

Letters

To my Dearest *Fifth Estate*...

Various Authors

Aging Anarchists

The population of hard core anarchists from the '50s, '60s, and '70s is slowly dwindling, and the next generation is unprepared to take up the slack.

Young people today are filled with apathy in a day and age where apathy is the one thing you don't want. So, where are you guys? Where are the huge mass gatherings of rage and indignation? Where are the fliers, the meetings, the banners and protests?

The old anarchists have grown lazy and comfortable in their old age, staying within their communities and discussing current events and times past. Well, discussing doesn't get you recruits, nor does it prepare young ones to fight the Power. Come on you guys! Get out there and show us how it's done!

These days young people have little to look forward to. Teenage punks scream anarchy to the world but wonder just what it's about and where to go. Liberal young men and women begin to lose heart from swimming in the endless sea of dumb Republicans and false information. Lost to us are the riots of yesteryear, the times where everyone was united and knew exactly what they wanted to accomplish.

What we need right now is guidance, someone to point us in the right direction. Teenagers are at the perfect age where our young minds can be molded, shaped and twisted by anyone with the least bit of agenda in their hands. Step forward and speak up before the kids are sucked in, chewed up and spit out by the corporate machinery and the sadistic military—two options that are being reamed into our brains as the only way to live prosperously and successfully.

Tell us there is another way, a better way. Show us the beauty of anarchy, the spark of rebellion, the pleasure of anti-USA debauchery. Introduce us to the joy of giving the government the finger. Give us protests; give us rebellion; give us liberation from the constant stream of right-wing supremacist bullshit shoveled down our gullets everyday by the media and radio and teachers and newspapers and music and mothers and fathers and priests and youth groups and billboards and everything that we live with in our day-to-day lives.

Give us hope. Give us idealism.

Give us the ability to say fuck you to what our country stands for (and more importantly, show us why). Do your duty, aging anarchists. Start the revolution in the disillusioned hearts of the young and restless. Get out there and show us what it is to be free again.

Liana Trimble
Ferndale, Michigan

Human Scale “State”

Peter Lamborn Wilson’s “Escapism” in the 40th anniversary *Fifth Estate* was an outstanding piece, and it fills a large void in anarchist thinking (at least, as found in FE). Leopold Kohr, one of the seminal thinkers of the 20th century, was long condemned as an anarchist, and yet he disavowed that label; it was not “no order” that he advocated, but rather human-scale order. And after all, any rational anarchist world must consist of some social structure (pure “an-archy” being an impossibility in the real world).

The US is the most dangerous political entity on the planet. Any action that undermines its power is a positive action. Anarchists talk big, but in the end they still participate in the US political/economic system, and thus further its oppression and violence.

Secession does not have to be at the state (e.g. Vermont) level. Our right to self-determination is fundamental, and not restricted to the political confines of state boundaries. Any viable, small population has a right to secede. For example, a few contiguous counties in Vermont that border on Canada might be a perfect candidate; or a few coastal counties in California or Oregon. Realistically, this is the only hope, since no whole state will agree to secession in our lifetime.

One cannot help but wonder why FE does not press this issue further. Is secession so tepid as to be merely “reformist?” Is a small, human-scale “state,” of perhaps a few thousand people living sustainably on the land, really so anathema to anarchist ideals? Isn’t it in such a small state, in fact, that such ideals have a real chance to flourish?

David Skrbina

Dept. of Philosophy

University of Michigan-Dearborn

Walker Lane responds: We received this letter in February when many people, reeling from the Kerry defeat in the 2004 election, were convinced that we were living in Jesusland, Dumbfuckistan. Canada was receiving thousands of requests daily about immigration from despondent Americans convinced this country had sunk into fascism. This sentiment is what generated part of the motivation for the minuscule secessionist thrust.

The FE collective was evenly divided on the question at that time, with some of us arguing that it is a worthless path of activity for those who want revolutionary change and who objected to the publication of Wilson’s report of a meeting on this idea. For one thing, secession, from the American South to Biafra, has a track record of being drowned in blood. But, in the contemporary situation, it amounts to just not reading correctly what the election signified, particularly now that Bush’s poll numbers in general, but also on the war and the economy, have sunk to historic lows.

Bush stole the second election in a row; this time by vote rigging and voter intimidation in Ohio. Even if one was to accept the election returns as officially tabulated, Bush managed to get only 50.8 percent of the vote; not exactly a reason to move North. Also, in both election years, if liberals had any spine, they would have called millions into the streets to protest the electoral theft.

Real secession isn’t about formally leaving a nation state, but rather of creating revolutionary communities of resistance, such as the Zapatistas have done, which control areas where we reside and work; in other words, dual power. The northern California/Vermont pipe dream involves a few thousand middle-class, white people; we need the whole population, much of it in gritty urban areas, to take up the idea of revolution to make secession real.

Resist Temptation

In the Winter 2004–2005 issue of your publication, I read an article by David Watson [“Political economy, perennial economy: Marx, Thoreau, and Us,” FE #367], which justifiably criticized the ideology of progress. People in the United States seem to generally love the supposed economic benefits of modernity. During the nine years when I had a seasonal job at a cannery, many of my co-workers walked, rode bicycles, or took the bus, but more owned automobiles, which they would have been loathe to give up.

Despite people's unhappiness, they would not wish to return to the pre-modern village, where the inhabitants might have known the neighbors all their lives. They probably would never think they could ever be in a situation in which they would be free from the dictates of governments, bosses or customers.

One problem is that U.S. society has created for itself some basic benchmarks which people feel they must stay above to avoid total degradation. An automobile has become close to a basic human right in the U.S., and being forced to walk is almost beneath the level of dignity to which all are entitled. The trouble is that the typical U.S. lifestyle is unsustainable, even without global warming, and the whole world could never reach it. People in the U.S. would find a lack of indoor plumbing repugnant, not because of the inconvenience, but because of the lower status.

Needless to say, U.S. society needs radical change. But we can all start now by trying to treat everyone with respect, regardless of ethnicity, social class or gender. When people treat others as if they are unworthy, the victims can seek a situation in which they can be the ones with unearned privilege. We need to resist the temptation to insult people on whatever pretext might be available.

Milton Takei
Eugene, Oregon

Not An "Inmate"

I was amused by your listing of the Armed Services in the "prisoner of the state" category on your subscription renewal form. However, I was not amused by your use of the derogatory term "inmate." I'm sure this was an honest mistake on your part and you didn't know that calling a person in prison an "inmate" is an insult.

The only thing worse to be called is a rat or a snitch, and all rats and snitches are inmates. The ramification being that you are merely there, such as an inmate at a psychiatric facility. We prefer to be called what we are—prisoners and/or convicts. In the future, please bear this in mind.

Oh yeah, and please continue my free "prisoner of the state" subscription. Thank you for the revolutionary support and solidarity that you've shown us inside here since the dawn of the FE.

Rand W. Gould
Mound Correctional Facility
Detroit

FE responds: We've changed the word on our renewal forms.

Strong Non-Violence

Thanks for your light and passion in criticizing the arrogance and warmongering that can only foment more anger and hostility! Sixty translated articles on anti-militarism and 90 articles on economic ethics are available on my website www.mbtranslations.com.

May we finally put the horse before the cart and mend our own pockets before falling to the myths of military keynesianism and corporate beneficence!

Nonviolence is stronger than violence as the open hand is stronger than the clenched fist! May we reclaim life from the power elite! The future must be anticipated and protected in the present, not extrapolated from the estranged manipulated present!

Hoping for peace with justice,
Marc Batko

Guns Again?

In your 40th anniversary edition, you say the paper had gotten beyond its 1960s fetishizing of guns and calls for “armed struggle,” so I was rather surprised to see the issue raise its head quite recently in your article, “Land and Liberty,” by Seaweed (See FE #367, Winter 2004–2005).

The standard issue primitivism of the article’s message appeals to me in many ways, and I, like many readers of this publication wonder what a revolution would really look like; how much of the old industrial, citified world will we bring into the new one? Still, a call for “the creation of an organically self-organized subsistence movement that is aimed at asserting access to land” doesn’t seem particularly feasible for too many people when we’re talking about an increasingly urbanizing trend across the world.

See Mike Davis’ “Planet of Slums” essay in the March-April 2004 *New Left Review* for a frightening and much more likely scenario. Besides, can tens of millions move to the countryside? Doubtful.

But what was the most troubling about Seaweed’s article was his/her call for armed self-defense particularly given your just stated refusal of such foolish dick waving.

E.B. Maple
Detroit

A Flowing Form

I have just recently come across your paper after having spent 15 years living less than two hours away! This is indeed ironic. Unfortunately, it took me moving across the country to discover you. I occasionally came across the name, but never had the fortune of holding a copy until last year.

Needless to say, I am quite excited about the few copies I have procured. You appear to me as (and forgive me if I offend, but this is meant with the utmost respect) a more flowing form of green anarchy only less angry (to use an over-used word) and more celebratory, and it is perhaps this celebration that draws me to your work. Dancing, poetry, love, etc.: these are the spontaneous expressions of freedom we all desire and are fighting for.

Thank you, thank you for the article on Ross Winn (see “Digging Up A Tennessee Anarchist,” FE #365, Summer 2004)! I have always found historical information on rural, under-appreciated, and lesser-known anarchists most fascinating. I plan on sending a donation and possibly putting on a fund raiser out here to show my gratitude in regards to FE and the Firebrand community center. There is a possibility that I will be back home for a few weeks, end of December. If it’s an option, I’d like to pop around and visit the Hollow, Firebrand, and pick up a few items at the barn bookstore. After all, it is the time of year to consume!

I am working on a ‘zine for parents and a co-author threw in a letter to the editor—sorry if you have to type it up. The Fall 2004 Unschooling issue was amazing—long overdue.

Strange that a few years ago, I was alone in Nashville, dropping off Green Anarchy magazines and personal ‘zines at record stores and bookshops, throwing up stickers and flyers, thinking “what the hell am I doing? No one’s gonna appreciate this here.” Lo and behold, in a short time later there’s a Food Not Bombs, *Fifth Estate*, an Indy Media, and a community center opening. Lovely.

Please send my love to the beautiful hills and hollers of Tennessee. We do occasionally miss the South.

In the spirit of Ross Winn and Southern anarchy,
Roman Shapla
Yoncalla, Oregon

Welcome Surprise

Your Fall 2004 issue [FE #366], Unschooling the World, was a welcome surprise on a much-needed topic: children. Too often they are overlooked in theory and praxis, which is unfortunate as they are the ones who stand to inherit this planet.

I was especially excited to see the Radical Books for Kids list, and although I'm aware you can't include everything due to space limitations, I do feel that there are three books that deserve special attention:

Anarchist Farm by Jane Doe—picking up where Orwell left off, only with an anti- authoritarian message.

Breaking Free: The Adventures of Tintin. Tintin works to kick-off the revolution, and though it's a workers' perspective, it is still a great book [FE note: This is a pirate Tintin published in England during the 1980s, and goes way beyond the exploits of the traditional children's favorite.]

The Salamander Room by Anne Mazer. When a young child begins to prepare his room for his pet salamander, he soon realizes that everything unnatural must go. A beautiful book recommended to me by Derrick Jensen.

Finally, I am looking for contributions for *Go Light: A Journal on Primal Parenting for the Wild Child*. We hope to include articles/ stories/poems on teaching children permaculture, primitive skills for kids, personal accounts, etc. For information, contact primalparent@hotmail.com.

Charlene Strawn

Kosovo Help

In Kosovo we are quite isolated; we have no Internet access. We started an independent free reference library, but do not know how to attract the attention of potential donors from abroad.

Part of the problem is that in Kosovo the average monthly salary is \$40, so the RLP is not able to pay for publications. If you can send us any directory, or even your personal list, of independent publishers, please do!

We have sent several dozen letters to various places, but we have not yet received any positive response. We encourage publishers of periodicals, books, and zines to donate copies of their publications. Even second-hand or damaged copies of books are welcome.

Because the Kosovo post is not reliable, please send replies and publications to RLP, c/o PF 44, CH 4142, Munchenstein 3, Switzerland.

In solidarity,
RLP Collective,
Pristina, Kosovo

Letters to the Fifth Estate: Send your comments to P.O. Box 6, Liberty, TN 37095, or [fe — a t — fifthestate — d o t — org](mailto:fe—at-fifthestate—dot-org)

fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #370, Fall 2005

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