

MEDIA READER

JELLO BIAFRA IN PHILADELPHIA
DR. DAVID RICHARDSON ON PUBLIC HEALTH
UNAMERICAN ACTIVITIES
SUBVERSIVE CRIMINAL PUPPETEERS
PROTEST IN PRAGUE



JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 2001

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Welcome to MediaReader. The big news is that we moved to Chicago. Please note the new address if you plan on sending us anything. Below are our current happenings:

- Insound.com now carries us in their *Zinestand* section. Online, they post all content for current and past issues. Offline, they sell single copies of all issues.
- MediaReader.org was recently overhauled in conjunction with this issue's release. There is more content and a new look.
- Ad rates have jumped a bit. This is due to printing costs rising nearly 175% between issues (or towns, if you will).
- Want to distribute this magazine? We rely on your help!
\$5 gets you 50 copies
\$10 gets you 150 copies
- Starting next issue, MediaReader may begin charging a cover price. We're thinking hard about this and haven't reached a decision yet. If we go this route, and you would like to continue getting this magazine for free, mail us and say so, or go to our web site and fill out the form for a free subscription. Beginning to charge is an effort to stop the excess waste a free publication inherently creates. Strong opinions? Let us know.

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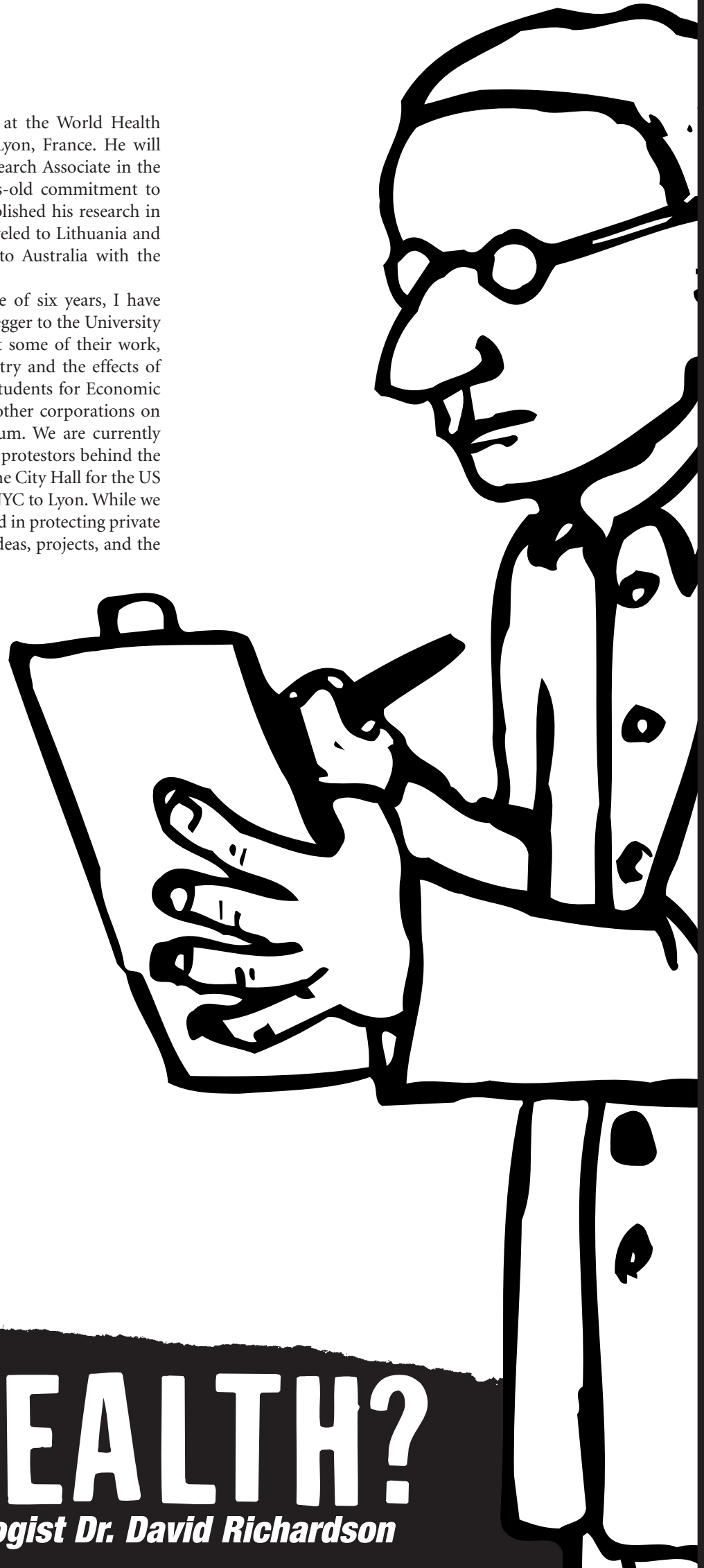
Captain: Dave Laney; **Editor:** Kate Monahan; **Illustration:** Roby Newton
Contributors: Dave Bailey, Joshua Bennett, Sebastian Samm, Elin Slavic, Bill Todd
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Doctor David Richardson is an epidemiologist working at the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer in Lyon, France. He will return to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as a Research Associate in the School of Public Health (an institution sloughing off its decades-old commitment to public health to begin bio-chemical military research). He has published his research in many leading public health and scientific journals. He recently traveled to Lithuania and Moscow to visit their nuclear facilities and to collect data, and to Australia with the Medical Association for the Prevention of War.

As an art professor, active socialist, and David's comrade of six years, I have worked with him to bring artists Sue Coe and Cornelia Hesse-Honegger to the University of North Carolina's Chapel Hill campus to show and speak about some of their work, which reveals the horrors of the American meat processing industry and the effects of radiation on insects near nuclear facilities. We have worked with Students for Economic Justice to undo the multimillion dollar contracts with NIKE and other corporations on campus, and are active participants in the Carolina Socialist Forum. We are currently enjoying our last months in Lyon, where police in full-riot gear hit protestors behind the knees and stole their banners at a Mumia Abu Jamal rally staged at the City Hall for the US Ambassador, who was in town to inaugurate the direct flight from NYC to Lyon. While we are in a relatively socialist country, the powers that be are as interested in protecting private wealth as they are in the US. I spoke with David about his work, ideas, projects, and the current state of public health.

-elin o'hara slavick



PUBLIC HEALTH?

An Interview with Epidemiologist Dr. David Richardson

Public Health?

An interview with Epidemiologist Dr. David Richardson

eos: When I first met you and you told me you were an epidemiologist, I thought you studied skin. So, what is Epidemiology?

Dr. David: It's the study of who gets diseases; when, where, and why diseases occur.

eos: Does an epidemic have to occur before you do an epidemiological study?

Dr. David: At minimum, someone has to raise the concern that there is a problem. Often these are little epidemics rather than plagues of biblical proportion. An epidemic might just mean that more people in a group are sick than might be expected. In some cases, such as diseases related to low-level environmental contamination, an epidemiologist might be looking for evidence of relatively small increases in disease.

eos: How is Public Health different from the Medical Establishment?

Dr. David: Medicine is focused on treating diseases of individuals. Public Health is, or should be, focused on collectives. Public Health includes people working in nutrition, maternal and child health, sexual health, and the prevention of occupational and environmental diseases.

eos: Has Public Health been successful?

Dr. David: Public Health efforts have been responsible for most of the major reductions in diseases. It has been more successful than modern medicine's efforts to treat individual patients. Things like public sanitation and water services, worker safety programs, and efforts to provide basic nutrition and decent places to live have been the best things we have done to improve health. Recently, in the US, a substantial amount of effort at schools of Public Health has moved away from collective changes towards projects that require expensive technologies and that focus on things that individuals should do—like take hormone replacement pills or quit smoking. In many cases, this reflects decisions to focus on promoting even better health for the wealthiest while ignoring systemic problems for the uninsured and underserved.

eos: Why this shift?

Dr. David: Part of the answer is that there is research money available for approaches that are profit-making. If there is a pill that can be sold or a blood test that can be marketed, it will be funded by a corporation. An enormous effort by epidemiologists is now directed at identifying a gene that can be screened for, or a substance that can be ingested, which will change

your risk of heart disease or cancer. This leaves aside non-market-driven study questions like, can heart disease be reduced by changing people's access to foods through legislation on pricing? (Currently we provide huge subsidies for products like refined sugar). There is also a focus on diseases that plague the affluent and the insured. Government research agendas are responsive to the lobbying efforts of the politically powerful and adept. This includes breast and prostate cancer, which are certainly real health problems. But it is illustrative of what is studied and what is left aside; there are numerous diseases that are well understood, preventable, and yet there appears to be little political will to intervene in their eradication. You have cases of silicosis (dust related lung disease) in the US among sandblasters, farm laborers dying of heat exhaustion, and poultry workers suffering from crippling repetitive stress injuries. One type of disease is not more important than another. It's a question of whose health problems are receiving attention and whose aren't. Unfortunately, the people with the least access to basic medical care are also being neglected by public health officials and workers. The professional class of researchers study the health problems of the professional class.

eos: What is one of the projects that you've been working on?

Dr. David: I am still involved in an ongoing project with the residents around Three Mile Island (TMI) and their class action suit. These are residents who have been waiting since the 1979 accident for a fair hearing and some sense of justice. The nuclear industry has formed what they call the "Pools," which includes many of the US nuclear utilities, to fight a legal battle against the residents around TMI. Consequently the industry has more money than God and has been able to drag the court case out for years. Meanwhile, the residents are still waiting for a trial in which they can talk publicly about their experiences and health problems as a result of the accident.

eos: The research you did found large increases in cancer after TMI, right?

Dr. David: Yes. The radiation traveled in plumes of radioactive gas so that there were some downwind areas that received higher exposures than others. Cancer rates were higher in the downwind areas and the rates changed over time. They were higher after the acci-

dent than before the accident. The official government estimate is that radiation doses from the accident were only a fraction of what a person receives from natural sources each year. The fact that we observed substantial increases in cancer downwind of TMI, only *after* the accident, suggests that those estimates are way off base. This is not surprising to the residents around TMI, who describe the painful deaths of pets and farm animals, people losing hair, spontaneous bleeding, and nausea during the accident.

eos: So, how were your findings used?

Dr. David: The research was presented as evidence in the class action suit.

The judge made the surprising decision not to allow the residents to present evidence from their chosen experts. She excluded evidence from environmental engineers and meteorologists. She allowed us to include our evidence, but only for certain types of cancers. In the end, after excluding a long list of expert testimony, she decided there was inadequate evidence to have a trial.

eos: That's unbelievable.

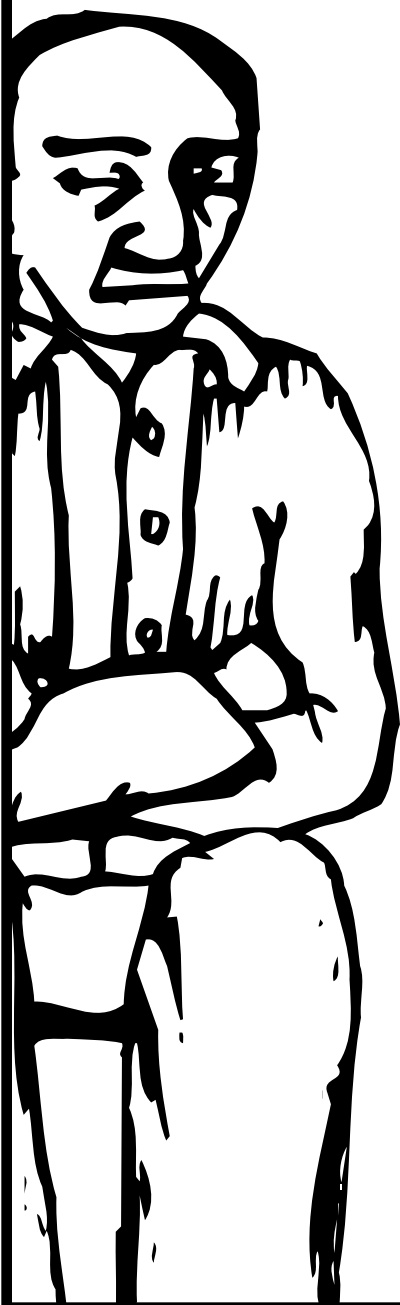
Dr. David: A recent court decision has reopened the possibility of a jury trial, but this is now more than 20 years since the accident. Many people, including myself, are skeptical of seeing justice through the courts.

eos: Does the story which they based the recent Hollywood movie *Erin Brokovitch* on give you any hope that justice is possible?

Dr. David: There are cases in which people may be successful at winning a legal battle against a powerful criminal organization. In large part, it may depend upon factors like luck and chance. In most cases, the form of justice is a financial settlement, and perhaps an admission of guilt. In that narrow sense, there may be cases of legal justice, but it's often of little consolation to parents who have lost a child, or to a person who has lost her partner. In the TMI case, a large number of the litigants are seeking some form of an admission of guilt by the utility company. Some members of the class action suit have been offered large cash payments on the condition of silence. They have refused because they want to see the company go to court.

eos: What else have you been working on?

Dr. David: I've been studying cancer among nuclear workers in the US and other countries. These people were not studied for decades. In recent years they began to fear that their dis-



eases were caused by exposures on the job. After decades of officials asserting that nobody was harmed by exposures at these facilities, the government has begun to acknowledge that there were problems. This has important implications for the hundreds of thousands of people exposed to on-the-job radiation today, and the even larger number of people living in areas with radiation contamination. Studying former nuclear workers is one way to better understand the risks that come from repeated low-level exposures to radiation.

eos: You don't mean "background radiation," do you?

Dr. David: The term "background radiation" is interesting for the very reason that some people's background radiation is higher than other people's background radiation. In part, that's a result of natural exposures to radiation from rocks or space, but it's also a result of political and economic decisions about who is most exposed to radiation from nuclear weapons tests and nuclear facilities. We need to redefine "background" to include these exposures. Our background has become contaminated. This raises a more general point about environmental diseases. The people who often bear the heaviest burden from environmental exposure are excluded from political decisions. For example, hazardous waste incinerators tend to be in black and poor neighborhoods. The problems of environmental contamination are problems of social justice.

eos: Would you give a brief history of radiation exposures and their proved link to cancer?

Dr. David: There are more than a million people in the US who are exposed to ionizing radiation on the job. There are large numbers of soldiers and civilians exposed to radiation. In addition, the vast majority of Americans will be exposed to radiation from medical and dental procedures. All of us have been exposed to increasing levels of environmental sources of radiation—from nuclear weapons tests to routine releases from nuclear power and waste facilities, and commercial uses of radiation. So, everyone should be concerned about the health effects of being exposed to radiation. This isn't really a question about whether radiation causes cancer. Any increase in radiation exposure increases the risk for cancer. Currently, the US government sets limits on occupational and environmental exposure to radiation that are based

on studies they've done on the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (A-bomb Studies). Beginning in 1950, while Japan was under the control of US occupying forces, a study of the long-term health effects from the bombings was undertaken. Early findings provided reassuring results to the government researchers. There seemed to be little evidence of long term effects, like cancer. The only health problems were from the immediate destructive effects of the bombs, like burns and physical injuries.

eos: You seem to be implying that there are problems with the A-bomb Studies?

Dr. David: Only the healthiest people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki lived through the devastation—the epidemic diseases, the burns, fires, lack of sanitation and food. It has to be stressed that studies of the A-bomb survivors began in 1950, five years after the attack. Tens of thousands of people died prior to the start of these studies. The old, the very young, and the feeble were more likely to die. So, you're studying the fittest members of the Japanese population.¶ Further, nobody in the A-bomb Study was individually monitored for radiation exposure. Instead, beginning in 1950 scientists began to ask survivors where they were when the bomb exploded. Using information about their position and estimates of shielding, like from buildings, they calculated doses. Any questionnaire has problems with inaccurate responses, made worse by the fact that in Japan there are reasons for people to be ashamed about exposures. Women found it difficult to marry as A-bomb survivors. The inaccuracy of the study can be seen when you look at people who suffered acute effects from high doses of radiation—like burns, hair loss, spontaneous bleeding—but were estimated to have received only low doses based on the questionnaire.

eos: And are the A-bomb Studies still used?

Dr. David: They are the basis for current radiation protection standards. They are using a study of survivors of a nuclear attack in which people were exposed to a sudden flash and unmeasured high doses of radiation, as the basis for worker and public protection in situations where people are normally exposed to repeated low-level radiation. It just doesn't make sense.

eos: Some people think that bias in the media is different than bias in scientific publications. Do you?

Dr. David: Until the late 1970s, there

were no published studies of radiation workers. This is surprising because the nuclear industry had been operating for more than 30 years and was possibly the largest US government project in history. Government documents indicate some of the reasons why studies weren't done and why information was kept secret. The government believed that health studies of workers in the nuclear industry would only create problems of legal liability and problems with unions. By the 1960s they determined the best course of action was to not study occupational and environmental health problems at all. When a workers' health study was finally undertaken at the end of the 1960s, it was described as a study NOT intended to find any problems. It was to provide the Department of Energy (DOE) with a study that showed that workers were not being hurt on the job. However, when the study was completed in 1976, it did indeed find excess cancers among workers at the Hanford Nuclear Plant in Washington State. The researcher in charge of the project was attacked publicly, the study was criticized, and his contract was terminated. Similarly, at Rocky Flats in Colorado, a health study found evidence of excess cancer. Again, the researcher was confronted by his superior and was told that he was not doing studies for research journals, but to please his employer, the DOE. At Oak Ridge National Lab, in Tennessee, a similar story was played out. When a study of workers found an increase in cancer death rates related to radiation exposure on the job (increases that were ten-fold higher than expected from the A-bomb Study) the researcher was told to go back to his university and come up with the "right" answer. This has been the institutional pressure exerted by the DOE on scientists. The US Government has conceded that the DOE no longer has the public's confidence and can not conduct credible health research.¶ Many journals have also practiced forms of self-censorship. They have chosen not to publish findings that challenge orthodox opinions about effects of radiation because in their words, "this will prompt controversy and letters to the editor." Or that these topics should be left to specialized journals dealing with nuclear issues, rather than be treated as public or medical health problems.



eos: We can't talk about all this and not mention Dr. Alice Stewart. Unfortunately, most readers of this interview probably don't even know who she is because of the internal and external censorship that occurs in medical journals, but even more so because the nuclear industry and first world governments don't want you to know who she is.

Dr. David: I agree. Alice Stewart is the woman who showed that prenatal exposure to a single diagnostic x-ray could lead to a doubling of a child's risk of cancer. In the 1950s, Dr. Stewart started a study of childhood cancers. For any child in England, Scotland, and Wales who died of cancer, she interviewed the mother, as well as a mother of a living child of the same age and sex in the region. It quickly became apparent that the children who had died of cancer were substantially more likely to have been exposed to radiation when they were a fetus. In England, it was common for doctors to take x-rays of pregnant women as a form of what they called "pelvimetry," that is, measuring the size of the mother's pelvis before delivery. Her findings enraged the medical establishment for several decades because of their investment in x-ray procedures and their resentment of the implication that they were harming their patients. However, it's now accepted that very low doses of radiation are dangerous to the fetus. Dr. Stewart is largely responsible for changing medical practice.¶ She continues to be deliberately overlooked and goes unmentioned even in articles about her research. In her 90s, she continues to do research, publish, and challenge the orthodoxy. She is an inspiration. There is a recent biography on her called *The Woman Who Knew Too Much*, by Gayle Greene.

eos: What do you think is the main cause of cancer?

Dr. David: There is probably no single cause of cancer. I view cancer as a process of interaction between people and the environment they are living in. That's a dialectic operating on a full range of scales, so that you might think of molecules like DNA in their watery cellular environment, cells and organs in our bodies that we feed and expose to sun and chemicals, or individuals in their built environments. When you read that a gene for cancer has been found, or that a particular chemical is a cause of cancer, that's only less than half the picture.¶ Causes of cancer are only meaningful

within a specific historical context as well. For example, for the contemporary Ethiopian, low-level exposure to radiation will not lead to a measurable increase in cancer. This is because they're unlikely to live long enough to die of cancer. So, causes of cancer are meaningful only in the context of competing causes of death, access to medical care, your entire social environment.

eos: Do you think that we can cure cancer?

Dr. David: Some people's cancers are treated and cured. Given the amount of funding, probably more types of cancer will be treatable. But, this leaves open the question of who gets treated and who doesn't. Equally important, whose cancers are diagnosed early enough to be treatable, who gets quality care necessary for treatment. These are the types of problems that come from a consumerist approach to cancer treatment and health care in general. It's extremely expensive. It involves waiting until people are diseased before taking any action. There are inequities in who lives and who dies. The alternative is to think about cancer as an often-preventable disease and focus on issues of health rather than disease treatment.

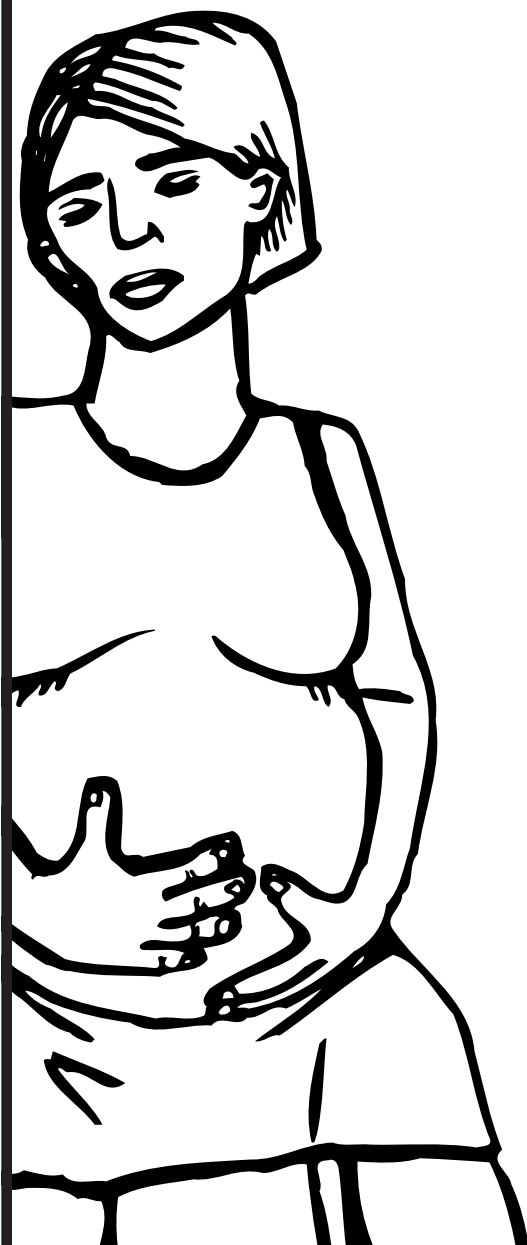
eos: What would be your recommendation for the amount of radiation one could be exposed to without risk?

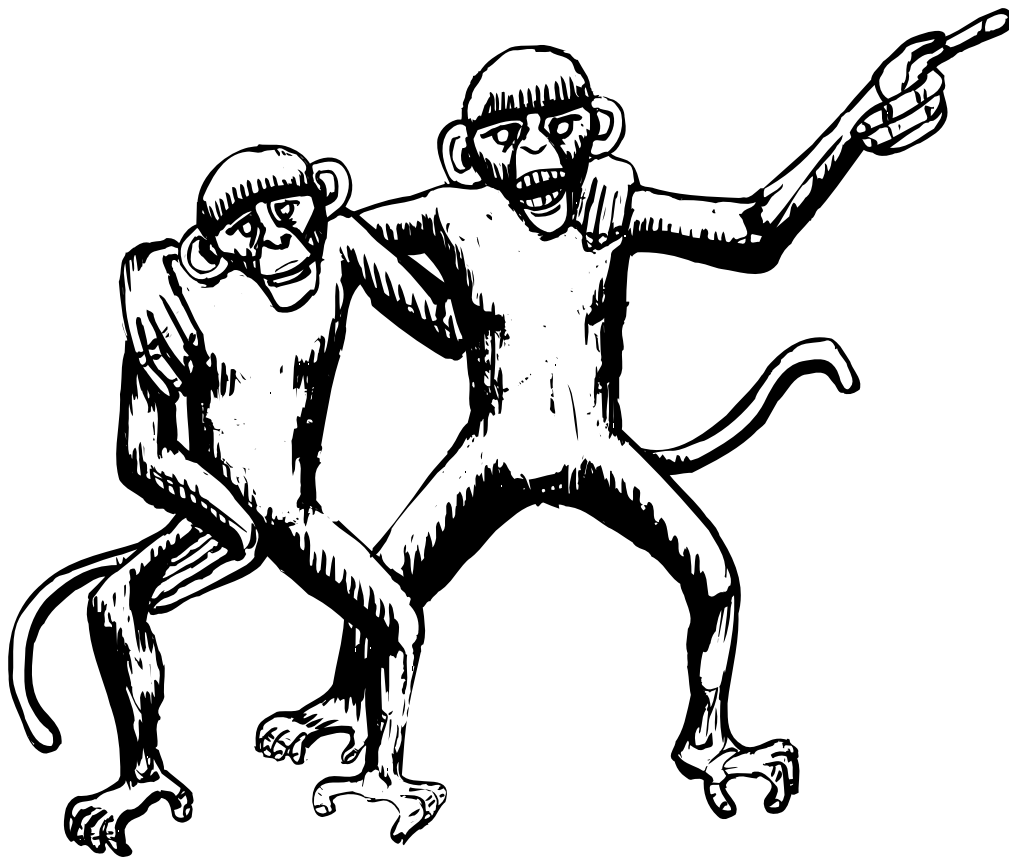
Dr. David: There is no safe dose of radiation. When any amount of ionizing radiation passes through your body it can change molecules, disrupt your cells, cause problems for your DNA. Down the line, that can lead to cancer. For people who are setting rules about what level of radiation is acceptable for workers and the public to receive, they are making some decision about the number of extra cancers that is acceptable to them.¶ Regulators of occupational exposures to radiation say that the number of acceptable cancer deaths is supposed to be roughly equivalent to the number of deaths on the job in other trades. The trades used in comparison aren't things like secretaries, scientists or government regulators, but the most dangerous job, which is coal mining.

eos: What is a person to do?

Dr. David: People need to act to protect themselves and to protect each other. Examples of self-protection include confronting your doctors and dentists (if and when you see them) about their use of diagnostic x-rays. Before being exposed, find out if the results of the x-ray will change the course of treatment. Both at the local

and global level, there are anti-nuclear campaigns. There are communities affected by the nuclear age who are struggling for openness about histories of exposures they've received, better information about the consequences of those exposures, and compensation for wrongs done in the past. Some groups to work with are: Physicians for Social Responsibility, Greenpeace, and if you're working with nuclear technologies you can organize with PACE, a union that struggles to protect workers from radiation hazards. Wherever there is a nuclear facility, there is usually an anti-nuclear community group. These campaigns and groups are important because the decisions we make today have consequences for thousands of years.¶ We're currently using nuclear technologies for electricity, weapons, and products like medical isotopes. All of this creates a legacy of nuclear waste, which limits our options for how we organize a democratic society. This sounds like a grand statement, but it's essentially true and a frightening prospect. The huge amount of plutonium and high-level nuclear waste that we've already produced means that we have a legacy of incredibly dangerous stockpiled material that has to be monitored and guarded for tens of thousands of years. This is longer than the existence of any written language. In order to take care of this legacy we're required to have at least some form of centralized government to oversee it. The bigger this problem gets, the more we cut ourselves off from possibilities of decentralized, smaller, democratic forms of self-government. These are huge choices. While this seems like a battle against a monolithic power, the anti-nuclear movement has been amazingly successful. In the US, it is now politically impossible for the industry to build any new power stations. At least for now, the nuclear weapons complex is scaling back. A few years ago, in Munster, Germany (I was there for a radiation conference), they practically had to declare Marshall law to transport nuclear waste through the city because of the number of protestors. You probably didn't hear about it on the evening news or see it in the papers, but it happened and continues to happen every day, sometimes on a smaller scale, sometimes on a much larger scale. The point is there are people who are organized and who are fighting back. ❖





FROM FUCK WORK TO FUCK UNAMERICAN UNAMERICAN ACTIVITIES

It is difficult to classify exactly what Unamerican Activities really is, or what it represents. A few things are clear. The organization began in 1994 when Srinikumar, a Stanford Sociology graduate, made a stack of "Fuck Work" stickers that, "blew out of the store." Unamerican started selling stickers, t-shirts, mugs and buttons sporting slogans like, "Jesus Hates Me," "Whitey Will Pay," "I'm in Scenester Hell," and "Bomb the Mall," that appealed to many within the American (and even global) counter-culture. Unamerican's popularity grew. Then,

around the turn of the millennium, a personal dispute within the company erupted onto the Internet. James Squeaky, who joined Unamerican in May of 1997, and Srinikumar exchanged a volley of personal attacks over Unamerican's customer e-mail list of over 40,000 people. James quit the company. And, for several months this year, Unamerican conducted no activities of any kind.

Some things are less clear. Unamerican has promoted itself as, "A punk rock band without songs, only titles," and, "Anarchy's Ad Agency." Journalists have described it as "part of

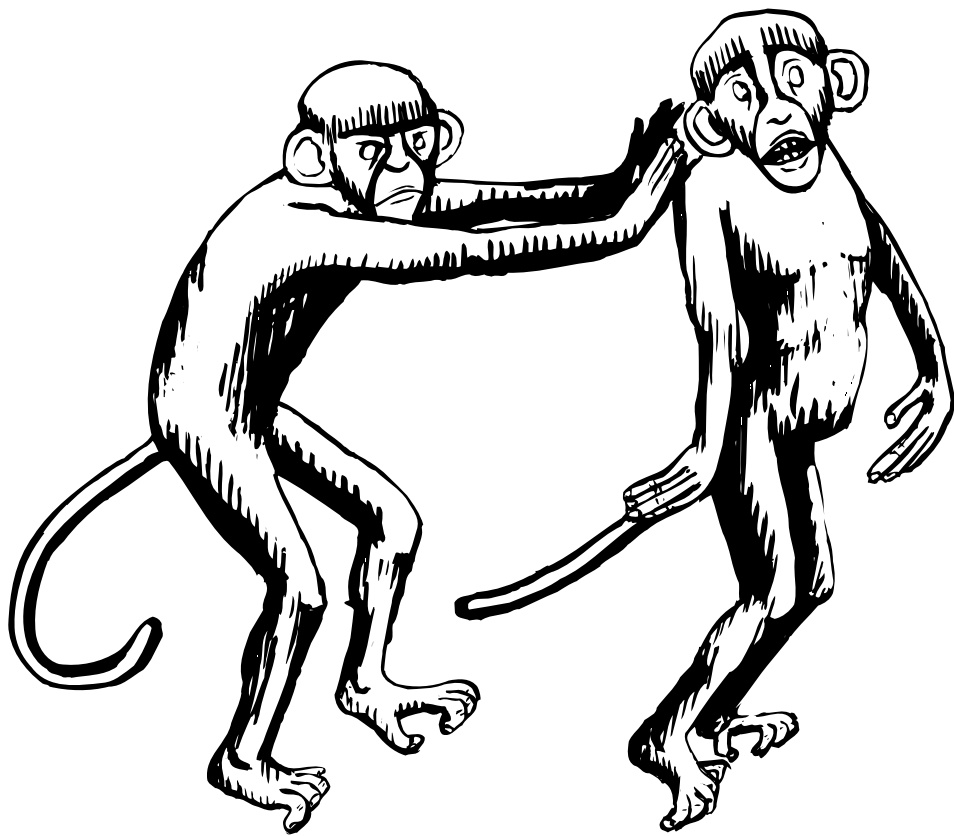
the system it claims to abhor" (*g21.net*, July 1998); "dedicated to testing the limits of free speech while pissing off 'squares' and 'normals'" (*San Francisco Bay Guardian*, March 25 1998); "intended to foment revolt by teaching workers to start their own businesses, like Kumar's" (*The Village Voice*, March 17 1998); and "the reproduction of capital decked out in punk gear." (*Maximum Rock & Roll*, #200). In a recent interview James Squeaky said, "I see Unamerican now as a business that sells stuff and tries to tout itself as a political organization."

According to Srinikumar, "We toe the line between irony and hypocrisy every day. That's my job." (*SF Bay Guardian*). But this very hypocrisy may have caused Unamerican to turn from what was perhaps the most promising punk business in existence to its current, confused state.

James, who now works full-time on his own project, *misterridiculous.com*, agreed to speak with us about his experience with Unamerican and how it relates to business, punk business, and individuality.

BY JOSHUA BENNETT





James and Srini met at the Anarchist Bookfair after-party in 1997. At the time Srini was headed to Europe and James, working at a San Francisco Kinko's, offered to run Unamerican while he was gone. At that point, James recalls, "Srini envisioned (might still actually) Unamerican becoming a 'political party.' I saw it more as a company that would go around and fuck shit up, becoming almost a label of quality—we'd find out there was someone doing something cool and would 'sponsor' it, network other people through the website, publish people's writing and such."

When Srini returned from Europe, he made James his "partner," though he set up the business as a sole-proprietorship and never worked out any kind of formal agreement with James. During the next year, James worked day jobs for pay and remained "unpaid by Unamerican while we got it off the ground." Around the end of that year, orders had increased to such a level that he devoted himself to Unamerican full-time, taking in a subsistence-level salary while working "60, sometimes up to 80, hours a week."

In those days, James believed Srini's vision of Unamerican reflected his own. "I saw a lot of potential in making the business successful and thought it would be a cool and interesting way of working on something I thought would do neat things for the activist community. I thought Srini

was very intelligent and had some great ideas." During his first two years with the company, James thrived on the constant contact with "neat kids and customers," in addition to the attention he received. "It was great and I believed that any annoyances that went for the job would be compensated for in the future. I felt like people really looked up to us and that was a really great feeling."

At around the same time, signs of Unamerican's success began to appear. The most notable may have been an extremely positive article in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* (March 25, 1998). The write-up lauded Unamerican's irreverent attitude and touted its approximately \$2,000 monthly revenue. "Kumar and his cohorts, mainly one James (Squeaky), sell stickers that tempt you to see what you can get away with . . . For these anarchists, the real enemy isn't the 'state' exactly or 'the system,' although it may include them, of course. It's bigger than that. It's anything and everything drainingly dull, hopelessly mainstream, and life-sapping" (*SF Bay Guardian*).

In an October 15, 1998, *Spite Magazine* article, Will Hines wrote about Unamerican: "Just like a great punk rock band, the slogans at Unamerican.com live in a hard-to-reach middle ground where everything is both sarcastic and earnest, cynical and idealistic, rebellious and responsible—all at the same time."

But as rave reviews surfaced, so did criticism. In July of 1998, *g21.net* published a critique of Unamerican's press kit. "Unamerican has commodified anarchy. By pandering to disaffected youth, these young guys have found a *Marketing* paradigm that works . . . Kumar and company have simply found a fertile vein of angst to tap and are profiting from other people's disaffection . . . there is indeed 'gold in them thar hills' if you're willing to leave your ethics at the door."

This kind of commentary was somewhat anathema to James. For years he's meandered from one job to another, often quitting out of disgust. He's concluded that "a lot of people work for really silly reasons. Most don't like what they do. Employers usually treat employees poorly. A lot of people work just so they can continue to work. They live lives that require a certain amount of money to maintain, working to do so makes them miserable, so they use the lifestyle as an escape from the work—but don't realize that if they just changed that lifestyle they wouldn't have to work so much."

To illustrate the gap between commentary like that on *g21.net* and James' own belief system, consider the fact that before working for Unamerican, James created and published two issues of a zine called *Static*, dedicated to various forms of work sabotage. (Oddly enough, James' *Static*

partner, Robynn Takayama, followed a path that approximated James': she worked for Unamerican and became engaged to Srini, only to sever all ties to both Srini and Unamerican in late 1999.)

Despite its detractors, Unamerican became increasingly popular and seemed ready to become a phenomenally successful punk business. *The Village Voice* compared Srini's domination of counterculture merchandise to Bill Gates' software empire. Even recently, the company received perhaps the greatest measure of marketing success: the pop-culture allusion. *San Francisco Bay Guardian* columnist Annalee Newitz wrote "I can't wait for f-biz, which I think should probably become a slogan for an Unamerican Activities sticker" (May 31, 2000).

James takes much responsibility for the wide swath Unamerican stickers have cut across the counterculture landscape. "The propaganda is hard to avoid if you are involved with anything outside the mainstream. I find stickers in photos inside album covers, mentions in magazines and, at least once a week, on the back of someone's car."

The most severe blow to Unamerican's credibility as an alternative business came when *Maximum Rock and Roll*, a longstanding flagship of the punk movement, published an article, "Fuck Unamerican," by Mimi Nguyen. The article attacked Unamerican's claims that it opposed



capitalism and “the system.” Nguyen made a case that Unamerican was a typical business, appearing punk only to sell merchandise to a market niche. “By way of an expanding product-line and an enthusiastic business politic, Unamerican wants to channel your revolutionary desire into a conventional capitalist mold. Between bootstrap entrepreneurship and individual consumer will, it’s the return of that patriotic fetish, the American Dream in a mohawk.”

The article initially affected James profoundly, but it also brought to the surface doubts he had already harbored. “The more Srini lamented over and dissed the article (he became completely obsessed with the article and Mimi), the more I started to realize its validity. I tried to point out to Srini that the article made some valid points and he freaked out at me. That was about the end of our relationship as far as I’m concerned—it was all sort of downhill from there.”

In fact, it was a specific event that caused these initial doubts to surface. In 1999, a cross-country trip in which James was going to promote Unamerican was nixed by Srini and Robynn, who claimed that there was not enough money to fund the trip. “They started talking about ‘getting rid of me,’ so there would be more money for the company. The moment I was made to feel expendable from a company that I

was under the impression I co-owned was the moment I realized Unamerican only existed to boost Srini’s (and at the time Robynn’s) ego. It had nothing to do with revolution, nor was it a cooperative among us. That’s when I realized it was just another ‘shit job,’ and much worse than any other job I’ve ever had or could imagine.”

Unamerican began with the phrase, “Fuck Work.” Its ethos was thereafter dominated by its goal of distributing five millions free “Fuck Work” stickers by the year 2000, its frequent emphasis on eliminating “wage slavery,” creating a three-day work-week, and uprooting the existing capitalist structure. But since working with Srini, James’ revelations about “work” have driven him to disapprove of the phrase that started it all.

“Not everyone has the luxury or option to ‘Fuck Work,’ so saying so comes from a background of middle-class privilege. A lot of people who work have debt, families, etc. So, changing the environment of work is much more important than just encouraging everyone to ‘start their own business,’ as Srini would. Working on making unions stronger and not corrupt is very important. Instead of starting another record label or little distro, I’d like to see politically-minded people start or join more things like food co-ops, find more ways to help the homeless, and such.”

“*Fuck Work* is really designed to be vague enough that no one could figure out exactly what it’s supposed to mean. A lot of people assumed it meant whatever they wanted it to, from ‘I don’t like to work,’ to ‘I am lazy,’ to ‘I think the ideas of ‘work’ need to be re-evaluated,’ to something equivalent to ‘fuck everything.’ So, my quest to ‘fuck work’ right now is to eventually have my own business that allows me to be self-sufficient, or at least find a way to freelance, so that I am not tied to the commitment of a job, etc. On the road to that, I am trying to find a job I can actually enjoy doing and get a lot out of.”

To further chip away at Unamerican’s punk business status, James is now refuting many of Srini’s claims. Much of Unamerican’s positive press focused on two areas: First, Srini claimed to have given out free stickers to many groups, including the San Francisco homeless population, Food Not Bombs, Earth First! and more, so that the groups could fundraise by selling them. Second, many articles published Srini’s claims that Unamerican was making money, ranging from \$2,000 per month in March of 1998 to \$12,000 monthly in February of 1999. James maintains that both these claims are false, saying, “When I left the company, we still had no idea how much money we were even making,” and “Even the claims Unamerican makes as a ‘social cause’ are mostly lies. Srini never went around San Francisco pass-

ing out 3,600 ‘Poverty Sucks’ stickers to homeless people (or whatever he claimed on the site)—they were still sitting in my living room when I left San Francisco and in the new headquarters in Oakland when I left the company. Srini repeatedly claimed we had done things like donate stickers to Food not Bombs, the San Francisco Bike Coalition (Critical Mass), the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), etc. As far as I know, that never happened. We never donated any money, helped anyone out, or really even put in our two cents on any specific political topics (outside of a few essays Srini or I wrote and distributed).”

The fact remains that Unamerican was extremely popular within the punk and other counterculture scenes. Good and bad press weigh fairly equally against one another, and each side has their bias. James continues to attack the company’s claims while Srini continues to make, and appears to fervently believe, them. Although it may never be possible to know Unamerican’s full story for certain, within it are contained both an inspirational tale of how significant an impact a successful alternative business can have, and a cautionary story of the challenges, potential pitfalls, and contradictions inherent in running such an organization. ❊

SUBVERSIVE CRIMINAL PUPPETEERS

BY DAVE BAILEY

When being handcuffed, I had been trained to clench your wrists; doing so makes them slightly larger, so when you relax and unclench, the circulation isn't completely cut off. As I attempted to utilize this tiny tactic, the officer who was dragging me towards the "Processing Room" responded by slamming my head into the telephone, then the wall. It was what must have been my third day in the Roundhouse – Philadelphia's detention unit. I still had one more day left to go.

"Let go!" he commanded of my wrists between expletives and proclamations of how much he loved hurting all 450 of us arrestees.

"Goddamn, I love this shit! I could do this shit to you John Doe motherfuckers all day." And again, "Let go!" as he, a hulk of a man easily weighing-in at 250lbs., smashed my head into the wall, over and over.

"Let go!"

For a brief second I did falter, letting my whole body relax and, consequently, my hand as well (I hadn't eaten in three days). He wrenched extremely hard on the

flex-cuffs – which are basically glorified, ultra heavy-duty plastic pull-tites. In less than one minute, I lost all sensation in my right hand. I was then dragged out of the cellblock and into the processing room. Compared to some, I got it easy...

At 2:05 P.M., Tuesday, August 1st, over 180 police officers and three helicopters lay siege to a warehouse on 41st and Haverford on Philadelphia's west side. When we looked through a mailslot to survey the situation, the police sprayed mace at us. They tried to barge in through a hole in the roof and, failing that, videotaped, tape-recorded, and spit at us through a skylight. All 75 of us inside the warehouse were detained for over two hours before any search warrant showed up. We would become known as the "Haverford 70."

And why? What sort of crime had we committed that was so heinous as to qualify such an egregious show of force?

We were making puppets. They were the props that would bear our messages of protest to the Republican National Convention (RNC): the death penalty; the

Criminal Injustice System; police brutality; corporate power in the two-party system; reproductive rights. And so on. All issues that the Republicans fail to represent the vast majority of people on, and issues that illustrate many of the flaws in the current governmental structure.

Had the police arrived thirty minutes later we would all already have been gone to the rally. Infiltration was eventually discovered to have been pervasive and thorough. Virtually every move we had planned was thwarted in some way, except for many of the blockades in Center City. State Troopers posing as Union carpenters worked at our side for weeks, side-stepping a court-ordered injunction preventing Philly cops from executing any infiltrating maneuvers against any of the planned protests— a move which violated the spirit of the injunction, thereby still breaking the law. Even so, we hadn't done anything wrong! When we were told that a search warrant for weapons was on its way, we were flabbergasted. It spoke volumes about the lies the infiltrators must have furnished.

The "evidence" from the search, and the search warrant itself were immediately sealed at the highly suspicious request of the City of Philadelphia. When the warrant was unsealed over a month later for public scrutiny, it exposed the string of lies the cops had spewed from the very beginning. It revealed the depths of the conspiracy that had been formulated against us in an effort to maintain a shiny, trouble-free image of a city that, in reality, is rife with corruption and has earned a reputation for being excessively punitive. The unsealed warrant revealed the justification of the raid as having been suspicion of the warehouse containing communist sympathizers. Their apparent evidence: newspapers and pamphlets that espoused communist or anarchist ideology. Stephen Presser of the ACLU denounced the raid as the largest scale example of preventative detention in modern history.

After the search warrant came, we were left with two choices: stay inside or abandon the warehouse and with it, all our puppets. Nervous about being beaten and pepper-sprayed and totally concealed

from any possible media attention if we stayed, we marched out, single-file, into the very arms of the same police we had aimed to protest against. The warehouse had a massive garage door through which we had driven an eighteen-wheeler for the creation of a float dubbed Corpzilla, the Corporate Monster, which was used earlier in the week for a large, permitted rally far from the ears of any possible Republican.

We opened that garage door to let the media and the community know that we were only dangerous in terms of our unflinching conviction, that we were still okay and in high spirits no matter what the cops would try to do. The community around the warehouse consists mainly of poor and underprivileged minorities who opened their neighborhood to us, a primarily white, middle or upper-class group. We held the best possible puppet rally at that door with as many of our puppets as we could hold. There were ten-foot tall skeletons, 138 strong, bearing the names of everyone Texas Governor George W. Bush had executed in his five years in office (a number which continues to climb, rapidly). There were cockroaches - "Cockroaches," read a wheat-pasted poster that made its way all over Philadelphia's open air wall space, "are not dirty, but exist only to clean up after messes. The government hates cockroaches because they remind them how dirty they are." There were mice - mice scare elephants, such as the GOP elephant, thereby justifying the mice's mantra: "Mice Are Nice!" Peanuts - the food of the elephant - thus they bore the names of corporate campaign contributors, such as, "United and U.S. Airways on the verge of merging... Donors to both parties... \$2,000,000." And so much more. People on their way out of the warehouse draped themselves in cardboard chain-gang chain, painted their faces yellow, white, blue, trying as hard as possible to still get the message out. One man carried a small placard over his head that read, simply, "Resist."

After being searched, handcuffed (or flex-cuffed), and photographed, I was led onto a bus where I would sit for the next ten and a half hours. For the first six hours we were denied water. And even then we were only given 500mL - slightly larger than a can of soda - to split between 32 people. This served to only wet our appetites for more water, reminding our bodies of how incredibly dehydrated we all actually were. An hour and a half later we were given four more 500mL bottles. To listen to the police officers wax selfless about the water ("This is my own personal water that I'm giving to you...I'm only trying to help you out...") filled me with disgust and contempt. Our attempts to point out a hose with water streaming out of it fell on deaf ears.

For ten and a half hours we were denied bathroom use. Those who had to urinate were told, "Too bad," and to "piss on the floor of the bus." I don't know whether anyone did or not, but the utter insanity of where we were and what was happening to us became increasingly poignant.

At some point, we learned that we were no longer being detained but had, in

fact, been arrested. We were not told this by an arresting officer, nor were we ever read our rights. We were simply left to slowly roast in a bus with windows that cracked a mere inch and a half in the scorching afternoon sun. Such treatment is far less than what is deemed humane for dogs.

On the bus, which was easily over 100 degrees, we sang songs of solidarity, of strength, of perseverance. We shouted for water and to be let off the bus. At one point, four bus loads of activists were shouting for water for us. The police eventually drove us to the long-abandoned Holmsberg prison - site of many a famous prison riot. Its lead-laden pipes and elevated level of airborne asbestos rendered the building, which had four-foot thick stone walls, uninhabitable. But apparently not so uninhabitable as to preclude it from being used for activists and protesters. In an uncanny display of solidarity, we refused to get off the bus. Why we weren't just dragged off the bus and tossed into that reproduction of the underworld will forever remain unclear. Beyond that incredible decision, we struggled with trying to reach consensus on almost everything. Mostly though, we just sweated, trying to relax our breathing.

As night began to creep over this unbelievably long day, we were driven to the Roundhouse. It started to rain after we had been given our first bottle of water. Desperately, people stuck their fingers out of the windows, attempting to channel a little stream of water off the roof of the bus and, hopefully, into their mouths.

The 450 arrested demonstrators, including the Haverford 70, the "Puppetistas," were divided among three cellblocks - 2 for men, 1 for women - and an overflow chamber. The overflow chamber held women, twenty or more on average, and was without bathroom facilities. It also overlooked the infamous processing room where much of the violence was to take place.

I had previously gone through a perfunctory yet still quite thorough training in nonviolent civil disobedience (also called CD Training). I knew a whole litany of tactics, both historical and new, designed to frustrate "The System." I had not, for example, brought any identification with me to the Haverford warehouse; I refused to give my name and address, thus becoming a "John Doe." I knew how to make group decisions by consensus. I was in Cell Block 2, where a consensus decision had been reached to refuse to cooperate for as long as possible and for as long as we were individually comfortable. For many, that meant hunger strike-150 throughout the Cell Blocks utilized that tactic. For Cell Block 2, it also meant nonviolent noncompliance with processing. As our cellmates were pointed out as the next target slated to be processed, we would announce our intentions of non-cooperation and "puppy pile" the targeted man. This meant we would put him in the furthest corner from the door and cover him with our bodies. The officers then had to attempt to extract the man they wanted, who, after wrestling him away from our hold, would go limp, mak-

ing it necessary for several officers to drag him. The otherwise quick and simple procedure of fingerprinting and taking mug shots became an excruciatingly long and difficult one. The intention of doing this is to slow down the system to a grinding halt, thus putting ourselves in a good position to bargain. We would then try and offer our cooperation in exchange for the city coming to the bargaining table to negotiate the conditions of our release, including dropping obviously bogus felony charges.

When they came for me they came in a ravenous fervor, kicking a cellmate before he even had a chance to get up and cover me. He was subsequently stood upon, kicked in the groin, punched, and otherwise targeted as the recipient of heavy amounts of violence. I was brought out in shock over what I had just witnessed, was slammed into the phone and wall headfirst and so forth.

The officer who proclaimed to be able to beat up protesters all day was immediately disqualified as I was dragged into the processing room, where he admitted he hadn't the strength left to drag any more of us out. I was halfway through being processed when they sat me down. My targeted cellmate was then dragged out in front of me, naked. Disrobing oneself is another useful tactic, as some officers will prove either too confused or too insecure to touch a naked prisoner. This tactic works especially well in avoiding, or postponing court arraignment hearings. Judges can be quite particular about dress code.

My cellmate was picked up off the ground and held by his throat in front of the camera for just shy of two minutes before being let go. He immediately collapsed to the floor. The large officer then stood upon his head while other officers viciously tore back his fingers for printing. He was never given the option to cooperate. A fellow protestor sitting next to me passed out from having been on hunger strike for the last 72 hours. He was given a little orange juice and verbally assaulted.

After processing, I was switched from one single-person cell with six people in it to another. The women averaged eight to a cell. All the cells measured 5'X8' - just a hair larger than a sheet of plywood. Our attempts at sleeping (a losing proposition) left at least one person wrapped around the toilet. The walls around the toilet were sticky with urine and filth. Some people turned yellow and were suspected of having contracted Hepatitis A.

Accounts of torture inflicted onto other nonviolent demonstrators only grew progressively worse. One woman was dragged, naked and bleeding, through the halls. As many as ten officers together would beat single prisoners. Many prisoners were beaten unconscious. One man's genitals were pulled and twisted. An HIV-positive man was denied essential medications. The list goes on and on, ad infinitum.

I was held on bizarre, contradictory charges for twelve days before being bailed out on \$10,000, which was the lowest of the bails anyone got. Anyone who could be traced to any groups being scrutinized

by larger governmental entities typically got \$1 million to \$500,000 bail. I never saw my lawyer and was denied phone use for the long side of nine days. The men were transferred from the Roundhouse into a maximum-security prison, locked into two-person cells for 23-hours a day. In five days, though, I was only let out twice for one hour each time. I stayed on hunger strike, although even if I had wanted to eat, the food was foul and wholly unhealthy. It was flatly admitted that people's special food needs (such as allergies, or lactose-intolerance) would not be accommodated.

As we were moved from prison to prison it became inevitable that we came in contact with the General Population (GP). Flying in the face of the Correctional Officers (CO's) threats and warnings of how bad the GP was, we were roundly applauded and otherwise treated like rockstars. Some of the protestors collaborated on a list of prisoners' demands and released it into the mainstream media. On many occasions, CO's would take me aside and tell me that it wouldn't last, the GP would turn against us, that our being in jail was pointless and we could be doing so much more on the outside. I say, what better tactic is there than to send 450 people opposed to the Prison Industrial Complex to prison? And how many times do prisoners see on the news and subsequently meet 450 people who are fighting for *their* rights? It was safer in jail for us than it would have been anywhere else in the world, probably.

I was sitting in the hospital block, in quarantine with about forty other prisoners, reading a newspaper when I read that George W. Bush had just sent two more people to death in one day, bringing his count up to 140. It occurred to me that we would have to make two more skeletons when the Puppetistas reunited. Later that night, we got word that all our puppets, our personal art and expression, had been destroyed in compacting dump trucks. In fact, the Haverford warehouse was completely cleared of everything: our bicycles, bags, tools, puppets, flags, paint, material. Everything. Philadelphia's Police Commissioner Timoney publicly stated that there were no puppets in that warehouse... There were over three hundred puppets in that warehouse. I know. I had intended to puppeteer one of them all that day, Tuesday, August 1st. The day they stole free speech.

If protesting against perceived injustices warrants arrest, if just the very act of saying "no" to any status quo you feel doesn't represent the people is criminal behavior, if making art (be it blatantly political or inherently so) in a privately owned building is cause for punishment, if nonviolent civil disobedience justifies an ever-escalating level of brutality at the very hands of those trusted with upholding the laws to prevent such brutality, then a serious reexamination of where this country has gone needs to get under way. ✪

An earlier, slightly shorter and less detailed version of this article was originally published in *StreetWise* on August 31, 2000

Dave Bailey can be contacted at: Trashio56@hotmail.com

Biafra

At the recent Republican National Convention protests in Philadelphia, police action was extremely heavy-handed and, according to ACLU lawyers, a “civil rights disaster.” This country’s longstanding tradition of harassment of activist groups by the local police and government is very much alive and well. Philadelphia authorities were quite successful in creating an atmosphere of fear that a person might be arrested for their beliefs, regardless of whether they choose to engage in civil disobedience or illegal activity or not.

Not since our founding fathers departed Philadelphia has there been much enthusiasm for progressive politics. The massive arrests and record-setting bails (clearly designed to inhibit political expression) have been cited as evidence that these protests were a failure. Ironically, the aggressive prosecution of protestors is making cities realize that hosting a political convention or World Bank summit means that they will have to spend a lot on security (\$10 million and counting in Philadelphia). That is a price they are going to have to accept if they choose to give these events a venue, and perhaps it will make them think twice in the future.

The police in Philadelphia are guilty of infiltrating and monitoring activist groups and photographing anyone who

frequents their meetings. A government spokesperson denied this for weeks before the authorities were forced to admit it. There were also suspicious visits by Philadelphia’s Department of Licensing and Inspection to “activist” spaces, as they attempted to shut them down. In one specific example, the city is allegedly guilty of pressuring the landlord of local music venue 4040 to shut down because they were incorrectly suspected of being affiliated with Philadelphia Direct Action Group. 4040 was forced to close under suspicious circumstances on the day before Jello Biafra’s scheduled spoken-word performance. But, after several hours of suspense, 4040 miraculously dug up the three months of pre-paid rent that their landlord was demanding, allowing them to reopen in time for Jello’s show to go on as scheduled.

Thanks go to Jello Biafra for the section that follows: a printing of highlights from his spoken word performance in Philadelphia, on August 6, 2000 that followed the Republican National Convention. As he said, it’s about “spreading the message.” I have distilled the performance down to the parts that are most relevant to the recent protests and presidential elections.

Introduction and transcription by Bill Todd



This (movement) has been building, especially in Europe, for years. The first outbreak, as we all know, that not even the straight media could keep a lid on and pretend didn't happen, was in Seattle last fall, when people who had about "zero interest in how high finance actually works," suddenly showed up in the tens of thousands to vent their opinion about the World Trade Organization. Then we fought the corporate agenda on April 16th, against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, with their white collar genocide policies that put third world countries further and further into debt. The people who have been demonstrating against the World Bank and the IMF for years usually get a dozen to 200 people for the gathering. This year they got what? 20,000 to 30,000. Obviously something is up.

Like the Vietnam War, the civil rights trouble and the dawn of the environmental movement before, corporate power and the rampant abuse thereof is the galvanizing force this time. More and more people are beginning to notice that government at all levels is often bought and paid for, and they have nothing to say about policies.

Americans seem to choose their presidents by which of the two options they can stomach to look at on TV for four to eight years and that's as far as it seems to go these days. I dutifully voted for Jimmy Carter when I was eighteen, and regardless of the halo around him now, he was a conservative president. He was one of the leaders that tried to reverse the progress made by George McGovern and get the Democratic Party more corporate and conservative. Then, Reagan and Mondale, what kind of choice is that? The voters actually thought they were making their own choice the whole time, or they thought that was the only choice.

In this election, Bush comes across as a spoiled frat boy trying out amongst his friends for the college debate team. And the vice presidential candidate, Dick Cheney, was secretary of defense under King George the first, and ordered Colin Powell to draw up plans to nuke Baghdad. Thankfully they were not used. Cheney's wife makes Tipper Gore look like somebody you'd actually trust. She was head of the National Endowment for the Humanities under part Reagan and Bush's term for seven years and denied grants to any education project that looked like it

Spoken Word by Jello Biafra, 4040, Philadelphia



ABC must answer to Mickey Mouse, and CBS is owned by Westinghouse. FOX is owned by “right wing media mogul megalomaniac” from Australia, Rupert Murdoch. The worst form of censorship I think is not Tipper Gore, but what we are deliberately not being told about the corporate media these days.

might be too political. Especially ones that might invite any multiculturalism into the curriculum that didn't say America is great, and weren't we wonderful for killing the Indians, etc. In other words more of the so-called politically correct, to bring back and entrench the patriotically correct.

Texas also has the worst education budget and the worst environmental record. Clinton was the worst sitting governor on those two issues when he got elected, by the way. So with King George the second, we basically have a cross between Dan Quayle and the Dukes of Hazard, with the guy who wanted to nuke Baghdad telling him what to do behind the scenes.

But is Gore any better? “Well, we better get behind Gore then to make sure that Bush doesn't get in, and we'll have a better Supreme Court that way.” The two most liberal Justices left were appointed by Gerald Ford and King George the first; Clinton is only appointing pro-choice right-wingers. The “fear of Bush” signs that are being held up certainly have a point, but how different is Prince Albert really?

The reason that I bestow them these titles is because they both come from old money, very wealthy families who have been monkeying with politics, and screwing the rest of us for generations. The Gores date back to the Civil War, and their job is to try and fix things, lead us to a new tomorrow, or come up with “a new beginning.” Their job is to protect old money—period. Gore is also pro-death penalty, pro-drug war, pro-star wars, which I can't believe they're trying to bring back. There's nobody to even fight anymore. It's not going to scare Osama Bin Laden and his crazy nerve gas cult, no more than it's going to scare Baghdad or Korea one bit.

Gore is also pro-WTO, that sham of a free trade scam going down right now.

And wait till you meet his wife. She, I believe, was probably the back door in the Clinton administration for the religious right, because of the Parent Music Resource Center that she helped found with Susan Baker, who was the wife of George Bush's secretary of state. She was directly

connected to the religious right, and is perfectly comfortable with these people. Tipper and Susan and others appeared before a senate commerce committee shared by Al Gore to talk about the “wicked evils” of Ozzy Osbourne and AC/DC, etc. The expert witnesses that Tipper brought in were directly linked to fundamentalist Christianity. And, at the time, Tipper was demanding warning labels on albums if the music even mentioned suicide, or homosexuality.

I encountered Tipper twice on the Oprah Winfrey show. The first time Oprah didn't let me talk very much at all, she has off-camera hand gestures that she uses to give people floor.

Then Tipper Gore was interviewed in Nashville, Tennessee where she was asked about the obscenity trial that came down on myself. I can laugh at it now, but it's not fun when you have charges or a lawsuit hanging over your head, so Tipper said in this interview—after she told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that she respected me—that “I'd like to take credit for the trial.” So, imagine my surprise when Oprah's producer called back and wanted me on the show again after she was so hostile to me the first time and kept giving the floor to Tipper Gore whenever I tried to say anything. I did actually get a chance to talk this time before Oprah realized “Oh my god, it's him again.” So, I pointed out that the PMRC is tied to people who think that Jews are Satanic and won't get into heaven, and lambasted Tipper for being connected to the Religious Right and not admitting it, and for appearing at Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum convention to talk about “evil music.” She denied that and then denied that she ever said she wanted to take credit for my trial, so I pulled the article out and read her own words to her. The audience started booing and hissing, and then Oprah quickly comes up to me with the same dagger eyes she had the first time, “You know you've been misquoted before, haven't you Jello?” The end of my talking on Oprah.

Back when the Reagan regime came in, which I now refer to as the Reagan, Bush, Clinton regime, because they're all pursuing basically the same policy, Reagan and Bush could have never gotten away with gutting the welfare system, let alone ramming through NAFTA and the GATT treaty that gave us the World Trade Organization. But, you get a fuzzy wuzzy yuppie pseudo-liberal in the White House, and you don't pay as much attention, at least not until Seattle and Philadelphia and all. So Reagan and crew got in and didn't put much regulation on business, “they just can't function today, unless we let them function any way they want to and get rid of this pesky big government.” So instead of big government on our back, we now have big business on our back. They deregulated the laws governing hostile takeovers of companies and mergers etc., so all of a sudden the mass media that used to be at least independently owned isn't. The mass media used to function as the fourth branch of government, policing the other three by exposing what jackasses they were, but not anymore, now that they have been bought out.

NBC was independently owned, but now it's owned by General Electric, one of the world's largest arms manufacturers. This gives GE editorial control over NBC news. Watch NBC news with that in mind the next time there is a military action. Back in the gulf war, NBC and all the rest of them were “rah rah! Those Patriot missiles are accurate every time! Isn't this just like a video game?” (GE manufactures the Patriot missile.) And there were never any protests—according to the news—but actually there were some huge ones, huge enough that they got that war over with, quick.

A good book out on the subject is *The Media Monopoly*. When the first (edition) came out, it sounded the alarm that 80% of all mass media in the western world—from school books on to movies, music, news broadcasts etc.—was in the hands of about four dozen corporations. Now it is down to just six. So instead of

them telling you what's going on, they tell you “shut up and shop.” This also leads to lots of news about O.J. Simpson, Jon-Benet Ramsey, Monica Lewinsky, Elian Gonzalez, etc. and not a damn thing about homeless families with less money than Elian's dad in Cuba.

If the My Lai massacre happened today, you wouldn't even hear about it. Seymour Hirst, who exposed the My Lai massacre, which allegedly Colin Powell helped try and cover up while he was in the Pentagon, exposed another massacre during the Gulf War, only on a bigger scale. A certain General, according to an article in a recent *New Yorker* magazine, crept up on and fired on people who already surrendered and were marching back to Baghdad on the Highway of Death, two days after the cease fire. They killed hundreds, and possibly thousands of people who had surrendered and were trying to go home. The alleged General's name is Barry McAffree, who was chosen by Clinton to be our drug czar and is now engineering the 1.3 billion dollars being sent in for military aid to Columbia. Columbia already ranks third in the amount of so-called foreign aid we pour into countries, behind Israel, and Egypt, but now that we're putting that much money in, it smells like Vietnam or El Salvador at least.

So, basically, the news has been dumbed down by the corporations that bought it out because they don't want a fourth branch. They don't want the news showing what the other three branches, let alone their board of directors, is doing. ABC must answer to Mickey Mouse, and CBS is owned by Westinghouse. FOX is owned by “right wing media mogul megalomaniac” from Australia, Rupert Murdoch. The worst form of censorship I think is not Tipper Gore, but what we are deliberately not being told about the corporate media these days. For example, the spin going on at CNN is that the Philadelphia police are doing so great at remaining calm under fire, but not a thing has been mentioned about the 300 people (on August, 5th) still in jail right now and the allegations coming out about



Part of what *becoming the media* means is when you find someone spouting Rush Limbaugh, Dr. Laura or Pat Buchanan, don't just give up, or dismiss people as stupid rednecks or something. A lot of these people are concerned with the exact same thing we are. This isn't just Green Party.



physical and mental abuse.

The biggest thing to watch out for now is they've got it in for the leaders, or anyone who seems to know what some of the plans are. The head of the Ruckus Society, the ones who train in non-violence and civil disobedience, and hang the big signs on buildings, was pulled off the street by Philly cops while he was walking on a sidewalk alone, and (was) being held for one million dollars bail without one single felony charge being filed. They know damn well that it's going to take a while to wind back through the courts and be proven unconstitutional and, by then, the head of the Ruckus Society is kept out of the LA protests as well. On top of that, they performed a (very questionable and most likely illegal) preemptive strike against puppet making.

So, it's no surprise they're predicting the lowest voter turnout per capita in American history. This is where we come in: there is a strong reason to vote in this election, and there is actually somebody to vote for at the national level, Ralph Nader. I've been registered Green for quite awhile because I'm down with what they stand for, and what they've accomplished in Europe. Even though they're not the majority party in Germany, they are part of the ruling coalition in the parliamentary system. So now the social democrats have to adopt some Green ideas, among which, they're shutting down every nuclear power plant, and by around 2005 all German car manufacturers will be required to take back old cars they've made and recycle all the parts. Needless to say, they don't waste all their tax money on drug wars, star wars, or whatever and that's part of what the green party stands for.

So imagine my surprise when I got a call in January asking, "do you want to run for president?" (as a Green Party candidate). I was in the middle of being sued by former band members who took me to trial and won damages off me, which I suspect was all started and caused by my refusal to put "Holiday in Cambodia" in a Levi's Dockers commercial. But,

due to a discrepancy in accounting, which was technically my fault and despite reconciliation, it snowballed into a threat letter from a lawyer. Using this as an opening, they claimed there was a long conspiracy by me, to deny money to the band members, and so they wanted damages for lack of promotion. And guess who's been hovering around behind the wings: Epitaph.

With that shit going on, I didn't have time, I couldn't campaign. Although I decided to leave my name on the ballot of NY and let it go out that I was one of the Green candidates in hopes of drawing more people who had no idea what Ralph Nader and the Green party were, into getting off their butts and voting for badly needed radical change in this country. We had the Green Party convention, and Nader of course got the nomination, but we were both on C-SPAN, and they actually let me give a speech. So, I spoke not on things that are already part of the Green agenda but things that could maybe be added. Like amnesty on all student loans, "If you want to go to school you've got to get in debt with student loans so you have no choice but to be a corporate lawyer instead of a radical lawyer, or you better work in a dot com office or you're never going to pay back your student loans." Also, every sitting governor and every sitting president for the federal offenses can commute all small time non-violent drug offenses to time served and let out over half the prisoners. As well as legalizing a system to eradicate sport utility vehicles.

Now I don't agree 100% with every single thing every single Green stands for, some of them want to even ban porno for example, and I'm not down with that. But the Greens are the most logical and best chance we've got at a powerful electoral alarm to accomplish the same goals that people have been in the streets for in Seattle, D.C., and Philadelphia. After the Reform party faltered by nominating Pat Buchanan, the Greens are in a position to be *the* third party, and are not the kind to forget about it after the election. This is a much deeper

party spanning several generations, and, if everyone gets off their butts, registers to vote, shows up in the fall and votes Green, that's it. If they get five percent of the vote, the Greens get matching funds in 2004. This is an example of why if somebody you believe in or a valid issue loses the first time, it doesn't mean you've lost, you've expanded the base of the pyramid and that's your bait to expand the party further next time.

Unfortunately the people most aware of how this works is the religious right, that's why school vouchers keep appearing on the ballot again, again, and again. Granted public schools often suck, this is just a ploy to get taxpayers to fund religious schools period. But when people like us show up, then ballot issues like medical marijuana pass, rent control passes, and living wage passes. Because I'm down with electoral action and direct action, I think we're going to need both.

There are other things we can do to counteract corporate power, such as trying to cooperate with their agenda as little as humanly possible. Give them as little money as possible. Stop patronizing chain stores, support music stores run and owned by people who like music, and bookstores owned by people who can read. Fighting corporate power also means not being fundamentalist about it. The problem is that some people get so into being pure and fundamentalist and militant, they see everything in such black and white terms that there only alternative is to go back to what they were in the first place. If you figure out that things always change and find a moral and ethical code that you can actually live with and live up to, you're less likely to snap a like a rubber band.

Part of what *becoming the media* means is when you find someone spouting Rush Limbaugh, Dr. Laura or Pat Buchanan, don't just give up, or dismiss people as stupid rednecks or something. A lot of these people are concerned with the exact same thing we are; this isn't just Green Party it's a much wider thing I call the

Green Wedge. A wedge issue that everyone is concerned about isn't left or right it's top versus the bottom. "Why can't I put food on the table?" That's something that everyone is concerned about. The economic boom is a myth in this country. Only half the people in the country can afford to own stock, and only about 1% of those people are really making a killing off the stock market and it's not trickling down to everybody else—it's putting more people on the street as welfare benefits get cut. The government's own statistics say that 80% of the American People haven't seen anything from this supposed economic boom. Their real income has either stagnated or gone totally down the toilet.

Another important things about voting is to get progressive people on city councils, school boards, and state legislatures. Imagine if the Green Party had just enough people in the legislature that neither the Democrats or Republicans would have a majority, and in order to get anything passed they had to talk turkey to the people who actually gave a damn. That could be in the state legislature, or the congress and that's possible now without having to switch the Constitution around to a parliamentary system of government, which might be a lot better for us than we've got now.

This election cycle is for the shot heard around the world for Greens to get Green people and good people into state legislatures. The people of the radical left are so used to not being listened to that they just bitch to each other and talk down to everyone else because they're not radical left progressives. But that doesn't communicate. So let's not be condescending or talk down to people who are concerned about the same things we are but don't know it or are channeling it into the wrong direction. As Michael Moore says, "Radicals should get off their high horse and get down with the people and go line dancing." ✪

Plans to mobilize 11,000 police officers and 1,600 army soldiers (compared to the 5,000 police officers in Seattle) were announced, contributing to a civil war atmosphere that made its way through all of the Czech media. People living next to the conference place were warned to move away from their houses.

A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE ON SEATTLE, PHILADELPHIA, DC, AND PRAGUE BY SEBASTIAN SAAM

“The Battle of Seattle,” the protests against the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) conference, had a huge impact in Europe. People over here couldn’t believe that so many people showed up (50,000) and were amazed at the degree of street violence the international media depicted. Though the whole conference was cancelled in the end without having come to an agreement, some Europeans who sympathized with the demands of the Seattle demonstrators learned a lot from what happened there.

The Seattle protests, combined with the similarly radical protests in Washington, DC against the IMF/World Bank (just 5 months later), added a new dimension to the already-ongoing mobilization against the IMF/World Bank summit in Prague (Czech Republic) in late summer 2000. Although protests, rallies, pickets and other manifestations of discontent with IMF/World Bank practices have a long tradition in Western Europe, the inspiration drawn from the Seattle protests gave many the impression that things would be different this time.

In several ways, things *were* different: this was the first such conference in former communist Eastern Europe and, as a result, it attracted unprecedented attention from the community. Interested, I started to gather information about the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank, read articles about both the protests in Seattle and DC, tried to stay up to date with the debate issues in Prague, and contacted the networks that were campaigning to “turn Prague into Seattle.” I had only superficial knowledge about the development of IMF and World Bank policies since 1989 and wanted to know more.

Seattle and what can be learned from it

The monthly newspaper *Le Monde Diplomatique* refers to the Seattle protests as the “turning point” for the American left. Even if you don’t share that enthusiastic point of view, it was astonishing that not only DAN (Direct Action Network, mainly representing the radicalized young white middle-class American) was involved in the protests and the later street fighting, but also trade unionists, environmentalists and human rightists.

Events in Seattle were obviously the product of different initiatives from very different organizations, but when the police charged on them as a whole, it effectively transformed the protests into a unified movement with clear demands and goals. Santa Cruz-based professor Barbara Epstein (author of *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Non-violent Direct Action in the 1970’s and 1980’s*) argues that Seattle brought together a “progressive radicalized youth movement” (that was earlier locked into its own cultural bourgeois ghetto) with the working class.

In the process of my research, I felt it was necessary to get more up-to-date information about the IMF/World Bank practices that were being targeted by protestors in Prague. Almost everyone knows that IMF and World Bank policies are some kind of vicious circle, even if their officially declared goal is the development of poorer countries. Since the breakdown of the former communist block, the markets in those countries have been getting more and more liberalized, simultaneously, the negative effects on those countries get worse and worse, rivaling the so-called “Third World” states in the southern hemisphere. Those effects are almost



SEBASTIAN SAAM LIVES IN HAMBURG, GERMANY, WHERE HE WORKS AT AN INDEPENDENT TELEVISION STATION.

The conference that was foreseen to last three days was stopped after two days. "The delegates did it faster than we thought" was the official statement of the IMF/WB, although just two out of 26 African delegates (representing the poorest part of the world) spoke before the ending of the conference.



the same in every country: a declining role of the state governments in economic regulation, heavy cuts on public spending, public health programs and education, pressure upon wages and the social security systems, liberalization of trading, and reckless exploitation of resources and privatizations. IMF/WB will say that this is necessary in order to achieve development. Opponents will tell you that those practices constitute the most significant contributing factor towards worldwide instability and insecurity.

International markets today look much like a global casino. More than 1,500 billion dollars move across borders every day, and more than nine tenths of those investments are speculative and not productive. During the last 10 years, IMF/WB have expanded their vision of the so-called "free-exchange" in order to encourage governments all over the world to open their markets to international short-term investments. The amount of those investments in the poorest countries of the world has rapidly increased in the last decade, from 44 billion dollars in 1990 to 256 billion dollars in 1997 (these figures were published by the World Bank itself). The problems start when investors begin to fear that their operations won't pay anymore, and their money leaves at the same speed that it came into those countries. Facing crisis, these countries address themselves to the IMF and to the World Bank, hoping to regain the confidence of investors. The two organizations usually then demand what they call "structural adjustments." Those include, for example:

- Raising taxes to strengthen local currencies again (earlier in Mexico and Brazil, a large number of smaller companies had to shut down because of "adjustments" like that, leaving thousands of people unemployed)
- Massive cuts on the social system (according to the IMF/WB credo: "spend less, export more")
- Decreasing wages, while implementing oppressive strategies against trade unions
- A further devaluation of local currencies (which makes exports cheaper and imports more expensive) and a re-direction of production towards exportation

The latter phenomenon causes a whole range of negative side effects: so-called "zones of free trade" are created by removing indigenous people from their lands and/or devastating the environment; malnutrition increases in the concerned countries as prices get higher and local resources are exported; people working in those "zones of free trade" face terrible working conditions and

exploitation. The whole idea behind the exportation dogma is, of course, to gather enough money to pay back the creditors.

But at the end of the day, IMF/WB proved helpless in the 1997 crisis and they had to mobilize their last reserves to prevent the crisis from spreading out to Japan, Europe or the US. Criticism about their policies today comes from both outside and inside the establishment. You might have heard about the Meltzer commission, for example, that moans that by intervening in the "free market," the IMF/WB would take away "chances" poorer countries supposedly have in the global run for gold. But there is also a widespread range of NGO's that take part in IMF/WB meetings. One of their most popular claims is to demand a taxation of international speculative capital (the so-called "Tobin Tax") that should be transferred to development funds for poorer countries. That may not sound bad, but the problem with that idea within the given system of global capitalism is that such a tax would cause a major fleeing from stock exchanges which could cause a world-wide market crash (as German economist Norbert Trenkle wrote in the weekly German newspaper *Jungle World*).

The IMF/WB's main goal today is to keep the economic world order stable throughout all its imbalances, while spreading their rhetoric of change at the same time. They will continue to intervene in places where they localize "countries of high systemic importance for global financial stability," as they call it. The effects of their actions have been analyzed many times and it is clear that their practices do not work, even if IMF/WB and their collaborating NGO's pretend otherwise.

2 Czech Republic joins the free world
It was the first such meeting in former communist Eastern Europe. Even before events in Seattle occurred, it was quite clear that the Czech government intended to show the Western World that it was ready to join the winning team. Months before the actual meeting, the Czech Interior Ministry tried to discredit the protests with negative propaganda, reducing it all to violence and vandalism. Plans to mobilize 11,000 police officers and 1,600 army soldiers (compared to the 5,000 police officers in Seattle) were announced, contributing to a civil war atmosphere that made its way through all of the Czech media. People living next to the conference place were warned to move away from their houses during the holding of the IMF/WB summit if they didn't want to be subject to severe

"restraining measures" on their daily lives. Flyers distributed to shop owners in the conference area used scare tactics: "When it comes to mass psychosis, it's best to leave your shop immediately and at least save your life!" Tourists were advised not to come to Prague in September - the Interior ministry web page announced that, in the thick of things, no differentiation might be made between protestor and bystander. To top things off, the FBI had opened its Eastern European bureau in Prague a few months earlier, and were generous in passing out advice to the Czech leaders.

The Czech Republic has struggled for years to become a member of the European Union, but due to severe economic barriers it hasn't been admitted. All the effects that economic liberalization had in Eastern Europe didn't bypass this state, which is bordering two EU member states (Germany and Austria). In 1990, the Czech government accepted a "structural adjustment program" by IMF/WB. Since 1996, the number of unemployed Czechs has increased at lightning speed, from 2% in 1996 to around 10% today, in some regions even 20%. Prices have quadrupled between 1990 and 2000.

Many of the social services that were free before 1989 have to be paid for today, and a large number of local enterprises have been forced to shut down, only to be taken over by foreign companies. The car industry today, for example, is totally controlled by Western European companies, the telecommunication industry is currently about to be sold to investors from the West. Perhaps the scariest example is the press market, which has been literally overrun by German companies. Today, 50% of the Czech press is owned by German companies, in the Western part of the Czech Republic that number is closer to 90%. Since 1998, Czech officials have admitted that there is a recession in the country, while IMF/WB advisors still demand to set up more severe criteria for access to social services or to cut them altogether so that the Czech government can pay back its debts.

3 Protest in Prague
Finally, around 15,000 people made it to the fortress Prague on September 26 for the "Global Action Day" mobilized by many different initiatives rallying for "Global Justice," "Drop The Debts" or "Shut Down the IMF." The biggest local network was the INPEG collective, representing an alliance of environmentalist groups, human rights advocates and so-called "autonomous" people (which you could probably best compare to DAN in Seattle).

The conference that was foreseen to last three days was stopped after two days. "The delegates did it faster than we thought" was the official statement of the IMF/WB, although just two out of 26 African delegates (representing the poorest part of the world) spoke before the ending of the conference. Might the street fighting that occurred after the demonstration have played a role? "Not at all" said IMF chairman Horst Köhler, although it's hard to deny that the heavy fighting and the extremely aggressive (televised) behaviour of police units influenced that abrupt ending in a decisive way.

The demonstration symbolically besieged the Conference Centre on September 26. Riots took place afterwards around the area as more than 1,000 demonstrators tried to break through police chains to the Conference Centre. The protests later continued in the downtown area and more than 850 demonstrators were arrested. "30 people inside the jails have been denied food, water and sleep. We have reports of people having limbs broken and teeth knocked out. One woman has a broken spine. There is clear evidence of torture by the police," reports the Independent Media Centre (IMC) of Prague. Other individuals reported "incredible scenes" in the prisons, where officers in riot gear lined up and forced prisoners to walk through their abusive ranks. Even around October 10th (two weeks after the actual protests), some Czech citizens arrested during the anti-IMF/WB protests remained in jail.

The INPEG collective concluded nevertheless that the actions were successful, uniting both "peaceful resistance and active confrontation" and that they "occurred with a single united voice."

The concluding remarks of IMF chairman Köhler point in another direction, saying that "these days were marred by the violent and destructive behaviour of a few, who are not interested in dialogue and democratic process." More than ten reunions took place between the Bank officials and the 400 (!) accredited NGO's for a "globalization with a human face." James Wolfensohn, the WB president, denounced the "unconsciousness of the rich countries" pretending that "if only the Northern countries would drop their custom barriers Southern countries could get a benefit of 250 billion dollars." He spoke of an "economic crime" that took away chances of development. This statement deliberately blames the whole tragedy on others. Today, the average wage in the 20 richest countries of the world is 37 times higher than in the 20 poorest ones, IMF/WB practices maintain this status quo and, unless changed, will end up making things even worse. ✪

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

So much has been written recently about the current neo-activist movement that I hesitate to write more. But, after witnessing the recent protests at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, I feel the need to voice my opinion, which may not be well received by some.

Regardless of the validity or righteousness of any of the causes or groups that voiced their opinions at the Convention, they all display a desperate need to improve their public relations practices. Although this is due, in part, to the media bias against them, that aspect is inescapable and needs to be transcended. Above and beyond the wall of media filters, there are many reasons that the public is going to have a hard time understanding or sympathizing with the myriad of issues and opinions that the protesters represent.

This importance of this issue was poignantly illustrated in one local critique of the protests: "Rosa Parks wasn't the only person to suffer the effects of segregation, but she was the most marketable."

Too often, protestors limited their slogans and signs to abstract references to the WTO and IMF, excluding uninformed or under-informed citizens from the full meaning of their message. Perhaps they should have tried, for example, holding placards showing off the dead dolphins that result from the WTO's gutting of the "Dolphin Safe" tuna regulations. That is something that the average person will have an emotional response to, perhaps inspiring them to educate themselves further on the issue. An acronym on a sign is just not going to evoke any kind of response from the apolitical set, nor teach anyone anything about why the organizations are being protested in the first place.

The protesters at the convention were also ill-advised in using Thomas Jones as their poster-boy; this man is a violent criminal, and even though the police brutalized him, the public does not perceive him as a martyr or an innocent victim. There are certainly better choices of people who have suffered injustice that could inspire public sympathy and further the cause.

Protesters who are planning more direct action should run advertisements or commercials, rent billboards, or mail flyers to get their message out. The corporate media sure as hell isn't going to do it for you, but you can be sure they will be doing it for themselves.

A lot of media criticism attacked the lack of a central voice or leader in the Philadelphia protests. I think having a "leader" could be detrimental in many ways, but how about creating an activist coalition? Some-

thing like a United Nations for activist organizations that share a similar vision. Here, they could iron out differences and consolidate their respective power and voices, just like the auto and tobacco industries use theirs in influencing policies. This would bring a more cohesive vision, power and organization to this movement, and build an entity that is more presentable to the public. And you will need the public behind you if you really want to enact change. The 'powers that be' have

no problem with throwing 'crazy radicals' in jail. They can not, however, deal with getting voted out of office or having their products boycotted.

Continuing to protest in ways that will engage and inform, rather than alienate, the public will result in increasingly rapid and profound progress.

-Bill Todd, Philadelphia



Letters to the Editor should be addressed accordingly and sent to

MediaReader

Post Office Box 641544

Chicago, Illinois 60664

No Idea



Aesthetic Attack On Consumerism
by Daniel Harris
Review by Kristian Williams

Daniel Harris' book, *Cute, Quaint, Hungry, and Romantic: The Aesthetics of Consumerism*, offers a long-overdue examination of modern tastes, focusing on those which have been formed and exploited by consumerism.

Consumerism, as Harris describes it, is an elaborate system of false promises. While pretending to satisfy our desires, it instead operates to create desires which cannot be satisfied, promoting a slavish devotion to mass-produced commodities. "[T]he aesthetics of consumerism are... designed to stir up dissatisfaction, to provoke restless longings that cannot be fulfilled. They actively instill anxiety and discontent with our lot, reinforcing the conviction that others are living lives happier and more interesting than our own" (xviii-xix).

Consumerism's use of aesthetics necessarily reflects this dual nature. Just as created desires and manufactured worries deprive us of real satisfaction, our world has become so crowded with images that there is no possibility of actually seeing it. Dazed and oblivious, we drift through a designer landscape where carefully planned details, though practically invisible, determine much of the texture of our lives.

This is where Harris' book begins—with the understanding that "we no longer truly see our world" (x), and with the realization that the overlooked details do somehow matter. The concept of *cute*, for example, represents an "attempt to recover the repressed aesthetic data of our lives; to make this vast archive of subliminal images accessible to conscious analysis" (xi).

Each chapter explains one aesthetic principle, with the focus on how the principle affects us psychologically and how it is constructed socially. Harris brings us an analysis of capitalism from the point of consumption. One might suspect that a book like this would read like a long, uninspired issue of *Adbusters*, without the cool pictures. Instead, we are treated to a thoughtful but abrasive work of criticism. This ambitious project does not focus on one specific text, but takes on a broader system of values, an entire ideology underlying the particular narratives, artifacts, and identities that make up our culture.

Harris does a remarkable job demolishing the categories of *cool*, *cute*, *zany*, *romantic*, and countless more, showing them to be shoddy approximations of the meaning and value we secretly feel lacking from our lives. He also successfully politicizes each aesthetic element, decoding it and revealing the tensions it reflects, or the conflicts it obscures, in our attitudes towards and relationships with the people and the world around us. Through this lens, *quaint* becomes a shallow attempt to preserve traditional structures of family and home, and *cute* is seen as a fetishization of the deformed and the pitiable.

But perhaps the trick works too well. The reader is left with the impression that no aesthetic categories could survive such scrutiny, that all aesthetic attempts—as such—are equally empty. The result is a sort of aesthetic despair; one fears the impossibility of authenticity, the hopelessness of adequate self-expression. Harris' approach also precludes the possibility of any politically correct (that is—anti-consumerist, anti-capitalist) aesthetic. His rendition of the dominant ideology is so encompassing as to leave no room for any resistance, or any alternative.

He writes: "They have built into consumerism symbolic forms of resistance to it, ineffectual strategies of rebellion that flatter the consumer with the belief that, far from being a marketing guinea pig, at the mercy of Madison Avenue, he is a courageous loner, a wacky oddball immune to the indoctrination

of advertising. One of the key concepts of popular culture is controlled nonconformity. . . Consumerism has created the perfect disguise for conformity: rebelliousness. Our individuality is actually contingent on our obedience, on buying the same product that millions of other people are buying at exactly the same time in exactly the same stores, all the while laboring under the extraordinary misconception that shopping is a profoundly self-creative act that distinguishes us from the mindless herd." (xxiii).

In keeping with the spirit of his critique, Harris offers no political program and expounds no clear ideology. The book speaks seriously against consumer culture, against its artificially created desires and insecurities, against the standards it promotes and the spiritual poverty it creates, but also denies the possibility of any alternative. Hence, it serves to maintain the passive role of the reader/consumer. It draws attention to our docility, but only reinforces it by emphasizing the futile nature of rebellion. This attitude is not only defeatist, but reactionary. A sharp critic of consumerism, Harris himself can only judge progress by the very standards he decries, such that any move away from consumerism is, of necessity, a giant step backwards. He writes: "What, after all, would a world without consumerism be like? Surely not one that I myself would choose to live in. There would be no cities because cities are dependent on trade, nor money because there would be nothing to buy. . . To imagine a world without consumerism is to erase oneself, to devolve through eons of human progress back to an era in which all of our time would have been directed to scrambling in the dust for roots and berries, with not a second to spare for making art or reading literature. . ." (265).

Harris mistakenly assumes that consumerism—a system he himself describes as provoking compulsive acquisitiveness in order to maximize corporate profit without regard to human need—is the only possible basis for an economic system. Sadly, he cannot imagine an economic arrangement that is not driven by profit and so does not need to produce the insatiable desire for ever more consumer goods. He cannot envision a system that would provide for everyone's material needs and allow them the opportunity to develop relationships and engage in meaningful pursuits without the distractions of commodity fetishism. Harris cannot conceive of a society in which it is not necessary—psychologically or economically—for a large mass of people to have the pathological need to buy.

This ideological retreat may owe as much to the focus of the argument as to the limits of Harris' imagination. The perspective of the work is decidedly middle-class, with its attention centering on those to whom advertisers appeal. Hence, it considers capitalism from the perspective of those who have more than they need. Notably absent is any discussion of the consequences of consumerism for those who have too little, those who cannot reliably meet even their basic needs, those who lack the opportunity to pursue manufactured desires. Because of this, he overlooks the material consequences of consumerism. He forgets that his smugly Panglossian acceptance of the status quo is a luxury that the vast majority of the world's population cannot well afford.

I would eagerly recommend this book, but it is hard to know to whom I should recommend it. People who already hate consumer culture mostly don't need it, and those who like consumer culture would probably just think it irritating. Political activists will consider it irrelevant, and artists would find it discouraging. I suppose other cultural critics might find it useful. Maybe the guys from *Negativland* would like it.

Aesthetic Attack On Consumerism
is available from Basic Books



Please keep in mind that the music reviews contained below are one person's opinion, not a unanimous polling of the effort.

The star system in a nutshell:
One star is bad.
Two is pretty good, or average.
Three is a very good record.
Four is exceptional.
Five rarely happens.

The design reviews are not based on budget, special effects, or reputation— but on the reviewer's opinion of how well the layout works within the package and deviates from the standard, accepted mediocrity of record design. We encourage people to view a record as a complete unit and representation of the musicians who made it. In this magazine, there is no separation between notes, lyrics, and design. It all functions together as one piece, and we intend on acknowledging all parts.

Bifocal Media: Kampai

Comp. CD ★★★★★
Bifocal Media • POB 50106 • Raleigh, NC 27650
www.bifocalmedia.com

This comp is all over the place. 21 bands ranging from Monochrome to Render Useless to the White Octave and Kids with Kites. Edgy pop to downright hardcore grind. This is a solid CD featuring some great bands that you probably can't find in the shelves of your local record store. Standouts: Captain Speky, Fura, Monochrome. My only complaint is that some of the recording is a little too lo-fi. Still though, this is highly recommended.

Design: Bifocal Media ★★★★★
This just stands out well beyond the other CDs in my stack of reviews. It's printed 4-color but is basically a two color design. Nice type and strong images on this very minimal, 2 panel insert. Bifocal seems to have a certain knack for making things look good. (DL)

Brandtson

"Trying to Figure Each Other Out..." Cdep ★★★★★
Deep Elm • PO Box 36939 • Charlotte, NC 28236
www.deepelm.com

Super smooth, mostly upbeat, pop music with lots of singing and good production. Very consistent with what Deep Elm has been putting out lately. If this sounds like your cup of tea, you'll probably eat this up. The thing I can't take with this CD is that the vocals are usually two tracks: one lead and one harmony. The way they do it creates this really silky, insincere pop song that sounds very "pro" in a bad way. The last song on this EP is the CDs saving grace. Very soft and somber, reminiscent of Low. I wish Brandtson would push this direction a bit harder.

Design: Matt Traxler, 4/2 4 panel booklet Julie Terrell, photography ★★★★★
Clean layout with good sans serif font. Don't like the backwards text in the title. Seems like if you were going to do this, then the opposite part of the title should be backwards on the back where the meaning of the title unfolds. Nice use of bold yet sparse color throughout the cover and photos. I'm not fond of the ">" symbol used as parenthesis, but the whole package comes off nicely regardless. No lyrics... (DL)

Chixdiggitt!

"From Scene to Shining Scene" CD ★★★★★
Honest Don's • POB 192027 o San Fran, CA 94119
www.honestdons.com

This is a pretty fun recording. I'm not really into records composed of three chords these days, but these 4 guys seem to be having a good time with it. So this is their 3rd full length and from what I can remember, everyone of them sounds exactly like this one. I guess that's not necessarily a bad thing if your into stuff like the Queers or one of those other proud Ramones thieves, but I think these guys do it with a bit more maturity. I've found that this album works as a good soundtrack to kitchen activities like cooking or something. It's an enhanced CD too, but the fuckers made it for PC only, so that didn't do me any good. They hail from Canada and have a website so check it out.

Design: Mike Eggermont, CD + Sleeve design ★★★★★
I guess if all their records are gonna sound the same, it's only suiting for them all to look the same as well. Rock poses and a couple of colors... whatever works for you. I have to say that I was quite impressed with the 2 full page "thanks list" and the 1 page of credits—way to fill up that pesky white space gentlemen! (SH)

Emo Diaries • Chapter 5

CD ★★☆☆

Deep Elm • POB 36939 • Charlotte, NC 28236
www.deepelm.com

Whatever it is that Deep Elm has tapped into, they consistently put out quality music of a definite genre. Call it “emo” if you like, but this is Deep Elm. This comp offers 12 unreleased tracks of solid music by some great bands of the genre including The White Octave, Slowride, Benji, Cast Aside, and Billy. The real stand out is The White Octave, whose song falls somewhere between Shellac and Cursive (if you can imagine that), but tailored with more of a staggered pop feel. Deep Elm has managed to assemble a strong assembly of quality music throughout their Emo Diaries series, and this is no exception.

Design – 2/2 4-page booklet ★★

Inoffensive, pastel colored, and minimal, the design here is trying to reflect the artists’ music, but I think it falls short of what they deserve. Seems a bit too typical of the “emo” genre, and I don’t think that it was ever very representative of the music played. These bands have taken the genre another direction, and I wish the design would reflect that. (DL)

Entartete Kunst

“Live at the Complex” 2xCD ★★☆☆

Entartete Kunst • POB 411194 • San Fran, CA 94141
This is a live, seventeen song comp consisting mostly of semi-ambient electronica. It varies in quality, some of the hip hop being a low point and the more ambient stuff being a high point. Overall, it’s a pretty good listen, good background music that makes you pay attention every few minutes. Unfortunately, my experts did not find it especially danceable.

Design: Collaborative ★★

The cover is a beautifully simple black and white photo of an elevator gate. This contrasts with the complicated and nearly illegible interior and back cover. (RN)

False Prophets

"Blind Roaches and fat vultures..." CD ★★☆☆

Alternative Tentacles • POB 419092 • San Fran, CA 94141
www.alternativetentacles.com

False Prophets were one of the staple Alternative Tentacles bands of the Reagan era, and provided pretty much of what you’d expect from the time: bile,

political diatribes, scathing irony, and a willingness to experiment with the thrash hardcore format. They don’t sound that dangerous and subversive, in retrospect, but to their credit they still sound as though they believe themselves to be pretty dangerous and subversive. These recordings document a band in the early 80’s, before punk music fell completely into the genericizing lock-step of hard-core, noodling around with surf, new wave and even reggae influences, bringing in the occasional keyboard, mostly just bashing out fast and frantic songs which sound tinny and alien now. This is, in short, a prime example of the white suburban counter-culture circa 81-85. And you may ask, so what? Like many of the Alternative Tentacles re-issues, these recordings are more interesting as historical documents than as contemporary sound- the 80’s punk aesthetic, in being so specific and reactionary to the times in which it evolved, is particularly prone to being dated. I’d imagine the people at AT are not putting these out so that local libraries can have well-rounded collections for patrons wanting to write term papers or old fogeys wanting to re-live their circle pit days- I would think that they want new audi-

ences to have visceral responses to this, the kind that listeners had when this sort of music first appeared and changed a lot of people’s lives. The problem, I think, is that a lot of what is being parodied and referenced here (lyrically and musically) doesn’t exist anymore or exists in such an already self-ironized form that the actual culture out-does the send-up. But who knows, perhaps somewhere there are suburban teens who need exactly this kind of thing to politicize them and give their lives meaning. I suspect, however, that teens will find this arcane and meaningless, unfortunately, and the tragedy of a record like this is that it seems now like a strange historical artifact, rather than a living, breathing thing.

Design: Jason Rosenberg ★★

An interesting and informative booklet, providing a lot of background on the band and the creation of these songs which does add a lot to contextualizing and understanding them. The designer seems torn between a desire to go for a “retro punk” look, with spackles of paint and ink and obviously fake staples holding the photos in place, and to go for a more slick layout. I find the compromise (fake computer cut and paste and xerox effects) a bit annoying. (AB)

Frown

s/t CD No Stars (Consumer Alert)

Stateless • POB 40734 • Providence, RI 02940

www.members.home.net/statelessrecords

They should have titled this CD “The most offensive, shitty music you’ll ever hear.” My guess is that it would have sold better, as the novelty value would have substantially risen, even if it was a one listen type of thing. 19 minutes of one painfully terrible song and nonstop noise. Sounds like a bunch of tough guy fascists trying to do a bad Pain Jerk interpretation of a good Lightning Bolt song. The promo release that came this one says tons of offensive stuff, including but not limited to: “Frown... is an equal-opportunity hate that calls you nigger, cracker, spic and breeder all at once.” “You are a bitch and a whiner and deserve not three seconds of Frown...” Under normal circumstances I wouldn’t have reviewed this, but I think it should be under the consumer alert spotlight. And yes, this is the only record we have ever reviewed that didn’t even receive one star. It isn’t worth the effort that went into making it. (DL)

I Hate Myself

s/t CD ★★☆☆

No Idea • POB 14636 • Gainsville, FL 32604

www.noidearecords.com

The vinyl of this release came out quite some time ago, but I suppose this CD was recently released. Intense, explosive music that lulls you near sleep and then thunders like the demons have just awoken. Simply great stuff. At times, not too far from Don Martin 3, Seam, or even a much rawer Low. The singer has a soothing voice that runs laps around most singers of the genre, and the guitar work hits all the right notes at the perfect intensity. I like the vinyl version better and would recommend that format, as the packaging here is a weaker interpretation of the LP. Either way you like, you’re only losing if you don’t have a copy of this record.

Cover Drawing: Mike Taylor ★★☆☆

You really have to look at the cover for a while to get a sense of all the stuff going on. It’s a one color ink drawing in collage style that feels very hollow, lonely and cold. Seems to work well with the record and the name of the band. The thing is, I don’t really like the name. Seems a bit too narcissistic, but the package fits together smoothly like an envelope containing a letter from your best friend who, guess what, feels very, very bad about her or his self. You look on and either start feeling bad about yourself or hope their outlook takes a swing for the up. (DL)

Imbroco

“Are You My Lionkiller?” CD ★★☆☆

Deep Elm • POB 36939 • Charlotte, NC 28236

www.deepelm.com

This album is a tiresome collection of redundant lullabies to take teary-eyed emo boys to dreamland. If you can still tolerate the Hot Water Music plus Sunny Day Real Estate formula, you’ll love it.

Design: Courtney Cooper/Gabe Wiley/John Szuch ★
Painterly stars and sweet script adorn this dreamy children’s book cover. Apparently, I’m too old for this shit. (RN)

Kerbloki

s/t CD ★★☆☆

Bifocal Media • POB 296 • Greenville, NC 27835

www.bifocalmedia.com

“New Kids on the Kerbloki” says my unkind housemate, and, you know, I hadn’t noticed it, but there is a certain similarity in production and overall feel to the New Kids in what these Carolinian-via-Manhattanite rappers are doing. Very 80’s, “old school” style rap. Which raises the question, do the hipsters co-opt sounds and aesthetics because they are being point-

edly post-modern or just because the music technology that was cutting edge in 1985 is now really cheap at the pawn shop? I mean, this is good, it does what it's trying to do well, but, like a record by the Faint or the Champs, you have to wonder, why are they doing what they're doing? Why do mainstream (i.e uncool) musical trends regurgitate themselves ten to fifteen years later as the cutting edge of the underground? I don't think that the members of Kerbloki intend this as irony, but I don't quite buy that this as the sincere expression of their musical vision either. Am I taking this too seriously? Rock the house, party people.

Design: "Amy" ★★★★★

I really like this. A section of a North Carolina flag with hand-written (looking) band name on it. Simple, slick, yet not too mechanical. CD art features a very Drive Like Jehu-looking snake drawing by H. Haynes. (AB)

The Ladderback

"Honest I Swear It's the Turnstyles" ★★★

Bifocal Media • POB 296 • Greenville, NC 27835
BI_FOCAL@hotmail.com

This sounds like one of those records where the band forms, writes twelve songs, and then goes and records an album, having only fully cemented their identity around song eight. On the plus side, the songs don't all sound the same, but on the negative side, it seems at times unfocused. A good record which could use a more solid sense of identity. Lyrics don't sway it one way or the other. Good live band.

Design (designer unknown): ★★

Same problem: a little girl on the cover standing against a brick wall looking very emo about something. Band pictures on the back let us know that the singer screamingly opens his mouth wide and has sideburns. Screaming open mouth and side burns!? It's been done. Nice color scheme, though: purplish blue with gold text is boldly regal. (AB)

n0. 5ive Long Player

"The Letter E" CD ★★★★★

Tiger Style • 149 Wooster St. • 4th floor • NY, NY 10012
www.tigerstylerecords.com

Members of June of 44, Rex, and Blue Man Group got together to make n0. 5ive Long Player. Very well executed post rock that you could expect from the cast of this band. I actually like this much more than June of 44, though it is more contained and focused on one thing. For what they lose by not having a vocalist is made up for with the depth and groove contained within the songs. The first song sounds like what I would imagine Aloha sounding like if they were covering Uncle Tupelo. Usually slow and somber, but always pushing forward, this is the soundtrack to a cold winter of overcast skies and high dreams. No cover with this one. (DL)

No Means No

"One" CD ★★★★★

Alternative Tentacles • POB 419092 • San Francisco, CA 94141
www.alternativetentacles.com

Mathematicians from the old school hash out some new formulas on this full length. The sound is thicker, denser than the older material, making it more listenable but certainly not easy. The lyrics read like poetry of a twisted nursery rhyme variety, however, delivered, sound rather terrifying in a I'm-glad-I'm-not-this-guy's-ex sort of way. I enjoy the content more when it describes insanity rather than stalking. Additionally, there are two cover songs, one Ramones and one Miles Davis, both funny.

Design: Randy Iwata at MINT-O-SHANK ★★★

Conflicting with their elaborate and extensive songs, the cover attempts a very simple act, basic black with gray "1" and "0" (binary code? I think so!). (RN)



Pitchshifter

"Un-United Kingdom" CD-EP ★★★

Alternative Tentacles • POB 419092 • San Francisco, CA 94141
www.alternativetentacles.com

I thought Pitchshifter was an Ozzfest-type metal band for some reason-- but, no, here they are with an EP on Alternative Tentacles, and judging from the cover they look to have a footing in the sort of rave culture meets vaguely hostile techno world of Prodigy or Orgy or one of those british electro-goth outfits. Two of the members having "programming" listed on their description of chores, as well as a Big Black cover, add to my suspicions. The title track, "Un-united Kingdom" confirms the Britishness (I hope so, anyway- otherwise this is the worst infringement of national sovereignty since those canucks Propagandi had the audacity to sing about completely US-centered, totally-none-of-their-business flag burning issues), and is a lot more straight-forward "punk" than I had expected, in a somewhat rote way. The sentiment expressed is essentially an exact recycling of the Sex Pistols "Anarchy in The UK," but without even the mildly exciting word "Anarchy" thrown in.

Singer J.S. Clayton gargles "Rrrrrroyal Brrrrritania" in his best Johnny Rotten snotty growl. The chorus is fairly catchy. Things pick up on track two, "Everything sucks (again)," which delivers the spooky chord progressions and programmed break-beats I was hoping for. Lyrical concerns center around everything sucking. Big Black's "Kerosene," which I suspected would be a disaster, turns out not so bad. The British accents add an over-the-top element and the "set me on fire" chorus works well in the whole evil-dance-music genre. Finally, the "Un-united Kingdom" remix is less Sex Pistols rip-off and more Ministry, which is good. They should have scrapped the first version.

Design: Unknown Graphic Services. ★★

As mentioned, it has that feeling of one of those glossy rave flyers you sometimes get, but a little more scary. (AB)

REVIEWERS THIS ISSUE:

AL BURIAN (AB)
SEAN HUSICK (SH)
DAVE LANEY (DL)
ROBY NEWTON (RN)



Q and not U

"No Kill No Beep Beep" CD ★★★★★

Dischord • 3819 Beecher St. NW • Washington, DC 2007
So I think that this is probably one of the best records to come out on Dischord in a couple years. Intelligent, witty, and fun DC rock—to say that I find most from that area not to be. 11 songs nearly flawlessly recorded at, yep you guessed it, Inner Ear with Ian and Don. A couple subtle electronic tricks, alternating vocals, wacky guitars (I was impressed to see these riffs played live while singing), and inventive drumming has created a record that I think I've listened to 10 times already since I got it for review—definitely one of my favorites this year!

Design: Shawn Brackbill, Photography ★★★★★

There wasn't much of a computer needed for this record, as far as design goes, just a few sharp full color photos of a scene from Partyville 2000. Even all the text credits were done on walls and photographed. A nice change. I think that every time I've ever seen their guitarist, he's been wearing that blue camouflage shirt though—so much so that when I forgot his name, I just starting referring to him as the camouflage guy. A minor issue. The record looks good none the less. (SH)

Ratos De Porao

"Sistemados Pelo Crucifa" CD ★★★★★

Alternative Tentacles • POB 419092 • San Fran, CA 94141
Ratos de Porao were the first pioneers of hardcore in Brazil. This album is a re-recorded version of their first one, originally recorded and released in 1983. Obviously, it's fairly predictable stylistically, grinding old school punk with hoarsely growled vocals telling of angst and a world gone mad. The great part about this record is that the recording quality is top-notch. The levels are great and it seems like they managed a clean recording without compromising the raw energy of the songs.

Design: Jason Rosenbeg ★★★★★

I have never seen the cover of the original release, so I can't compare it to this one. The cover has an illustration of a crucified punk rocker, though heavy-handed, probably appropriate, given the era and location from which this band hails. It makes good use of classic punk design, keeping it basic and clean, with stark black and silver inks. (RN)

Reverse

s/t CD ★★

Reverse • 2039 Washington Street • Wilmington, NC 28401
Southern fried Brit-poppers make their debut with this full length. The songs are solidly poppy and catchy, but there's something missing in the depth of the sound quality. The vocals are a bit inconsistent, however, when on point, quite touching. The bonus track is one of their best, a sloppy country jam that lets the fun shine through.

Design: Brian Weeks ★★

The digipak begins with a simple '70s boardgame theme that gets cluttered with too many photos and ideas and becomes overwhelming by the time one opens the cover. (RN)

Shutdown

"Few and Far Between" CD ★

Victory • PO Box 146546 • Chicago, IL 60614
www.victoryrecords.com

Fucking "Youth of Today" rip-offs 15 years after the fact singing about the struggle and the streets. Give me a break.

Design: ★

Mike Ski/Eric Deleporte, Construction + Layout
Mike Ski/Eric Deleporte/Marc Scondotto, Art Direction
Mike Ski, Typography and Photo Illustration
There's a hell of a lot of credits here for some shitty-ass album art. They sure have that NY hardcore image down though—3 fonts: 1 grunge, 1 graffiti, 1 collegiate. (SH)

Song of Zarathustra

"The Birth of Tragedy" CD ★★★★★

Blood of the Young • POB 14411 • Minneapolis, MN 55414
Troubleman • 16 Willow St. • Bayonne, NJ 07002
blood-of-the-young.com / troublemanunlimited.com
I found SOZ's discography 10" to be one of the best in my collection, so I had high-as-hell expectations for this new full length as well as their new drummer. I'll just say though, that when I was finished checking it out, I breathed a sigh of relief from how fucking worked up it got me. No other band has made me so on edge before. They do a lot less "blast beats" with this record and concentrate more on intense syncopation which makes for some, a lot more of a listenable record. 12 songs in 22 minutes. They are to me, the musical equivalent of heroin.

Design: Jordan Guile, Photography + Design ★

So I'm gonna have to slam the record's look. A really terrible attempt at some kind of "techno" evil. I don't know what the attempt was really, but it looks awful. Definitely don't judge this book by it's cover. (SH)

True North

"We Speak in Code" CD ★★★★★

No Idea • PO Box 14636 • Gainesville, FL 32604
www.noidearecords.com

Members of 12 Hour Turn, Palatka, Strikeforce Diablo, and probably a slu of other prominent Florida hardcore bands united to create True North. The music isn't too far from any of the aforementioned, but the lyrics lean towards a more articulated reflection of someone who has been involved with the DIY scene for most of their life, and intends on staying that way. Positive, encouraging at times, and always honest. Somehow they managed to get the most intense, rawest recording possible without being lo-fi in the least. The guitar work here is sometimes abrasive, sometimes melodic, and sometimes dissonant. I do wish there was more variety in the vocals and that fewer songs started with guitar. It sort of has a Lungfish feel, though it sounds nothing like that band. Listening to this makes me feel like I'm sitting in the Hardback with tons of psyched people, which is one of the best things I could say about a record.

Design: Var, 12 Panel 4-Color Booklet ★★

Layout mostly consists of Gainesville area photographs which, in combination with the lyrics, make this whole thing complete. I hate the font used for the lyrics though, as it's at times impossible to read and has a drop shadow at an already small size. (DL)

West of Here

s/t Cdep ★

Shining Sun Productions • Lake Stevens, WA 98258
This is the type of music that makes me leave coffee shops on Saturday afternoons. Offensive acoustic singer/songwriter stuff that leaves a bad taste in my mouth. No cover sent with this one. (DL)

"The Whistle of the Missile"

Video ★★

BiFocal Media • PO Box 296 • Greenville, NC 27835
www.bifocalmedia.com

This is a collection of live performances from ladder-back, converge, secret life of machines, party of helicopters, 12 hour turn, rah bras, dillinger escape plan, the episode, legend of the overfiend, crash smash explode, his hero is gone, engine down, and monochrome as well as independent short films from brad scott, dave lukasik, curt sanford, roby newton, charles cardello, randall bobbitt, vikki warner, carl weichert, mathew fulchiron, steve olpin, and greg linguist. For the most part, all of the live stuff looks pretty good but sounds pretty terrible. There's lots of great bands here, but they're shot in many of the same places making for not much of a variety of back drops. I think the saving grace is all of the great short films sandwiched in between the band footage. I don't remember one that I didn't like and having them on a primarily hardcore video makes them a lot more accessible to people who wouldn't ordinarily be able to check them out. The transitions and titling were done quite tastefully and sharp as well with an ongoing hip-hop track that created a nice change up. All in all, this is a well done collection and I look forward to the next one. (SH)

