

Summary

Today we have a double bill; perhaps these two topics are opposite sides of the same coin. Both are concerned with concepts of individual rights. Anarchism concentrates upon an individual's right to do what and when he pleases without anyone having the right to challenge, Citizenship considers both rights and duties as between the citizen and the state.

1. What Anarchists Believe -Discussion led by Peter de Grootpon

Discussion

What do Anarchists believe?

Anarchism differs from anarchy. The main theme of anarchism is the attainment of complete freedom with total equality. The definition of anarchy is a state of disorder due to absence or non-recognition of authority or other controlling systems.

Anarchists have traditionally advocated a violent revolution to establish a free society, but some have rejected violence or revolution or both—violence is so often followed by counter-violence and revolution by counter-revolution.

Anarchists are in favour of private property but only that which cannot be used to exploit others. They are against private ownership of that property which is no use in itself and can be used only to exploit other people—land and buildings, instruments of production and distribution, raw materials and manufactured articles, money and capital.

Nearly all anarchists today are either atheists or at least agnostics. Anarchists are in favour of free sex but not in favour of universal promiscuity.

Example of a 'free society'?

Peter recalled his 'on the fringes' interest in the Dutch 'Provo' movement, which was very popular in the Netherlands in the 1960s. It was founded in May 1965 by Robert Jasper Grootveld, an anti-smoking activist, and the anarchists Roel van Duijn and Rob Stolk. The movement published, in the first issue of its magazine, a 'Provo Manifesto' and reprinted recipes for bombs from a nineteenth century anarchist pamphlet. The magazine was eventually confiscated.

The Provos proposed the White Bicycle Plan as a method to close off all motorised traffic in Amsterdam with the intention of improving public transport frequency by over 40% and to save 2 million guilders per year. Taxis were to be electrically powered and the Municipality to buy 20,000 white bikes per year, which were to be public property and free for everybody to use.

After these plans were rejected by the authorities, the Provos decided to go ahead anyway. They painted 50 bikes white and left them on streets for the public to use. However, the police impounded the bikes as it was illegal to leave them unlocked. To overcome this, the bikes were fitted with combination locks and the combinations were painted on the bikes. The movement was disbanded in 1967.

The liberal attitude towards the use of cannabis was welcomed by the students in Amsterdam. When this became too much of a problem and the number of arrests as evidenced by tests increased, the students took evasive action by smoking hay and insisting on tests being performed by the police to prove guilt. Hence the alternative 'grass'.

Further thoughts

Authority above the individual is regarded by anarchists as elimination of freedom. Individuals are free to organise themselves in groups and freely decide how they live together for mutual benefit without impinging on anyone's right to do nothing. Even the Russian Revolution was initially a protest against

the totalitarian regime of the Tsars but ended up in a violent overthrow of the Russian Empire for it ultimately to be replaced by an even more dictatorial authority.

It seems to be quite possible for individuals to act 'normally' during the week and 'anarchistic' during weekends, similar to the behaviour of CND activists around the middle of the 20th Century.

Conclusion

It would be absolutely lovely to live in a Utopian society but is this the way to achieve it? Is there any way?

2. Citizenship – the Concept - Discussion led by Jonathan Lucas

Discussion

A citizen differs from a subject of a monarch- a subject has no rights or duties other than to do as the monarch wishes. In 1215 King John was forced by powerful barons to grant them a charter of liberties that would place him and all his successors under a rule of law. The document was reissued (with amendments) thrice, the 'final' in 1225 and eventually founded the basis of English Common Law. The benefits of the charter were for centuries reserved for the elite classes only, while the majority of English citizens still lacked a voice in government.

In the 17th century, however, two defining acts of English legislation—the Petition of Rights (1628) and the Habeas Corpus Act (1679)—referred to Clause 39, which states that "no free man shall be...imprisoned or disseised [dispossessed]... except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land." Clause 40 ("To no one will we sell, to no one will we deny or delay right or justice") also had dramatic implications for future legal systems in Britain and America.

Three dimensions of citizenship

- Provides a legal status-including civil, political, social rights, how citizens are treated by the state.
- Requires participation in political institutions e.g. vote (compulsory in some countries), military service, registration passports and/or ID cards.
- Provides cultural identity; e.g. Britishness.

How do you become a citizen of a country?

It is normally the case that you become a citizen of the country where you are born. This is not automatically so as some countries may insist that one (or both) of your parents is a citizen/ (are citizens) of the country of your birth. In Canada, both parents have to be born in Canada for the infant born outside Canada to be recognised as a Canadian citizen. Only in unusual circumstances will a person lose this birth-right nationality and become stateless.

An alternative way of becoming a citizen is by naturalisation. In most countries this follows a period of permanent residence of a determined period and the completion of a citizenship test. States may rescind nationality acquired in this way. Some countries will not allow their citizens to become dual nationals.

Is the State responsible for the welfare of its citizens?

The creation of the welfare state extended the duty of care of the state to its citizens, particularly in respect of health, public transport, legal aid and education. The state has also become more involved to an extent that some may regard as an intrusion in the conduct of their personal lives. Some absolute rights have also been restricted by applying 'means tests', for e.g., free legal aid, provision for care in retirement homes.

Conclusion

A well governed state is almost certainly more acceptable than a state of anarchy.