

In The On-Deck Circle

Fifth Estate Collective

1979

The authoritarian, proto-fascist religious cults such as the Moonies, Krishna Consciousness and the People's Temple have always thrived at the fringes of what was once called the "counter-culture" and which is today euphemistically referred to as "New Age" consciousness—a catch-all of Asian mysticism, macrobiotics, herbalist fadism, palmistry, "holistic" products-mongering, meditation, pop psychology and other obscurantist effluvia.

Under a guise of "holism" and often starting from a legitimate rejection of bureaucratic ambition, car culture, chemical foods, frankenstein medical despotism and the destruction of natural communities, the "New Ageists" discover the wonders of such "revolutionary" insights as Hinduism, Astrology, cotton clothing, the "brilliant function of pain," and "footsie rollers." Two publications of this confused milieu are *New Age* and *East-West Journal*. A sampling of some of their stupid, bankrupt prattle follows. These are genuine quotes, not FE parody.

* In an article on India from *East-West*, July 1978, Alex Jack argues that human beings are little different from amoebas, by discussing the relationship between Mahatma Gandhi's consumption of sugar and his philosophy: "Possibly his consumption of these...sweets contributed to the nervous excitement and an ensuing moral rigidity that affected Gandhi's otherwise commonsense views...Gandhi's tendency to see everything in moralistic terms was continually reinforced, if not originally reproduced, by a basic dietary imbalance."

If you are what you eat, Jack demonstrates in his article that tofu assuredly addles brains.

* From an advertisement in *East-West*: "Ram Dass and the staff of the Hanuman Foundation Dying Project invite those who wish to join with them in exploration of death as a vehicle for spiritual awakening to make application to participate in on one of two nine-day retreats...We particularly welcome applications by those facing potentially terminal illness though facilities for special care are limited. Cost: \$175..." Ram Dass is obviously trying to fill in the gap made by the sudden departure ("spiritual awakening" for the faint-hearted) of Jim Jones.

Fanatics of a Feather...

"Children of God"—a controversial religious sect in the United States in the mid-1970s—is reportedly planning to establish its religious headquarters in, of all places, Libya. The London Observer reports that Libya's leader, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, has reportedly become a new prophet for the group of so-called "Jesus Freaks," and that "Children of God" followers have received both moral and financial assistance from the Libyan government as a result. Qaddafi, who is a Moslem, is "One of God's chosen ones," according to Children of God literature and Qaddafi has reportedly become so enamoured with the sect that he has composed a song for them about "Allah." The "Children of God" movement began in 1969, and now currently claims some 250,000 converts. The Observer says that one reason children of god are happy to cut their ties with the U.S. is what has grown into a spate of accusations that the group has forcibly held, sexually abused, brainwashed and enslaved converts.

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