

Letters to the Fifth Estate

Various Authors

2003

Fifth Estate Letters Policy

We welcome letters commenting on our articles or other topics, but can't print every one we receive. Each, however, is read and considered for publication.

Letters via email or on disk are appreciated, but typewritten and legibly handwritten ones are acceptable. Length should not exceed two double-spaced pages. All submissions must have a name and return address, which will be withheld upon request.

Send to POB 201016, Ferndale, MI 48220, or via email to fifthe Statenewspaper@yahoo.com

Non-Dualism

hi there:

i really enjoyed the spiritual section in the last FE. [See Issue #359, Winter, 2002–2003.] the philosophy is compatible to the advaita non-dualism to which i subscribe. have you seen onions to pearls by satyam nadeen?

he was an xtc dealer who got arrested and had an awakening in jail. over and over his message: it is all consciousness. there is no separated doer. his negation of free will agitated a few people.

the best to you all,

fred

San Francisco

Buddhist Anarchist

Dear Fifth Estate:

Thank you for the fascinating Winter 2002–3 issue dedicated to spiritual anarchism. In the midst of one of the most dangerous times of our history, the need for finding spiritual anchorage has never been greater.

Although it can be argued that the apocalypse of the self has always existed, as a Buddhist anarchist, I feel the burgeoning power of rampant technology and the corrupt State now poses a threat to all beings of Earth in an unparalleled way.

The great lama Milarepa said, "About the things of this life, think as follows: About involvement in all the complex affairs of politics and government think thus: Desires achieved increase thirst like salt water. Work has no end like a river's ripples. Prosperity and decline are like a pond's filling and drying." But the need for us lesser beings to engage in worldly affairs is vital, much as the Tibetan warrior horseman class fearlessly fought to protect Tibet and the Dalai Lama. Milarepa himself was a black sorcerer who killed many of his own family out of revenge, before

undergoing revolutionary change through deep meditation and powerful tantric absolution. (All worldly violence ultimately needs to be absolved.)

Spiritual forms are co-opted by the state to justify violence and control the population. I can remember being in jail reading *The Three Pillars Of Zen*, and being highly disappointed when I learned that the main contributing Zen master, Yasutani Roshi, was actually a fascist collaborator, as were many Japanese Buddhists [during the period of WWII]. Just look at the drug-dealing, imperialist Bush Family, the very model of good American Christians! I can just see their lying, hypocritical faces weeping during the September 11 funeral service at the National Cathedral; politicians are the greatest actors in the world.

Now, we are faced with a corrupt, CIA-controlled government whose infinitely funded talons run so deep into every aspect of national and international society (media, police, technological development, etc.), that we are truly faced with the choice of either a dark future of escalating, increasingly hellish wars and oppression, or outright revolution, a coalition revolution.

We are all interconnected, regardless of the government's attempts to divide and conquer, and we must practice universal compassion—to a point. The Tibetan warriors justify their violent actions by the notion of killing some in defense of the many. They have no problem being reborn in a lower realm in defense of the Compassionate: this is fearlessness. Non-violent civil disobedience does not work against robotic, military minds.

Real spirituality is only understood on a personal level, and cannot be expressed fully using self-limiting language. For me, all the universe is illusionary, temporary, karmic slag roiling on the Sun of Compassion, and everyone is everyone else's Tutelary Deity (all beings are your parents).

In the end, we will be Buddha, but like Milarepa, we may have to kill a few relatives on the way.

Om Mani Peme Hung,
Raphael Shannon

Why Bash NEFAC?

Dear Fifth Estate:

I have been a reader of your magazine for most of the last decade. While I was happy to learn that you were going back to a regular schedule, thanks to a new editorial collective, I must say that I was disappointed by the Fall 2002 edition.

Why the hell do you feel the need to bash the Northeast Federation of Anarchist-Communists (NEFAC) with uninformed cheap shots? I hope you are not going on a new rampage against NEFAC like you did against *Love and Rage*. I particularly take issue with the piece "Instead of a primer: on ism, schisms & anarchism," by Pono Bonobo [FE #358, Fall, 2002].

First, there's the blatant disinformation. Tom Keefer is not the spokesperson for NEFAC and his critical article on the Calgary Anti-G8 protests is not a position paper. Hey! We are anarchists, remember? NEFAC does not have and does not need a spokesperson, period. When we want to have a position paper or a text reflecting the view of the federation we publish a collective statement.

Second, there's the distortion of Keefer's arguments. While Bonobo says it's a moralistic piece, it was in fact a political argument from within the movement. Maybe Bonobo didn't notice, but NEFAC was heavily involved in the anti-globalisation movement from the beginning, both in the non-violent and violent wings. For example, the black bloc of A16 that Bonobo praises at the end of the article was called by the proto-NEFAC (and the same is true in Quebec City where NEFAC members were heavily involved both in the black bloc and in the "fluffy," pacifist green zone).

I was also disappointed by the cheap shot against NEFAC and Anti-Racist Action (ARA) in the review of *Crime-thInc*. I really doubt *CrimethInc* is more popular than ARA (or ELF and animal liberation) has been in the last two decades, especially in punk circles. Second, there's this assumption, both in the review and in Bonobo's piece, that organisationalists like ARA or NEFAC must be boring and anti-cultural.

Nothing can be further from the truth. ARA has always been about counter-culture and they spend much more time animating a vibrant anti-racist counter-culture (with music, shows, festival, patches, t-shirts, etc.) than actually fighting the nazis in the streets. They are everything but boring!

As far as NEFAC goes, culture has always been and remains an essential part of our approach. While it is not as strong as ARA, we too organise frequent shows and bring a cultural and fun dimension to our political activity. For example, during the Festival del Pueblo, organised by Boston NEFAC, there was no less than five concerts, a cultural gathering, a soccer tournament and a street festival.

Most of our activities end up with video nights, DJ's, shows and so on. We've been involved in a number of political squats in the last two years, many NEFAC people live in communal houses, we help run bookshops, collective kitchens, alternative media, and we are deeply involved in a number of counter-cultures. The main difference with CrimethInc (and apparently *Fifth Estate*) is that we live what they write about and we don't elevate this to the only true revolutionary praxis.

I'm a member of NEFAC who helps distribute the *Fifth Estate* locally, writes for Anarchy! sometimes, is a community organizer who looks like a hippy, lives in a self-managed housing coop, likes punk rock and folk music, has a kid and doesn't want to be reduced to a category and put in a little box for the sake of convenience and cheap political arguments.

In solidarity,
Nicolas Phebus
Quebec City

P.S. When your writers are bashing articles, it would be cool to give URLs instead of saying "it was widely distributed on the net." For example, Keefer's article can be read at www.nefac.net.

Pono Bonobo responds: I think it's great that some NEFAC members are also punks and hippies who like beer, good music, kids, and the cultural revolution. But that wasn't my point.

Leftist organizationalism, even when practiced by well-meaning anarchists, has led historically to essentially bureaucratic groups which make a lot of initial noise, implode due to internal wrangling, routinely have a short shelf life, and discourage the hardworking participants- as to the possibility of radical activism and community building. The wreckage of the Love and Rage federation, the last sorry attempt at this, does need retelling as an example of similar failed efforts.

The most effective revolutionary movements of recent years have all used the same leaderless anti-structure of decentralized affinity groups and cells from Seattle to Quebec City to Prague.

Tom Keefer's document may not be an official NEFAC statement, but it definitely got it wrong on nudity. As a tactic, taking-it-off has really taken off in the antiwar movement. See www.baringwitness.org for confirmation.

I wouldn't join your group, but that doesn't mean I won't have a beer with NEFAC people after a big demo. I still love CrimethInc., but definitely disagree with them about beer (see pp. 32-34 this issue). Cheers to the revolution. In the hills, February 2003.

Radical News Wire

Hey, Fifth Estate:

Welcome to the Southeast. I am contacting you from the *Asheville Global Report*. We are a weekly non-profit, all volunteer, radical newspaper in Asheville North Carolina. Recently, we have been involved in building a news wire for radical and progressive independent news sources called the Dry-erase news wire. So far we have participation from about ten radical papers, and a community radio station in Toronto. How it works is that everyone posts their original content for anyone else on the wire to pick up and reprint.

Papers that are in so far are Javelinia, Austin, Tex., Alarm!, Santa Cruz, Calif., Independent, NYC, IMC, Champaign-Urbana Ill., The Nor'easter, Providence R.I., Turning The Tide, Los Angeles, Insurgent, Madison, Wis., City Free Press, Danbury, Conn., a Toronto community radio station and several others. If you are interested in participating let me know.

Shawn Gaynor

Asheville Global Report
P.O. Box 1504
Asheville, NC 28802

Taking Pep Pills?

Dear Editors:

I am glad to see four issues in one year. This is unheard of in anarchist circles. Are you on pep pills?

Are you full of “vim and vigor,” as our friends at *The Baffler* would put it? Has the current state of war frenzy driven you to write more and publish, or is the lack of distractions out there in the country on the farm making you productive proletarians?

Whatever it is, keep it up. Here is my subscription renewal and one for the prisoner of your choice.

The cover of your Winter 2003 issue scared me. I thought I was in for 48 pages of NAMBLA and Aubry Beardsly nostalgia, but happily that is not the case. I’m not a big fan of the excesses of so-called “lifestyle anarchism,” any more than I am of pro-stalinist Bookchinism.

Balance, yin and yang, all working together, arm-in-arm, retro and porno, all together in One Big Anarchist unity, marching forward under that Big Black Banner. Oh, isn’t it wonderful?

Are we in San Francisco yet?

Gary Rumor

Venice, Calif.

‘60s A Rehearsal?

To the Fifth Estate:

I just finished reading the Winter 2002–03 issue and was touched and excited by your article, “Argentina’s New Forms of Struggle.” I have for many years thought that just this kind of completely spontaneous—however situationally or historically explainable—activity was the only avenue, in the final or last resort, that could not be co-opted and/or attacked and defeated by the “face of business today.”

By saying this, I do not mean to disparage or discredit the work being done to assist people in seeing their way clear to the necessity for such a personal and complete and uncompromising action. This, together with the demonstrations everywhere, leads me to feel very encouraged about hope for humankind and thinking again that I just may be right in my prediction for this decade: It will make the ‘60s look like a rehearsal.

Maybe someday we will have an event like Bastille Day to celebrate.

Charles E. de Winter

Canon City, Colorado

FE is Not Toxic

Dear Fifth Estate Folk:

In a letter to the FE in your Spring 2002 issue Jimmy Griffen wonders whether colored ink in the Fifth Estate is safe for garden composting [Letters, FE #356, Spring, 2002]. Since when is black not a color?

As an organic grower (I prefer biological grower as my label), I compost newsprint in the garden all the time as mulch. The inks are soy-based and not heavy metal contaminated. Toxic inks are used in slick, glossy magazines and are a no-no in the garden.

Earthworms love chowing down on newsprint and I even use it in the compost heap in shredded form. Lead-based newsprint has not been used for years.

The *Fifth Estate* is safe to compost and to use as mulch, but I save them, and prefer using *The New York Times*, *Newsday*, the *Village Voice*, and other newspapers.

Correction

Our Summer 2002 edition carried an article entitled, “Marcos: The Zapatistas’ Unknown Icon.” It should have properly given credit to Naomi Klein, author, theoretician and anti-globalization activist. Through an editing error we failed to do this.

The article, “Rebellion in Chiapas,” originally appeared in the UK newspaper, *The Guardian*, March 3, 2001. It now is available in a collection of Klein’s essays, *Fences and Windows*, available from Picador publications.

We apologize for the confusion.

fifth Estate

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