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2017-02-01

Individual Action - 1953, February 17, Tuesday

John Goldstein

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Recommended Citation

Goldstein, John, "Individual Action - 1953, February 17, Tuesday" (2017). *Individual Action Newsletters, 1952-1953*. 8.

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INDIVIDUAL ACTION

Vol. 1, No. 7

New York, N. Y. February 17, 1953

Price Five Cents

WATERFRONT MEN VICTIMIZED BY PIECARDS

Ryan Condemned

John's Corner

We anarchists are more often than not called unrealistic. The Liberals, in particular, castigate us for not offering "practical" solutions for the ills that afflict mankind. In other words, the parlor pinks want us to alleviate appalling conditions while retaining the present social system.

But we anarchists have pointed out, on frequent occasions, that one cannot eradicate our ills without altering the social order. We have demonstrated that so long as capitalism or the state exists, we will be relegated to utter misery. For example, the cold war has stabilized our economy. It has enabled the Government to draft youngmen for military service who otherwise might have been unemployed. Similarly, if war production were curtailed, millions would be jobless.

Since we anarchists have taken cognizance of these aforementioned factors, we are actually more pragmatic than the "down to earth" liberals. For we do not merely deal with symptoms, but we go to the root of the problem; we advocate the abolition of Government and private property — and if such a humanitarian act is not accomplished in the near future, the destruction of human values will be the result.

* * *

David Dubinsky, the "leader" of the AFL Garment workers has given one million dollars to the State of Israel without rank and file approval. It is strange indeed that unions should contribute to the support of any Government in view of the fact that it either directly exploits the workers or protects the exploiters from the downtrodden masses.

* * *

I have just learned that Herbert Read, the so-called "intellectual leader" of British Anarchists has just been made a Knight. The Acceptance of this

"honor" by Mr. Read is a tragedy indeed. Anarchists have always condemned a system that gives rewards and punishments — and for an anarchist to accept a Government favor is an act of hypocrisy.

Read, nevertheless, defends his action. He contends that since we accept "protection" by the armed forces of the State, he has the right to receive the "honor." I, and most of my comrades, contrary to Read's statement, consider the armies and navies our oppressors. In fact, we would like to see the elimination of armed forces — and we mean all armed forces.

The British anarchist also states that because some of us are compelled to make certain compromises with the system he too should be allowed to compromise. Most of us, as Read says, pay taxes, accept relief from the State and make other concessions. But we do not seek medals from the politicians, nor do we perform acts that are calculated to enhance the State's power.

Mr. Reads Acceptance of Knighthood is inexcusable to say the least. He would not have been hurt in any way if he had rejected the Government's offer. As a matter of fact, his prestige would have increased greatly inasmuch as free thinkers, no matter if they were anarchists or not, would have admired Herbert Read for adhering to his anarchist views in action. I cannot possibly show any sympathy for Herbert Read; he has done a disservice to the Anarchist movement.

A Worse Crime?

At the trial of the thirteen Communists, the Judge informed the prosecutor that there are worse crimes than that of violating the Smith Act. He considers murder and robbery, for example, more reprehensible than the acts of the second string Stalinists. The most colossal Killers though, happen to be the Governments of the world.

The Tug Boat workers had effectively tied up the port of New York. Longshoremen in Manhattan observed their picket lines but the ones in Brooklyn who are anti-Ryan went to work as usual. The Tugmen are demanding wage increases ranging 30 to 50%. The employers had offered them a 5% wage hike.

There is, however, a reason why the Longshoremen crossed the Picket line — though we feel that they expressed their revolt in the wrong manner. Last year, when a few locals in Ryan's alleged union, called a strike despite the wishes of Mr. Ryan, the President of the Tugboat union labelled them communists and refused to respect the recalcitrant's picket line. But this piecard's previous despicable action does not give the Anti-Ryan faction the right to scab on their fellow workers.

Some anti-Ryan Longshoremen, nonetheless, refused to scab on their brothers, but instead, picketed both Ryan's and the Tugboat union piecard's offices and demanded that they resign for their class collaborationist activities. Rebellion of this sort should be commended and supported by class conscious workers.

Meanwhile, the State Supreme court, as might have been expected, issued an injunction preventing the Tugboat workers from maintaining picket lines on City piers. The Shipping companies had contended that the pickets were "interfering with trade". We believe that the company spokesmen would have expressed their thoughts more clearly if they had stated that the strikers are interfering with their "just" right of making profits.

For many years, the waterfront workers have been victimized by their "leaders". They are forced to pay racketeers if they wish to work. Their unions treasuries have been stolen by the piecards. The So-called anti-Communist fund was pocketed by Crooks. And worst of all, the labor fakers have received — and are receiving — handouts from the bosses to forestall "labor trouble". This is how the Union bosses are "serving" the rank and file.

It is imperative that the mari-



From A FIELD OF BROKEN STONES, prison memoirs of Lowell Naeve, an American War Objector in World War II — book available from Libertarian Press, Glen Gardner, N. J.; \$3.00.

time workers liquidate their present unions and form a free association, an association in which all participants will be considered equal. Such a group should work with others to abolish the wage system and usher in a free society. Then, and only then, will the workers have the chance to solve their problems satisfactorily.

Individual Action

Single copies: 5c, Bundle orders of fifty up: 4c, Yearly: \$2.00, Six months: \$1.00, Three months: 50c

Order from Individual Action, Apt. 2F., 15 Sheridan Square, New York, N. Y.

Published every two weeks by John Goldstein, Apartment 2F, 15 Sheridan Square, New York 14, N. Y.

Editors: John Goldstein and Felix Ortiz

Make all checks and money orders payable to Individual Action

A Sorry State

Eisenhower's State of the Union message depicts the United States Government's future policies. It seems that the administration will encourage Chiang Kai Shek to invade the Chinese Mainland, will repudiate the Yalta and Potsdam Agreements, and will curtail Government interference with "Free Enterprise."

The President's statement concerning the Chinese situation has provoked considerable comment. Contrary to Eisenhower's assertion, Truman did not station the Seventh Fleet near Formosa to protect the Chinese coast from an attack by Chinese Nationalists, but to discourage Mao's Government from invading Formosa owing to the fact that the American ruling class was not equipped, during the inception of the Korean war, to launch a full scale slaughter-fest. This, and no humanitarian reason, motivated Truman's actions in limiting the war to Korea.

Apparently, the present administration is ready to provoke a World-wide conflict for if the United States helps Chiang in his endeavor to recapture China, the Russians will, in all likelihood, come to the aid of Mao. The United States' politicians and Generals are not all fools and are thus prepared for a Global war.

As was to be expected, the British and French Ruling classes have objected to this change of policy on the part of the Republican administration. Their protests, however, are based upon economic considerations rather than ethical and moral ones. It so happens that the British and French Capitalists have investments in Red China, and due to the fact that they know that their property would be confiscated in case of war, the British and French desire to reach some sort of compromise with China. Such a compromise, though, can never be reached so long as the "United Nations" supports Chiang against the Chinese Communists. We expect, nevertheless, that the British and French will capitulate to the aspirations of the American capitalists because the "allies" are dependent on the United States for economic aid.

Equally revealing of Eisenhower's plans is his renunciation of the Yalta and Potsdam treaties. He declared, in so many words, that the United States will not recognize an agreement that allows the Russians to "enslave" other peoples. It appears that the American capitalists want to recapture the markets of Eastern Europe. The United States is, therefore willing to forment a rightest rebellion in that section of the World. In all probability, American soldiers will be sent to help the recalcitrants if they attempt to overthrow the Iron Curtain Governments. The plain fact of the matter is that the American capitalists are bent upon ruling the world no matter how much misery and destitution they cause.

As far as domestic policies are concerned, the Republicans are anxious to reinstate old fashioned Capitalism. The Liberals, of course, are greatly alarmed over the abandonment of price and wage controls, but we feel that laissez-faire capitalism is no worse than New Dealism. In fact, price and wage regulations did not alter the economic system but were merely an effort to delay capitalist crisis. One should notice that these "reforms" failed inasmuch as great destruction of human life and property has taken place for 20 years.

It is a high crime indeed that Governments are spending millions of dollars preparing for war while thousands of Dutch and English were made homeless as a result of recent floods. The politicians, instead of furnishing supplies that would build homes for the unfortunates, are producing war goods and they will continue to do so until the people reject rulers whether they call themselves Democrats, Republicans, or Communists.

J.G.

Individual Non - action

by Ammon Hennacy

If those who depend upon the state for "cradle to the grave" care are to be castigated for their lack of independence those who call themselves anarchists and do little but talk about it are also to be disqualified. The former are victims of false education, ignorance, and the superstition that God will take care of the world and mortals need only trust in "the powers that be" and they will get their reward in heaven. The latter are victims of bourgeois tastes, mental and physical laziness, and the superstition that there is no God, and His name is In-action.

The first time I met an anarchist is when I introduced Emma Goldman to a downtown audience while attending the University of Wisconsin in 1915. I was then a Socialist, but was asked to introduce Emma because the only anarchist at the University was working for a degree and did not want to jeopardize his scholarship. (And this was 37 years ago when loyalty oaths were unheard of.) All that I got out of the meeting was the idea that here was a woman who was alive and who stressed the value of individual action.

The next year when I was secretary of the Socialist local in Columbus, Ohio, and head of the Socialist club at Ohio State University I was asked by the sociology professor to prepare a paper **against** Socialism. The daughter of wealthy parents was asked to argue **for** Socialism. What Emma had said must have sunk in for I surprised the class by giving the argument that Socialism was not radical enough: Anarchism was more basic. Although then not a pacifist I gave the answer that Socialist wanted to make people good by lay; and like the Wind in the Parable sought to make the traveler remove his coat by **force**. But Anarchists took a gentler method like the Sun whose warm rays persuaded the traveler to remove his coat **voluntarily**.

The next year I was to meet the first great man in my life: Alexander Berkman. This took place where we were both doing time for individual action against the war, in Atlanta prison. It was during the next year, 1918, that I changed from being a Socialist into becoming an Anarchist. This was accomplished by my study of the Bible in solitary and by my reading of Tolstoy's Kingdom of God is Within You. When I got out The example of Jesus as a good

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Felix says . . .

It's a pity that there are no Knighthoods to be given out in this country. If there were, one could be appropriately awarded to the obscurantist scribbler Paul Goodman. Paul is, in a way, Herbert Read's counterpart in this country. I don't say that Read is also an obscurantist. What they both have in common is that both intellectuals look down condescendingly upon the unhonored anarchists. (Paul has several letters after his name). What they also have in common is a coterie of prideless bootlickers. (I won't mention names, but if the shoe fits wear it). Here the parallel ends.

It seems that some people will forever confuse obscurantism with profundity. We agree with Berkman, Tolstoy, Malatesta and others that the truth can be stated in plain language. Thus, we are not hoodwinked and taken in by intellectual charlatans like Dr. Goodman.

There must be something wrong with the ethical system of those who do **not** consider the support of a bloody tyrant like Franco to be a question of morals. We present a better ethics. We consider such support to be immoral.

It is also against our moral grain to support a hierarchal, authoritarian institution like the Catholic Church.

Chasity, a product of civilization, is the most corrupt of all sexual perversions.

Feminine Modesty, which began as a delicious refinement of preliminary erotic play, has become — by extension in time — transformed into a weapon employed ruthlessly by women to force men to capitulate.

Warning

John Foster Dulles has warned Europe that if it does not unify the army within 75 days, the United States shall discontinue aid to the various countries. The young European men have the opportunity to answer the representative of American imperialism by performing a certain act, an act which the American Government would consider subversive. If both the European and American youth partake in such a venture, the rulers, themselves, would have to fight their own wars.

* * *

Decentralization

Anarchists have indorsed decentralization ever since the monstrosities called cities have plagued the workers with diseases and destitution. There is no good reason why anarchists should abandon their position on decentralization. In fact, the problem of centralization is more desperate now than it was during the life-span of Peter Kropotkin.

This is so because the cities have grown immensely in the last 30 years. Great suffering among the people has been and is the appalling result of increased centralization. Workers are compelled to live in hovels that are not fit for rats — and in many instances they are forced to climb 6 flights of stairs or more which affects their health adversely. In addition, city residents not only breathe poisonous air — scientists have corroborated this fact — but acquire neurosis because they are subjected to the inharmonious noises of street-cars, subways, and interminable chatter.

If these factors alone are not sufficient to show that big cities are unhealthful, the prevailing factory system, a system that is most oppressive, is even more conclusive proof that metropolises are degrading, depressing, and unfit for human habitation. Workers are required to punch time-clocks when they arrive at work. Most employees are relegated to the miserable task of performing one operation during a life-time which is monotonous and thought-killing. And the employer's stooges compel the workers to work at speeds beyond their endurance. Sensitive workers might be willing to undergo some aforementioned hardships if they were producing goods that enhance human happiness. This is not the case, however. At least 75% of the workers are engaged in war production — either directly or indirectly. Others make mink coats for "fine ladies" if they are not turning out swill. Few workers perform useful tasks. Since anarchists, unlike Marxists, have taken cognizance of the humiliating symptoms of mass production methods, they excoriate assembly line production and its concomitant evils.

But American anarchists are often asked why they still live in the cities despite their telling criticism of them. The answer is rather simple but tragic nevertheless; because the rural areas of these United States contain no art galleries, museums, or concert halls, and possess li-

braries which are inadequate to say the least, we anarchists, in order to satisfy our cultural aspirations, are constrained to inhabit the metropolises.

Agriculture has also been hampered due to our idiotic centralist policies. It is an established fact that soil which is relegated to one crop deteriorates. Yet, farmers, capitulating to Wall Street speculators, often reserve large areas for cotton and corn. Do we need any more proof to sustain the fact that centralism is disastrous?

We anarchists desire to form a society in which town and country would be indistinguishable. If such an event takes place, people would work at several trades, artists would create great poetry, music and novels, since they would be living in a healthy environment and would not be required to rush their compositions, cultural facilities would be available to those who aspire to use them, and most important, the mental and physical health of the population would undoubtedly improve greatly. Surely no one, who is intelligent and sensitive to human need, could object to such a social order.

Yet we realize that, without the abolition of private property and the State, decentralization would merely be a reform in view of the fact that the human race would still be afflicted with war and depression. It is, therefore, necessary for us to extirpate Government and capitalism along with obliterating the cities.

John Goldstein

NOTICE

We are very much aware of the fact that our views antagonize many.

We try to express ourselves honestly and with complete sincerity; which is more than can be said by most publications.

But we are happy to report that Individual Action is selling very well at the 42nd Street Newstands in New York. It is already selling faster than all the leftist political party organs sold there (except, of course, the Stalinist rag). Unfortunately, these newstands place a limit on the number of copies they'd accept. So, if you're a New Yorker, don't rely on these stands for your copy. They may be sold out before you get there. Subscribe!

—o—

Action

The Israel Government has declared that it shall act to prevent Arabs' incursions. If its actions are similar to its previous ones, Arab homes will be raided and many arabs will be deported. Israel is a Democracy, you know.

Witch Hunt Continues

Three New York school teachers were suspended for refusing to state before the Board of Education whether they are communists or not. They intimated that it is none of the Boards business what they do in their spare time. Three cheers for the land of the free and the home of the brave.

On Mutual Criticism and the Virgin Birth

(Concluded from last issue)

Many persons accept the legend of the Virgin Birth because it helps them express their love for Jesus and the way of life he exemplifies. When we compare his life and character with the failings around us (and in us), we should sympathize with this attitude even though we consider it misguided and contradictory.

By contrast, consider how much more comfortable it must make the Christian bankers, landlords, and tycoons to worship the "Holy" mother of God (about whom almost nothing is known or said except that she was not polluted by sexual intercourse) rather than to meditate on Jesus' injunctions, such as "Sell all that you have, give it to the poor, and follow me." How much easier for the Christian Soldier to contemplate Jesus' pure and silent birth rather than his rather disturbing words about loving our enemies and doing good to those who hate us. Under the current arrangement, Cardinal Spellman can help give the bombardier in Korea a feeling of mystical exaltation while he drops jellied fire-bombs on screaming women and children.

When the Catholic Church became rich, wordly, and parasitical, it turned people's attention away from the revolutionary life and teachings of Jesus and substituted an emphasis on the things which Jesus and the early Christians had always opposed — miracle, mystery, and authority (Cf. Dostoevski's chapter "The Grand Inquisitor" in *The Brothers Karamzov*).

Today the authority of the birth legend is so strong in Christian circles that Christian Anarchists like those of the Catholic Worker can accept it along with the revolutionary teachings. But the general function of the legend still remains — to divert attention away from what is basic and needed to what is at best extraneous and soporific.

A second fundamental harm that comes from preservation of the legend is that it helps preserve the belief that sex is something sinful. Again it is not

an accident that the Church which most glorifies the Virgin Birth is also the church which attacks birth control, held up a scientific approach to venereal disease, and through its Confessional builds complexes of guilt and fear in the psychologically crucial childhood years, through its attitude toward masturbation. Just as the Prohibitionist helps produce the reaction of excessive alcoholism, so the narrow and unwholesome attitude of the Church on sex leads not only to sex-guilt and neurotic repression but also to the reactionary attitude of dishonest and irresponsible sexual promiscuity.

At this point I should state that as usual the Catholic Worker (and of course some other Catholic groups) approaches the whole problem of birth control with a positive and responsible emphasis which is certainly making the best of a bad position. (Cf. Michael Harrington's excellent article in the March 1952 *Catholic Worker*) But — why try to put new wine into old wineskins?

If it could be proven scientifically that President Eisenhower were descended from a Virgin, I would not be persuaded thereby to support N.A.T.O., capitalism, and the H-Bomb. Nor would I feel that Jesus was less inspired — or that the world needed his way less — if because of a different sexual psychology the church were claiming not that he was conceived in a virgin but that he was the product of one of the other famous miracles of ancient times, the sexual union of Jupiter with a swan.

However nobly and sensibly a minority of Christians may beautify the legend of Virgin Birth, it remains a false and dangerous doctrine which helps foster a frame of mind leading to ignorance, superstition, sex-guilt, and reliance on authority. For myself I have too much respect for the life and teaching of Jesus to want to see them de-emphasized and perverted in this manner.

DAVID DELLINGER

A Dialogue

(This dialogue is based on a statement by Herbert Read in *FREEDOM* (1-17-53) in which he tells why he accepted the title of Knight.)

Sir Herbert — My acceptance of this title may give amusement to an indifferent public and dismay to my comrades.

Anarchist Joe — We are amused. And we are amused because we are indifferent. And we are indifferent because we never looked up to you as a "prominent exponent of Anarchism" as others have done. We are further amused by the fact that your action has caused dismay to certain comrades in London. However, our anger is aroused by the strongly contemptuous remarks you hurled at the average anarchist in your statement. **Freedom's** comment is a classic of wishy-washy, weak-kneed pipsqueakishness. Says **Freedom**: "He (Read) must have had good reasons." **Freedom** adds: "Titles, especially those like Knighthoods, do seem to imply social distinction." A choice bit of sham naivete!

Sir Herbert — I would ask my accusing comrades to examine their own consciences before condemning me. Daily and continually, almost every one of you accepts an order of living, which is integrally bourgeois and from which you cannot escape, unless you are prepared to go and live on a desert island.

Anarchist Joe — We agree that we cannot escape certain "compromises" with bourgeois society, but nobody forced you to become a Knight. Or did anyone twist your arm?

Sir Herbert — It does not cost you anything to keep your seat at the picture-house when the National Anthem is played; it does not cost you anything to stand on a soap-box and shout insults at the Queen or her Government.

Anarchist Joe — Some of us have been beaten up by hoodlums (with or without uniforms) for doing the above, or similar things to the above. How much did it cost you to become a privileged character? The reader should not fail to notice the subtle chivalry shown to the Queen in the above passage. We suggest that Her Majesty allow her dainty hand to be kissed by this noble Knight amid the blowing of trumpets and the beating of drums. It'd be amusing indeed!

Sir Herbert — So long as you keep within the law and pay your taxes, you are free to make an exhibition of your Ishmaelish self, at the mere cost of embarrassment of your friends.

Anarchist Joe — At this point we smelled a phony. A man with strong anarchist convictions would not talk like that.

Sir Herbert — But what positive good do you do?

Anarchist Joe — More than you do. The very fact that you were Knighted should throw suspicion on your effectiveness as a threat to the government. Your whole statement reveals that the government made no mistake. In the course of our of our proselytizing "The Philosophy of Anarchism" is more of a liability than an asset.

Sir Herbert — When Tolstoi tried to get rid of his title and estate, he caused much suffering to his family and his dependents. He did not advance his ideas by such selfish intransigent conduct; on the contrary, the world has had to forgive him his actions before it could accept his ideas.

Anarchist Joe — Tolstoi tried to practice what he preached. If all the privileged classes were to become as "selfish" as Tolstoi we'd have Anarchy. But since we don't expect them to become so "selfish" we hope that some day the people will force them to give up their titles and their estates. That is why we are anarchists.

Sir Herbert — To take a position in society that will give force and authority to one's faith is an elementary duty.

Anarchist Joe — We want no condescending saviours. F.O.

Madman

*He strives to balance life's insanity
And bears the brand of "different"
in his eyes*

Which marks him for the race, humanity,

As set apart, by madness, from the wise.

His pulses beat to timeless emperies.

He cannot seem to keep in step with man.

*His vision fired by future galaxies
Must focus on the Present's petty plan.*

He sees the flaws and flays them, unafraid.

And eats the cakes of sorrow for reward.

He must accept the prize of loneliness

Who battles for the host against the herd.

He stands alone as one with unclean form

Whose mind is whole where leprosy is norm.

"Different"

—HYACINTHE HILL

Individual Non-Action

Continued from page 2

rebel kept up my courage in those dark days. Jesus was not a writer; He only wrote one word in the sand and no one reported what it was. He was a doer, a man of action.

Up until the appearance of *INDIVIDUAL ACTION* last fall the tone of all the English language anarchist papers I have read has been how to keep out of trouble; how to hide away and keep from being arrested for opposing the system. (The turtle does this very well and lives a long time by never sticking his neck out and crawling back in his shell.) Of course action with an immature philosophy back of it is not as effective as action that is more the result of a whole philosophy of life. Knowing that the editors are young fellows there is hope that they will graduate from their sophomoric exaggerations.

To bring this short article up to date it is necessary to state that during the past ten years that I have refused to pay income taxes to the United States or to state governments there has been one paper that has supported my stand from the start: the *CATHOLIC WORKER*. Fleeting references have been made at times in the pacifist and anarchist press. All of these organs are strong either on giving the news of every appeal to the President or the United Nations or on long articles on theory, such as the mistakes of the Spanish Civil War. Individual action today that is not organized hardly gets mentioned.

Since I spoke in the Anarchist Hall on Broadway in October 1952 I have joined the Catholic Church because I find it the means for greater growth in that which is the basis for in-

dividual action: man's place as a free agent in the world and his relationship in the Communion of Saints. I may have to hunt for this freedom and fight for it in the Church but I find more of it than I do on the outside. I spoke in Catholic churches and colleges openly in criticism of Franco and, as the Pope has done, against materialism. I advocated anarchism and pacifism and non-payment of taxes. Attempts have been made by wealthy Catholics to prevent Catholic anarchists from speaking in churches but the clergy have bravely withstood this suppression of free speech. Those anarchists who are atheistic have no monopoly on Anarchism. Before they criticize Catholics because they are anarchists and follow the Pope on faith and morals they should present either a better ethic, or a better record of individual action against what Albert Jay Nock terms, "Our Enemy, the State."

The British anarchist weekly *Freedom* recently published a series of very interesting articles called, "Lessons of the Spanish Revolution." Since we consider the subject to be of great importance to Anarchists we wish to commend the author "V.R." for his excellent work.

Old Boy Scout

Governor Dewey, that lovable friend of the people, has praised the Boy Scouts for being anti-totalitarian. Governor, your slip is showing. No organization that we know or ever heard of treats children with as much authority as the Boy Scouts. We would discourage all children from joining such despotic and pernicious organization.

INDIVIDUAL ACTION
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Sec. 34.66 P.L.&R.