

The Unabomber fan club: How killer Ted Kaczynski became an icon for new generation of radicals

The coalition of admirers includes libertarians, left-wing environmentalists, and Greek neo-fascist party Golden Dawn

Kieron Monks

August 10, 2023



Mugshot of Ted Kaczynski, identified as the domestic terrorist known as the Unabomber, in April 1996 (Photo: Bureau of Prisons/Getty)

The announcement of the death of Ted Kaczynski two months ago on 10 June triggered an outpouring of heartfelt tributes.

“Uncle Ted is gone,” lamented one member of an online forum devoted to the man dubbed the Unabomber, who killed three and injured 23 with letter bombs until his arrest in 1996 after a 17-year manhunt.

“We did lose a great man,” said another fan in another Kaczynski group. “But he will live on through us... The man died, not the idea!”

Tributes cut across national borders and political divides. Elon Musk, owner of the world’s highest-profile tech company, paid his respects to a man who dedicated his life to a war on technology.

The movement behind the Unabomber is gathering strength. Communities of thousands across Facebook, Reddit, and Discord pore over his essays. Podcasts and TV series draw in new audiences. Celebrities struggle to contain their admiration.

Kaczynski remains a powerful influence, researchers believe, and in some cases a dangerous one.

Followers told me that the Unabomber transformed their lives. “I was lost when I first encountered him,” said Khan, a 24-year-old Istanbul resident who had felt disillusioned by what he saw as the “fake reality” constructed by social media.

Khan now identifies as an anarcho-primitivist, an ideology based on the idea that humanity took a wrong turn with industrial civilisation and should return to a sim-

pler, self-reliant way of life. For adherents, the Unabomber's 35,000-word manifesto, *Industrial Society and its Future*, is a foundational text.

Weather
Today: Mostly cloudy, generally sunny. High 77, Low 58. A.G. Cool. Wednesday: Partly sunny. High 79, Low 61. Wed. northeast 6 to 12 mph. Thursday: Temp. sunny 62 to 72. A.G. Cool-60. Details on Page 12.

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Today's Complete Page A2

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Unabomber Manuscript Is Published

'Public Safety Reasons' Cited in Joint Decision By Post, N.Y. Times

By Howard Kurtz
Washington Post Staff Writer

After weighing the question for nearly three months, the Washington Post and New York Times have agreed to publish in today's Post a 35,000-word manuscript attributed by the Unabomber, the serial mail bomber who has promised to kill his family or his employer if it is not published. The Unabomber, Donald E. Graham, the Post's publisher, and Arthur O. Sledge Jr., publisher of the New York Times, and they jointly decided to publish the document "for public safety reasons" after meeting last Wednesday with Attorney General Janet Reno and FBI Director James F. Byrnes. The papers are editing the text of an eight-page insert, which will appear only in the Post because it has the mechanical ability to distribute such a section in all copies of its daily paper.

From the beginning, the two newspapers have consulted closely on the issue of whether to publish in the face of the threat of violence. We have also consulted law enforcement officials. Graham and Sledgeberg said in a joint statement: "Both the attorney general and the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation have now recommended that we print this document for public safety reasons, and we have agreed to do so."

The FBI has been investigating the man known as UNABOM since 1978, when officials believe he launched the first of 16 attacks that have killed three people and injured 23 others.

"Neither paper would have printed this document if public safety reasons were not at issue," said Graham in an interview. "We thought there was an obvious public safety issue involved and therefore sought to publish the document for public safety reasons, not journalistic reasons."

"We actually had to get too much faith in the words of someone who had strategically important services and



A Bosnian Serb woman holds an 11-month-old child in the rubble in a street in Banja Luka, Bosnia, where tens of thousands of Serbs fleeing the joint offensive of Bosnian Croat and Muslim forces have sought refuge.

Muslims' Battlefield Successes Imperil Peace Talks in Bosnia

Joint Offensive Against Serbs Spurs Desire to Extend Fighting

By John Pendergast
Washington Post Staff Writer

BOSANIA KRUPA, Bosnia, Sept. 18—Even as the United States pushes for new peace talks in Bosnia, a combined offensive of Bosnian and Croatian troops in western Bosnia has rekindled the conviction among many Bosnian Muslims that fighting, not negotiation, is the solution they must find to end their war against Serb aggression.

Added by two weeks of NATO bombing and earlier Serb assaults, Muslim fighters, in less than a week, have captured more territory and seized more major towns than they have since war resumed in Bosnia 4 1/2 months ago. Up to 80,000 Bosnian Serbs have fled the Bosnia-Croat advance, which has rolled through at least one strategically important town and threatens the two biggest pocket

tion centers held by the Bosnian Serbs: Banja Luka and Prijedor. Prijedor remains in Serb hands despite reports Sunday that it, too, had fallen to the resurgent government army, according to information in this recently captured town. But U.N. officials nevertheless say the Muslim-Croat victory has been decisive.

That Serb holdings in Bosnia have diminished from 72 percent of the country to less than 50 percent. The offensive, they say, constitutes the most significant change in Bosnia's map since the war began. If consolidated, it will give Muslims and Croats more territory than they would receive under an internationally brokered peace deal being pushed by the United States.

The drive out of the once-occupied ethnic pocket into the heart of Serb-controlled territory along a 20-mile front in northern Bosnia risks derailing U.S.-led efforts at resuming peace talks.

Those efforts received a significant boost Sept. 15 when the foreign ministers of Bosnia, Croatia and Yugoslavia met in Geneva and set the foundation for further talks. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard C. Holbrooke, leading a peace mission to the Balkans, has expressed concern about the offensive, as did British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkin in remarks in Geneva today.

U.N. officials also have warned that the offensive could fuel tensions on Muslims and Croats and lengthen the war.

That is so because the Muslim-Croatian job at a Bosnian town, which was destroyed by NATO airstrikes, risks provoking Serbs. However, the provision of Serbs and a significant power broker in the Balkans, to send in the Yugoslav army to save brother

House Plan Would End Federal S&Ls

Bill Would Save \$5 Billion, Kill Agency

By Albert R. Cronshaw
and Jerry Knapp
Washington Post Staff Writers

The House Banking Committee is now expected to act on its version of a proposed bill that would eliminate the federal savings and loan industry—rescuing institutions to become either national banks or state-chartered banks, and closing down the federal Office of Thrift Supervision, according to industry and congressional sources.

The provision, which is expected to be approved by the full committee today, will put the bill back to the overall budget reconciliation bill, which would take effect next week when congressional budget writers would have to raise \$5 billion in additional revenue for next year, these sources said.

The Senate Banking Committee is scheduled to act on its version of the bill today.

The plan, which grew out of a proposal to merge the two federal banks into a single entity, would force all insured banks, under the supervision of the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency or the Federal Reserve, or they could become state-chartered banks, under state regulation. Many might decide to merge with other institutions, a few might fail.

Nonprofits Fight Limits On Lobbying

By Stephen Barr
Washington Post Staff Writer

With such legislative news, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops makes sure that Congress knows where it stands on such issues as abortion, embryonic research or Head Start. But when it comes to House Republican bills aimed at curbing "political advocacy" by nonprofit groups that receive federal grants, the bishops would have to dramatically limit their lobbying activities.

The bill would restrict the federal grant recipients by setting limits on what they do with their charitable contributions and on what they do with their charitable income. In a sharp break with current law, the bill would expand lobbying restrictions to grants to new executive branch and judicial decisions.

The proposal has drawn the criticism of nonprofit organizations. The bill would affect the Catholic Bishops, for example. Because they receive millions of dollars in federal grants every year to assist the elderly, other nonprofits fear the bill would restrict their ability to lobby for their cause.

Efforts to quash the bill are underway. The House, from Colorado to Florida, has introduced 30 bills. But on Capitol Hill, House Republicans are pushing another push today to attach the legislation to the House Transportation, Postal Service

Standoff in Montana Tests Resolve to Avoid Bloodshed

By Tom Kenworthy
Washington Post Staff Writer

BOONVILLE, Mont.—Nothing in his career as an English teacher and attorney for Massachusetts County ever prepared John Bellman for the day last spring when it appeared this normally peaceful town in the plains of central Montana was about to be swept up in a full-blown civil insurrection.

Officials in several central and western Montana counties had been attempting for some time to cope with a long-term movement of anti-government militants calling themselves "freemen." Originating in the farm crisis of the 1980s, the movement had evolved from resistance to tax foreclosures on farms to aggressive protection of all forms of government authority.

Adherents refused to license their cars, set up their own common law courts, filed multimillion-dollar liens against local officials who crossed them, issued bogus money orders, and had begun badly threatening officials, try and punish local prosecutors and judges—all based on a bogus pseudo-political theory drawing on the Bible, the Magna Carta and selected parts of the U.S. and Montana constitutions.

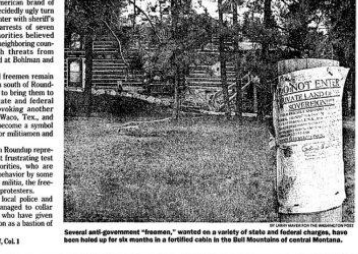
But what had seemed up to that time a

marginated, secularly American brand of political fanaticism took a decidedly ugly turn on March 3. A tense encounter with sheriff's deputies ended with the arrests of seven armed freemen who authorities believed were bent on kidnapping a neighboring county prosecutor, and death threats from around the country directed at Bellman and other county officials.

Six months later, several freemen remain defiantly holed up in a cabin south of Boonville. Authorities are anxious to bring them to justice on a variety of state and federal charges but wary of provoking another bloody showdown that, like Waco, Tex., and Ruby Ridge, Idaho, could become a symbol of government oppression for millions and other extremists.

The continuing standoff in Boonville represents the toughest and most frustrating test to date for Montana authorities, who are tracking down an criminal behavior by some of those associated with the militia, the freemen and other government protesters.

Elsewhere in the state, local police and state investigators have managed to either other high-profile freemen who have given the law the state a reputation as a hotbed of extremism.



Several anti-government 'freemen' wanted on a variety of state and federal charges, have been holed up for six months in a fortified cabin in the flat mountains of central Montana.

NFL Cows Sues Cowboys, Owner Jones

Licensing Arm Cities Nike, Pepsi Deals

By Christine Reardon
Washington Post Staff Writer

NFL Properties, the licensing arm of the National Football League, filed suit in Federal District Court in New York Tuesday against the Dallas Cowboys, Texas Stadium and owner Jerry Jones, seeking more than \$200 million in damages.

The suit, which was authorized by a unanimous vote of the five club executives who form the NFL Properties Executive Committee, alleged the court to order Jones, the Cowboys and the stadium corporation "to stop violating their agreements with NFL Properties regarding club trademarks and logos" and "to prevent the defendants from signing any additional deals that undermine existing NFL sponsorship or licensing contracts."

A hearing is scheduled at 10 a.m. Thursday in District Court in New York.

Jones, the maverick owner of the Cowboys, signed many of his fellow NFL owners earlier this month when he defied league licensing deals with Nike and various sports apparel companies to sign sponsorship deals with Pepsi and Nike, neither of which have paid for the right to be associated with the league. Jones made the deals for Texas Stadium, which was built.

Jones told The Washington Post last Friday that he planned to announce two more stadium sponsorship deals in "the next few business days." One of the deals reportedly will be with American Express.

An affidavit filed in support of the lawsuit said that "such agreements would further violate" the Cowboys' agreement with NFL Properties.

The document also states that Jones engineered transactions with

INSIDE

Redskins' Lacey Is Out for Season

By Jim Lacey, the Washington Redskins' offensive line coach, will miss the remainder of the regular season with a shoulder injury he says he could also end his Redskins career. Lacey initially was hurt during preseason, but later a restorator cut in Sunday's loss at Denver. **SPORTS, Page C2**

Foster Notebook

By The House Counsel
Theodore Roosevelt says he is not responsible for leaving from Foster W. Foster Jr.'s office. **NOTES, Page A2**

French Nuclear Program Closely Tied to U.S.

Sharing of Sensitive Codes, Access to California Labs to Expand

By William Bradford Huie
and Jeffrey Smith
Washington Post Staff Writers

When President Clinton traveled to Paris last week to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the war in the Pacific, his aides dispensed an urgent message to the French government: Please do not conduct the first in your conventional series of nuclear tests under a Pacific anti-nuclear pact.

Even though French President Jacques Chirac was eager to proceed with the nuclear tests in the face of international protest, he realized he was in no position to take them back to request from a special friend. Reluctantly, Chirac

put off the publicly embarrassing threat until Clinton had returned to Washington.

Chirac's gesture was partly a token of respect for the close relationship he has nurtured with Clinton during his first four months in office. But even more, say French and American officials, it was a tip of the hat to the long years of unannounced support and assistance provided by the United States to the French nuclear weapons program.

Despite its claims of developing an independent nuclear deterrent, France has long relied on the United States for some of the most sophisticated technologies needed to upgrade and maintain a nuclear warhead arsenal, these officials say.

Although known to specialists, the U.S.-French nuclear links have been little discussed over the years. With the French nuclear plants generating opposition around the Pacific and among environmentalists everywhere, however, the details of the collaboration are getting a new look.

In fact, even though the United States is no longer making its own bombs and has publicly criticized the French tests, U.S. officials say the cooperation is intended to expand to an unprecedented degree.

Washington and Paris currently are trying to negotiate an arrangement, for example, under which the two sides will begin to train technicians, these officials say.

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The Unabomber manifesto published in the Washington Post in 1995 (Photo: The Washington Post)

The activist now follows an agenda inspired by the Unabomber's teachings, which includes promoting afforestation, boycotting corporations, growing rather than buying food, and "most importantly, spreading his ideas and the Unabomber manifesto."

Khan has little interest in Kaczynski's crimes. "It doesn't matter if you use violence," he said. "Just this week more people died for stupid reasons. It is nothing for a great cause."

The Unabomber has millions of followers across the world, he says, including "pretty radical" elements willing to use violence in service of their goals.

But there is little consensus among acolytes, who span the political spectrum.

Libertarians admire Kaczynski's advocacy for individual freedoms. Right-wing activists appreciate his critique of the left, which he saw as weighed down by "feelings of inferiority." Left-wing environmentalists share his commitment to living simply with nature.

The Unabomber's "political ambivalence" allowed him to be adopted by "radicals of different stripes", says Sean Fleming, *The Unabomber and the origins of anti-tech radicalism*.

While Kaczynski remained laser-focussed on technology, admirers claimed him for various ideologies.

"You have green anarchists and radical environmentalists," says Dr Fleming. "Then there is the far right, nonviolent anti-tech radicals, and violent anti-tech radicals.

"It's difficult to find someone who accepts all of his ideas, but it's easy to find a lot of people who accept some of his ideas."

The peaceful end of the anti-tech radical spectrum includes groups such as the Anti-Tech Collective, co-founded by philosophy professor and longtime Kaczynski confidante, Dr David Skrbina.

Violent groups such as the Mexican collective Individuals Tending to the World followed the Unabomber's example more literally, sending mail bombs to scientists.

Kaczynski's far-right following has become most prominent in recent years, says Dr Fleming. Greek neo-fascist party Golden Dawn published a translation of his manifesto. Anders Breivik plagiarised passages from it before murdering 77 at a youth Labour camp in Norway.

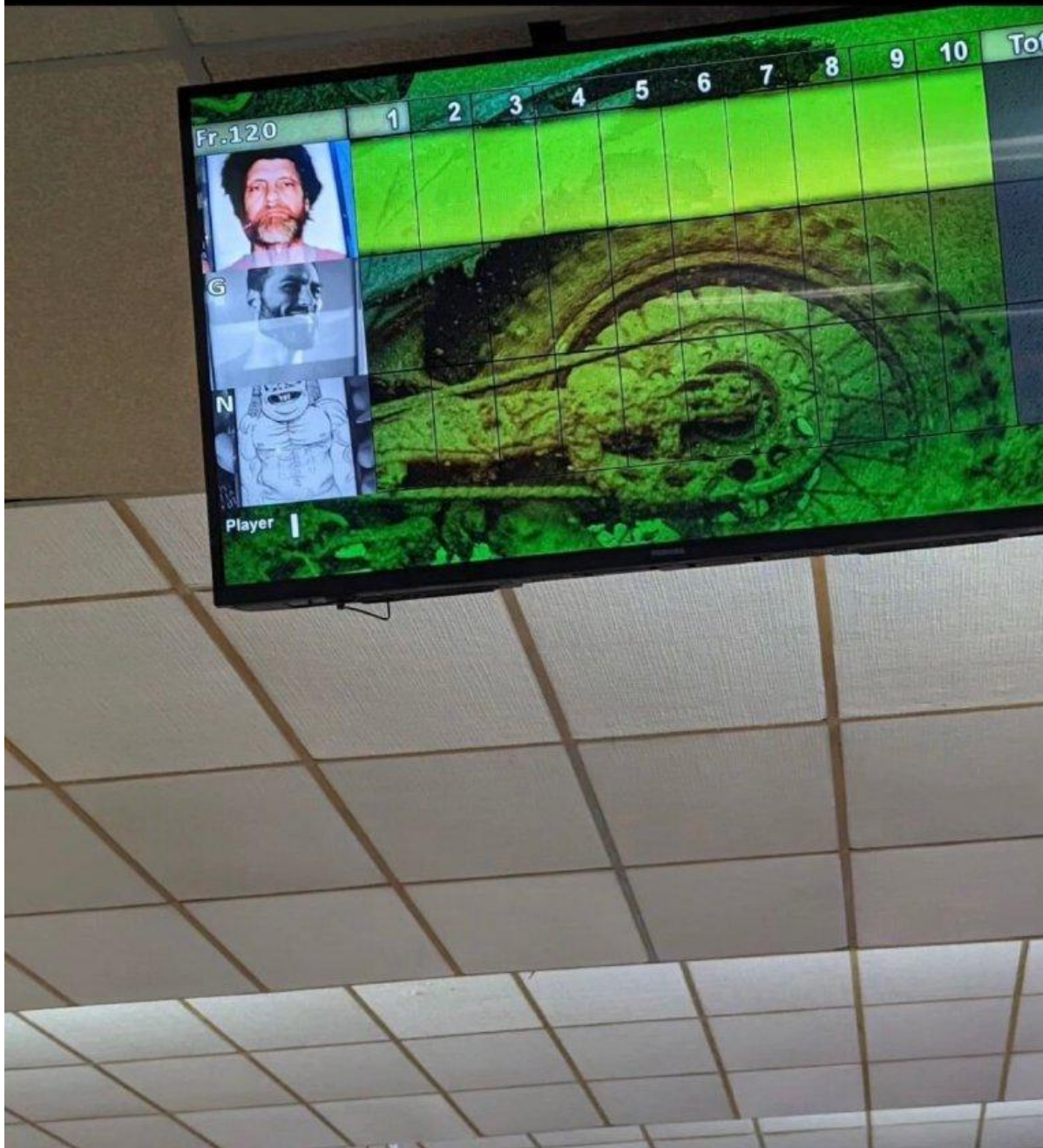
A libertarian member of a Unabomber forum, speaking anonymously, divides his following by degree of commitment.

"Moderates... sympathise or agree with some of Ted's ideas but disagree with burning the whole thing down," he told *i*. "Radicals" crave a "return to hunter gatherer society".

Theo Slade, a contributor to the Ted K archive – a collection of writing by and about the Unabomber – believes that many alienated young men identify with a "kindred broken spirit".

Kaczynski, a highly intelligent but awkward character, possibly on the autism spectrum, embraced isolation by withdrawing from society to live in the woods of Montana.

Bowling alley let's you use pictures





I can't believe he didn't cry during Titanic!



Do men even have feelings?



Kaczynski memes from forums

“I think his eccentricities and his weirdness are compelling to people who are struggling,” says Mr Slade. He often talks to Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs) through the archive who seem troubled and alienated.

The Unabomber offers a vision of freedom, Mr Slade suggests. In one case a member of the community followed his icon’s lead by going to live in a hut in a national park.

In other cases, Kaczynski’s influence was not harmless. Greek ex-soldier Nikolaos Karvounakis is now serving a prison sentence for planting a bomb in Edinburgh after being radicalised in Unabomber forums.

Kaczynski cultivated a following in prison with an eye on his legacy and maintaining the anti-technology cause, exchanging letters with many admirers. But his fans were often a disappointment, and he continued to disparage leftists and eco-fascists in his writing.

He was an object of fascination from the start, says John Zerzan, an anarcho-primitivist author who befriended the Unabomber and visited him in prison.

“There was a huge amount of interest in him and huge amounts of correspondence from various kinds of people,” he told i. “There was a lot of support right away, in fact we had a benefit for him.” Support ranged from “anarchists and bunker types” to “very straight people”.

Despite a falling out that ended Mr Zerzan’s visits to the Colorado Supermax, he remains full of his admiration for the Unabomber’s work and sees it as more vital than ever.

“I continue to recommend *Industrial Society and its Future*, I think it really holds up and points the way to grasping what is going,” he said, distilling Kaczynski’s message to single point: “The more technology in society there is, the less meaning and freedom in the individual’s life.”

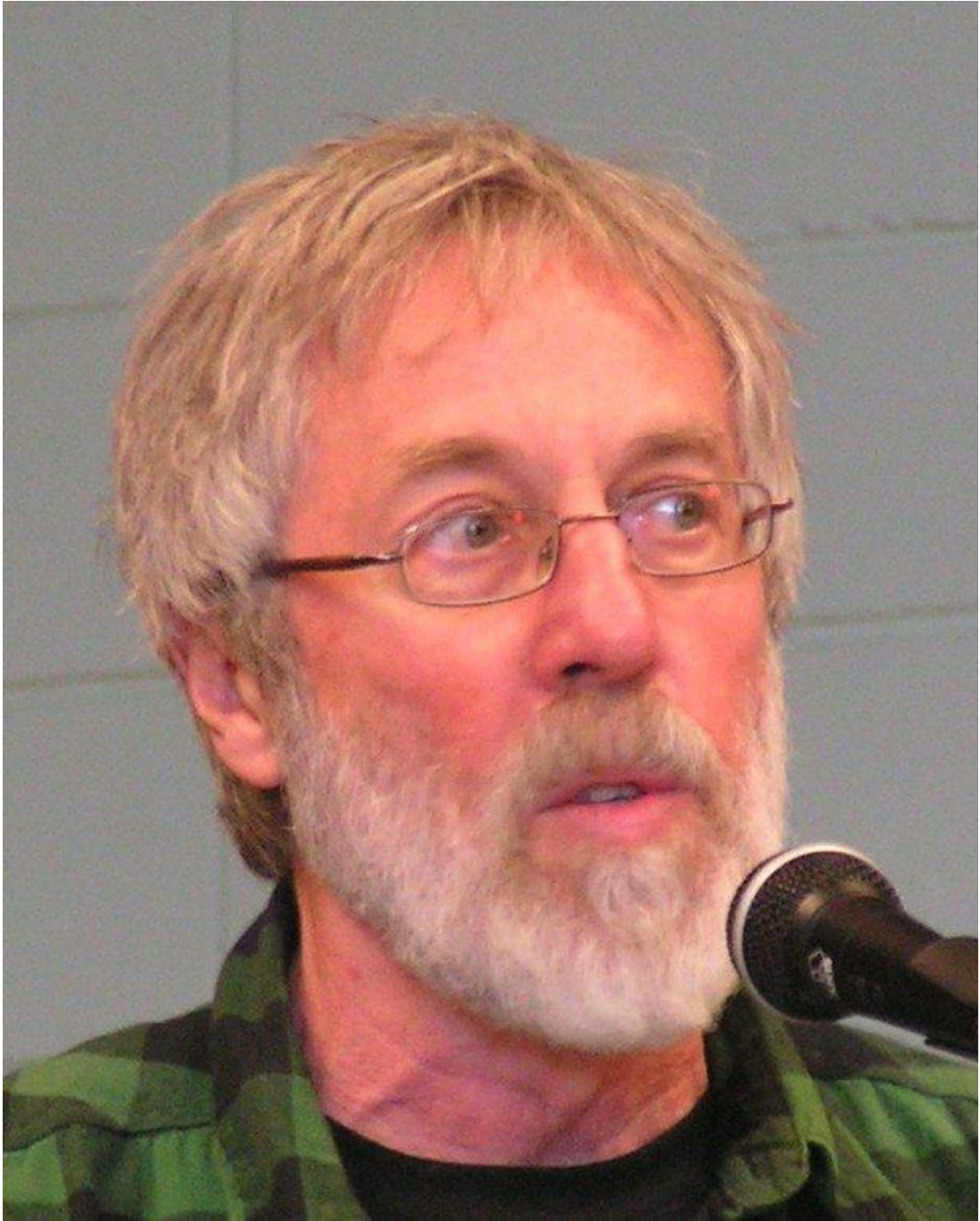
That message has become even more prescient in this tech-centric era, the author argues, as smartphones reduce people to “zombies” and artificial intelligence threatens to render humanity redundant.

Mr Zerzan is encouraged by the growth of groups such as New York’s Luddite Club, which encourages people to ditch their phones, suggesting a new era of tech-scepticism could be arriving that his old friend would have approved of.

The Unabomber’s following has waxed and waned, says Dr Fleming, peaking around the release of his manifesto in 1995 and arrest the year later, and then again when his collection of essays *Technological Slavery* was released in 2010.

Kaczynski is enjoying another surge today, the author believes, having anticipated many of the great anxieties of this era.

“I think this is only the beginning of the Unabomber revival,” says Dr Fleming. “With increasing concerns about automation, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, and climate change, Kaczynski and his following are only going to grow.”



Anarcho-primitivist author John Zerzan visited Kaczynski in prison (Photo: Wikipedia)

A critique of his ideas & actions.



Kieron Monks

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The coalition of admirers includes libertarians, left-wing environmentalists, and Greek neo-fascist party Golden Dawn

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www.thetedkarchive.com