

# Interview with John Connor Of “Green Anarchist”

John Filiss

General editor since 1995 for *Green Anarchist*, undoubtedly one of the finest and foremost anarchist publications in the world, John Connor first discovered anarchism during the 70’s punk explosion. The 80s found him involved with the peace movement and animal liberation, and the 90s took him into squatting, anti-racist activities, and Earth liberation. More important than where he’s been, however, is where he’s going. If anarchy has any chance of realization, it will no doubt be due in some part to *Green Anarchist* and its outspoken, well-spoken general editor.

*How would you describe the current direction of Green Anarchist?*

*GA* was originally intended to bring together different currents in the 1980s protest culture. It had a Brecht quote on its masthead: “The enemies of the people are those that know what the people need.” One of the founders, Richard Hunt, put an end to this eclecticism after a couple of years. In 1986, he excluded the others and imposed a rigid economic analysis. This had the merit of being rooted in primitive affluence and did challenge fundamentals of Civilization, but those involved in the Hunt years found themselves stuck with recruiting and promoting his “line.” By the end of the 1980’s, most anarchist tendencies were as ideologised – the ACF actually boasted of their platformism at this time. When some quirk led Hunt to demand support for the Gulf War in 1991, he was ousted by the other editors’ “peasants’ revolt” and drifted off into the far Right.

The remaining editors then began to pay more attention to writers like Fredy Perlman and John Zerzan and developing a green anarchism superceding Hunt’s economism. During the 1994 Anarchy in the UK festival, they met John Moore and Leigh Starcross, the start of the Anarcho-Primitivist Network. *GA* then introduced anti-civ critiques of work, technology, ideology, etc., to the European movement through themed zines and importing key texts.

During this review process, we naturally encountered Camatte and Colli’s *On Organization*. It crystallized our dissatisfaction with ideologized politics, then already being superceded by the direct action movement, groups like *EF!*, etc.. However, this left us with a problem: if ideology was the enemy, what role for *GA*? We saw our new role as negating ideological rackets by exposing their contradictions and compromises with Power, and also facilitating resistance and resistance-thinking by listing actions that were happening and techniques suggested by readers for increasing their autonomy, and also by acting as a forum for those involved to discuss them

on a “no censorship, no endorsement” basis. We didn’t want to judge the actions or discussion about them. Some have complained this broadening of access to *GA* has reduced the quality of debate in it or given the oxygen of publicity to acts that are just plain anti-social rather than revolutionary. It isn’t our business to judge them — it’s for readers to sort out amongst themselves in our pages and in their lives.

The authorities — both those now running things and the wannabes in the movement that’d like to — are evidently extremely upset by this approach, so I guess we’ve hit on a formula worth going on with for a while.

*What nations of Europe appear to have the greatest interest in the topics and perspectives of Green Anarchist?*

We used to publish a contacts list in *GA* and the anarcho-orthodoxy in UK used to hate it as it was so much larger and more diverse than theirs. We stopped this last year because by that point we were sickened enough by other tendencies’ willy-waving to find our own intolerable. It was a bit of a relic of the Hunt era — people don’t have to be “in our club” to liberate themselves.

From the old contact list, I’d say we have as much support on mainland Europe as we do in UK, remarkable given the language barrier. I think the reason for that is that, despite over a decade of Thatcherism, there’s more repressive tolerance in UK. People thought the 1994 Criminal Justice Act might be the end of a long tradition of polite dissent and civil disobedience in UK, but the CJA pretty soon proved unenforceable and that space remained open. Britain had its revolution earlier than most other European countries (way back in the 17<sup>th</sup>) and that’s left so much longer for the revolutionary tradition to be recuperated by trades unionism, etc.. I think more people have seen through that on the Continent than, for example, syndicalists here because those models are more often tested on the streets of mainland Europe and found counter-revolutionary.

There are two levels of interest in *GA* on the mainland. Generally, in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, interest is relatively superficial — veganism, animal lib, punk, all tied together by the sort of rights analysis popular in the UK in the 1980s and sadly still persisting. They get the zine because it lists their actions and has the latest goss, but it’s really just about importing the British direct action movement lock, stock, and barrel, complete with slogans in English! More promising are those in Germany, Italy and the Fire Thief group in Turkey who are trying to go beyond this, challenging the totality of Civilization in a coherent way. It’s noteworthy that in these countries, repression is most extreme — by the State in Italy and Turkey, and by the tail-end of the Left in Germany. This is a great shame as EF! Germany’s *Der Auel* (“The Owl”) was excellent in its re-analysis of the Frankfurt School. We’ve received the odd letter from the Invariance group in Paris, but our lack of French has been a barrier there so far.

*Give me some background information on the Gandalf Trial.*

Things are getting hotter for revolutionaries post-Cold War. Internally, the security forces are looking for new targets to keep themselves in work and externally, they’re collaborating more with the ongoing formation of the European super-state, exchanging repressive techniques and levelling them up.

From 1990, *GA* and groups associated with us were targeted by MI5 provocateurs to manufacture an “eco-terrorist threat.” One, Tim Hepple, wrote an ecotage manual recommending assassination, articles in *GA* encouraging political violence, and supplied lists of fascists hoping this

would precipitate a street war. An activist for Belfast Animal Rights, then a *GA* contact group, was arrested by the Army at gunpoint on bomb charges thanks to one Stuart McCulloch (this trial collapsed when the prosecution refused to produce McCulloch in court as a witness). Both claimed involvement in the Earth Liberation Front, a militant splinter of EF!UK. Both were exposed by independent anti-fascist researcher Larry O'Hara in 1933/4, but the institutional wheels were turning by that stage, media conduits accusing *GA* and the ELF of everything from a plot to sabotage the Grand National using hang gliders to a massive chip burglary at the Department of Transport! After the propaganda came the Special Branch raids, a whole year of them, 55 in all. Some of the questions asked were nuts — *GA* editor and ex-RAF engineer Steve Booth was asked whether he'd sabotaged a live freight aircraft that crashed at Coventry airport in late-1994 with the loss of six lives, and the Branch also investigated *GA*'s supposed links to the Oklahoma City bombing! They wanted to link *GA*'s editors and spokespeople for the ALF to a letter bombing campaign by the Justice Department (no, over here they're animal lib militants), but by the time it reached the court, the State had decided it was easier to prove we'd just conspired to report such actions. The press continued to report this Gandalf (*GA*-aND-ALF) prosecution as against a "bomb plot" anyway. As far as the State were concerned, legally and politically, it didn't matter. In UK, inciting an act carries the same penalty as the act itself — a potential life sentence in this case — and MI5 were busy redefining all "subversion" as "terrorism." The idea was to criminalize the direct action movement through us, giving the security forces a monopoly when it came to representing it in the media.

The odds were massively stacked against all the defendants. Under the conspiracy/incitement laws, thoughtcrime and the rules of evidence that applied in 16<sup>th</sup> century witch trials still apply in UK. You can be tried simply for your beliefs, your lifestyle, and those of people that may only know you at four or more degrees of separation. Furthermore, the normal burden of proof is reversed — to establish your innocence, you must disprove prosecution conspiracy theory, whilst their interpretations are presumed to be "reasonable inferences." Not only were news reports deemed incitement, but reviews of text published by others overseas, T-shirt slogans and even listing too many political prisoners on one page! The most trivial associations were deemed evidence of conspiracy — who'd written letters of support to ALF press officer Robin Webb in prison, who'd attended a meeting any defendant had, or received a *GA* t-shirt through the post, all were raided and threatened with arrest for conspiracy. The State spent 4 million pounds on this prosecution; involved the RCMP, FBI, Italian and Finnish political police; rigged it so that the trial was heard in Portsmouth, home of the Royal Navy and the court with the highest conviction and sentencing rates in UK; and had a former NATO major general presiding and at least a third of the jury from military backgrounds, despite the judge agreeing to exclude such individuals! Defense witness Darren Thurston was deported on arrival in UK as an "undesirable alien" before he could even testify. Judge Selwood blocked defense motions and witness questions as a matter of course, informed jurors he considered defendants guilty even as the defense case was being made, and spent 3 ½ days at the end of the 12 week trial convincing the jury of the defendant's guilt. Of six charged, one was actually acquitted and two others had their trials deferred until a year later, November 1998. Consistent with the security forces' gameplan, the judge described the three *GA* writers convicted as "terrorists" and sentenced them each to three years imprisonment, the same some squaddy who'd strangled his wife and buried her under the patio got in the same court a month previously.

During the course of the first Gandalf trial, its implications dawned on the alternative press and the first of many statements of solidarity and defiance were drawn up in support of the defendants. Names came in from across the world including the Nobel laureates Noam Chomsky and Harold Pinter, GA continued to be published as usual, and other alternative zines also started running defiant direct action diaries, there were protests at British embassies in the Czech republic and New Zealand, trucks were burned and butchers forced out of business in UK. What finally forced the State to let the Gandalf Three go after 4 ½ months inside was the project of Amnesty International classifying them as political prisoners because of the injustice of their trial. The Three's release has severely undermined the viability of the Gandalf-2 trial, judge Selwood's career is now on hold, the Hampshire Special Branch fronting for the Security forces are trying to shift blame and refusing comment to even their own tame media, and the provocateurs are now getting a lot of embarrassing attention from the movement. Victory on this may be close, but we appreciate it will be only temporary — Europeanization is continuing regardless and the security forces will still need to validate their new National Public Order Intelligence Unit.

*While Green Anarchist was suffering the inevitable difficulties of the Gandalf Trial, and in particular need of a show of solidarity from all those concerned about freedom, you inexplicably came under attack by Stewart Home and Fabian Tompsett in what appeared to be a clear attempt to undermine your support. Perhaps you can give me some sketch of what occurred.*

I think there's a danger of oversimplifying the Neoist Alliance's campaign against GA. It started before Operation Washington was even thought of, with an article by Stewart Home in the Independent, a yuppy broadsheet, attacking the non-sectarian October 1994 "Anarchy in the UK" festival. In it, he tried to pretend that Richard Hunt was still editing GA, even though we'd actually booted him out three years earlier. When the Independent was asked to correct this error, Home anonymously circulated a series of phony leaflets painting us as eco-fascists wanting "Green death camps" &c., and then had the chutzpah to accuse ourselves and Larry O'Hara of spreading disinformation against him when challenged about this.

It later emerged that Home was the one associated with fascists, Richard Lawson and his errand boy Tony Wakeford, both formerly of the volkish nationalist Iona Collective. Home had known Wakeford since their mutual involvement in the punk scene in the early 1980s — Home's claim to the "utopian tradition" he gives a garbled account of in Assault on Culture — and continued to sympathetically review Wakeford when he joined the National Front and fronted one Holocaust-denying band after another. From Iona, Lawson went on to the TransEuropa Collective, which has now taken over Richard Hunt's zine, Alternative Green. GA #36 was the first to expose Lawson's involvement in TransEuropa and their early attempts to court Hunt. This all made Home's agenda obvious — he was trying to cover his arse by falsely accusing GA of doing precisely what he was actually doing!

At the October 1995 Anarchist Bookfair, nine months after *Operation Washington* began, Home collected together his smears and issued them as Green Apocalypse. In this, he claimed that whilst GA was inciting, the cops had no interest in shutting it down — "they could if they wanted." This while the cops had seized our computers and all available records, raided contacts and editors, bookshops and mail order customers, had lies printed about us in the national press, scared off our printer and tried to get our bank account closed as "funding terrorism!" Curiously, according

to papers that came to light during the 1997 Gandalf trial, undercover cops from *Operation Washington* visited the 1995 Bookfair on the word of a “confidential source” but checked out only two stalls, GA and the Neoists, the latter only to acquire Green Apocalypse...

At the start of our 1997 speaking tour to raise awareness about the case, Home’s Neoist sidekick, Fabian “Fuckwit” Tompsett, put out another pamphlet, *Militias: Rooted in White Supremacy*. This ludicrously claimed not only GA were fascists, but groups involved with us in the Anti-Election Alliance such as Class War and the ACF, and even Black Flag’s Stuart Christie, once jailed for attempting to assassinate Franco! At least Fuckwit was honest about his intentions: “to undermine any lingering sympathy for GA, who are trying to muster support during their current court case.” Whilst content to support freedom of speech for Holocaust Denier Robert Faurisson, Fuckwit was opposed to defending that of anarchists.

Whilst the first Gandalf trial was on and signatures for the Alternative Media Gathering solidarity statement were being collected, the Neoists held a meeting on “anarcho-fascism” at the October 1997 Anarchist Bookfair and launched yet another pamphlet, *Anarchist Integralism*. This argued all anarchists are fascists because Bakunin once supported pan-Slavism, a point almost as ridiculous as suggesting all anarchists are gay because he also once fancied Nechayev! Home and Fuckwit realized they’d severely miscalculated when they found that the only people that attended their meetings beyond a few of their sad fans were not-yet-jailed Gandalf defendants and pissed-off members of Class War and the ACF. The Neoist’s performance was consequently long on mumbling, short on specifics, and ended with Home making a beeline for the back exit in his usual courageous manner.

Even after the Gandalf three were jailed, Neoist attacks continued. On one occasion, Fuckwit turned up at the February 1998 London Gandalf Supporters Campaign (LGSC) meeting to hand a leaflet to Sax Wood’s parents, saying he hoped the prisoner’s “rot in jail.” He was, of course, shown the door.

In their attempts to undermine support for the defendants in the Gandalf-2 trial, the Neoists have been much-aided by the anarcho-workerists around AK Press. They started carrying the Neoist’s smear pamphlets to spite GA, after we helped expose their support for Paul Bowman and Tony White, assets of MI5 front zine, Searchlight. Like US anarcho-publishers, AK have excessive influence in the UK anarcho-scene, bankrolling syndicalist publications like *Black Flag* and the Solidarity Federation’s *Direct Action*, and having access to others with even more money and power. The irony of these anarchists backing fascist proxies against other anti-fascist anarchists is as lost on them this time as in the original 1994/1995 incident. Although calls by Edinburgh-based Neoist, Micah, for supporters to un-pledge themselves from the various statements of solidarity and defiance haven’t had one taker so far, he did succeed in getting a May 1998 LGSC speaking tour through Scotland cancelled in the run-up to the Gandalf Three’s appeal. Pro-Neoist Carol Saunders also thought it amusing to put Steve Booth next to Fuckwit — the one who said he should “rot in jail” — at the 1998 Anarchist Bookfair and pulled out of producing the *1998 Anarchist Yearbook* when its editor refused to list Fuckwit’s Unpopular Books because, after *Anarchist Integralism*, Fuckwit clearly had no place in it. Saunders and her ilk typify those anarchists more interested in power than truth, those prepared to use the Neoists as a barricade against the rising tide of DIY direct action politics that looks set to sweep them away.

*Aside from the inferences drawn from the situation just described, as well as their being substandard writers with very little to say, is there any direct evidence that Stewart Home and Fabian Tompsett are government agents?*

Just because the Neoists have acted in a grossly sectarian way that — if anything — will benefit the State at the expense of the movement, it doesn't mean they're State assets. Without proving direct collaboration between them and the security forces, the worst we can assume is that they are just useful idiots.

Of course, there is indeed proof of such collaboration, in the form of knowing things they could only know from the Special Branch in Operation Washington or those closely associated with them. One of Home's 1995 leaflets, *The Sordid Truth About Stewart Home*, refers to "only six" people being involved in GA. At the time it was written, no one knew that six of GA's editors had been arrested up until then during Operation Washington as Jon Rogerson, ex-projects editor, didn't let the rest of us know of his arrest until a month after it. No one expect the cops involved in Operation Washington and Stewart Home, that is. Similarly, only two people have been mad enough to suggest connections between GA and the Angry Brigade — a group that ceased activity half a decade before GA was first published — and between GA and the Oklahoma bombing. The first is Des "Looney-Tunes" Thomas, heading Operation Washington, and the second is Fabian "Fuckwit" Tompsett, in his *Militias* pamphlet.

The latest copy of Home's zine, appropriately named *Re-Action*, produced just before the Gandalf-2 trial in an attempt to demoralize defendants, includes a lot of personal information about independent anti-fascist researcher Larry O'Hara that could have only come from intercepts by the security forces, most likely through their proxy, Searchlight. In a 1995 leaflet, *Green Anarchism Exposed*, the Neoists expressed their support for Searchlight and it reciprocated the following year, approvingly referring Home's *Green Apocalypse* and to Home as an "anarchist." Normally, Searchlight hates anarchists, and both Home and Fuckwit are one record as having described anarchism as "stupid," so we'll leave it to your more informed readers to dot the i's and cross the t's here — that is, after noting that whilst Searchlight have railed endlessly against fascist music in the form of Blood & Honour, it strangely has had nothing to say about that put out on Tony Wakeford's lucrative World Serpent label...

A couple of odds and ends that might help readers decide whether the Neoist's collaboration with the security forces is just an alliance of convenience or rather more: (1) Home has appeared repeatedly in the national media committing credit card fraud in his Decadent Action persona without being prosecuted, and (2) his latest hoax is to circulate anonymous leaflets presenting the current highly effective campaign against genetic engineering in UK as a product of religious mania. Similarly, a few years ago, he attempted to ridicule Open Eye's expose of the zapping of a retired Kentish couple, Antony and Margaret Verney, a horrific incident that could have caused vast embarrassment to the security forces. His attempt to trash "Anarchy in the UK" in the run-up to the passing of the 1994 Criminal Justice Act has already been mentioned above. Is there, perhaps, a pattern here and who do you think benefits...?

*The US has a level of free speech which, if hardly perfect, is far beyond what is seen in most of the rest of the world. One reason for that, I feel, is that there is a pretty high respect for the value of free speech by participants across the political spectrum, and even groups which are very much at odds will support their opponent's ability to give*

*their perspective without governmental obstruction. Unfortunately, I get the impression that Europeans are generally less open-minded in this regard, and more supportive of governmental oppression of the opposition. Is this a fair statement?*

You'll have seen from my account of the Gandalf prosecution that we don't exactly have a 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment over here! There is talk of European laws incorporating a right to free speech, but I suspect that in practice this isn't going to be worth the paper it's written on, just like the UN Charter.

The disgraceful behavior of the Neo-creeps aside, I'm not sure you don't underestimate how suspicious revolutionaries are of State intervention though. There's a lot of very strong anti-racist legislation over here — most obviously the Race Relations Act — but amongst even those militant anti-fascists that are hostile to anarchist traditions, there is no willingness to resort to the law because it's recognized that fascism is just another aspect of racist, imperialist society. In one incident I know of, there was a murderous arson attack on a Somali family and the anti-fascists preferred to investigate it themselves rather than take what they knew to the police. What happened around Stephen Lawrence just goes to show how futile that'd have been anyway. Trotskyite and liberal groups that do call for stronger legislation or police action are regarded with contempt as collaborators, grasses and diverters of revolutionary effort.

I think the lack of open-mindedness is within the movement itself. Even GA has to carry a note saying "letters from fascists and other bigots and piss-takers...will be binned, though we will note their arrival." This isn't because we think such letters are likely to be so sophisticated and persuasive that publishing them will turn all our all readers into fascists, etc., but because any breach of "no platform" principles is likely to lead to hysterical denunciations from elements of the movement who have less confidence about their ability to argue against the far-right than we have. At the turn of the 1990s, the militant animal lib magazine *Arkangel* accidentally published the address of a far-right front group Greenwave. Hysterical denunciations followed and, on the "no censorship, no endorsement" basis *Arkangel* was founded on to deal with sectarianism within the animal rights movement, these were published alongside a letter from Greenwave's fuhrer, Patrick Harrington. The result was that the anti-fascists abandoned *Arkangel* to the far-right rather than defeat Harrington's shoddy "I'm veggie too" arguments. What saved *Arkangel* was the imprisonment of its editor, Keith Mann, as a result of Operation Igloo on charges including incitement. This created a break in continuity and a new, more censorious "line" under a new editor. As someone of mixed race parentage, Keith Mann was violently opposed to the far-right whereas the rumors against *Arkangel* were started by Searchlight's Paul Bowman, later to collaborate with race attacker Tony White and Leeds C18 pseudo-gang.

Although I think it's safe to say that the censoriousness around anti-fascism is most psychotic — and it's not as if Jean Barrot hasn't said it before me — I'm sure you're as sadly familiar with the vegan police in Amerika as we are here. It's mainly as a result of them that the workerists present "lifestylists" as obsessed with trivialities of language and personal practice, though their obsession with PC and aping the crappiest aspects of working class culture just mirror this. A few years ago, someone wrote a pamphlet, *Animal Liberation: Devastate to Liberate or Devastatingly Liberal?*, suggesting vegan police be treated the same way as any other police, and he was quickly denounced as a Special Branch stooge and sexual inadequate without them even bothering to find out who he was! They chose denunciation over dealing with the criticisms raised, which means their ideology isn't equal to making a free society. Radical feminists also have a pretty

bad reputation here but post-Greenham, most of those still left are off chasing legislative routes and remaining feminist advocates of sexual freedom are explicitly anti-censorship, if worryingly liberal.

Over here, people are easily whipped up over trivial and artificial scandals as so few can be bothered to find out where rumors come from and if they're true. Given the treatment Bob Black has received over the Hogshire affair, I hardly think the idiocy is exclusively European. In this matter, I can see exactly the same deference to an informal hierarchy of patronage I've seen regarding the AK clique over here, and am amazed people have learned nothing since the Processed World business, where so few stateside would publish Black's on-target critique of PW that he was forced to staple it to telegraph poles!

*Your thoughts on the Unabomber and Industrial Society and its Future.*

The first thing I want to say is those that sat on their arses doing nothing to change society while denouncing someone putting his life on the line taking on the whole State, those that did nothing to defend Ted Kaczynski after his arrest, those people are scum! They aren't even worth pissing on.

By the FBI's own account, FC brought Amerika's postal and air transportation infrastructure to the verge of paralysis around the time of the 1995 LAX hoax. Most humiliatingly for them, it took the Feds almost two decades and \$100 million to catch Ted Kaczynski and when they brought him to court, he'd got enough guts to expose his trial as a farce. I see little point demanding anything of our oppressors, but most publicly and humiliatingly the Feds were forced to meet "terrorist" demands and grant FC the full "oxygen of publicity." This, in itself, exposed how vulnerable and easily held to ransom Amerika's technocratic elite — or the "little Eichmanns...preparing the Brave New World," as John Zerzan calls them — is. I've my reservations about FC but ask their critics what they've done in comparison. The onus is on those criticizing FC's targets or methods to suggest better targets or methods, or else all they're doing is replicating the arguments of the Feds.

My main reservation about FC's campaign, as suggested above, is *Industrial Society and its Future* — the sword was definitely mightier than the pen in this case, but by putting demands around this through the media, the terror felt by our oppressors was incidentally magnified. On the Manifesto I've the same opinion as Fire Thief in Turkey — beyond its reductionism and machismo, its praise for GATT and elitist attitudes to consciousness-raising, etc., it does challenge technocracy in a fundamental way difficult to turn aside from and this is its saving grace. I think a particularly severe weakness is FC's ignorance of the primitive affluence thesis, leading to the "power process" byway. I'd hope that faced with the *Manifesto*, anti-ideaologues would take the same attitude to it as Raoul Vaneigem said to take to any other tract: "loot the supermarket of ideologies, take only what is useful to us, what pleases us!"

*What are general sentiments towards the Unabomber amongst radical and Green movements in Europe?*

I'm not sure whether this story belongs here or above, but you might be interested to know how I got hold of the text of *Industrial Society and its Future* and what happened to it thereafter. A comrade in Class War that later joined me in the Ted Kaczynski Defense Campaign (TKDC)



got the text off the Net and forwarded it to me via one Micah of Spunk Press and more recently of the Neoist Alliance. I got it out as a pamphlet by 5<sup>th</sup> November 1995, Fireworks Night over here. This was the Manifesto's first publication in pamphlet form, certainly months before the human vermin at Jolly Roger Press, at a sixth their price and with the communiques, etc., thrown in for free! I wrote to Ted K. suggesting he collect his royalties off Jolly Roger, just to teach them for taunting him when he was awaiting trial. We put the Manifesto out through our mail order service and street-sold it for years, once in front of the High Court when Keith Mann was up appealing his incitement conviction, which was taking the piss somewhat...

Why I think this story belongs here is as it was primarily through GA that the European movement encountered the Manifesto and had to take a position on technocracy.

The workerist old guard quickly recognized that it challenged their reduction of Civilization's totality to "capitalism" — albeit just with its own reductionism — but rather than simply acknowledge this, they opted for evasion. Hilariously, many identify with the leftists FC denounces, revealingly assuming criticism of them equated with criticism of "women, Indians, etc.." As we all know, leftists just parasitize other people's struggles, using them to magnify their own power first and foremost. Anyway, Neoist Fuckwit was wholly typical of the old guardists in denouncing FC's supposed "fascism" and comrade Micah was quick to fall into line behind him, despite his earlier role. A milder version from the *Freedom* group was to insist the Unabomber "is not an anarchist" for advocating social over political revolution. To this day, they refuse to publish letters pointing out that by this same logic, *Freedom's* founder Peter Kropotkin "is not an anarchist" either! It was predictable this sort would continue to wallow in their rut.

More promising was reaction from the new wave DIY/direct action movement after the Manifesto did its rounds at Newbury. The pacifist "fluffies" tried to divert the struggle against technocracy into their usual passive protest 'n' photo-opportunities direction, forming the New Luddites. This group appropriated Kirkpatrick Sales' *Rebels Against the Future* as a text more palatable than the Manifesto, but it fell apart in under six months. More militant eco-activists and animal libbers got involved in TKDC and our picket of the Amerikan Embassy, but more important was a general perception in such circles that the road-building programme, genetic engineering, etc.. were technological phenomena and this critique moves closer that a lot closer to challenging Civilization as a totality. I never cease reminding them that FC was first to target Monsanto Flvr Savr tomatoes, the company being used as a return address on one of the 1995 parcel bombs.

*The Unabomber has spurred one of the deeper divisions in memory amongst various anarchists and radical ecologists. More accurately, perhaps, it has brought up issues of actualizing our goals in the real world which anarchists in particular are not always fond of discussing, and some differences of opinion were inevitable. Your thoughts on the division, and the perspectives it has brought up for analysis and debate.*

To murder Dr. Johnson, I'd say the prospect of an imminent FBI knock on your door concentrates the mind wonderfully. Believe me, debate is hardly as intense outside the US. I recall that after I had a letter published in *Fifth Estate* a couple of years ago, I received an hysterical 15 page letter from some flake in Rhode Island terrified that my mere mentioning of FC would get an FBI hit squad sent to his door. As his letter also mentioned that he hadn't even told his next door neighbor that he was an anarchist, it was hard to take this clown's concerns seriously!

As in the UK, there are those in the States who denounced FC simply because their politics is superseded by them — the *Shadow* hilariously had Ted K as an agent of the CIA on the rather thin

basis of press reports of a bogus yearbook entry! Others such as Slingshot were quite frank about their fear of repression outweighing all other considerations — as if all authentic revolutionary action doesn't provoke State reaction! But we're talking a workerist old guard here, not worth breath.

More significant are reactions amongst radical environmentalists and the US anarcho-primitivist milieu, rather closer to FC's area of concern and more likely to be on the receiving end of FBI attentions.

You'll know that one of *Live Wild or Die's* editorial groups had to go on the run after the FBI accused them of inciting FC through their "Eco-Fuckers Hit List." Fair play to them — and to those that replaced them, reprinting the List in the most recent LWOD with Gilbert Murray's name crossed through! This makes nonsense of the "no one in the radical environmental movement... is calling for violence" line that the Earth First! Journal crew inherited from Judy Bari before her untimely death. She had the best of personal reasons to disparage bombings, but denouncing everyone more militant than yourself as a provocateur is just plain wrong. They're fussed that FC will be used to whip up violence against the open civil disobedience tactics they've pushed as EF!'s house style ever since the Foremanistas split, but eco-activists have been killed on such demos with no more provocation than just being there and the State and the media didn't give a damn. The only way they're going to stop this — never mind make revolution — is to show Earth rapers is that our lives aren't as cheap as they think by deterring them ourselves. Heresy though it may sound to satyagraha cultists, there are times when the public are more offended by nonviolence than by violence, and there are times when violence is necessary regardless of public opinion. They don't realize the contempt people feel for those that set themselves up to be passive victims, refusing to defend themselves or those near to them. Like FC, I suspect a lot of this self-sacrificial ethic is rooted in self-hatred — probably another reason why they don't want to deal with issues raised by the *Manifesto*.

What's going on in US anarcho-primitivism is rather less facile. Despite *Fifth Estate's* long record of opposing political racketeering, I don't think Watson's motives in attacking the Formanistas in 1990 were any purer than Bookchin's. Both regard radical environmentalism as a constituency and since Bookchin published his stupid Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism, it's come to a head-to-head over another, old-guard social ecology vs. "new" social ecology. Watson hopes to pick up on all the disillusioned libertarian municipalists, liberals and leftists that gathered around Bookchin, as he has John Clark. As FC is unpalatable to them, *Fifth Estate* have denounced FC. This suits Watson fine as he can also denounce all anarcho-primitivists more revolutionary than himself, such as John Zerzan and Anarchy magazine, for supporting FC. What's missing here is why they are more revolutionary than *Fifth Estate* — precisely because they're prepared to accept armed struggle has a place in smashing Civilization. For over a decade, *Fifth Estate* have been selling out to pacifism and mysticism, and by posing the supercession as some unattainably distant goal (much as George Woodcock did anarchism in the 1960s), they're opening the way to reformist tinkering with the system, with endless recuperation of their community projects or the easy crushing of any that can't be recuperated, Osage Avenue-style. As FC themselves put it, "revolution is easier than reform."

*Although political anarchy has never existed outside of primitive societies, many anarchists (if a decreasing number) continue to feel that anarchy can be realized within the*

*confines of a technological society. Some even feel that technology furthers the prospect for anarchy and its realization. Your thoughts?*

You've got to laugh, haven't you? Bob Black once said that the anarchist critique of voting was just a special case of the anarchist critique of organization. The same is true of technology. That's just a special case of the critique of organization too. Pro-tech types try to evade this by refusing to distinguish between tool use and technology, between the slave gang and its spades and the army and its spears, despite Lewis Mumford's key distinction between using tools and becoming them drawn the better part of a century ago! By accepting technology as organization, they have to accept a horizontal division of labour that means alienation will never be ended in techno-industrial society however it is administered. Much more upsetting for them is that to administer, regulate and coordinate this horizontal division of labor, there has to be a vertical one between managers and managed, a class division. These types often accuse GA of having no class analysis, precisely because our class analysis poses a more fundamental challenge to the existing social order than theirs does. They really are on the horns of a dilemma: if they want the diversity and complexity of production that they use to sell their post-capitalist utopia, they need a worldwide and production and distribution infrastructure. But to have such an infrastructure, they need tier after tier of delegates, somehow supposedly "accountable to the base." How they reconcile this with their critiques of the oligarchical tendencies of established trade unions or oxymoronic "representative democracy" beats me — by treating it as no more than an article of ideological faith not to be thought upon, no doubt. Certainly, I was amused to note debating this with old guardists that those at the top of their informal anarcho-hierarchies defend delegation and representation whilst those that aren't always manage to fail to understand what I'm arguing — thus the way of things is preserved!

To go on with this class analysis, there's also the small matter of the international division of labor. Those that see techno-industrial society as a cornucopia aren't the ones stuck in the fields and mines and steel mills, the ones on the bottom of the productive pyramid and get very little back for it. Because of horizontal division of labor (specialization), they're likely to remain there after the "revolution" because given the opinion of doing something else, they will and the whole pyramid's going to come tumbling down. Of course, they don't need to be told this — it's just common sense that by taking back your own time, you're better able to suss out better means of survival than sweating for some boss. In wrecked Uganda, people took to uprooting cash crops for export and replacing them with their own for subsistence, thus absenting themselves from the international economic order. There's more food in Russian gardens now than Russian stores, so how long's that country going to hold together as a viable entity? In Brazil, the MST, described by some as "the most important social movement in the world today" are doing pretty much the same thing. I'm not arguing for agriculture here as an end in itself — I'm pointing out how the most oppressed are making revolution themselves by recovering autonomous means of living. Those arguing for technological society are arguing against these people. If they claim to be arguing "for the working class," then they're voiding that term of any worthwhile meaning. Many will say that you can't just walk away from Civilization. Paradoxically, the revolutionaries I've touched upon above are both central to production and peripheral to the worldwide techno-grid socially and geographically. Equally paradoxically, Civilization's control is both cruder and weaker there — it's easier to see an enemy, to want to free yourself of it as well as to actually do so. The more that break away, the easier it is for others to in the future as well — revolution on

the periphery. Deeper within Civilization, there are others marginalized, movements of refusal and resistance, counterculturals, stigmatized and oppressed groups, etc., who find it so difficult to leave (except through the illusion of culture) that attack is a better option. Because of the intense division of labor, each isolated from but dependent on another, techno-industrial society is uniquely vulnerable to attack — one thing leads to another, just as fighting one oppression in an evolutionary manner leads you to fighting oppression as a totality. Smashing the infrastructure of control will force everyone to be free, to make what they can of the pieces.

An Arab proverb portrays society as a ship, the privileged on deck and the rest in the hold. The proverb warns that those on deck had best share their water with those below or else, maddened by thirst, they'll break through the hull and sink everyone. Though skewed, this is a useful analogue. The old Marxist dictums about extraction of surplus value hold true and should be obvious to anyone that thinks about them. Why then is a revolt not generalized? I think because those in the hold are told there's always a chance they'll be allowed onto the deck if only they behave. We're talking embourgeoisement here — those that don't strive for better jobs for themselves or for their kids via a better education than they had so far down the pile that they fall into the periphery. By commodifying everything — including their identity — workers are individualized and made competitive and insecure. Of course, they can never buy enough and what they buy's not worth it anyway, but in the process they come to think that living any other way will be a kind of suicide, a destruction of their manufactured identities. Anarcho-orthodoxy's traditional tactic of tail-ending reformist industrial demands is therefore obviously doomed as a revolutionary strategy, just another way of saving Civilization.

The proverb is skewed in the assumption that if the ship sinks, all will drown, and that the water beyond the hull is undrinkable rather than sweet, abundance for all denied through conditions of artificial scarcity imposed by those on deck. I've returned to the proverb here because its original meaning here is the one put out by orthodoxy, as above. They ask "what's to be gained by giving up technology?" when they're really thinking about what they'll lose commodity- and power-wise. Their whole thing is about keeping as much of the means of production as possible, as if that won't force people back into exactly the same roles, except with anarchist rhetoric. The more of the system that's preserved, the more difficult it'll be to get rid of the rest. Years ago, an old Stalinist was boasting about a riot at a car plant he was a shop steward at: "They smashed up the canteen but left the line alone. That's where their power is." If that was the case, why were they rioting? It was a mark of their domestication that they didn't destroy what made them most dependent on the system, what had stolen away their lives. No doubt the shop steward helped inculcate this attitude, their traditional role. John Zerzan's *Who Killed Ned Ludd?* is excellent in contrasting this domesticated attitude with an older millenarian tradition about refusal and sweeping away a whole world that only enslaves us. Liberating ourselves from that should be enough in itself, but what we gain by this is an end of commodified identity and separation, a return to the abundance of the proverbial sea, to unalienated Oneness between each other and Nature. I'll take authenticity and self-determination over any truckful of techno-industrial trinkets.

*How would you compare anarchism and its adherents in Europe with those in North America? Their viewpoint, their approach, etc...*

I suspect I'm as informed about the US anarcho-scene as you are with the European one, so when I hold up my mirror to Amerika, don't expect to be impressed! Without going into the more

obscure anarcho-fauna and — flora, I think differences are more a matter of degree and kind, not least because most US anarchism is European import. Anarchist communism and syndicalism, obviously, but even a supposedly native tradition like pragmatic individualism has its roots in grand ol' William Godwin.

I think these differences of degree arise out of history. Amerika was Civilized only recently, and the last genocides associated with that have not long passed from living memory. The frontiersman mentality has had effects as diverse as an ongoing reverence for wilderness and a hostility to communism that meant anarcho-orthodoxy never recovered from the Red scares during and after World War One and the CP hardly got enough grip to carry such anarchism with it into the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Class issues are much confused with those of race, slavery in Amerika not being that historically distant either. As Empire became Commonwealth, UK became as ethnically diverse as the States, but there was a sense of citizenship and belonging, of “return to the Mother Country,” that I think is absent in the Amerika. Certainly, we couldn't have an AIM here or a panopoly of Black liberation groups laying claim to one English country or other as “homeland,” probably because UK's colonial wars were generally played out by the 1950s. In UK, genocide is something that happens overseas, a former colonial problem. This mentality allowed the war in Northern Ireland to run for 25 years without people on the mainland batting an eyelid. It was the same mentality that started 4m Irish a century ago. That Amerika is still an empire, with its somewhat contradictory ideology of rugged individualism and technical expertise, means that there's more space for the sort of analysis Perlman put forward in *Against His-story*, *Against Leviathan!* than there would be in Europe.

One import you can chalk up is Earth First!, though because there is no wilderness left on this crowded island, EF!'s focus in UK is much more on social/anti-technological issues. Aside from a few animal lib groupies, people don't give much of a toss for deep ecology here — there's not the same nature/culture dualism that so marred EF!USA. There's some surprise that there isn't more of an anti-industrial focus Stateside. Britain may have been first into the Industrial Revolution, but you had “the American Hitler” Henry Ford, his assembly lines and, before him, the disassembly lines of the Chicago slaughterhouse on which they were modeled.

*Any books, authors, or projects which you feel are of value but which have been overlooked by radicals in North America?*

You expect I'll mention John Moore and I will. Some think he's just derivative of Fredy Perlman because he's studied him so closely, but his pamphlet, *Anarchy & Ecstasy* (1989), gets right inside the skin of Perlman's ideas of about Leviathanic armoring, particularly his essay “On Ecdysis.” John uses literary theory to try and yield up meaning barred to him by politico language — his analysis of anarchy vs. anarchism vs. chaos from Milton's myth, *Paradise Lost*, is particularly effective. In his second pamphlet, *Love Bite* (1990) — which Fifth Estate's literal minded-reviewer didn't understand, despite being sent up a follow-up letter of explanation — his struggle against language goes even further as he tries to get inside primitive consciousness. I don't think he necessarily succeeds — the fact John turned to writing fiction and pretty much fiction only afterwards suggests a limit had been reached — but it's such a brave attempt that it rewarded the effort of reading.

There's also William Golding's *Inheritors*. A friend once said, “I've never understood how such a stupid man can write such clever books,” but here his usually intrusive Christianity is turned on

its head, the myth of the Fall indicting humanity as genocidal destroyers of primitive, authentic consciousness. The book ends with a short, scientific-sounding account of the fossil remains of one of its key characters, a doomed Australopithicene, its brutal externality emphasizing our loss. What Golding does well here, as all agree, is write in a language of immediate sensation — perhaps a view out of Civilization’s prisonhouse.

In terms of projects, I don’t know whether I should plug Reclaim The Streets (RTS) here. On the one hand, almost everyone that should know about it does already, and on the other I think it’s run into a kind of limit where it can’t generalize the street party beyond very limited time and space, and that risks it quickly serving the same recuperated function as Carnival, a safety valve to blow off excess steam. Good things about it include its now-focusedness, which does a lot to strip away role and the self-sacrificial attitudes typifying dull Leftist militancy, and perhaps even point towards a new, revolutionary sense of community. There’s something celebratory about a good street party, far beyond the liberalism of the average Sexual Freedom Coalition parade. It’s simultaneously refusal, not just of the car but of its culture and all that implies for modern Civilization, and in numbers that have temporarily paralyzed cities. The need to defend street parties has blown away fluffies with considerably more good humor than debate around, for example, anti-fascist street activities. I do worry, however, about its willingness to define its own meanings — an important part of it — as this invites others to impose theirs. It’s surprising how something apparently so robust is actually so fragile. Cultural commentators are predictable recuperators, little better than journalists, but even cruder are the workerists who come to street parties as there are no big demos to peddle their papers at anymore. They busily try to convert something spontaneous and alive into something ideological and dead, telling party-goers the real struggle lies elsewhere, at the point of production. They can’t help it — rather than recognize their own revolution has failed, they try diverting what’s superceded it, too.

Friends of People Close to Nature (FPCN) are also worth a plug. Arguing “these people, they are anarchists,” FPCN’s Hartmut Haller zips round the world helping the last remaining tribal people to resist Civilization, with surprising success. The Hazda of central Africa, for example, successfully booted big game hunters off their traditional land and returned to the bow. They’re prouder of living this way than wearing shoes or taking anything else from Civilization. Hartmut told them he’d be back again when they’d burned the last church and school. He’s spent years dodging across one African border or another helping tribal kids escape school. He’s been condemned by some anthropologists for showing some tribal people Europe, probably because their strident anarchism has proved profoundly embarrassing to Survival International-type “mission Indians” usually preferred at international conferences on indigenous peoples, etc.. Hartmut does this because he knows that far from being over-awed by Civilization, his hunter-gatherer mates hate it — there’s nowhere to hunt and the people are all crazy — and they have much to teach us in terms of a perspective from outside Civilization.

*What are some future themes we can look forward to from Green Anarchist?*

We really prefer readers to suggest core themes to us — GA is a forum for their discussions, after all. The next issue will be on “Wildness & Wilderness.” There’s a very long piece by one of Marcuse’s last students, Glenn Parton, *Humans-in-the-Wilderness*, but I was surprised by how much else was about how compromised by Civilized values the movement is and this made me realize how much further we still have to go. I share Alfredo Bonanno’s despair at these ideologues.

We're also planning an issue on the Millenium — only one chance to do it in 1,000 years, after all! I remember during 1984, there was the odd TV program on about how Orwell's 1984 hadn't come to pass in UK — this at the height of the Mines Strike that broke the back of old-style socialism in UK! Currently, they're not even bothering with that treatment, just selling the Millenium as a big party where we can buy lots of goodies at their theme park in Greenwich and the pubs will be open 36 hours non-stop. The movement's "Fuck the Millenium" is totally obvious and reactive, such an invite to passivity that it's as much a part of this spectacle as opposition to it. What we're after is tapping into millenial angst and hopefully even the rejectionist fervor that fired the radicals of the English Revolution. A friend said socialist-rationalist ideology isn't equipped to cope with that, but capitalist-rationalist Civilization has accommodated it — and its current Civilization — perfectly well for centuries, as the poverty of "Fuck the Millenium" demonstrates. We felt it could do with a real challenge, from what's really going on under the surface...

The Anarchist Library  
Anti-Copyright



John Filiss  
Interview with John Connor Of "Green Anarchist"

Retrieved on December 12, 2009 from [www.insurgentdesire.org.uk](http://www.insurgentdesire.org.uk)  
This interview with the editor of one outstanding anarchist publication originally appeared in the pages of another, *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* (C.A.L., P.O.B. 1446, Columbia, MO 65205-1446. Sample issue \$6, 4 issue subscription for \$16).

[theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)