

# Letters to the Fifth Estate

Various Authors

1986

Due to space considerations, some of the letters on these pages may have been excerpted. We ask that letter writers make their remarks as concise as possible.

## Pretty Bad Taste

Dear FE,

The Christians to the lions stuff in the last issue was in pretty bad taste (“Hail Mary Not Quite!,” FE #323, Summer, 1986). The original victims of the Roman state were communal, love-thy-neighbor, subversive types, much different from today’s fundamentalist/fascist types. And even then, I don’t think it would be very appropriate to feed anyone to lions, but I’m probably being my humorless self.

Against all authority,

Ed Slyboots

Lawrence KS

***The lions respond:*** We don’t want Christians with good taste; we want Christians who taste good!

## Zeal to Possess

Dear Folks at FE,

Since I’ve read everything appreciable in my personal library, I’m rereading old issues of the FE which never seem to lose their vitality. “Anarchy in the Age of Reagan” (FE #322, Winter-Spring, 1986) is an especially pertinent article, and I thought I’d comment on it.

While I agree that the facade of modern capitalism is deteriorating—and the incongruities of the system are as manifest now than any time in the past—it would not seem that the people amidst its putrefaction are giving any mass indication of conscious rejection. Anti-authoritarians provide repeated examples of this assumed repudiation of capitalism—from employee theft to the willingness of people to loot and shoplift—but this simply points out the narcissism spawned by acquisition of commodities.

Most people—middle class Americans, that is, the majority, albeit a shrinking majority—give little indication of discarding the intrinsic tenets of capitalism. Rather, they attempt to circumvent the system in their zeal to possess commodities ad nauseam. Granted, they are alienated by this process and the contradictions of living under modern capitalism, but I’m certain they would readily reject anybody who would suggest they give up their cherished possessions in order to live a better life. The modern credo—exemplified by a popular bumpersticker—is: I owe, I owe, so off to work I go. With this mentality, coupled with a conviction that through materialism and acquisition we gain freedom, can we ever hope to achieve a “paradise renewed?”

I hate to sound pessimistic and nihilistic, but I do not hold much hope for the future of (western) mankind, especially with the depth of the indoctrination of the people. I'm afraid we'll need to experience a formidable crisis—such as another depression with mass starvation and unparalleled suffering (in short, the absolute collapse of capitalism)—before people realize the malodorous character of the system and endeavor to supplant it. I'm afraid nuclear war will arrive before that can ever happen.

Pace Verde,  
Kurt Nimmo  
Detroit

## **FE Mascot**

Hi FE people:

If you would like my cat Anarchy as your mascot (Anarchy is notorious—bites, claws and scratches everyone including me), I will gladly mail her to you at no cost to you.

Lamprine Sakkas  
Newark, New Jersey

## **Bicycle World**

Dear Friends,

I became aware of your publication while visiting the Alternative Bookshop in Montreal. The *Fifth Estate* is a superb newspaper, inspiring and well written.

Eleven years ago we started out as an organization struggling for the political rights of urban bicyclists in the Montreal region. There was a constantly growing amount of bicyclists and no facilities to permit them to commute safely. Through our efforts, both theatrical and traditional and two brief sojourns in prison by Claire Morissette and myself resulting from our zealous efforts to obtain subway access and a commuter bicycle path, Montreal has become much more cyclable.

We won bridge access over the St. Lawrence River Bridges to the South Shore suburbs, subway access for bicycles on weekends and after 7 p.m. during the week, an important North-South bicycle artery leading to downtown where a small fence protects cyclists from cars and where the curb lane has been given over to the exclusive use of bicycle traffic. Previously the cars had the space. Much safer bicycle parking has also been installed. So we won more than half of our demands although the city is still not yet Amsterdam or Hanoi. As we won, energy and commitment to the movement diminished as is natural.

Our newspaper has been publishing for 10 years. At first it was mostly bicycle related. Recently, however, because of our victories and other reasons, we have been trying to produce an alternative bilingual paper where the bicycle struggle news is limited to one quarter or so of the content and where the bicycle becomes a symbol or metaphor for the world we want: accessible, open, efficient, quiet, peaceful, pretty, non-hierarchical, cooperative and clean.

We consider the bicycle to be the best friend of an anarchist. It enables us in the cities to often bypass the radical monopoly of the car. As you know the radical monopoly of the automobile was artificially constructed over the years. It began with General Motors, assisted by Standard Oil and Firestone, buying up and destroying America's streetcar systems. They were even convicted of these heinous crimes in a Chicago court in 1959. (U.S. Ground Transport, Bradford Snell, U.S. Library of Congress). Afterwards municipal, state and federal governments spent billions on roads and neglected mass transport.

So, as a result, even the simplest mobility required a car. The bike's a way around this deadly monopoly. Daniel Behrman thinks the bicycle is a tool for revolution and Ivan Ilich said that "Socialism can only come by bicycle".

Robert Silverman  
Le Monde à Bicyclette

C.F. 1242, Succ. "La Cite"  
Montreal, Quebec H2W 2R3 Canada

## Cross of Bills

Dear FE:

Thanks for crediting the LOOKOUT for the graphic "Evolution of the UPC" (Vol. 20, No. 4, Summer 1986), but the credit really belongs to the artist Winston Smith, who's also renowned for his DEAD KENNEDYS album cover for "In God We Trust, Inc.," featuring "The Lord" crucified on a cross of dollar bills. Winston also puts out an occasional zine called FALLOUT which is loaded with similarly brilliant graphics. Back issues are two bucks or so. Your readers might be interested and the FE could probably use some of them, too. Winston's address: POB 1535, Ukiah CA 95482.

Lawrence Livermore  
Laytonville CA

## Isms Are Wasms

Dear FE:

Recently while rehashing the old "should we call ourselves anarchists?" dilemma with a friend, I heard for probably the hundredth time that the word anarchist could only exist if there were an anarchism, and since all isms were structured doctrines, which my friend rejects, he should reject the label anarchist.

Well, of all the arguments I've heard in favor of not being labeled an anarchist, this is the one that I've always questioned the most. Do all isms have to be structured doctrine? Did the anarchist come from anarchism or did the anarchism come from the anarchist? I decided to finally put my curiosity to rest and to look up every acknowledged (in reference sources that is) ism and ist to try to draw some conclusions on this. (If anyone's interested they can write me for a good list.) I'm also trying to find the first references to the words anarchist and anarchism to see which was used first. When I return home after the summer I'll find out and share my discoveries with you.

In the meanwhile, my study of the meanings of the suffixes ism and ist does not prove that the meaning of anarchist isn't someone who adheres to an ism, a doctrine, but it does definitely prove that as a linguistic unit ism or ist doesn't imply this; only popular usage implies it.

Ism, as defined by the Oxford, is: [used generically as an independent word] a form of doctrine, theory or practice having or claiming to have a distinctive character or relation: chiefly used disparagingly and sometimes with implied reference to schism.

Upon further reading, I found that its Greek root, isma, expressed the finished act of things done.

Ism is a descriptive term for doctrines, or for principles such as: atheism, egotism, jingoism, hedonism, libertinism, realism, stoicism, etc.

It can express action, conduct or habitually doing something, such as: desperadoism, autoeroticism, malapropism, quixoticism, recidivism, solecism, etc.

It can express use, in words as: L.S. Deism, epigrammatism, hyperbolism, narcotism, euphemism, hypnotism, magnetism, etc.

It can denote a characteristic, especially pertaining to language, such as: archaism, colloquialism, witticism, anglicism, Americanism, westernism, etc.

It can take the characteristic of a person, like Leninism, McCarthyism, or the one I coined, Eichmanism.

It can indicate condition, like: barbarism, deaf mutism, orphanism, parallelism, etc.

It can mean taking the qualities of, as: charlatanism, esotericism, pendaticism, etc.

It's the result of an action, such as: ostricism, mesmerism, etc.

It also has exceptional forms such as a teratism, which is a malformed fetus.

Anarchism therefore can mean: taking the qualities of anarchy, the result of anarchy, the condition of anarchy, habitual anarchy, anarchy-like conduct, etc., in addition to a doctrine. And since I don't know of any doctrine that's been accepted by the majority of anarchists, I would think it more likely to fit into one of the other meanings.

Next comes the ist which can be synonymous with the -ite, such as a Stirnerite, or a transvestite or an anarkite. And 'ist' can do an action such as: a baptist, exorcist, syllogist, plagiarist, etc.

He or she can practice some method or art, such as dogmatist, satirist, theorist, dramatist, metallurgist, etc.

The -ist can be an adherent of some creed, doctrine, art, or system such as a polytheist, spinozist, a minimalist, marxist, an impressionist, a monarchist, etc.

The -ist, can be formed on an adjective such as a fatalist, idealist, humanist, plurist, realist, etc. (This point proves that the -ist can come before the ism, because the ist and istic come from the quality of the adjective, the ism follows.)

An ist can denote someone whose profession or business it is to have to do with the thing or subject in question (sometimes with education involved), like an artist, colourist, dentist, florist, linguist, tabacconist, etc.

Sometimes it comes from verbs like a conformist, computerist, separatist, speculatist, etc.

An ist is also of course someone expert in a particular art, science, study or pursuit like a schealogist, archeologist, a biologist, etc.

There are ists that correspond to events like a semi-finalist or a second adventist.

Then there is somebody who performs something. Such as a eulogist (that's particularly interesting because it usually refers to a one-time only event) or a threnodist, the person who sings the funeral songs.

Of course these aren't all the meanings of ist, but the most indisputable (I don't want to get into esotericism or didacticism). It's obvious that there are dozens of recognized -ists where there are no isms and vice versa. There's diabolism, no diabolist, holism, no holist, narcotism, polymorphism, puerilism, voyeurism, etc., without the corresponding ists. There's a misanthropist, misogynist, parodist, vendettist, etc. without corresponding ism.

According to the meaning of the suffixist, therefore, an anarchist could: practice anarchy, take on the qualities of anarchy, teach the qualities of anarchy, live in anarchy, know a lot about anarchy as well as someone who adheres to an ism.

Using the word anarchism, or anarchist can be dangerous because it's understood in a narrow way by the vast majority of people. It's like many other words which we've learned to use in a restricted sense. So what are we to do? Do we reclaim the word, attempt to change its popular meaning? Or do we invent more words. (Figure that somebody does that every time another word is reduced and that's why English has such a vast lexicon.) Do what you want. What I'm doing is of no importance to what you'll do; I just wanted to pose yet another question to clutter your minds.

Anarchy, peace and love,  
Laure Akai-Ngurundere  
New York City

## Not Obsessed

Hello FE,

Congratulations on your 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As a regular reader for the last 10 years and a sporadic reader before that I can say you've improved over the years. I hope you publish for another 20 or until the downfall of everything anyway.

I depend on your magazine for a viewpoint not available too many other places. Especially up here. A lot of Democrats, Republicans, and satellite dishes cluttering up the landscape. Living here between an air force base and a submarine communications (ELF) line is somewhat depressing although the natural aspects of the area are beautiful. I try not to become obsessed with the thought of all those Nukes aimed at my head.

I love this northern great lakes region and every new high voltage line, housing development, highway, etc. saddens me. Most people here seem to look at these as progress. I'm sure all of you have had the same experience. Anyway your magazine is important to me and has helped me grow over the years and I hope you continue.

Jerry Mohlman  
Iron Mountain, MI

## Feel Free To Read

Dear Friends,

To John Zerzan: It is unlikely that writing in and of itself is a mortal or venial sin, ditto for reading and electric guitars. They grew from a big mistake; a demented act of cultural self-abuse. As it disappears so will they. In the meantime if you have something that you want remembered, give it to a younger person to keep in their head and hope that they can pass it along. Books are much too fragile a means of preservation. As to illuminating the cultural evil which gave birth to writing, be at peace friend. It was accounting. Now any greater explanation will not fit in the head of a younger person for preservation so I would leave it to the dung beetles. In the meantime feel free to read and write—the goddess will not damn you for it and it may make you feel better.

To the woman whose name I can't find who got bent at the "Layabouts concert": Why damn the grass which grows through the sidewalk for not being a meadow. I know few Bantus who hold conversations at dance-time and they play acoustic drums and sing a cappella. The Layabouts seem to have a fine time playing and I have had a fine time dancing with them and listening with them and intoxicating with them all in immoderate quantities. Joy in Detroit has to be treated like grass in the sidewalk—imbibe where and when you find it. Ralph, I can see no reason to defend victimless pleasure to a person who uses telephones, mass transit, and pencils. Joy, like electric guitars, reading and writing, is not a mortal or a venial sin but unlike them will probably not disappear when we all finally get to act out. Albert Einstein wore black socks and shorts but it was ok; Emma Goldman...well, I'll leave it to you to find out...Relax, they ARE trying to kill us. We need pleasure wherever we can find it. Take a deep breath...exhale slowly and say I'M OK...THEY'RE NOT...now, go do something that makes you happy...you haven't much time left.

With love  
the albert einstein clone  
Dallas, Texas

## Face Value

To the Fifth Estate:

With the extremely limited experience I have had in reading Lewis Mumford, I find that I am often in agreement with his work. Yet I fail to see why this translates into uncritical support for native North American culture.

As a vegetarian, I am repelled by the hunting lifestyle these people follow. As an anti-theist, I object to mysticism/religion in any guise. To say that this is the result of a bourgeois upbringing may be true, but that does not say enough.

Also, how can John Zerzan accept the mainstream media at face value? *U.S. News & World Report* does not strike me as having any credibility (See "Present Day Banalities" FE #322, Spring 1986). As it is, I cannot rejoice over the high rate of illiteracy in America which he cites. For me, everything seems as if we have been transported to a Weimar Republic on a global scale.

Martin Toews  
Winnipeg MB

## Mindless Slippage

Dear Friends:

I was sorry to discover that our Newspaper Dept. at the Chicago Public Library had canceled our subscription to your publication—just another instance of our slippage toward the mindless totalitarianism that you're trying to combat.

Anyhow, here is a check for a year's subscription for myself, personally—you will have to send it to my apartment, however. Keep up the good work!

DW  
Chicago

## Jewish Nationalist

Dear Anarchists,

There are very serious errors being made by anarchists such as Julia Morrigan and Ana Coluthon who wrote (in Letters, FE #323, Summer 1986) in defense of the freedom of speech for the racists Keegstra and Zundel.

Anti-Jewish fascists advocate that Jews among others be shut-up permanently. Therefore, these fascists have given up their right to freedom of speech by denying that such a right exists. In order for liberties to be universal as a principle, they must be reciprocal.

In general, the anti-nationalist line put forward by the Fifth Estate newspaper ignores the fact that when a people are attacked for their particular characteristics such as culture/appearance, and if other people are not willing to defend them, then they will defend themselves.

This is why you must take responsibility for making me a Jewish nationalist, which corresponds to my twenty years of activity on behalf of the Palestine people.

Eibie Weizfeld  
Montreal, Kebek

**FE reply:** Sorry, Eibie, but ultimately everyone packs their own parachute. Take responsibility for yourself, please.

## Vancouver 4-1

Dear Comrades,

Greetings from the northern colony. I just thought I'd drop you a line to say hi and to let you know that my address has recently changed. I've been transferred down from Matsqui prison to a lower security prison (William Head prison) on Vancouver Island.

My new mailing address is: P.O. Box 4000, Stn. A, Victoria, B.C. V8X 3Y8 Canada.

I really enjoy the FE. It's a major source of strength for me and I would hate to miss even one issue.

I've noticed you receive both support and flack from your readers for your simple society/pro-nature approach to anarchism. Well, you can count me in as one of your staunch supporters for what it's worth. Personally I find the FE viewpoint a refreshing bit of life in what is otherwise rapidly becoming a high tech necropolis. As a dedicated heretic, I must challenge this newly fabricated religion, which repulses me as much as the old one. I find it equally as alienating, dehumanizing, enslaving and mesmerizing as christianity.

Like christianity—and all of the other patriarchal, institutionalized religions—I find that any good which it can claim to have effected in the world is far outweighed by the bad. I'm convinced freedom is a condition of nature and not something which can be created by a machine.

Unfortunately, as I'm sure you can guess, I'm not doing a hell of a lot of dancing in the forest these days. Still, prison life could be worse. At least this prison looks a bit better than the last one.

Here at William Head there are lots of trees, tall grasses and rocky outcrops and we are surrounded on 3 sides by the sea. There are animals too: cats, geese, raccoons, deer, seals, orcas. Of course, there are still the typical prison head-games and power trips and it can get extraordinarily depressing at times.

Lately I've been writing and playing a lot of music, reading a hell of a lot of books, setting up a visual education program, taking university courses and enjoying the limited, but impressive by prison standards, outdoors.

From what I understand the 3 other comrades are doing okay: Doug was recently transferred down in security to Matsqui and only has 2 years to do before they have to release him on “mandatory supervision;” Brent was apparently having a bit of trouble with some other folks at Milhaven, but that seems to have passed and he’s recently been approved for a transfer to lower security as well; reports have it that Ann has run out of things to do and, consequently, has engaged in a bit of rebellion, which has cost her, but fortunately, the womyn is strong. As for Julie, contact with her has been severed, so no one’s too sure what she’s up to. I think most of us feel sorry for her, but her betrayal is difficult to forgive.

Well, I guess that’s it for now. So take care my friends, stay strong and drop a line sometime if you feel like it. Long live brotherhood and sisterhood! Long live Mother Earth! Long live anarchy!

In love and struggle, your bro,

Gerry Hannah

Victoria, B.C.

## **Vancouver 4–2**

Dear Fifth Estate,

I applaud your proposal to publish an issue on trees and forests. My personal area of especial interest is logging and the other activities of the “forest industry.”

A point that I think is insufficiently appreciated is the distinction between arguments for the defence of the natural environment that are based on the interest of the environment itself. A human-centered argument might run, for example, that a particular forest should not be logged because it would not be economically viable and would require government subsidy, because it would damage salmon streams and hence the fishing industry, because it would impair “scenic and recreational values” and hence tourist industry profits, or because in some other way it would hurt our collective long-term interests.

On the other hand, an environment-centered argument might be that the natural ecology of the forest has value and importance in and of itself and should not be wantonly devastated, and that even if on the whole we do benefit from the activities of the forest industry, nevertheless we are obligated to restrain it in order to protect the land and all its inhabitants.

The former view is essentially a pragmatic and selfish one. The latter view is a moral one and rests on a spiritual perspective of the human situation in the world; needless to say, it does not have much popular political appeal.

A second point I would like to make consists of a different but analogous pair of views having to do with the ecological impact of the forest industry. The forest companies endeavor to constrain public debate to issues of specific practices, as for example, the benefits of leaving buffer zones between logged areas and water courses or of implementing proper replanting techniques. The implication is that if only the forests were responsibly managed, then “sustainable yield” could be maintained indefinitely without long-term harm to the forest ecology.

An opposing perspective holds that logging a forest damages it, that recovery is not complete by the time it re-grows to a “commercially mature” stage and is re-logged, and that the damage is progressive, that is, each cycle of logging and re-growing causes greater deviation from its original, natural form. In fact, the only way to reduce the widespread destructive effects of the forest industry is to drastically reduce the scale of logging. This, of course, would have a dramatic effect on the economy of regions dependent on the forest industry, and demands for such a change would not be well received.

A third point is this: in working on specific struggles, such as protecting particular forested areas, many environmentalists restrict their public positions to the more reformist ones described above, both by appealing to people’s long-term economic self-interest rather than their sense of ecological responsibility, and by calling only for limited changes rather than a radical reduction in scope of the entire industry. They would probably say that by being politically palatable they are maximizing their chances of success in each individual struggle and they are probably right.

However, this overlooks the wider political context and the longer term. If we are ever to substantially restrain the overwhelming industrial assault on the natural world, radical environmental analysis and action will have to

become widely disseminated and taken up by a great many people. By focusing too much on limited criticisms and demands, the movement may be sacrificing effectiveness in introducing the deeper ideas that are essential to the long term.

The slow, cautious, “reasonable” approach certainly has advantages and I am not suggesting that it be completely abandoned. However, I am suggesting that environmental activists consider the advantages of publicly and clearly presenting the moral, political and ecological arguments that justify their ultimate aspirations.

Doug Stewart

Matsqui Prison, POB 4000 Abbotsford, BC V2S 4P3 Canada

**FE Note:** We are still planning to produce a special issue on trees and forests, and seek articles, excerpts and graphics concerning trees in all their ecological and mythopoetic dimensions. All correspondence will be answered, all ideas seriously considered. Send to The Fifth Estate, Box 02548, Detroit MI 48202 USA.

## Lost Its Soul

Dear FE:

As a Christian anarchist I read your article “Christians to the Lions” (Summer 1986 FE) with interest and amusement. Although I have already stated in these pages (see “Anarchy & Christianity: An Exchange,” in FE #317, Summer 1984) that I agree with many of your criticisms of my religion’s bloody history, as an unabashed leftist there are a few points I would like to respond to.

You equate christianity with the “mystico-technocratic anthill,” patriarchal authority, tyranny, bureaucracy. No doubt your encounters with right-wing christians picketing the film “Hail Mary” give you good reason to feel this way.

However, what puzzles me is the “christians to the lions” motif that runs through the article. As you know, christianity came from an area of the world that was under the boot of the Roman state. Christ was executed between two criminals because he dared to challenge that power...For the first few hundred years of its history christianity was essentially an underground religion, meetings were held in secret because the Romans would give the christians over to the death squads to be tortured and, yes, thrown to the lions, because they refused to bow down before the state idols and instead worshipped in their own creative fashion, conspiring together and holding all their goods in common.

For the first three hundred years it was also unthinkable for a christian to accept conscription and fight in the imperial occupation forces, and it was only with the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 312 AD and his dictum, “In this sign [the cross] shall you conquer,” that all this changed. In short, christianity lost its soul as a spiritual force as soon as it was accepted as the state religion by imperial power. The rest is history. The central historical mistake of the early christians is that they were too successful. As Wilhelm Reich said in *The Murder of Christ*, “A thing is often accepted as it can be all the more destroyed.” So in an ironic sort of way, yes, we were better off when we were being thrown to the lions.

But today there is a new spirit blowing through the land...There are now christians in every part of the country getting arrested and going to jail (the oft-mentioned fate of our early predecessors), some for up to eighteen years, for faithful acts of defiance to demonic powers in high places.

At a conference of the U.S. War College a speaker was quoted as saying, “The greatest challenge we face today comes from the churches.” And although I will freely admit that in many ways our steps have been tentative and not always with a major impact on those under the gun of current despotic power, I am proud to be a part of this new conspiracy of conscience and I feel it to be in the truest sense our heritage and tradition...

Bill McCormick

Decatur, Georgia

**George Bradford responds:** Despite the persecution of the followers of Jesus by the Roman Empire, a persecution they shared with many other primitivist cults during that period of collapse, their religion rapidly became the foundation for this civilization, which in murder and repression has far surpassed all previous leviathans.



The “success” of this cult among many in elevating itself to a state religion is a question which should be confronted by all those who consider themselves radical followers of the cult or, as someone said in another, related context, the criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism.

“Initially the rebellious visionaries were at one with every life-affirming strain, and they apparently borrowed freely from all of them,” writes Fredy Perlman in *Against His-story, Against Leviathan*. “But as soon as they define themselves as Christians, they have to make it clear...just how they differ” from the other mystery cults. “Once they turn away from other resisters, it does not take the Christians long to turn against them...First they turn against the way others affirm life, gradually they turn against life.” So the organization develops hierarchy, each circle becomes a church. Eventually, “the Churches are starting to look like provinces of the Roman Empire; all that’s missing is the Emperor.” The foundations for the leviathan are already laid; Constantine simply steps in to fulfill his role. The visions become a reified gospel, the shepherds become simultaneous shepherds of the cult and officials of the Empire. Christianity has ceased to be a Way, a resistance movement, and has become a religion. As Fredy writes, “The resistance has come to power, but its first aim is to liquidate all resistance.” Such has been the history of christianity since that time.

As for the heretical traditions in christianity (see Norman Cohn’s *Pursuit of the Millennium*), such outbursts of the original impulse were consistently crushed by those who held power in the christian world. While primitivist christian rebels were superseding christian civilization by creating communes based on freedom, ecstatic community, and the pleasure principle, the hierarchs were defending the cross with the sword by crushing such manifestations of freedom in Europe and waging bloody crusades, eventually in the animist world as well. It is possible that the present upsurge of so-called liberation theology represents a recuperation similar to that of the Franciscan movement of those times, that is, as a reformist order which could draw rebels and heretics away from genuinely dangerous currents and back into the hierarchic church. Wherever the radical (repressed) prehistory of primitive communism emerges, the churches respond, bringing with them their anti-nature and anti-pleasure foundations.

In Latin America, liberation theology and leftism come from the jesuitical tradition. While they are both a response to and a catalyst for radicalization, both—despite possible short-term gains—may ultimately serve only to corral revolt into modernized forms of “progressive,” national capitalism. (It should come as no surprise that in Latin America christians function in bureaucratic popular fronts with authoritarian marxists; both are police ideologies.)

In the past you described yourself as more a taoist than a christian; I’m disappointed that you’ve forsaken the anarchic primitivism of the Tao for the guilt-drenched charade of christianity. I’m glad some christians oppose nukes and run food kitchens. Perhaps the christians whose religion has destroyed so much, and who believe in the necessity of “atoning” for sin, should be doing so. But none of that lessens the importance of stating the reactionary character of christian civilization and the serious limitations of the christian discourse. The memory-less christian “love” barely conceals even a shred of the incredible violence and repression that hold the present configuration of power together. The christian hierarchs now sit where once the Roman rulers sat; they need to be nudged, firmly, into their own arena. The (lion’s) tongue-in-cheek suggestion of the anti-christian declaration in the last issue was for them; they should learn to take a hint. As for our christian friends whose courageous acts of defiance and humanity indirectly legitimate the ideology of the hierarchs, they should learn to take a (bitter) joke. “He who is not with me is against me,” said your god-man. So be it.

## Critical Flab

FE Staff:

The rhetoric and pretensions of your journal do not liberate you from a revolutionary criteria that demands coherence, that values deeds over words, and does not have a soft-spot in its head for tear jerking sentiments and sacrifices.

And applying this criteria to the FE, a criteria that had once appeared to be the point of departure for the entire project, gives your recent efforts (Summer 1986 FE) a quality of despair and resignation. At once you present visions

that are mutually exclusive, uncontested I might add, and abandon ground previously gained by critical analysis in other issues.

Bill McCormick's "Remembering Kent State" was particularly objectionable. How can you print that with the "Christians to the Lions!" piece? How can an article from a member of the Catholic Workers, those idiots, be presented under the same hood as an open letter that so venomously denounces everything about Christian civilization?

Despite your ludicrous pluralism, how does such a bland collection of left/liberal sentiments (with its anecdotal style) find its way into a publication that aspires "to suggest new terrains for contestation." Such a publishing strategy not only conspires against the radical use of ideas, but relegates the FE to the ranks of such miserable rags as the N.Y. Times or The Village Voice.

However, I do not mean to imply that by excluding McCormick's article your publication would have been palatable: the "critical flab" is evident elsewhere. For instance, there's the "Terrorism & Media" article: isn't the solution to the (immediate) problems of tv as simple as not having one?

Or the Haymarket commemoration and Spain articles that barely even hint at the acute and profound problematics of anarchism. And there was "The Plan" article; offering no analysis of why a proposed incinerator in Detroit could lead to a "direct confrontation with industrial society and its power structure" while victims of Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Love Canal, etc. have apparently not even considered such a struggle. I could go on.

While looking through past issues of the FE I came upon much that exposes a number of the forementioned articles as pure regressions in qualitative steps the FE had taken. In one issue G. Bradford did an excellent job illuminating the backwardness of Christian resistance (appropriately juxtaposed to letters from McCormick and another dummy). The cover of another issue was graced with the statement "Turn It Off!" containing an extensive article by E.B. Maple on why TVs should be dumped. Also, hasn't it been established that "anarchist industrial collectives" (Porter, "Spain '36") are far from desirable? I could go on.

I wonder if you are denying that your arguments can and do have consequences; considering that past advances have not helped determine current practice (at least as far as the FE is concerned). Reassuring or not, your publication has had consequences for me: enough so that I can say with certainty that the FE has become quite pathetic.

For myself, and others I know, the FE's decomposition is a point of departure: I will use what I've learned from the FE and publications like it and go further. However, I suggest you bag the whole project if you can't do better.

C.W. Morse

Poughkeepsie NY

**E.B. Maple replies:** There is something myopic and linear about an approach to criticism which sees only the immediate and neglects the totality. You sing the praises of our past efforts, but when you come upon one issue containing several articles with which you have disagreements, you perceive us to be suddenly in such a state of terminal decomposition that your only remedy is to throw years of our effort into the waste basket.

There is an ideological arrogance here as well that insists on a rigid conformity in every paragraph to your view of what critical theory should be, without which a coherence is lost leaving our readers in a state of confusion. To you, an article you agree with in a previous issue is somehow negated by the appearance of one with which you don't agree in another edition.

If I can remain undeterred in my opposition to religion by Bill McCormick's mentioning in passing that he is a christian anarchist in an article condemning state murders, I assume other readers will be immune as well. No one is going to think we've gone soft on religion after reading our "Christians to the Lions" article, and to contend that the simultaneous printing of McCormick's piece is an example of "pluralism" hopelessly misunderstands the concept.

Similarly, over the years we have published material critical of the Spanish revolution and anarchism, but that was not what was under discussion in our last issue. We asked David Porter to write a short, commemorative piece about a moment in human history worth celebrating even with all of its flaws and we were satisfied with the results.

It is relatively easy to strike a pose of being aghast at our "critical flab," just as it is easy to write off the experiences of millions of revolutionary Spanish workers and peasants with glib hindsight about industrialism. What is

more difficult would have been to add to the discussion by raising your specific “problematics of anarchism” rather than to just assert authoritatively that something has been “established” and, hence, closed.

Actually, it seems a bit “flabby” of you to counterpose what was a thoughtful critique of how the manufacture of images insulates power with the simplistic notion that you turning off your set alleviates the problem. None of us here are TV watchers and most of us don’t own a set, but the almost total proliferation of television among the American people creates the context where one is forced to respond to the mass images they consume, since it is so often those images which shape political discourse. We will know we are getting somewhere when that situation begins to erode, but an examination of the process of submission to media seems appropriate to me.

But don’t let me be overly defensive. If our publication is no longer of interest to you, if you think we have retreated from past positions, your desire to speak in even more radical terms is nothing we have any quarrel with. If you complete something of interest that “goes further,” send us the results.

## **Good Idea**

Hi FE Friends,

Loved the “FE staff photo”!! (See front page of FE Summer 1986 issue.)

I liked the idea of giving the paper free for people in Exile (the armed services). Back in 1971 or 72 I received one that way when I was in the navy.

Love and Anarchy,

Harry,

Lexington, VA

## **Goldman Show**

Dear Folks,

I am trying to raise funds to produce my original one-woman show about Emma Goldman, here in New York City and elsewhere. Some of you may have seen the show on May 1<sup>st</sup> in Chicago at the Haymarket Gathering. We believe it is a timely show, which needs to be seen by the general public in order to educate them about who Emma was and what her anarchist philosophy was all about. Emma’s own belief was that “the drama” is one of the most powerful tools of propaganda that exists.

All donations/contributions are tax-deductible (for those who pay taxes) and should be made out to the producing organization: The Original Cast, 310 W. 49 Street, Suite 4B, New York City, NY 10019; and should be earmarked for “Emma”. This is a non-profit theatre company dedicated to developing and producing new playwrights and their plays. At present, The Original Cast and I are pursuing all funding sources short of state funding, which wouldn’t be at all appropriate for a show about Emma, don’t you think? We hope to raise enough money to produce the show here in NYC, and also hope to be able to send the show to other parts of the country/world. Thanks.

Salud y libertad,

Mindy Washington

New York City NY

## **Terrorism, USA**

Dear Fifth Estate:

The news is dreadful and chilling—innocent American citizens slaughtered in cold-blooded disregard. Victims stabbed, beaten, shot or bombed into oozing shards regardless of age or infirmity. This is Detroit—where more Americans are killed monthly, and regularly, than the combined number of U.S. “terrorist” victims during the last decade overseas. Isn’t it time for an airstrike?

Despite the hysteria manipulated by politicians and the media to whip American blood into patriotic fervor, terrorism is on the rise right inside the U.S.A. It's being exported by America and, considering the methods used against Native Americans in our acquisition of these territories, terrorism is as American as apple pie.

Even by definitions acceptable to popular fantasy, terror is on the rise, and it is right-wing, patriotic American terror: the hostage-taking and firebombing of elementary school children in Cokesville, Wyoming last May 16 by Posse Comitatus members—a paramilitary right-wing outfit which tried to get \$300 million ransom from authorities in a scheme that literally blew up in their faces; the increasing anti-Arab violence within this country, specifically, the murder of Alex Odeh, the regional director of the Arab Anti-discrimination Committee, in Santa Ana, California on October 11, 1985; the recent bombings by white separatists in Idaho; the fire-bombing of abortion clinics by right-wing Christians; the attempted fire-bombing of cars in California by Frank Camper, director of the Mercenary School in Alabama. It would be interesting to discover just how many people in Latin America were slaughtered by some of Camper's graduates of "exported terrorism" funded by discreet right-wing organizations in America.

We are talking about Terrorism, pardner, the kind that editorial writers here would prefer not to talk about. It is more popular to keep an Arab face on the subject, ignoring the fact that while Khadafy and his ilk may have dirty hands, the CIA issued handbooks to Contras and trained them to use the most up-to-date methods of terror, including torture and assassination, to help "pacify" border villages in Nicaragua (methods, by the way, perfected by the Green Berets in South Vietnamese hamlets).

The recent shift of "terrorist" attacks in the Middle East and Europe directed toward Americans and American targets began when the U.S. abandoned its neutral facade and took an active role in supporting Israel and Lebanese Phalangists during Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1983. Aside from the fact that the Israelis bombed Beirut neighborhoods with American cluster bombs and shelled Lebanese villages with American tanks and artillery, it must be remembered that the "neutral" and "peacekeeping" U.S. forces committed appalling acts of officially sanctioned "terrorism" against the Druze and Shiite peoples in September 1983.

Responding to the Phalangists' appeal for aid in their battle against the Druze and Shiites at Suk al Gharb, Robert McFarlane, then National Security Advisor, avoided the Joint Chiefs of Staff's prohibition from engaging in combat by creating a totally bogus claim that the U.S. forces were acting in self-defense. Reagan officially authorized this naval bombardment in which no less than seventy heavy rounds were fired into Lebanese coastal villages by the U.S.S. New Jersey and Virginia.

In so doing, he essentially came to the aid of and openly sanctioned the forces responsible for the unconscionable massacres at Sabra and Shatilla. Officially, the U.S. action in Lebanon is not described as "terror" by the media or by the government here because there were flags flying and insignia bared. But from all available physiological reports, Arab babies bleed, and Arab peoples do have memories.

In light of this blatant U.S. support of Phalangist factions and Israeli interests, the kamikaze style bombing of the U.S. marine base in Beirut in October 1983 was clearly an act of war and not an act of "terrorism."

Indeed, it must seem that the West is reviving the crusades of centuries past when European armies quixotically rallied to "liberate" Jerusalem. Since Israel is in fact a western power—a geographical and geopolitical anomaly—the Mideast power struggle represents the realization of a consistent drive embedded in Judeo-Christian consciousness since the debacle of the Crusades. These religious powers seem to be repeating and compounding a historic error. Many thousands have died over misguided religious adventurism.

The decadence of daily life in this cutthroat consumer-crazed society forms the basis of an increasingly pervasive domestic terror that has no particular face, but can be seen almost everywhere. It is the terror of daily life. While tourists whine that it is unsafe to travel abroad, we forget how unsafe it is for a woman to walk down an American city street. There is the terror of the market place, of careers, of shattered life. While there is a yearly increase in the rate of youth suicides—Artaud would say that they are being "suicided" by society, as was the case, he claims, with Van Gogh—there is the terror of children left in dumpsters.

The terror embedded in society is not merely the terror of crime, but that too is beyond epidemic. It is the terror of nature itself recoiling. It is instinctive, every animal flees and there is a hush in the forest when we enter. There is a hush in the wind and a hiss in the stinking waters, in the food that is poisoned. It is the fear of a tamed and timid beast, shorn and penned. It is the terror of a child prodded out of bed and sent to school in the morning. If

not for fear there would not be this society, for terror is the motive, the grease in the gears, the axle that turns the wheel. Who would go to work tomorrow but for the terror of survival in conditions we scarcely control?  
—Pat the Rat

# fifth Estate

Various Authors  
Letters to the Fifth Estate  
1986

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/324-fall-1986/letters-to-the-fifth-estate>  
Fifth Estate #324, Fall, 1986

**[fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net)**