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Iain McKay
Letters against Primitivism

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Letters against Primitivism

Iain McKay

after a fictional character from a movie before I can discuss politics with (sorry, get labelled by) *GA*…

All in all, I'm not surprised by any of this. The ability of *GA* members to avoid the issues and instead invent the politics (and associations) of those who dare question their politics was proven by Tom O'Connor's rants two issues ago. Can I expect another diatribe about what I do not think next issue? Perhaps rather than make up the ideas I hold, they could actually address the issues concerning their politics I raise? But that would be too much like hard work, far better to smear than think.

yours in solidarity

Iain McKay
Glasgow

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rather than by the capitalists). But that should be obvious. Sadly, it is not for *GA*, which confirms my analysis of *GA*'s politics as fundamentally authoritarian. Such actions cannot in any way be part of any possible revolutionary strategy. To argue that they could be shows not only a lack of revolutionary and libertarian politics, but also a lack of common humanity.

Ironically, if we accept Booth's analysis at face value, we would have to admit that the tools used by the "Irrationalists," unlike every other, were simply neutral and could be used for liberation rather than oppression! Will *GA* start arguing that techniques, like tactics, are socially neutral? That tools do not reflect the ideas and interests of those who create and apply them nor shape those subject to them? That would be amusing…

Booth states that I "think anarchists who use armed struggle are not anarchists" and I am a "dogmatic pacifist." Strange, but considering that I did not discuss the question of violence nor armed struggle by anarchists, I would say that Booth's comments that I am "merely calling on *AJODA* readers to share [my] dogma" is really a case of the pot calling the kettle black! How can I all upon *AJODA* readers to share a "dogma" (namely "pacifism") which I do not, in fact, hold? Like Tom O'Connor's sad remarks in his letter as regards my politics, Booth's comments indicate how little *GA* are interested in little things like facts and evidence when they discuss other people and their ideas.

Also of interest is Booth's assertions that I use a "common technique" of "Neoists and Neoists fellow travellers" and am grouped together with "Micah/Tompsett etc." As I said in my last letter, the lumping together of all critics into one camp is a useful way of muddying the waters and so obscuring the real issues of the debate. And has Booth "answered" the concerns raised by his original article? Clearly not, as he can still think of these actions as being compatible with libertarian "resistance."

I also love the "this Iain character" comment, very funny! How dare other anarchists question him! Sorry, I had better name myself

ing people? Are they the enemy?) and can be applied for libertarian ends (which makes you wonder how "libertarian" those ends could be, given the means).

He says that he wishes to provide an effective alternative for the "protest movements" which will make the "Irrationalists" irrelevant. Sorry, no, that does not work either as it still implies that actions like those of the Aum Cult and the Oklahoma Bomber can be considered part of the "resistance" movement. They are not — they are part of the problem and they share the same authoritarian basis as any state's bombing campaign against civilians.

We can get an insight to Booth's ideas from another of his articles (as posted on the internet at: www.insurgentdesire.org.uk/irrationalists.htm). There he argues that "there are ideas and motives behind an action, and there are methods. These two things are separate. Do we blame tools for the use to which they are put?" He stresses: "I say only a fool refuses to learn lessons about effectiveness from their worst enemies." Needless to say, certain methods imply certain ideas and ends. The Bolshevik creation of a political police force (the Cheka) was very effective in ensuring the "success" of the Russian Revolution. It reflected Bolshevik ideas on the need for centralised power and party rule. It was ***very*** effective in ensuring the defence of Bolshevik power. Shame that it helped kill the revolution. Now, could there be an anarchist Cheka? Can this "tool" be effective for anything other than what it was designed for? Of course not.

Similarly for those whom Booth thought had the "right idea." The ideas ("tactics," "methods," "tools") in question were selected because they reflected the politics of the people who used it. They are not tools of liberation. That the actions were carried out by right wing authoritarians should come as no surprise as they reflected the anti-revolutionary nature of their creators. Moreover, they would remain so no matter the professed politics of the perpetrators (just as one-man management did not change its nature when it was inflicted on the Russian workers by the Bolsheviks

The question of how we get to a primitivist utopia

Dear *Freedom*

Karen Goaman's summary of my ideas (issue 10/1/04) is at such odds to what I actually wrote I don't know where to begin. Perhaps it is just me, but it often seems that supporters of primitivism speak a different language to the rest of us. After all, I said in my first reply that I doubted that people who went to the trouble of having a revolution would leave everything pretty much the same as before (as asserted in the first "Green and Black Bulletin"). But, no, apparently by this I meant the opposite! So when she labels me a lover of "modern industrial society" she is distorting my position slightly.

Then there is the whole "primitivist" rhetoric itself. The first Bulletin stressed primitivism was "not posing the Stone Age as a model for our Utopia." Now Karen points to "only 150,000 years of our own pre-history" as "models and examples"! She stresses that the "small-scale land-based cultures" primitivism wants are not peasant communities (although she also says that "peasants and small farmers" were what "the Wildfire writers argue for"!), which leaves us with the "gathering and hunting" tribes the first Bulletin rejected. So to recap. Primitivists don't want to go back to the Stone Age, they just imply they do. They also consider peasant life a "return to a life of drudgery," but also "argue for" it. Which, I suppose, shows that Zerzan was right to combat the evils of language!

Then there is the whole issue of (to quote the first "Green and Black Bulletin") when "civilisation collapses" through "its own volition." Now, that can only mean one thing. It means the destruction of life as we know it in a short period of time, whether we want it or not. Primitivists, when pressed, seem to say that they don't mean instant chaos and mass starvation by that expression but that is what it sounds like. And they get huffy when you point it out!

Karen shows this contradiction between the rhetoric and reality. She says I raise an important issue "of how people could manage nuclear and toxic waste caused by decades of military and industrial production." She suggests "skilled people to contain the legacy of industrialism or to allow them to degrade as safely as possible in areas that people can avoid." So, to get this right, no one will want to work in a mine or in a factory but they ***will*** want to look after toxic and nuclear waste? And how will they do that? Both bulletins rejected workers' control out of hand. And it will require technology and industry to provide the means of containment, but that is (yet again) rejected out of hand. So, how will this task be done? As for dumping it into one area, surely Karen knows that the environment cannot be subdivided in this way. The effects of a rotting pile of industrial waste will not stop at human made barriers.

The key problem with Karen's reply is that it does not address the pretty basic question of how we get to her primitivist utopia. She talks about "small-scale land-based cultures" yet does not explain how the UK will support 58 million people living like that. Nor how we get there. The very crux of my critique, incidentally. And which none of the "primitivists" have bothered to acknowledge, never mind address.

Given that primitivists reject workers' control, federalism, the "continuation of industrial society" (even temporarily), and so forth, I fail to see how it will ever happen without starvation and misery on a massive scale. Perhaps "primitivism" will be as wonderful as Karen says it will be but until she and her fellows actually discuss how to get there, I'll be unable to sign up to it. Perhaps the reason why they don't do this is because they know that it will involve all the things they slag off "traditional" anarchists for. In other words, a process of transition involving workers' control, federalism and the use of industry. Also, if they admit to that they would also have to acknowledge that "traditional" anarchists do not want the "continuation of industrial society" at all but rather a total transformation of how we live. We just recognise this cannot

minds in the US anarchist movement comes up with such rubbish. Obviously the Durruti column would have had the "right idea" if they had just shot everyone who crossed their path.

I find it funny that Black thinks we have "ex-communicated" *GA* from the anarchist movement. Sorry, no, *GA* managed to do that very successfully by themselves. And, of course, *GA* never, ever "ex-communicate" anyone (and neither does Black, he just calls them "anarcho-leftists" regardless of the facts). All this talk of "leftism" is definitely not an attempt to use guilt by association to marginalise other anarchists. No, of course not. But then again, it is easier to call someone a name than actually address their arguments — as authoritarians and authorities throughout history have known.

Black argues that "they had the right idea" was "a very poor choice of words on Steve's part." Looking at Steve's letter, published in the same issue of *Anarchy*, its clear that they were no such thing. It must annoy Black that he claims one thing, and then a *GA* member blows his argument out the water in the very same letters page. First it was "Tom O'Connor," now it is Booth.

Booth states that I express "knee-jerk pacifist disagreement." How he knows this, I'm not sure. I discussed whether mass murder of workers was "the right idea" or not and, of course, whether it is consistent with libertarian politics. No mention of the merits of non-violence as the only means of social change, but why let facts get in the way of a good rant?

He claims that the "Irrationalists" article was about "the possibility of armed struggle and armed resistance to totalitarianism." He states that the article aimed at discussing the "shape of possible anarchist armed struggle in the future, and how such actions resemble" violent events "in the present." Clearly, then, as the Aum Cult and the Oklahoma Bomber had the "right idea" then "anarchist" struggle "in the future" could follow this model. His attempts afterwards to distance himself from his original article fail as Booth, like Tom O'Connor before him, clearly thinks gassing commuters as a valid form of "resistance" ("resistance" to what, exactly? Work-

of mind by other anarchists quickly results in them being labelled as "sheep" by GA and their supporters like Black.

It also seems strange that Black thinks that my letter was just a "painfully long defence" of what happened in Scotland so many years ago. Rather, as the reader would soon see, the bulk of the letter was made up of a discussion of *GA*'s politics and a reply to the distortions of "John Connor" on my politics and who I was, distortions which I notice Black considers as not worthy of comment. Does he have so little respect for his readers that he feels he can rewrite history so? Sad, really, but I do get the impression that discussing their politics is the last thing Black or *GA* desire. Rather, we must take their word as to the "consistent" and "committed" nature of *GA*'s politics. Sorry, I gave up religion decades ago and I analyse what people say rather than accept it on faith.

It is interesting how Black portrays *GA* always as victims. Not only that, even when they advocate mass murder as the right idea, they are "more consistent and committed British anarchists" than people whose activities and politics Black probably knows nothing about. Sad, really, that Black has decided to show his ignorance of the Scottish anarchist movement.

Black's comment that mass murder was a "tactic" used by revolutionary anarchism during the Spanish Revolution suggests a desire to confuse the issue being discussed. Like *GA* defences of the "Irrationalists" article which equated the Aum cult and the Oklahoma Bombers with "Propaganda by Deed" anarchists, Black's pathetic analogy does damage not only to argument but also to the intelligence of the reader. If Emile Henry argued that "there are no innocent bourgeoisie", then Black and *GA* are arguing that there are no innocent people and so exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, are of equal worth as regards acts of "resistance." Apparently, there is no difference between the killing of fascists and pro-fascists by the militia columns immediately after a military coup and the planned gassing of commuters and the blowing up of office workers and children. Sad, really, that one of the best

be done overnight nor need involve the elimination of all forms of industry/technology.

I'm glad she says I may be "happier and more satisfied living" in her utopia, after all she does not give me any other options to choose from. The idea that we can choose the level of technology we want is dismissed out of hand. Without irony, she says that it is "industrialism" that "removes the choice for people to decide how to live" and so condemns us all to live under primitivism. Saying that there is no alternative does seem a little bit authoritarian to me, sorry. Particularly when the use of appropriate technology shows it's not true.

Iain McKay

Critique of Green and Black Bulletin no. 1

Dear Freedom

I was disappointed in the first the *"Green and Black Bulletin."* This is not because I am against Freedom covering ecological issues. No, far from it. A regular column on green issues would benefit Freedom immensely. I know that anarchism and ecology are intertwined and that any relevant and decent form of anarchism ***must*** be rooted in an ecological perspective.

No, the reason I have reservations about this Bulletin is two fold. Firstly, it proclaims it will be a "primitivist" column, thus excluding most forms of ecological anarchism. To suggest that anarcho-primitivism ***is*** *"'green anarchism"* is blinkered, not to mention sectarian and downright false. Secondly, the first bulletin does not enfuse me with confidence that the column will have anything positive to say about eco-anarchism or, indeed, anarchism. I know it is early days, but to start off attacking other anarchists as being "reformist" and proclaiming it is a case of "anarcho-primitivism versus anarchism" does not bode well for the future.

As an example, Moore asserts that "classical anarchism" simply wants to "rework" modern society and "remove its worst abuses and oppressions" leaving "99% of life … unchanged." So the "worst abuses and oppressions" of capitalism account for just 1% of life! Which sounds like the comment an apologist of capitalism would make. He also has little belief in the creative abilities of the bulk of the population. He seems to think that people who went to the trouble of smashing the state and kicking the bosses out would stop there, leaving industry and technology unchanged and that workers will continue doing the same sort of work, in the same way, using the same methods! In other words, it is not enough to get rid of the boss, although this is a necessary first step!

So, "classical anarchists" doubt that many of the workers who use technology and work in industry will leave either unchanged (see, for example, Kropotkin's **Conquest of Bread**). Rather, they will seek to liberate the technology they use from the distorting influences of capitalism, just as they liberated themselves. This will take time, of course, and be an imperfect process (but, then again, primitivists seem somewhat impatient, subscribing to what Kropotkin rightly dismissed as a harmful fallacy, namely the idea of a one-day revolution). Moore simply distorts the ideas of "classical anarchism" by his assertions.

On a different issue, looking at the arguments in the bulletin I am struck by how vague "anarcho-primitivism" is. For example, John Moore states that the "kind of world envisaged by anarcho-primitivism is one unprecedented in human experience" and that "there are no hard-and-fast rules" in getting there. In other words, we don't know what we want nor how we get there! Even worse, he states that "there can't be any limits on the forms of resistance and insurgency that might develop." Whatever happened to the anarchist principle that means shape the ends? That means there ***are*** "limits" on tactics, as some tactics are not and can never be libertarian. More on this later.

that their invented assumptions of myself or my politics are wrong. Still, the readers of *Anarchy* may find my comments of interest.

Bob Black claims that mass murder is "a tactic, not an idea." Interesting. So people who have tactics do not think about them? A tactic is an idea until such time as they do it, then it becomes an action. Clearly, Black is talking nonsense. He states he is "unable to imagine any ideas they [the Aum Cult and the Oklahoma bombers] might hold in common," which suggests a lack of imagination which is amazing. Perhaps the "idea" would be the tactics they were using? The ones praised in the "Irrationalists" article? No, surely not? Black is abusing the English language and the intelligence of the reader.

Bob argues that it would have been the "anarchist way of dealing with problems" to go ahead with the speaking tour and discuss face to face with *GA* the issues. Strange, then, that it was *GA*, not us, who decided to take our decision to postpone the tour as a cancellation and then attack us in their paper as "sheep," following our (*GA* appointed) leaders. And Black talks about "the shabby way [I] and my ilk treated the would be *Green Anarchist* visitors"! Yes, indeed, poor *GA*, having other anarchists hold them accountable for their politics! I wasn't aware that the anarchist way of dealing with problems was to simply switch off ones brain and not question the validity of decisions previously reached when new information appears.

I remember the meeting when the issue was first raised on whether to cancel the meeting or not and the decision to postpone it until such time as we could fully discuss the "Irrationalists" articles, the issues it raised and decide whether or not to continue with the tour. Next thing I see is *GA* writing in their paper that we had cancelled the meeting and that the Scottish Anarchists are all sheep (is that the anarchist way of dealing with problems?). Funny how a desire to think about *GA*'s politics and our response to them rather than mindlessly do what *GA* wanted equates with being sheep. But as I said in my previous letter, any independence

free speech if you do not actively help someone spread their message! And do not forget that is why SAN postponed the speaking tour. We were not "manipulated by fascists and spooks." We rather read an article they published which celebrated mass murder as "the right idea." Connor's paranoid rants try to hide this fact under a deep layer of smears and insults but that remains the truth. Read that article, read how mass murder is "the right idea" (opps, being "hysterical" again!) and then wonder if our reaction was, rather, a human and libertarian response to it.

I have to say, in ending, that I am glad I wrote my letter. Connor's reply just exposes the nature of *GA*'s politics as well as their abusive and lying "debating" techniques. Rather than distancing himself from "The Irrationalists" article, Connor embraces it and still claims the terrorist acts of the likes of the Japanese Cultists and US fascists are examples of "unmediated resistance." Looks like they still have the "right idea." Nice to know. Rather than an "idiotic" article, as Black implies, it in fact represents the core of their politics. And that core is not anarchist, as I argued in my original letter.

I wish *Anarchy* all the best for the future!

yours in solidarity,

Iain

Bob Black, the Aum Cult and the Oklahoma Bomber

(letter to Anarchy)

Dear *Anarchy*

While I have much more important things to do, I will take the time to answer Bob Black's and Steve Booth's letters in *Anarchy* no. 51. I'm sure that no matter what I write, I will never convince either

And I cannot help thinking that all this talk of "Civilisation" lets the ruling class off the hook for our and the planet's problems, as it is "technology" and "mass society" which is blamed (the capitalist class can rest easy — injustice, authority, oppression, ecocide, etc. are not their fault, they are simply the inevitable result of "mass society"!). Rather than seeing power originating in socio-economic relationships, it is rooted in "the machine." Which, ironically, is the mirror image of Engels' argument in "On Authority." For Engels, technology meant freedom was impossible during production. He wanted to keep technology and dump autonomy. Primitivists want to dump technology, suggesting that the comments on workers' control being "workers' self-exploitation" have more in common in classical Marxism than classical anarchism.

This is not the only convergence with Marxism, since primitivism seems to share with Leninism an objectivist vision of social change. For Leninists, it is the economic crisis that puts "socialism" (i.e. state capitalism) on the agenda, similarly for the primitivists it is when "civilisation collapses" through "its own volition." Perhaps this is because they know that the mass of people who, quite rightly, view their utopia with horror. After all, Moore does not explain how the UK could feed nearly 60 million people by primitivist (i.e. hunting and gathering) means (and let us not forget one of the editors of ***Green Anarchist*** did say they would prefer "mass starvation" to "mass government," i.e. existing — "mass" — society). Perhaps this explains why, according to Moore, primitivism does not "seek to … win converts." Why bother, when society will collapse and people will not have a choice? The idea of anarchism as being created from below, by the conscious desires of the oppressed for freedom and justice is missing.

What of Moore's comments that civilisation may, perhaps, collapse "through our own efforts" and that only "widespread refusal …can abolish civilisation"? He does not explain how this can be achieved, if you do not seek "converts" (i.e. convince people of your ideas). Given that he argues that "daily life" is marked by

"internalised patterns of obedience," it suggests that by "our" he means primitivists, not the classical anarchist idea of a revolt by the people. He talks of "communities of resistance," yet does not root them in the workplace or the neighbourhood and so the practical concerns of most people. Wildfire concurs, dismissing "workers' councils, committees" out of hand while, apparently, subscribing to Moore's idea of "interdependent" communities. How such communities would communicate, never mind work together, without federal organisations is left unasked, never mind unanswered!

So dismissing the mass of the population (i.e. the working class) as an agent of change leaves primitivism with two options. Either wait for the "inevitable collapse of civilisation" (and wile-away the hours slagging other anarchists off as reformists) or embrace eco-vanguardism and celebrate any form of "resistance" which may bring the glorious day forward. This reached is logical conclusion when ***"Green Anarchist"*** supported the actions and ideas of the (non-anarchist) Unabomber and published an article stating that the *"the Oklahoma bombers had the right idea. The pity was that they did not blast any more government offices…The Tokyo sarin cult had the right idea. The pity was that in testing the gas a year prior to the attack they gave themselves away."* A subsequent exchange of letters in **Anarchy** magazine saw one ***"Green Anarchist"*** editor justify this sick, authoritarian nonsense as simply examples of *"unmediated resistance"* conducted *"under conditions of extreme repression."* Which makes you ask "resistance" to what, exactly? Working people? Are they the enemy? Perhaps, given Moore's comments about the mass of people internalising obedience.

As I said above, no anarchist can talk about "any" means of "resistance and insurgency" being valid. Libertarian ends require libertarian means. Perhaps I am reading too much into the reprinting of Moore's article, but given the legacy of its original publication place (***Green Anarchist***) it suggests a fatal unwillingness to learn from the mistakes of the past and an equally fatal unwillingness to develop anarcho-primitivist theory in a way to avoid these authori-

that their politics are not looked into critically?" My hopes proved to be utopian. The level of Connor's response is no improvement. Indeed, he has included *Black Flag* into the diatribes and insults — perhaps the better to hide the politics of the debate beneath another layer of smears. Given that the *Black Flag* collective is claimed to be "Neoist-tainted workerists," I have to assume that *GA* think everyone who disagrees with them are "Neoist" or "tainted" with it. Nice to know. Useful, though, to group all criticism under one banner, regardless of the facts. It muddies the water even more, as intended I am sure.

At least Connor's letter proves that *GA*'s basic politics have remained unchanged since "The Irrationalists" article. Black's comment that *GA* are not "celebrat[ing] the terrorism of despair" is refuted by Connor. They obviously do. Indeed, they consider such acts as praise-worthy, "the right idea," part of the revolutionary process like strikes, occupations, and so on, indeed they are part of the same revolution in Connor's eyes. He states they are to be included with other acts of "liberation" which will "give the rest of us the opportunity to live autonomous, authentic lives too" ("the rest", presumably, still alive after such "unmediated" actions). How can dead commuters, office workers and children "live autonomous, authentic lives"? Indeed, to call these acts what they actually are (acts of mass murder and terrorism) is to "libel" them. In Connor's eyes they are part of the "resistance." He confirms the critique in my last letter. I thank him again.

He states that SAN acted to "anathematise and stifle the free speech of anti-fascists and anti-Statists." How did we "stifle" and "anathematise" their free speech? Did at any stage we ban or censor their words? No, *GA*, then and now, still publish their paper, write their letters and so on. So how could SAN "stifle" them? Only by not organising the speaking tour. In that case SAN also "anathematise and stifle," the IWW, the IWA, *Anarchy*, *Freedom*, *Black Flag*, and so on as we have not organised speaking tours for them either. Connor's definition of stifle seems strange. You apparently "stifle"

above — there is nothing to "disassociate" from. We, unlike Connor, do not take *Sunday Times* hack (and spook friendly) journalism at face value. We do not have to disassociate ourselves because the *Sunday Times* article (and Connar's sheep-like repeating of it) is not true.

Perhaps Connor will come back and argue he knew all along the truth of that article and decided to lie in his letter to present an analogy with the treatment of *GA*. This is possible, if highly unlikely and highly dishonest. Sadly, the analogy falls as *GA* did publish "The Irrationalists" article while Ian Heavens and Spunk Press were set-up and smeared by the *Sunday Times*.

Apparently I "presumably" mean that by "Leninist" "an elitist ideologue 'gang' in the Camattian sense." Strangely enough, I meant by "Leninism" (I do not even use the word "Leninist" in my letter) the ideas of Lenin and Bolshevism. Funny that, but then again Connor consistently asserts I mean something totally different from what I actually wrote. I also have no idea what "Camattian" means and so cannot mean it in that sense, assuming I did use the word, which I did not. However, this is all irrelevant as I did not say that *GA* were "Leninist." I stated that the Unabombers politics had parallels with Leninism ("The parallels to Leninism are clear, with the "instability in industrial society" replacing the inevitable collapse of capitalism as the catalyst to the new society"). It is this parallel, looking to an objective rather than a subjective catalyst for revolution, that helps explain *GA*'s support for terrorist acts. As is clear from my letter, which Connor clearly misrepresents.

According to Connor I am a "hysterical" "Neoist-tainted workerist." Also nice to know. It is also nice to see that Connor (and Black) dashed the hopes I expressed in my first letter. I had hoped that my letter would "not be answered by the usual *Green Anarchist* tirade of insults they direct against people who disagree with them. Indeed, like Lenin they take a positive delight in insulting those who dare to question their politics. Perhaps by so doing they ensure

tarian pitfalls ***"Green Anarchist"*** so helpfully and unintentionally exposed in it. Perhaps future "Green and Black" Bulletin's will address the kinds of issues I've raised here, while opening itself up to contributions from other kinds of eco-anarchists. I hope so, but we will see.

yours in solidarity,

Iain

Critique of Green and Black Bulletin no. 2

Dear *Freedom*

I'm not surprised that the article *"Mass Society"* was not signed by the member of the "Wildfire Collective" who penned it. I, too, would be ashamed of putting my name to such nonsense. Strong words, I know, but justified given the self-contradictory and superficial arguments this article inflicts on its readers.

Our anonymous comrade (whom I will call WF) seems to have taken all the traditional arguments ***against*** anarchism and turned them into arguments ***for*** "primitivism." "Anarchism cannot work in complex societies"? Correct. "Organisation equals government"? Of course. "Society equals the state"? You bet! "Modern society requires bureaucracy." Indeed. "No one will work"? Right! How depressing reading an anarchist confirm all the common prejudices against anarchism.

And the alternative? That is not defined but in the "immediate term" we get "small scale land-based culture," based on the smallest group possible. I doubt many people in the West will embrace this return to peasant life. Rather, they would embrace the inequalities and oppression of capitalism and statism, given the alternative. With enemies like these, the current system really does not need friends!

Then there is the incredible level of self-contradiction. WF opines that "why should people's actions be defined by the

resources they live near" yet fails to recognise that the small-scale groups they favour will, by necessity, be defined so. It is asserted that "no community would be beholden to any other" while talking about "our shared future world." But such groups need not share anything, unless they have something "defined by the resources they live near" which others do not. Then they would "be beholden to an external need," which is bad. And WF talks about "establishing a truly global classless human relations" while making communication beyond a few days walk impossible! Which makes their opposition to "cultural Pangea" quite ironic: their "small groups" will only see the few "cultures" nearest them.

Then there is their wondering of "who's going down the mine." They answer "Me? No thanks!" Ironically, WF does not offer that option to those who do not wish to live in self-sufficient small groups. Even more ironically WF refuses those in the "global south" any choice in what kind of society they want while also arguing that ***other*** anarchists seek a similar bland globalised world as capitalism and cannot see beyond the "western model." Indeed, a successful anarchist revolution in the west would be imperialist, "export[ing 'civilisation'] to these denied its 'wonders.'" But perhaps this exposes an awareness that people in the "majority world" do ***not*** particularly ***like*** many aspects of their lives and seek improvements (e.g. clean water and basic medicines) in their living conditions? As for the level of technology and industry they would like, well, I think true anarchists should let them decide that themselves rather than seeking to impose primitivist fantasies onto them.

So WFs vision of the future is as contradictory as it is unappealing. What of their critique of traditional anarchism? That, too, is lacking. Talking of London, WF argues that "if the city stays" then it "cannot and will not be anarchist" due to the size of the population and the resources and organisation required. In return, I ask, how will WF get rid of London? WF claims that organising a city the size of London would be "a fucking nightmare" yet singularly fails to talk about the real fucking nightmare of what will happen

It is interesting that *GA* use the *Sunday Times* article about Ian Heavens. This article was slander, pure and simple. A piece of hackwork by a journalist Larry O'Hara stated had links with MI5 in his book *Turning up the Heat: MI5 after that cold war.* From this article they state Spunk Press "happily advertised bomb manuals." In reality, that claim was a clever piece of misinformation presented by the journalists. The article in fact pointed to a specific Spunk Press file. This file contained links anarchists would find of interest. These links included news-groups such as alt.society.anarchy and so on. These groups are totally open and anyone can post to them. The "bomb manuals" and other information the journalists were referring to appeared on these mailing groups, ***not*** Spunk Press. The way the journalists had written their smear article was extremely clever. It did not, in fact, tell a lie but it was so "economical with the truth" that anyone without a basic understanding of the internet would be led to believe that Spunk Press stored "bomb manuals." As intended. A half-truth became a total lie and one Connor swallowed.

This hack-work, intended to present an anarchist terror at the heart of the Internet, almost cost Ian Heavens his job (yes, like most of us, he is a wage slave). As it was, he had to drop out of Spunk Press and anarchist activism on the Internet to keep it (which was a great loss). If Connor knew anything about what actually happened with Ian Heavens rather than repeating the smears of the *Sunday Times* article, then they would know that Spunk Press does not "urge" terrorism of any form. I'm quite glad Connor has brought up the *Sunday Times* article. It shows how firm his grasp of the facts really is and how low he will swoop to slander those "sheep" who dare to question *GA*'s politics and activities. It also shows that he quite happily repeats the smears of spook-friendly journalists when it suits him. I thank him.

So, as requested by Connor, I have indicated why ACE and SAN "don't disassociate themselves" from Spunk Press and those Connor thinks are its members. The answer is clear from my comments

has nothing to do with "mass society" and a lot more to do with capitalists, the distribution of land and power and the economic system we live under. But such an analysis of the real causes of starvation is obscured by vague comments about "mass societies" having to be hierarchical. The capitalist class can rest easy — famines are not their fault, they are simply the inevitable result of "mass society."

Connor fails to answer any of my points and questions. Indeed, in answer to my question on the inherent anarchist nature of primitive society he mutters that its is a "boring" question, and "answered many times." He could at least point me to the relevant articles or books or, indeed, provide me with a summary of the answer, and so on. No, that would get in the way of the main purpose of his article, to insult and slander those who dare to disagree with his politics and point out their authoritarian core. So much for wanting to "clarify issues."

Connor ends his letter with some truly amazing paranoid speculation. He wonders if I am "really" Ian Heavens (indeed, he seems convinced of it). This has caused my friends and comrades no end of amusement. Well, I am myself and none other. How can I prove it? As well as comrades in Scotland, you could ask Freddie Baer, Chuck Munson (who should be familiar to *Anarchy* readers) and the numerous comrades on the anarchy and organise e-mail lists. Or, then again, ask Jason McQuinn who met me in Glasgow about 5 years ago when he was staying with a member of the *Here and Now* and *Counter Information* collectives. He will hopefully remember me (I remember asking about the "anarcho"-capitalists who I had recently come across on-line). If he does remember, he will confirm that I am from Glasgow and not, in fact, from England as Ian Heavens is. I hope he states so in *Anarchy* as it would be nice to stamp this particular paranoid delusion out before it fully joins the others in Connor's mind. Or, then again, ask the *GA* member who attended the London Anarchist Forum meeting on Murray Bookchin (but, given how hazy his memory is of that event, he may not remember who was there any more than what he said).

to these 8 million people? Why should they leave the city? How? Where to? Can all 8 million, never mind the other 50 million, attempt to live the life "primitivism" asserts is in their interests to live on these islands?

If London "stays" WF wonders if "those in the 'countryside' still have to provide food for the beast"? By "the beast" I assume WF means the 8 million people of London. So, for WF, is the enemy the mass of the population? Apparently so. And I wonder how "those in the 'countryside'" would appreciate a mass influx of millions of starving city folk, driven from the city by who knows what? But why let little issues like mass starvation and what people want and desire get in the way of the primitivist utopia?

What of WF's argument that it is impossible to organise a city the size of London in a libertarian fashion? He wonders where all the delegates would meet. But why assume that ***all*** the delegates would have to meet or discuss ***all*** the many issues of the population. Many issues would be in the hands of those most affected and not require wider discussion. Most communication of needs would be direct. A community would contact workplace A for supplies, which would contact workplace B to arrange inputs, and so forth. For co-ordination of wider activity, there would be delegates of federations so cutting down on the number having to meet substantially. And as for FC's pondering of how "those in the Global North [can] communicate let alone convince a community in the Global South" not to "harness nuclear energy," have they not heard of e-mail, telephones, letters, petitions, sending delegates by plane? Or forms of direct action as the boycott, the strike? Or even protest marches? Or raising a protest motion at the appropriate federation congress?

So how would our "community's voice [be] heard"? In the same way as the rest, by an elected, mandated and recallable delegate. Impossible? It worked during the French and Spanish revolutions and in the recent revolt in Argentina and would, I suggest, work far better than any primitivist alternative. Such a system will in-

volve reaching agreements with others and so compromise, but freedom is not some immature desire to always get your way. That is the atomised, narrow and self-defeating individualism promoted by capitalism, not the social freedom desired by libertarians.

Popular self-management would apply in industry too. WF states that "workers control" means "placing technologies and skills in the hands of the few." Actually, it means the opposite, i.e. workers' controlling the technologies and skills they use rather than letting bosses (the few) do so. As for it being "enforced divided labour" and "workers self-exploitation" WF is really abusing the meaning of words. Yes, things will need to be produced and different tasks will involve different work but if this is "enforced divided labour" then so is ***all*** productive activity, including that in WF's "small-scale" groups. Or perhaps the work required to get food is not "enforced" as the alternative is starvation? If so, then say hello to the usual capitalist defence of wage slavery!

Non-primitivist anarchists know that production "will continue to need raw resources to be built." Yes, this will cause ecological destruction. But so will the ecological destruction caused by the breakdown of civilisation WF desires: nuclear meltdowns, toxic waste and oil slicks caused by abandoned industry, all the other legacies of industrial society, which (like the ruling class) will not just disappear. We will need to handle such problems while transforming society. And this is where the "industrial progression" WF dismisses out of hand comes into play. They cannot see that technology can be used by those who work to make it easier and reduce/eliminate the most unpleasant aspects of it. People can see the impact of their activity and would change things to minimise it. Yes, solar panels will use resources but they are less ecologically destructive than coal fires in every home. Which is, of course, "progress". Would WF, as a true believer in anti-progress, oppose developments which save resources and reduce pollution?

Which exposes another problem with primitivism. It is the mirror image capitalist worship of progress (for one it's good,

the meeting in question. I can only offer as "proof" the room full of people who also heard this statement. Just to aid the memory of the *GA* member, I was the one with the Scottish accent. Perhaps a few more details will jog the memory? He will recall, I am sure, his mobile phone going off halfway through the meeting. And remember, perhaps, Donald Rooum's question concerning the dangers of epidemics in a primitivist society? Or the wonderful answer in which the *GA* member informed us we need not worry about such occurrences as the groups would be so small and so widespread that disease would just wipe-out one group and not spread wide enough to be classed as an epidemic? Needless to say, our *GA* member did not bother to indicate how we go from our current population of six billion to these Hunter and Gatherer levels. Perhaps the excess population just "disappears" in a puff of (suitably enhanced) smoke? Or, perhaps, this is where the mass starvation comes in? I hope Connor answers these questions clearly, as it is his chance to set the record straight. Can six billion people survive in a primitivist world? If not, how is the appropriate population level reached?

So we discover *GA* yet again rewriting history. And they have the cheek to state ***I***"play fast and loose with the truth"! Incredible!

As far as Connor's assertion that "mass society" ***causes*** "mass starvation," well, what can I say? Research suggests otherwise. The work of economist Amartya Sen indicates that class society and its property distributions and entitlements that create mass starvation. According to his work, famine occurs in spite of food being available. Indeed, food is usually exported out of the famine zone in order to make profits. Rather than "mass society" causing it, it is rather specific forms of society, class societies, with specific property relations, distributions and entitlements. If, for example, workers owned and controlled the land and the means of production they used, then famines would not occur. Without private property, people would be able to produce to meet their needs. Which, by the way, indicates well how *GA*'s ever-so-radical "primitivist" politics obscures the real causes of starvation in modern society. It

repression." He states that "The Irrationalists" article was a "discussion about dismantling" "Leviathanic structures." Two points. Firstly, it is clear that for *GA* you can only take part in this "discussion" if you agree with GA and think the Aum cult and Oklahoma Bombers had the "right idea." Otherwise you are slandered as a "leftist", "workerist" or whatever. Secondly, it is perfectly clear that Connor considers that these examples of "unmediated resistance" as relevant to the process of creating a new society. He states that I "libel" these acts as "terrorism against the general public" rather than seeing them, as Connor does, as the "activity" of "particular oppressed people in their own immediate situations." Let us not forget what the "activity" in question was, namely the blowing up of a government office and the attempted gassing of commuters. The insanity of Connor's comments (and politics) is clear. It is obvious from his comments that nothing has changed in the last two years. *GA* is still celebrating such acts. I await *GA*'s defence of pogroms against Jews and an "un-terrified" account of the importance of the fascist nail-bomb attacks in London last year.

Apparently I have a "concern" for "legitimacy and representation" and that, therefore, I support "concentrating/transferring power rather than destroying it" and so I "fall" into the "typically Leftist role as 'revolutionary policeman' and retardant"! Where in my letter are such concerns voiced? Indeed, I explicitly called for the destruction of political power ("Anarchism, by definition, is against the acquiring of political power — it is for its destruction") and indicate that it is the Unabomber who aims to acquire political power. Conner obviously has total contempt for the intelligence of *Anarchy*'s readership to misrepresent my letter so.

Apparently I repeat *Black Flag's* "libel that *GA* 'prefer "mass starvation" to "mass society"' (what I actually wrote was "they would prefer 'mass starvation' to 'mass government' (i.e. existing society)"). Indeed, they present a lovely paranoid tale of how this "libel" came about. To set the matter straight, I did not "repeat" the *Black Flag* claim. I, in fact, stated what ***I*** heard, with my own ears, at

the other evil). They are two-sides of the same, anti-human, coin. Anarchists see progress in a more complex light. It is surely a truism that "progress" under a hierarchical society will be shaped by the equalities of power in it. This means that progress is not as neutral as either capitalists or technophobes like to suggest. Rather than the quasi-religious opposition to "progress" we should be using our minds, evaluating the costs and benefits of specific concrete forms of technology and production, seeking ways of improving and changing them and, perhaps, getting rid of some of them totally. Something anarchists have long argued people who are creating and living in a free society would do.

Ultimately, WF exposes the core problem with primitivism. For them, technology, "mass society" and "civilisation" ***are*** neutral. For the primitivist, all these things are inherently "bad" and so independent of the desires of the people affected by them and the system they are part of. However, once we realise that these things are ***not*** neutral we can see the way out. We can see that workers' control is not "self-exploitation" but rather the first step in modifying technology and production to ecologise and humanise it. Similarly, the self-organisation and mass participation required by social struggle and revolution are the first steps in humanising society and civilising a "civilisation" distorted by the barbarism of capitalism and the state. And this new society would be take the best of existing cultures, technologies and skills to help produce a world of unique individuals who live in diverse communities and experience diverse cultures and ideas.

To end, WF complains that "the left claim these primitivists want Mad Max dystopias." On the evidence of this article, I can only surmise that "the left" is right on this one.

Iain McKay

Wildfire Collective and primitivism

Dear *Freedom*

The letters by both members of the "Wildfire Collective" (WC) just reinforces the poverty of primitivism. Rather than address the issues I raised, they prefer personal attacks and distortion while having the cheek to accuse me of "vitriol, lies and half-truths"! Ignoring the insults, inventions, evasions and self-contradictions, their letters actually have little to say. Most of it is simply (and obviously) gross distortions of what I had argued.

"Wildfire 1" (WF1) complains that by "assert[ing] these two [of 5!] positions to us, in invented commas (as if lifted from the text)" I am being "dishonest and misrepresentative." Yet the context of my letter makes it clear I was not quoting from the text and any reader of the original article will know that I was not.

Looking at the assertion that "organisation equals government" I cannot see what he is complaining about. The second bulletin obviously assumes this. This is more than confirmed by his suggestion that I have "all my hopes resting in becoming one of your illusionary 'recallable' politicians of the future." And here is the person who takes offence to my "assertion" that he equates organisation with government! How ironic. Then there is his comrade's letter, which calls "recallable delegates … another form of governance," even dismissing collective decision making as the individual being "crushed under the weight of 'workers' democracy.'" Whether in the workplace or in a "small-scale" community, organisation means requires decisions to reached and these will rarely make everyone happy. If every decision requires 100% agreement then the opinion of the 99% other members are "crushed" by the "lone voice." It suggests a somewhat autocratic approach to co-operation, namely the expectation that everyone must do exactly what you want otherwise you are oppressed. Thus my "assertion", rather than being "dishonest", was correct.

with *GA* then you are a freethinking, non-ideological bound revolutionary. If you question their politics or activities you are a sheep. Instead, I will concentrate on the new silly claims Connor voices.

He starts by stating I think *GA* are "Leninists." Nope, read the original letter. I stated there were "parallels" between *GA*'s politics and Leninism. He states I think *GA* are FC's "active, determined minority." Nope, read the original letter. I made no such claim. I stated that FC's ideas explains *GA*'s support for terrorist acts and that anarchists (a grouping I would exclude *GA* from) should be an "active, determined minority" but, obviously, not FC's one. Unfortunately, the rest of Connor's letter gets no better than its beginning. Nothing like starting a letter with obvious falsehoods to set the tone.

GA claim that "leafleting claimants about welfare reform" is "ritualistic political practice" and "is far more patronising, manipulative and futile" than *GA*'s work. Yes, informing people of what the state plans to inflict on them and urging them to resist and act for themselves ***must*** be "patronising, manipulative and futile" as *GA* disagrees with it. Fortunately, everyone else will see that it is, in fact, the opposite. It is treating people as intelligent individuals who can be convinced of certain things by presenting them with facts and arguments.

Connor states that I am "terrified, saying the resistance has to be approved by the 'majority'" and adds the slander that by "the majority" it is meant myself and "other SAN types." How false, banal and stupid. Firstly, where in my letter do I state that? Perhaps the little fact I made no such claim indicates why no supporting quotes are forthcoming? But, then again, Connor obviously knows I am an "anarcho-leftist" and so no evidence is required. Secondly, the twisted politics of *GA* are exposed by Connor's lies. I was arguing against the mass terrorism of the kind celebrated in "The Irrationalists" article (such as associated with the Oklahoma bombers and the Aum cult, both of which, let us not forget, had "the right idea" according to *GA*). Connor considers such actions as examples of "unmediated resistance" conducted "under conditions of extreme

English (when it suits him). Support for terrorism becomes a "metaphor," support for acquiring "political power" becomes "inconsistent" anarchism. He states that *GA* are "obviously" anarchist. When it comes to certain tendencies we can see that Black's justly famous critical faculties are switched off and so there is cause to question what Black considers "obvious."

Black states that my "parting shot" hits me right in the foot. Actually, it was serious question that I wanted answered. Black obviously judges me by his own standards. Of his replies, I would agree with number three — there is no guarantee that any form of anarchism will not degenerate into statism. We cannot predict the future and while I think anarchism will work I may be disappointed. Point One, however, begs the question. Why did the original primitive societies not see and counteract the degeneration into statism? They were surely as intelligent as the "future primitivists" will be. If they did not see the rise of statism, why should we expect the future primitivists to see it? Could not the very nature of primitive society contain the seeds of its own destruction?

Black ends by comparing me to a cloned sheep. How amusing. Do I wish to keep anarchism "respectable"? No, I wish to keep it revolutionary and anarchist in nature. Hence my critique of the Unabomber and *GA*. Shame that Black prefers to slander than to think. I do wish to "learn of" and "think through the anarchist implications of primitivism." Hence my reading of the Unabomber's manifesto, Watson's *Beyond Bookchin*, and other works. It also informed my question which Black so clearly fails to answer. Why am I a sheep in Black's eyes? Perhaps because I do not agree with him or *GA* and instead ask some questions about their ideas and politics? Surely not!

Now I turn to John Connor's letter. As pseudonyms go, I cannot help thinking that Tom O'Connor would be better as O'Connor's jokes were as bad as Connor's politics. I will ignore the usual silly claims that anarchists in Scotland are sheep, following our (*GA* appointed) shepherd. It seems clear that if you unquestioningly agree

WF1 says I propose "an 'imperialist' proletarian revolution on the majority world." Really, WF1, do you think the readers of *Freedom* are stupid? They read my reply and know I said no such thing. The "quote" you provide was my repeating ***your*** straw man argument against "traditional" anarchism and most definitely ***not*** suggesting agreement with your dishonest comments! The context makes it clear that this was the case, as can be seen by WF1 doctoring the quote to remove the quotation marks where I indicated the second bulletin's words. How dishonest can you get?

As regards WF1's puerile comments in response to his own inventions, it is hardly worth replying. I will note that I fully support "Zapitistas who don't want dams" and others who reject the demands of capitalist progress. As I made clear, "progress" under capitalism is shaped by inequalities of power and wealth. I obviously do not worship it, I just don't reject all progress as inherently bad. It's not that hard to understand. And I think it ironic that someone who wants the whole world to be "primitivist" has the cheek to call me an "imperialist" and "authoritarian," particularly given that I said "As for the level of technology and industry they [in the 'Global South'] would like, well, I think true anarchists should let them decide that themselves rather than seeking to impose primitivist fantasies onto them" (i.e. the same position I hold for the "Global North").

I do find it funny WF1 mentioning I want to "organise strikes against those who refuse the 'progress of the west.'" I assume that this is in response to my suggestions on ***his*** question of how "those in the Global North [can] communicate let alone convince a community in the Global South" not to "harness nuclear energy." Which is a total distortion of my argument as well as being deeply ironic. There I was explaining how we could convince people ***not*** to follow our mistakes and WF1 turns it on its head!

His comrade gets annoyed by this as well, complaining that direct action would be used against a "group of workers [that] doesn't want to play" in order to "force people to do what the ma-

jority want." This is ironic. Is he now suggesting that we ***should*** let people "harness nuclear energy" as it would be oppressive to try and convince them not to? I wish he would make his mind up! He then ends this self-contradictory paragraph with an assertion that "when the boycotts fail" I would "be out shooting all these 'anti-work' types his Spanish civil war heroes" did. I notice he provided no evidence for this serious claim. I checked the most obvious source for such an accusation (Seidmen's **"Workers Against Work"**) and found nothing. Perhaps he would furnish a reference?

Then there is WF1's distortion on my handling ecologically destructive technology. He again produces a doctored, out of context, quote in order to launch into a tirade on how I think "the future is an either or scenario. Either we embrace ecological destruction or face ecological destruction." Perhaps I should stress that by "ecological destruction" I assumed WC meant the use of natural resources by humans (this is clear from my letter). Given the context they used the term, I feel justified in this. Yes, producing any product, even ecological ones, will result in resource use, pollution, and so on (i.e. be destructive of the natural environment). This applies to "primitivist" society as well. Cutting down trees for homes, heating and farm land causes "ecological destruction." My starting point is how do we interact with the environment to minimise our impact while maintaining a decent standard of living. As I made clear in my letter, as WF1 knows.

WC clearly reject this solution. I can see why WF1 distorts my position as it allows him to ignore my point, which was that "the breakdown of civilisation WF desires" will face the "legacies of industrial society, which (like the ruling class) will not just disappear." Presumably WF1 rejects this and thinks that nuclear power stations should just be allowed to melt down and the toxic wastes of decaying industrial society just seep into the water table and soil? But no, he argues that "we can safely deactivate and secure 'toxic' processes during a revolutionary situation, without having to continue their production post-revolution." Why didn't I think of

> are at least 200 government automatons that are no longer capable of oppression.
>
> "The Tokyo sarin cult had the right idea. The pity was that in testing the gas a year prior to the attack, they gave themselves away. They were not secretive enough. They had the technology to produce the gas but the method of delivery was ineffective. One day the groups will be totally secretive and their methods of fumigation will be completely effective."

It is clearly stating that the Oklahoma bombing and the attempted massacre of Japanese commuters were correct. This is not "metaphor," it is agreement. To argue otherwise is complete and utter nonsense.

Black seems to state that he thinks that the article is "idiotic." Why? If it is simply a "dramatic metaphor" then why is it "idiotic"? Perhaps because it was clearly nothing of the kind? What ***is*** idiotic is to print such an honest account of your politics and expect no one to comment on them and express the obvious conclusion that they are not anarchist. In that sense Black is correct. Hence the difference between *Fifth Estate*'s printing of a silly article and *GA*'s printing of the "Irrationalists." One was idiotic, the other stated that it was the "right idea" to try and gas commuters and actually blow up people. If Black cannot see the difference, he is truly lost to humanity. If he truly thinks my (and others) repulsion towards "The Irrationalists" article is simply because it "offends" people then I feel sorry for him.

Ironically, he (correctly) lambastes Chomsky and Bookchin for affirming "political power" and yet states that the Unabomber is "inconsistent" as regards anarchism. This is in spite of his manifesto clearly stating that "the revolutionaries" will "acquire political power" That is not "inconsistent," it is a clear support for political power and for "revolutionaries" to take hold of it. Black's hypocrisy is clear. He seems to have a problem understanding

Black states that "an event which is 'postponed' and not rescheduled is cancelled." As I said, the only people who thought it was cancelled was *GA* and so the point became moot. It is hard to organise a tour when one half thinks it has been cancelled and the other is horrified by the first's celebration of terrorism. The wave of insults and smears from *GA* made communication pointless. Black argues that "The Irrationalists" article "didn't celebrate the terrorism of despair." It stated that the Aum cult and the Oklahoma bombers had "the right idea" — in other words, it explicitly ***agreed*** with that terrorism. Perhaps the "intellectual infirmity" Black insults "anarcho-leftists" with is actually a case of the pot calling the kettle black?

Black calls me a "censorist leftist" and that I cannot "understand a text may be significant to anarchists" even if it is not written by an anarchist. "That's where critique comes in" he enlightens us. Obviously Black has a different dictionary than myself, otherwise he would be aware that I presented a critique of the claim that the Unabomber is an anarchist plus a critique of his politics and theory of "revolution." And how, exactly, am I "censorist leftist"? I am not a "leftist" but an anarchist. Moreover, did I state that the text should be banned? Or that anarchists should not read it? No, I did not. Indeed, I read it myself, found its politics somewhat authoritarian and saw their relevance to the politics of *GA* (which are not anarchist, if you ask me). Indeed, I quoted relevant parts of the text to justify my claims! Hardly a case of "censorship." Black's passion for insults gets the better of his intellect.

He asserts that stating someone had the "right idea" is actually a "dramatic metaphor." Bollocks. It is nothing of the kind. Here is the quote in question:

> "The Oklahoma bombers had the right idea. The pity was that they did not blast any more government offices. Even so, they did all they could and now there

that? No, wait, I ***did***! I wrote that "we will need to handle such problems while transforming society" as well as "evaluating the costs and benefits of specific concrete forms of technology and production, seeking ways of improving and changing them and, perhaps, getting rid of some of them totally." WF1 simply repeats ***my*** point against me. How dishonest can you get?

Strangely, WF1 does not explain how this deactivation would occur. As he dismisses workers' control, I cannot see how it will be done. The issue is simple. If WC think "primitivist" society will exist immediately, then they must acknowledge that millions will die of starvation so that the "lucky" few that survive can raise chickens free from such tyrannies as hospitals, books and electricity. If, however, they think it will be created over time, with the sensible deactivation of industry and the voluntary dismantling of cities like London then let them explain how this will be done without the workers' control, international links and the self-organisation of the population they attacked me for advocating. And if the transition is slow, then why can we not judge which technology to keep/modify/reject rather than just dump it all?

But that isn't an option for WC, who denounced me for suggesting it. They made it clear that it was a case of when "civilisation collapses" rather than progressive change over time. Given this, they ***must*** explain why such a sudden breakdown will not lead to the death and ecological destruction on a massive scale. If they claim, against all logic, they do not want such an abrupt change, then why do their bulletins so obviously suggest they do?

But logic does not seem to be their strong point. WF1's comrade states that the bulletin is not "a blue print for the future." So when it argued for "small scale land-based culture" it was ***not*** proposing any ideas for the future? He asserts that primitivism rejects "that models of social interaction be imposed on anyone" yet fails to discuss how to get to his primitivist utopia. He wants to get rid of the city, yet makes no attempt to explain how nor what will happen to London's 8 million inhabitants. Given that neither primitivist

bothered to answer the question of how the UK will support 58 million people using such a culture, I have wonder why WF1 complains that it is false to say he "propose[s] 'mass starvation' as a solution"! May I remind WC of their first bulletin's comment about when "civilisation collapses"? What conclusion ***should*** we draw?

Until WC answers such questions, no one will take them seriously. The fact that they refused to take this opportunity to do so is significant. Will they fail to answer the equally simple question of how they plan to deactivate industry safely and avoid mass starvation without the workers' control, international links and federal organisation they dismiss out of hand as new forms of "governance"?

It is simple. We are faced with the fact that a revolution will start in society as it is. Anarchism recognises this and suggests a means of transforming it. Primitivism shies away from such minor problems. In spite of extremist sounding rhetoric, it has no revolutionary perspective at all and, consequently, little to recommend it.

Finally, I had to laugh when WF1 said my "longstanding battle with 'primitivism' has been well documented." He states that the "letter pages of past issues of *Black Flag* and *Green Anarchist* are littered with 'calls and responses' similar to these." Clearly WF1 is as bad at documentation as he is with honest debate or getting quotes right. I have ***never*** written a letter to *Green Anarchist* nor a word in *Black Flag* about primitivism.

But why let the truth get in the way? It hasn't so far. WF1 states that I have "exposed [my] potential to misrepresent and lie to secure some obscure 'ideological' battle." Given his utter distortion of my arguments and his seeming inability to get even simple quotes correct, I know who has been exposed as the liar. I will not hold my breath waiting for an apology for his distortions and lies. But at least WC have shown that they have no concern for the truth or discussing the problems a social revolution will face. Or, more im-

starving to death, then is it surprising most people prefer government?

One last point. To state that "political anarchy has never existed outside of primitive societies" (as the interviewer of John Conner states) raises an interesting point. If primitive societies are the only viable form of anarchy (something that anarcho-primitives assert) then why are we living in a state-ridden, industrial capitalist system? If primitive societies are inherently anarchic, then how did archy develop in the first place? And what is there to stop the future primitive societies aimed at by anarcho-primitives going the same way?

Hopefully this letter will not be answered by the usual *Green Anarchist* tirade of insults they direct against people who disagree with them. Indeed, like Lenin they take a positive delight in insulting those who dare to question their politics. Perhaps by so doing they ensure that their politics are not looked into critically? After all, any one who does must be a "workerist" or "anarcho-leftist" or "anarcho-liberal" — and if not celebrating the murder of children by bombs as the "right idea" makes you an "anarcho-leftist", then I would sooner be an "anarcho-leftist" than a cheer-leader for terrorists.

Keep up the good work with *Anarchy*. I always enjoy reading it.

yours in solidarity

Iain

Bob Black and the primitivists

Dear *Anarchy*

I must admit to being perplexed where to start as both John Connor and Bob Black make so many points and claims. I will start with Black. Rest assured, Mr. Connor, I'll be back for you!

an anarchist society can be created. We do not have a "new ideology" seeking to "acquire political power." These comments by Unabomber indicate how far from anarchism he actually is. Rather than a popular movement against the state, his vision is of a vanguard seizing power even if they do not have the "support" of the majority of people. Democratic government at best, dictatorship at worse.

Given this dismissal of working class self-activity, it is not surprising that Unabomber argues that "revolutionaries" should *"promote social stress and instability in industrial society."* After all, with the majority ignored until the *"final push"* (when they can help the new bosses *"acquire political power"* perhaps?) there is no real way to revolution. This, in turn, explains *Green Anarchist*'s support for terrorism — such acts do promote *"social stress and instability"* and so the revolution is promoted against the wishes the majority, who, let us not forget, *"unthinking."* Rather than an act of social revolt, the "revolution" will be the act of minorities who force the rest of society to be free (whether they subscribe to Unabomber's ideas of a free society or not). The parallels to Leninism are clear, with the *"instability in industrial society"* replacing the inevitable collapse of capitalism as the catalyst to the new society. Rather than being a subjective revolt for a free society, the Unabomber revolution is a reaction to objective events which force people to his utopia whether they want to go or not. And, therefore, *Green Anarchist*'s support for terrorist acts — they may claim to be anarchists, but their politics drive them towards authoritarianism and vanguardism. After all, someone who claims that they would prefer "mass starvation" to "mass government" (i.e. existing society) hardly counts as a libertarian, if by libertarian we think of someone who supports liberty rather than an ideology (these words were said by a member of *Green Anarchist* at a London Anarchist Forum meeting last year). That someone who claims to be an anarchist could say should a thing is a disgrace — if liberty means millions

portantly, the fate of the 58 million people of the UK under "primitivism."

Iain McKay

Green Anarchists celebration of terrorism against the general public

Dear *Anarchy*,

Reading your interview with John Conner (*Anarchy* no. 47) I saw that he states that Micah "succeed[ed] in getting a May 1998 LGSC speaking tour through Scotland cancelled." In the interest of truth, I feel that I should point out that nothing of the kind actually happened. What *did* happen was that the meeting tour, which was being organised by the Scottish Anarchist Network (SAN), was postponed after Micah brought to our attention certain articles in Green Anarchist (namely the infamous "Irrationalists" article). I must stress this point as *Green Anarchist* has continually stated that we cancelled it at the order of Micah. Indeed, *Green Anarchist* went so far as to state that we Anarchists in Glasgow were "sheep," following Micah's decrees without question (anyone who knows the Scottish movement will know how far from reality such an assertion actually is). Ironically, the only people who did follow Micah was *Green Anarchist* themselves who took Micah's wish as a SAN decision!

So why did we decide to postpone the meeting tour? Simply so we could discuss the issues Micah raised. Micah desired to have the tour cancelled, other comrades were not so sure. Unfortunately, the issue became mote as the tour was effectively cancelled by Green Anarchists assumption we were all sheep following Micah's orders. One thing which we all did agree on was that the article in question, with its celebration of terrorism against the general public, had nothing to do with anarchism (and, indeed, humanity).

Stating that murdering innocent people was the "right idea" suggests a deeply authoritarian position and one in direct opposition of the goals of anarchism — namely individual and working class self-liberation. Such a position, I would also argue, reflects the politics of Unabomber and, therefore, not anarchist. I quote from the manifesto *Industrial Society and Its Future*:

> 194. Probably the revolutionaries should even **avoid** assuming political power, whether by legal or illegal means, until the industrial system is stressed to the danger point and has proved itself to be a failure in the eyes of most people… the revolutionaries should not try to acquire political power until the system has gotten itself into such a mess that any hardships will be seen as resulting from the failures of the industrial system itself and not from the policies of the revolutionaries. The revolution against technology will probably have to be a revolution by outsiders, a revolution from below and not from above.

In other words, the aims of "revolutionaries" is to *"acquire political power."* This is may be revolutionary, but it is *not* anarchism. Anarchism, by definition, is against the acquiring of political power — it is for its destruction. Clearly this places the Unabomber outside the anarchist tradition and the anarchist movement, unless of course anarchism now includes those who seek political power (which makes the Trotskyites anarchists as they seek a "revolution from below" in which they assume political power). Perhaps this explains the earlier comment that:

> 193. The kind of revolution we have in mind will not necessarily involve an armed uprising against any government. It may or may not involve physical violence, but it will not be a *political* revolution. Its focus will be on technology and economics, not politics.

After all, if the Unabomber does seek "political power" then a revolution which had involved an uprising against "any" government could put the new government in a dangerous position. Having done it against the old bosses, they may just do it against the new ones. So it looks like Freedom (who insisted that Unabomber was not an anarchist) were right and Conner's attempts to dismiss their claims misguided

Like all vanguardists, Unabomber downplays the importance of working class self-liberation. He states that:

> 189. Prior to that final struggle, the revolutionaries should not expect to have a majority of people on their side. History is made by active, determined minorities, not by the majority, which seldom has a clear and consistent idea of what it really wants. Until the time comes for the final push toward revolution, the task of revolutionaries will be less to win the shallow support of the majority than to build a small core of deeply committed people. As for the majority, it will be enough to make them aware of the existence of the new ideology and remind them of it frequently; though of course it will be desirable to get majority support to the extent that this can be done without weakening the core of seriously committed people.

Yes, the minorities with a "new ideology" who will lead the majority (after gaining their "support", perhaps) to the new land… Well, I have heard that before and not from the mouths of anarchists. Yes, anarchists are (or at least should be) an "active, determined minority" but we are such in order to increase the influence of anarchist ideas and so produce a social movement which aims to transform society into something better. Rather than get the "support" of others, we desire them to act for themselves, think for themselves and create their own future, for that is the only way