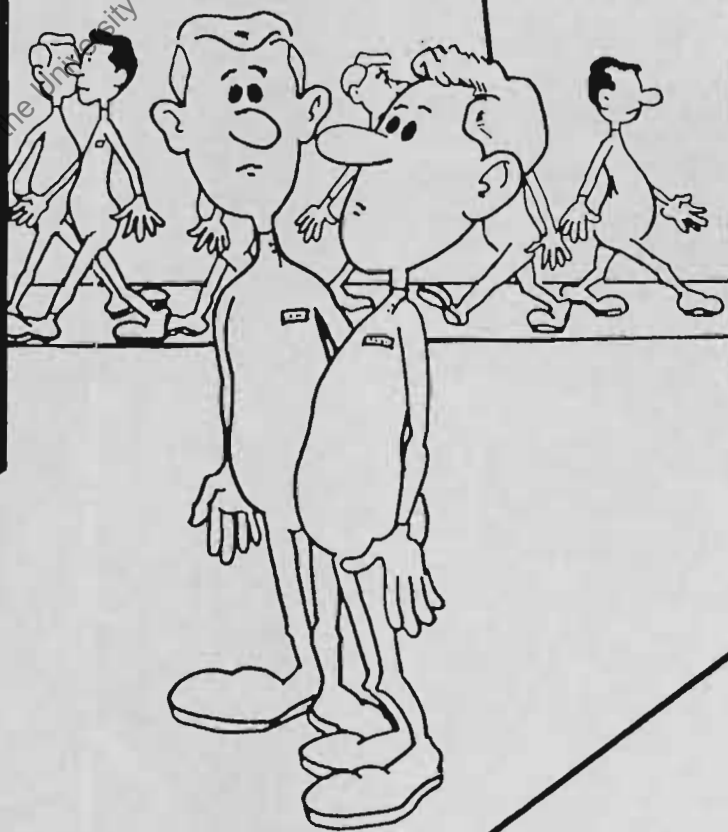


# NO GOVERNOR

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**THINK  
FOR  
YOURSELVES**

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Raltzo '82

# NO GOVERNOR

## Ideas for Individuals

Issue # 10. The zine of Illuminated Anarchism, incorporating Tlaloc Grinned, H.M., S.H., The Universal Instructor in All Arts and Sciences and Pennsylvania Gazette, The Scene, and all other perished predecessor periodicals published by this person. A Green & Pleasant publication by Robert Shea, P.O. Box 319, Glencoe, Illinois 60022.

Send letter of comment, get the next issue free. Will trade for your publication. Also available at \$2 per issue, \$10 for a six-issue subscription (make checks payable to Robert Shea), — overseas (sent airmail) \$3 per issue or \$15 for a six-issue subscription. Number in upper right-hand corner of mailing label is last issue on your current subscription. If you think it's incorrect, please let me know. T means trade copy. P means a permanent subscription; you get the zine as long as you and it shall last.

"There is no governor present anywhere." — Chuang Tzu

"Gort, Klaatu barada nikto."

"Laissez les bons temps roulez."

"Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice." — Barry Goldwater

"Piss off! Anarchy! Die!"

"Nov shmoz kapop."

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## LOST SUBSCRIBERS

If you can give me a current address for any of the following it would be appreciated by me. Possibly even by them: Eric Brewer, L.M. Day, Grey Zone (a Minneapolis anarchist group), Jeff Halsey, Henry Rosenblum, David Sonenschein, Edward M. Toomey.

## FLASHES

In retyping Neil Wilgus's review of the book *Ecodefense* for last issue, I left out the publisher's address. Both *Ecodefense* and the radical environmental journal *Earth First!* are available from Earth First!, Box 5871, Tucson, Arizona 85703.

The all-sf issue of *New Libertarian*, scheduled for publication in Fall, 1988, will carry a set of connected stories by Brad Linaweaver, Victor Koman, Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea which, taken together, constitute a festschrift in honor of the late Robert A. Heinlein. For the occasion each of us has taken characters from our own novels and incorporated them into the Heinlein universe. Sam Konkin has graciously agreed to make the results available to the world.

For more information write *New Libertarian*, 1515 West MacArthur Boulevard, # 19, Costa Mesa, California 92626.

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Until now I've been unable to fill most of the requests I've gotten for back issues. I've been working on a little project of re-Xeroxing the earlier issues, and I now can supply copies of #s 8 and 9, at a cost of \$2 per issue. I'm working on reprinting earlier issues as well and should have copies ready soon.



### DANCING ON THE DESKTOP

For a long time I've been of the opinion that the level of content of a magazine — the quality of the writing and artwork that goes into it — means a lot more to readers than handsome reproduction. A magazine printed on glossy paper with heavyweight covers, illustrated in full color throughout, using every face in the typographer's armamentarium, may well be a big bore, while a well-written dittoed fanzine may keep me up all night reading. Since the first magazines I read regularly were science fiction pulps, it's natural that I would think this way.

So, when it comes to my own zines, published with limited resources, I generally don't try to overreach myself on the production end. One of my rules as an amateur publisher is that, while I don't expect to make money at it, I want my zines to come close to paying for themselves. At the moment *No Governor* doesn't do that, really, but at least it isn't a big burden. I use the most economical and easily available methods to produce my zines. That used to be mimeograph; now it's Xerox. I've found that every time I switch from one method of reproduction to another my publication

schedule — shaky at best — is thoroughly disrupted, and years sometimes go by before another issue of my zine comes out — if ever.

Nevertheless, the lure of desktop publishing is irresistible. I've always wanted to typeset my zines, but typesetting is just too expensive, especially as *No Governor's* circulation is about a hundred copies per issue. Now, however, the means to do a typeset zine are just barely within my reach. I have an Apple //e, the faithful Mr. Chips, and I have a friend who will let me transfer word-processed material from Apple to Macintosh disks. Helping to edit the *Harvest*, the journal of the Northern Illinois Computer Society, the user group I belong to, I'm learning how to work with Pagemaker, a popular desktop publishing program. And my local Kinko's rents Macintoshes equipped with Pagemaker, and the use of a laser printer.

The thing is, I'm only a fumbling beginner with Pagemaker, and renting while you learn is a slow, costly process. Also, many of my mistakes don't show up until I've laser-printed the pages, whereupon I look them over and wince. I've decided that a certain number of mistakes and infelicities must be left standing, if I am to get the job done in reasonable time at reasonable expense.

Now therefore, at first glance this issue may look more professional than past *No Governors*, but on closer scrutiny you'll probably find a great many reproductive boo-boos. I apologize, beg your indulgence and promise that future issues will look better as I grow more nimble at the desktop dance.



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# THE ETHER VIBRATES

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Portions of some of the following letters that pertain to "The Martin Gardner Challenge" are published with the second installment of the "Challenge," elsewhere in this issue.

## ARTHUR D. HLAVATY

I'm glad to hear that *Mameluke* is completed and that you'll be doing more *No Governors*.

What I was trying to say in the comment Rich Dengrove attacks is not that the current State historically evolved from a minimal state, but that this is a trend in attitudes towards the State (and may occur with libertarian revolutions, like the American one, eventually leading to oppressive States). An example of this process is Martin Gardner's challenge. As phrased, it is a defense of minarchism. And yet, I seem to recall reading that Gardner is actually a social democrat, so somewhere along the line, he must have come up with justifications for lots of other State actions. Certainly there are people (Robert Nozick, for instance) who believe that Gardner's challenge does require a minimal State, but don't take it further than that.

I take it that Neil Wilgus believes that property rights are not human rights, since he maintains that it is possible to "nonviolently" take or destroy people's property ["Listen to the Eco," *No Governor* # 9].

I'm afraid that one reason John Gardner thought that Robert Anton Wilson was a better writer than John Barth is that he believed that almost anyone was a better writer than John Barth. Barth was the Great Satan in Gardner's worldview, for the sins of Not Being Morally Serious and Writing About Books Instead of Writing About Life. I find it amusing, by the way, that like smut stompers and Red Hunters wallowing in the study of that which they oppose, Gardner was tempted by the sin of metafiction and let more and more of it into his own writing as he grew ever shriller in his condemnation of it.--*Durham, North Carolina*

I've read John Gardner with interest, but I get more pleasure out of Barth's novels than I do out of Gardner's. I find Gardner's theoretical writing fairly interesting, though I frequently don't agree with it. Now we must try to find out what Barth thinks of Wilson — and what Wilson thinks of Barth.

## RICHARD A. DENGROVE

I really enjoyed *No Governor* # 9. First I have a few preliminary comments on it.

1. You say you're a "reprobate" on weight because you have a lot of it. That's not good enough for me. I only accept the Love Story definition of reprobate: "being a reprobate means never having to say you're sorry."

2. I re-read *No Governor* # 8. And it doesn't seem an unreasonable interpretation in retrospect that you and Arthur were discussing the beginnings of the state as well as its purpose. Of course, what you say you meant must be what you meant. I don't have the chutzpah to say I know better.--*Alexandria, Virginia*

I stand reproved.

## SAM HELM

Congratulations on completing *Mameluke*, on its prodigious length, and on what you learned you could do in the process! (Now how many volumes are they gonna divvy it into?)

Without getting into too many of the discussions therein in particular, I want to say that you certainly have the pithiest lettercol I'd ever hope to see. (It almost deserves rightfully to be called a "discussion column" instead.) Your professional experience certainly shows, and you've collected an enviable variety of contributors.

To Richard Dengrove's question, "You search how humans can be changed for anarchism. Yet, how can

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they be changed if they have the free will you claim?" I cannot resist the one-word answer: Voluntarily.--*New York, New York*

The latest from Ballantine is that *Mameluke* will come out in the Spring of '89 in two volumes.

Thanks for your good words about this lettercol, whose merits are due to the people who write in. I just retype the letters and keep the editing to a minimum. I do seem to have a natural affinity for letter columns. In the nearly-20 years that I was a full-time magazine editor, I always edited the letter column, no matter what magazine I worked on and no matter what my job otherwise involved.

#### ADRIENNE FEIN

Re Richard A. Dengrove's letter — obviously, people have to be encouraged to freely choose to change.... I mean, this is obvious, isn't it?

Re Unwritten Fashion News — Did you by any chance read *Davida* by Marge Piercy, specifically the cts about how *Davida* realizes that miniskirts had looked futuristic, but actually signaled sexual availability? Do you think we'll ever get a cultural revolution that doesn't consider female sexual availability as a groovy liberated goodie? (Especially since that sort of expression makes me want to throw up.)--*White Plains, New York*

The more I learn about relations between the sexes in earlier times, the more I appreciate how much progress our culture has made in this century, and the more optimistic I am about the future.

#### ROLDO

I dunno what all this rights debate is about, but I figure in an ethically unevolved species like homo semi-sapiens there's no way an intelligent decision can be made. When I used to watch *Star Trek* on toob, I was always waiting for someone to inform Spock that when the Vulcans decided to eliminate emotion that decision was made while his race was still subject to emotio-mental instability so it was probably an emotional and illogical decision. An intelligent decision about "rights" can only be made by an intelligent

species and that's generations off for us, even tho evolution is picking up speed — in curious parallel to the speed at which ideas are communicated, actually. You can have the men who make the laws — give me the communicators.

That idea of pub'ing the missing pages from *Illuminatus!* sounds good to me. Hopefully, it would include more of Miss Portinari's most enlightening rap on the Tarot. I fain would see more of Mordecai the Foul's Tarot writing, too...that poem on the Hierophant is brilliant. A piece on each of the Atus would be an invaluable classic to anyone hip to what Tarot is really for and about.

What's really needed is a good solid hardcover edition of *Illuminatus!* I read it bits-at-random constantly and cover-to-cover annually to test my own learning by how much more I understand. Sometime I think it's a combination instruction manual and entrance exam for the Invisible College. Whom the Gods would raise, they first make mad...

Congrats on *Mameluke* ...sounds like you had a Good Time.

I dunno if I go for this idea of the State as a "necessary evil." My idea of "evil" is anything that lacks any positive aspects, and the State does keep the Hordes from their unfortunate propensity for destroying anything they don't approve of; like me. The way I got it figured is that Government should be slowly eliminated as people become intelligent enough to govern themselves. Unfortunately, the types who have grabbed the positions of authority are cunning enough to recognize that their cushy jobs are available only as long as the masses need someone elected to think for them...as soon as the schmucks start to think for themselves, the power junkies are out of a job. That seems to answer the question of why the gnosis always gets busted. The problem is that the "authorities" are able to control the communication of ideas and impose their own ideas through media and what passes for education. The Ultimate Power, as I keep howling, is the power to define Reality and this decade with its constant repetition of control-fnords like "get Real," is Big Brother's Last Hurrah. "Last" because for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction (Atu X of the Tarot). The Future should be Quite Interesting.

At our present point of Evolution, my best course seems to be to cop as much Wu Wei as possible, work on increasing consciousness and accelerating intelli-

gence and hope that I can attract the attention of whoever's brewing up those Immortality Pills. Government began when the most cunning dude in the cave (proto-politician) discovered he could manipulate the strongest in the tribe (proto-cops) to control the others. A legacy like that can only be out-lived. An Anarchist's most potent tool is Patience.

Make LIGHT of It.--Winnipeg, Manitoba

There's more on the Tarot in other books by Robert Anton Wilson, such as *Prometheus Rising*. Wilson's ideas bear a striking resemblance to those of Miss Portinari and Mordecai the Foul. Nothing is really lost.

#### D.M. SHERWOOD

The name is as above, not RENWOOD ["The Ether Vibrates," *No Governor* # 9].

Letter needs a bit of editing. So, for the record:

1st column, Page 10, 3rd line from bottom should be: "threats, a woman could have been raped if the attacker had not been interrupted;"

2nd column, it's "filth," low slang for police.

2nd column, 2nd paragraph: It was the victim that had to move.

3rd paragraph suffers from APA syndrome, i.e., I've passed the old issue onto someone else & without it am not sure I mean to mean myself. Ditto 5th paragraph.

1st paragraph, page 11, line 15: "(teeth) but argh some spectactually stupid things of that type went down."

Right, having bored you to death. "Foot to an Unwritten": There's evidence that brain operations of same type — healed sutures in skulls where done by Maya. So not so daft an idea on the face of it. Problem is that such operations in modern hospitals take large blood transfusions. Need more solid evidence.--Port Talbot, United Kingdom

I try to change the original text of locs as little as possible and I make earnest efforts to read and correctly transcribe handwritten letters. I may get my glasses changed later this year.

Incidentally, Gary Jennings' *Aztec* has the Maya inventing eyeglasses.

#### LT

It's too bad Jay Harber did not try to justify his cynical (and to me insulting) claim that the incentive to respect people's rights is naturally fragile and would vanish in the absence of the State's enforced norms to the contrary. Fact is, today's governments do infinitely more to strangle liberty than to secure it. Their collectivist dicta force people to act not for others but, tragically, against themselves. If instead we were let be, the extent to which the good of others determined our happiness could flourish in full. Mandatory charity, whatever the window-dressing, always amounts to a garish contradiction. ... On abortion, Harber is wrong to say that children are "parasites" after birth, though I would say that that is an entirely proper description of the fetus. Biologically speaking, parasitism implies a host having no choice but to nourish the subordinate organism or die. On this basis (which Friend Grubb elucidated to me), I think it more probably right to condone abortion than to forbid it. Bob, I do not accept your assertion that no rational morality exists. Proof?

Neal Wilgus's review of *Ecodefense* grates me raw. No advocate of human freedom ought to recognize such a notion as "transgressing against Earth." Noncoercive exploitation (yes, exploitation) of all the resources in one's domain, is pivotal to human progress. The idea of sanctioning the sabotage of machines and property, so long as one stops short of threatening human life, would be ludicrous if it were not so repugnant. Machines are the product, and extension of human life force, and are indispensable to the sustenance and furtherance of lives everywhere. I wonder, how would Dave Foreman and Edward Abbey like it if Mobil started sabotaging their "tools of industrialism": their power drills, their automobiles, their washers and driers?

Don't know what to make of your Footnote on the Aztecs. It makes me think of Erich von Daniken, whose non-science, like the *Weekly World News's*, borders on humor inspired. Assuming you are being ironic, would I need to read *Illuminatus!* to be enlightened as to the joke? (I mean to read it anyway, one o' these light-years.)

Re your second "Footnote": Wouldn't the complete decline of "trends" altogether be an even more significant portent of great change?

Interesting comment on buying computers. Maybe the computer is the most important tool yet invented

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because it is the most versatile toy yet invented.--  
*Durham, North Carolina*

A parasite is any organism that lives in, on or with another organism and obtains food and shelter at its host's expense. It is not necessarily the case that either organism must die if they are separated. The parasite frequently does die, but sometimes finds another host.

Morality appears to me to be a set of rules devised to avoid that which is harmful and do that which is useful. It is grounded in the desire that we and those closest to us survive and flourish, a desire which is not shared by all people, a desire whose objects vary from person to person and community to community. We can reason about feelings and we can use reason to help us obtain the objects of our feelings, but I don't think we can rationally prove that we ought to survive. Nor should we have to. We just — usually — want to. But that means the ultimate ground of morality lies elsewhere than in reason. Q.E.D.

Neal Wilgus replies at the end of this column to objections raised to his review. Meanwhile, I might point out that sabotage in defense of the environment, or ecotage as Wilgus calls it, is a response to aggression against our health. If government, corporate and individual assaults on our environment happen to be legal and the countertactics of ecoteurs happen to be illegal, so much the worse for the law.

The target of the Aztec revisionist item is a phenomenon we did not ridicule in *Illuminatus!* but I believe we would have if it had come to our attention when we were writing.

It now appears that I called it wrong on the miniskirt. A great many women are refusing to buy them for excellent reasons, and the fashion world as a result is in disarray. It is healthy for the fashion world to be in disarray at least once every ten years. If the miniskirt itself be not an augury of cultural revolution, perhaps the rebellion against it is. I'm easy.

#### KEVIN MARONEY

[Re needing externally imposed deadlines:] Ain't it the truth? One of the primary sources of my writer's

block is the lack of real, external deadlines. I have been conditioned all my life to slack-off until the time that work had to be done, and since graduation, all that's kept me going are occasional bursts of incredible self-loathing. (Never underestimate the power of simple disgust, I have never before said.) Apa-hacking is a little easier, since they do have deadlines, but of late I've even been letting those slide.

"Rationalizations are more important than sex," as Lawrence Kasdan put it in *The Big Chill*. Maybe all moral beliefs are mere rationalizations of gut-level responses, but that doesn't mean that some of them aren't better than others. I don't really feel up to a full-blown argument on the topic of the epistemology of ethics right now (that is, at this minute), but maybe later. Basically I'm approaching it from a pragmatic viewpoint (I'm a devoted pragmatist) but some types of moral conclusions seem to me to be more useful than others.

On the specific abortion issue, I feel, without necessary proof, that forcing a woman to bear her unwanted children is "worse" than allowing the unborn to be killed. The only argument I've ever found remotely convincing on the anti-choice side is similar to a vegetarian argument, that the existence of the abortion desensitizes one to murder. I shouldn't have to point out that most (not all, Gustav bless 'em) anti-choice activists also favor nuclear weapons, gun deregulation and the death penalty. And, never let us forget, at some level, depriving someone of a choice they might make is violence.

If my memory serves, it was in a local free newspaper that Charlie Martin pointed out that spiking trees can be a lethal action; saws fragment when they hit spikes (which is the whole point of spiking), sending shrapnel in every direction.

In general, I find this type of behavior questionable. The whole premise of monkeywrenching seems to be that a small, moral group of people is free to strike forcefully against larger, immoral groups, in accordance with Higher Morality. But, the only thing that protects the small groups is their diminutive stature, for otherwise, the larger groups would bother, be able and be willing to hunt them down and make them pay. This leads me to the conclusion that the monkeys can only be a tool of harassment, not an agency of actual change. Monkeywrench gangs can only continue to exist if they are too small to do any tangible good.

Destruction of property, even if it can be precisely limited to property, is still violence. Or, if you believe it isn't, we should get together and blow up your car and burn down your house some time. Destruction of property is a failure to recognize the rights of others to determine their own fates, which is violence. I'm against it.

Who is to decide the moral difference between a tree-spiker and someone who blows up a clinic? I've never heard of anyone getting injured in a clinic attack; they are always carefully planned to avoid injury. But we cannot live in a world where anyone who answers to Higher Law is encouraged to blow up empty buildings or destroy heavy machinery. Zeal is danger.--*Durham, North Carolina*

Your last line reminds me of an exhortation by Lord Melbourne, Prime Minister under Queen Victoria: "Above all, no zeal!"

And your comments on morality recall another comment of Melbourne's: "Things have come to a pretty pass when religion is allowed to invade public life."

Who is to decide between tree spikers and clinic bombers? It occurs to me that while I don't believe that an objective and universally valid moral law exists, it might help if we humans invented one, just to settle questions like this. Of course, if we could all agree that whatever moral promptings we feel come from inside us — gut-level responses, if you like (and I do) — it might be harder for zealots to persuasively invoke Higher Law as a justification for destructive acts.

#### **Neal Wilgus replies on monkeywrenching:**

I'm surprised that Hlavaty, LT and Maroney all seem to think monkeywrenching is an issue of property rights, pure and simple. Impure and complex, I'd say, because the property we're talking about is a mixture of public and private, and the rights issue is all tangled up with other social issues.

To begin with Hlavaty — of course property rights are part of human rights, but whose property is more equal? A monkeywrencher may destroy a piece of equipment belonging to a land developer, and we rightly condemn the act. But the developer may destroy a priceless and irreplaceable part of the ecosystem on public property to everybody's loss, and that's okay

because he got permission from the government. Is corporate property superior to ecoproperty?

LT comments that exploitation is pivotal to human progress. Who sez? Actually, I agree up to a point — but LT seems to be delivering it as an unalterable religious truth. What about the Luddite minority who doesn't want your damn progress?

More to the point, exploitation is rarely noncoercive, and in the cases where monkeywrenchers take action there's more than enough coercion to go around. Public land "administered" by agencies like the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management use the standard government coercion — private ownership forbidden, support by taxation, policies set by unelected bureaucrats, threats, arrest and incarceration if you don't obey. Then the "administrators" turn around and strike a deal with timber, mining and grazing "harvesters" who rarely give a damn about damage to the environment as long as the bottom line is satisfactory. They can rape, pillage and wipe out endangered species to their heartless content so we can have more office buildings, aluminum beer cans and cheap hamburgers. This is progress?

I believe it's possible to have the good things of modern civilization and preserve much of the natural environment, too, but when the two are in conflict, as often happens, it's rarely easy to pick one side against the other. Monkeywrenching is a tactic that shouldn't necessarily be ruled out just because "progress is inevitable."

Kevin Maroney is apparently missing the point about tree spiking. The purpose is not to shatter saws in the sawmill, but to stop the cutting in the first place. What monkeywrenchers do is let the timber company know that trees in a certain area have been spiked so that those trees will not be harvested. Of course in this imperfect world spiked trees are going to end up in the sawmill somewhere along the line — which is why something like spiking is not to be undertaken lightly.

Maroney dismisses the impact of monkeywrenching too lightly. The two most spectacular acts of sabotage in the last few years were highly successful, did not result in human injury, and provoked little retaliation by the victims. I'm referring to the destruction of the Icelandic whaling fleet by the Sea Shepherd militants and to the so-called White Rose Action, in which Katya Komisaruk singlehandedly destroyed the Navstar computer complex at Vandenberg Air Force Base. The



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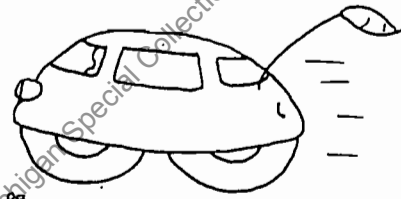
identity of the Sea Shepherds is known, but no action has been taken against them — and Komisaruk could have walked away with a good chance of not being identified, but turned herself in as yet another way to make her anti-nuke statement. She got only five years.

I, personally, am not an activist and have not spiked trees or destroyed property to save Gaea, and I share the general unease with such tactics. But surely most of us would agree that sabotage is justified at times — against the Nazis during World War II, for instance, or against any dictatorship that is threatening your life and freedom. But sabotage in peacetime against targets you abhor — that's a harder knot to untie. I suspect No Governor readers might favor Animal Rights raids against abusive labs over the abortion clinic bombings mentioned by Maroney, with ecotage somewhere between.

Ideally, any form of violence is abhorrent, but there are real-world situations where it might be necessary. On a planet where the rain forests are disappearing, the ozone shield is crumbling, and the toxic waste of high-tech living is accumulating at horrifying speed, I can understand and even sometimes applaud a mon-

keywrenching act that succeeds, even if property is destroyed. But it's an iffy business, I agree.

The Earth Firsters are full of zeal, and that's dangerous, as Maroney points out. But they're literate and thoughtful, too — as demonstrated in Ed Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and in the *Earth First!* journal, where many peaceful demonstrations are reported in addition to the relatively few acts of sabotage. I recommend *Earth First!* (Box 5871, Tucson, Arizona 85703) as a lively and often funny journal for rebels — even Discordians — who don't much care for how things are going these days.



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## MY TV IS WINKING AT ME

By Robert Goodman

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The Illuminati control Hollywood. They're slipping 23s and 17s in like mad.

Bob Shea says he's noticed this for years. Indeed, I caught a gratuitous 23 in an old Roger Moore *Saint* movie on TV. But I didn't notice (wasn't "primed" — heh, heh) until recently. The current pattern seems to be, get their attention with brazen examples, then continue the inside joke with cleverer, more cryptic instances.

The broadcast version of *Max. Headroom* set me up. They hit viewers over the head with 23. Then *Sledge Hammer!* did a takeoff of Max. H. In it, the *Sledge Hammer* was chloroformed and kidnaped while his digital clock in the foreground read, "1:17 AM." Coincidence? Not after a later episode had Hammer in prison wearing number "12323;" but by then, you see, I

was watching very closely.

Close watching or not, it took until the second time I saw the *Sledge Hammer!* episode, "Big Nazi on Campus" to notice the following. First, in the hallway of a college dorm building, the room numbers in the background were in the 230s. Then there figured prominently a phone number: "555-1967."  $1+9+6+7=23$ . Finally, a blackboard in the background had the following assignment written on it: "Chaps. 17-23."

Meanwhile, I saw an el station poster ad for some movie from Touchstone Pictures. It was a page of funny obituaries, and the one in the upper right corner used a 23.

*Married with Children* led off with her asking him for numbers for the lottery. He suggests 23, which she

rejects because of bad associations. So he suggests 17 as a substitute. Only when I saw the episode for the second time did I catch the significance of the \$253 phone bill: 11 x 23. They get subtler and cuter.

In the opening credits of *Women in Prison*, under Peggy Cass's mug shot you'll see her prison number: "000023." And in an episode aired last January they were really cute. Someone had stolen a bottle of champagne from a case of 24. The accuser came in saying she'd just counted the bottles and, "...there were only 23. Sounds like a suspicious number to me." It fit the plot perfectly, but it's a raised eyebrow to us.

Time-Life has a TV ad for a series of books about the supernatural. They mention that someone turned back from boarding a plane which later crashed. The picture shows him turning at the entrance to "Gates 9-14." Then an intertitle: "Dismissed as Coincidence." Was this another raised eyebrow to us? Or coincidence? It's a beautiful self-reference.

Did the conspiracy extend only to shows I like? One night I tried watching TV at random. I stopped when I got to *J.J. Starbuck*, a show I'd never even heard of before, let alone watched. What stopped me was mention of the 23rd floor. I stayed tuned for the rest of the show, saw a 46 in a closeup of a tape recorder. If they're into multiples now, they must've broken in with obvious 23s and 17s before.

I can't stand too much more TV. We're going to have to watch in shifts. Who knows how many we've been missing?

People think there's no clever writing on TV. It's there, but apparent to initiates only. We're being winked at, but I'd like to wink back. I wrote to *Sledge Hammer's* producer, but don't know whether he's in on it. The conspiracy might be composed of supposed underlings. It may be just the last hands the props, costumes, and scripts go through that insert those numbers. It looks like they're having a contest to see who can insert the most, the cleverest, etc.

The Illuminati really are playing with the world. They obviously have Hollywood at their disposal, yet they play games with it. If they were to get serious...(shudder). Actually, I think they're on our side. The bad guys wouldn't be involved with a show like *Sledge Hammer!* would they?

There's a whole magazine called *Seventeen*, you know. And what's really in *Orthopedic Monthly*, anyway? And why's the 2-3 defense so popular in

basketball?

And is there yet another joke inside this inside joke?

I now watch TV with a calculator, ready to sum or factor for those 23s and 17s. For instance, Beans Baxter lives at 12903, which equals  $3 \times 11 \times 17 \times 23$ . (They also used "Klaatu barada nikto.")

I spoke to John Spector, producer of *Women in Prison*. He says that, in the meeting where the mug shots were created, someone first suggested Peggy Cass's character have number 1, implying inaugural residence. That was too obvious, so it was suggested that a 2-digit number be used, at which time someone wrote down "23" for no apparent reason. As for the perseveration in the script about those 23 champagne bottles, that was to have been even longer (but was cut to its final length), the elaboration compensating for bad acting. I realize now that the actor was chosen for her appearance. The script writer was someone who, to Mr. Spector's knowledge, had never even met the person who came up with "000023." I think Spector's in on it, and is playing the joke to the hilt by denying it. Since then, I've noticed that the warden's office is 203.

*Married with Children* airing January 17, 1988 was really cute. One character complained that the other was blocking his driveway by 2 feet, 3 inches. That 2'3" figure was repeated about four times over the course of a minute, just to make sure we'd get it. Ready as I'd been for a fast ball 23, I wasn't expecting this curve, which indeed took until the third repetition or so to sink in. Knowing after that, that this was one of those episodes, I was alert enough to catch the following line in the dialog — a sentence fragment: "No juice, no license, no horse." This must be a play on "no wife, no horse, no mustache," from *Reader's Digest* via *Schroedinger's Cat*. Then in the calling of a horse race, I thought I heard mention of a "Prince Eris," though it was scripted as "Prince Harris." The capper was set up early in the episode, when we're told a certain long shot horse would pay "at least 20 to 1." (Two people have pointed out that phrase's homonymy with "twenty-two one," which when added...but, come on, there must be limits.) So set up, I waited to hear what the final odds would be. Finally the denouement: the horse won, paying \$22.90. A joke within the joke.

My source within *Married with Children*, named simply "Luz," has left that job. Of course, nobody can be allowed to get too close to the conspiracy—without

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being drawn in. Still, she dug out that "Prince Harris," not Eris, in the script, which was written by a contractor, John Vorhaus, but still went through their usual committee of writers and editors.

I'm trying to determine whether the show *Matlock* is

in on this. What next? Elliptical constructs, where the 23 is only implied? At football games, banners reading "*Illuminatus!/17:23?*" Stay tuned.



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## R.I.P., B.O.R.

The funeral for the Bill of Rights was brief.

The Nixon Court had administered the hemlock.

"Harmless error, blah blah blah."

"No citizen has any rights which the police have to respect."

"Only unborn foetuses have rights, which are forfeited upon birth,

A kind of civil Fall." The rain continued and prayers were offered

To the ultimate absentee landlord with hopes that now that we had shaken

Off the shackles of the past our hands would quit shaking.

"Warning: The Surgeon General has determined that Liberty is dangerous  
To your health, is fattening and causes acne."

July Fourth was now celebrated as Dependence Day.

In balancing the claims of Society against the individual's claims to

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the former were given

Infinite weight. "Individuals," of course, means "human beings."

That other kind of persons, Corporations, were unleashed.

If U.S. Steel wants to put something unnameable into the living waters,

What could be more red, white and blue than that? The fish in those

Waters turned red, white and blue as well and if you ate them you'd get

Enough mercury and lead to set up shop as an Alchemist.

God knows that the Sunkist Company has a Divine Right to manipulate

The Price of lemons so that the American people, like lemmings,

Can get the squeeze. But those Godless Communists don't believe in Freedom

And to prove it we'll take a poll of those on Grenada held prisoner in

Packing cases. We'll prove to them, by God, that the U.S. means business

When it says it'll fight for Freedom. We're so busy fighting for Freedom

That we dont enjoy it. And Grenada is Afghanistan spelled backwards.

--Dan Wm. Burns

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## THE MARTIN GARDNER CHALLENGE: II

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Is anarchism just an escapist fantasy, or do anarchists have practical solutions to the major problems of contemporary society? A highly regarded mathematician and skeptical writer, Martin Gardner made the following statement in an essay called "Why I Am Not an Anarchist" in his book *The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener*:

"As things are, there simply is no way a modern industrial society can flourish without a strong government to enforce the law. This means, of course, a system of police, courts, lawyers, judges, jails, and, given the absence of a world community, a military establishment. You cannot even enjoy your humblest possessions unless a government supports a vast system that prevents thieves from taking them. Regardless of whether altruism is genetically based (as anarchists like Prince Peter Kropotkin argued, and some modern biologists believe), or entirely acquired after birth, there is not the slightest reason to suppose that humanity can, in the foreseeable future, eliminate what Christians call original sin."

Gardner's attitude seems to me representative of what many intelligent, well-informed people have said when I've discussed anarchism with them. Crime is a major concern of people in all walks of life and at all levels of society. It is perhaps a greater worry for the poor, because they are the chief victims of crime. What does anarchism have to say to people who are worried about crime?

Taking this passage from Gardner as a succinct statement of an important challenge to anarchism, I've been asking all who read this, both those who consider themselves anarchists and libertarians and those who do not, to respond. So far "The Martin Gardner Challenge" and responses to it have been published in *SRAF Bulletins* #s 88 and 89 and *No Governor* # 9.

Now what about you? What's your opinion of Gardner's view of anarchism and crime? How about joining in the discussion?

And if you've already written in answer to this, feel free to write again. I'm hoping to make this a continuing dialog.

Following are comments received after the "Challenge" appeared in *No Governor* # 9.

Next issue I'll publish my own observations on what's been said so far.

**Brick Pillow:** I don't have an answer, cuz I don't think there is a solution to crime in a modern western-style society. If we're gonna live in that society, crime is just part of the package.

But blindly trusting your fate to an official Police Department is not what I'd call realistic. The mugger you're worried about will only wait till the cops turn the corner out of sight. I've known many people who've been victims of urban crime, dozens, and I've yet to meet anyone who was rescued by Officers of the Law. That's just not what they're about. You say the reason most folks aren't thieves is "the simple natural fact that participation in human society is intrinsically rewarding," and I'll buy that, for most folks. But there's also a criminal element that doesn't care about such things one whit; "fear of the police" is their only real deterrent. I suggest that a little "fear of the victim's anger" needs to be made part of the mugger's outlook on life. But this half of the equation, where victims can and would lash out at their attackers, is precisely what current law seeks to eliminate, by requiring special permits (very hard to obtain) before an average joe is "allowed" to arm himself; and woe be to some unlucky Barney Goetz type who actually fights back. The authorities still haven't finished nailing him to his cross.

You speak of non-violence, which is all well and good as far as it goes, but it doesn't go very far when some schmuck with a blade wants your wallet. You speak of society shunning the criminal, refusing to socially interact with bad guys, but what's the value in ostracization as punishment in a society the size of

Glencoe? I'll happily refuse to do business with the man who stole your word processor, but how am I to even recognize him?

Evil action requires genuine punishment, in any society. Absent the punishment, you'll end up with anarchy, in the very worst sense of the word. Certainly we need to unlock the cells of those "found guilty" of tax or draft evasions, drug offenses, etc. But if we're talking about crimes of human violence, I can hardly comprehend the stunning naivete of Mark C. saying, "the criminal would be treated with love and respect...somewhat like a wayward sibling..." Obviously, Mark C. has never been robbed or raped. Violent crime is a problem that cannot be defeated with effective use of anarchist platitudes, as Mark C. and L.G. so clearly illustrate in *No Governor*. Much as I dislike government, I can't stretch government into a viable excuse for violent crime. I don't toss and turn all night worrying about the cruelties of prison life for murderers and muggers, and I don't support the oft-heard anarchist dream of freeing all the prisoners.

But I do earnestly believe that violent crime can be made a much less common interruption in our lives if the damn government (talk about criminals!) would allow us to prepare and exercise adequate individual defenses. Much of the perceived "need" for judges, juries, cops and prisons, etc. could be eliminated by simple self-defense, if only it were "legally" permitted. Being as I'm somewhat soft in appearance and fact, I wouldn't be caught dead without my weapons, and I've no idea whether they're legal or not.

How much less inviting a target would little old ladies be, if thugs believed the grannies were armed and dangerous?

I believe genuine defense from crime is an individual's responsibility. The government taxes you for defense, but your only genuine defense is you.

And who defends you from the government?

**Neil Belsky:** You're talking about a village-type society. How could this possibly work out in something the size of New York City? Goetz is a fine (albeit overused) example. There were far more people calling for his release than there were calling for his incarceration. Yet there were several different views. Depending on where he traveled, Goetz could be either a hero or a murderer. The same could be said for a smaller crime. It takes something really major to unite the

population against a single person. Frequently, even a murder is not enough. By the way, L.G. is full of shit. Britain is in a pretty bad way (I would go so far as to say on the skids) and I would venture to call the actions of the general populace apathetic disgust.

**Andrea Antonoff:** I like your ideas on anarchist society because they sound as if you're optimistic about people & their behavior if allowed to be free. I have no good ideas about how to deal with crime in an anarchist society but I think it will always be a problem to be solved. I mean I don't think it will entirely disappear if the society is less coercive, though I do think it will decrease. I think that the current amazingly high level of crime in our culture is probably due to an unfortunate coincidence of centuries of deranged child-rearing practices combined with a fragmented and rapidly changing culture leading to a sense of isolation & alienation combined with resentment. Phew. See? That's all it is. Now all we have to do is fix it.

**Michael Grubb:** I have often heard it said that anarchism is overly optimistic about people's good natures, but I then usually suggest that pessimism about human nature (taking the form of unwillingness to put social power in any individual's hands) is what motivates anarchism. On the other hand, people are people, and the presence or absence of the State is not going to change basic human nature. And on the third tentacle perhaps those conditions that make the abolition of the state possible would involve a realignment of human nature.

Your discussion of crime in an anarchist society suggested to me the picture of a "police" force that expended its energies on identifying criminals and then publicizing that information.

**LT:** I don't feel particularly addressed by the Martin Gardner Challenge. However, insofar as he regards government as a basically Good Force to curb men's inherent Evil tendencies, I would applaudingly echo Sean Haugh's entire response and two points of your own. These being: that "participation in human society is intrinsically rewarding" and that "the antisocial person will create his or her own prison."

**Adrienne Fein:** The present system of government/law enforcement may not be preventing robbery, rape,

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and murder very effectively, but any other way of doing so might be even less effective.

I wonder if participation in a human society is rewarding? I wonder if, even if there are rewards to be gained by belonging to a culture, it doesn't work largely by subcultures?

I'm thinking of some of the kids I see at work, for instance; they belong to a culture, all right — street culture, with street ethics—which constantly gets them in trouble with the mainstream culture, especially regarding things that mainstream culture considers stealing. (This is not all our kids by any means, understand—just some percent of them.) I don't think these kids particularly do (in many cases) belong to the mainstream culture, nor do their parents; I don't think they perceive the mainstream culture as having any particular rewards for them if they were to make the effort to conform to its ethics, so as to be able to join it. Given "how-things-are" I'm not even firmly convinced that the mainstream culture would reward them for membership in it, although I think it has enough going for it that I'd certainly recommend to them that they give it a try.

Do you have any bright ideas about what to do when two different cultures have two entirely different ethical codes, one culture exists more-or-less within the other—and some people seem to be being "rewarded with a sense of belonging" for the "wrong" ethical standards and culture?

**Sam Helm:** I don't think that new answers to "The Martin Gardner Challenge" are necessarily needed beyond your own eloquent answer based on the obvious failures of legalized force and the need to settle on nonviolent alternatives to the things government now does (poorly) with coercion.

I would quibble with Ukelele the Short's suggestion that, "Maybe we're anarchists because we think most people are like us; statist are statist because they think they're the privileged few." I would bet that statist are statist because they think other people are like themselves too — because they "know" that they are held in check from robbing and enslaving their fellow humans even more than they do only by the structure of the state.

**Neil Steyskal:** Re your idea about shunning criminals, how about neighborhood "credit bureaus" to keep

track of shunners?

**Richard Dengrove:** Will crime happen under anarchy? You answer crime happens now: Among other things, the state itself practices crime. You see President Reagan as the equivalent of Machine Gun McGurk. There is a problem with this, though. Doesn't it make your task doubly hard? Now, as an anarchist, you will not only have to stop crime in the streets, but crime on the statehouse steps — and in the Capitol. Not only is Charles Manson a murderer but so is General Haig. Would it be easier to stop the crime of such "notables" than it is the crime of "two-bit thugs;" or harder? My experience is that most people would gladly stop Manson's crimes; but not Senator Kennedy's, or even Senator Helms's. So stopping the state's crimes may be harder.

And what about the constituency these politicians serve, aren't they accessories? I have been a bureaucrat for many years, and have gotten hints as to why things are done. It might be easy to stop the dairy producers who milk the taxpayers as efficiently as they do their cows. But some constituencies count in the millions. We Federal employees do. As do parents. Yes, some Federal benefits accrue to parents in general. For instance, the vast majority want that taxes subsidize school lunches, even if their kids trash them. And these parents are an awful lot of people to stop.

Some of your commenters had another answer about anarchy and crime. They believe anarchism would end crime. Under anarchy, people would love one another. I can't believe that. In some times and places, that government is the best that governs least. In others it is the worst. In certain times and places armed groups wander about an area raping and pillaging at will, and extorting money and crops. This has happened in Uganda, pre-revolutionary China and Mozambique. On a more individual level, the same thing goes on in primitive societies: In those anarchies the strong terrorize the weak. In one that is based on slash and burn agriculture, the only recourse from bullies is to move on. Otherwise, they will take all your crops and leave you with nothing. In another primitive society, Colin Turnbull's *The Mountain People*, the strong take food from the mouths of the starving. So reconciled are the starving that they merely laugh.

You may find all sorts of differences between the anarchy you advocate and the Mountain People or

present day Uganda. But are these differences relevant? Here the commenters in # 9 only mention one relevant trait for anarchy, and Uganda and the Mountain People have that trait. The state has lost its monopoly of force in all three; it can no longer use force against force — at least not effectively. Maybe your anarchy will not result in armed bands and the strong exploiting the weak, but maybe it will. Maybe your anarchy will mimic the Mountain People, even though drought created theirs. Maybe your anarchy will mimic the Ugandans', even though ethnic conflict created theirs. Maybe not.

**Donna Camp:** In your longer letter you mention that government comes into being in imitation of violence. Noting that part of that process is that thugs who want to be "good" go into the policing forces, and I wonder if that's good or bad. In some senses we are safer for a while at least while the various gangs deal with each other. Only when a place gets populated enough to need a frontier are we forced to confront thuggery. Perhaps if that takes long enough a philosophy will have a chance to develop. The trouble is that you run the risk of being blown to smithereens depending on the rate of technological development.

It seems to me that the anarchist revolution must be religious. But this is an intuitive response; I haven't tried to think it through completely. I think each individual must learn for himself that there is only one way to change the world and that is one person at a time. Then as each person becomes enlightened, he becomes free of the traps of politics, government and state. Decentralized churches will fill the need of social aid and succor and the nuclei of "multigovernments." People might "go through" a number of churches until they found one with which they could agree. Or they might find that no church serves perfectly but they have found one in which they could be comfortable.

**Robert Goodman:** I'd expect anarchists in an anarchy to behave the same as anarchists in non-anarchy. So anarchists will deal with crime the same way they deal with crime (including state crime) today. This goes for all types of anarchists and all types of crime. What makes anyone think they'd change?

**Georg Patterson:** Even before I got through to the end it had occurred to me that Gardner makes an

unjustified leap, from the need for security to the need for a coercive state. Many of your responses and those of others from SRAF address the point well. Gardner simply doesn't explain this leap.

BUT, and this is where the fun starts, I don't think any of you have answered the underlying question in any way that makes any sense to me. Is there a difference between anarchy and chaos? Is it, as someone once said to me, a question of self-control? I simply find no support for the Kropotkin idea that there is a bio-basis for altruism. Nor do I agree with Gardner's classing of these non-altruist tendencies as "original sin." Xtianity strikes me as a way of positing an unattainable goal to guarantee that you life will be miserable.

I go with Sean's take, that there will be people who want to be anti-social and the best we can do is eliminate large coercive structures for them to be anti-social within. It seems to me that there may be something in the nature of interaction that gives rise to hierarchy. Up against this humans, as rational self-imaging creatures, have posited what you could call the fallacy of equality. Let me just say this here and you can ignore me last week: All people are not equal (that's # 1); this inequality is a social requirement because someone has to do the shitwork of society. No matter how we change the structure there are going to be people that play the game better.

So how do we stop them from becoming a coercive state? The only possibility I see that makes any sense is such wide-spread atomization that a large mega-state would be impossible. This would allow for individuals to form small communities of like-minded people to attain their vision of the good life. they would be able to exclude free riders, people who chose not to contribute to the overall good of the group. Thus, the free rider problem is solved at a certain level by simply increasing the options.

But, what of people who choose to be anti-social? What of rapists and child-abusers and serial killers? I'm sorry, Bob, but you seem to be ignoring these problems, focusing on crimes against property, the most-defensible sort of crimes and those most easily come to grips with.

But failing to answer is at least better than some of the SRAF answers, filled with the worst sort of mysticism and counter-intuitive hooah.

Does that sound harsh? Well, some of those people

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need some harshness in their lives. How else to deal with someone who assumes that because s/he is rational and nice that everyone else will be, too? Based on what? Sure, it might be nice were it so, but it's **HARDLY AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION.**

And why, precisely, should I try to live in a society that treats criminals with love and respect? Why do they merit my respect for raping three-year-olds or dropping bricks out of buildings onto passing pedestrians, pray tell? Shouldn't the love and respect of any society be accorded to those who have chosen to provide that love and respect to the other members of society?

This doesn't mean that we as members of any society would necessarily want to be cruel and unusually punishing towards criminals. What would best serve utility? The best arguments against the police state are that it does not maximize utility. But that does not tell us what would be the anarchist response to crime. Knowing what does not work does not tell us what will work.

My response to Gardner is that of many, that the

current system is clearly not working. I just can't follow the road that says, somehow, by getting rid of the coercive state, we will get rid of all these social ills.

If asked to speculate, I'd expect some sort of utterly atomized state to be probably more than a bit chaotic and quite likely to be less likely to provide a peaceful and happy existence in certain respects than the one we're stuck with now. The desire to smash the state really does require a certain amount of altruism since, I'm sorry, the state simply doesn't coerce me all that much. I have a good life, and giving that up for an abstract good opens the possibility of a world of rampant chaos, and that's asking a sacrifice, and that raises the free rider problem.

If I know what you want is what's best for me, then why should I want what's best for you when I can want what's best for me and then there'll be two people looking out for me? Sure, we can voluntarily agree that it is better for a society that people do this, but once we start compelling it we're on the road to the total state machine.

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Neal Wilgus

## NEW NATIONS NOW NEEDED

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Burning Bridges, AL (LEAK)—The states of Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana made it official today by signing the papers which created the United Confederate States, thus becoming an independent nation. With the secession of the UCS from the

United States a modified version of an old Southern dream comes true, but those concerned with the rapid crumbling of the American empire merely shake their heads in despair and refuse to talk about it.

It all began, of course, with the formation of the Black Nation from the former states of Kentucky, Tennessee, North

and South Carolina and the Virginias. When these states were given to the black people to form their own country many whites hoped that the black states would vote to remain in the union and preserve the structural power of the federal government. With the black secession, however, the legal gates were opened and

withdrawal from the union has been gaining popularity ever since.

Hawaii was the first to follow the example of the Black Nation, but it was only by armed struggle that the native population was able to drive out the foreigners and establish their own control. By that time the federal government





was so involved in military problems elsewhere that little was done to stop the island state from declaring its independence.

Experts predicted that the southwestern states of Arizona and New Mexico would be next to go, expecting the large Indian and Mexican populations to establish nations of their own. Surprisingly, it was the New England Federation which made the next move when the predominantly white population in the eight northeastern states voted to withdraw from the union and seek their own destiny. Not long after this Canada had its secession problems when Quebec declared its independence from the rest of the provinces.

Since then, of course, the Indian and Mexican nations have been created in the Southwest, while Texas and Oklahoma have joined in the formation of still another independent country. California, too, has declared its secession from the union in spite of the fact that civil war continues to rage throughout the state. Rumor has it that the Northwestern states, the Rocky

Mountain states and the Plains states are also considering withdrawal, and some observers go so far as to predict that before long the District of Columbia will be all that's left of the old federal union — a confusing political situation since the district does not fall under constitutional jurisdiction.

Today's creation of the United Confederate States in Burning Bridges is another big step in the direction of that prediction, but few people here are mourning for the old federal structure. One happy old timer expressed it for everyone when, shortly after the official ceremonies, he declared that "we've learned something from the blacks after all, even if it took us some time to realize it. They taught us that if you get beat back down the first time you try something, just keep at it, and after awhile, just like they say—you shall overcome."



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## FOOTNOTES TO AN UNWRITTEN TEXT

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A new scholarly edition of the letters of Mark Twain is being published by the University of California Press. Since Sam Clemens usually wrote letters in a hurry, he sent out first drafts, with scratch-outs and all. In this new edition words or passages that he crossed out will be printed — crossed out but readable. According to Michael E. Frank, one of the editors of the new edition, Twain sometimes deliberately crossed out portions of his letters in such a way as to leave them clear enough to be read, to achieve certain humorous effects. Did Mark Twain invent the slashout?



According to Joan Beck in the Chicago Tribune, psychiatrists at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons found that suicides among teenagers increased significantly each time one of four

made-for-TV movies on suicide was broadcast. The movies were intended to discourage teen-age suicide.



I first discovered sedum when I was in grammar school, walking in Fort Tryon Park. I found a small, strange-looking plant growing in a crack in some rocks facing west, overlooking the Hudson River. It had a jointed stalk with three leaves growing out of each joint. Sometimes a new branch would start at the joint. It interested me because it looked more like a succulent than any plant growing in New York State had a right to, and it also had a kind of prehistoric look. I took some pieces home and found that they would take root easily in a flower pot. Roots and new plants would grow out of the joints. Since then, wherever I've lived, I've always had a little sedum with me.

The first kind I encountered had oval-shaped leaves

that come to a point at the end, a quarter to a half inch in length. Later I discovered a smaller kind with leaves so thin and short they looked like tiny pine needles. Still later I found people growing different kinds of sedum in their homes, some with very thick pale green leaves, others with rounded dark green leaves that turned red at the tips. As far as I know, these varieties won't grow outdoors in a climate where there is frost.

One nice thing about sedum, for me, is that you can keep cloning the same plant, and so a little plant growing in your window or yard today can be a direct descendant of one you picked twenty years ago in another part of the country. When I lived in apartments I kept the same plant going in window pots. When I moved to an apartment in a three-story house with access to a yard, I started a sedum patch in the yard. When we moved to the house we live in now, I started a couple of sedum patches from clones of the same plant. I have a rather large rock garden going right next to the rear of my house, about nine feet by five feet, all overgrown with sedum descended from that same segment I picked, now almost twenty years ago, at the Morton Arboretum. The entire patch turns gold with tiny yellow flowers every year in early summer.

My sedum rock garden faces west, just as the first sedum I saw did, growing out of those rocks in Fort Tryon Park.



We don't have to use every minute if we feel like goofing off, but if there's something important we want to do, no bit of time, no matter how small is too small to be used for that purpose. If we want to tackle a long-term project and we only have five free minutes, we can use them to take one small step. Do that often enough, and the project will get done.



The "Connections" column in September/October 1987 *Nomos* quotes Carl Watner's response to the moral riddle posed by Robert Anton Wilson in his book, *Natural Law or Don't Put a Rubber on Your Willy*.

After quoting Wilson's account of Conchis's dilemma in *The Magus*: either he beats three prisoners of war to death or the Nazis execute every male in the

village, Watner proceeds to give us what he deems the correct answer to the question:

If the principle of "no aggression against non-aggressors" (that is, libertarians all agree that it is morally improper to violate the rights of innocent persons) can be used to identify libertarians, then why does Wilson find this such a riddle? Doesn't he agree that it is wrong to kill innocent men? Of course, it is hard to think that 300 people may die but shouldn't libertarians be prepared to let justice be done, though the heavens may fall?

I took down my copy of *Natural Law or Don't Put a Rubber on Your Willy*, just to see whether Watner was being fair to Wilson. I re-read Wilson's full explanation of why he poses this riddle:

The totally hypnotized, of course, have an answer at once; they know beyond doubt what is correct, because they have memorized the Rule Book. It doesn't matter whose Rule Book they rely on—Ayn Rand's or Joan Baez's or the Pope's or Lenin's or Elephant Doody Comix—the hypnosis is indicated by lack of pause for thought, feeling and evaluation. The response is immediate because mechanical. Those who are not totally hypnotized—those who have some awareness of concrete events of sensory space-time, outside their heads—find the problem terrible and terrifying and admit they don't know any "correct" answer.

I don't know the "correct" answer either, and I doubt that there is one.

In the light of the above, it would appear that Watner either failed to understand, or chose not to address, Wilson's point. In any case, with a ringing cry of, "Let justice be done, though the heavens may fall!" he appears to have impaled himself upon it.



I notice that as a child and a young man I seemed to have more time to re-read books. Is this simply because I didn't know of any others and so didn't feel I had to rush on and read others and so could go back and read the ones I liked?



To understand a difficult poem or piece of prose, hold off on trying to figure it out, abstracting or generalizing about it. Just repeat the words. Get close to the words or the concrete, specific images described. Say the words over and over; memorize them, even. Gradually their meaning will become clear.



For most people, standards of personal grooming and housekeeping are imposed upon them early in life by their parents, teachers and others in authority. Many people accept these standards and try to maintain them, but others make appearances, their own and that of their homes — and sometimes workplaces as well — an issue in their struggle for personal liberation. It becomes a matter of personal integrity to negate the standards imposed on them early in life. The disadvantage of this stance is that what was formerly forbidden now becomes compulsory. In order to feel like a free individual one must refuse to wear a tie, must let oneself deteriorate physically or must clutter one's home with old newspapers. The only way out of this trap is through a change of attitude, recognizing that true personal liberation lies in doing for myself what I honestly think is best for myself. Living well is the best rebellion.



The best statement I've seen in a long time on the conflict between science and religion appeared in Stephen Jay Gould's column, "This View of Life," which is published monthly in *Natural History* magazine:

But no battle exists between science and religion — the two most separate spheres of human need. A titanic struggle occurs, always has, always will, between questioning and authority, free inquiry and frozen dogma — but the institutions representing these poles are not science and religion. The struggles occur within each field, not primarily across disciplines. The general ethic of science leads to greater openness, but we have our fossils, often in positions of great power. Organized religion, as an arm of state power so frequently in history, has tended to rigidity — but theologies have

also spearheaded social revolution. Official religion has not opposed evolution as a monolith. Many prominent evolutionists have been devout, and many churchmen have placed evolution at the center of their personal theologies. Henry Ward Beecher, America's premier pulpiteer during Darwin's century, defended evolution as God's way in a striking commercial metaphor: "Design by wholesale is grander than design by retail" — better, that is, to ordain general laws of change than to make each species by separate fiat.

The struggle of free inquiry against authority is so central, so pervasive that we need all the help we can get from every side. Inquiring scientists must join hands with questioning theologians if we wish to preserve that most fragile of all reeds, liberty itself. If scientists lose their natural allies by casting entire institutions as enemies, and not seeking bonds with soul mates on other paths, then we only make a difficult struggle that much harder.



1) If humans are by nature depraved, then:

a) they need authorities to keep their depravity in check

or

b) any human authorities are bound to be depraved, therefore people are better off governing themselves.

2) If humans are by nature good, then:

a) human authorities are good and can be trusted to rule

or

b) being naturally good, humans do not need rulers

When I encounter a case where opposite premises yield the same conclusion or the same premise yields opposite conclusions, I am reminded once again that philosophizing is elephant shit.



People often talk about the need to make major changes in order to grow. While I don't think it's necessary to change one's basic premises frequently, I think it's important to rigorously question and re-examine one's basic premises from time to time. Say,

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every couple of years. It's necessary to know, in the first place, what our basic premises are. And I guess we do that by asking ourselves why we're doing what we're doing and tracing the answer back until we arrive at some sort of first principles.



*The Blind Watchmaker*, by Richard Dawkins, a fascinating new book (Norton, 1986) about evolution, explains how complex and beautifully organized life forms could have come about over millions of years through the simple interaction of mutation and natural selection. The title refers to the problem Creationists often pose to Evolutionists: If you found a watch lying on the ground, would you not know at once from its complexity and organization that Someone must have made it? How then could blind forces of nature produce living things, which are much more complex and organized than any watch? Dawkins insists that a blind watchmaker is philosophically and scientifically the best explanation for the origin and development of life.



Any editor has a perfect right to refuse to publish material that disagrees with the editorial slant of the publication. Or it is fine to publish balancing articles taking opposing positions, although not fair to give one side an advance peek at what the other has written. And the writer should, of course, be warned that an opposite opinion will be published in the same issue. It is okay to write editorial rebuttals to letters to the editor. It is less than fair to rebut, in the same issue, articles you as editor have solicited, because as editor you have the advantage of getting the last word. It is even more unfair to rebut your writers in a way that interrupts the flow of what they have written.

These are the Natural Moral Laws of magazine editing, and anyone who violates them should be liable to the Judgment.



Most people pray when they feel quite helpless and that they've exhausted all the rational possibilities, but even in a hopeless situation it would be better to be

examining what one might do about it than to spend one's final moments praying. One rational response to an invincible threat might be acceptance of the situation.

Another reasonable thing to do would be to turn your mind to enjoyment of the present moment. A fellow who was in a motorcycle accident told me that as he was sailing through the air he said to himself, "Pay attention! This will only happen to you once."

Of course, a rationalist faced with inevitable doom might figure he has nothing to lose by sending off a prayer, just in case there is Somebody out there listening.



Objectivists use the term mysticism to mean any superstition or belief in the supernatural. This is a usage arising from Ayn Rand, and it is inaccurate and it messes up dialog. Mysticism, in my dictionary, means the belief that direct contact with God or the supernatural is possible through intuition and without the mediation of reason or sensory knowledge. Objectivists may pooh-pooh that too, if they wish, but at least they should pooh-pooh with precision.



Justice William O. Douglas said it in a letter: "As nightfall does not come at once, neither does oppression. In both instances there is a twilight when everything remains seemingly unchanged. And it is in such twilight that we all must be most aware of change in the air — however slight — lest we become unwitting victims of the darkness."



Stewart Brand, publisher of the *Whole Earth Catalog* series, always has interesting things to say. In an interview with the *Chicago Tribune* about his new book, *The Media Lab*, he came up with a notion about how working with a computer program can change one's style of moral reasoning:

At Hennigan [an inner city Boston school where every 4th and 5th grade student has a computer] the children learn to approach problem-solving quite

differently. You don't program a computer by being right or wrong. You learn to program by isolating and fixing bugs, the parts that keep the program from working. These kids learn to think about problems in terms of debugging.

"Some people feel this kind of approach can lead to a loss of rigor and discipline, and indeed there are fraudulent forms of interactivity out there. But MIT has found that discipline in these kids flips from the external, oppressing, 'Get it right!' to the internal, intellectual, 'Make it work!'"

There's no telling how far youngsters trained this way might go, Brand mused. "As adults they may taking on world problems as exercises in debugging rather than what some institution accepts as right or wrong behavior, which is what school teaches us."



J. G. Ballard interviewed in *Rolling Stone* (November 19, 1987):

Oddly, I feel that the 1980s are a good time to be alive, because the consumer conformism — "the suburbanization of the soul" — on the one hand and the gathering ecological and other crises on the other do force the individual to recognize that he or she is all he or she has got. And this sharpens the eye and the imagination. The challenge is for each of us to respond, to remake as much as we can of the world around us, because no one else will do it for us. We have to find a core within us and get to work. Don't worry about worldly rewards. Just get on with it!



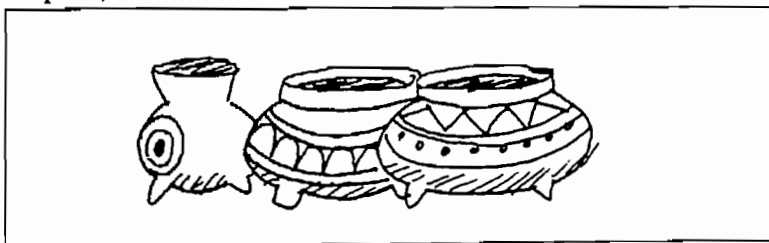
I learned, the last time I was trying to keep up with a miniseries, that you have to schedule your videotape watching just as if you were a station planning a broadcast. You have to select a starting time and pick the amount of time you're going to spend on watching the tape at that time. Otherwise, if you just figure you'll watch the tape when you get around to it, it doesn't work.



Any time questions of taste in fiction are reduced to an either/or level, both sides are likely to be wrong. Personally, I can't make myself read a book, no matter how beautifully written or how highly praised by scholars and critics, that doesn't keep me interested with a pretty good story. On the other hand, I can't make myself read badly written books no matter how much vitality the plot may have. But I can tolerate a certain degree of bad writing if the story is gripping, and I can tolerate a relatively uneventful story, if the writing is good enough.



Natalie Goldberg in *Writing Down the Bones*, (Shambhala, 1987) a Zen approach to writing, says, "If someone writes something great, it's just more clarity in the world for all of us. Don't make writers 'other,' different from you: 'They are good and I am bad.' Don't create that dichotomy. It makes it hard to become good if you create that duality. The opposite, of course, is also true: if you say, 'I am great and they aren't,' then you become too proud, unable to grow as a writer or hear criticism of your work. Just: 'They are good and I am good.' That statement gives a lot of space. 'They have been at it longer, and I can walk their path for a while and learn from them.'"



It's never too late. When you catch yourself thinking that it's too late to do something you want to do, or to make some improvement, recognize that this is self-defeating thinking. You don't know how much time you may have left to you, or how much good you can accomplish by making a new beginning now. So go ahead and do the constructive thing.

