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# On Anarchy

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Chapter VI of Albert Parsons' *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and  
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Liberty, therefore, is the basis upon which true co-operation rests. To remove the shackles from individual activity in order that co-operative activity may have natural genesis is the mission of anarchy. It looks to the state only to abolish privilege; it looks to the freeman for the co-operative unit. It lays its foundation at the bottom, rather than beginning at the top to build downward.

In co-operation it sees that which will supplant the state, which will open avenues to every faculty, provide supply for every demand, and furnish to all the fullest and freest scope for the development of individuality, without the necessity of pleading a "baby act" to invoke guidance or desire to compel others to follow our co-operative lead and example.

make it also tributary to its gains. Again anarchism says to secure perfect co-operation there must be freedom in financial as well as in other matters. The privilege bestowed upon gold, by bestowing upon it as if by divine right a royal crown over other products of labor, has made it the despot of exchange. Anarchy declares that it has no natural right to the exclusive discharge of this social function over any or all other products; that so far from facilitating exchange it fastens upon industry the clog: of interest, causing all other wealth to pay tribute to it and at the same time regulating values by a speculative standard. Anarchy asserts that in the overthrow of this old superstition, exploded everywhere else save in financial matters, men will be thrown upon their own resources to organize mutual credit; that in co-operation a medium of exchange can be issued based upon any and all forms of wealth as security, and that in this ability to capitalize products for purposes of production of increased wealth there will be no monopoly to command interest for use. Anarchy, therefore, sees in emancipation from the monopoly of land and credit the opportunity for complete and perfect co-operation. Not a governmental scheme by which our functions are prescribed but a free alliance to achieve common ends; not necessarily a unity in one national association, but co-operation for local or national ends, just as the need arises, confident that under equal opportunities that which best discharges its social function will best commend itself for support.

The great trouble is that we have so long been nursed that we are not yet fully aware of our own capacities. So much have we been dominated by the state that we have not encouraged self-reliance. If, however, freedom is preferable to restrictions co-operation can only be secured by the joint efforts of free individuals, and just so far as the social units are emancipated from restriction so far will society reflect that liberty; just so far as the individuals are happy, prosperous, and moral, so far only will society be happy, prosperous, and moral. Social virtues are results, not causes.

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of less fortunate fellow-creatures, who find their own fate more irrevocably fixed in becoming stepping-stones upon which the few mount to privileged enjoyment. Co-operation to eliminate the middleman and retaining rent and interest is but a sorry makeshift for the bright ideal our dreams had presaged.

Anarchy presents a wider and grander view of co-operation than that involved in joint stock or profit-sharing concerns—a view which requires no elaborate scaffolding to erect nor exercise of legislative authority to preserve. It seeks no charter, for it asks no privileges; it seeks no aid, for it contains within itself capacity to provide for all needs. All it asks is a free field—the removal of restrictions which limit its scope and deny it full exercise. And as it finds these restrictions in legislative sanction given to privileges, in chartered rights bestowed upon some, it demands their abrogation.

It claims for co-operation of freemen ability to discharge any social function, and as production and exchange are the principal directions in which modern activity manifests itself it imperatively demands as means of industrial emancipation that neither shall be endowed with privilege, that the source of production and the means of exchange cannot be subject to letters patent.

With freedom of access to land, to hold for occupancy and use, Testing upon this common title, common needs will draw occupants and users to co-operate to secure what is beyond the power of the individual to obtain. The common title would produce independence, mutual reliance and organization, and precisely as privilege was eliminated fraternity of spirit and common aims would naturally arise. Co-operation would not have to be invented, it would be evolved; common needs would require common efforts, and whenever union would present benefits unattainable to divided efforts that moment steps toward co-operative unity would be taken.

But freedom of land is not enough. Capital, clad in the legalized armor of monopoly, holding in its power the medium of exchange and thus imposing a tax upon its use as a means to further production, can well afford to laugh at the puny effort to co-operate and

cessity and discord on the other are instructing them in its aims and preparing them for the application of the requisite means. It is the dream of the toiler, the hope of the thoughtful, and the goal of the progressive humanitarian.

How shall we substitute co-operation? Efforts have been many, satisfactory results few. Unforeseen obstacles are met to be overcome; artificial environments limit freedom of action; chartered privileges impede progress; restrictions hamper and clog activity.

Co-operation in the distribution of products sacrifices the producer to the consumer. Buying at the lowest competition price, and following current trade principles, it would swell profits for the benefit of customers. If it tends to lesson prices the consumer, so far as he is a producer, but gives from one hand what the other hand gains. An English writer indulges in the following criticism on the system:

The co-operative wholesale society is a gigantic middleman. In its workshops it pays the lowest of competition wages. In the language of one of the workers in one of the shoe factories: "The workmen have to work for what they can get; they know there is no true co-operation." In its transactions with other producers it pays the lowest of competition prices. The profits made out of the retail prices are distributed among the members labor is depressed. In short, it is as far from displaying a single feature of real co-operation as any private trader is who uses the weapons of competition and capitalism for his personal ends, regardless of the interests of others.

Even where success attends the enterprise it can hardly rank as even ameliorative. The few, the stockholders, the customers alone are its beneficiaries; the great mass are left, and further, so far as cooperation lifts a few out of the social slough it is at the expense

## I. What Is Anarchy.

The statesman, intent on schemes to compromise principles and tide over clamorous demands for justice, says it is disorder and spoliation. New taxes are then levied to defend the state, to repress incendiary talk, and protect privileged prerogatives. Or false and surface issues are prepared to distract attention, to embroil citizens in partisan quarrels, and furnish new offices for the spoils-hunter. The people pay the bills and the statesman remains.

The priest, intent on saving souls, and setting less value on temporal things—for others—says it is abolition of marriage, atheism, and draws a picture of a state wherein his voice would be derided, yet ever careful to bring no testimony to corroborate his dismal forebodings of social chaos.

The financier, intent on new schemes for manipulating public credit to personal ends, says it means "a dividing up"; that the lazy and worthless want to share with the industrious and honest the fruits of industry; and thousands believe it and never think to ask whether any one ever saw an anarchist who believed in this fancied "divvy."

The landlord, comfortably collecting toll for the use of land from those who have been placed upon this earth, says it is the destruction of the foundation and framework of society and removal of all incentive to progress and then proceeds to invest tolls received in fresh acres.

The merchant seeking by every means to obtain a monopoly of the market, says it is the negation of freedom, a gigantic despotism in which life would be burdened with prison rules and social intercourse regulated with clock-like regularity.

One and all incessantly dinning this into the public ear, their cry re-echoed by that social prostitute, the "able editor," in whose sheet their respective callings are advertised, the timid shrink from the word, women grow old, and children learn to believe an anarchist is a first cousin to Old Nick. And, laughing in their sleeves over their

success, the statesman lays pipe for a re-election the priest pictures another world where corner lots have no speculative value, the financier busies himself in cutting coupons and computing interest, the landlord in figuring how soon he may safely raise rents, the merchant in converting "surplus values" in to profits.

In the tenement house human beings are huddled like sheep in a pen; in the factories women and children crowd out husbands and fathers; in the potter's field trenches are continually opened and filled; in the cities vice and crime are spreading gaudy attractions for idle feet; in the country able bodied men vainly seek employment; men grow disheartened and sullen, women overworked and cross, girls and boys dejected and lost. Yet while rent and interest are collected and profits amassed society is safe and law and order secure, though

Our fathers are praying for pauper pay,  
Our mothers with Death's kiss are white;  
Our sons are the rich man's serfs by day,  
And our daughters his slaves by night.

Yet anarchy will not down, but continues to gain adherents, and says to the statesman: Your surface issues are dead and party questions misleading. We ask justice, and would stop the spoliation from which we have so long suffered. Producing all, we too often lack food and warmth and clothing. Where all are prosperous the state must be so too, and until we are state interests are of secondary importance to us.

It says to the priest: There can be no healthful organization of the moral forces while poverty sets at our hearths and vice beckons our youth to gayer scenes than home can afford. Give us freedom from unrequited toil and enforced destitution and our emotional natures will warm into unity from higher aspirations.

It says to the financier: Your function in society should not lie determined by monopoly, but under equal opportunities. Your privileges are our restriction; your charters our disenfranchisement.

In anarchy labor and capital would be merged into one, for capital would be without prerogatives and dependent upon labor, and owned by it. The laborer would find that to produce was to enjoy and The nightmare of destitution banished. The artisan would find in co-operation that nature alone remained to be exploited. The tradesman would find that production offered greater inducement than exchange, unless he accepted a position of competence and ease in the labor exchange which would supplant isolated stores. The clerk, no longer with his horizon bounded by a ribbon counter, would have full scope to display his talents in any direction. The farmer, above all, free from irksome care to meet interest, to dread foreclosure from enforced taxation, with his family growing up around him, and rendered secure by a common title and mutual inter-dependence, or seeking in insurance indemnity for depredation, would find in anarchy release from useless drudgery and his labor crowned with plentiness and peace.

The only question then likely to arise would be: Who would not be an anarchist?

## IV. Co-operation

Now that questions of forms of faith in theology and government have ceased to divide men into hostile factions, that political as well as religious toleration has become firmly rooted as a social virtue, economic questions rise into greater importance. Here again we find the old struggle of past centuries under new standards; again liberty is arrayed against authority on other fields. Co-operation in religion has passed out of the held of strife and been declared victorious; our creed is no longer dealt to us. Co-operation in government has won its place in the world's history; our rulers no longer claim divine right to govern. The scaffolding of past centuries has brought mankind to the completion of the social structure. Reason and intelligence on the one hand and ne-

necessity an onerous toll as prerequisite condition to their use to further increase production. Look over the crowded human beehives where the toilers jostle each other and then at the vacant lots surrounding them, serving but as receptacles for broken crockery. Ask yourselves by what title deed has the landlord disinherited you from nature's estate? Has God set his seal to it? Is nature's sign-manual there? Have you surrendered your natural claim to a footing on earth? Whence, then, the privilege to him and the restriction upon you? There is but one answer: The law so ordains!

You dream of co-operation, but when you essay it you find rent and interest as firmly seated astride your shoulders as was the Old Alan of the Sea upon Sinbad. Not only are you denied possession of the source of production-land-but monopoly also steps in to dictate upon what conditions you may have the means of production by conferring the privilege of capital on a certain form of wealth only. Your buildings, your machinery, your products, your possessions, the reward of honest industry, may be used, but not capitalized: they cannot be made the basis of credit except in the terms of the monopoly money furnished for the purpose of selling to you permission to utilize your own credit. To the question: Why is this so? again there is but one answer: The law so ordains!

Instead of praying: From rent and interest, good Lord, deliver us! Strike down that which breathes vitality into their grasping tentacles, crush it, throttle it, damn it like freemen, and assert our right to cooperate in producing wealth without making terms with the land-robber, and to co-operate to furnish mutual credit without paying toll to the credit robber.

Anarchy is freedom from artificial regulation and restriction; and, in freedom, the farmer, as well as the artisan and all the classes into, which society is now divided, will find that wider scope to activity will bring increased comfort; and in freedom to use of land and to organize credit, rent, interest, and profits will disappear together like bats before the dawning light; and in co-operation find full security for wealth attained and opportunity for its application.

We demand freedom to co-operate in financial as in other matters; to co-operate for mutual banking is well as for mutual insurance; and when you are shorn of privileges we may co-operate to base credit upon all wealth well as on that you would dictate. For equal opportunities would destroy your prerogative to fashion and control a medium of exchange. Justice would reign and interest cease, because it could not.

It says to the landlord: Equal opportunities give you no monopoly of the soil. Again, monopoly has conferred a chartered right and men are disinherited. Destroy this chartered privilege and strong wins will labor with joy and find in mutual credit new avenues to invade the province of nature. Co-operation would enlarge production, extend consumption and equalize distribution. Overproduction and underconsumption would become myths, and demand would seek supply with unfailing regularity without other guarantee than absence of restriction.

It says to the merchant: Exchange is a social function, and, in the absence of the monopolies of money and land, labor, free from artificial restriction, free to co-operate in mutual banking to organize credit based on all products, thus free to connect use with possession of soil, free from the enforced payment of interest for monopoly money, free from enforced payment of rent for production would through co-operation organize exchanges and leave you free to whistle for profits.

To them all it says: gentlemen, we ask no privilege, we propose no restriction; nor, on the other hand will we permit it. We have no new shackles to propose, we seek emancipation from shackles. We ask no legislative sanction for co-operation asks only for a free field and no favors; neither will we permit their interference.

It asserts that in freedom of the social unit lies the freedom of the social state.

It asserts that in freedom to the capitalization of all acquired wealth lies social advancement and the death of interest.

It asserts that in freedom to possess and utilize soil lies social happiness and progress and the death of rent.

It asserts that in freedom to co-operate the labor exchange will displace the penny-pinching tradesmen and prove the death of profits.

It asserts that in freedom from restriction co-operation will result and in free co-operation capital will seek labor as well as provide guarantees for security.

It asserts that order can only exist where liberty prevails, and that progress leads and never follows order.

It asserts, finally that this emancipation will inaugurate liberty equality, fraternity.

## II. What Anarchy Offers.

The world of activity is one of inducements. Why should I do thus or so? Because my highest interests are concerned. To follow a given course, to advocate certain measures, there must be sufficient inducement therein to satisfy my mind that such is for my interest to do so. We propose no change in human nature, we, take it as we find it, and ask: Does anarchism offer any inducements superior to those of the present system? Can self-interest see any advantage in the change? It is a question of comparison of weighing of advantages and disadvantages. Self-interest shall be umpire.

Let us see what are the inducements now offered, what are the prizes in the lottery of life, and the chances of winning them. We find men placed upon earth dependent upon labor for enjoyment of life. In our zone nature withholds, her gifts and makes them the reward of exertion. Every faculty of individuality is thus aroused to exertion and self-reliance developed. We do not pluck and eat, but labor and develop natural resources, and hence provide. Herein lies the cause of progress, of civilization. Natural conditions must be accepted and our activity governed in accordance therewith.

Alas! to ask is to answer; the toiler still delves on in his weary tread-mill round, and finds advancing age but brings added cares and disquietudes. To him the business boom and national prosperity are only visible when seen recapitulated in the eloquent words which flow from the "able editor's" prostitute pen.

In his thinking moments the artisan dreams of a co-operative society in which freemen will combine to wrest from nature her hidden wealth, in which liberty to labor will no longer be restricted as a boon to crave, in which with manly independence, he may look forward to the calmer enjoyment of the fruits of industry in old age. Nor stands he alone. The farmer wonders if his mortgage will ever be paid. The tradesman asks whether life has no other aim than the constant necessity of counting pennies. The clerk thinks that there cannot be room at the top for all, and what if he should miss his hold on the ladder?

Through all grades of society unrest prevails, because in all success depends upon ability or craft to climb over the fallen forms of your associates; to rise out of the slough by using them as stepping stones, though every upward step plunges them deeper into the abyss.

Modern society, monarchical, parliamentary, and republican alike, cries with one voice: Law and order first and foremost, liberty and progress secondary and resultant. Anarchy says: Not so; law must not deny liberty, order must not precede progress; they are causes, not results. It proclaims progress first, to which order must adapt itself; liberty at all times, over which law has no control.

It whispers to the artisan, the laborer, the miner, the factory hand, the farmer the tradesman, the clerk, to all whose hearts have not been seared by the blighting, hand of successful greed: Your happiness lies in freedom from artificial restrictions, not in strife for privilege.

Look over the broad fields teeming with golden grain and then at the numberless acres held by speculators to extort from human



lege, sets a premium upon greed and culminates in tyranny. The other, in removing privilege, places a premium upon voluntary co-operation, and tends to eliminate greed.

### III. Who Should Be Anarchists?

First, we might ask: Why should there be any? Are not our cities filled with evidences of ceaseless traffic? Is not capital ever on the alert for investment in profitable enterprises? Are not our western towns rivaling each other in “booms” in real estate, thus testifying to increasing revival of business? Is not the army of the unemployed steadily diminishing, and demand for labor increasing? Are not our public documents teeming with statistical columns showing national prosperity? The building trades find employment in building new and grander palaces; in their decoration and furnishing an army of skilled employes find remunerative labor; in the clothing and adornment of their inmates thousands are fed and clothed. On every hand new church spires arise, as if to serve as exclamation points to the astonishment which the voice of anarchy arouses.

Festive revelries were never more frequent; people marry and are given in marriage, and display to reporters the bridal gifts; luxury is creating new demands upon industry; salaries of officials and popular preachers are raised, and pews sell at a higher premium; in fact, everything goes as merry as a marriage bell were it not for the discordant note of frequent strikes.

Ah! Here is a depth which statistical compilations of productions and exports does not reach, it seems. Let us peer beneath the veneering of “national prosperity,” and see if the structure be sound or wormeaten. Let us see if the gilded rays of boulevard prosperity radiates into tenement-denized streets and “nigger alley”; whether the magic wand of the speculative genie of the business boom has transformed these humble homes.

But at the first glance we see that our efforts are limited by artificial regulations. Nature has placed us upon the earth, but we are denied its use for productive purposes. We find the source of all production resting in land, and on every lot we find the placard: “Taken.” Nature’s gift has been monopolized, and artificial conditions are first to be surmounted before access can be had to the use of soil. Held, not for use, but for sale, it assumes a speculative value. Have you a lot, a homestead left to you? This speculative value extends over to it, Increases your taxes, places a fine upon all improvements, and where such are made requires increased exertions to meet new exactions. Society says that you have no natural right to the soil. The right to produce must be bought. You must first accumulate through production before you can have access to the source of production, hence you must crave employment. You must realize sufficient profits from the sale of time or products before you can purchase the right to produce for yourself. Therefore, you work for others, and from the values you create there is diverted one part to the owner of land, from whom you purchase the right to remain on earth, under the form of rent, and another portion to the employer as inducement for giving you employment instead of starving, under the form of profits. After these requirements are met you receive wages. And were we studying political economy instead of glancing at some of its salient points, it would be seen that this applies as well to the farmer as to the laborer.

The laborer’s wages are paid in the form of money, the current medium of exchange. Advancement lies in saving, in economy, in postponement of marriage, in accumulating money by which privilege may be purchased or capital secured. Possession of land is not enough; there must be joined to it ability to use. But labor saved is only wealth till turned to reproductive use, when it becomes capital. But here, again, artificial conditions are introduced. Society in its wisdom having privileged the landlord, now grants prerogatives to the capitalist. It limits the medium of exchange to a particular form of wealth. All credit must flow through a specified sluice. A, B, and

C seek through co-operation to escape from the necessity of working for others. A has wealth saved in a house; B has wealth saved in machinery; C has wealth saved in products; all having equal exchangeable value. But their wealth had cannot be capitalized into wealth used, save by purchasing monopoly money. As a basis for mutual credit it is valueless; as a basis for sale or mortgage it can command money, be capitalized. Thus by this privilege conferred upon one form of wealth to constitute the sole medium of exchange and basis for credit another toll is laid upon industry in the form of interest.

All these artificial complications by which the surplus value of production is diverted from the producer into the coffers of the, so to speak, complicators of normal social relations require the support of the source of interference, hence taxation claims its share before the residual sum is dealt out as wages. Therefore it is that, as under slavery and serfdom, the producer works for as little as may be necessary to support him. The competition of labor for privilege to live keeps the minimum of wages at the line of cost of subsistence, while taxation, profits, and rent have no determinable limit. Labor, lying tinder all these super-imposed burdens, paying all these exactions, is necessarily remunerated by this iron law of wages. Anarchism must offer emancipation from this enforced subjection of labor to land and capital, and, logically, in proclaiming emancipation it must proclaim freedom to the oppressed—liberty!

Emancipation from the thralldom of man to land; the individual right to possession and use, carrying with it the right to co-operate for guaranteeing security and protection. Emancipation from the thralldom of man to capital, the individual right to utilize all wealth, and the right through co-operation to organize mutual credit with the same facility we are now graciously permitted in mutual insurance.

Emancipation from bondage to rent would base all titles upon occupancy and use; would open avenues of escape to the toiler, and in nowise limit the farmer's capacity to produce, nor his ability to

enjoy the reward thereof. In increased production, application to labor would be lightened, the necessity for struggle lessened, an inflation of wealth would ensue, distribution be more equitably adjusted, and natural right to a footing on earth receive social sanction and, through co-operation, social guarantee.

Emancipation from bondage to interest would join means to possession of the source of production. Co-operative effort would offer sanction to co-operative credit, and in freedom to capitalize all products. Interest would be abolished in the same sense as petroleum "abolished" candles.

Labor, free from the exactions of speculative rent, and released from necessity to buy a monopolized medium of exchange, would offer as inducements to exertion:

Opportunity to freely enjoy the fruits of industry without paying toll.

Opportunity to the endless increase of wants and means to wrest from nature their supply.

Opportunity to the use of all wealth had in the extension of productive activity.

Opportunity to freely co-operate to secure:

1. Protection and security from invasion of these natural rights.
2. Insurance against depredation and risks.
3. A medium of exchange based upon wealth saved, having social sanction, discharging social functions, and serving social ends.
4. The organization of labor exchanges from which profits would have fled to join rent and interest.
5. The organization of all forms of activity, and thus release from enforced taxation.

In short, where capital seeks labor, where supply waits upon demand, where order follows progress, where authority dissolves under the genial glow of liberty, and necessity for wage-labor disappears.

The present system offers government to defend privilege. Anarchist-socialism offers co-operation to extend opportunities. The one, in making co-operation compulsory and fostering privi-