

**OUR REVOLUTION.
ESSAYS IN
INTERPRETATION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649665341

Our Revolution. Essays in Interpretation by Victor S. Yarros

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Cover @ 2017

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BOSTON
RICHARD G. BADGER
THE GORHAM PRESS

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Made in the United States of America

The Gorham Press, Boston, U. S. A.

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THE ESSENCE OF INDEPENDENT RADICALISM: INTRODUCTION

THERE ARE NOW a good many radicals in the world who are not "ists"—not State Socialists, not Communists, not Anarchists, not Syndicalists, not Guild Socialists. They are not ashamed to call themselves Opportunists, however, though that does not give them the conventional title of "ists." They are independent radicals, Mugwump radicals. No school or dogma claims them, yet they are in the exact, scientific sense of the term radicals.

What is radicalism, in point of fact? Superficial and confusing definitions one finds everywhere, but few persons seem to know what the touchstone of radicalism is. Yet there is a touchstone. He is a radical who believes that the existing social, economic and political system is wrong and *wrong fundamentally*; that the so-called Liberal reforms and palliatives are not sufficient to set it right, and that profound, far-reaching changes are necessary, desirable and indeed inevitable.

It follows, then, that the radical favors profound changes, welcomes them so far as they are already casting their shadows before them, and endeavors to

facilitate their arrival by interpreting them to the thoughtful elements of the public and by seeking to convince conservatives and moderate Liberals amenable to reason that it is idle and dangerous to resist the stream of social tendency.

Now, the independent radical is not a State Socialist because he distrusts and fears the State, which is in its essence tyrannical and intolerant, and always has been, and must be, unprogressive and inefficient. He is not a State Socialist because he shares most of the ideas concerning the State which the philosophical Anarchists, the Guild Socialists, the Syndicalists, the Single-Taxers and other progressives have long entertained. Glorification of "the State" is to the independent radical repugnant and absurd.

The independent radical is not, however, a philosophical Anarchist either, because that form of radicalism is Utopian and metaphysical, arid and anti-Darwinian. That the State may be abolished at some remote day, is possible. That men and women may learn to dispense with compulsion in their economic and political relations, as they have learned to dispense with compulsion in the spheres of religion and æsthetics, is possible. But such hopes and aspirations have practically no relation to the pressing problems of the day. The independent radical would solve these problems along libertarian lines, though he realizes the necessity—nay the

wisdom—of making substantial concessions to what is called the Socialistic spirit and trend of the time. The independent radical, though individualistic in his philosophy, perceives that it is foolish, idle and reactionary to oppose—for example—child labor laws, shorter workday laws, social insurance, old-age pensions, insurance against unemployment, and the like. He sees that to oppose such ameliorative measures is to give aid and comfort to toryism, to alienate labor and its middle-class sympathizers, and to retard the reform process. He realizes that so long as the State exists, and is being used by social groups with power enough to shape and influence legislation, it is utterly irrational to expect that labor and the humanitarians will be induced, this side of the millennium, to ignore the State or refrain from utilizing its machinery and authority. In short, he knows that life obeys no dogmatic formula, and that progress is a resultant of many forces and factors.

The independent radical is not a Syndicalist, because Syndicalism is an extremely nebulous affair, as Prof. Bertrand Russel has pointed out, that fails to protect the interests of the consumers, of the public, or to provide for any form of systematic cooperation among the autonomous syndicates or communes. The Syndicalists have never thought out or worked out their vague and attractive ideas.