

Letters to the Fifth Estate

Various Authors

Being Definite

Dear FE:

With only 12 shopping days left 'til nuclear war, I thought I'd better get some bucks off to you to renew the old sub. Thanks a million, or should I say thanks \$4 bucks? Whatever, the FE is always welcome on my doorstep.

I like the new big format. Makes me feel like I'm really reading something and it holds more kitty litter. No, seriously, the paper is greatly appreciated for its sane thoughts in a world long gone mad. Keep up the excellent work.

The anti-nuke article "The Nuclear Freeze: Why We Didn't Sign Your Petition" [FE #309, June 19, 1982] was terrific. First' it was "Ban the Bomb," now we just want to Freeze, eh? We're taking two steps back for every one forward! Progress.

And needless to say the "Murder on Seal Island" Malvinas/Falklands hoax was the only serious viewpoint around. Although I did enjoy the TV coverage more. They were much more humorous.

Larry Montgomery
San Francisco CA

FE Note: Thanks, Larry, for your appreciation of our content and our form. Several others aren't quite as happy with our format change and have even likened it to the dailies. We changed from the tabloid size for several reasons: 1) it is considerably easier to prepare and lay out 16 large pages than it would have been for 32 of the old style; 2) we actually gain considerable copy space in switching format; and 3) we like it

Also, thanks for recognizing our definite article. That is, over the years, mostly due to logo design, we have slipped from being "The Fifth Estate" to the plain ol' "Fifth Estate." In fact, the Post Office demanded that we cease using the definite article in our subscription box, because it did not appear on our covers.

Being saddled with a totally meaningless moniker all these years is punishment enough without bits of it being chipped away by government bureaucracy and common usage.

Can't Support FE

Dear Friends:

If you guys can't support the Nuclear Weapons Freeze, I can. I'm taking the money I'd give to you self-serving elitist anarchists and giving it to them.

Now I can smile at you when I see you in the bars; I won't be supporting you. The newspaper is beyond the level of the masses and your personal bickerings with the RCP, CP, etc. are boring, and only excelled by the fools you criticize.

I remain,
James Fasza

But They Can

Dear Fifth Estate,

Enclosed is \$40 towards your efforts. This money was raised at an anarchist Picnic held in Berkeley (CA) on July 11. Those present were bay area anarchists and some of the Italian comrades. Our support and best wishes.

In Solidarity,
The Anarchist Picnic
Berkeley, CA
(Raised \$149.85 total)

Who Is Primitive?

To the Fifth Estate,

"Dismantling the Nuclear State" (FE #309, June 19, 1982) was so pervasive and encompassing it seems almost to have written itself. I would like to make a few observations in conjunction with it, as they seem to belong in its logical spheres.

Primitivo Solis says that there is nothing we can compare this bomb fear to. I find many similarities, however; in the Black Plague which swept most of the world in the 14th Century. In Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror* is described the hideous death that killed one-third to one-half of the occidental world. It got so bad that people even gave up burying the dead or hauling them off the streets. Parents would abandon their children or vice versa when either was infected. Farming, trades, other occupations would be abandoned and the majority of people thought that surely the world was coming to an end. Indeed, some cities, when an outbreak would start, would wall up the few houses and bury the living, sick and dead together and, of course, that didn't save them either.

A report recently on television news, indicated that the fear of nuclear destruction and its seeming inevitability has had a negative effect on stock investments (sigh). It's hard to gauge, but undoubtedly a large number of the disaffected in the present generation of rebels were disenfranchised at an early age by the fact that they were the first to grow up under the shadow of the bomb.

Could it be that the plague was an early warning by nature (spirits, demons, process or whatever) to give up this tendency, this aberration—civilization? How ironic that something as small as a virus could be so destructive, and more so, that it finds its ancestor is yet more minuscule and more virulent, the atom. Both of these demonic forces are but symptoms of the systematic break with natural laws that moderate the patterns of existence.

What most people forget when considering the so-called primitive life is that we have it backwards—it is civilized "man" that is the primitive. Knowing how to operate a machine, shop for clothes and food, etc., are things that even the most "backward savage" can adapt to, hence, the success in conquering small, un-unified tribes. It is far more difficult to "go back." The average "primitive" must know how to provide food, shelter, medicine, navigation, etc.; a myriad of things that we have done for us by specialists, each of whom relies on other specialists to account for the sphere out of "his" acumen.

I would say, therefore, that the myth of progress is such a lie as to truly represent its opposite. We are getting more stupid all of the time and getting better at being stupid. Indeed, we need people to teach us how to be spiritual, even, in some cases, how to fuck! How stupid.

I suppose we got lucky with the Black Death—maybe not so lucky this next time.

The problem is, can we wise up before it happens? Idiots are in charge and the average person is getting more idiotic all of the time. Let's do, as Solis suggests, make our own culture, our own education, our own everything...may the spirits give us strength to be animals.

No Name,
Ambassador of the Animal Kingdom

Practical Commies?

Dear Commies,

Alright, you fiends! Your despicable rag gets my blood pressure so high I can't even sleep at night. You're going to pay—I mean, I'm going to pay you for this! Please enter my subscription beginning with the current issue.

Why don't you give some space to practical methods of F.T.ing the S.? With so many people out of work, I think it would be helpful to pool knowledge on beating the high costs of utilities, parking tickets, etc. If this is outside of the scope of the 5th, I'd be interested in putting together some other medium to spread this info or even talking with other people who have found ways to get over on the powers that be.

Peter Schneider

A Compliment & Two Complaints on Style

Dear Fifth Estate,

I just finished reading my first copy of your paper and I'm really impressed. want to congratulate you on a very thought provoking and interesting production.

I want to make two minor complaints about the style of some of the pieces you included in the June 19th issue [FE #309, June 19, 1982]. A friend who is a journalist looked at the front page and threw it down in disgust. She had been hooked by the headline on the nuclear freeze article, and read the whole front page section without being able to find out why you didn't sign! I agreed with her that it took a heap of reading to reach the important points made in the piece.

The second is in relation to the Anti-Work exchange. It seemed to me after two readings that Zerzan's original article was primarily a mass of evidence which was open to several different interpretations. Unfortunately, he didn't make his preference among these known. Thus, when Luke offered his analysis, Zerzan and Brubaker jumped all over him, in a manner somewhat unfair. Another case of good intentions but poor construction of the article. I didn't know until reading the rejoinders to the response what Zerzan had intended to say either.

I was very interested in the exchange between the FE and Chris Dugan of LEAF on technology (See FE June 19, 1982). I would like to throw in my 20 cents worth, too.

Dugan seems to imply that population pressure was the cause of technology. He ascribes the increases in productive capacity to-the need to provide for an expanding population. I feel that he has the cart before the horse. While the increase in technological complexity does make larger populations possible, it is obviously the result of a series of other factors. The potential for expanding population exists in every species and at every point in human history. It was not inevitable that humankind develop technology to the extent that we have; but Dugan's argument implies this. Rather, the actual history of technological advances is much more complicated and perhaps not a matter of simple causation.

Dugan takes the existence of 4 billion human beings as a given fact which then requires that we continue to develop technology or at least preserve the levels we have reached. I would quarrel with his assumption that our technology does allow us to support 4 billion. Many of these are presently starving and dying due primarily to the social/economic system which controls the technology of today. If a truly liberated society emerges in the near future, it is likely that they will find it necessary to reduce the standards of living of many in the industrialized nations to help save those in the other "worlds" of development. Vast changes will be necessary to meet the legitimate needs of 4 billion in a way that the present system doesn't even try to do.

The letter by Dugan also seems to imply that technological advance will be necessary to preserve the population levels. Food First by Collins and Lappe suggests that a reduction in the amount of technologically intensive agriculture could lead to an increase in the number of people fed by any given piece of land. All that is necessary is to return the land to the people who have traditionally farmed it so that they may supply their own food again. In this way the famine caused by the appropriation of farmlands for industrial and cash cropping by the industrialized world and its agents will end.

Finally, some population scientists suggest that high birth rates are a natural adaptation to marginal living conditions. They point out that many animal and insect populations which face the highest rates of death among their young therefore produce the highest number of young to ensure that a minimum survive to carry on the species. Human population may respond in this way as well. By alleviating the poverty and oppression caused by the present system, we may reduce the population by removing the fear that 3 of 5 infants will not survive.

Allan Malkis
Minneapolis

E.B. Maple responds: Thanks for your appreciation of our efforts. As to complaints from journalists, our usual response is to throw them down in disgust! That doesn't stop us from agreeing that articles should be well organized and concise, nor from admitting that often those in the FE are not. We, of course, try our best for readability, but not on the terms of professional journalists—those standards produce People magazine and a language capable of only discussing the vapid. An abiding interest in ideas is hardly deterred by poor organization, lengthy articles or “big” words. Usually, we have found that among those who say that they “Can't understand” the FE are those who actually would have no interest in what we are saying no matter how we were to say it since what really is at issue is their political disagreement with what is being said.

fifth Estate

Various Authors
Letters to the Fifth Estate

<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/310-fall-1982/letters-to-the-fifth-estate>
Fifth Estate #310, Fall 1982

[fiftheestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fiftheestate.org)