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Indigenous Anarchist Responses to Government Shutdown

Indigenous Anarchist Federation

February 23, 2019

The following will be a series of responses made by Indigenous Anarchists from the IAF to questions posed by Kelly Weill, reporting for the daily beast. These are our complete answers that provide complete context. Stay tuned for part two of the responses. The original article with excerpts from our responses can be viewed at this link on The Daily Beast.⁽¹⁾

So the federal government's out. Does that mean we're living in anarchy right now?

Quite the opposite. Because of the government shutdown, we are living with a state that has suspended its social functions, while maintaining its oppressive institutions full time. The government only deems groups like the military, the FBI, federal law enforcement, and of course the IRS as important enough to keep functioning. This pulls the veil from the supposed 'social contract' that

⁽¹⁾ Kelly Weill, "Even Anarchists Don't Like the Government Shutdown," *The Daily Beast*, January 18, 2019.

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the government is supposed to honor. The state has abandoned its obligations to provide what little healthcare it does offer and its obligations to protect our environment and natural spaces. The political theatre of the 'shut-down' does little to erode the coercive power of the US government, but it does help erode the notion that the government is interested in anything aside from maintaining power. Furthermore, anarchy would require other major changes to our society such as the abolition of borders, sexism, chauvinism, racism, and other forms of domination. Our society in the absence of the social services of the government is far from anarchism while the courts continue to prosecute humanitarians in Arizona, arrests migrants in Los Angeles, deploys Special forces in the global south, and maintains the surveillance of dissidents worldwide.

What do anarchists want to accomplish, besides abolishing the government?

Anarchists aren't inherently against governance, but do want governance by the people, not elected or self-appointed rulers. Anarchism seeks a world where we come together and decide on what we want our society to look like and how we want to accomplish our goals. This can't be done through the proclamations of strongmen, nor the edicts of elected officials that represent the money that elected them. Anarchism is, at its heart, the philosophy and political strategy that advocates for the abolition of domination, whether through hierarchy, sexual coercion, forced identity, wage slavery, or private property. We still will have people who will be tasked by the community to accomplish certain tasks that they want to help with. We will have a vibrant community where expression and self-identity are encouraged instead of repressed, we will have improved relations with the earth and a more whole understanding of resource extraction and reuse. We are inspired by the autonomous Indigenous villages in Oaxaca and the example of the Zapatista revolution in Chiapas. We are inspired and guided by them women in Chiapas and Rojava who have thrown off the yoke of patriarchy. We are inspired by every Indigenous person

who persists despite every effort to eliminate our indigeneity and make our lives less livable. From the reservations to the cities, to the rural farms of America, indigenous people are awakening. This government shutdown is a demonstration that we can make it on our own, even if it's hard. What does the federal government do for us that we can't do for ourselves, if we challenge the systems of domination that hold us down? Unfortunately, the US government has so thoroughly subjugated our people, replaced our traditional governance with 'federally recognized' puppet governments, and maintained us in a state of poverty, debt, and incarceration, that we must demand whatever social services we can of the state.

How does your position as indigenous people affect your perspective of the shutdown? Is it different than that of non-indigenous anarchists?

Our perspectives align closely with those of non-Indigenous Anarchists, though we have additional concerns and struggles within our communities that arise out of the US government shut down. One of our major concerns is for our people, who are the victims of a government who neglects their treaty obligations to provide for the welfare of Indigenous people across the so-called United States. Tribes are being forced to find ways to help fund or substitute critical medical, psychological, and nutritional programs. Again, the fact that we have fighter jets flying over our lands everyday during the shutdown, but the nurses who care for our elders have to pay for their gas out of pocket is criminal negligence. The second area of major concern is the regulatory agencies that, why already extremely lax with corporations, are now absent from protecting our lands and waterways. These lands were stolen and now they aren't even being managed. That said, Border Patrol, Marines, and Army soldiers all still walk and train on these lands. This goes to show; our ancestral lands are valueless unless they can be used for resource extraction or the training of imperial American troops.

And has the shutdown inspired any anarchist actions?

The shutdown has inspired small acts of mutual aid, a critical component of anarchism in action, across Indigenous communities. One example from my community is that people are giving up birthday money to help pay for gas and groceries for the BIA-contracted, now furloughed, nurses that care for our precious elders. We are finding ways of getting food distribution networks up should current food aid completely dry up.