

Direct Action: An Historical Novel

Book review

Fifth Estate Collective

2003

a review of

Direct Action: An Historical Novel by Luke Hauser

In *Direct Action*, Luke Hauser writes fiction so steeped in reality that he reproduces an era for us, with all of its excitement and frustrations.

Although the 1980s are generally thought of as a kind of dead zone for progressive activism, in the San Francisco Bay Area the early part of the decade was a time of fervent activism around nuclear issues.

Hauser's novel, set in that era, recreates the emotional and political milieu of the anti-nuclear blockades at Livermore Lab, Vandenberg Air Force Base, and the San Francisco Financial District. The nonviolent direct actions of the 70s and early 80s against nuclear power and nuclear weapons were the forerunners of a style of organizing that came to fruition in the blockade of the World Trade Organization in Seattle in '99. Many of the assumptions about non-hierarchical organizations, the power of nonviolent direct action, and many of the tactics and strategies that inform the movement today were pioneered at that time.

Hauser was one of the organizers of Livermore Action Group, which focused attention throughout the early eighties on Livermore Lab, run by the University of California—one of the two places in the US where nuclear weapons were designed and developed. Livermore Action Group was born when organizing against nuclear power expanded to include nuclear weapons.

The book continues through the following Summer, culminating in a series of protests at the 1984 Democratic Convention in San Francisco that were direct precursors of today's vibrant urban direct action movement. The story ends with the dissolution of LAG, but stirs embers of hope among the ashes.

Anyone interested in the history of social movements or the antecedents of the global justice movement kicked off by Seattle will find this book fascinating.

Hauser tells a good story, and creates characters that live and breathe. But he does more—he brings alive a part of our history that might otherwise be forgotten, and offers its lessons and legacy to the present.

With a Foreword by Starhawk. 768 pages. 300 illustrations. \$19.95. Ages 16-up. Available from GroundWork. Contact info@directaction.org, (415) 255-7623.

Starhawk is the author of many books on Goddess religion and grassroots activism, from *The Spiral Dance* to the recent *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising*. Her writings and travel and teaching schedules can be found at www.starhawk.org

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