chairman chosen by a majority of the members voting.

ARTICLE VII.—The duties of the Secretary-Treasurer shall be those usually incumbent upon such an official. His term of office shall expire on the first Sunday of the month of January following his election, and on that day a new election shall be held.

ARTICLE VIII.—The Club shall hold its regular business meetings on the first Sunday of each month. The Secretary Treasurer shall call a special business meeting upon receiving a written request that he do so, signed by at least ten members of the Club.

ARTICLE IX.—The conduct of each meeting shall be vested solely in the chairman, and from his decisions there shall be no appeal.

[Note: This article is not at all antagonistic to the “no government” war-cry of the Anarchists. To aver that it is is to demonstrate an inability to distinguish between form and substance. Defining government as compulsory regulation, no voluntary arrangement of free individuals, however despotic in form, can logically be classed under that head. The Anarchists condemn all attempts to coerce people into any line of conduct which outsiders may deem beneficial, and protest against the arrogant claim of one set of individuals to direct the course of other sets of non-aggressive individuals. But they, as Anarchists, are entitled to choose any mode of practical organization which they may regard as answering their purposes and capable of carrying out their aims. The Anarchists have learned from a varied and long experience—and are also supported in their conclusion by theoretical reasoning—that meetings are best conducted, are more orderly and harmonious, when the chairman, rather than the audience, has the final deciding power. Accordingly they adopted this policy, which, of course, they can abandon or modify at any time by changing the constitution. The

chairman, to be sure, follows general instructions of the Club, and is allowed to exercise his own judgment only in extraordinary cases which are not covered by the instructions.]

ARTICLE X.—The choice of a chairman at a regular business meeting, as provided in Article VI., may be cancelled at a special business meeting by a three-fourths' vote of the members voting, provided each member of the Club has been notified by the Secretary-Treasurer that such a proposition is to come before the meeting; and in case the three-fourths' vote shall be obtained, the Club shall at once choose some other member, by a majority of the members voting, to act as chairman until the next regular business meeting. The Secretary-Treasurer may be removed from office and a new one chosen in his stead at any meeting of the Club, by a majority of the members voting, provided each member of the Club has been notified by the Secretary-Treasurer that such a proposition is to come before the meeting.

ARTICLE XI.—All questions coming before the Club shall be decided by a majority of the members voting, except such as are otherwise provided for in this constitution.

[Note: It will be observed (see Article XIII.) that the power of the majority is limited to matters relating to practical details of the Club's business management, but does not prevail in cases touching fundamental changes or principles. In the latter a unanimous vote of the Club is required. In the former, it was thought best, in order to save time and secure an expeditious dispatch of routine business, to allow the deciding voice to the majority of the members voting. Nobody will confound this with the system of majority rule obtaining under democratic forms of government. The difference between an agreement on the part of certain people to submit certain matters to the decision of a majority of members, and a majority of people in a given locality investing themselves arbitrarily with authority over the rest of the residents and governing them by force or threats of physical violence, is too plain and striking not to be perceived and admitted.]