

Money, Money, Money

Primitivo Solis (David Watson)

As some of us were walking to our car from the February 4th rally to support draft resister Dan Rutt (see above), we spied another demonstration in front of the Federal Reserve Bank downtown. There were picket signs, an American flag, and some chants, although we couldn't hear them from down the street. As we came up, we were approached by one of the all male, all white group, who explained to us that they were demanding a return to the gold standard and protesting the use of paper money. "Paper money is unconstitutional," he said. "It isn't even real money."

An interesting idea, we lied. But what about money, period? Who cares if it is gold, paper, silver, porcelain, stone, or little bags of shit? It all reflects human labor crystallized into a commodity, an abstraction, into someone's profit—into theft.

He kept talking as if he didn't hear.

"This country is a communist dictatorship," he said. "We've been going downhill since 1913 when they started the Federal Reserve Bank. Read this." And he handed us a copy of some boring looking official pamphlet from the Fed itself. "Paper money is just debt," he continued. "It can't buy anything."

Look, we replied, it isn't whether or not it is gold that matters. Money is useless. You can't eat it, plant it, or use it for fuel—in fact paper money is slightly better because you can burn it to keep warm. There was a time when there was no money, you know.

"No way!" answered another one as he came up. "There has always been money."

"Hey, don't stand around, keep moving, don't block the sidewalk," yelled one of the more law-abiding members of the group.

Listen, at one time everything around you was free, had no value, could not be given or taken or owned for any amount of anything. There weren't "amounts," because people didn't put numbers on anything. This was sacred Algonquin land—living, breathing sensuous reality.

"Aw, he's crazy," said one. And another, "We abide by the U.S. Constitution and the Flag—"

The constitution is worthless and the flag is a rag, we fumed. The original inhabitants of these lands didn't need your flag or your constitution or your money. If gold turned up, it might make a fine ear plug or an ornament. If it got exchanged it was only as a gift and was bound to come around again...

They were crowding around, now, getting ugly since our mention of their flag.

Hey, how 'bout this, we said. You say this paper money ain't real, can't buy anything. Hell, we like your spirit. Let's burn some. Put your money where your mouth is, so to speak. We pulled out a buck. It was windy and it wouldn't light. The pickets stumbled into each other as the line stopped and they watched what we were doing.

"Hey, don't let the guards inside the bank see you doing that, it's illegal. You could get into trouble," yelled the guy on the left, and the others who had pulled out bills put them away.

"Yeah, we don't want to get into trouble, do we? we replied. The bill finally went up in flames. They laughed, forgot the insults to their flag. "Keep moving," said the fat guy, "don't block the sidewalk."

"Money, money, money," goes the song. One way or another, it has people hypnotized. Some because they are addicted to making it; others because they can't get enough to keep their heads above water and their kids' ribs

from sticking out; and these for some of the most obscure reasons of all. They are like dogs who look at your hand when you point at a bone across the room. Rather than worrying about the human causes behind all that money, or the inhuman results—the pollution, the radiation, the hunger, the threat of war, the cultural disintegration, the passivity—they worry about the symbols and the forms, rather than what the-symbols signify, the content which makes up capital.

Oh well, we had a good time, and recommend burning money occasionally for enjoyment and shock value. Not huge amounts, yet, since kids' ribs are sticking out and it can be used. But just to remember, from time to time, that it is only a symbol, just another stupidity. Defacing it is fun, too, by the way, making Washington look weird, adding anarchist slogans or just nasty, suggestive remarks. It's like a leaflet that people won't throw away.

People have told me that I'm infantile, but kids think it's funny...

fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #312, Spring 1983

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