

THE BEST OF BASTIAT #1.3

“Bastiat the Revolutionary. Part 2” (June 1848)

“I am throwing myself into public debate; I am trying to get through to the crowd to preach all the freedoms, the total of which make up liberty.”



Claude Frédéric Bastiat (1801-1850)

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Editor's Introduction

Frédéric Bastiat (1801-1850) was the leading advocate of free trade in France during the 1840s. He made a name for himself as a brilliant economic journalist, debunking the myths and misconceptions people held on protectionism in particular and government intervention in general. When revolution broke out in February 1848 Bastiat was elected twice to the Chamber of Deputies where he served on the Finance Committee and struggled to bring government expenditure under control. He is best known for his clever and humorous criticisms of tariffs and government subsidies in two collections of articles called *Economic Sophisms* (1846, 1848) and his unfinished treatise on economics, *Economic Harmonies* (1850-51).

This collection of articles dates from June 1848 when Bastiat and a group of friends were active participants in the Revolution for a second time (see the collection of articles from their first period of revolutionary activity in February and March 1848 in the journal *La République française*, “Bastiat the Revolutionary Part 1”). The journal only appeared for a few weeks before it was forced to close when rioting broke out in the streets of Paris to protest the closing of the tax-payer funded unemployment relief scheme known as the National Workshops. The violence lasted between 23-26 June and troops were called in to quell the riots, killing hundred of protesters in the process. Bastiat quite provocatively in the last issue of the journal called for the abolition of the National Workshops which he had opposed since they started on 27 February. Also for a second time, Bastiat was an eyewitness to these events and wrote letters to close friends describing what he had experienced. In a letter to Julie Marsan dated 29 June Bastiat tells how he tried to disarm the fighters on the barricades and to save the lives of some of the protesters whom the troops were about to shoot.

Of special note is the article entitled “The State” which appeared in the first issue 11-15 June which is a draft of what would later (September) become Bastiat’s famous pamphlet also called “The State”.

The name “Jacques Bonhomme” was one Bastiat liked to use in the *Economic Sophisms*. He was a character who represented the average Frenchman and Bastiat often put free market ideas into his conversation.

“Let us get it right, what is the State? Is it not the collection of all civil servants? Therefore, there are two species of men in the world: the civil servants of all sorts who make up the State and the workers of all sorts who make up society. That said, is it the civil servants who enable workers to live or the workers who enable civil servants to live? In other words, does the State enable society to live, or does society enable the State to live?”

ARTICLES FROM *JACQUES BONHOMME*
(JUNE, 1848)¹

1. “Freedom” (11-15 June, 1848) [1]

I have lived a long time, seen a great deal, observed much, compared and examined many things, and I have reached the following conclusion:

Our fathers were right to wish to be FREE, and we should also wish this.

It is not that freedom has no disadvantages, since everything has these. To use these disadvantages in argument against it is to say to a man trapped in the mire: Do not get out, as you cannot do this without some effort.

“A people has two ways of procuring something. The first is to make it; the second is to make something else and trade it. It is certainly better to have the option than not to have it. Let us therefore demand the freedom to trade. I am throwing myself into public debate; I am trying to get through to the crowd to preach all the freedoms, the total of which make up liberty.”

Thus, it is to be wished that there be just one faith in the world, provided that it is the true one. However, where is the infallible authority which will impose it on us? While waiting for it to manifest itself, let us maintain the *freedom of discussion and conscience*.

It would be fortunate if the best method of teaching were to be universally adopted. But who has it and on what authority? Let us therefore demand *freedom of teaching*.

We may be distressed to see writers delight in stirring up all forms of evil passion. However, to hobble

the press is also to hobble truth as well as lies. Let us, therefore, take care never to allow the *freedom of the press* to die.

It is distressing that man should be reduced to earning his bread by the sweat of his brow. It would be better for the state to feed everyone, but this is impossible. Let us at least have the *freedom to work*.^[2]

By associating with one another, men can gain greater advantage from their strength. However, the forms of association are infinite; which is best? Let us not run the risk that the state imposes the worst of these on us; let us seek the right one by trial and error, and demand the *freedom of association*.

A people has two ways of procuring something. The first is to make it; the second is to make something else and trade it. It is certainly better to have the option than not to have it. Let us therefore demand the *freedom to trade*.

I am throwing myself into public debate; I am trying to get through to the crowd to preach all the *freedoms*, the total of which make up *liberty*.

Notes

[1] “La liberté” (Freedom) [1st issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, 11-15 June, 1848] [OC, vol. 7, #56, pp. 235-36] [CW, vol. 1, pp. 433-34]. <oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/226072>.

[2] Bastiat uses the phrase “liberté du travail” (freedom to work) as opposed to the socialist idea of “la liberté au travail” (right to a job).

2. “Laissez-Faire” (11-15 June, 1848)[1]

Laissez-faire! I will begin by saying, in order to avoid any ambiguity, that *laissez-faire* is used here for honest things, with the state instituted precisely to *prevent* dishonest things.

This having been said, and with regard to things that are innocent in themselves, such as work, trade, teaching, association, banking, etc., a choice must be made. It is necessary for the state to *let things be done* ^[2] or *prevent them from being done*.

¹ This selection of Bastiat’s articles from the journal *Jacques Bonhomme* comes from Liberty Fund’s edition of his *Collected Works*. Four of them come from vol. 1, one from vol. 2, and the rest from vol.4 (forthcoming). *Jacques Bonhomme* had four issues which appeared between June 11 and July 13, 1848. Full details are provided in the notes.

If it *lets things be done*, we will be free and optimally administered most economically, since nothing costs less than *laissez-faire*.

If it *prevents things from being done*, woe to our freedom and our purse. Woe to our freedom, since to *prevent things* is to tie our hands; woe to our purse, since to *prevent things* requires agents and to employ agents takes money.

“This is simply absurd. Do you seriously have such faith in human wisdom that you want universal suffrage and government of all by all and then you proclaim these very men whom you consider fit to govern others unfit to govern themselves?”

In reply to this, socialists say: “Laissez-faire! What a disaster!” Why, if you please? “Because, when you leave men free to act, [3] they do wrong and act against their interests. It is right for the state to direct them.”

This is simply absurd. Do you seriously have such faith in human wisdom that you want *universal suffrage* and government of *all by all* and then you proclaim these very men whom you consider fit to govern others unfit to govern themselves?

Notes

[1] “Laissez faire” (Laissez-faire) [1st issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, 11-15 June, 1848] [OC, vol. 7, #57, p. 237] [CW, vol. 1, pp. 434-35]. <oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/226074>.

[2] Bastiat uses the phrase “laissez-faire”.

[3] Bastiat uses the phrase “laissez les faire”.

3. “The National Assembly” (11-15 June, 1848)[1]

“Master Jacques, what do you think of the National Assembly?”

“I think it is excellent, well intentioned, and devoted to the good. It is a product of the people; it

loves the people and wants them to be happy and free. It brings honor to *universal suffrage*.”

“But how hesitant it is! How slow! How many storms in a teacup there are! How much time wasted! What good has it done? What evils has it prevented? The people are suffering, production is failing, work is at a standstill, the treasury is ruining itself, and the Assembly spends its time listening to boring speeches.”

“What are you saying? The Assembly cannot change the nature of things. The nature of things is at variance with nine hundred people governing with a will at once determined, logical, and swift.[2] This being so, you must see how the Assembly is waiting for a government that will reflect its thought, how it is ready to give it a compact majority of seven hundred votes in favor of democratic ideas. However, no such government is in the offing at present and could hardly be so in the interim situation in which we find ourselves.”

“What should the Assembly do?”

“Three things: deal with the emergency, draw up the constitution,[3] and make itself scarce.”

“What should the Assembly do?”

“Three things: deal with the emergency, draw up the constitution, and make itself scarce.”

Notes

[1] “L’Assemblée Nationale” (The National Assembly) [1st issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, 11-15 June, 1848] [OC, vol. 7, #58, pp. 237-38] [CW, vol. 1, p. 451]. <oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/226088>.

[2] The February Revolution of 1848 introduced universal manhood suffrage (21 years or older), the Constituent Assembly (April 1848) had 900 members (minimum age of 25). Over 9 million men were eligible to vote and 7.8 million men voted (84% of registered voters) in an election held on 23 and 24 April 1848. Bastiat was elected to represent the département of Les Landes in the Constituent Assembly of the Second Republic. He was the second delegate elected out of 7 with a vote of 56,445. The largest block of Deputies were monarchists (290), followed by moderate republicans such as Bastiat (230), and extreme

republicans and socialists (55). The remainder were unaligned.

[3] The Constituent Assembly, elected on 23 April 1848, adopted the Constitution on 4 November and dissolved itself by the end of April 1849.

4. “The State” (11-15 June, 1848)[1]

“There are those who say, ‘A financial man, such as Thiers,[2] Fould,[3] Goudchaux,[4] or Girardin,[5] will get us out of this.’ I think they are mistaken.”

“Who, then, will get us out of this?”

“The people.”

“When?”

“When the people have learned this lesson: since the state has nothing it has not taken from the people, it cannot distribute largesse to the people.”

“The people know this, since they never cease to demand reductions in taxes.”

“That is true, but at the same time they never cease to demand handouts of every kind from the state.

“since the state has nothing it has not taken from the people, it cannot distribute largesse to the people. The people know this, since they never cease to demand reductions in taxes. That is true, but at the same time they never cease to demand handouts of every kind from the state.”

They want the state to establish nursery schools, infant schools, and free schools for our youth, national workshops for those that are older, and retirement pensions for the elderly.

They want the state to go to war in Italy and Poland.

They want the state to found farming colonies.

They want the state to build railways.

They want the state to bring Algeria into cultivation.

They want the state to lend ten billion to landowners.

They want the state to supply capital to workers.

They want the state to replant the forests on mountains.

They want the state to build embankments along the rivers.

They want the state to make payments without receiving any.

They want the state to lay down the law in Europe.

They want the state to support agriculture.

They want the state to give subsidies to industry.

They want the state to protect trade.

They want the state to have a formidable army.

They want the state to have an impressive navy.

They want the state to . . .”

“Have you finished?”

“I could go on for another hour at least.”

“But what is the point you are trying to make?”

“This. As long as the people want all of this, they will have to pay for it. There is no *financial man* alive who can do something with nothing.”

Jacques Bonhomme is sponsoring a prize of fifty thousand francs to be given to anyone who provides a good definition of the word state, for that person will be the savior of finance, industry, trade, and work.[6]

Notes

[1] “L’État” (The State) [1st issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, 11-15 June, 1848] [OC, vol. 7, #59, pp. 238-40] [CW, vol. 2, pp. 105-6]. <oll.libertyfund.org/title/2450/231337>. This piece is a rough draft of Bastiat’s best-known pamphlet, “The State,” published in September 1848 (see “The State,” pp. 93–104 in CW vol. 2. For more details on Bastiat’s journalistic activity during the revolution of 1848, see “Bastiat’s Political Writings: Anecdotes and Reflections,” pp. 401–7 in CW vol. 2.

[2] Thiers, Adolphe (1797–1877). Lawyer, historian, politician, and journalist. He was briefly prime minister and minister of foreign affairs in 1836 and 1840, when he resisted democratization and promoted some restrictions on the freedom of the press. After the 1848 revolution and the creation of the Second Empire he was elected a deputy representing Rouen in the Constituent Assembly.

[3] Fould, Achille (1800–1867). Banker and deputy who represented the départements of Les Hautes-Pyrénées in 1842 and La Seine in 1849. He was close to Louis-Napoléon, lending him money before he became emperor, and then serving as minister of finance, first during the Second Republic and then under the Second Empire (1849–67).

[4] Michel Goudchaux (1797-1862) was a politician, banker, and served as a minister in the Second Republic. After the February 1848 Revolution he served as Minister of Finance in the Provisional Government but resigned in March when the taxes on salt and letters were reduced. He was elected to the National Assembly in April and sat with the moderate Republicans like Bastiat. In June he was appointed Minister of Finances in the government of General Cavaignac where he tried to increase taxes on inheritance and investment capital. He was a strong supporter of the "45 centimes" tax increases.

[5] Possibly Émile de Girardin (1802-1881) who was the editor of the magazine *La Presse* and a supporter of Louis Napoleon; or Ernest Stanislas de Girardin (1802-1874) who was liberal Deputy.

[6] [Paillet's Note: One can see in this article and the next a sketch of what would become the pamphlet "The State" published three months later.] DMH - "The State" was expanded and published in the *Journal des débats* on 25 September and as a stand alone pamphlet later that same year.

5. "Taking Five and Returning Four is not Giving" (15-18 June, 1848)[1]

Let us get it right, what is the State? Is it not the collection of all civil servants? Therefore, there are two species of men in the world: the civil servants of all sorts who make up the State and the workers of all sorts who make up society. That said, is it the civil servants who enable workers to live or the workers who enable civil servants to live? In other words, does the State enable society to live, or does society enable the State to live?

I am not a scholar but a poor devil called Jacques Bonhomme,[2] who is and never has been anything other than a worker.

Well, as a worker who pays tax on my bread, wine, meat, salt, my windows and door, on the iron and steel

in my tools, on my tobacco, etc.,[3] I attach great importance to this question and repeat:

Do civil servants enable workers to live or do workers enable civil servants to live?

You[4] will ask why I attach importance to this question, and this is why:

"Let us get it right, what is the State? Is it not the collection of all civil servants? Therefore, there are two species of men in the world: the civil servants of all sorts who make up the State and the workers of all sorts who make up society. That said, is it the civil servants who enable workers to live or the workers who enable civil servants to live? In other words, does the State enable society to live, or does society enable the State to live?"

For some time, I have noticed a great tendency for everyone to ask the State for the means of existence.

Farmers ask: Give us subsidies, training, better ploughs and finer breeds of cattle, etc.

Manufacturers say: Enable us to make a bit more on our woolen cloth, our canvas and our iron goods.

Workers say: Give us work, pay and tools to work with.

I find these requests perfectly natural and would like the State to be able to give whatever was asked of it.

But in order to give all this, from where does it take it? Alas, it takes a bit more on my bread, a bit more on my wine, a bit more on my meat, a bit more on my salt, a bit more on my tobacco, etc. etc.

So that what it is giving me it also takes away and cannot avoid taking away from me. Would it not be better for it to give me less and take less from me?

For in the end, it never gives me all that it takes. Even to take and give, it needs agents who keep part of what is taken.

Am I not very gullible[5] to make the following bargain with the State? I need work. In order to arrange some for me, you put a tax of five francs on my bread, five francs on my wine, five francs on my salt and five francs on my tobacco. That makes twenty francs. You[6] will keep six for your own living expenses and will arrange for me to have work for fourteen. Obviously I will be somewhat poorer than before and will call upon you to put this right, and this is what you will do. You will start again. You will take another five francs on my bread, another five francs on my wine, another five francs on my salt and another five francs on my tobacco, which will make another twenty francs. To which you will add another six francs for your pocket and will enable me to earn another fourteen francs. When this is done, I will have fallen one degree further into poverty. I will turn to you once again, etc.

Si maladia [If a persistent illness]

Opiniatria

Non vult se guarire, [refuses to be cured]

Quid illi facere? [What should be done?]

Purgare, saignare, clysterisare, [Purge, bleed, give an enema]

Repurgare, resaignarer, reclysterare. [Purge again, bleed again, and give another enema][7]

Jacques Bonhomme! Jacques Bonhomme! I find it hard to believe that you have been crazy enough to submit to this regime just because some scribblers were happy to call it *Organization* and *Fraternity*. [8]

Notes

[1] “Prendre cinq et rendre quatre ce n’est pas donner” (Taking Five and Returning Four is not Giving) [2nd issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, 15-18 June 1848] [OC, vol. 7, #60, pp. 240-42] [CW, vol. 4, forthcoming].

[2] “Jacques Bonhomme” (literally Jack Goodfellow) is the name used by the French to refer to “everyman,” sometimes with the connotation that he is the archetype of the wise French peasant. Bastiat uses the character of Jacques Bonhomme frequently in his constructed dialogues in the *Economic Sophisms* as a foil to criticise protectionists and advocates of government regulation.

[3] Bastiat is referring to some of the common French taxes which the state used to raise revenue: the “gabelle” tax on salt (which was a state monopoly), the

direct taxes imposed upon doors and windows, the state tobacco monopoly, and the “octroi” tax on commodities like wine which were imported into towns and cities. There was no income tax in France at this time so the state raised revenue from a combination of tariffs, direct and indirect taxes, fees, levies, and duties.

[4] Bastiat begins by using the polite form of “you” here (vous) but changes later in the article to using the familiar “tu” which he commonly used in these articles addressed to the workers and ordinary people of Paris.

[5] Bastiat uses the term “une grande dupe” (a huge dupe) which is significant as the word “dupe” played an important part in his theory of the deception and plundering of ordinary consumers.

[6] Bastiat changes to the familiar “tu” form of you here.

[7] These lines in pseudo Latin - which the French call “Latin de cuisine” - are quoted from Act III of Molière's comedy “Le malade imaginaire”, the last play written and acted in by Molière (1673). This is taken from a scene from Molière’s last play *Le malade imaginaire* (The Imaginary Invalid, or the Hypochondriac) (1673) where Molière mocks the medical practices of his day in an “Interlude” at the end of the play. The play ends with an elaborate dance of doctors and apothecaries (and would be doctors) in which a new doctor is questioned about how he would treat certain illnesses and is then inducted into the fraternity by swearing an oath. Molière parodies this with an elaborate scene written in “dog” or pseudo Latin. Bastiat takes this parody and creates his own parody in ES2 9 “Theft by Subsidy” (January 1846) where he writes an oath of induction for a would-be tax collector, also in Latin.

[8] In its capitalized form these two words refer to common slogans used by socialists at this time, namely cooperatively or state organized forms of production and worker organization.

6. “A Hoax” (15-18 June, 1848)[1]

As you know, I have traveled a great deal, and I have lots of tales to tell.

As I was journeying through a far-off country, I was struck by the sorry situation in which the people

appeared to be, in spite of their industriousness and the fertility of the land.

Desiring an explanation of this phenomenon, I turned to a great minister whose name was *Budget*.^[2] This is what he told me:

“I have had a count made of the workers. There are one million of them. They complain that they are not paid enough, and to me has fallen the task of improving their lot.

First of all, I thought of taking two sous^[3] from the daily pay of each worker. That brought 100,000 francs each morning into my coffers, or *thirty million* per year.

Out of this *thirty million*, I kept back ten for me and my officials.

I then told the workers: I have *twenty million* left, which I will use to have various works started, and this will be of great benefit to you.

“This was when I [Grand Minister Budget] invented indirect taxation. Now, each time that workers buy two sous’ worth of wine, one sou goes to me. I am taking something on tobacco, something on salt, something on meat and something on bread. I am taking from everything, and all the time. I am thus gathering, not thirty but one hundred million at the expense of the workers. I strut in grand hotels, I lounge in fine carriages, I have myself served by fine lackeys, up to ten million’s worth. I give twenty to my agents to keep an eye on wine, salt, tobacco, meat, etc., and with what remains of their own money I set to work the workers.”

In fact, they were marvelously happy for a little while. They are decent folk, who do not have very much time for reflection. They were very upset at having two sous a day filched^[4] from them, but they were much more mesmerized by the millions apparently being spent by the State.

In spite of this, they gradually began to change their minds. The most alert of them said: ‘We have to admit that we are very gullible.^[5] Minister *Budget* has started by taking thirty francs per year from each of us, *free of charge*. He then is giving us back twenty francs, not *free of charge* but in return for work. When all is said and done, we are losing ten francs and some working days in this arrangement.’”

“It seems to me, Lord *Budget*, that these workers are reasoning correctly.”

“I thought the same thing, and I saw clearly that I could not continue to filch^[6] considerable sums from them in such a naïve way. With a bit more guile,^[7] I said to myself, instead of two, I will obtain four.

This was when I invented *indirect taxation*. Now, each time that workers buy two sous’ worth of wine, one sou goes to me. I am taking something on tobacco, something on salt, something on meat and something on bread. I am taking from everything, and all the time. I am thus gathering, not thirty but one hundred million at the expense of the workers. I strut in grand hotels, I lounge in fine carriages, I have myself served by fine lackeys, up to ten million’s worth. I give twenty to my agents to keep an eye on wine, salt, tobacco, meat, etc., and with what remains of their own money I set to work the workers.”

“And they do not perceive the hoax?”

“Not in the slightest. The way in which I filch^[8] from them is so subtle that it escapes them. However, the large-scale projects I arrange to be carried out dazzle them. They say to each other: ‘Goodness! What a good way of weeding out poverty. Long live Citizen *Budget*! What would become of us if he did not give us work?’”

“Do they not see that in this case you would no longer take large sums from them and that if they spent these themselves they would provide employment for one another?”

“This does not occur to them. They constantly cry out to me: ‘*Great Statesman, make us work even more.*’ And this warms my heart for I interpret this to mean: *Great Statesman, take even more of our sous in taxes on our wine, our salt, our tobacco and our meat.*”

Notes

[1] “Une mystification” (A Hoax) [2nd issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, 15-18 June 1848] [OC, vol. 7, #61, pp. 242-44] [CW, vol. 4, forthcoming]

[2] Bastiat uses the English word “budget” as the name of the Minister of Finance in this fictional country. During the Second Republic Bastiat served as vice-president of the Finance Committee of the Chamber of Deputies one of whose duties was to advise the government on budget and tax matters.

[3] 1 sou = 5 centimes.

[4] Bastiat uses the word “subtiliser” (to steal from) which one of many words he used to describe the process of taxation.

[5] Literally “we are great dupes”.

[6] Bastiat uses the term “soutirer” (to extract or to squeeze out).

[7] Bastiat uses the term “la ruse” (deception, fraud) which is significant as the word “ruse” played an important part in his theory of the deception and plundering of ordinary consumers.

[8] Bastiat uses yet another synonym for taxation here - “épuiser” (to drain or run dry).

7. “A Dreadful Escalation” (20-23 June, 1848)[1]

The ordinary expenditure of the State has been set at one *billion seven hundred million* for the 1848 budget.[2]

Even with the 45 centimes tax,[3] you cannot extract more than *one billion five hundred million* from the people.

There remains a net deficit of *two hundred million*.

In addition to this, the State owes *two hundred and fifty million* in Treasury bonds and *three hundred million* to the Savings Banks, and these sums are due right now. [4]

What can we do? Taxation has reached its ultimate limit. What can we do? The State has an idea: to seize lucrative industries and operate them for its own account. It will start with the railways and insurance, followed by the mines, haulage, paper mills, the parcel post[5], etc. etc.

Taxing, borrowing and usurping, what a dreadful escalation!

I very much fear that the State is following a path that ruined Old Man Mathurin. I went to see Old Man Mathurin one day and asked him “Well, then, how is business?”

“Dreadful”, he answered, “I have difficulty in making ends meet. My expenditure outstrips my income.”

“You have to try to earn a bit more.”

That’s impossible.”

“In that case, you have to make your mind up to spend a little less.”

“Nonsense, Jacques Bonhomme! You are fond of giving advice and for my part, I hate receiving it.”

“What can we do? Taxation has reached its ultimate limit. What can we do? The State has an idea: to seize lucrative industries and operate them for its own account. It will start with the railways and insurance, followed by the mines, haulage, paper mills, the parcel post, etc. etc. Taxing, borrowing and usurping, what a dreadful escalation!”

A little later, I met Old Man Mathurin as shiny as a new penny in yellow gloves and patent leather boots. He came up to me with no hard feelings. “Things are going wonderfully well!” he cried, “I have found lenders who are charmingly compliant. Thanks to them, my budget is balanced each year with marvelous ease.”

“And, apart from these loans, have you increased your income?”

“Not by an obole.”[6]

“Have you reduced your expenditure?”

“God forbid! Quite the contrary. Take a look at this suit, this waistcoat and this top hat! Ah, if you could see my town house, my lackeys and my horses!”

“That is wonderful, but let us work it out. If last year you couldn’t make ends meet, how are you joining them now that, without increasing your income, you are increasing your expenditure and have back interest to pay?”

“Jacques Bonhomme, it is not nice talking to you. I have never met anyone so gloomy.”

Nevertheless, the inevitable happened. Mathurin displeased his creditors, who all disappeared. What a cruel situation!

He came to see me. “Jacques, my good friend,” he said, “I am desperate; what can I do?”

“Rid yourself of all that is superfluous and work hard, live frugally and at least pay the interest on your debts, and thus arouse the interest of some charitable Jew[7] in your fate so that he lends you enough to last a year or two. In the meantime, sack any unnecessary staff, move to a modest house and sell your carriages, and you will gradually restore the state of your affairs.”

“Master Jacques, you never change. You cannot give a piece of advice that is agreeable and in line with people’s inclinations. Farewell. I will take only my own counsel. I have exhausted my resources. I have exhausted my loans; now I will start to ...”

“Don’t say it, let me guess.”

Notes

[1] “Funeste gradation” (A Dreadful Escalation) [3rd issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, 20-23 June 1848] [OC, vol. 7, #62, pp. 244-46] [CW, vol. 4, forthcoming].

[2] According to the Budget Papers for 1848 total government income was fr. 1,391,276,510, spending was fr. 1,446,210,170 (with a deficit of fr. 54,933,660). See the Appendix on “French Government Finances in 1848-49.”

[3] In the immediate aftermath of the February Revolution the government faced a budget crisis brought on by the decline in tax revenues and by the increased demands being placed upon it by new political groups. Louis-Antoine Pagès (Garnier-Pagès) (1803-1878), a member of the Provisional Government and soon afterwards Mayor of Paris, was able to pass a new “temporary” tax law on March 16, 1848 which increased direct taxes on things such as land, moveable goods, doors and windows, and trading license, by 45%. It was known as the “taxe de quarante-cinq centimes” (the 45 centimes tax) and was deeply unpopular, prompting revolts and protests in the south west of France. See the glossary entry on “French Taxes.”

[4] In the 1848 budget the biggest parts of budget expenditure went for servicing the public debt (384

million or nearly 27% of the total), the Ministry of War (305 million), the Navy and Colonies (120 million), and the Ministry of the Interior (116 million). See, “Documents extraits de l’enquête sur les théâtres”, *JDE* July 1850, T. XXVI, pp. 409-12; and the Appendix on the Budgets for 1848 and 1849. See the Appendix on French Government Finances 1848-1849.”

[5] Immediately following the revolution of 1848, the temporary executive commission appointed to govern the country was considering the “purchase” of railways and insurance companies.

[6] An obole is a coin of very low value, like a farthing or a penny.

[7] Bastiat uses the expression “quelque juif charitable” which was a common expression in this period for money lender.

8. “To Citizens Lamartine and Ledru-Rollin” (20-23 June, 1848)[1] [2]

Dissolve the national workshops. Dissolve them with all the care that humanity requires, but *dissolve them*. [3]

If you want a reborn confidence, dissolve the national workshops.

If you want production to revive, dissolve the national workshops.

If you want shops to empty and fill, dissolve the national workshops.

If you want factories to reopen, dissolve the national workshops

If you want the countryside to become peaceful, dissolve the national workshops.

If you want the National Guard to have some rest, dissolve the national workshops.

If you want the people to bless you, including one hundred thousand workers out of the one hundred and three thousand in these workshops, dissolve the national workshops.

If you have not concluded that the stagnation of business followed by the stagnation of employment, followed by poverty, followed by starvation, followed by civil war, followed by desolation will become the Republic’s funeral procession, dissolve the national workshops.

If you have not decided to ruin the finances, crush the provinces, and exasperate the peasants, dissolve the national workshops.

If you do not want the entire nation to suspect you of deliberately having the specter of riots hanging over the National Assembly, dissolve the national workshops.

If you do not want to starve the people after having demoralized them, dissolve the national workshops.

If you do not want to be accused of having imagined a means of oppression, fright, terror, and ruin which exceeds anything the greatest tyrants have ever invented, dissolve the national workshops.

“If you do not want the entire nation to suspect you of deliberately having the specter of riots hanging over the National Assembly, dissolve the national workshops. If you do not want to starve the people after having demoralized them, dissolve the national workshops. If you do not want to be accused of having imagined a means of oppression, fright, terror, and ruin which exceeds anything the greatest tyrants have ever invented, dissolve the national workshops.”

If you do not have the ulterior motive of destroying the Republic by making it hated, dissolve the national workshops.

If you do not want to be cursed in the present and if you do not want your memory to be reviled from generation to generation, dissolve the national workshops.

If you do not dissolve the national workshops, you will draw down onto the country every plague simultaneously.

If you do not dissolve the national workshops, what will happen to the workers when you have no

more bread to give them and private production is dead?

If you retain the national workshops with sinister intent, posterity will say of you, “It was doubtless by cowardice that they proclaimed the Republic, since they killed it by treason.”

Notes

[1] “Aux citoyens Lamartine et Ledru-Rollin” (To Citizens Lamartine and Ledru-Rollin) [3rd issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, 20-23 June 1848] [OC, vol. 7, #63, pp. 246-48] [CW, vol. 1, pp. 444-45]. <oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/226084>.

[2] Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869) was a poet and statesman. As an immensely popular romantic poet, he used his talent to promote liberal ideas. He was a member of the provisional government and minister of foreign affairs in June 1848. Alexandre Ledru-Rollin (1790-1874) was a lawyer, deputy (1841-49), owner of the newspaper *La Réforme*, minister of the interior of the provisional government of February 1848, and then member of the executive commission. He had to yield his powers to General Cavaignac in June 1848.

[3] The National Workshops (Ateliers nationaux) were created on February 27, 1848, in one of the very first legislative acts of the Provisional government, to create government funded jobs for unemployed workers. Liberals like Bastiat regarded the Workshops as expensive interventions by the government into the operation of the free market which were doomed to failure. He opposed them from the start and he lobbied against them when he was vice-president of the Finance Committee of the Assembly, but ironically he later vociferously defended their right to protest against the government and sought to protect them from being shot by the army. The increasing financial burden of the National Workshops led the Assembly to dissolve them on June 21, prompting some of the workers to riot in the streets of Paris during the so-called “June Days” of 23-26 June. The army under General Cavaignac was used to suppress the rioting resulting in the death of about 1,500 people and the arrest of 15,000 (over 4,000 of whom were sentenced to transportation). In the last issue of *Jacques Bonhomme* Bastiat published this article calling for the dissolution of the National Workshops which was a provocative thing to do at this time. The magazine was forced to

close because of the violence in the streets and the imposition of martial law. In a letter written to Julie Marsan on 29 June Bastiat states that he became involved in the street fighting in order to attempt to disarm the fighters and to rescue some of the insurgents from being killed by the army [See *Collected Works*, vol. 1, pp. 156-57].

Further Information

SOURCE

The edition used for this extract: This selection of Bastiat's articles from the journal *Jacques Bonhomme* comes from Liberty Fund's edition of his *Collected Works*. Four of them come from vol. 1, one from vol. 2, and the rest from vol.4 (forthcoming). *Jacques Bonhomme* had four issues which appeared between June 11 and July 13, 1848. Full details are provided in the notes.

LF's edition of *The Collected Works of Frédéric Bastiat*, in 6 Vols. ed. Jacques de Guenin (2011). As each vol. is published it will appear on the OLL at <oll.libertyfund.org/title/2451>.

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FURTHER READING

More works by Bastiat can be found here <oll.libertyfund.org/person/25>.

“I love all forms of freedom; and among these, the one that is the most universally useful to mankind, the one you enjoy at each moment of the day and in all of life’s circumstances, is the freedom to work and to trade. I know that making things one’s own is the fulcrum of society and even of human life.”
(Draft Preface to Economic Harmonies, 1847)



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