

Letters to the Fifth Estate

Various Authors

1994

Fifth Estate Letters Policy

The Fifth Estate always welcomes letters commenting on our articles, stating opinions, or giving reports of events in local areas. We don't guarantee we will print everything we receive, but all letters are read by our staff and considered.

Typed letters or ones on disk are appreciated, but not required. Length should not exceed two double-spaced pages. If you are interested in writing a longer response, please contact us.

It's Crazy

Dear Fifth Estaters:

I'm looking over your interesting and informative publication, and it's crazy—you are constantly attacking and ridiculing communist groups (see FE #343, Fall/Winter 1993)!

On Page 2 you tell of a project being organized against the RCP and attack Bolshevism and the former USSR. On page 3, you make Cuba look like an evil place. On page 4, you call for RWL members to be expelled, cheer the misfortunes of the RCP, plus another attack on the RWL. And, so on. I don't think you are right in giving these groups negative publicity without bothering to discuss these groups or engage them in a debate over ideas.

Please understand, I am no friend of the groups you criticized although I am a communist (Israeli CP, a mainstream poststalinist party). In Israel, I worked and cooperated with local anarchists, and my experience was good. Not because I recruited any—that was never the point (as it is with some groups). We were



Television is not relaxing
Television dominates the senses
Television is addictive
Television is not a "neutral" technology
Television can only present biased views
Television creates social homogeneity
Television suppresses imagination
Television makes people impatient & irritable
Television cannot depict reality
Television isolates its viewers

able to unite our resources on agreed upon projects. We set up an anti-fascist action group, published a zine, demonstrated against the cops, and lots of other stuff. We maintained mutual respect, even though we have different ideas.

When you spend so much space on cheap shots, you sound as sectarian as the rest of them. It sounds like an attempt to enforce a party line on fellow anarchists. A party line that makes us out to be two-dimensional, stupid, authoritarian, meaningless, dangerous and beneath contempt. We share so many agendas—respect for women, anti-fascism, anti-homophobia, anti-capitalism, peace, etc.

I'm not a very orthodox communist, so I share even more: a respect for co-ops, communes, the Anarchist Black Cross, anarcho-punk, etc. You should treat others as you would like to be treated. Why not replace cheap shots with a discussion or debate against some aspect of these left parties you are attacking?

Charles Lenchner

Amherst MA

E.B. Maple responds: An unorthodox commie is, fortunately, usually soon an ex-commie, since enforced uniformity of thought is a hallmark of leftist parties. Independent thinkers are considered dangerous to internal "discipline" and quickly sent on their way if they haven't already quit of their own accord. I predict you will soon be an ex-member of your thoroughly discredited group given your self-description.

Not recruiting members at every opportunity? Shame! That in itself could be enough to get you bounced since building the organization is the end all of every grouplet's existence.

Our paper's operation is fairly anarchic. No one planned the attacks on the left you mentioned—they just happened as the paper filled up. However, we do perceive leftists exactly as you described with the exception of "meaningless." Unfortunately for the working class and the world, bolshevism has been a disaster wherever it has ruled. We consider commies to be red nazis who have acted as counter-revolutionaries in every popular struggle since the party of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin strangled the Russian Revolution.

I respect some rank and file members of communist organizations, but regardless of their individual sincerity, at the head of each group resides the central committee and its own little Stalin drooling at the prospect of commanding the state and its cops to eliminate their rivals and opponents just as their idols did. There are a few left communist groups who hear-

ken back to the call for workers councils without the party, but they are a meager footnote in the repressive history of party communism.

From time to time we have printed more fully our disagreement with the left. I would suggest our Spring 1987 article, "Anarchy & the Left," and the Spring 1991 for "The Myth of the Party" by Murray Bookchin, for an opening to our ideas on the subject. Also, Black & Red's publication, *Bolsheviks & Workers Control* by Maurice Brinton is an excellent text for examining the counterrevolutionary role the party played from the moment it seized the power of the state. The papers and the book are available from us at \$2 each for the issues and \$3 for the book.

I don't think we share anything in common with leftists. The issues you mention, where our ideas seemingly converge, are only instrumental events for the party where papers can be sold and recruits solicited. Party members are apparatchiks—part of a machine.

Being a human being in revolt against all of modern society means developing autonomy, not being part of one of the major institutions of tyranny. Given your admirable affinity toward anarchists, why not junk your affiliation with capital's left (which is what the left has historically acted as), and find some comrades who share your anti-authoritarian sensibilities?

Wants Fifth Estate

Dear FE Folks:

I was wrong. Please take me back. Three or four years ago I canceled my subscription to the FE.

In my letter indicating why, I said that your paper succeeded more at raising the level of discontent in the world than anything else. Not buying into the idea that a sufficiently unhappy populace is the primordial ingredient of social change, I decided to go on chipping away the stone of the establishment without my quarterly dose of additional rage.

With so many "anarchist" friends publicly allying themselves with leftism and leftists, happily spending hours with computers and television, and sidelining me as a kook for wanting to pass out leaflets, I found myself missing the FE.

There's a nice dose of solidarity I get when I read all-out attacks on the pillars of modern society. It is comforting to know there are other anarchists who despise

the left as much as the right. Unless you have changed, body-snatcher style, into what you decried in the 1980s, I want my Fifth Estate again.

Still carrying the torch,
Glenn Harrington
London, Ontario

FE Reply: The basics are still the same, but we hope we've gotten better. Welcome back.

Fearful of America

Hi, Sports Fans!

We ordered an issue of the *Fifth Estate* to "taste" from a mail order company, Last Gasp of San Francisco. As ex-liberals and former TV-addicts now living in A'dam, we're without a regularly scheduled current events publication we can digest. After our first reading of your paper, we now subscribe to your newspaper and your clarity.

Our first issue as subscribers arrived in our mailbox from across the ocean unsealed and without a brown paper wrapper. It takes a vast amount of perspective to synthesize "Dope, Queer Sex, and Anarchy" as your writers did [in FE #342, Summer 1993].

We became fearful of America and Americans. One must live somewhere and there are government-free zones (including Christiania in Copenhagen, Denmark). We chose Holland because the Dutch elite offer citizens a better deal than do elites of other so-called liberal democracies.

This may seem like a backhanded way to compliment our hosts, but it isn't so. We greatly admire Dutch people—even their power elite. We trust our neighbors for the time, until American culture completely suppresses Dutch culture.

Grace and Mike Hogan
Amsterdam, Holland

@ Anti-Semitism?

Dear Fifth Estate:

As usual I enjoyed most of your Fall/ Winter 1993 edition, but I do want to differ with Bradford's and Maple's article on the PLO-Israel Accord, "Another Defeat for the Palestinians," FE #343, Fall/Winter 1993.

I also am skeptical that peace will be an easy process on the West Bank or Gaza, and I also have many criticisms of the previous Israeli government and of the in-

vasion of Lebanon. However, that does not mean that one should try to downplay the number of victims of Palestinian terrorism. Likewise, one does not have to love either the Israeli government or the PLO to support the accords.

As long as there is a war in Israel there can be no withering away of the state or of the differences between Palestinians and Israelis. There occasionally are grassroots moves towards peace, but extremists on both sides usually destroy these efforts, so the only beginning to a solution is via “mainstream” efforts such as the negotiations between Rabin and Arafat. Israeli novelist Amos Oz expressed a dream that Arabs and Jews could live in a confederation—this is the closest I’ve seen to an anarchist solution—but this could only be done after a peace process, like the one you are criticizing.

I just got back from a trip to Israel (for the first time) and there was a bomb threat at the airport on my way home. The 700 or so deaths from Palestinian attacks may be small compared to what the Israeli Army did, but it is a big number for a country of 4.6 million. While I was there, the Iranian and Syrian (two real countries for freedom!) supported Hamas and Al-Fatah groups attacked people on a regular city bus with a machine gun.

There was violence almost every day by opponents of the treaty during the two weeks I was there. I think that it is a mistake for the *Fifth Estate* to support Palestinian terrorists, which I feel coming from the article. One can and should support Palestinian and Israeli autonomy, but I think that the article you printed only recognizes the former.

Anarchists have a tendency not to like statist and boring negotiations, but in the reality of this situation it is the only choice. The romantic Bakunin-like appeal of the Palestinian fighter should not be used by the anarchist media anymore than Jews should make heroes of the Israeli Army, especially since the Intifada is no longer non-violent.

I am also concerned by remarks which are extremely critical of Israel as some (but certainly not all) are covers for anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism should have no more right to exist in the anarchist movement than does homophobia, sexism, or racism.

Just think about the number of critical articles on Israel run in the *Fifth Estate* (or most radical media) and the lack of articles critical of Arab nations, except during the Gulf War. Then look up each country’s human rights record in Amnesty International. This

is one reason many Jews are saying that the left is anti-Semitic.

If you do not support the peace treaty, what do you want? An Arab invasion of Israel? A victorious Islamic fundamentalist Hamas? Neither will bring more freedom to the Middle East.

Andrew Wertheimer
West Lafayette IN

E.B. Maple responds: Your contention that we in some way implied support for “Palestinian terrorists” constitutes a dismal misreading of our article. It was critical of Israel, the PLO, and Hamas, and declared armed struggle to be an impossible “chimera.” We often criticize Israel because of its ability to confuse even those who should know better, your letter being a case in point.

Over the years of Israel’s existence, a number of Jewish anarchists have relinquished the principle of absolute anti-statism, when it comes to that particular nation state. The fact that your opposition is limited to the “previous Israeli government” is revealing.

Now that the “nice cops” are in power, you put forth this empty agreement, which only worsens the conditions of the Palestinians, as the only possible alternative. The settler state has the political and military advantage, and is only willing to grant “limited autonomy” to economically marginal regions which they have had limited success in controlling. The agreement is a strategy to solidify Israeli rule where they want to keep it—in an expanding Jerusalem containing more settlements and superhighways adjacent to Palestinian-policed bantustans which will continue to provide cheap labor for the burgeoning Jewish metropolis.

The Feb. 27 Hebron mosque massacre by Baruch Goldstein certainly doesn’t strengthen your argument. The cult of worship which has grown up around the tomb of Goldstein and even the funeral eulogy for him by a rabbi who said, “One million Arabs are not worth a Jewish fingernail,” contradicts the attempt of the Israeli government to characterize the assassin as a lone, demented individual.

The Nazi-like statement of the rabbi probably does not reflect the view of the average Israeli (many expressed shame and horror), but represents the sentiments of many settlers in the same manner that Native American people were hated by the European invaders on this continent. Perhaps more telling is the several score of Palestinians shot to death by Israeli troops in rioting following the massacre and since.

Such death sentences are official government policy to terrorize the Arab population into submission to army rule. No other Western country executes children and others for throwing rocks, nor could one do so with the impunity Israel does.

Men who kill defenseless people and wear uniforms are called soldiers; those who commit the same acts in civilian dress are labeled terrorists. Would you have labeled Geronimo and the other leaders of the armed native resistance to the European invasion of the Americas as terrorists? The settlers did.

Our purpose in mentioning the relative and absolute number of Israeli civilian deaths over 45 years of the Israeli state was not to downplay them, but as contrast to the disproportionate number of Arab deaths at the hands of Israel and how this flies in the face of the attempt to portray the Jewish population exclusively as victims. This is exactly what the Nazis did: it was they who were under assault from the Jews.

I can't think of any word other than reprehensible for your attempt to label us and other critics of Zionism and Israel as anti-Semitic. This is the tactic of the worst right-wing, racist supporters of the exclusivist state. Israel gets the criticism it deserves for its brutal displacement of the indigenous people, the repressive role of its military and the gulag of prison camps it maintains for Arab prisoners, its role as junior partner to U.S. imperial strategies in the Middle East, its possession of nuclear weapons, the supplying of Nicaraguan contras with arms as part of the Iran/Contra affair, its support of racist and truly anti-Semitic governments like South Africa and Argentina in the 1970s and 80s.

Really, Andrew what is there about Israel a decent thinking person can support, let alone someone who considers themselves an anarchist?

All of the above does not condemn people in Israel who are opponents of state policy, no more than are we in the U.S. responsible for the murderous actions of our government. It is one's opposition here and there which has a redemptive quality to it.

One good source for Israeli oppositional thought, although they aren't anarchists and support the so-called two-state solution (probably as much a "chimera" as armed struggle) is *The Other Israel*, PO BX 2542, Holon 58125, Israel.

Dressing Up

Howdy:

I thoroughly enjoyed your last issue. It was refreshing to hear anarchist critiques of what is going on in Somalia, Bosnia and Israel.

I really liked the "Revolt of the Bats" article [FE #343, Fall/Winter 1993]. I collect stories about wildlife fighting back and also dress up with a gang of friends as bears and attack nature stores and other targets that offend wildlife.

I really liked "A Fugitive Surrenders" at id "Killer Cops" was fantastic. The *Fifth Estate* was one of the first things I read that clued me in about five years ago. You're one of the few newspapers that covers current events from an anarchist perspective. So, I'm just writing to say keep doing what ya do real well.

I do a zine called "Shithappy."

Adam Bregman

Los Angeles CA

Process of Healing

Dear FE:

I enjoyed reading Jack Straw's article, "Has Booze Brought the Blues" in FE #342, Summer 1993. I've been anxious for a while to see more open-minded discussion among anarchists concerning the centrality of consciousness to any pragmatic practice of personal and social liberation. As well as enlivening that discussion, his article provides FE readers with an opportunity to rethink their understanding of deeper cultural patterns not often discussed within this continent's largely white, Euro-American anarchist milieu. It also gives us a chance to re-vision personal, social and ecological health from an anarchistic perspective.

In my experience many anarchists often get stuck in reductive and repetitive scapegoat-oriented politically over-focused ruts. Yes, the society we live within is incredibly out of balance and unhealthy. Unfortunately, many seem so addicted to telling us how bad our predicament is that they neglect the fact that we could also do ourselves and each other better by allowing more time to swap stories, ideas and practical everyday methods that will help create what health and mutual aid we can for each and all, here and now.

At times we can be our own worst enemies by not allowing/challenging ourselves to be exemplars in the sometimes incremental and painstaking process of healing. I've also sadly found it common for many anarchists to be enthusiastically contemptuous of

other actively radical folk within the larger society whose only apparent sin is that they don't verbally justify their actions with a sufficiently total critique. But, no matter "what time it is," sharing knowledge and compassion with friends and strangers can't wait until after the "revolution."

Some questions came to mind after reading Straw's article which I'd like to ask FE readers: How do we really foresee living beyond all variety of (debatable) unhealthy addiction patterns? Does use of some psychedelics help some individuals to more effectively grow beyond the toughest addictions? Do phrases like "sacred spiritual practice" used in his article rightfully offend anarchists or are they appropriate to one who has experienced ecstatic states psychedelically-induced or otherwise and who subsequently wishes to share these methods and provisional benefits with others?

Are egoist anarchists always rightfully afraid at the prospect of purposeful temporary ego-dissolution and the lessening of barriers between people and their environment? Do many alcohol-oriented anarchists hold on too tightly to the isolation and alienation that drinking provides them? Can a discussion continue on the diverse, cross-cultural realm of shamanism without kneejerk criticisms of the shaman as scapegoat of the mythical origins of the division of labor, or, by referring to those who may be intellectually (let alone experientially!) curious to explore the topic as inherently being la-la new agers, implicit racists/cultural thieves or unwitting dupes of Lynn Andrews or Carlos Castaneda?

What better post-guru ways are there to experience the teachings, ecstasies and potential pitfalls of chaos and (be)wilderness than by traveling within the depths of the mind with the aid of a plant teacher in the appropriate setting? Can anarchists remain true to their principles and seek "a return to the hallucinogens in the context of sacred ritual?"

As to the last question, I feel that those who pursue this path not only can remain true to their principles, but they may also find themselves more capable to help create an increasingly anarchistic future. Though in saying this I think it's important to emphasize being careful not to disregard the attendant risks as well as the necessity of judicious, occasional use and personal integration of lessons learned. Psychedelics are not "the answer," but they most definitely have an important part to play in the reemphasizing of the creative and imaginative aspects of mind that

industrial society has actively suppressed. And we do literally need to expand these aspects for the health of each other, the planet and all of its inhabitants.

Zerox Vermont
Seattle WA

Selling Sage

To Fifth Estate:

Sissy Sabotage and Maxeen X write in their article, "Queer Anarchy Coming Out" [FE #342, Summer 1993], that "Queer anarchy welcomes and incorporates the vast 'berdache' tradition of queer tribalism that has existed for centuries amongst the indigenous peoples of North America," (my italics) and quote several times from Walter Williams' book, *The Spirit and The Flesh*, which I recently read.

It is true that the many Native American traditions lumped together with the term "berdache" (a word brought to the Americas by European colonizers) are an important part of the study of sexuality and sexual diversity, and throw light on the puritanically oppressive heterosupremecist ideas of Europeans, but they are also traditions with culturally specific meaning that we must not participate in erasing.

The long and evil history of white people's genocide of Native Americans has included the adaptation and co-optation for white people's benefit and profit of any potentially assimilative aspect of Native culture. As more and more people become disillusioned with pathetically bankrupt "Western" culture and values, there has been a growing market for the co-optation of Native American spirituality and traditions.

White New Agers and liberals are selling sage in bookstores and advertising a "religious experience in an authentic sweat lodge for only \$\$\$" in the back of queer magazines. This exploitation is a powerful form of cultural destruction and especially in this context, white queers should think twice before "incorporating the vast "berdache" tradition."

The berdache role is not the same thing as a queer identity. To claim they are the same is to erase the religious and cultural significance these traditions have in many cultures. In his book, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, that inspired the writers of "Queer Anarchy," Walter Williams does not address the complexities of cultural imperialism or his questionable role as a white academic looking for a gay history in a community that has been exploited by academia.

When confronted by a Cheyenne elder who didn't want to talk to a non-Cheyenne researcher, William's only reply was to characterize the issue as one of "privacy" and to admonish Native Americans such as this elder against "becoming secretive and defensive about their cultural past." In looking to define our own identities, non-Native American anarchist queers need to be careful not to make Williams' mistakes and support or participate in cultural imperialism and the assimilation of Native cultures.

In Solidarity,
Sister Immaculate Conception
PO Box 7075
Minneapolis MN 55407

Sissy Sabotage responds: In our initial "queer anarchist manifesto" we expressed a desire to "incorporate" indigenous tendencies of queer tribalism into our vision of a homo-utopia beyond hierarchy. In a brief and subtly perceptive response, Sister Immaculate Conception sensed that our use of the verb "incorporate" masked a eurocentric appropriation, an act of textual imperialism, erasure and thievery, which we used to validate and bolster our position while removing the "Berdache," "Winkte," and other Native American queers from their particular context in the past.

At this point, I am certain the phrase "inspired by" would have more accurately articulated our perspective. Flagrant cultural imperialism and new-age-feel-goodism at the cost of already marginalized peoples should not be taken lightly and Sister should be commended for her close reading of our text, and for calling us out, for that culturally predicated oversight.

However, while this change may have made our point more clearly and "correctly," when taken in the specific context of our article, it should be obvious we were speaking as light-skinned North American anarchist queers, and made no pretense to speak for all queers, or for the indigenous homosexuals whose lifestyle, livelihood and legacy was all but obliterated by European colonization. Because of our own ancestry, we need not rely solely on white male traditions of thought or action for our inspiration and ethical sustenance.

As far as Williams is concerned, I feel no need to defend him. As white Americans we are forever bound by our encultured intellectual bondage to the tenets of phallogocentric, anthropocentric, eurocentric, logocentric crap, ad infinitum.

But does that restrict our ability to reject the ideological legacy of our white male heritage and embrace ideas and traditions which liberate us from the penitentiary of patriarchal practice? What I've learned from reading Williams, studying literature on the berdache and examining sexual difference transculturally had tremendous impact on the way I practice gender blur and prepare for queer revolution.

Should it be any other way? What do you suggest? Why don't you identify yourself better in the letter? Are you, like us, a non-Native American anarchist queer? Where should we get our inspiration?

Alien Socialists

Dear Fifth Estate:

Thank you very much for the back issues. I was impressed with the seriousness of many of the contributions. Most interesting was George Bradford's lengthy discussion of Marxism, Leninism, and the Bolshevik Revolution (see "The Triumph of Capital," FE #339, Spring, 1992).

I consider myself a Marxist and I share many of the ideas of Lenin and Trotsky, but I generally agree with the criticisms of the two leaders voiced by Kollontai, Shliapnikov and other Bolsheviks in the Workers Opposition. I noted the complete absence of any mention of the Workers Opposition in Bradford's article.

Those calling themselves Leninists and Trotskyists ignore the Workers Opposition in their accounts of the revolution. Unfortunately, this is also true for many anarchists. While the former will refer to the Workers Opposition, if they do so at all, as an "ultra-left syndicalist tendency," the latter group usually ignores it considering it just another group of "statists." Thus the anti-syndicalism of the Leninist-Trotskyists and the anti-Bolshevism of the anarchists have combined to render the Workers Opposition a mere footnote in history.

While there are numerous volumes on Lenin and Trotsky, and numerous others by anarchists such as Voline, books on Makhno, Kropotkin, on the sailors at Kronstadt, there is not a single volume specifically on the Workers Opposition.

I was interested in Maurice Brinton's book *The Irrational in Politics*, which deals with Wilhelm Reich's ideas, and sent away for it to Left Bank Books in Seattle. I've become very interested in the theories Wilhelm Reich elaborated during his Marxist period (I've begun doing

research on his later theories, also, such as those involving orgone energy).

Enclosed is an article which I wrote a year ago. I sent it to several socialist organizations around the country, and received only one reply. One of the topics discussed in the article is the UFO controversy. To my knowledge, I am the only person in the radical movement, unfortunately, who has attempted to initiate some kind of discussion of the UFO controversy. I wish I were not alone.

The one reply I received was from David Finkel, editor of *Against the Current*, and leader of the Detroit-based Solidarity group. His reply was that the UFO controversy was “not of political relevance.” I am presently working on an article covering various subjects I think are generally ignored in the radical press, such as the UFO controversy, the JFK assassination, Wilhelm Reich’s ideas, as well as those of Kollontai and others in the Workers Opposition.

Marc Viglielmo

Honolulu HI

FE Reply: We know Dave Finkel and the reason for his dismissal of you is quite obvious to us. Hidden by his wry humor and his love for baseball is the fact that Finkel is himself an alien being.

Bradford’s extensive critique of the Bolshevik revolution and its aftermath, “The Fall of Communism and the Triumph of Capitalism” in the Spring 1992 FE, is available for \$2.00 from our book service.

Defense of L&R

To the Fifth Estate:

FE #343, Fall/Winter 1993 contained two accounts of the “split” in Love and Rage this past summer, when many people involved in the network decided not to participate in it as a formal organization.

Liz Highleyman in “Love and Rage Splits” states that the “U.S. hardly seems on the brink of revolution and that any revolution that is not supported by a large segment of the population is by definition vanguardist and authoritarian.” While the United States may not seem to be on the brink of revolution, that brink may be reached more quickly than Highleyman assumes.

While living in Finland from 1989–1990, I spoke with people who were from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics. These societies were turned upside down practically over night. While anarchist revolution did not take place, which is naturally what we were hoping for, society was reorganized in a major way in a short period of time.

This change was not anticipated long before it happened. It would not be hard for one to imagine a similar situation occurring in the United States. The rebellion that erupted in the wake of the Rodney King verdict spread across the country and even resulted in the police station in my podunk fifty thousand person city being attacked by a mob. What would have happened had that situation escalated or if the Los Angeles rebels had smashed their municipal government and made LA an autonomous or liberated area?

E.B. Maple's article, "L&R: The Network Implodes" [FE #343, Fall-Winter, 1993] makes obviously false statements. I shall not address his implied accusations of Trotskyism aimed at Chris Day, since I'm sure Chris is capable of defending himself if he sees fit to do so. However, in stating "Day and his cadre," Maple implies not only that others in the organization are trotskysts, but that they are followers of Day.

The implication that people in Love and Rage are followers of Chris Day is just plain false. Everyone in the organization is capable of thinking for themselves and does so. Maple explains how Love and Rage from its inception has "functioned as a classic leftist organization."

Maple states that "administration 'of the modern world' is based on formal organizations and that it is difficult to differentiate Love and Rage from leftist organizations and capitalist parties. Among other things, he cites Love and Rage's "intricate governing bureaucracy" as a sign of this.

Is it not possible to conceive of a structure within which many people can work together equally, a structure which only facilitates activity and is not created to govern that activity? This is what Love and Rage is striving to create. The "intricate governing bureaucracy" is really quite simple and attempts to be egalitarian.

Maple cites "national programs" as a characteristic which Love and Rage shares with authoritarian leftist groups. Love and Rage's foci differ in significant ways from the national programs of left groups. Love and Rage foci on anti-racism, police brutality and immigration issues are worked on by people wishing to work on these issues on a broad scale in many areas at once. We coordinate our work on these issues in order to have a greater impact.

People working on these issues organize themselves non-hierarchically. They are not directed by anyone to work on these issues, unlike authoritarian left groups, in which members may be directed by a "leader." They do not take a patronizing, van-

guardist attitude when working with other groups and individuals.

We have formal membership in order to keep those not participating in the organization from being involved in decision making and to make sure that those in the organization are able to participate in decision making. To do this we must concretely know who considers themselves a part of the group and who doesn't.

Also, members can be assumed to have a basic level of commitment to the group and grasp of the ideas espoused by the group. To put out a paper, only a small collective may be needed. For greater coordination of activities between greater numbers of people, a more complex structure is necessary. This does not imply hierarchy.

The implication that Love and Rage flew its banner in Chattanooga to attract new recruits as a Marxist group would be lame. Banners are often flown with a group's name on it to indicate that group's support for the cause it is demonstrating for (in this case the banner indicated Love and Rage's anti-racist stance). However, I do not see what is wrong with an organization trying to attract, or recruit people who have corresponding politics, so long as recruiting does not become the focus of the group.

Finally, Maple concludes that "anarchy cannot be willed into being. It is like the wind, either it will blow our way or not." This sort of argument is used to show the futility of struggle and to rationalize not doing activist work.

Matt Miscreant
PO BX 7007
Santa Cruz, CA 95061

FE Note: With the grudging permission of the author, the above letter was extensively edited to conform to our policy guidelines. We think (and hope) we have maintained the core of his criticism of our articles. His complete letter is available from the above address.

E.B. Maple responds: When I look at L&R's structure which you assert is for the purpose of insuring internal democracy and see it replete with initials like CG, NC, PG, DB, etc., I think this qualifies as an "intricate governing bureaucracy" particularly in a group which aspires to anarchist principles. In any organization, whether it is government or Rotarians or leftists, such in-house formations always become fiefdoms of power and privilege for its participants and platforms from which to extend one's power base. It sounds just like the old RSL.

I only read about L&R and its problems, so perhaps the objections we sense from afar are best articulated by those who were directly involved:

Tommy Lawless, a former L&R paid facilitator, resigned from the group following the July 1993 conference and issued an internally circulated paper entitled, "Cutting Our Own Throats: Why I Won't Be A Member of Love and Rage RAF." In part she said, "Everything I thought L&R stood for in principle was violated at the conference in practice..." Further, "It is vile that this proposal [to institute membership] was passed by a minority—not even a majority of 51%." So much for L&R democracy.

Regarding our charges of manipulation by Day and his cadre: I never implied that my critique of the L&R inner core applied to the entire membership. In fact, I expressly said that most of them (perhaps you as well) were unaware of the manipulation and instrumental operations at the top. However, the most serious criticism of what we indicated has come recently from within the organization and perhaps to the extent of sounding the death knell for the federation.

Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, an ex-Black Panther and SNCC member, who spent years in jail for an airline hijacking, emerged from prison a committed anarchist. He recently linked his activities to L&R only to be rebuffed in his attempts to establish a black presence within a virtually all-white Movement.

Besides criticisms published in the L&R Discussion Bulletin, Komboa recently sent us a letter containing scathing criticisms of what he described as a "high-handed, arrogant organization, which reflects its leader's style." He characterized a January meeting in New York as "thoroughly undemocratic, and elitist to the core..." and as "skullduggery." He wrote further, "It is clear to me that the votes on these matters [to racially diversify the membership] meant nothing because Day and the NYC clique will undermine the decisions of the group as they have always done."

Komboa says in closing, "It turns out I was wrong about this group [L&R] and its potential...This group has some internal political and personal problems which are killing it, more than anything, Chris Day and the NYC clique...I renounce my membership in the organization."

Matt, L&R is a mess in the manner of all such formal organizations no matter what their intent. The desire to create the conditions for anarchist revolution is a worthy one, but it won't be facilitated by formal organizations.

Workers and people have always organized as fast as necessary at the flashpoint of a revolution as can be seen from Poland in 1980, the Worker-Student Action Committees of Paris 1968, the Workers Councils in Hungary in 1956 or the Factory Committees of the Russian workers in 1905 and 1917. The existing organizations proved to be either a brake on the revolution at hand or even its opponents.

I was shocked to realize how few people (about 40) actually were taking part in the L&R conference in San Diego, according to Lawless' account. Still, a collapse like L&R is experiencing grinds people down, burns them out, and drives good people out of solid, local work.

We've printed a paper, had demos and conferences, defended political prisoners and supported the international anarchist press, all without the hopeless baggage that L&R is being sunk by. And, when necessary we've been able to coordinate our activity nationally or internationally on a need-to basis.

When you lose valuable people like Tommy Lawless, Lorenzo Ervin and Liz Highleyman and are left with the streetfighters and the ex-RSLers, this seems like a good time for reflection on whether your experiment is working. I think the results are in.

The September 1993 L&R paper included a reference on page three to the RCP as "comrades." Time to pack it in, I'd say and let Day and his boys join the Spartacist League where they belong.

Merely Flirting

Hello:

The reaction to my response to the *Fifth Estate's* Queer Anarchy presentation (FE #343, Fall-Winter, 1993) sadly demonstrated the political correctness with which I was afraid some of you were merely flirting. Its personal nastiness is remarkable, especially given that I'm a regular contributor and considered somewhat of a comrade.

Liz's response is generally o.k., though I do disagree with many of her points. She asserts "there have been societies in which bisexual behavior was more or less universally "accepted," as if that's in opposition to my viewpoint. As I pointed out, most indigenous societies "accepted" non-heterosexual behavior.

Does she mean "universally practiced?" Accepted and practiced are two different things, I'm sure you'd agree, and even Walter Williams' book asserts that

“queer” behavior was practiced by a group which was far from a majority. Her assertion that I’m “defensive” also comes off the wall; she was the one who was unclear on what she meant by “options,” and I welcome her clarification. If she’s unclear on the impact of the word “hetero,” try “homo.” On the whole, though, I appreciated her part.

Sissy Sabotage came off like a moralistic, uptight, politically correct, leftist fanatic. His charge that I’m “homophobic,” which was repeated a number of times, is slanderous and without any basis whatsoever.

Am I homophobic simply because I criticize him, a bisexual? He managed to misquote me, saying I saw the Native Americans as merely “tolerant” of “non-heterosexuals”; I distinguished between acceptance and tolerance, and in fact made fun of the notion of tolerance. How he missed that I don’t know. The fact that you all missed that, or else were willing to overlook Sissy’s assertion, is rather disturbing.

Over the years, I’ve taken a lot of shit from “normals” for attacking heterosexism. I do not intend to take being labeled homophobic lying down. Sissy’s response to me typifies the self-righteousness among some radicals who happen to be gay or bisexual which I’ve encountered as far back as the ‘70s. It’s not a tendency I in any way wish to welcome and nurture in a revolutionary community. His notion of “heterosexual belief systems” demonstrates further a confused (or is it ideological?) identification of heterosexuality with heterosexism.

On a separate note, even more disturbing is Sissy’s statement that a national, continental or global anarchist society or movement seems not only “impossible,” but also “undesirable.” This seems like a retreat from genuine social transformation into a “do your own thing /create your own island of happiness” defeatism which has doomed past movements. This is what the mass media advance as their version of what contemporary radical/oppositional practice is, precisely because it suits their ends—the preservation of the status quo.

Hakim Bey may support such goals, but Bolo’Bolo most definitely does not; it very specifically sees a global transformation as necessary for its vision to come true. This should be a topic for a new full debate.

Jack Straw

Berkeley CA

Sissy Sabotage responds: If Jack Straw is so concerned with slanderous and unfounded intellectual attacks, why does he join the mudslinging foray by

calling me a “moralistic, uptight, politically correct leftist fanatic?”

What does he mean by his statement: “Am I homophobic simply because I criticize him, a bisexual?” Does he wish to imply my bisexuality somehow impairs my ability to know homophobia when I see it? While biphobia is quite prevalent among both heterosexuals and homosexuals, I am not usually persecuted for my heterosexuality, but I have experienced varying degrees of gay-bashing.

Straw is correct that I confused his tolerance v. acceptance distinction, but his notion of acceptance reminds me of what an unsympathetic friend recently said: “I accept you as a person, but I cannot embrace your lifestyle.” Does anyone recall the Church’s “Love the sinner, hate the sin” rhetoric?

I’m not at all confused about the connection between heterosexuality and heterosexism. In a homophobic society, heterosexuals who do not declare solidarity and sympathy with the cause of queer liberation support heterosexism. I’d love to hear more about how Straw has attacked heterosexism and taken “shit from normals,” and I’d especially like to know if there’s anything he would “take lying down.”

Let me clarify another point. I wholeheartedly advocate and agitate for the total and global transformation of society insofar as the destruction of the transnational grid of work and war is a necessary precursor to the genuine liberation of wilderness and its creatures.

How we construct our communities “after the revolution” should not be left to the position papers of professional dogmatists nor deter our imperative for constructing revolutionary, anti-authoritarian projects and communities now. Whether this transformation will come from a self-destructive implosion brought on by the deteriorating sway of monolithic, multinational capitalism or through prolonged, protracted and painful struggle by an army of revolutionaries (or neither) is the subject of much debate.

What I find undesirable is implementation of any form of anarcho-management to coordinate the infrastructure of a “global” society. The speculations of bobo’bobo are optimistic on these matters, but even that model would have its inevitable bureaucracy, hierarchy and pencil pushing misery.

While bolo’bolo suggests an intricate blueprint for “management” of an anarchist society on a global scale, it does not ignore, as Straw seems to, the need for autonomous communities within the larger community to develop and maintain a “cultural identity based on

common interests.” This notion (expressed on pp. 76–82 of *bolo’ bolo*) clearly provides an example of how our radical queer communities could flourish in a new society.

Web Archive note: see further responses in Letters, FE #345, Winter, 1995.

Unique Gift

Dear Editors:

Tragically Australia has the reputation for extirpating more mammals than any other country on earth. The plants, reptiles and insects are hardly even given a thought. There are a lot of “paper greenies” here; numerous reports, conferences, lots of badges and T-shirts are seen around, and that is where the commitment to our Mother Earth starts and stops.

We’ve established a 400-acre wildlife refuge protected from shooting and burning in the home of the ubiquitous cow. We are in the redneck capitol of Australia (Tasmania) not because we particularly desired to see the absolute worst of our fellow humans on a daily basis, but we could afford to buy the most land out of our own pockets. We would like to know if anyone else has decided to put themselves on a bit of mother earth to protect at least a little bit from rapacious nasties?

If so, do they get good support from others with the same feelings or do they get the blank smiles from professional greenies who dash back to their desks to write a letter of outrage or a report, but won’t put in an appearance or offer support.

If this sounds like a gripe, it is. The scum have declared war on the plants and animals and the best the activists can do is talk a good fight. Shame. Australians slaughtering and feeding on the unique gift Mother Earth bestowed on our part of the world. Not everyone is able to live on the land like we are, but everyone can stop eating meat and save several lives.

Yours for Mother Earth,
Molly Maguire
POB 124, Currie King Island
Tasmania 7256
Australia

Dissing The Poor?

Dear Fifth Estate:

I found E.B. Maple's book review [FE #341, Spring 1993] interesting in some of his word choices. First its title, "A Review of Five Books: Confronting Poverty and the Poor." The word confront most often means to stand in opposition to, and although it can mean to encounter, it is rarely used in that context.

Being a single mother of two, who lives well below the poverty line, I am confronted daily by the societal attitudes towards the poor. It's as if the complex social obstacles I encounter in my family's basic survival are my fault. This wears on my self-esteem.

I turn to publications such as the *Fifth Estate* seeking a different value system and attitudes. I often overlook the middle-class attitudes that seep onto your pages because I realize it takes time to overcome one's classist and racist attitudes and middle-class radicals are no exception. But this review forced me to confront these attitudes.

Further along in Maple's review there is a statistic that four of five low-income Detroit renters spend at least half their income on housing. Then there is a statement about the urban area surrounding the FE where there is a "...surfeit of homeless panhandlers who, having been kicked off the welfare rolls in 1991, find begging to be their last resort. More and more of the destitute prowl the streets..."

Being that four of five low-income renters in Detroit pay at least half of their income on housing, is it any wonder there is a surfeit of panhandlers in the Cass Corridor?

Surfeit is another interesting word choice. It means to overdo, or too great an amount. Considering the vast amount of poverty in Detroit, I find it surprising there aren't more panhandlers. The majority of homeless and/or low-income people are not out panhandling, but the panhandlers have done a valuable service for other homeless and low-income people, in that the problem of poverty has become more visible because of their numbers. Also, panhandlers in their encountering people of other classes have motivated actions such as the Food Not Bombs movement. Even if some of these actions come from white, liberal guilt or token radicalism, when you're hungry you don't care if the bowl of rice in front of you was put there because of guilt or is just a token. But don't be fooled, after the hungry have been fed, we do engage in critical analysis of the motivating forces of those who give the rice.

Maple's sentence, "More and more of the destitute prowl the streets..." is another interesting word

choice. Prowl is defined as to roam about furtively, as in search of prey or loot, and is synonymous with lurk. Does Maple feel preyed upon because the poor ask for quarters or returnable bottles? I understand the humiliation of refusing the poor, but I miss the humiliating factor of giving?

Fran Shor's article "Love & Anarchy" (FE #341, Spring 1993) might be a good place to start if you want to change. His section on "Spiritual Love: Anarchy and the Quest for Communion" is excellent. "Spiritual love also inheres in the struggles of those who because of the persistence of oppressive hierarchies are either dishonored or treated with disrespect because of their color or gender or class. We can learn from their efforts of communion..."

We continue to be part of oppressive hierarchies when we continue to dishonor and disrespect others because of their color, gender, and/or class. Maple was disrespectful to the woman who approached him and asked for a quarter, by not even looking up. From my reading of Maple's article there is/ was a whole lot of fear and disrespect of the poor in his/her environment.

404 would be another good place for Maple to start figuring out what to give. At present there is a vegan soup kitchen on Sundays. [FE note: 404 has closed recently; see article elsewhere in issue.] If more FEers and readers got involved in the soup kitchen aspect of 404, it could be open more often. Then when people came up to you to ask for a quarter to get something to eat, you could look them in the eye and say, "Oh, you want to get something to eat? I know a place down the street that's open with free food."

The last word choice of Maple's I'd like to bring attention to is, "...those who choose a downward lifestyle..." What does that mean? Is there something wrong with choosing a downward lifestyle? If we are ever to achieve communion with our environment, we are all going to have to choose a downward lifestyle. I personally did not choose a downward lifestyle, but rather had it forced on me. However, when I ignore the system, I consume far less than most; I feed the trash incinerator less.

Hoffman's book, *The Art and Science of Dumpster Diving*, sounds interesting because I dumpster dive and wish more people would. I can't bear the thought of how many good things we burn each day. I sell books I find to John King Books, clothes to Showtime, and odds and ends at flea markets while I am reducing, re-using and recycling. I give vast amounts of clothes away that I first clean.

From dumpster diving at Eastern Market, I cut my grocery bills and share tons of food with other low-income people. Gross you might think, but a huckster leaves discarded cases of tomatoes and I come along and grab them. I discard the truly rotten ones and turn the rest into sauce. Too much for me and my family, so I give the remainder to fellow social activists and take the rest to the 404 soup kitchen.

C. Rattz
Detroit

E.B. Maple replies: I re-read my review and from a subjective standpoint, it's hard to find the attitudes in it C. Rattz ascribes to me. However, truth is in the eyes of the beholder, as the cliché goes, so maybe my attempt to write compassionately about the plight of the poor was not as successful as I intended.

Certainly I wish she could have been present to edit the article. Encounter is a better term than confront; prowl was meant to convey what those kicked off the welfare roles by a heartless governor are forced to do, but I would have chosen another verb; surfeit means exactly that, too many, although the categories of rich and poor are particular to class society and are what we strive to eliminate. And, of course, ending commodity society would mean a drastic reduction of products of all kinds, not universal dumpster diving.

What I find gross is the way the rich live, not what the poor and destitute do to maintain a bare hold on the necessities of life. I don't fear the poor and I certainly don't disrespect them. On the other hand, I am not obliged to respond to every person who greets or accosts me on the street. Regardless of your feelings toward the poor, isn't it a nuisance to be asked for money by four men in a period of twenty minutes? Also, I don't think they would have been satisfied with offers of food.

Their purpose is financial, masked by a friendly greeting, and although this is understandable given economic conditions, the falsity and persistence, like any business encounter, is not pleasurable. Ultimately, I will decide who I respond to and on what basis, not in pre-scripted terms.

Why is it humiliating to give to the poor? I find it embarrassing for the person (a fellow human being, reduced in status because of wealth distribution under capitalism) who has to beg. He/she is the object of my/our arbitrary decision to give or withhold charity. When granted, the recipient humbly thanks me, as I wrote in "The War on the Poor" (FE #338, Winter 1992), in a manner like, "Oh, thank you, sir, thank

you, God bless you, sir,' sounding like a voice out of a Dickens novel." In my estimation, this relationship of non-equals is humiliating to both parties.

Finally, I don't need remedial help on relations with the poor. Although I'm from a middle-class background, I went to inner-city Detroit schools, have lived in poverty areas, and rarely earn over what constitutes a working-class income.

We at the *Fifth Estate* produce this paper and do other political work including actions in support of the poor and homeless. I think others less involved in community projects are the proper targets for your suggestions.

The above-mentioned issues are available for \$2 each.

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Various Authors
Letters to the Fifth Estate
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<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/344-summer-1994/letters-to-the-fifth-estate>
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