

Letters to the Fifth Estate

Various Authors

1978

Leftist Puritanism

Dear FE,

Puritanism is pernicious & petty. It goes against the grain of libertarianism. In the sexual sphere are two Puritan-isms, of the right and of the left.

The Puritanism of the right we're quite familiar with—the old Victorianism, sex as dirty, sex for procreation only, no sex before marriage, etc. The Puritanism of the left, however, is more subtle, less easy to explain. This is because it often wears libertarian clothes.

The article in the FE of last January 24, “Fashionable Fascism: The Slick Misogyny of Porn” [FE #289, January 24, 1978]—this article I'm indebted to. For now when anybody asks what I mean by Puritanism of the left, I simply show them this article.

Sam Cohen

What's New?

Dear FE:

Yeah, wife and child beating is a drag, that's for sure. So what else is new? (see last issue, “Everyday Violence: Wife Beating” [FE #289, January 24, 1978]).

Men who beat their wives, and mothers who put their children inside of microwave ovens are taking out their own inadequacies and frustrations. Frustrations that stem from their own experiences growing up in this sick society.

The ole' man comes home after having put in 8 or 10 hours in the factory and the ole' lady wants him to cut the grass. He doesn't feel like it. But she persists and wham, ban”, smack, she ends up with a black eye.

The kid won't do what he or she's told to do quick enough, their mama persists, they raise a stink and whap, smack across the backsides with a lamp-cord.

Beat your wives, beat your kids, pick a fight in the bar, hit, strike back at anybody except the creeps who really deserve to get their heads broke. The creeps who own the factories we work in and run the system we all live in.

Yeah, you're right Amelia Jones, it's a drag. So what's your solution? “Redesign our living spaces and work places...” even within the “context of existing capital” you say?

That sounds like a lot of counterculture dreaming to me. We won't be able to redesign anything until after we have totally destroyed “existing capital”. And that's something that Amelia Jones and others like her just don't seem to understand.

Yours looking forward to the day of reckoning

Arma Dilla

More On Violence

Dear FE:

I've been following with great interest the letters and articles published in the last several issues of FE on revolutionary "violence," and would like to comment some, criticize, and in general, throw in my own two cents worth.

First, in regards to Laurance Kisinger's letter [in "Comments on Revolutionary Violence," FE #287, October 28, 1977]. He's right in stating that governments and corporations (and their armed servants) are the real terrorists, and that they love to apply the term "terrorism" to armed resistance to their rule, and armed activity designed to destroy their system, in an attempt to discredit revolutionary fighters and fighting in the eyes of us workin' folk. It's also very true that the media loves to make "airport massacres" out of the bombings of empty corporate and government buildings. They do this in order to make those who are fighting toward the system's destruction in an armed fashion look like a bunch of psychopathic crazies who are bent on taking innocent lives.

He's also correct in stating that the best way to cure the Che Guevara/Carlos Marighella type fantasies is to yourself "go from spectator to actor." But I feel it's dangerous for him to suggest folks take action alone. The individual lone assassin, lone hijacker, lone bomber, or lone whatever usually gets him/ herself caught or killed. And when they get caught or killed they make fighting back successfully look hopeless.

Also, "fighting back at your own place of material and/or subjective oppression" may not always be the secure thing to do. The automobile worker who takes his deer rifle to work and blows his foreman away is usually nailed before he ever gets out of the plant parking lot.

I agree with Lorenzo Ervin's letter (Oct.-Nov. 1977 FE) that we ought to build the "armed infrastructure" now, and not only to deal with today's repression, but also to get vengeance for yesterday's and to contribute to the total destruction of this rotten, stinking system. Well coordinated, well organized, and well planned group activity is the best.

Ervin's criticism of Hillbilly's article ["On Terrorism and Authoritarianism," FE #285, August, 1977] is essentially correct. She does seem to be another babushka wearin', brown rice munchin' hippy, pacifist type who is afraid of fighting and possibly dying to bring this rotten system to a quick demise.

Hillbilly claims she's not one of those "peaceful transition to communism" types and then goes on to say she's against the self-sacrifice that's so necessary on the part of all of us to eventually tear the motherfucker up. She says we ought to "search for new forms" to "destroy the old order". What other forms are there, one might ask? Levitating them off the ground perhaps? or Praying for them to go away?

The only way to make them go away is to blow them away.

And if people like Muswell Hillbilly and Amelia Jones are afraid of what that necessarily involves for fear of getting their "soft tits bruised" then maybe they oughta buy armor plated brassieres.

As a wise old mother fucker once said: "the laws of nature's God command the slave to rise, and on thy oppressor's head break his chains."

Yours for the grand luau,
Dave Knight

Lousy Punk

Dear FE:

I thot yr (FE's) articles on punk rock were lousy because they were patronizing—and therefore typically leftist. ["Anarchy in the U.K. The Power & the Punk," FE #287, October 28, 1977 and "A Punk's Essay," FE #288, December 1977]. You are trying to understand something that has to be understood viscerally/irrationally/"immediately"—thru sympathy and contagion—not thru wooden analysis, however "radical."

I sent you the clip from Search & Destroy to illustrate that punk is more complex and conscious than any leftists have given it credit for. True, Search & Destroy publishes Warner Bros. record ads. Still, that hasn't led them to censor or cut out Niko Ord-way's political columns—or anything else. I know the S. & D. people—they aren't after music co. ad money—except to pay their printing bill—a minor incidental!

Also, I would ask if you at F.E. are not participating in commodity economy just as much as S.& D. They sell ad space to record companies. F.E. & Ammunition Books charge a standard 40% bookseller's markup on the trade books you sell. Isn't that participating in commodity exchange relations? What's the difference? The point is the message—and I consider Punk's message more genuinely revolutionary—even on Warner Bros.' records like "Never Mind the Bollocks"—than most of the academic confusion displayed in the pages of F.E.

New Wave Forever!

Kirk Johnson

San Francisco

A Real Punk

Who Robs?

To the Fifth Estate:

It is really not necessary for me to reply to Mrs. Zerzan ["Industrialism & Domestication," FE #287, October 28, 1977] since your satirical article, as part of its purpose "proved" the animals in general revolt ["The Revolt of the Animals: Manifesto Made Public," FE #288, December 1977], was an hilarious treatment of the Zerzan's insipid opinions; nevertheless: Your heading in the case of Mrs. Zerzan's so-called response should have been the author kneejerks.

The Zerzans, perhaps thinking they are doing a service for themselves and others, have made a career out of giving examples of social dislocation, the breakdown of capitalist social relations and authority and then exclaiming "see the revolution". In doing so it is they (and not others such as myself) who "rob autonomous movement of its truth". One does not deprecate or minimize this social dislocation when one says that everyone except the lumpenized and the hermitic is aware of it in general. It is the responses to social dislocation that vary.

The problem is that one does not affect the development of a thing by the Zerzan's response—changing its name to revolution. The incontestable widespread revival of religion in its old as well as new forms is also almost entirely a response to societal dislocation. Anyone in the slightest way acquainted with the rise of fascism as an anti-capitalist movement would be ashamed to publish such opinions as the Zerzans'.

Not as Mrs. Zerzan concluded for the merely negative (and in her obviously petty-bourgeois case infantile and romantic) "rhapsody of punk" but for the negation.

Michael Tinkler

Landsdown, PA.

Balancing Act

Dear Fifth Estaters:

I sent you a year's subscription way back last June 1977, when my former sub expired. Since then I haven't heard from you at all. As the *Fifth Estate* is practically the only paper I subscribe to (the other being Borba, organ of the Yugoslav League of Communists), ever since then I have been in the dark on world events. And believe me, I direly need your paper to balance my reading material.

Believe it or not, Borba is even less objective than your paper. So I'm even sending you cheapies a stamp so that you can at least tell me what's up, & hopefully get your bureaucratic mess untangled. Shit, if even anarchists make mistakes, what's our world coming to.

For the pieing of Tito,

Andre Mesarovic

FE In the Wind

Dear Fifth Estate People:

Congratulations, chumps, on your latest issue. Although you brazenly state you desire not to exceed a circulation of 3,000, you know that you are merely whistling in the wind (and the wind is cold). Anyways, what are numbers? Did Sirhan Sirhan count the SS men on the way to his immortal act? Like swollen membranes the social order keeps puffing itself up with literally human numbers.

Though it comes late, I must criticize your critique (the little cheap shot) that you made in Detroit Seen about hockey. By condemning it for its violence you put yourself in the position of fundamental repression. Violence is the first and foremost element that is repressed in Civilization. It is also the first and foremost thing that prevents most of us from becoming debris under unlimited power.

Hockey is the closest thing to pure prayer that can be, because it is fast, violent and totally ridiculous. The play impulse magnified. Violence, by the way, is the only thing that keeps Jimmy Carter smiling. Wouldn't we all like to be pretty?

I understand that you printed my letter about punks ["A Punk's Essay," FE #288, December 1977]. I never intended to limit the talk to music. The so-called punk bands are alright as far as it goes, but we must recognize them for what they are in their limitations: mere rattlers of their chains.

The punks in factories who sabotage, the fools who blow up toilets in schools, or sneak in at night and vandalize, the wild women who tell their elite husbands to go to hell (or, better yet, send them there) these are far more important than the record sales of punk musicians. In fact, it should be the solemn duty of punk bands to destroy music studios and record shops.

The hemoroidal maniacs (like Rod Stewart, Keith Moon, etc.) who merely destroy hotel rooms or airplane interiors could do the world a favor by destroying themselves along with it. Led Zeppelin could make a record of themselves being strangled by gorillas and they would reach an artistic plateau undreamed of by any recording star yet, and I would buy such a record. So much for elite.

No Peace & No Honor

Rhodan for the Geophysical Tribunal of Continuous/Discontinuous Operations

Inmates Give U.S. The Finger

Inmates at an Ohio prison who mailed a human finger to Federal officials in Washington in December have identified the name of the prisoner who donated the appendage. Inmates stated in a press release that a prisoner named Richard Armstrong voluntarily consented to have one of his fingers amputated last November 29.

The inmates say they sent the severed digit to the State Department to protest the fact that Federal officials will not permit 14 of them to renounce their U.S. citizenship while they are in prison.

They threatened that another human finger would be amputated and mailed to U.S. Attorney General Griffin Bell by Jan. 20 if their renunciation of citizenship demands were not met by that date, but we have not received word as to whether this second demonstration was carried out.



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