

Anarchy for Kids

Breaking Rules

Peter Werbe

2013

a review of

A Rule is to Break: A Child's Guide to Anarchy, John Seven and Jana Christy. Manic D Press, 48 pp, \$14.95
www.manicdpress.com

Maybe you can't tell a book by its cover, but a snappy title can gain an author attention where a lesser one might not. In an era where "everyone's an anarchist," James C. Scott's book title, *Two Cheers for Anarchism*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, was just the right formulation for even *The New York Times* to feature it. One suspects if he had given a full three cheers, it may have been ignored.

Similarly, this little children's book from a small publisher benefited from its subtitle, gaining it international attention. Its notoriety was increased when Eric Odom, a Tea Party whacko, denounced it not only for its advocacy of anarchy for children, but because the book is endorsed by former [way, way back] Weatherman, Bill Ayers, who for almost all of his adult life has been a respected educator.

Odom, managing director of Liberty News Network, went ballistic, as reported in the London *Guardian*. "The book alone is horrendous enough. But it gets even worse when we realize Bill Ayers, radical terrorist leftist and friend of Obama, not only endorsed it through his Twitter account, his comments in support of the book are listed on the actual Amazon.com book page," the right winger frothed.

But, thank you, Eric, for doing what an army of publicists couldn't.

The book is dedicated to urging children to have a sense of autonomy and discovery through Christy's charming graphics and its accompanying short aphorisms. It opens with the statement, "The opposite of rules is anarchy!"—a credo I'm not sure all parents would like their children to embrace, although the husband and wife authors have two together and say they raised them in fidelity to those principles.

And, they're not saying anything goes. Their "No Rules!" page has the added proviso of "Be nice," heading off any charge that what they suggest will engender a *Lord of the Flies* scene among kids.

Anarchist circle A's adorn the front and back leafs, and are consistent with many of the suggestions for children's responses and behavior such as, "When someone says work, you say, WHY?" I did that and got my allowance cut off!

Some of the pages even the Teabaggers would agree with such as, "Think for yourself," or "Build it; don't buy it," but I'm sure they would part company with, "Stay up all night!" and "Baths never again." Probably most parents would blanch, as well.

The difference is, Teabaggers would order their children to obey under threat of punishment, whereas, most anarchist parents would allow questions of behavior to be open to discussion.

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