

What to do until the World Ends

Kerry Thornley

Liberation News Service — That a hard rain (of some kind) is gonna fall on America soon is a fact apparent to mystics and rationalists, to leftwing political scientists and to rightwing economists, to European money speculators and to your local police, who've probably already ordered their tanks. The Hopi Indians can tell you all about it and so can the Black Power cats and the Brown Berets, not to mention Yippies, Provos, Zenarchists, and the rock group of your choice.

Whether it manifests itself in the form of a shifting of the Earth's crust complete with sinking cities and tidal waves that sweep whole states under the rug, or as a declaration of martial law, or as a Good Revolution with the inevitable ironies and excesses, or as a wholesale economic collapse—such an age will present splendid opportunities for those who long to go down fighting at some courageous moment fit for the tear-jerking folk music of tomorrow. (If it comes as a hydrogen war, on the other hand, there might not be much singing after the fact.)

Whatever the case, there are some of us, perhaps less dramatic by nature, who would prefer to just go on living. Maybe we've got our own bag that we're into, or maybe we're like the True Sage of the Tao who cuts himself in on the general prosperity of good times, but in times of disorder digs into the poverty scene and cultivates his leisure.

The Economics of Chaos

The economics of chaos are centered around the idea of self-sufficiency, an art which may be more easily acquired than most people think. Following are some random hints which result from a few years of study.

I: Learn to Eat Weeds

Edible wild plants; compared to the wilted, handled, sprayed, and artificially fertilized crap you buy in the supermarkets, are health foods. Further, properly prepared, some of them are gourmet delights that can keep you alive when other food sources fail.

Weed-eating is a hobby you can begin to cultivate now, first by visiting your local library and, after that, your neighborhood vacant lot. You'll be surprised at the ease with which you can soon throw together a wild salad.

The sure-to-become classic trilogy of Euell Gibbons—*Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, *Stalking the Blue-Eyed Scallop*, and *Stalking the Healthful Herbs* is an excellent way to start, because these books are written with humor as well as truth. But the literature of weed-eating is vast and many other good books are to be found, too. Look in the Botany section of any relatively large public library.

The danger, real but often exaggerated, of this sort of thing, of course, is that you might mistakenly eat something that will rub you out. This can be avoided by -Checking every edible weed recommendation with at least two sources, eating small amounts of each new discovery first, avoiding books with vague illustrations, and learning the terms of botanical identification.

Weed-eating has psychological advantages, too. Expertise in the subject gives you a feeling of security in knowing you'll never starve. A diet rich in fresh greens gives you a mild natural high. Knowing the tastes and smells of its plants brings you into a deeper communication with your planetary environment.

II: Live Like a Gypsy

A teepee, camping tent, trailer van, house trailer, camper, small boat or large ship can give you mobility and make you independent of the main hook of the money system—rent.

Coming on like a vacationist, you can avoid the suspicion of cops and forest rangers. At sea, you can get away from controls of the various states of the world almost entirely, either as an individual family unit or as a sea-going utopian fleet community. A houseboat is a good bet, too—cheaper than most other boats with equal living space, if not as handy to move.

There is lots of land in Canada, by the way, and one lake for every person in the country. Despite government propaganda to the contrary, you can squat too. (Information on British Columbia retreating opportunities can be obtained from Don and Barbie Stephens of 5020 El Verano Ave., Los Angeles 90041.

An alternative to mobility is living in the boondocks. A friend of mine who got out of Nazi Germany just in time reports that his city relatives were all dead by the end of the war and his country cousins were all alive.

(The School of Living, Brookville, Ohio 45309 can provide a rich variety of information on rural revival and Green Revolution, and how to pull it off.)

III: Learn a Pre-Industrial Trade

Learn to make something useful without resorting to electric tools or machines. Articles of clothing will especially be in demand, from hats down to moccasins—While luxury items and decorative pieces will not. Tools and anything related to food and shelter will be needed too.

A barter economy always comes to be during an upheaval and essential goods and services predominate. Having a “trade” is, literally, having something to trade when multimillionaires are using Federal Reserve Notes as kindling and burning their furniture to keep warm through the winter.

Another idea is to store goods which now may be obtained fairly cheaply but which in time of crisis will be rare, such as: tobacco, sugar, salt, tea, coffee, storable food, booze, acid, watches, fuel, cigarette ends... lighters and accessories, used clothing, shoes, leather goods, razor blades, medicines, and small tools.

IV: Study Preventive and Emergency Medicines

Avoid medical troubles by learning how to stay in good health; and learn how to be your own doctor: Break out of the brainwashing of the AMA monopoly and seek everywhere for medical advice and information, using your own judgment to decide what is and is not quack. Standard MD reference books, handbooks on shipboard first-aid, regular first-aid courses, books on keeping healthy, books on herbal medicine and folk medicine, old wives' tales, common sense, and your own cellular wisdom will help you here.

V: Learn to Build a Solar Still

You can get water out of the soil in the desert, even, if you know how to make this simple contraption, and also convert salt water to fresh. Articles on how-to appear in: *SCIENCE*, 17 September 1964; *OUTDOOR LIFE*, 12 August 1965; and *INNOVATOR*, Box 34718, L.A., 90034.

Teach Others

As you pursue the above indicated lines of study, pass on what you learn to your friends. Independent people cannot be co-opted by the Establishment.

Spreading the word about the secrets of personal independence overcomes the superficial dichotomy between dropping-out and dropping-in, between privatize and humanism, between self-interest and revolution. For to be surrounded by people who can take care of themselves is your greatest asset in times of crisis.

Further, innovation, since it does appeal to self-interest, is capable of deeper and vaster social alteration than any political method. Compare the agricultural, industrial, medical, and automotive revolutions to the American, French, and Russian revolutions.

Committed individuals might go one step beyond teaching friends, by setting up Free Universities for Independence in racial, ethnic, and subcultural ghetto areas across America. Teach minority groups who are victims of discrimination to become independent of both business and government and you will have radicalized them forever!

Teach members of the middle class to become independent of the defense industry and other death-oriented activities and you will have drained the Establishment of skilled technical and financial support.

fifth Estate

Kerry Thornley
What to do until the World Ends

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/62-sept-19-oct-2-1968/what-to-do-until-the-world-ends>

Fifth Estate #62, Sept. 19-Oct. 2, 1968

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net