

Writings of the Vancouver Five

Various

1984

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Justice and The Vancouver Five

The first trial of the Vancouver Five — Julie Belmas, Gerry Hannah, Ann Hansen, Doug Stewart and Brent Taylor — on charges of theft, possession of stolen property, possession of restricted weapons and conspiracy to rob a Brinks guard, is now underway in New Westminster, B.C. It is now over one year since their arrest on a remote mountain highway on January 20, 1983.

The Vancouver Five are also charged with the bombing of a B.C. Hydro substation, three Red Hot Video outlets, and the Litton Systems Ltd. Factory where the Cruise missile guidance systems are manufactured — as well as conspiracy to bomb facilities at the Canadian Forces Base at Cold Lake Alberta, and other charges which, like the above, relate to the activities of guerrilla resistance by the organizations DIRECT ACTION and the WIMMIN's FIRE BRIGADE.

All of the alleged offenses in the first indictment — the theft of automobiles, weapons and ammunition, the preparations for the expropriation of the wealth of the capitalists — are essential to the formation and continuation of an armed clandestine resistance organization. As such, they are as political as the attacks on corporations which destroy the environment, promote hatred of women, or manufacture weapons of mass destruction — charges which will be dealt with in upcoming trials (three of which will take place in B.C., and one in Toronto, Ontario).

The division of all the charges within the B.C. jurisdiction into four separate trials is an attempt by the prosecution to publically brand the defendants as “criminals” before proceeding to the obviously politically oriented bombing charges. This separation is a political decision of the state, specifically the Attorney General's office, to attempt to discredit these political prisoners and erode their support.

On December 30, 1983 Judge Toy ruled to allow wiretap evidence in the court — despite police testimony which has indicated that the bugs were installed illegally in the homes of the accused, and despite recent Alberta Court of Appeals and Supreme Court of Canada decisions allowing judges to throw out such tainted evidence. Clearly, Toy is operating under predetermined intention to ensure the conviction of these comrades because of the political nature of the “crimes” they stand trial for.

The decision to admit the wiretaps as evidence is but the latest of a series of rulings and actions of the state which seriously effect the ability of the Five to conduct a legal defense. These include the prosecutor's violation of a press ban on the publication of evidence when, immediately following the court order, he appeared at a press conference; the denial of bail which drastically limited the Five's ability to communicate and prepare a defense; the use of a direct indictment instead of the customary preliminary hearing; and the refusal of the defense requests for a stay of proceedings or a change of venue to counteract the extensive, sensationalist pre-trial publicity. With the Judge's admission of illegally-obtained wire-tap evidence — in contradiction to a principle established by this same Judge in a previous court case — all pretence of this being a “fair trial” has been thrown aside.

These reactionary rulings and actions against the five defendants come as no surprise, for they stem from the basic function of the judicial system: protection of the interests of the dominant class. In a capitalist country such as Canada, the judicial system of law enforcement agencies, courts, its economic system of private property, and its hierarchical social system.

Our economic and social system — which subjects people to poverty and degradation; which feeds on the blood and oppression of people of the third world; which has destroyed the land, culture and identity of the original inhabitants — is upheld by a system of law designed to isolate, imprison and punish those who are impoverished or who try to resist the ongoing injustices.

To the class which has little property to call its own, and whose exploitation forms the wealth of the capitalists, the courts are a farce, and the police and prisons coercive institutions designed to keep

them in their place. The history of this country is filled with accounts of police breaking up strikes and protests. Routinely courts are used to bring injunctions against unions struggling for their rights. And though every seven minutes a worker is killed on the job in this country, few, if any, of the people responsible for their work conditions, responsible for this slaughter, are ever brought before the courts. The ever increasing contamination of the air, water and land with carcinogenic chemicals from industrial processes, as well as the promotion of cigarettes and the mass production of chemically-violated foods, result in thousands of cancer-deaths yearly. Those responsible for this carnage are never tried or punished in this “justice” system.

The legitimacy of the court system is based on the myth of equality before the law and the myth that laws are founded on principles of justice. These myths, and the accompanying respect for authority, are rooted so deeply in our system that those not directly oppressed by the discrimination of the law often refuse to see the existence of this discrimination and hypocrisy. Legislators, judges, prosecutors, and lawyers are often educated in the same private schools and prestigious universities as members of the power elite and they share the same value system and outlook on society. They will naturally treat more sympathetically a member of their own social standing, while dealing harshly with a person of a different class — whose very existence may be a threat to their value system and their power base.

Justice in the bourgeois legal system is essentially for hire. High-priced lawyers and expensive expert witnesses substantially determine the “guilt” or “innocence” of the accused. The state, in its attempt to prove guilt, has comparatively unlimited resources: including the latest in computer, laser, and other high-technologies.

The working class defendant has all the cards stacked against him/her: laws made by and for the ruling class; court officers who are members or assistants of the ruling class; and jurors, trained all their lives to respect authority, who routinely place their faith in police and other establishment witnesses. As the Five wrote in an earlier statement: “Given this reality, it is obviously not possible for true fairness or justice to be practiced in the ruling classes’ courts”.

In the case against the Vancouver Five, the state intends to act harshly. Not only was over \$10 million of property destroyed in the attacks on B.C. Hydro, Red Hot Video, and Litton, but the exclusive monopoly of the use of coercion by the state was challenged. With the series of house searches of activists in Vancouver and Toronto, the charges against the Five and their supporters, and most importantly the show trial against the political prisoners, the state intends to demonstrate with repression that it will not tolerate any challenges to its rule.

People should harbour no illusions about the state and its attitude towards serious and determined acts of resistance. Obviously we must be aware of the realities of imprisonment, however, we must never let fear of the long arm of the law and the heavy crunch of its clubs, stop us from taking action and doing what is necessary in order that we may someday be free. Our commitment and determination cannot be confided by the threat of prison. The power of the system ends when we no longer fear its violence, but are willing to overcome it through struggle.

Living in Reality

Dough Stewart

In the last few years, tens of thousands of people have died in El Salvador, — mostly guerrillas killed by the army and peasants killed by the death squads. What does that mean? Not much, I think, to most of us. We have an intellectual understanding of events in that sorrowful country, but I don't think we really *feel* the reality of the suffering and struggle taking place there. For most political people there is an unconscious emotional distancing, an alienation and separation that prevents us from empathizing, from feeling the tangibility of what is happening. We read a magazine article and are properly outraged, but in a few days we forget. I think we should try to overcome this; we should make an effort to internalize the reality of fascism and guerrilla war in El Salvador. Now, right now, there is someone just like us, with hopes and dreams and fears, being tortured or murdered or raped by Salvadorean soldiers. And right now, there is someone just like us sitting in the jungle with a rifle, watchful and waiting. We are political people. These people are our sisters and brothers and their lives are real. We should grant them realness in our minds.

“The eyes are bling, one must look with the heart.” There is a lot of injustice in the world, a lot of oppression and suffering, and I think for most of us our understanding of this reality is very intellectual and abstract. We do not really identify with the existence and the pain and the resistance of the people we sympathize with. For example, even to progressive men, I think that what it feels like to be a womyn in a patriarchal society is largely unintelligible. We can intellectually understand the omnipresent potential for violence, the belittling, cruelty, and scorn, but we do not really empathize and identify with the frustration, wear, and fear that our culture imposes on womyn. The genocide of American Indians is another atrocity we abstractly understand, but one which I think very few white Canadians really grasp the reality of.

A different kind of non-understanding is of the rape of the earth. Most leftists view ecological destruction as unnecessary or inefficient or offensive to human aesthetic values, but we do not really empathize with the foxes and flowers, with the whole indescribably complex, interconnected, and beautiful life of the land; nor do we truly feel the horror and injustice of the slaughter being perpetrated against the earth.

These are all examples of our alienation from reality of the limits on our understanding of the world, of our inability to feel on an emotional level what we think on a rational level. This inability is characteristic of our culture and springs from many sources.

One source is simple and obvious: the life experience of most oppressed people is totally foreign to our own; if I am not a womyn or an Indian or a tree, it will be difficult for me to deeply appreciate what they undergo. And if our lives are relatively sheltered and comfortable, it will be difficult for us to appreciate suffering of any kind, to really understand sudden violence, slow starvation, crippling disease, rape, torture, and unreasoning murder.

More generally speaking, I think there are two major elements of our society that alienate us from reality: the patriarchy and technology. Perhaps the most fundamental root of our behavior and thought is our sexist conditioning, and for those of us who are men this implies deep-seated separation from womyn, illusions of superiority, and emotional isolation. This mental and emotional straight-jacket pervades our lives, acting as a major barrier to our empathizing and identifying with anyone oppressed in any way.

Our technological culture also constrains our understanding. Our environment — the cars, cities, houses, jobs, and especially the TVs — is very artificial, complicated and unintuitive and, over time, conditions us to accept the violent and bizarre as routine and unexciting. I don't understand this point

entirely clearly, but I feel strongly that on a subconscious level the machine environment alienates us not only from the natural world but also from ourselves, from those around us, and from events in the world in general.

One final source of our inability to empathize with the world around us is the sheer horror of it. Those who open themselves to reality, who seek to identify themselves with suffering people, will be overwhelmed by cruelty and pain, and deeply hurt. In self-defence we withdraw.

I have tried to give some explanation for what I see as limitations in our understanding. I think that we, a political people, should seek a profound understanding of the world, going beyond remembrance of facts to knowing of reality, to a heartfelt identification with suffering people and struggling resistance fighters. The burden of this consciousness is great, but the benefits are greater still. If we are dedicated and honest and desirous of this understanding, I think that we can achieve it. Further, I think that it can have significant consequences for our lives.

For one, our understanding of the world will become truer and richer, and we will have a stronger sense of being rooted in the material world, of actually living in reality. As well, I think that people of different life experience will seem more concrete, more on the same level of actuality of ourselves.

More specifically, the horror of the world will become clearer; we will start to feel the character and scale of suffering and injustice in the world. We can never completely succeed, but if we try we can come to a closer identification with what it means to be an oppressed person, to be a Central American peasant or an American Indian or a Canadian housewife or even a logged valley.

This consciousness will outrage us, not in a way that will fade in a few days, but in a way that will sink deep into our being, that will fuel our anger and our determination to be politically effective. We will be driven from political consciousness into political activism.

This consciousness will also serve to keep our personal position in perspective. We forget sometimes that most of us lead very privileged lives, especially those of us who are white men. If we maintain a tight emotional connection with the less fortunate, then we will be less constrained by fear of endangering the security of our lives and lifestyles, and more willing to risk what we have for the sake of those who have very little.

As we develop an identity with suffering people we will also come into an identity with people in resistance. El Salvadorean guerillas, rape relief workers and AIM militants are all our sisters and brothers; if we can learn to empathize with the reality of their lives and work, and to carry that consciousness with us, we will have a powerful source of strength and hope to draw on. Beyond ideology and beyond motivation, we need faith, the inner strength that enables us to push on in the face of apparently overwhelming opposition.

In time of depression and crisis we can be sustained by our connection with our friends and comrades around the world.

If we make an effort we can see past the maps and numbers and into people's impact on our lives. I hope that we come to see the political work we do, not just as an obligation, as what we think we should do, but also as what we want to do, flowing from our connection with people and our desire to struggle alongside them. And mostly what I hope is this: that we look at our lives, at what we do and why, and at what we could do, and that we always live in the real world, seeing clearly and feeling deeply.

In what I say here I am speaking primarily to serious political people and to my own community, feminist anti-authoritarians, and environmentalists. I am speaking as an equal to people I respect and am in solidarity with.

I don't propose the consciousness of *Living in Reality* as something that no one has, or as a magical solution to any of our problems, but as contribution to our on-going dialogue about the world and our lives in it. I hope that people will read this critically and sympathetically, taking what they find of worth leaving the rest.

Dough Stewart
Oakalla Prison
1983

Feminist Resistance vs. Reform

Ann Hansen

The majority of the white womyn's movement have taken on the cry for equal pay for work of equal value, more government daycare centres, tougher anti-porn and anti-rape laws, more government funding for women's groups, and affirmative action programs in business. These demands are called reforms, because in themselves, they do not presuppose that the entire patriarchy must be destroyed for the intent of these reforms to be realized. They are made known to the male rulers through government sanctioned legal channels i.e. petitions, lobbying mp's, mla's, and supporting government parties.

Some womyn believe reforms can liberate them, without the destruction of capitalism.

For them there is a great hope of reforming the patriarchy, particularly in North America, if the womyn are white and willing to take on the male persona. Some radical feminists see reforms as short term gains that will become the groundwork for a revolutionary movement to destroy the patriarchy. Too often their work towards immediate reform obscures their revolutionary aims and determines the methods that they employ. For example, to change the laws to curb pornography, their methods usually involve dialogue with government representatives, letter campaigns and petitions. If everything an individual womyn does in a day is geared towards reforming the law, then her secret revolutionary aspirations will remain just that.

All that most reforms accomplish whether they are called for within a radical or capitalist context, is the accommodation of a few more white womyn that are capable and willing to assimilate into the male dominated institutions. This means accepting the values and principles of the corporate world. If a womyn seeks power and money in life and is aggressive, ambitious and competitive, then yes, there could be a place for her in the corporate world. She can obtain "freedom and equality" with her male peers even though in reality these qualities are viewed as greed and power from the perspective of the poor.

There is enough profit margin in Europe and North America to accommodate white middle class womyn in order to diffuse a potentially threatening feminist movement. There is hope for these middle class womyn to attain equal pay for work of equal value, more government subsidized daycare centres, abortion on demand, tougher anti-porn and rape laws and affirmative action programs which could place token womyn in every professional field.

There will never be a large enough profit margin in the western world to alleviate the poverty of coloured, Indian, and Third World womyn — because the definition, essence, very fibre of the patriarchy and capitalism is rooted in making wealth for the few by exploiting the many, and in objectifying womyn and nature to transform them into products sold for a profit. This system of exploitation is maintained and protected by parliament, the legal system, and the police force. It is a contradiction in terms to believe these institutions would contain legitimate channels for the destruction of a system they are designed to protect.

If womyn do not develop revolutionary methods and goals, the very foundation of the patriarchy will remain untouched, leaving governments, institutions and businesses that embody the male value system unscathed. There will still be smoggy sunsets, oil spills, people starving, and computers taking over the mind. The patriarchy will be left intact, with a few token females in the power structure.

Reforms also tend to strengthen the existing system by appearing to resolve contradictions within its ideology of freedom, liberty and democracy, and its reality of social, political and economic exploitation. Although they can be resolved only through revolution, reforms can diffuse these contradictions for the

middle classes. Reforms help give the patriarchy a kinder face. Affirmative action programs place token womyn in traditional male professions; more daycare centres allow more womyn to join the work force and tougher anti-porn and anti-rape laws create the illusion that womyn are protected from the most violent aspects of sexism. These reforms will have given some privileged women more power and freedom within the male world, but the patriarchal structure and values that are rooted in materialism and greed will remain untouched. There will still be millions of sterilized Indians and third world womyn, most womyn will still be treated primarily as sex objects, will be impoverished or starving, and the human society will continue to embody only the worst life-destroying features of the male psyche.

Yet these reforms create a false appearance of equality which can be used as a weapon against the poor womyn who only experience poverty, violence and degradation. The middle class womyn, beneficiaries of reform, can then turn against the poor, claiming that the middle class have jobs, daycare centres and abortions and therefore the problem of the poor lies in their own laziness and incompetence.

Even the benefits of reform to the middle class womyn are an illusion because quality within this patriarchy is, in reality, the transformation of womyn into female replicas of men who have learned to enjoy the evils of greed and power. To work at jobs within the patriarchy, we have to give up our children to institutional daycare centres and take on the values of the male dominated work-place.

We must refuse to be accomplices in the perpetuation of our own oppression by smoothing over the conflicts of the patriarchy. Instead these conflicts and contradictions should be exposed and attacked with a strategic eye towards total liberation.

The contradictions between capitalist/patriarchal ideology and the daily reality of exploitation and the destruction of life cannot be resolved without a total transformation because these realities are integral to the system. To understand why reform won't liberate us, we have to understand the nature of the beast — this international system that we are enslaved by. We must throw off the rose-tinted glasses and throw away the middle class fairy tales that taught us that our society is a nice place and everything always turns out well. In reality, capitalism and patriarchy are rooted in exploitation and objectification of life. Capitalism is an economic system based on profit-making for the rich and patriarchy is a system in which the values of men, that is, competition, power and aggression, dominate and negate all other values.

Liberation can only be attained through the destruction of the patriarchy — our methods must be those of a liberation struggle. Few feminists would argue against the view that the government is a powerful bastion of the patriarchy; that is, government leaders are responsible for creating laws and institutions that maintain male dominance. Yet many of these womyn still believe that, by asking these same powerful male leaders of government to help them, womyn can attain liberation. Womyn cannot expect to achieve liberation through the patriarchal governments' methods of social change. The most that can be expected of these methods is that government and business accommodate a few feminists by changing some laws and redistributing some wealth.

Developing methods of struggle rooted in resistance does not mean we must reject all short-term goals. Liberation is a long term process built upon gains made little by little; when we fight for abortion on demand, or against pornography, we must do so within a revolutionary context. This means describing the problem from a radical perspective and using tactics that reflect our rejection of the male controlled legal, political and economic system. For example, rather than demanding equal pay for work of equal value — a demand which reflects an acceptance of the existing patriarchal economic system — womyn should develop new means of survival that are non-exploitative and harmonious with the earth, such as expropriations, co-ops and collectives.

A liberated womyn in this society is a womyn in total resistance, constantly pushing against the limits and obstacles restricting her. Liberated womyn must make a total break with the patriarchy: establish their won communities, culture and political action groups. Instead of putting their energy into asking the male protectors, the government, to help them, liberated womyn develop tactics of resistance that cannot be controlled by the government, such as occupations, blockades, information distribution, peoples' inquiries, postering, spray painting, expropriation, survival gatherings and other

direct actions. If unified into a movement, the tactics of resistance are effective because they allow us to directly confront the government and corporations. If our work is based on the understanding that the patriarchy must be destroyed, then we can't be conned into believing that a change of law here, and government commission there, will improve the situation for womyn. It will be focused on relentlessly exposing and attacking the protection and cover-ups that the government affords the male rulers and rapers of the people and land.

Once dedicated to a resistance struggle, womyn will begin to take the initiative of social change out of the hands of the patriarchy. In our present situation, the government and multinationals make the decisions that determine the course of events. For example, the federal government continues to sanction mega-projects that pollute the land and we react.

If the initiative of change is to lie in the hands of feminists and radicals, then we must analyse and understand how the Canadian state and multinationals operate. We have to understand the role Canada plays in the imperialist network, the strategic interests of the economy that keep Canada strategically stable and the political weaknesses that we can expose. Once we have this understanding, then we can develop strategies of action that have continuity and that are not rooted in a reaction to the most singularly obvious symptoms of the system. This way we can, over the long-term, undermine the very structure of the system.

Armed with a militant feminist analysis and tactics of resistance, womyn can develop an ongoing offensive against the bastions of the patriarchy — the corporate megaprojects, military and government institutions. As long as these institutions continue to control human society, pornography, rape and the objectification of womyn will continue.

If we look around us, and are shaken to the core by a dread of the deathly future this society presents us, then we must turn to the spirit, emotion and sensuousness in ourselves that allows us to connect with all life. Through a rejoining with the spirit of life, we will rekindle the spirit of revolt. Revolt at the raped forests, polluted rivers, the death culture of this society, the massacre of third world people and genocide of the indian people. A deep feeling of revolt at death and a corresponding love of life will give us the power to resist and make the sacrifices that are essential to save the earth. Surely there is no greater task than to prevent the destruction of the earth and the misery and meaninglessness of modern-day human life.

No Peace for the Poor

Peace they cried
From sun-tanned faces
Fattened up on granola bars
to the white maggot faces
of the steel mill kids
hanging out at the corner
There ain't no peace for the poor

Peace they cried
Violence begets violence
But the kids were too busy
With their moms getting beat up
And their daddies drinking and running from the law
To listen
Cause their ain't no peace for the poor

Peace they cried
Marching down the street
All straight and tall
Stepping over the drunken Indians sprawled
Along the hot sidewalks like dying dogs
There ain't no peace for the poor

Peace they cried
Walking home
To their apartments
Potted plants and prints in the hall
While all around
The war goes on
In silent insidious form
There ain't no peace for the poor...

— Ann Hansen

Sister Tree

Oh my friend, sister tree,
You are always there
Outside my barren cell
Radiating the life and richness
They try to kill in me
imprisoned in this tomb of stone.

You are everything this is not
Green limbs, sinewy strong yet soft
Soothing, carressing the wind,
Providing a home at no cost
To crows and squirrels and wrens and bugs

Hugging the earth and holding the rain
Giving not taking
Loving not hating
You are centuries of wisdom
Humbly providing
Shelter from the storm

My mother, my lover, provider, protector
My spirit flies out to you
And silently my cries implore
Please take my body too!

— Ann Hansen

Death from Above (the cruise)

There's a monster at large,
That has the whole world running,
Its electronic brain,
Is deadly and cunning.
It glides through the sky,
With the grace of a dove,
But its roaring jet engine,
Brings death from above.
Created by madmen,
With minds bent on hate,
It's the perfect new toy,
For the whims of the state.
They say that its role,
Is strictly defense,
But the truth of it is,
It's dollars and cents.
And they fail to mention,
Their additional goal,
To crush opposition,
And maintain control.
Though we told them "forget it",
"We don't want to burn",
It's being deployed,
despite our concern.
But we mustn't lose heart,
Or cease in our struggle,
'Cause there's a monster at large,
And it's looking for trouble.

— Gerry Hannah

The Work Ethic and The Western Dream

Gerry Hannah

A good many people these days seem to realize that mega projects, large scale logging or mining operations, and continued land developments will inevitably lead to a devastated and inhospitable environment. Yet for some reason, despite this realization most people continue to accept and even endorse these practices, and generally maintain that they are necessary. One might well ask why a species of allegedly intelligent creatures would want to pursue this self-destructive way of thinking. The answer is simple enough: for the sake of jobs.

We are willing to cut down forests and to flood river valleys, displacing hundreds of wild animals (many of which will die later for lack of shelter and grazing grounds) for the sake of jobs. We are willing to transform countless fragile ecological communities into wastelands of concrete, slagheaps and mud; for the sake of jobs. We are willing to poison rivers, lakes and the air, with all sorts of pollution: for the sake of jobs. Basically we are willing to totally violate this earth in any way, shape or form, just as long as those pay-cheques keep on rolling in.

As a fully industrialized society we believe that in order to survive we must be employed, and as such we have become totally dependent on corporations and other large institutions for our livelihoods. This is an exceedingly vulnerable position to be in because now, out of fear of being unemployed, we are in effect silenced from speaking out against many improper practices carried out by employers through their various enterprises. We see that what we are doing to the earth and to ourselves is wrong, we see that those who are responsible for initiating these actions against the earth are not concerned in the least about the impact they have on it, yet we dare not raise our voices too loudly in protest against them for fear of losing our source of income.

One wonders though just how much we are willing to sacrifice in the name of employment. Where exactly does it end? Are we ready to accept the fact that our children will be left with a devastated and barren world so that we may have jobs today? Jobs that are almost always degrading, monotonous or destructive in some way. Jobs that are unstable at the best of times. Jobs that bring us a mere fraction of the profits that are made as a result of our sweat and toil. Hopefully we are not that shortsighted, foolish, and selfish.

Not only is this position we find ourselves in today vulnerable, it is self perpetuating as well, and tends to continually reinforce our reliance on the initiatives and enterprises of others rather than on our own abilities to survive. As we move farther and farther from a direct dependence on and close relationship with the natural world, and steadily immerse ourselves more and more into a way of life based on the production and consumption of humanmade things, our demand for the exploitation of natural “resources” increases dramatically, thereby creating further destruction of the environment. This in turn makes an interdependent relationship with the natural world farther and farther from the realm of possibility. The basic elements for sustaining human life — independent of modern society — will simply not be there, and the knowledge of how to use them will have been forgotten as well. This is a very good situation for those people who stand to make a lot of money from our dependence on their endless stream of consumer goods and products, but a poor and dangerous situation for the rest of us.

In periods of so-called economic crisis, when the fear of unemployment is running high, governments and corporations are able to use jobs to justify a lot of the things that have little to do with the destruction of the environment (directly anyways) but are still equally as negative. For instance a surprising number of people now are asking that prisons be built in their communities hoping that

this will provide them with employment. Rather than attempt to deal with the very basic question of whether a society as messed up as ours (or any society for that matter) even has the right to keep people in cages, they opt instead for the short-term solution to their problems, at the expense of the many victims of our society's totally corrupt values and outright oppression.

Another example of this job fanaticism are the people that practically beg to have nuclear power plants built in their communities at great potential risk to themselves and their region — just for the sake of a handful of jobs. In fact, lately we even hear people defending the nuclear weapons industry because of the large number of people it employs. Apparently not only the destruction of the environment, but contributing to the mass murder of millions of people is okay as well, as long as it provides a source of stable employment.

We seem to have forgotten that human beings were living long before the concept of “earning a living” was ever heard of. The fact that we are here today is proof that they were. Contrary to popular belief, life for them was often not sheer drudgery at all, but a job in many cases. In many communities of old, work and play were virtually indistinguishable. Particularly in hunter/gatherer societies where our ancestors usually had the foresight to settle in areas where the basic needs for living were easily obtainable, and there was little need for prolonged stretches of dull or arduous labour.

This scenario is of course excluding the imperialistic slave, and feudal societies, which actually bear a much closer resemblance to our own society, where work is served much like a prison sentence, and play is viewed as an earned privilege — allotted to us in a highly institutionalized and regimented form, once we have spent the bulk of our time and energy labouring to fulfill someone else's greedy ambitions.

Many people would argue that a more basic existence such as our ancestors enjoyed without all the mechanical devices and technological processes we have today, would be too physically demanding, and would leave us with much less leisure time on our hands than we have today. However we're now finding that in our day to day existence in modern society, we are gradually receiving less and less of an adequate amount of physical exercise which we need in order to stay healthy, and so we now must find other means to keep fit such as jogging, swimming, and cycling to name just a few. So in essence this means that to a large extent rather than making our lives easier, we have merely restructured them, and not only that, but now we are often actually paying for exercise that was at one time merely a part of day to day living, not to mention using up a good deal of our newly gained leisure time with boring fitness programs.

Another argument that some people make against a very basic existence, is that its not really necessary to go that far. They say that all that's necessary to stop the destruction of the environment and to maintain a healthy relationship with nature is for people to control industry rather than corporations and for industry to stop producing massive quantities of useless consumer products and instead produce only items that are practical and truly useful. Some of these items might include components for maintaining mechanized transportation and advanced transportation and advanced medical procedures, as well as electronic communication/information equipment and alternative energy-producing devices.

Though no doubt these goods and the services they enhance could be beneficial to us under the right conditions, this argument has one essential flaw to it. It ignores the vast and complex industrial sub-structure that must exist before such goods and services can be created. For example X-ray machines and wind-powered electrical generators, though seemingly more or less ecologically sound in themselves, actually require many exotic, highly-processed parts and materials. These parts and materials don't just spring from thin air. They must first be extracted from the earth, transported to where they are to be processed, processed, then transported to where they are to be manufactured, and finally, manufactured. This is all before these parts and materials even get to the final assembly plant. Each one of these operations basically constitutes an industry in itself, and each one of them also relies on its own group of specialized mechanical devices, which in turn must be manufactured from their own parts and materials as well, and so on and so on. Even if manufacturing were restricted to a mere fraction of the more sophisticated items we produce today, we can see that we would still actually be depending on quite a substantial amount of industrial activity.

Also even if the most advanced and effective pollution controls and recycling methods (which again rely on their own manufactured parts and materials) were implemented in this production process, there is just no way this amount of industry would not have a serious impact upon the natural world. Furthermore there is no way that a society that willingly embraces this amount of industry, can be truthfully said to be living in harmony with nature.

In the consumer society we live in today, human relations also tend to break down along with relations with nature. We are frequently abused and insulted both in our workplaces and in the marketplace by employers concerned only with our output as Employees, who are generally insensitive to our feelings as human beings, and by entrepreneurs who see us only as consumers from which a profit might be made, who have little regard for our real needs as human beings. This humiliation and abuse we experience daily (which comes in many other forms as well) inevitably leads to feelings of helplessness, frustration and inadequacy, which we tend to vent in various negative ways. These often include escape through drugs or alcohol, and violence both domestic or otherwise. We have so little control over our own lives, that we attempt to make up for it by dominating others. We also become bitter and apathetic towards life in general and suspicious and intolerant of other human beings.

At the same time, as all of this is happening we are repeatedly being encouraged through mainstream media and slick corporate advertising, to be highly competitive and totally materialistic, and judge ourselves and one another by what we possess rather than by what we are. By accepting these values and attempting to live up to them, we become little more than machines performing pre-programmed functions at the expense of our own and others freedom and dignity.

Most of us can sense that there is something very wrong with the way things are today, but we apparently have not yet fully realized the extent of the damage being done. Nor do we yet have a clear idea of what to do about it. Many of us look to political leaders for answers, but they are usually either too busy making business deals with their corporate cohorts, vacationing, or just plain too arrogant to answer, and when they do claim to have some answers, it's always just more of the same. They tell us that these problems are just part of the price of progress, but they never tell us just what exactly it is that we are progressing towards, so how do we know whether the price is worth it or not? The same is true for business leaders, who surprisingly enough some people still perceive to be nice men who actually care about us. Their answer to just about all the world's problems, is less control over big business and more financial incentives for free enterprise ventures — which is the same as saying the best way to put out a fire is to add more fuel to it.

They will also argue against a return to a simpler more independent lifestyle, by saying that a highly technological society would be much more beneficial and healthy for us to live in. That it is our only real chance for freedom and equality. We should question though how a society that's built on the philosophy of profit at all costs, total conformity, and domination over all living things — including the very earth which gives us life, could possibly be healthy, beneficial and fair. We see the beginnings of it now. Is it fair? Is it healthy? Are there any less problems than before? We only need to take a careful look at ourselves and at life around us for the answer to that question.

For those of us who strive to be truly honest with ourselves, and who share a deep concern for the quality of life on our planet, the reality of the situation should be clear by now. Either we refuse to collaborate in the earth's and in our own destruction any longer, or we commit ourselves and our children to a permanent position of subordination, and a totally artificial way of life from which there is no return. If we choose to refuse, then a radical change in our way of thinking is required. We must stop kidding ourselves that industrialism and the environment can co-exist. They can't. We must stop presuming that we need all of our modern devices and processes to survive and be happy. We don't. And we must stop assuming that the people with the power, be they elected or otherwise, will make the right decisions for us. They won't.

The total change that must happen in order to guarantee that our lives will have real meaning and independence, and that our planet will survive, seems so hopeless in terms of realization. Yet it must happen. Each one of us individually must attempt to fully understand the plastic society around us

and our relationship to it, and to reject it entirely, both in thought and in action. As well, we must in the process join together with others who share this knowledge and concern for the future and bravely push forward, in every way that we can, toward a new and better way of life. A way of life based on cooperation, equality, and deep respect for the earth.

The situation is urgent. The time for change is now. The work ethic and the western dream are killing us, both physically and spiritually, but we can live if we want to. It's up to us.

The Wild Seed

Like the wild seed, beneath winter's snow,
We must be.
Seemingly lifeless, held frozen in the dark,
Yet we are not dead.
The cycle is not complete.
Life, hidden deep within, is only waiting,
For the sun to shine, for the snow to melt,
For the warm spring wind to blow.
Then we'll rise above the ground,
Flowering for all to see.
And what purpose will we serve?
To grow more seeds,
Who in turn will also know the changing seasons,
And will fear them not.

— Gerry Hannah

Deadmen

You men who hide from the truth,
That hear only that,
Which echoes your own opinions,
You think you've heard it all,
You've heard nothing.

You men who deny spirit,
That feel that life without expensive toys,
And habits is boring,
You think you've felt it all,
You've felt nothing.

You men who disrespect life,
That see all of the earth,
That can't be made to serve you as barren,
You think you've seen it all,
You've seen nothing.

You men that live for wealth,
That perceive all that can't be bought,
And sold as worthless,
You think you have it all,
You have nothing.

You men who lust for power,
That believe that everyone has their price,
And judge people's value on their willingness to obey,
You think you know it all,
You know nothing.

— Gerry Hannah

Patriarchal Conquest and Industrial Civilization

Brent Taylor

The apocalyptic horrors we face today — the looming nightmares of nuclear war or ecological catastrophe — are a direct consequence of the industrial and technological civilization created by materialistic capitalist and communist male power elites over the past 200 years. These threats to our survival are entirely unique to this modern era, and would have been virtually inconceivable to people of former times. However, the true roots of industrial civilization — the consciousness and attitudes which eventually enabled such a civilization to come into being — first began to fester in the societies of our ancestors long ago. Why we have only so recently come to be faced with the nightmarish reality of a crises of extermination is because the modern era is the first in which the actual potential for extermination exists. It was only through the actualization of an advanced industrial civilization that the machines, weapons and industrial processes were created which are now threatening the survival of life on Earth.

The present industrial and technological civilization is, in its global scale and its actual physical manifestations, vastly different from all other eras of so-called “civilized history”. From the stupefying rate of expansion of the “industrial revolution”, and with the colossal productive capacity of massive factories, the immense output from power projects, and the utilization of mega-scale resource extraction, etc., etc., ad nauseum, there is little question that the modern era, in a material sense, literally stands beyond history. It has facilitated the most consumptive and materialistic societies ever — which are surely a science fiction fantasy when compared with even the most developed urban centres of the 18th century. Yet it is not because of a new mode of thinking that human existence has been so rapidly transformed.

Industrial civilization has evolved from the cumulative effects of an unbroken adherence to perceptions, concepts and philosophical values which are negative and essentially anti-life. For example, the capacity of human beings to want to wage wars of total annihilation against their enemies, or the quest to manipulate the natural environment to our anthropocentric ends, or to lust after material wealth with insatiable greed — these machinations which are so prevalent among the ruling classes of today — have also dominated the pursuits of previous eras and civilizations. Clearly, far back into history, well before the beginnings of the Judeo-Christian era, the dominant conceptual outlook of civilization can be described as being that of “patriarchal (male-dominated) conquest”. I believe that within this mode of thought are ways of perceiving and being, sometimes subtle and sometimes brutally apparent, which must be rejected if we are to survive and recreate lives and cultures of natural freedom and harmony.

At some point in our distant past, when early patriarchal societies began to develop and then become established and powerful, a distancing and disregard, and eventually contempt and conquest, over womyn, other peoples and finally the natural environment came to be the principle underlying premises upon which the ruling males governed. Since those times, the magnitude of patriarchal conquest has steadily expanded, and “human development” has been synonymous with the ever-increasing institutionalization of patriarchal domination. The tragic effects of this domination is not only evident today in the material conditions of human societies, but as well, in the inner world of human beings.

Over thousands of years, the patriarchal culture of conquest has virtually destroyed our inner grounding with what can be termed “a natural and wholistic appreciation of life”. Such a severe spiritual crippling has left us collectively wounded and astray. This is particularly true in advanced industrial

societies where an extremely distorted and lifeless view of living exists. Not only has much of the reverence and worship of life itself vanished, but it appears that these societies have become incapable of recognizing the fact that they are creating an execution chamber world by the very manner in which they are functioning and by the very motives which drive them onward.

Patriarchal conquest has become an all-embracing battle of conquest over all life for the ends of greed and power for rulers and Empires — to bury variety, spontaneity and vitality in a coffin of artificiality, domination and control. Male rule, womyn hating, racism, warfare, imperialism, materialism, anthropocentricity, specicism, aggression, competition, believing humanity to be separate and superior to the natural world, psychic and emotional encasement, invulnerability, hierarchialism, objectification, exploitation, tech-no-rationality, lack of intuition or insight and spiritual voidness — these are some negative attributes which are consistent with a patriarchal culture. Taken as a whole, they form the cultural archetype now exhibited in the military industrial imperialism of our present times. Throughout patriarchal history, these attributes have more or less determined how we have lived, and how civilizations have developed. Today, much of humanity, most men, and all imperialist economic, scientific, political and military leaders are imbued with many of these life-smothering characteristics. The brutal landscapes and stagnant cesspools of modern industrial civilization are a real life mirror reflecting the extent to which the human spirit has been extinguished by the culture of patriarchal conquest.

The ceaseless dark ages of history, now epitomized in the 20th century crises of extermination, starkly reveal that the longer human beings have adhered to, or been forced under domination of, the various strains of patriarchal thinking, the greater the anti-social centrality of such thought has permeated the character of human societies; and therefore, the greater the degree of violence, destruction and misery that all living beings and the environment of the Earth have experienced. On the path of patriarchal conquest things haven't gotten better, they've gotten worse. All the multitudes of negativity found throughout patriarchal history have compounded, mutated and expanded over time, eventually culminating in the toxic realities of modern times.

With the advent of industrial civilization a qualitatively new era of destructiveness has come into being. Before industrialization, though there was often unfathomable suffering and brutality, actual threats to the survival of all life on Earth did not exist. Therefore, irregardless of the many terrors people faced, in their dreams they could visualize an open-ended future full of possibility. Today this is no longer true: we live in dread of the horrors of industrial civilization, and daily we are confronted with the very real possibility of extinction. Industrialization has not only magnified the basic anti-life dynamic of the patriarchal culture of conquest, it is in fact a Frankenstein created by it.

The existence of industrial civilization cannot be divorced from the historical process which eventually enabled it to be created — that process being patriarchal historical development. Industrial civilization stems totally from within the conceptual framework of the patriarchal mindset; and it is from that mentality that the strivings to pursue it dwell. It would never have come into being without human cultures having first been mutilated by patriarchal conquest, and our identification with the natural living world severed. If we fail to make this connection, then we fail to understand the real "nature" of industrial civilization.

Industrial civilization is the definitive product of patriarchal conquest. Industrial development is not wrong simply because it is recklessly utilized towards the ends of power and profit. Its very essence is wrong: all the premises upon which it was founded, and is maintained, are negative and anti-life. It is inherent within the essential "nature" of industrial civilization for it to be life-threatening. It is entirely consistent, therefore, that its existence has become such a grave threat to the survival of life.

To survive this crisis of extermination, it is simply not enough to isolate nuclear war, large-scale pollution or relentless profiteering as being the offensive realities of industrial civilization, and therefore, as the only parts of it that should be done away with. To do that would mean that we still Embraced, on the whole, most of the industrial "way of life" created in the image of the patriarchal mentality. It would mean that we still adhered to the culture of patriarchal conquest. It is essential we come to realize that it has been, and will continue to be, our basic adherence to the patriarchal mentality which is the real

threat to life, and the fundamental reason why the likelihood for doom is ever consuming us. Inevitably, if we are to survive and create a better world without warfare and the possibilities of extinction, a complete abandonment of the culture of patriarchal conquest must occur. Such an abandonment must certainly include “industrial civilization” in its entirety.

We must come to recognize the degree to which our understanding and perceptions of life and the external world have been determined by patriarchal conquest, and how we have developed our societies as a result of this. Then we can clearly see how history has been charted, civilizations built, and finally, how industrialization has come to dominate and threaten our existence because of the lifeless images and vision of the patriarchal mentality. We will be far better able to make positive choices about what kind of societies we want to create, and about what we need to do to survive, if we realize the extent to which the “developments” of history, and the technologies of today, are actually the manifested realities of this entirely morbid process of thought.

For us to really become clear about what we need to do in this struggle for survival, we must rid our inner beings of the negative attributes of patriarchal thinking, but as well, we must rediscover our physical connection and dependency upon the Earth, and re-unite ourselves spiritually with nature. Only from a renewed appreciation and knowledge of natural life processes can we once again come to possess a meaningful understanding of the proper ways to live. Through such an understanding we can gain the direction and strength necessary to wage the struggles that are needed, and the vision to fight against the deadly, artificial existence of industrial civilization; not to reform it, but to do away with it completely.

Victory Or Death

In El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala they hide out in the mountains,
Together in small groups among the bushes and trees they move,
And when they sleep, they sleep on the ground, and when they fight, they fight for freedom,
Imagine what life must be like for them, they who are dedicated totally to the cause,
Who live by the call of 'victory or death!'
And believe that nothing is more important than the tritumph of
their revolutions,

At great risk these armies of the people have risen up from their oppression,
Through the years they have endured by much love and sacrifice,
Overcoming fear and terrible hardship with intense determination,
Onward, ever onward, maintaining an undaunted spirit of resistance,
Quietly celebrating small secret victories and learning the painful lessons from defeat,
They have now finally united in the struggle for total liberation of their nations,

Companeros, our hideout was warmed by the knowledge of you,
May your struggle be victorious,
May your children grow strong and free!

La Lucha Continua!

— Brent Taylor

Stein River

Welcome the mornings, another awakening
with bright warm sunrays
seeping deep through our skin,
welcome the mornings, feeling strong and joyful
with fresh cool water
to splash on our faces ...

Welcome the afternoons, playing together
our senses revelling
as our bodies run free
welcome the afternoons, exploring Earth's body
we are animals alive with enchantment
among her abundant life ...

Welcome the evenings, a time to appreciate
the gifts of the fire
with the beauty of friends,
welcome the evenings, a time for receiving
precious nourishment from loving
and the dream spirits of the night.

— Brent Taylor



The Library of
Unconventional Lives

Various
Writings of the Vancouver Five
1984

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