

# Letters

## Our readers respond

### Various Authors

2011

Send letters to **fe — AT — fifthestate.org** or Fifth Estate, POB 201016, Ferndale MI 48220  
All formats accepted including typescript & handwritten; letters may be edited for length.

#### **Veg Myth I**

Walker Lane's review of *The Vegetarian Myth: Food, Justice, and Sustainability* by Lierre Keith [see Spring 2011 FE] failed to address the poor science behind one of the author's central arguments for meat-eating, which focused on nutrition and health.

Many of Keith's conclusions are indebted to the Weston A. Price Foundation, a non-credible group that bases its recommendations on the opinions of a dentist who chronicled observations of indigenous populations in the 1930s. Given these questionable sources and her inability to decipher basic nutrition research, it's no surprise that Keith offers up page after page of contradictions and confused observations.

Without sharing any information about her diet or her health conditions, she asks us to believe that her problems were linked to veganism. But, it was obvious to me, as a dietitian and a long-time vegan, that she simply didn't understand how to plan a healthy vegan diet.

Her case is built in part on misrepresentations of the food habits of various groups, mostly because she clearly doesn't understand the research in these areas.

For example, she suggests that Americans have gotten sicker over the past 15 years as fat intake has declined. But food consumption surveys clearly show an increase in fat intake over that time period.

And, in an effort to demonize soy, Keith claims that the Japanese consume less than a tablespoon of soy-foods per day. In contrast, a large body of research shows average soy consumption to be at least eight times that amount, and often much more for those eating a traditional Japanese diet.



The Fifth Estate/Support Marie Mason table at the 5<sup>th</sup> annual New York City Anarchist Book Fair, April 8–10. Several FE staff members and friends from Detroit and New York distributed 300 copies of the new FE, sold books, and back issues, and raised funds for Marie. The fair featured dozens of exhibitors, a film festival, workshops, children's programs, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual NYC Anarchist Art Festival PAnarko Lab" and art exhibit, including a Living Theatre performance. Hundreds of attendees crowded Judson Memorial Church.

She also advises against grain consumption since our Paleolithic ancestors didn't eat these foods, but heartily endorses dairy foods, which not only didn't appear on Paleolithic menus, but are poorly digested by most of the world's population.

But more importantly, the book is filled with observations about vitamins, minerals and fats that show a poor grasp of key nutrition principles. While I don't have the background to analyze her perspectives regarding food justice and the environment, her failure to understand the most basic tenets of nutrition science makes me doubtful that her analysis of the equally complex science behind these other issues is any better.

Lierre Keith's conviction that a vegan diet will damage us is based on self-diagnosis and a misinformed interpretation of research. It's not supported by the medical evidence or by simple observations of long-time vegans.

Virginia Messina, MPH, RD

Port Townsend, Wash.

### **Veg Myth II**

Greetings from the Texas gulag! Kudos for once again putting out an informative and thought provoking magazine. As always, you've challenged me to question my world view and possibly to gain new insight due to the close inspection.

A case in point is Walker Lane's book review of Lierre Keith's *The Vegetarian Myth*. Keith puts forth a valid argument that a decision to eat a meat-free diet in and of itself is not a magic bullet that guarantees a happy ending.

If one takes a strict materialist philosophical stance, it doesn't matter what (or even who) one eats (so long as they don't get caught). After all, food is food; right? And, as the T'ai Chi master quoted in the article observed, "There's good chi in meat."

Intent should be a deciding factor in all one's choices. An Eskimo-Aleut cannot be faulted for placing human life above that of lower animals and doing what he must to provide for himself and his family. Someone in a more temperate zone should ideally feed as low on the evolutionary scales as possible.

And, yes, there is a difference between murder, which is the wanton and unnecessary taking of life, and killing to maintain one's own existence. To pretend otherwise is a deliberate obfuscation to promote a personal agenda.

What it all boils down to is, we're all struggling to become more peaceful and loving entities on an evolutionary path. If we are to realize that destiny, we must exercise damage control in all our choices.

Richard

[last name and prison withheld]

### **Veg Myth III**

While I enjoyed Walker Lane's review of Lierre Keith's book, both Keith and your author make a common mistake—neglecting the fact that the vast majority of the world's corn, wheat, soy, and oats are fed to farmed animals, so that a diet that includes meat requires even more mono-cropping, more herbicides and pesticides, more bioengineered crops, and so on.

Veganism is not perfection, but it's a critical starting point from which to build. It cuts way down on both direct and indirect cruelty and slaughter: A vegan doesn't pay others to abuse and kill chickens, pigs, and other farmed animals.

And, a vegan doesn't support the vast inefficiency of funneling crops through animals, with all the additional harm you rightly note from that intensive form of agriculture.

For many vegans, including myself when I adopted the diet in 1987, it is precisely the facts you cite (e.g., that "we've overshot our carrying capacity with the destruction of the forests, watersheds, seas, and the rapid disappearance of top soil") that cause us to adopt a vegan diet.

As the United Nations explained in its 408-page report, titled "Livestock's Long Shadow," eating meat is "one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global."

Specifically, the 408-page report noted the meat industry's contribution to "problems of land degradation, climate change and air pollution, water shortage and water pollution, and loss of biodiversity"

It's critical to remember that the report impugns all meat—not just "factory farmed" meat—as wasteful, polluting, and destructive.

So, yes, all agriculture causes some harm, but eating plants directly, rather than funneling them through animals, causes exponentially less harm than diets that include animals.

Readers who would like to learn more should visit our Web site, [FarmSanctuary.org](http://FarmSanctuary.org).

Bruce G. Friedrich

Senior Director for Strategic Initiatives,

Farm Sanctuary

Washington DC

*Walker Lane replies:*

The issue of diet is critical not only for our individual health, but perhaps more importantly, for the environment, which is severely stressed regardless of which dietary path we choose. As the world population expands towards seven billion, the demand for food increases.

Turning more land over to agriculture to feed more people, using contemporary farming methods, will surely claim the last of unfilled soil using the chemical and genetic methods Bruce Friedrich rightly decries.

An organic food revolution could only occur within a larger context of the overthrow of capital's entire mode of production. Only that would sweep away fossil fuel dependent agri-business along with the planet destroying economic system that engendered it.

I, too, wondered whether it was Lierre Keith's veganism that caused her physical ailments. That's why I cited the numerous athletes who do not eat animal products. But, more important is the claim of her and others who say a grain-based diet is at the root of the plague of modern illnesses such as cancer, heart ailments, and diabetes.

Grain converts to sugar in the body, so is that cause of the enormous up tick in diabetes in the last half century, or, is it the fructose-laden products and the prevalence of junk food that is the culprit? Or, both?

Messina's remark about the Price Foundation is a cheap shot. Whatever its origin, their contentions are made in numerous other places as well. For instance, the Paleo Diet claims it's "the world's healthiest diet," and advocates eating a mix of flesh and vegetables that the founder says, "is the one to which we are best genetically adapted."

Is it? I certainly don't know. And, even though Messina is a dietician, I can't imagine how she can say with such absolute certainty.

Friedrich's concern about the use of chemicals and feeding grain for livestock is something Keith opposes, as well.

What's missing in their discussions, however, is the ethical dimension. Almost every vegan I know doesn't want to kill to eat and says it isn't necessary. Keith essentially says, and I agree, that Wheat is Murder, just as is meat.

Unaddressed is the fact that agriculture is massive biocide laying sterile enormous patches of the earth's land which was once home to sometimes hundreds of species in an area stripped of everything except a desired crop.

Animal eating is heavily rooted in the human experience, but the modern method of obtaining sustenance from either plants or animals seems unacceptable to people who care about themselves, other creatures, and the planet.

### **Copyright or Wrong?**

I enjoyed the article, "Making Anarchist Multimedia," by Ryan Alexander Neily in the Spring 2011 Fifth Estate. As a free software developer myself, I especially appreciated its recommendations of specific multimedia applications. I would like to offer a correction to the article's portrayal of the origin of copyright, however.

According to the article: "Laws were enacted to protect a creative's work from being copied for a period of time so they could recoup their costs and actually earn a living making art. This is called copyright law. The laws were put in place because a society that encourages artists is a healthy society"

This is what the publishing industry wants you to believe, but it is mostly a myth. Copyright was not invented to subsidize creation. It was a reworking, about 300 years ago, of an even older censorship law, and it was intended mainly to regulate and support the nascent printing industry.

Copyright has always supported distributors more than artists, often at the expense of artists, in fact, precisely because it was designed by and for distributors.

It was very much a compromise measure, and was controversial from the moment the English Parliament passed it in 1709.

Today, the advent of a zero-cost, world-wide copying and remixing machine—the Internet—invites us to rethink whether giving out these monopolies on the free flow of information is a good idea.

For a more detailed look at the origins of copyright, see:

[questioncopyright.org/promise#history](http://questioncopyright.org/promise#history)

Karl

Editor, QuestionCopyright.org

### **No Internet**

The ecological American Revolution requires the abolition of the internet. Only off-line can we be underground and truly revolutionary.

Off-line American Revolutionary Benjamin Franklin founded the postal service which is more difficult and costly for the Internet Fascist Authorities to surveil compared to the telephone and internet.

Hand written letters (which are automatically historic documents) are the underground currency of the first and second American Revolutions.

Long Live Anarchy!

David G. Pearson

Arlington, Mass.

*FE responds:* Well, David, this may break your heart. In an April 27 *New York Times* article, it was reported that less and less young people are able to write in cursive handwriting such as the style in which you submitted your letter, and worse, they can't read it!

Young fingers reading and typing on keyboards may have sunk what many of us were raised on as the accepted way of writing. It's all in block letters now with some people even signing their name with printing. If you think about it, there's no visual relationship between a printed E and a cursive one, for instance.

The *Fifth Estate* is pleased to receive letters commenting on articles in any form from handwritten to Word documents.

### **Haymarket! Not Guilty!**

In your article, "The Haymarket Martyrs: Guilty! So What?" (See Spring 2011 FE), Timothy Messer-Kruse states that the bomb thrower [who killed several Chicago police in 1886] was Rudolph Schnaubelt.

I contend the identity is still unknown.

During the murder trial [of eight anarchists for the act], one of the accused, Albert Parsons, stated that he relied on the testimony of a saloon keeper and two other witnesses that it was a large stranger from New York who threw the bomb.

However, Parsons never named the bomb thrower or whether he worked for big business. There was talk that agents of business carried out the bombing to break the back of the Eight-Hour Movement.

The New York stranger, bearing a satchel, told the saloon keeper that soon they would hear of trouble from Chicago. However, John Bennett, a witness in the square, testified he was right behind the man who threw the bomb and it was not Schnaubelt.

Schnaubelt, a prime suspect because he fled the scene of the bombing, said he never considered throwing an explosive.

Also, he did two things a guilty person would have avoided: he was seated in the speakers wagon during the protest, and he didn't flee the city or the country, but rather remained to try to secure the release of his accused brother-in-law, Michael Schwab.

Is not evidence from a witness and the statement and inappropriate actions of Schnaubelt that he was not the bomb thrower better than your conclusion based on hearsay evidence given by Oscar Nee-be, another defendant, years later as to who threw the bomb?

My information is a summation from *The Haymarket Tragedy* by Paul Avrich.

Mark Quistad

Salem, Ore.

*Timothy Messer-Kruse replies:* There can be little doubt that the abundance of historical evidence points toward Rudolph Schnaubelt to have been the Haymarket bomber.

Of course, those working to free the accused men tried their best to cast doubt over the testimony of prosecution witnesses, but in the end they failed to provide a more convincing alternative candidate.

Paul Avrich places great weight on the testimony of John Bennett who claimed to have stood behind the bomber, but when shown Schnaubelt's picture denied that was the man he saw. In fact, Bennett flatly contradicted himself several times.

The story about the mysterious stranger in the bar was one of a sheaf of affidavits the defense included in its appeal for a new trial. John Philipp Deluse was a saloonkeeper in Indianapolis who remembered that a man carrying a small but heavy satchel entered his bar sometime in May 1886 and said, "I come from New York and I guess I will go to Chicago. You will hear of some trouble there very soon."

Interesting to be sure, but hardly worth more than a footnote to this history.

As for Schnaubelt's actions during the Haymarket rally all that can be definitively stated about him that night was that he was present in the area well before the rally began and was spotted by multiple witnesses in and around the speakers wagon up to the moment the bomb was thrown.

The circumstances remain murky but it appears that Schnaubelt was picked up along with most of the staff of the *Arbeiter Zeitung* newspaper the day after the bombing, but released with others who seemed to the police to be low on the pecking order.

Schnaubelt was detained and questioned a second time a day or two later, but again before the police had obtained a clear description of the bomber from their witnesses. Soon after that he skipped town never to reappear. None of these events are inconsistent with Schnaubelt having been the bomb-thrower.

For too long the meaning and legacy of Chicago's Haymarket anarchists has been distorted by those who have focused on the bomber rather than the broader conspiracy of which the bombing was only one part. Whether or not Schnaubelt was the bomber is less important than the overwhelming evidence that Chicago's anarchists hoped that the Haymarket rally would provide an opportunity to attack the police and thereby spark a general uprising of the working class.

We need to remember that these men were not just victims of a corrupt justice system, but true revolutionaries who acted on their determination to overthrow capitalism.

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