

Letters to the FE

Various Authors

1996

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.

New Definition

Dear Fifth Estate:

Congratulations on your 30th anniversary! It's been a while since I sent you any money as I never seem to have any myself, but here's a little to thank you for the work you've done and to encourage your continued survival. From the integrity of Bradford to the poetry of Perlman, the *Fifth Estate* remains an inspiration.

I take issue however, with the odd explanation of your name given in the anniversary issue (see "What Does 'Fifth Estate' Mean?" sidebar in "History of the Fifth Estate," FE #347, Spring, 1996). When a name or phrase has no commonly accepted meaning, it is important to give it one that reflects its actual use in the world. I offer the following:

fifth estate, n. the people themselves, the true source of all political power. Distinguished from the traditional four estates with political power (clergy, nobility, bourgeoisie, and the press).

W. Mark Schneider

Los Altos Hills, Calif.

Stupid Sports Logo

Dear FE:

Americans have it easy with bear species, the North American black bear being easily the least aggressive. Virtually every other type of bear—polar, sloth, Asian black, grizzly, Kodiak—are among the most hostile and dangerous of carnivores. Lions are mostly disinterested, leopards are circumspect, and tigers, who are on top of the food chain in some of the most populous areas of the world, only very rarely prey on humans. Hyenas, wolves, etc., are in general, no danger at all to humans.

Partly due to a poor facial musculature, bears have limited ability to warn off interlopers. An encounter with other carnivores can be terrifying even if nothing happens, whereas bears tend to act a little spaced, then lumber

off seemingly benign. Unless of course, you're actually attacked—in which case I'm sure the Grizzly Project won't be soliciting your opinion. (See "Tales from the Planet," FE #347, Spring 1996).

Now, about the stupid [Vancouver Grizzlies] sports logo. I would sooner condemn it for bad taste than because it represents a bear's more savage aspect. Would the Grizzly Project have preferred something more Disneyesque, a la "The Lion King?"

What is being said here? The individual Viking Berserkers were inspired by the bear's predatory fervor, and before such practices were codified and held, they stood as one of the most potentially liberating responses to Leviathan. But perhaps Yogi Bear is more edifying.

This whole thing is reminiscent of the animal rights theorists whose contrived vision has as much to do with nature as Christianity has to do with love. Fury, predation, and attack are part of Nature's raiment, and those who would rather imagine our predators out in the woods playing pattycake maybe shouldn't indulge their fantasies in a public forum, least of all the FE.

I want an end to civilization also, but I face that prospect with fewer preconceptions as to what it means to be an animal...or to be human:

By the way, I love the name, *Fifth Estate*. To me it says "we the uncategorized; we who don't belong." Please don't change it.

John Filiss
Port Jervis, N.Y

Radical Enviros

Dear Fifth Shanty:

I think your name is just fine. Your point about recognition/continuity is extremely important. The radical enviro community has not learned this lesson. Many abandon or utilize the *Earth First!* name as it suits them.

Jason Halbert
Warfordsburg, Penn.

Tract Plaque

Dear Fifth Estate:

Regarding the Czolgosz article (See "The Michigan Roots of Leon Czolgosz," FE #347, Spring 1996), I went to Buffalo in 1967 to attend the university there, and spent a bit of time looking for the "monument" to his attentat and finally discovered it! There was a small rock with a plaque in front of a semi-suburban tract house—no mention of Leon at all.

Bernard
San Francisco, Calif.

Real Bullets Flew

To the Fifth Estate:

I am a long time subscriber. "Reclaim the Streets," from your "Tales From The Planet," (FE #347, Spring 1996) prompts my first commentary on your usually excellent analyses and reporting. I thought that Anarchy means building cooperative alternatives to the present exploitative, force-based system. Since when does it mean acting like spoiled, arrogant jerks?

What does it mean to protest "the overuse of private motorcars?" Who judges? What is "overuse?" Is it simply a matter of one person choosing to drive when another would use alternate transportation? I notice the article does not mention that the protesters eschew automobiles altogether.

How does forcing hundreds of run-of-the-mill individuals to accede to the agendas of a self-appointed few build community? Did the workers and students whose lives were disrupted consent? Was their consent even asked? Did anyone stop to think that delaying emergency equipment can cause needless deaths from fire and medical trauma? How does it threaten the power structure? Do juvenile antics accomplish anything more than alienating folks who share a leaky boat with us, making the many want the cops to show up and bash heads?

Self-appointed Yuppies in this part of the world employ similar tactics. They remind me of the daddy-got-money anti-warriors of the '60s and early '70s who had kid-with-a-new-toy fun playing evolutionary until real bullets flew at Kent State. They lost interest entirely when Tricky Dick ended the draft. Their false community was more destructive than anything the Government could have done to destroy faith in cooperative living.

Isn't building bridges more sensible than burning them? Isn't it presumptuous to excommunicate people because we disagree with their choices? Isn't leading by example more effective than pontificating, affecting great wisdom, and pretending to possess moral and intellectual superiority?

Yours for a thoughtful, non-coercive, future,

Daniel R. Schenck

St. Helens, Oregon

How Many Words?

Greetings:

In your last issue you state [in "History of the Fifth Estate" below a quote from the FBI] "the above twelve-word summary by the nation's secret police serves adequately as an abbreviated history of this paper..." I think if you count the number of words, you will find only nine.

The article otherwise was very informative. At the time, I was sailing in the merchant marine—carrying bombs and beer to Vietnam.

A very good book on that era is *Thy Will Be Done—The Conquest of The Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in The Age of Oil* by Gerard Colby and Charlotte Dennett, Harper Collins, 1995. I would rank this book alongside Ferdinand Lundberg's, *The Rich & The Super-Rich* or G. William Domhoff's, *The Higher Circles*, for the insight it gives. The same forces that were at work subduing the natives of Vietnam were subduing the native peoples of South and Central America—CIA, AID, etc.

Robert M. Mills

Birmingham, Ala.

FE Note: Congratulations. You are the only reader to have passed our minimum intelligence test. However, the author and the rest of our staff who counted the words all flunked.

Welcome Back

To the Fifth Estate:

I'm back [as a subscriber] after a 18-year hiatus. I'm including a \$2 prisoner donation.

Wm. Hancock

Frankfort, Ky.

Techno-Nightmare

Dear Friends:

I really enjoyed the back issues you sent me; you guys are right on target, for the most part. Its a pleasure to read some real technological criticism without having to search a used book store for a couple of days.

Plus, I'm stuck here in Kentucky, where everybody is turning into a faithful believer in the techno-nightmare. Our industrial recruiters are promising our bodies and minds to the highest bidder (and the more polluting the better).

Can I make a suggestion? I'd give just about anything to see an article on Jacques Ellul in the FE. He's the one who really opened my eyes to the truth about technology. It's unfortunate that he's never mentioned anywhere; I've been reading his books for years and know almost nothing about him.

Now would be a good time to do an article about him, since he died in 1994. His memory needs to be kept alive!

Jeff McFadden

Somewhere in Kentucky

FE Best Defense

Dear Fifth Estate:

First of all, thanks. Thanks for hanging in there in spite of all the struggles and more related in your "History of the Fifth Estate" last issue. Reading the FE is the best defense I have against the inanity that assaults me everyday, coming at me from the media, the government, and the arts.

Included are a few things for you, just for your information. I enjoyed very much your articles on WWI, the Wobs, and the Shell murders. I am getting my IWW poems ready for printing. Several presses have taken them on only to drop them.

Too many years of waiting. I'll do them myself. The broadside is the first from my press. The booklet, one of three others by Dennis Formento and Gary Lawless. The Ken Saro Wiwa poem because of your article. Stay well. You folks are important, don't forget it. In the midst of the squabbling that always goes with this territory, don't forget.

Joe Napora

Ashland, Ky.

Dioxin & Tree Mush

Hi there,

After 30 years of doing this, you still want money? How many reams were spent decrying the stuff? You need value—reified and reified eventually into sparks flitting from one node to another. Signals that are converted into sustenance by the activated protein masses being human. In such a sense, this medium here has little value; the intent is not to pollute your bodies with dioxin and tree mush.

Some fanzine given away in a roomstore shared with Factsheets5 and Zerzan and Bukowski being offered for \$ reminded me with tones of righteous indignation that banks make money like magic—out of thin air. The depositor's money is not touched; that's just collateral, so every loan that comes back to them—plus interest—did not exist before said customer made it real by buying his/her whatever. So, the national debt we are told to be slaves to is a monstrous fiction. 'Tis mind boggling

We have victories, puny though they may be like soldiers, recovering from flesh wounds to get back in the battle. Little Sisters bookstore winning their case against Canada Customs; folks having charges laid under an arcane law—intimidating the legislature!—dropped by the Crown; likewise for anti-poverty activists arrested in an action prompted by the welfare minister; and a small public service union fighting the government to a standstill. Yeah, such strange alliances our enemies put us into.

Pause too long and groovy screen saver comes up; wait long enough and get slapped with a corporate icon. There is no escape, and to think this machine is "owned" by a Stalinist.

Peace & Love,

Stu Vickars

Toronto

A Queer Commune.

Howdy y'all:

Greetings from down under the hill in Tennessee. I've been reading the Spring 1996 FE and it inspired me to write to you, subscribe, and send a donation to help out.

How to express myself from this backwards, upside down, inside out hollow to your urban sensibilities? It is—a trip living at a queer commune amidst the buckle of the Southern Baptist bible belt. You may have heard of Tennessee's recent resolution encouraging the public posting of the 10 Commandments. Surrounded by beauty, not too far from Watts Bar Nuke Plant, chip mills, the homes of Al Gore and Andrew Jackson, in a county where you can't buy wine.

How do we survive, you might wonder? Well, for starters, we make lots of homemade wine and beers which taste better than Stroh's. And garden. And party. And play music. And laugh, which sometimes seems like the only thing left to do after mourning.

The most challenging part of my life is coping with AIDS as so many friends die, and now my boyfriend, Spree, has AIDS.

We have been together seven and a half years and all of his vomiting, weight loss, etc. breaks my heart regularly. With winter over (sort of) he seems to be regaining vitality.

We performed last month at a conference in Cleveland called "Performing AIDS," and Spree had an incredible amount of energy. People laughed and cried; I was jubilant to see the impact we could have, to share zaniness/pain wrapped together.

We walk a strange tightrope between alternative treatments and the medical establishment. We take everything the white coats say with a grain of salt and we also watch out for New Age charlatans peddling medical cures. So, he'll take drugs and miso; hospital examinations and wild salads.

How many friends of mine have died in the last year? A dozen or two!! Including a roommate from Ann Arbor. It fucks with my mind and challenges me not to be constantly numb. Spree is definitely scared at times, not so much of dying, but of the misery and suffering we have witnessed so many friends go through. But he also has an amazing beauty and irreverent strength that helps us savor the pleasures he can handle.

Like walking through the woods, down the late winter/early spring road. Past the wildflowers, whites, yellows, purples, pinks (soon red too); green shooting up everywhere. Seems like just yesterday I was holding him as the temperature plunged below zero and we couldn't keep our uninsulated homes warm no matter how much wood we burned. Now he blossoms as we walk past the flowers, past the waterfall across from our mailbox, gushing spring fluids and drowning out bird songs with its effervescent echoes off the hills.

Three creeks merge there (one flows out of a nearby cave which houses numerous bats of an endangered species). And there is a huge patch of chickweed on the rocky bank, my favorite salad bar this winter (along with various wild onions and cress that stayed green throughout the cold days). We pick our salad and head home—two miles round trip and we don't pass any moving vehicles. I love it.

I love that he can walk. Last fall he Couldn't, until the lesions on his feet were zapped and he recovered from the horrendous side effects. Again, the technology and the doctors are frightening. But so is AIDS. There's no easy answer. There's no answer. So we continue to pick our salads and herbs.

And as spring moves forward, the variety of edible greens increase. New violets, trout lily, toothwort, claytonia and pansy flowers are common. Our early crops are up: peas, radishes, spinach, lettuce, chard, carrots, onions. And garlic—the one crop we are self-sufficient in (we grew about 2,000 garlic plants last year for us and Short Mountain Sanctuary).

We put in our first potatoes last week, and planted more than 1,000 onions. The more I eat the food we grow, the harder it becomes to appreciate food shipped from California, Florida or Texas. Fresh food hits the spot and feels as valid a medicine for Spree as anything a doctor can prescribe. One of the greatest things for me last year was watching our tiller break, and then having to make new garden beds with shovels, not petroleum machines which are loud and ugly.

A few miles away is logging world, tobacco fields, cattle grazing, factories in town (eight miles away) and the general misery of capitalism. There ain't no escaping, but it's still fun to live the fantasy of creating (some of) our

own reality in the midst of the mist in the woods by the creek near grandmother's house not too far from Christian technocracy.

Which brings me to the point of why I'm writing—to thank y'all for continuing to put out a fabulous provocative paper, one of the few print things left in the world that makes my heart sing with liberatory desire.

MaxZine
Dowelltown, Tenn.

Enforced Idleness

Dear Fifth Estate:

I recently was loaned a copy of your 30th Anniversary issue and enjoyed reading it very much.

I understand that prisoner subscriptions are free, so please start one for me I have a year left of my sentence. Lots of time for reading as I was sentenced to enforced idleness.

I read that you are short of money, so even though the subscription is free, I will enclose a donation of \$2 with this letter. Doesn't sound like much, but when your total cash income is \$15 a month, it's quite a hit. Wish I could do more.

James L. Knight
Dixon, Ill.

Poorly Dispatched

Dear Fifth Estate:

I subscribed to your newspaper around February this year and received my first copy yesterday. I was just about to write and ask what was happening.

But when your paper arrived yesterday it was just folded over with a little hard-to-see address sticker on it, with no postage markings on it. I'm absolutely surprised it was delivered to me at all. I have never seen anything so poorly dispatched in all my years.

Maybe for international mail you could at least cello tape the newspaper closed so it can't unfold or unravel in transit, or possibly put it in a paper bag or something so the address label and postage markings stand out clearer.

John Glue
Cooktown, Australia

No Primitivist

Dear FE:

Sorry to say that I won't be renewing my subscription. I apologize for not responding sooner and am enclosing a couple of bucks to cover your last few wasted letters.

I just don't feel we have much in common any more. I was never a major primitivist, and have actually evolved somewhat away from "left" anarchism to "right" anarchism (libertarianism)—not that I would ever do anything as disgusting as vote or support Libertarian Party politics.

Also, funds are really low these days and I just don't have the "big bucks" to throw around like I used to. Kind of ironic that now that I've become a "capitalist," I'm more destitute than ever.

So long, it's been good to know ya.
Al Medwin
Farmingdale, N.J.

Our Voices

To Fifth Estate staff and readers:

Thanks to the *Fifth Estate* for the mention of *Kick It Over* in your last issue. As you noted, KIO is still alive and kicking, just a little less regularly these days.

It's the money thing that's slowing us down. Like most of the anarchist press, *Kick It Over* does not pay for itself. Rather, the magazine depends, as do most such projects, on the generosity of our readers and the commitment of those Who put it together to make up the costs beyond what subscriptions and newsstand sales bring in. Recent steep rises in paper and postage expenses have exacerbated the situation.

Kick It Over receives a large number of publications from across North America and around the world, anarchist, feminist, ecology and other alternative papers and zines. Over the last several months, I've noticed a disturbing rise in the number of appeals for funds in these publications. Even long-standing and well-respected projects are having money problems (note the appeal in the last FE, for instance).

So, this is an appeal to Fifth Estate readers on behalf of not only *Kick It Over* and the *Fifth Estate*, but for all anarchist projects and publications. In these days when the dominance of capital is expanding so rapidly, when the forces of authority and repression are strengthening their grip, and when truly alternative voices are becoming harder and harder to find, it is now more than ever vital that you support the anarchist press and other media projects.

These are our media, our means of communicating among ourselves and with others of like mind. And, it's up to us to keep these voices alive.

For *Kick It Over*,
Bob Melcombe
PO Box 5811, Stn. A,
Toronto ON M5W 1P
Canada

FE Note: For information on how to order Watson's Vietnam essay with its introduction by historian Richard Drinnon, see our book page.

Right-Wing Anarchism

Dear Fifth Estate:

I sent a copy of *Green Apocalypse* to you before, but for some reason it was returned. I thought something might be up with you, so I was especially pleased to see issue #347.

As you can see from GA, we've been having some problems with Green Anarchist. Their letter in your Spring 1996 issue is pretty much par for the course. Like the Unabomber, they offer a right-wing version of anarchism, and are now latching on to primitivism. Anyone who criticises them is accused of "siding with state assets" when they're not accused of actually being state assets.

I don't understand why anyone except right-wing bozos would give the Unabomber the time of day. We've been active in the alternative publishing scene for a couple of decades publishing revolutionary news and views. We have been part of a world-wide network which has been generating debate and reflection on all sorts of struggles across the world.

Rather than taking part in this unglamorous work, the Unabomber is so infatuated with his own ideas that he threatened to murder people unless his second rate ideas were published in the mainstream media. What a shit! Rather than participate in the slow and sometimes painful process of collectively developing a discussion with people across the world, the Unabomber adopts the pose of a Lex Luther, an asocial genius whose ideas will "change the world."

When we get to read these "wonderful" ideas, what do we get?—a heap of reactionary bullshit. His tirade against "over-socialised leftists" smacks of warmed up left-overs from Frederick Nietzsche. O.K., he's against technology,

but this comes from an anti-modernist, right-wing perspective. For those who can't figure it out themselves, the Unabomber spells it out when he suggests that:

"The people whose behaviour is fairly well under the control of the system are those of the type that might be called 'bourgeois.' But there are growing numbers of people who in one way or another are rebels against the system: welfare leeches, youth gangs, cultists, Satanists, Nazis, radical environmentalists, militiamen, etc." (Thesis 161)

This is just reactionary elitism, and shows the Unabomber up for the scum s/he is. It comes as no surprise that Green Anarchist reproduced the *Manifesto* and offers accolades to the Unabomber, as this fits in with their own right-wing agenda. But I am surprised that others haven't condemned the Unabomber not simply as an 'embarrassment' but as a reactionary.

In the 'twenties and 'thirties, reactionary left-wing parties like the Social Democrats and the Communist Parties tried to offer alliances with revolutionaries on the basis of a shared discourse around class. Those who entered such alliances soon found out at their peril the consequences of such pacts, e.g. the 1937 May Days in Barcelona.

From this experience it is clear that those who are ready to push technological progress aside in favour of the world human community have nothing to gain from aligning themselves with people who make a fetish of the struggle against technology. It doesn't matter whether these creeps remain in the right-wing sewers of the militia movement, or pose as anarchists.

Anyway, I should have some more bits and pieces to send you soon—a Hakim Bey scandal in Italy and a discussion of primitivism in Detroit which is to appear in *Transgressions* #2.

In Solidarity,
Fabian Tompsett
Unpopular Books
Box 15, 136 Kingland High Road
London E8 2NS, England

FE Note: Write to the above address for a catalog of interesting anti-authoritarian titles.

Neither Victim

Fifth Estate:

In "Looking Back on the Vietnam War: History and Forgetting" (FE #346, Summer 1995), David Watson quotes Frances Fitzgerald's statement that American officers called the area outside Government of Vietnam control "Indian country." Fitzgerald adds, "It was a joke, of course, no more than a figure of speech," but in fact there is a declassified 1963 Pentagon film that has to be seen to be believed.

This 32-minute film, called "Kennedy's Cold War—keeping the Commies Covered"—is available from MPI Home Video (MP 1423, 1988). I highly recommend it to those wishing to see how the world was viewed by the Kennedy Administration, and how (at the time) only the eyes of CIA, State Department, and military personnel were to view the world. There is so much packed into it, I'll only cover the "Indian Fighters" part.

The film comments on "communist infiltration and subversion using guerrilla hit-and-run warfare" portraying the strategic hamlets as stockaded forts "strongly reminiscent of the American past." They relate that "once more fighting is on a primitive level" and "the techniques are those of the Indian fighter, the scout: more silently, use the concealment of woods, swamp, or jungle. Strike fast and hard." They also bring "heroes" of the past such as Roger's Rangers and Francis Marion "the Swamp Fox" as examples of some of the many "precedents in our history for some of the fighting methods used today. Guerrilla warfare is a new challenge, but an age old technique."

It appears to me that it was a war of mythological proportions, but also a war like all wars, i.e., murder. I found Albert Camus's questions in *Neither Victims nor Executioners* to be profound:

"To come to terms, one must understand what fear means, what it implies and what it rejects. It implies and rejects the same fact: a world where human life is considered trifling. This is the great political question of our times, and before dealing with other issues, one must take a position on it.

“Before anything can be done, two questions must be put: ‘Do you or do you not, directly or indirectly, want to be killed or assaulted? Do you or do you not, directly or indirectly, want to kill or assault?’ All who say no to both these questions are automatically committed to a series of consequences which must modify their way of posing the problem.”

Gregg Walker
Cambridge, MA

“A” Is Very Green

FE Note: The following came to us after our response to a pro-marxist newsletter we received from the group RSRA. We included a copy of the Spring 1992 *Fifth Estate* which includes George Bradford’s essay, “The Fall of Communism; The Triumph of Capital.” See book page for ordering information.

To The Fifth Estate:

Thank you for the copies of the *Fifth Estate* and your note. While we are not about to take down the picture of Marx and Engels from the wall and put up the black flag, we always want to pay attention and enter into the thoughts of others.

We have read Bradford’s article “The Triumph of Capital,” some of the most serious anarchist writing we have read. We are educated, but not converted.

Time does not permit a full opinion of it now. We hope to incorporate our thoughts in an RSRA article in October.

We did learn this: The anarchists have a big beef with the Marxists because they say whether you are a capitalist democratic society or a Marxist collective society, it’s all the same. Both groups are run by capital, whether private or state. We have always suspected this but have never read a more detailed and documented account of it. This tie ‘between the two systems certainly is and has always been the case.

Our response to this situation is that you must take it as a given, and go on from there. Our view of Modern Communism is tied to the simple Marx quote, “From each according to his abilities and to each according to his needs.”

The anarchists are very serious. Their fulfillment depends upon the downfall of both systems, a pretty large agenda, but not out of the question. We feel that if this scenario were to happen, it would not be sudden or soon, but several lifetimes away. In the meantime, society is best served by leaning toward Marxism.

The black A is very green. This somehow surprised us. But a full reading of Bradford’s article clarifies how green anarchy has to be. We approve of this thought yet at the same time are suspicious of things green.

We will pay more serious attention to anarchist writing in the future.

Edward Campbell
RSRA
PO Box 907
Astoria OR 97103

**NOTICE TO BOOK STORES, STUDY GROUPS, OR FOR OTHER BULK ORDERS OF BEYOND BOOKCHIN:
PREFACE FOR A FUTURE SOCIAL ECOLOGY BY DAVID WATSON Contact Black & Red, PO Box 02374, Detroit
MI 48202 or Autonomedia, PO Box 568, Williamsburgh Sta., Brooklyn NY 11211.**

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fifth Estate

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