

DEMOCRACY

MEANS PRISONS



Our forebears overthrew kings and dictators, but they didn't abolish the institutions by which kings and dictators ruled: they *democratized* them. Yet whoever operates these institutions—whether it's a king, a president, or an electorate—the experience on the receiving end is roughly the same. Laws, bureaucracy, and police came before democracy; they function the same way in a democracy as in a dictatorship. The only difference is that, because we can cast ballots about how they should be applied, we're supposed to regard them as *ours* even when they're used against us.

Those who don't accept the authority of the state must be isolated, lest their disobedience spread to the rest of the population. We're told that prisons protect us, but the only constant since their invention has been that they protect the state from those who might threaten it. In practice, by breaking up communities and fostering antisocial tendencies, they only endanger us—even those of us who aren't behind bars.

Without prisons, there would be *anarchy*: people would have to work out conflicts directly rather than calling in the authorities, and it would no longer be possible to sweep the inequalities of this society under the rug.