

Recipe for Change

Dave Not Bombs

2013

a review of

Hungry for Peace: How you can help end poverty and war with Food Not Bombs by Keith McHenry. See Sharp Press, Tucson, 2012, 180 pp., \$18.95

Even after three decades of Food Not Bombs (FNB) volunteers sharing meals, smiles and good times with anyone who happens to pass by, the authorities still don't seem very inclined to give members of the direct action anti-hunger group their proper respect.

Earlier this year city governments in Philadelphia and Houston banned their local chapters from sharing food in public, although vocal pushback campaigns eventually forced politicians to back down, at least partially, from their authoritarian decrees. In Orlando, Florida members of the local group are appealing a "Large Group Feeding Ordinance" that has temporarily led them to relocate their food shares in front of city hall.

On May 1, in an apparent effort to justify their laughable decision to put the group on the "terrorist watch list," the FBI arrested several Cleveland FNB volunteers for an alleged bomb plot that's hard to describe as anything but a classic case of police entrapment. [FE Note: see article on the Cleveland 4 elsewhere in this issue.]

Halfway around the world in Minsk, Belarus, fifteen members of the group are now facing trial following a police raid of a charity fundraiser.

It isn't surprising that the organization is facing a wave of repression following the recent emergence of the Occupy Wall Street movement. Food Not Bombs, with its long traditions of feeding the hungry, defending public space, working through consensus and opposing policies which create hunger, poverty and war, can be seen as a model, if not a blueprint for the Occupy Movement.

FNB co-founder Keith McHenry gives a full picture of the Food Not Bombs movement in *Hungry For Peace* that is part cookbook, part history, and part organizing guide.

Of course, clashes with the authorities are nothing new for those involved with Food Not Bombs.

In the 1980s, the San Francisco FNB chapter survived a sustained police effort to stomp them out that only ended when the group provided disaster relief in the aftermath of the devastating 1989 earthquake. In 2005 right-wing skinheads martyred FNBER Timur Kacharava in Moscow as he was sharing food. It took a protest of over 3,000 St. Petersburg students to force Russia's President Vladimir Putin to punish those responsible for his death.

Why are people in power so disturbed by movements like Food Not Bombs and Occupy Wall Street? It's really not that complicated. Rich people don't like seeing the homeless and poor gather in public. It disturbs their carefully constructed fantasy world. The well-off would much rather keep the rabble quarantined to some out of the way charity soup kitchen, then come face-to-face with those impacted by the poverty and political disempowerment our society creates.

When people actually put aside their differences and come together to help one another in a spirit of mutual aid, that's even more unacceptable to them. It threatens the legitimacy of our winner-take-all social system and poses alternatives to real social ills like wage slavery and top-down decision-making.

Food Not Bombs in particular is a great example of how to make a different world happen. Despite organized opposition, the movement has flourished for over thirty years and spread across the globe from Boston to San Francisco to Lagos, Bogota, and even Beijing.

The FNB website (foodnotbombs.net) lists more than 600 chapters in over 60 countries around the world, and yet there is no centralized body enforcing mandates to its membership. Instead, the whole philosophy of the group is summed up in three simple rules.

1. The food is vegan or vegetarian and no one is turned away.
2. Each chapter is independent and makes decisions by consensus, a form of universal agreement.
3. FNB is dedicated to nonviolence.

These three principles have allowed the group to persevere throughout all manner of repression and opposition and helped create a worldwide movement dedicated to the idea that the world's resources should be used to feed people and not kill them through wars and militarism.

And, that's good news, because in an era where the world's elites are pushing obscene austerity policies that offer nothing but misery for the world's inhabitants, the relevance of FNB's direct action, egalitarian recipe for change has never been greater.

The book is only \$12 if ordered directly from See Sharp Press: P.O. Box 1731, Tucson AZ 85702 or at seesharp-press.com. Keith McHenry can be contacted through foodnotbombs.net.

fifth Estate

Dave Not Bombs
Recipe for Change
2013

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/388-winter-2013/recipe-for-change>
Fifth Estate #388, Winter, 2013

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net