

Ultimatum

CrimethInc.

September 11, 2000

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Unless you grant our demands, from the close of the millennium at midnight, New Year's Eve, onwards,

- happiness, self-esteem, and mental clarity will be held hostage from the populace by a ruthless elite of advertising executives and other psychologists, utilizing a constant barrage of propaganda upon all five senses to maintain their power¹;
- corporations will steal the most precious hours from the lives of millions of human beings, converting them into useless trinkets, pollution, tedium, and work-related injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome²;
- those trapped within the frontiers of this ever-expanding hell will take their apathy and anger out on themselves and each other with firearms, addictive drugs, and abusive relationships³;
- governments will lay claim to what lives remain, to destroy in more efficient ways⁴;
- and all those who contest this will be mocked, starved, beaten, jailed... branded terrorists by the real terrorists⁵.

These travesties will continue without mercy or quarter until all our demands are met. This is not negotiable. These are no idle threats. Hell, all these things are happening right now, and have been for decades.

We have demands, which we make upon every man, woman, girl, and boy:

- Each individual should seek a life that will constantly broaden her horizons, that will give her the experiences she needs to discern exactly what her greatest desires are. The important things cannot be taught or explained. Go search.

¹ My mother started smoking when she was thirteen. She calculated that she's probably spent enough money on cigarettes to retire early, if she had it back; but instead, we grew up with billboards advertising cigarettes next to our school, and now my brother smokes too. It's finally illegal for them to advertise cigarettes on billboards, so the same corporation has invested in other products, and other billboards...

² None of us ever got to know my grandfather—he was always so tired when he came back from work that he didn't talk. When he retired last year, his employer gave him a watch. We still don't know him... I guess at this point all he knows how to do besides work is watch football on the television, and drink.

³ Two nights ago, my friend was raped at knifepoint by a boy who asked for a ride at a party. She had been one of the only women I know who hadn't been raped or sexually abused yet. It's very hard for me to let anyone touch me anymore.

⁴ My uncle became addicted to heroin after he was drafted to serve in Vietnam. He finally fought free of the addiction, but now he's dying of Hepatitis B.

⁵ My lover was making puppets for street demonstrations when the F.B.I. and police stormed her building on a fabricated excuse. They teargassed everyone at the door, and began attacking people at random as they destroyed all the puppets (which the papers would later refer to as "weapons"). When she tried to get between her friend and the policeman who was beating her with his nightstick, she was beaten herself, and then charged with six felonies for "assault." The news networks are celebrating the police for maintaining order in this city.

- We need to create ways of satisfying our individual needs that simultaneously provide for the needs of others. Otherwise, every time we take care of our own needs, we simply reinforce the system of scarcity that makes others suffer—and it is in no one’s best interest that we live in a world of mutual distrust and misery.
- Gift giving must replace exchange as the standard economic, social, and emotional transaction. And while everything still belongs to the hoarding exchangers (the “possessed,” we call them, those would-be possessors), let theft, squatting, trash scavenging, etc. enable us to begin this gift economy immediately.
- We need control over all the resources of this society, not just the fragments we receive as individual consolation prizes, and we need social arrangements in which this control can be shared to everyone’s advantage. It’s not just a question of being free to pursue our desires, but even more so of being able to participate in the shaping of them—and for that, we must share power over the world that does the shaping.

We have the guns for war. They are the simple, infectious pleasure of breaking rules—the loneliness shared by prom queens and executives on long business trips alike, both ready to abdicate their roles the instant someone offers them a world populated by people rather than chess pieces —the outrage rightly felt by anyone who has had to go fruitlessly in search of a restroom through the crowded streets of a city, who feels in his very gut just how out of place human beings are in these new metropolises.

What we need is a new radicalism, one that can offer both the opportunity to make a total revolution, and the courage to seize it, to those who today make their revolutions only by halves: the middle-aged adulterers and teenage elopers, the bank robbers and shoplifters, the Peace Corps volunteers and block-burning rioters, religious mystics and hikers of the Appalachian Trail, militiamen and members of Alcoholics Anonymous, free software advocates and fired construction workers, and everyone else who has everything at stake in the formation of a new world and no idea how to get there. A radicalism that can join the cause of the landless farmworkers in Brazil to the raw fury of the dilettante anarchist vandal of the West, without any implications of charity work or youth reform; one that can demand that we surpass the oppressive role of art in this society, without denying or demeaning the solace the solitary adolescent poet finds in it. One that can give real form to the false promises of adventure implicit in “rebellious” rock music and fashion... one that can integrate the needs of the violent young hoodlum with those of the single mother, the art-school intellectual, and the runaway child. One that can integrate the “violent” with the “non-violent” resistance, showing that this is a false dichotomy, just like the self/other dichotomy—and every other dichotomy.

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