

Representation and the State

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Contents

I.	3
II.	10

“The State! Whatever the State saith is a lie; whatever it hath is a theft: all is counterfeit in it, the gnawing sanguinary, insatiate monster. It even bites with stolen teeth. Its very bowels are counterfeit. ”

— FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

“Communism in material production, anarchy in the intellectual -that is the type of a Socialist mode of production, as it will develop from the rule of the proletariat — in other words, from the Social Revolution, through the logic of economic facts, whatever might be the wishes, intentions, and theories of the proletariat.”

-KARL KAUTSKY.

I.

The argument that Socialism involves State tyranny of a type with which the worker is not unacquainted under present day society is one which the opponents of Socialism regard as being not the least valuable in their somewhat limited armoury. This fact, coupled with the somewhat hazy notions which even some Socialists seem to have as to the position of the State in future society, warrants an examination of the part the State plays in Capitalist society, an enquiry into its transient elements, and a recognition of what constitutes its permanent character. The matter is one which must be considered in the light of society's evolution. We must note how the Central Directing Authority in society has evolved its threefold function of legislative, judicial, and administrative power.

From living in a tribal state and gathering whatever nature offered him spontaneously, man slowly came to invent one weapon and tool after another, in order to aid him in his struggle for existence. Each instrument was more delicate and complex than its predecessor, and corresponded with the development of his skill as fisherman, hunter, and cattle raiser. The latter occupation carried with it a negation of primitive Communism, wherein no class struggle existed, and led to the private ownership of the land and instruments of labour which were the necessary basis, of a final settling down to agriculture and handicraft. As pasture farming involved Communism, so cattle breeding on the one hand, carrying with it handicraft on the other, required individual skill, a negation of associated labour, and consequently private ownership of the means of production employed by the craftsman, and of the products which he created. Thus began petty industry based upon the individuality, the skill, industry, and perseverance of the worker, demanding, requiring, and securing unto himself private property. These were the basis of bourgeois society. From satisfying its own requirements only, the peasant family, owing to the progress of agriculture beyond the needs of the family, began to produce a surplus of food, tools, and garments. The situation of the family governing largely the nature of the surplus they produced and the differing implements required and tastes acquired, the basis for exchange was laid, specialization of industry was established, and goods were produced both for consumption within the establishment in which they were produced, and for the purpose of exchange for the products of another establishment.

Goods now became commodities, barter was established, and the necessity for some standard commodity or exchange value—such as gold — realised. As the handicraftsman had produced primarily for exchange purposes, so the peasant, in the course of industrial development, was

brought to be a producer of commodities. The division of labour, which these conditions necessitated, took the form of every single concern producing a different class of goods, and the private ownership of the goods exchanged by those who exchanged them. Mutual independence in society, side by side with private property, became increasingly the main conditions of society. As production for personal consumption was more and more superseded by production of commodities, buying and selling became an art, and merchant trading arose, the success of which was founded on buying cheaply and selling dearly. How these economic conditions made for monopoly, on the one hand, in the course of time, and for the creation of a proletariat on the other, is known now to every student.

The rapidity of industrial development in the terms of an ever-increasing velocity, and its financial reflex in the present generation of steam, electricity, and centralization, is apparent to the eyes of all. With the story of its daily unfoldment before him let the reader but reflect how the peasant who produced goods for his own consumption gave place to the peasant who exchanged these commodities for other articles for his own use; how he, in turn, made way for the merchant who neither produced for his own use nor bought articles for his own use exclusively, but bought and exchanged commodities with the intention of making a profit.

Removal from the manufacture and production of commodities constituted the road to wealth. The merchant prince gave way to the financier, and the latter made for present day monopoly.

The political reflex of this industrial development is found in the story of a social passage from Communism through tribalism to nationalism founded on feudalism and vassalage, to Imperialism and 'Colonial developments. As the commercial class laid the basis of imperial developments, so the financial class pursued the exploitation of other lands within that development, and identified successful share-mongering with national prosperity, and consol returns, and Imperial debts, with the opening out of Colonial civilization. The courage of the soldier, the nautical equipment of the sailor, the scholarship of the scientist, the permanent value of literature, were all subservient to Capital's idol-finance, its only standard of success.

The anomalies were strange and disastrous. The little shareholder to live had to invest, and the success of his investment made only for his own buying out by the director king, who could then render his money useless as being no longer capital. On the other hand, the investment failing, the shares could still be foisted upon the financial public, and the director retire the gainer. The standard of wealth, gold, concentrated into fewer and fewer hands, and with it the control of the means and instruments of production which nature had begotten and labour power created. Trade unions, to realise the value of their funds, had to invest in capitalist concerns. Their officials, as a dependent official caste, opposed strong industrial action against the capitalist class, because such activity depleted-both by direct call and loss of interest on capital invested-the funds of the unions and so hazarded the jobs of the union officials. So that labour became more enslaved as men drawn from the ranks of labour became more and more the interested officials, and legal administrators of capitalism, in their official capacity as representatives of share-holding interests, preachers, legislators, and capitalistic philosophers.

The growing competition of women industrially, and the reduction of the standard age of the worker owing to specialization made for a negation of skilled labour. The advocate of woman's suffrage on the same basis as man's suffrage hastened to secure the propertied enfranchisement of woman, whilst working men witnessed the formation of Women's Trade Unions and Universal Adult Suffrage Societies. The Parliamentary Revisionist sought to secure representation. The financial credit reformer blamed monopoly and the State. The proletarian was driven to enquire

what should constitute his attitude towards the State and its machinery. The worker fully recognised that the fact of women having the vote did not render them more open to bribery than men, since that was an impossibility in view of the history of the pocket boroughs, the capitalistic proclivities of men, and the corruption of male Poor Law Guardians. On the other hand, in view of the perpetuation of misery and exploitation in those countries where women have the vote, he had to confess that the vote of women did not aid him in giving political expression to the class struggle so long as women voters failed to understand the economic conditions. The enfranchisement of a number of women who belonged to the parasite class seriously affected him in the securing of such a political expression of the industrial struggle. So far, therefore, as the woman's political enfranchisement was concerned, the proletarian could only note that, both as a question of abstract justice, and a matter of expressing politically the true industrial relations, absolute adult suffrage irrespective of sex and property qualifications was the only solution of the problem.

This would carry with it the right, so long denied, of women to be returned to Parliament. Whilst the basis of society's recognition of this right, so far as working women are concerned, would be industrial fear, its realisation would have no different effect from the return to Parliament of working men—a fact that is demonstrated by the women trade union officials being neither worse nor better than the men trade union officials in the question of palliative effort rather than of Socialist endeavour. It would still leave, furthermore, the question of true representation untouched so long as the political machine was controlled in the interests of class society, and governed by the present system of representation on the lines of party voting.

This brings us directly to the question of what the State is and does, as a prelude to this difficult) of majority or minority rule—a difficulty which belongs purely to bourgeois society. Of the intimate connection existent between economic and political freedom we have already spoken. Each fresh economic development carrying with it a corresponding political transformation, it follows that as absolute monarchy in the political world is mated with personal slavery and vassalage in economics, so representative government in politics goes along with the economic system of commercialism. In the course of this transformation, the social purpose of the State has been so evolving as to show the radical reconstruction which was—or is—in store for it in the future. As the aristocracy freed itself from the domination of the Monarchy, as the bourgeois secured their emancipation from their feudal oppressors, so the State has become less and less powerfully essential as an engine of oppression and more and more established as a vehicle of administration. Greater than all the decrees of despotism, Dame Nature's Constitutionalism has decided that the lot of the State for the domination of man by man must cease, and the function of the State as a machine for the management of production must be raised and developed.

As an instrument of domination it took its rise as a necessity at a certain stage of economic development, necessarily linked with the division of society into classes. It was the official representative of society as a whole, its personification in a visible body, but inasmuch as it was the State it only stood for the class which represented in itself the whole of society. According to the philosophic conception it was “the realization of the idea” of the kingdom of God upon earth, the domain where eternal truth and eternal justice realized themselves or ought to have done. The result was a superstitious reverence for the State and for everything in connection with it, which was all the more evident from the fact that his insignificance, the individual, was taught from childhood to suppose that public business and the ‘common interest of society could not be cared for in any other way than through the State and its well-paid employees.

It was fondly thought that a great step had been made in advance when faith was lost in an hereditary monarchy and claims laid to a democratic republic. But even the necessity for such claims was only to be found in the fact that the State's function was mainly legislative and judicial, not industrially administrative. An instrument of oppression used 'by one class over another, and quite as much so under a democratic republic as under a monarchy, its capture by the bourgeoisie, subsequent to the republican agitation only meant that its existence was becoming less an absolute and more a representative one-and therefore more anonymous and changeable in character-its position was becoming more and more hazardous in view of the advancing industrial conditions in the direction of social production and distribution. Thus as economic conditions have made for Socialism, the political reflex has made less, and less for the success of State tyranny. Let us analyze what the failure of the Capitalist State — as the last political reflex of class society — means.

Of late years, the cry for proportional representation, second ballot, etc., has grown in volume. The reason for it has been the obvious failure of the House of Commons, or Chamber of Deputies, as the case may be, throughout capitalist civilization to represent what is termed the opinion of the country. In other words, a majority on the Government benches of the People's Chamber may actually represent a minority of opinion in the country, and generally does not represent the true proportional majority in the country. The historic failure has long been pointing in this direction. On the other hand, the Capitalist State existing as a reflex of economic "conditions, it can be seen that whilst the cost of its management is being paid for by the capitalist class out of the surplus value, the basis of its recognition of working-class representation is the growing class consciousness of the latter class and the growth of revolutionary endeavour on its part. Even, therefore, as a palliative, and out of sheer despair of curtailing the growth of this spirit, the Capitalist State must give heed to the question of electoral reform, in its various phases of proportional representation, adult suffrage, etc., and even to the question of the abolition of the House of Lords.

Now, on all these questions, the division is rapidly becoming a 'class, and not an individual one. Bourgeois Radicalism, with its theoretical belief in the modification of the State structure in every particular, and antagonism to Imperial development, has found that the continuance of the society to whose support it looks, demands that their foreign policy shall be a continuation of Tory traditions, and their modifications of State structure exceedingly slow, timid, and expedient. Conversely, in matters of foreign policy and On questions of State structure, the Tory would adopt an attitude of absolute autocracy and non-negation of the status quo. On either of these rocks, capitalism would be bound to split. Radicalism meaning the undoing of its political power to oppress, and Conservatism the centralization of the power to such an extent that its very menace would be its own undoing. Hence, whilst the political rewards and family traditions have formed the basis of individual adherence to this or that party, concessions to social expediency have been the basis of their political continuance and securement of the stability of the system. But this has meant the gradual but certain coming-together of the two parties for the defence of the profit-mongering system, the equally certain emphasising of their class-basis, the taking of common action against strikers at home and empire-disrupters in the colonies or abroad. The Liberal Statesmen has vied with his Tory confrere in oppression in Egypt, South Africa, and in India, as well as in shooting down the workers at home.

The growing evidence of the hypocrisy of this party system its essential class unity, has been the cause of Labour, from relying on mere trade union activity, taking to political action. In the

whole of that action compromise has been more apparent than stern defiance. But even so it has presented to the capitalist politician some evidences of the inherent tendency of class-society to undo itself.

To counteract such a possibility, all that capitalist politicians can do, with safety, is to concentrate their endeavours on the political reforms of adult suffrage, second ballot, and proportional representation as already indicated. Yet even so, to so extend the franchise and to secure a larger continuance of power, the task of the capitalist politician is no easy one, for to, hunt the devil of corruption from parliament to people by an extension of the franchise, is only to more readily expose the basic rottenness of capitalist society and bring about the downfall of its empire.

More and more would it become apparent that the M.P.s were but the puppets of the Party Whips and of the Cabinet, which were but the agents of the desires of trust-magnates, whose growing financial power would involve the corruption of business, politics, and citizenship; the easy punishment and bossing of Premiers, Senates, Titular Monarchs, and Republican Presidents; the ruin of the little middle-class whose affected contempt of the manual labourer would thus slowly vanish together with their position. Carrying with it, as can already be seen, the negation of legislative and judicial dignity, by rendering justice a farce and legislation chicanery, it would inevitably reveal the State's 'function as one coercive of persons and not administrative of things, and show that the instability of a corrupt society demanding, the stability of a free society would not require, the punishment of persons for evils which were socially produced and not individually malicious. It would also show, that the punishment or coercion of persons was no guarantee of social calm.

Side by side with this would be the further fact-awaiting a social recognition-of the powerlessness of the State to do the one thing which would abolish, or at least check, all revolutionary endeavour — to abolish pauperism. Its only power, so far as it could concern itself with pauperism, would be seen to consist in police regulations, charity, etc. To abolish poverty it would have to abolish those conditions responsible for its own existence, and hence to abolish itself. As the abolition of ancient slavery involved the abolition of the Ancient State, so the abolition of modern capitalist slavery would involve the abolition of the bourgeois Representative State. As soon as it evolved to being the representative of the whole of society in a complete society, the judicial and legislative functions of the State would become superfluous, with the result that the State, as class society has historically known it, would become superfluous. Equally superfluous would become the anti-statism or voluntaristic production which partakes of the same representative character as the State, and is equally corrupt under class society. Growing out of the industrial conditions which necessitated the negation of private ownership, would be social ownership based on social production and distribution. Individually this would mean social freedom, whilst socially it would embody all the efficiency that a historically evolved administrative function, having its basis deep down in society's foundations, could alone carry with it. This, however, the opponents of Socialism tell us, would involve tyranny and expertism. Let us see.

Its erection being on a ruins of a society where production had been for profit and not for use, wherein the coercion of man had been at a premium against which the growing social consciousness had revolted, this would hardly appear to be the case. The failure of legislative and judicial activity being amongst its progenitors Socialism could hardly perpetuate that coercion which its very coming into existence must necessarily negate. But now we have to consider the basis of expertism under capitalism in order to show it to be impossible under Socialism. Our preliminary shall be a statement of the attitude of the newly found individualist opponents of

Socialism, who tell us that every State is a despotism, because, whether the despot be one or many, whether the State be monarchial or republican, solely from the principle that all right or authority belong to the collectivity of the people-and the collectivity represents the status quo, whether autocratic or democratic — its existence as a State implies the oppression of the individual, against whose interests the State arraigns itself. Agreeing that the historic rôle of the State has been that of a despotism, and that violence against State authority is no more criminal than legal violence against the individual, the proletarian must needs seek an explanation for the being of State authority. “How is it that, whether by apathy or indifference, the collective will of the people supports the State against the individual well-being of the majority of the people?”

Why does the property owner pay taxes and duties to the State, and the oppressed worker seek its benediction?” asks this economical enquirer. “Education by the State,” is the voluntarist reply. “But,” pursues the investigator, “the State is but an anonymous reflex of the collective will of the people. If, therefore, the State create that will, it must be at least coexistent with it, if not, as the creative agency, prior to it. But it cannot be created by a will it creates, nor can it be a reflex of the collective will. If it is only a reflex of the collective will, how is that will formed? If the collective Will is the outcome of statism, we must seek elsewhere for the latter’s origin.” Let us investigate.

Accepting the principles of the materialistic conception of history, we learn that, if the engineer is paid twenty times more than the navvy(i.e day [wage] labourer), it is because the cost necessary to produce an engineer is more considerable than that necessary to produce a navvy by nineteen times the cost of the latter’s production. Now, it having cost society twenty times as much to produce the engineer than it did to produce the navvy, the engineer is twenty times more indebted to society than the navvy. Instead, therefore, of taxing society for greater privileges he should return more to society. As he does not, under the system under which the engineer flourishes because of advantages of education the navvy is dispossessed of his rights; and therefore the capitalist system which is at once society and the wage system has established the technical education of the navvy’s children in order to protect itself against the expertism of the engineer. In working its own undoing once more, in a vain attempt to secure temporary relief capitalist society is abolishing the expert in the interests of social progress. In the face of these facts to pretend that the expert will become a parasite and tyrant under Socialism is absurd. With his numbers growing his occupation is going, because — as an intellectual — he is rapidly becoming the rule and not the exception.

It may, however, be contended that, under capitalist society, it is the extent of monopoly in education and in industry, and not their various costs of production, which has enabled the engineer, the scientist, and the doctor, to draw from society ten or a hundred times more than the labourer, and the weaver to earn three times as much as the toiler in the fields, and ten times as much as the match-girl. Were this correct, it might, of course, justify the inference that under Socialism, the representatives of administration would so control industry and education as to become the monopolisers of its advantage, and hence impose upon the people a bureaucratic expertism. In order to expose the fallacious nature of this contention, it is only necessary to enquire more fully into what is’ the industrial basis of that monopoly which enables the engineer, the scientist, and the doctor to simply draw their profits from their own sort of capital-their degrees and their certificates-just as the manufacturer draws a profit from a mill, or as a nobleman used to do from his birth and title.

The first in our enquiry will 'be to note that in modern capitalist society, as we have already shown, a bourgeois minority control and direct the means and production of social livelihood for the great majority the vile mass of workers who toil to live and live to toil in the interests of the minority. Degraded, they receive the bare means of subsistence for preserving themselves and rearing other wage-slaves-their children-whose education also is in the hands of the capitalist class. Now, the sooner the children begin to work the greater is the commodity, labour-power, which is offered for sale; and the less the price required, owing to competition. The longer the child is kept from work-i.e the longer the time spent in his education the greater is his cost since his parents are receiving money from the capitalist class in excess of their immediate personal needs of subsistence. Consequently, having more time devoted to its education, it has to study and to live, be fed and clothed, for a longer period than children not so fortunately placed. It accordingly has to experience less competition at a later stage when offering its labour power to the capitalist class, and consequently demands a higher wage necessary to the preservation of its position and knowledge; and it is so placed because it has cost society more to develop its technical knowledge. If "monopoly in education and industry" be the cause of this discrepancy only, now, as the "nobleman's birth and title" was formerly how came the one cause to change into the other cause? The answer can only be, because of material development on the industrial plane; not the title, the educational privilege, nor the monopoly, but the industrial conditions necessitating these reflexes as sequences, the causes or cause. The privilege of a monopolised education, therefore, represents immunity from labouring at the expense of others who are rendered industrially immune from intellectual development. But here a strange factor enters in. As the feudalistic contempt for defending themselves, believing this to be the duty of bourgeois society, lay the basis of its downfall, so the bourgeois contempt for the studies as well as for the manual labour it gratefully abandons to the proletariat, is forming the basis for its own overthrow. Not only so; but its very evolution is a splendid object-lesson not merely in the tyranny but also in the ignorance of expertism. And so well has bourgeois society placed the hallmark 'of its disciplinarian mediocrity upon all professions, that slowly but surely, genius is being forced to enlist in the class army of the proletariat.

Here, however, it is being taught to despise expertism as the bourgeoisie in its days of revolution-was taught to despise titles. That contempt has remained its consistent characteristic where its success has been most unquestioned. And it has paved the way for the similar contempt of proletarian genius for bourgeois profit mongering to become the characteristic of future society. Thus, the evolution of the capitalistic educational system, has prepared a minimum educational basis for the future society to start from, which is founded on an ever-increasing negation of expertism; the development of its judicial and legislative machinery has shown not merely its class-basis but also the impracticability of judging and condemning men as criminals; the pursuit of its science has shown the basic psychological idealism of humanity, with its records of martyrs, and its social history showing that the greatest crimes of class-rule have been done in the name of lofty sentiment in the name of justice, righteousness, and equality; and its giving birth to a class which is inspired by the lofty sentiment of freeing society from all class domination.

Thus, economically, politically, and psychologically the whole of the trend of social evolution shows that Socialism can only have its social expression in an era of freedom, and its political expression in a State which shall treat of the management of production instead of the control

of persons.¹ The psychological guarantee against expertism will be found in the contempt with which all men will regard it, and the tendency to excellence of administration will be reposed in the admiration which all men will have for efficiency. Should this possibility still meet with opposition on the ground that such a central directing authority finding its embodiment in a collective will, would not find legal oppression incongruous with its industrial basis, one can only conclude that either humanity is inherently bad and progress an impossibility or else that in a system of absolute individualism must humanity's hope lie.

If in the latter alternative, then its basis must be that all social relationship is an impossibility since where co-operation takes place, management coming in, there must be some centralization of directive authority. But the whole trend of civilization serves to negate this assumption. Teacher and scholar, pulpit and pew, orator and audience, editor and readers, in their growing approximation to each other are emphasising the passing of capitalistic professionalism, and the development of Socialist simplicity. Even the military is being infected with the spirit of the revolutionary consciousness which is undermining the foundation of the Capitalist State. And amid the growing volume of its expression is drowned the echoes of the sectarianism so common to class society. Men and women, seeking the spirit of the highest impulses rather than the letter of the narrow dogmas of meaningless import are seeing in its arrival the realisation of those impulse — in the social Brahman the communistic Nirvana. In this evidence of its philosophic harmony of movement may be caught a glimpse of the lofty impulses which have served to direct its evolution. It is this philosophic essence of unity which supplies us with a quintessential index to the meaning of the evidence I have adduced in the present essay, showing the failure of the bourgeois representative system, the inevitable collapse of its state, and the erection on its ruins of a social system which shall in truth be apostrophied as the Commonwealth! For it would be the intelligence of the community that would select the most capable administrators of its workings, instead of the plutocratic administration deciding the limits of its representation.

II.

Happy augury of the liberty which will exist under the Socialist Commonwealth, we see that as the agencies of production and distribution have become increasingly social, despite the fact that control has been private, political freedom has become more and more a reality. Thus recognising the growing incongruity of its role of legal oppressor and its mischievousness to 'capitalistic production, the State has more and more concerned itself with the distribution of the armed forces, the duties of the secret police, the appointment of arbitration and conciliation boards, the feeding of necessitous children as a palliative. 'On the other hand, thus realising its administrative character on questions of penal reform and criminal punishment, its attitude has become "more humane" — as the bourgeoisie say the decentralisation of its authority becoming synonymous with the growth of economic oppression, and the failure of the Party system. On all hands it is, therefore, being recognised that the social problem is rapidly resolving itself into an economic rather than narrowing itself down to a political issue. The duel is between the financier and the business man on the one side, representative of private profit; and the proletarian on the other, symbolical of production for use and not for profit. To these combatants, Liberal and

¹ Here the term 'State' is used in a sense entirely unhistorical. Such a political order is Anarchy and can only be termed a state in the sense of being a social condition

Tory have given way; and significant of the change, their avowed capitalist successors, under the guise of individual freedom, have assumed a chastening attitude towards the State wherein their ideals have hitherto found a safe embodiment. Their fear is lest Socialism should involve majority tyranny. Their hope is that of impressing the workers with a consciousness of the essential liberty of capitalism. The better to remove their fear, let us outline and examine the basis of their hope.

The latter's foundations are laid deep down in the social life of the bourgeoisie. It had its corner stone in the right of individuals to privately own articles or instruments of production which constitute capital. Its edifice is to be found in a social structure which seeks the elevation of his insignificance, the individual, at the expense of his collective unconsciousness, society. Its science of being, subsists in the growing recognition by the bourgeoisie of the necessity of mastering political economy, and the adaptation of its state organisation to a harmonious incorporation of the rules evolved in the study. Its expression of its consciousness of its destiny is seen in the bourgeois appreciation of Buckle's very true declaration that the only good done by modern legislation was the repeal of the old.

Prior to the bourgeois recognition of the importance of right opinions on political economy the State carefully sought to supervise in direct contravention of economic laws—the price of corn, the wages of labourers, the importation of corn, the manufacture of beer, the rate of interest on loans, attendance at divine service, the apprenticeship of children, the combination of workmen, etc. All this was done in the interest of a governing and established class, conscious of its security. But economic facts made for its undoing through the medium of the very laws thus passed in its own interests. A statute of Henry VIII went so far as to forbid the use of machinery in the manufacture of broadcloth, and the woollen trade threatened to take refuge in Holland, where the “divers devilish contrivances” were under no law. In order to encourage sheep-breeding, a law was passed that the dead should be buried in woollen garments it being urged that since sheep would be bred, wool would rise in price, and mutton be cheaper. But economic laws re-established their inevitable social equation, and the artificial stimulant became an absurdity. All usury being urged as wrong on religious grounds, and it being thought that 10% represented the maximum interest which was compatible with a non-injury to trade, this was the interest fixed, in Henry VIII's reign, on loans. As economic laws asserted themselves, the anomalies this law created made for numerous modifications, until sound sense prevailed and any amount became allowable in the early half of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the State obtruded into the marital relations, and similarly its functions have become more and more anomalous, until now the right of Free Love, under the pressure of economical backing, is being recognised as valid by the bourgeoisie. Laws are to be found on the Statute Book setting forth with what amount of energy and thoroughness the ploughman shall plough each furrow. Regrating and forestalling were crimes, the laws against them being aptly said, by Adam Smith, to be laws against providence and thrift.

Recognising the general trend of economic law to assert itself, and realising the impossibility of averting the tendency, bourgeois society has made for the workman being, politically, a ‘free man. It allows him the right to employ himself in any work he can get entrusted to him, so long as he recognises the right of the employer to employ whom he likes. He may demand any wages he thinks right, and take advantage of the favour of supply and demand in his direction, so long as he recognises the right of similar activities on the part of the employer. He may ‘combine and boycott so long as he allows the right of his master to combine and boycott. Out of this right of

employer and employed the wage system itself springs as a form of mutual convenience, arising out of a Cooperation in which, as Henry George might have it, one of the parties prefers a certain to a contingent result. Consequently, there is no “iron law of wages,” but a natural and healthy reward, with-in capitalist society, for all human exertion employed in the production of wealth! So much for the capitalistic appearance of liberty for employer and’ employed!

Did ‘matters thus stand still, and petty enterprise thrive in bourgeois society, this equal right of master and serf might thus form the basis of a certain amount of social sordidness, but never permit of matters coming to a head. But nature abhors such a contingency as certainly as she abhors a vacuum. And so it comes about that from time to time we hear of some Sugar King, or Railway Magnate, owner of some vast stretch of land, complaining at the uncontrollable character of the wealth and the industrial conditions which have made him. In America, the home of Trusts no less so than in England where combinations are thinly disguised under various names, a few men control more money than does the Government. Their power being absolute, the bourgeoisie, mistaking itself for the whole of the people, plead that such individuals are corrupting business, politics, and ‘citizenship, and in evidence of this assertion point to how titles are obtained in England, and how political power is controlled by millionaires in America. This plutocratic element, an increasing one under capitalism, judges men not by their principles but by their price. It regards public office as an article of merchandise, to be bought and sold the same as dry goods or railroad shares. The strongest political argument it can offer is a thumping cheque. Its very being evidences the failure of democratic government, and shows that there is no difference beyond that of form between the crowned Monarch in England the sceptred Emperor in German, and the uncrowned President of’ the United States. It means that even if in other details democratic representation was not a farce, the affirmative usages of government were controlled by plutocracy. To its offices were elected the sons of the plutocrats. Affirmatively, therefore, the State is but a bureaucratic institution, the official representatives of which tax or blackmail the capitalist class to the tune of several millions per annum for the privilege of being supplied with a standing army, navy, judicial bench, etc., for the purposes of enabling the capitalist class to pocket its surplus value the unearned profit which it derives from the exploitation of the proletariat. A reflection of industrial conditions, the State is thus seen to be controlled by, and managed in the interests of, the capitalist class, whose turn the government must always serve, since government officialism is paid for directly by the capitalist class out of the surplus value. In other words, the cost of the army, navy, charitable institutions, police, bench, bar, and the whole judicial machinery, represents the cost of the capitalists’ class’s insurance policy. Labour produces the wealth and capital pays the insurance. Official mismanagement is, in some directions, causing capital to resent the terms of its insurance and long for “Voluntarism”; in other directions, to long for better-centralised control-and the nationalisation of the land, the mines, and the railways.

To the capitalistic advocates of the voluntaristic philosophy, who assure the world that one cannot get more intelligence out of the administrative or legislative machine than one puts into it, the proletarian-remembering that genius is also the mental characteristic of a revolutionary class during the period of outlawed existence will lend a sympathy not unaccompanied with the reservation that, however true the statement, it does not concern the proletaire, in whose interests, Government, so long as the capitalist system lasts, will not, and cannot, be administered. When that system has departed, class interests will have vanished, and Government will be unnecessary. Antagonistic to the spirit and letter of government, the mastering of the industrial

principle of the class war, will have supplied the proletarian with an explanation of its existence which will but serve to add a flippant contempt for government decrees to an intellectual scorn of its methods and an intense hatred of conventional morality — so dear to drawing-room prudes living on the unearned increment which makes for prostitution — as being but the vicious profit-mongering pretences of an anonymous slave-society.

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)
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Guy A. Aldred
Representation and the State
1940

Retrieved on 12th September 2021 from libcom.org

Taken from a collection of Aldred's pamphlets *Studies in Communism*, (1940). Originally published in Pamphlets for the *Proletarian*, NO. 10. In the title page the author was described as: "Minister of the Gospel of Revolt, Late Prisoner for Sedition." More information about Aldred and the various British Anti-parliamentarians groups can be found in *Anti-Parliamentary Communism the movement for workers' councils in Britain, 1917-45* by Mark Shipway

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