

Letters to the Fifth Estate

Various Authors

2000

Fifth Estate Letters Policy

We welcome letters commenting on our articles, stating opinions, or giving reports of events in your area. We don't guarantee to print everything received, but all letters are read by our staff and considered for publication.

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 longer responses, please contact us.

A Plea To Vote

Hey, Guys:

Once again, I'm going to break with the ranks and plead with you to vote. We really do have the power to elect at least a few radical politicians. We're close out here to getting some Pacific Greens elected.

I know Peter probably won't be swayed, but does anyone really know the difference between an anarchist and an apathetic citizen at the polls? My guess is that they just think people don't care, not that it's a protest against the system.

Jeremy Emmi

Lake Oswego, Oregon

Peter Werbe (an apathetic citizen and an anarchist) replies: I'm probably mentioned by name since I've written the most in these pages over the years describing the validity of the anarchist principle rejecting electoralism. In fact, so much so that I can't bring myself to marshal the traditional arguments I've repeated so often. Any one else? Feel free.

I would only say, "The Greens in office? Whoopee!" That's been a marvelous development in Germany where the granddad of the Green parties is part of the ruling coalition led by the Social Democrats. In June, the government announced an austerity program, which is a major attack on workers' standard of living, and the Minister of Defense (a Green) lustily prosecuted NATO's war against Yugoslavia. If that's not enough to make you rip up your voter card, I don't think anything will.

Dear Fifth Estate:

I was very pleased with the review by Julie Herrada in your Summer 1999 issue of my biography of Jo Labadie, *All-American Anarchist: Joseph A. Labadie and the Labor Movement* (see "Life of a Detroit Anarchist"). She conveyed very well a sense of Labadie's controversial yet engaging personality and his lifelong commitment to anarchist ideals.

Those interested in more information about Labadie, including selections from his essays and poetry, might like to visit the website I set up at: <http://members.acom/labadiejo>.

Carlotta Anderson
Glen Echo, Maryland

Are You MAD?

To The Fifth Estate:

Wouldn't it be strange if the world was thrown into anarchy because of the Y2K computer crisis, but few anarchists survived or lived to see it?

Kudos for Kyle Holbrooke's article (see "The Year 2000 for Revolutionaries," Summer 1999 FE) which summarized the gravity of the problem—which will effect all of us, not the other guy or the other country. I hope all readers took the time to read the entire essay on-line and have already done the measures he recommended on page 27. [FE Note: the complete article is available from worldonfire@hotmail.com.]

If you don't, you're playing Russian roulette, only this time there's only one empty chamber and the rest have bullets.

I would strongly advise people to do the most important things: Make sure they have a heated shelter.

1) Buy a wood stove if you can now-before everyone else does. Whether you can or not, buy plenty of warm clothing—long underwear, heavy mittens, and a polar sleeping bag.

2) Buy large water containers and fill them in December. Without clean water, you're dead in three days.

3) Buy a camp toilet or make your own. A non-flushing toilet will stink you crazy.

4) Buy several months of food and candles or an oil lantern.

5) Instead of talking to your neighbors and friends, get on the Internet and educate yourself, pronto. The most comprehensive site is www.garynorth.com with over 4,000 indexed articles:

If you don't have computer access, read The Millennium Bug. Having a month's worth of cash is good, but only after you've prepared yourself. You must prepare now or you'll be part of the December panic when the procrastinators finally prepare. It's your choice.

Russel Lane
Smithville, Tenn.

Peter Werbe responds: North was one of the major purveyors of MAD (Millennium Anxiety Disorder) and reading material on his site probably convinced the visitor that the sky would, indeed, fall on New Year's Day 2000. North has been criticized as having a right wing agenda, so if you check out his info, be forewarned.

I was taught to "Be Prepared" during my unhappy stint in that paramilitary youth group, the Boy Scouts, so it didn't seem as though Russel suggested anything that wouldn't be prudent under any circumstances as a hedge against natural or manmade disasters (gender specific pronoun intentional). However, I find the End Days mentality that often comes along with preparedness to be distressing. In any event, the direst consequences never occurred, so there's a lot of people with a lot of freeze-dried food on hand.

No Verbal Revo

As-Salaam Ataikum:

Overall, I feel FE is a very good publication. My opinion on some issues differ somewhat, but that's to be expected. We would be no better than sheep if we all went along with every idea given us.

I can understand ignoring what Teddy K. [editorial note: Kaczynski] has to say or has done, but to go out of your way to criticize any party for striking out against our shared corporate/government oppressors seems counterproductive.

While he accomplished little or nothing on the face of his direct action campaign, he did, in fact, act in furtherance of his beliefs (which is more than can be said for all too many so-called "activists" and "revolutionaries" these days). He showed by example that a long term direct action campaign can be carried out if only one puts their brain and ass in gear and gets to it.

We can't talk the corporate elite into giving control of society back to the people.
Freedom will eventually have to be taken and there is no such thing as a "verbal" revolution.
Tear down the Walls! Free Mumia! Peace, my brothers,
Nasir Abdul-Khabir
Attica, N.Y.

Shades of Berkman

Dear Friends:

I am a prisoner at SCI-Greene, Pennsylvania's super-max penitentiary, and will be in the "hole" for the foreseeable future. This is because myself and five other convicts escaped from Western Penitentiary in Pittsburgh through a tunnel which we dug under the wall.

Unfortunately for me, the Department of Corrections considers me to have been responsible for the planning and much of the execution of the tunnel. As a consequence, not only must I remain in this 10' by 6' cell 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but put up with the retaliation which the authorities see fit to impose, in addition to the sanctions handed down by the courts.

Regardless, I knew the issues involved when I undertook the task of acquiring freedom without consent and there is little for me to do now, but ride it out.

It would be much easier to pass these long days if I could keep busy, and you could help by placing me on your mailing list.

Peace to you all,
Name withheld

FE Note: This is an absolutely amazing letter since it parallels almost exactly the experience of Alexander Berkman 100 years ago. Berkman, an anarchist comrade of Emma Goldman, was in the eighth year of a 22-year sentence for attempting to assassinate the industrialist Henry Clay Frick during the 1892 Homestead strike in Pittsburgh.

On July 26, 1900, officials discovered a 300-foot tunnel underneath the same prison, Western Penitentiary, as the inmate above tried to escape from in an identical manner. Berkman's friends on the outside had devised an elaborate plan to free their comrade from the oppressive prison. Their attempt was also unsuccessful. Prison officials unsuccessfully tried to tie Berkman to the tunnel and he served another four years.

The story of Berkman's attempt is available in the Spring 1992 Fifth Estate, or in Berkman's Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist, or Goldman's Living My Life, all of which are available from our book service.

Final Donation

To the Fifth Estate:

Enclosed is my final donation. Don't put me on your subscription list. At the rate of, what—two issues a year?; I couldn't stand the suspense of waiting for them to come out.

Name Withheld
Kitchener, Ontario

33 for Ted?

Dear All:

It's now been two years since Ted Kaczynski was sentenced to multiple life terms for the 1978–95 Unabombing campaign, following a farcical trial in Sacramento. Ted's currently appealing his conviction.

After the trial, Ted was sent to the notorious Florence supermax, Colorado, where he's been denied visits from everyone except journalists, who he generally doesn't want to talk to.

Ted's main contact with the outside world has been by mail, publishers Context Books covering postage costs. Now Ted's rebuttal to smears against him by his family and the media, *Truth v Lies*, is not being published, he is no longer receiving this mail money. [note: see article on this elsewhere in this issue.]

The Friends of Ted Kaczynski has been formed to cover Ted's mailing costs. A donation of just 30 cents will pay for a letter out, so please support this anarchist political prisoner! Send your donations—preferably well-hidden cash dollars to POB 11331, Eugene OR 97402; or BCM 1715, London WC1N 3XX, UK, clearly marked "Friends of Ted Kaczynski" (cheques payable to John Zerzan).

Yours for the destruction of civilization,

George Woodsel

Friends of Ted Kaczynski

London, England

Peter Werbe replies: Thirty or thirty-three cents for Ted? Sure, but a friend of Ted? I don't think so.

The letter above was accompanied by a request to print a display ad as well showing a photo of Kaczynski with a halo drawn over his head.

Perhaps a good way to determine whether "Ted" is an anarchist deserving of support, or a highly disturbed individual who let his understandable anger toward the modern system become an inappropriate murderous rampage is to list the people he bombed and ask those who "support" him in the abstract, if they really feel comfortable identifying with those acts. Remember, this list would have been a lot longer if some of his plans hadn't been thwarted.

1978: Northwestern University security guard injured opening package; 1979: Northwestern U. student injured by bomb left in commons area; 1979: bomb explodes during airline flight-12 injuries; 1980: bomb explodes at home of United Airlines president who is injured; 1981: bomb found outside University of Utah classroom—no injuries.

1982: secretary injured at Vanderbilt University opening package;

1982; University of California-Berkeley professor injured picking up pipe bomb;

1985: bomb explodes at U-C Berkeley computer room injuring student; 1985: University of Michigan research assistant and another person injured by mail bomb;

1985: computer store owner killed by bomb randomly left outside shop;

1987: Sacramento computer store owner injured by bomb;

1993: geneticist injured when he opens package;

1993: Yale professor injured by bomb;

1994: publicist killed in New Jersey;

1995: head of forestry association in Sacramento killed.

"Ted" fans exult in the fact that the Unabomber got a little more focused toward the end of the campaign, whacking two people involved in apologizing for the destruction of the forest. But do they really feel comfortable supporting the carnage Kaczynski wrought? Their assassination attempts, like the one on Earth First!'s Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney in 1990, are bad; ours are good? Is it too much to ask for ethical consistency?

Youth Not Violent

To the Fifth Estate:

I'm writing in response to Isabel Gomez' article on the April 24 Philadelphia march to free Mumia Abu-Jamal (see Summer 1999 FE). It was a good article, mainly, but I have to take issue with her characterization of the youth of today as being "increasingly materialistic, selfish and violent." I think this is just plain wrong.

In terms of the violent aspect, I would recommend Gomez check out Mike Males' recent book, *Framing Youth: Ten Myths About The Next Generation* (Common Courage Press 1999). This book exposes how the system has completely misled people about the violence and criminality of youth, looking at their own statistics. He exposes how this deception has been used to lobby for and implement increasingly draconian repression and imprisonment of an entire generation.

And, he bemoans the fact that across the political spectrum this mis-characterization of youth is repeated. It's not true; it's a lie.

Youth today are statistically less violent than in the past, even with the hugely enlarged police forces out there everywhere trying to catch youth up in the system. It's time that activists looked at this reality and started challenging the lies and make sure we don't buy into them.

In terms of youth being "increasingly materialistic and selfish," I see that as wrong also. I don't have statistical data to back me up, but I check out what's new culturally and meet and talk to a lot of youth, both while doing political activism and also at work and going to shows.

While youth understand the necessity of having money I see a lot of hatred and disgust for capitalist values, especially when I check out young spoken word artists. It's a realm where social criticism is very pronounced and one thing that many of them go after is the commodification of everything. They see it as soul-destroying and as a value they want to throw in the garbage bin of history.

I'm making a big deal out of this because it's damned important that we unite with and seek to mobilize youth. If we think that they're backwards, we're going to miss great opportunities to transform the world.

Yours in struggle,

Mark Draper

Berkeley, Calif.

Prison Guide

Dear Friends:

We are working with the Raze the Walls! collective in Georgia to publish a new edition of their Prisoner's Resource Guide. They published the first edition in May 1998, distributed it throughout the country, and it was an invaluable resource to numerous prisoners and prison activists.

Recently, the Raze the Walls! folks put together a greatly expanded, updated and improved guide, but unfortunately, dissolved before they were able to publish and distribute it.

As a group of prison activists, we have decided to raise the \$1,500 needed to bring this about. We would appreciate any help you can provide. Make checks out to "Autonomous Zone," and send to Prisoner's Resource Guide, 1658 N. Milwaukee, PMB #117, Chicago IL 60647. Call 773-395-9620 for more information.

Sara Brodzinsky, Liz Gross, Josh MacPhee, Christian Oglivy, and Mike Staudenmaier
Chicago, Ill.

Photo (not included in Web archive)

Caption. The state of religion? No, the religion of the state. Howard Besser sent this scene back from his visit to Hanoi. The icon on the wall is of Ho Chi Minh; That along with the ornate alter and the white-dressed acolytes must have of Karl turning in his grave. Howard writes:

"Vietnam has not yet begun to worship Western commodities and artifacts (though with recent trade negotiations, the arrival of McDonald's and Mickey Mouse can't be far off). Vietnamese leaders continue to promote the worship of former dictator Ho Chi-Minh. As Vietnam does away with all social services and fully adopts a market economy, how will the cult of personality around Ho stand up against the cult of Western commodities?"

For photos and a diary of Howard's recent trip to Vietnam, those with a fast web browser can check out [http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/~howard/ Personbal/Trips/Vietnam99/](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/~howard/Personbal/Trips/Vietnam99/)



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