

Letters to the *Fifth Estate*

Various Authors

1978

FE A HOBBY?

To F.E.:

Anarchism can provide the perfect defense mechanism for dilettantes. In your “reply” to John and Paula Zerzan [“FE Criticized & Our Response,” FE #291, April 30, 1978] you come perilously close to demonstrating this when you excuse your conceptions of the FE by reference to the nexus of capital within which, not surprisingly, you find yourselves.

It goes without saying that if we demur defining revolutionary activity to avoid posing, then is any criticism appropriate? Or are we simply to congratulate you for “doing your thing?” You should excuse us if we—thought that the FE was something other than your hobby.

C. Sheridan

San Francisco

Staff reply: Huh?

JOURNALIST HABIT

Dear Fifth Estate:

About your “Note to Writers” (Letters, FE #291, April 30, 1978 FE, where readers are requested to limit the length of letters). The way you justify this structure is by mystifying the reality that you—real people—not some power called “practical” limitations—decide and defend these contradictions. Why do you reproduce this journalistic habit? Why do you recreate a newspaper?

In your paper, as in many others, I read the letters first. I find most of them more readable, and challenging, than the articles. Figuring out why leads me to an overall critique of the written word, of which your newspaper is one product.

Letters are written directly and specifically to someone; they tend to be more personal. They reveal ideas to be what they are: an aspect of our relationships with each other, dialogues between people in conflict. Articles confront us outside of our relationships, as a power over us. So most of us feel belittled that we are not authors of articles, but readers/letter-writers.

The resolution is not for us (letter-writers/readers) to become authors of articles, but for us all to write more extensively (Forget the 2-page limit for space considerations!) and personally to each other in the paper. This would make the paper more of a direct dialogue than this.

It take away the power of the “specialists,” the “authors,” and could (if you let it) take away some of your power as editors/producers.

(I don’t know how to solve the problem of us sharing the shit work with you in Detroit.)

Pieces of writing (now called “articles”) that do not originate in a comment to or a disagreement with someone in the paper (as letters do) should be situated in the real life conflicts of the writer so that we feel some sense of that person. I’m not suggesting an introduction to the writing, but a change in the content itself.

The more “personal” type pieces like those on feminism usually reveal the writer; other pieces can and should also. Another example of what I am asking for is the lengthy letter debate about pornography, which you printed in the April 30 issue. Also, interviews are a way of showing ideas of people.

I concur with the Zerzans that articles should be signed. The absence of signatures (your response to the problem, of specialization in your reply to the Zerzans) only reinforces the separation between article writers and letter writers. It is this real separation that must be attacked, not disguised in some mystifying anonymity.

You are not eliminating the problem of having “writers” or “specialists” by omitting their names! The problem is that we still respect those writers (Bookchin, etc...) as luminaries. As for disguising the labor of those who edit, typeset, etc., that labor, and the people who do it, could be described next to the writings.

We have to get rid of writers, authors, editors, typesetters (typesetter’s note: I can dig it!), and letters, articles, reviews, and on and on...My attack on the dichotomy you perpetuate in “Note to Writers” and in the entire paper, raises the question of how and why should one piece of writing be distinguished from another? This is an open question, and I ask it of all who are interested. How can we destroy journalistic forms of domination?

Melen Luan
Philadelphia, Pa.

A PIG IS A PIG

Dear Friends:

I remember reading an article you wrote in one of your first issues of the Fifth Estate (’75-’76?), in which you wrote a nice piece in Detroit Seen about how the Detroit Feminist Federal Credit Union asked their members to put the heat on women that they knew were delinquent in payment on FFCU loans. (In the FFCU’s concept of a new society, everyone can be a cop.)

In their most recent newsletter (Spring 1978), these bankers have now shown their support for the fucking judicial system! Under the heading “Feminist Justice,” the FFCU sent their congratulations to a FFCU member who had just been appointed to the Detroit Records Court.

Fuck these bankers! “Feminist Justice” my ass! Laws are laws and pigs are pigs!
Yours for fucking in the streets,
Headlights

MORE ON PORN

Dear FE:

Regarding Pornography & Fascism: Both derive their power from giving form to socially unacknowledged and repressed desires and emotions. The best way to deal with either is to get to the heart of the matter and lay bare the unconscious and repressed. This of course is far riskier and potentially embarrassing than taking a pat stand against porn & fascism. I regret seeing this important debate fall into name-calling.

Regarding Revolutionary Violence: In a situation of isolation and non-support, it may be cathartic but counter-productive. It is never desirable.

Note to the Zerzans: Cancel my rhumba lessons!

Bzort,
Jay Kinney
San Francisco

[Archive note: Part of the above letter was omitted from the print edition. See Letters, Issue 293–294 for correction.]

PICKET ON TARGET

Hello:

All in all there was much worthwhile reading offered in your Jan. 24 edition [FE #289]. A comment on "Fashionable Fascism": While a misogynist attitude toward women is being presented in many "girly" mags: Oui, Penthouse, Playboy, and their sleazier cousins, it seems to M3 that the right bookstores have been targeted. A Nazi front presents a more present and immediate threat to men and women alike than "adult" bookstores. Peruse some WWII footage of Nazi arrests and treatment of men and women.

I feel the article made its point, though, porn is a debasement of women, indeed to men, too. The latest trends "pushed" by the mass media rags: S&M, bondage, and beatings of women ought to offend. To the extent that people are satisfied by, off; "get-off" via paper—be it laws, rhetorical theory of revolution, or porn—they lose their humanity.

So picket your local porn shop, burn it down, whatever—there are more than enough targets to go around; gadzooks, they abound...pick one, pick two...

RDL

Chino, Calif.

Staff Note to Prisoners

When writing for publication we would appreciate it if you indicate how you want your letters signed—full name, initials, withheld and the name of the prison you are writing from.

ON THE BUS

Dear Fifth Estate:

On April 27 I boarded a southbound Woodward Ave. bus. About half way down, two undercover patrolmen from the Bluebird section (see "Detroit Seen," FE #290, March 2, 1978) sat down next to each other. After about two minutes one came and sat in a seat across from me and proceeded to glare at me in a malicious fashion.

I was considering talking to a girl on the bus which is in some cases considered technically to be accosting and soliciting. I then took it upon myself to ask this man if he was a policeman at which time he replied, "No, only if you want me to be."

When I got off at Adams, the two of them pressed against me at the door in a belligerent way. One of them pulled out his badge and replied, "You were right the first time."

When I got off of the bus one of them pointed his finger about an inch from my head and told, me that if I ever revealed his identity again, he'd put a bullet between my eyes and blow my head off.

Mr. Target

fifth Estate

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<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/292-june-19-1978/letters-to-the-fifth-estate>
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