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The History of a Prognostication

Laurance Labadie

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In 1886, at the request of the editor of *North American Review*, [Benj]. R. Tucker wrote his famous essay, "State Socialism and Anarchism; How far they agree, and wherein they differ[;]" the article, while paid for, was not published, perhaps because of fear, because of "the Haymarket affair." The editor volunteered the declaration that it was the ablest article he had received during his editorship. It later appeared in Tucker's "Instead of a Book"; and has been published many times as a pamphlet in different languages.

In 1911, Tucker wrote a postscript to the essay, in which he said that the increased concentrations of wealth made the anarchistic solution of the social problem, while it was the only solution, exceedingly more difficult to apply.

In 1926, he amended this last postscript, to the disagreement and despair of his disciples, by saying the concentrations had reached such a pass that even if it could be inaugurated, free banking alone would not be sufficient to break the monopolistic power of capital.

Tucker was a close observer of world events. On July 22, 1930 he wrote to his friend Clarence Lee Swartz a letter from which the following is a paragraph.

“I am posting you a copy of a new book, of great importance in my eyes . . . *Scenes de la Vie Future*, by Georges Duhamel. Perhaps you will not like it; it may even make you angry, for the author, in his impetuosity, often forgets his own purpose and does injustice to America. In my judgment the book could have been better entitled ‘Scenes of Approaching Death, America Leading the Procession.’ In reading the book, be careful to bear in mind that Duhamel’s real attack is on the age in which we live, and which America’s mad career enables us to visualize. The matter of my famous ‘Postscript’ now sinks into insignificance; the insurmountable obstacle to the realization of Anarchy is no longer the power of trust, but the indisputable fact that our civilization is in its death throes. We may last a couple of centuries yet; on the other hand, a decade may precipitate our finish. As Clemenceau said: ‘Perhaps there may still remain a few negroes wandering the Congo.’ The *dark* ages, sure enough. The monster, Mechanism is devouring mankind.”

This was before World War II and the dropping of the atom bomb. Thirty years have passed. The process indicated above has continued unabated. Governments have become more totalitarian. Not only has the bomb itself been increased many times in destructive power; but they have been produced in greater quantities, and the means of delivering them are being perfected. Even Clemenceau’s reference to the Congo, so strangely prophetic, appears close to becoming *passee*.

The cause of the historical trend toward degeneration and annihilation is governmentalism and the existence of national States.

Most of the accumulations of rubbish labeled sociological “knowledge” [are] still being spoon-fed to new victims instead of being relegated to the garbage heap. Only one social theory has withstood during the only slightly more than a century of its existence, and has been vindicated, and the anarchism. Is it a case of too little too late?