

# Ted Kaczynski's Interview with a Turkish Primitivist

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# Introduction

Interview conducted by the Turkish group Veganarsý and published in *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, No. 61, Spring Summer, 2006.

Ted Kaczynski wrote this letter in reply to a Turkish anarchist, Kara, who sent him a series of questions as an interview for her zine. Rather than include Kara's letter, I have quoted only the questions which Kaczynski answered. Spelling and typographical errors, apparently introduced in transcription, have been fixed. Kara's English has been corrected. Section headings have been added.

In the letter, Kaczynski describes his personal motivation for absconding from civilization; he quotes from his journal to explain his motive for seeking its destruction; he asserts the responsibility of technology for civilization; he addresses the idea of non-violence as a value in itself; he rebuts the romanticized vision of primitive society promoted by some primitivists; and he warns against the counter-revolutionary potential of the "Green Anarchist Movement," which he attributes to the influence of leftist values.

Regarding his bombings, Kaczynski claims here that he sought to destroy industrial society only after the land on which he had escaped it was destroyed by development.

Although this must have been more of a sense of re-committing himself, as he had already sent 7 bombs by then in attempts to kill people.

Also, this glosses over some of the homicidal animosity he had to society in general, for example, early on he stated one of his ambitions was to kill a communist, and it was only later that he realized this was due to the way he had unquestioningly accepted state department talking points fed to the conservative newspapers of the time.

# The Initial Letter From a Turkish Anarchist

Hi Ted!

First of all, I should introduce myself. I'm Kara, I'm writing this letter from Turkey (I think you had taken some letters from Turkey). I live in Istanbul, Turkey's largest city expanding as a virus. I'm 24 years old. It is a very boring and disgusting thing that to be dependent on city and city life. But every past day I struggle to change every day of my life in order to find harmony with Mother Earth. I am trying to break and to resist the chains of cities, technology and the whole system of civilisation. Like you. But not active like you.

In Turkey, I am publishing an anti-copyright fanzine called VEGANARSI. Its a fanzine includes the subjects of veganism, anarchism, primitivism and movement. Fanzine has a 4 issue today. And the 5<sup>th</sup> one is on the road. I started to publish it in 2000. Its a way of expression and declaration of myself, my thoughts and everyday life actions. As you can understand I'm not in an organization but I have contacts with anarchists in Turkey. I feel myself as I'm among them. But I don't believe organizations such as worker unions and federations. Because wide organizing recreates and reproduce hierarchy, authority and dependent on mass society. I believe in Libertarian Networks that don't oppress individuals and local groups. In this way the society that we imagine, can be realized slowly.

I was always thinking to write a letter to you last 4 years but I couldn't write not at all. And I think finally I accomplished to do it now at last. So now you can ask me why I am writing this letter to you because I agree with your thoughts and actions. Your thoughts guides the humans on earth for the future of our earth. You showed the whole wrong thing clearly and directly. I always wanted to thank you with a letter. Now I can only send a letter to you. Because I'm in Turkey and you are in USA. We are very faraway from each other.

If you wonder how do I define myself, I can say that I'm an anarcho-primitivist-veganarchist. But it is not important how you and I define ourselves. The important think is that we are humans living on this planet and that we are suffering from this cruel and killing system called civilisation. Definitions are only how you are aware of this system. Some people think that the only wrong going thing is capitalism, some of them think that its wrong using of technology and some people think that its wrong using of capital..I don't feel that I am among these people, because I think

that civilisation is the whole reason that we and our planet are suffering from as an anarcho-primitivist...

And in my direct action of changing every-day of my life, especially in my diet (my eating system) I call myself and act as a veganarchist. Because I think that not to be vegan costs a lot of cruelty, pain and destruction for our planet. Being vegan is a direct action way of my life against this suffering civilized system for me. I don't think the problem is only eating animals and exploiting them. I don't only feel compassion for animals. Because on nature some animals eat other to live. It's necessary for them. But not for us, only when we have no choice.

I think the problem is DOMESTICATION. One more thing is to destroy the ecosystem borders between species. When we (humans) started to be civilized, we became alienated to the nature. And we started to destroy our planet, actually ourselves. Not to eat and use animals is an expression against this cruel system in everyday life.

I want to ask some questions about you and your thoughts if you give permission. Can I interview with you for VEGANARs fifth? If you accept, I'll write the questions at the end of this letter. I think it will be very effective for Turkish readers to hear about you currently. Because do you know your The Future of Industrial Society is printed as a book from Kaos Publishings a few years ago and in Turkey the book is loved by a lot of people and affected a lot of people. And it will be effective to the people that know and wonder about you.

Ok, I must finish my letter. You can get bored from me. Please don't feel alone in prison. Because there is growing number of people who think like us. I wish one day you'll be released. I'm waiting for your reply.

Black and Green Greetings.

The Interview Questions:

- 1- Hi Ted, can you talk about your story? Who are you?
- 2- Where/when did you born?
- 3- Which schools did you graduate from?
- 4- What was your job?
- 5- Were you married? have you got children?
- 6- I think you were a mathematician and you didn't have thoughts like now? What has changed your ideas wholly?
- 7- When did you started to think that the problem is in civilisation?
- 8- Can you tell in a few words why did you refuse civilisation?
- 9- How/when did you decide to live in forest and to bomb?
- 10- What is the reason that you made you decided to bomb technological areas?
- 11- Don't you think violence is violence?
- 12- How do you see anarchists, green-anarchists, anarcho-primitivists? Do you agree them?
- 13- How do you see vegetarianism/veganism? What do you think about not to eat and use animals?
- 14- What do you think about Animal/Earth Liberation?

15- What do you think about groups such as Earth First!, Earth Liberation Front and Gardening Guerillas?

16- Do you believe in revolution or endless revolt?

17- What do you think how can we destroy civilisation? What will make it became closer for you?

18- You have got a forest life. Can you tell about it? Is Living primitive easy what is the difficult sides of living primitive?

19- If I want, can I live in forests now? Is it possible to live in forests today? Don't we suffer from starvation?

20- How is prison life? Did you suffer form torture in prison? What is your condition? Have you got rights to speak with another people in prison and out?

21- What is the last situation of your trial? Didn't the trial finish?

22- Have you got a future life utopia? What do you Project in future? Have you got an alternative society utopia?

23- What about the movements in USA? Do they support you? Which groups support you? Which groups accuse you?

24- Finally, have you got anything to say to Turkish readers? Feel free to ask and wish something from us

With All Supports Of Myself

# Ted Kaczynski's Response

## Introduction

Dear Kara,

I am sorry I have taken so long to answer your letter dated August 12. I am usually busy, especially with answering correspondence, and your letter is one that could not be answered hastily, because some of your questions require long, complicated, carefully-considered answers.

For this same reason, it would cost me an unreasonable amount of time to answer all of your questions. So I will answer only some of them — the ones that seem to me to be most important and those that can be answered easily and briefly.

## Biographical

*Kara:* Where/when were you born?

I was born in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A., on May 22, 1942.

*Kara:* Which schools did you graduate from?

I graduated from an elementary school and a high school in Evergreen Park, Illinois. I received a bachelors degree from Harvard University, and masters degree and doctors degree in mathematics from the University of Michigan.

*Kara:* What was your job?

After receiving my doctors degree from the University of Michigan, I was an assistant professor of mathematics for two years at the University of California.

*Kara:* Were you married? Do you have children?

I have never been married and have no children.

## Rejecting civilization

*Kara:* You were a mathematician — do you have thoughts like that now? What has changed your ideas wholly? When did you start to think that the problem is in civilisation? Can you tell in a few words why you refused civilisation? How/when did you decide to live in the forest?

A complete answer to these questions would be excessively long and complicated, but I will say the following:

The process through which I came to reject modernity and civilization began when I was eleven years old. At that age I began to be attracted to the primitive way of life as a result of reading of the life of Neanderthal man. In the following years, up to the time when I entered Harvard University at the age of sixteen, I used to dream of escaping from civilization and going to live in some wild place. During the same period, my distaste for modern life grew as I became increasingly aware that people in industrial society were reduced to the status of gears in a machine, that they lacked freedom and were at the mercy of the large organizations that controlled the conditions under which they lived.

After I entered Harvard University I took some courses in anthropology, which taught me more about primitive peoples and gave me an appetite to acquire some of the knowledge that enabled them to live in the wild. For example, I wished to have their knowledge of edible plants. But I had no idea where to get such knowledge until a couple of years later, when I discovered to my surprise that there were books about edible wild plants. The first such a book that I bought was *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, by Euell Gibbons, and after that when I was home from college and graduate school during the summers, I went several times each week to the Cook County Forest Preserves near Chicago to look for edible plants. At first it seemed eerie and strange to go all alone into the forest, away from all roads and paths. But as I came to know the forest and many of the plants and animals that lived in it, the feeling of strangeness disappeared and I grew more and more comfortable in the woodland. I also became more and more certain that I did not want to spend my whole life in civilization, and that I wanted to go and live in some wild place.

Meanwhile, I was doing well in mathematics. It was fun to solve mathematical problems, but in a deeper sense mathematics was boring and empty because for me it had no purpose. If I had worked on applied mathematics I would have contributed to the development of the technological society that I hated, so I worked only on pure mathematics. But pure mathematics was only a game. I did not understand then, and I still do not understand, why mathematicians are content to fritter away their whole lives in a mere game. I myself was completely dissatisfied with such a life. I knew what I wanted: to go and live in some wild place. But I didn't know how to do so. In those days there were no primitivist movements, no survivalists, and anyone who left a promising career in mathematics to go live among forests or mountains would have



been regarded as foolish or crazy. I did not know even one person who would have understood why I wanted to do such a thing. So, deep in my heart, I felt convinced that I would never be able to escape from civilization.

Because I found modern life absolutely unacceptable, I grew increasingly hopeless until, at the age of 24, I arrived at a kind of crisis: I felt so miserable that I didn't care whether I lived or died. But when I reached that point, a sudden change took place: I realized that if I didn't care whether I lived or died, then I didn't need to fear the consequences of anything I might do. Therefore I could do anything I wanted. I was free! That was the great turning-point in my life because it was then that I acquired courage, which has remained with me ever since. It was at that time, too, that I became certain that I would soon go to live in the wild, no matter what the consequences. I spent two years teaching at the University of California in order to save some money, then I resigned my position and went to look for a place to live in the forest.

## Motivation for bombing

*Kara:* How/when did you decide to bomb?

It would take too much time to give a complete answer to the last part of your ninth question, but I will give you a partial answer by quoting what I wrote for my journal on August 14, 1983:

The fifth of August I began a hike to the east. I got to my hidden camp that I have in a gulch beyond what I call "Diagonal Gulch." I stayed there through the following day, August 6. I felt the peace of the forest there. But there are few huckleberries there, and though there are deer, there is very little small game. Furthermore, it had been a long time since I had seen the beautiful and isolated plateau where the various branches of Trout Creek originate. So I decided to take off for that area on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August. A little after crossing the roads in the neighborhood of Crater Mountain I began to hear chain saws; the sound seemed to be coming from the upper reaches of Roaster Bill Creek. I assumed they were cutting trees; I didn't like it but I thought I would be able to avoid such things when I got onto the plateau. Walking across the hillsides on my way there, I saw down below me a new road that had not been there previously, and that appeared to cross one of the ridges that close in Stemple Creek. This made me feel a little sick. Nevertheless, I went on to the plateau. What I found there broke my heart. The plateau was criss-crossed with new roads, broad and well-made for roads of that kind. The plateau is ruined forever. The only thing that could save it now would be the collapse of the technological society. I couldn't bear it. That was the best and most beautiful and isolated place around here and I have wonderful memories of it.

One road passed within a couple of hundred feet of a lovely spot where I camped for a long time a few years ago and passed many happy hours. Full of grief and rage I went back and camped by South Fork Humbug Creek.

The next day I started for my home cabin. My route took me past a beautiful spot, a favorite place of mine where there was a spring of pure water that could safely be drunk without boiling. I stopped and said a kind of prayer to the spirit of the spring. It was a prayer in which I swore that I would take revenge for what was being done to the forest.

My journal continues: “[...] and then I returned home as quickly as I could because I have something to do!”

You can guess what it was that I had to do.

## Technology and civilization

*Kara:* What made you decide to bomb technological areas? How do you think we can we destroy civilisation? What will make its destruction closer?

Anything like a complete answer to these questions would take too much time. But the following remarks are relevant:

The problem of civilization is identical with the problem of technology. Let me first explain that when I speak of technology I do not refer only to physical apparatus such as tools and machines. I include also techniques, such as the techniques of chemistry, civil engineering, or biotechnology. Included too are human techniques such as those of propaganda or of educational psychology, as well as organizational techniques that could not exist at an advanced level without the physical apparatus — the tools, machines, and structures — on which the whole technological system depends.

However, technology in the broader sense of the word includes not only modern technology but also the techniques and physical apparatuses that existed at earlier stages of society. For example, plows, harnesses for animals, blacksmiths tools, domesticated breed of plants and animals, and the techniques of agriculture, animal husbandry, and metalworking. Early civilizations depended on these technologies, as well as on the human and organizational techniques needed to govern large numbers of people. Civilizations cannot exist without the technology on which they are based. Conversely, where the technology is available civilization is likely to develop sooner or later.

Thus, the problem of civilization can be equated with the problem of technology. The farther back we can push technology, the father back we will push civilization. If we could push technology all the way back to the stone age, there would be no more civilization.

# Violence

*Kara:* Don't you think violence is violence?

In reference to my alleged actions you ask, "Don't you think violence is violence?" Of course, violence is violence. And violence is also a necessary part of nature. If predators did not kill members of prey species, then the prey species would multiply to the point where they would destroy their environment by consuming everything edible. Many kinds of animals are violent even against members their own species. For example, it is well known that wild chimpanzees often kill other chimpanzees. See, e.g., *Time Magazine*, August 19, 2002, page 56. In some regions, fights are common among wild bears. The magazine *Bear and Other Top Predators*, Volume 1, Issue 2, pages 28–29, shows a photograph of bears fighting and a photograph of a bear wounded in a fight, and mentions that such wounds can be deadly. Among the sea birds called brown boobies, two eggs are laid in each nest. After the eggs are hatched, one of the young birds attacks the other and forces it out of the nest, so that it dies. See article "Sibling Desperado," *Science News*, Volume 163, February 15, 2003.

Human beings in the wild constitute one of the more violent species. A good general survey of the cultures of hunting-and-gathering people is *The Hunting Peoples*, by Carleton S. Coon, published by Little, Brown and Company, Boston and Toronto, 1971, and in this book you will find numerous examples in hunting-and-gathering societies of violence by human beings against other human beings. Professor Coon makes clear (pages XIX, 3, 4, 9, 10) that he admires hunting-and-gathering peoples and regards them as more fortunate than civilized ones. But he is an honest man and does not censor out those aspects of primitive life, such as violence, that appear disagreeable to modern people.

Thus, it is clear that a significant amount of violence is a natural part of human life. There is nothing wrong with violence in itself. In any particular case, whether violence is good or bad depends on how it is used and the purpose for which it is used.

So why do modern people regard violence as evil in itself? They do so for one reason only: they have been brainwashed by propaganda. Modern society uses various forms of propaganda to teach people to be frightened and horrified by violence because the technoindustrial system needs a population that is timid, docile, and afraid to assert itself, a population that will not make trouble or disrupt the orderly functioning of the system. Power depends ultimately on physical force. By teaching people that violence is wrong (except, of course, when the system itself uses violence via the police or the military), the system maintains its monopoly on physical force and thus keeps all power in its own hands.

Whatever philosophical or moral rationalizations people may invent to explain their belief that violence is wrong, the real reason for that belief is that they have unconsciously absorbed the system's propaganda.

## Green Anarchism

*Kara:* How do you see anarchists, green-anarchists, anarcho-primitivists? Do you agree with them? How do you see vegetarianism/veganism? What do you think about refusing to eat and use animals? What do you think about Animal/Earth Liberation? What do you think about groups such as Earth First!, Earth Liberation Front and Gardening Guerillas?

All of the groups you mention here are part of a single movement. (Let's call it the "Green Anarchist" (GA) Movement). Of course, these people are right to the extent that they oppose civilization and the technology on which it is based. But, because of the form in which this movement is developing, it may actually help to protect the technoindustrial system and may serve as an obstacle to revolution. I will explain:

It is difficult to suppress rebellion directly. When rebellion is put down by force, it very often breaks out again later in some new form in which the authorities find it more difficult to control. For example, in 1878 the German Reichstag enacted harsh and repressive laws against Social-Democratic movement, as a result of which the movement was crushed and its members were scattered, confused, and discouraged. But only for a short time. The movement soon reunited itself, became more energetic, and found new ways of spreading its ideas, so that by 1884 it was stronger than ever. G.

A. Zimmermann, *Das Neunzehnte Jahrhundert: Geschichtlicher und kulturhistorischer Rückblick*, Druck und Verlag von Geo. Brumder, Milwaukee, 1902, page 23.

Thus, astute observers of human affairs know that the powerful classes of a society can most effectively defend themselves against rebellion by using force and direct repression only to a limited extent, and relying mainly on manipulation to deflect rebellion. One of the most effective devices used is that of providing channels through which rebellious impulses can be expressed in ways that are harmless to the system. For example, it is well known that in the Soviet Union the satirical magazine *Krokodil* was designed to provide an outlet for complaints and for resentment of the authorities in a way that would lead no one to question the legitimacy of the Soviet system or rebel against it in any serious way.

But the "democratic" system of the West has evolved mechanisms for deflecting rebellion that are far more sophisticated and effective than any that existed in the Soviet Union. It is a truly remarkable fact that in modern Western society people "rebel" in favor of the values of the very system against which they imagine themselves to be rebelling. The left "rebels" in favor of racial and religious equality, equality for women and homosexuals, humane treatment of animals, and so forth. But these are the values that the American mass media teach us over and over again every day.

Leftists have been so thoroughly brainwashed by media propaganda that they are able to "rebel" only in terms of these values, which are values of the technoindustrial system itself. In this way the system has successfully deflected the rebellious impulses of the left into channels that are harmless to the system.

# Primitive society

## The romanticized vision

Rebellion against technology and civilization is real rebellion, a real attack on the values of the existing system. But the green anarchist, anarcho-primitivists, and so forth (the “GA Movement”) have fallen under such heavy influence from the left that their rebellion against civilization has to a great extent been neutralized. Instead of rebelling against the values of civilization, they have adopted many civilized values themselves and have constructed an imaginary picture of primitive societies that embodies these civilized values. They pretend that hunter-gatherers worked only two or three hours a day (which would come to 14 to 21 hours a week), that they had gender equality, that they respected the rights of animals, that they took care not to damage their environment, and so forth. But all that is a myth. If you will read many reports written by people who personally observed hunting-and-gathering societies at a time when these were relatively free of influence from civilization, you will see that:

- All of these societies ate some form of animal food, none were vegan.
- Most (if not all) of these societies were cruel to animals.
- The majority of these societies did not have gender equality.
- The estimate of two or three hours of work a day, or 14 to 21 hours per week, is based on a misleading definition of “work.” A more realistic minimum estimate for fully nomadic hunter-gatherers would probably be about forty hours of work per week, and some worked a great deal more than that.
- Most of these societies were not nonviolent.
- Competition existed in most, or probably all of these societies. In some of them competition could take violent forms.
- These societies varied greatly in the extent to which they took care not to damage their environment. Some may have been excellent conservationists, but others damaged their environment through over-hunting, reckless use of fire, or in other ways.

I could cite numerous reliable sources of information in support of the foregoing statements, but if I did so this letter would become unreasonably long. So I will reserve full documentation for a more suitable occasion. Here I mention only a few examples.

## Cruelty to animals

Mbuti pygmies:

The youngster had spread it with his first thrust, pinning the animal to the ground through the fleshy part of the stomach. But the animal was still very much alive, fighting for freedom. [...] Maïpe put another spear into its neck, but it still writhed and fought. Not until a third spear pierced its heart did it give up the struggle. [...] [T]he Pygmies stood around in an

excited group, pointing at the dying animal and laughing. At other times I have seen Pygmies singeing the feathers off birds that were still alive, explaining that the meat is more tender if death comes slowly. And the hunting dogs, valuable as they are, get kicked around mercilessly from the day they are born to the day die.

— Colin Turnbull, *The Forest People*, Simon and Schuster, 1962, page 101.

Eskimos: The Eskimos with whom Gontran de Poncins lived kicked and beat their dogs brutally. Gontran de Poncins, *Kabloona*, Time-Life Books, Alexandria, Virginia, 1980, pages 29, 30, 49, 189, 196, 198–99, 212, 216.

Siriono: The Siriono sometimes captured young animals alive and brought them back to camp, but they gave them nothing to eat, and the animals were treated so roughly by the children that they soon died. Allan R. Holmberg, *Nomads of the Long Bow: The Siriono of Eastern Bolivia*, The Natural History Press, Garden City, New York, 1969, pages 69–70, 208. (The Siriono were not pure hunter-gatherers, since they did plant crops to a limited extent at certain times of year, but they lived mostly by hunting and gathering. Holmberg, pages 51, 63, 67, 76–77, 82–83, 265.)

## Lack of gender equality

Mbuti pygmies: Turnbull says that among the Mbuti, “A woman is in no way the social inferior of a man” (Colin Turnbull, *Wayward Servants*, The Natural History Press, Garden City, New York, 1965, page 270), and that “the woman is not discriminated against” (Turnbull, *Forest People*, page 154). But in the very same books Turnbull states a number of facts that show that the Mbuti did not have gender equality as that term is understood today. “A certain amount of wife-beating is considered good, and the wife is expected to fight back.” *Wayward Servants*, page 287. “He said that he was very content with his wife, and he had not found it necessary to beat her at all often.” *Forest People*, page 205. Man throws his wife to the ground and slaps her.

*Wayward Servants*, page 211. Husband beats wife. *Wayward Servants*, page 192. Mbuti practice what Americans would call “date rape.” *Wayward Servants*, page 137. Turnbull mentions two instances of men giving orders to their wives. *Wayward Servants*, page 288–89; *Forest People*, page 265. I have not found any instance in Turnbull’s books of wives giving orders to their husbands.

Siriono: The Siriono did not beat their wives. Holmberg, page 128. But: “A woman is subservient to her husband.” Holmberg, page 125. “The extended family is generally dominated by the oldest active male.” Page 129. “[W]omen [...] are dominated by the men.” Page 147. “Sexual advances are generally made by the men. [...] If a man is out in the forest alone with a woman he may throw her to the ground roughly and take his prize without so much saying a word.” Page 163. Parents definitely prefer to have male children. Page 202. Also see pages 148, 156, 168–69, 210, 224.

Australian Aborigines: “Farther north and west [in Australia] [...] [p]erceptible power lay in the hands of the mature, fully initiated, and usually polygynous men of the age group from thirty to fifty, and the control over the women and younger males was shared between them.” Carleton S. Coon, *The Hunting Peoples* (cited earlier), page 255. Among some Australian tribes, young women were forced to marry old men, mainly so that they should work for the men. Women who refused were beaten until they gave in. See Aldo Massola, *The Aborigines of South-Eastern Australia: As They Were*, The Griffin Press, Adelaide, Australia, 1971. I don’t have the exact page, but you will probably find the foregoing between pages 70 and 80.

## Time spent working

A good general discussion of this is by Elizabeth Cashdan, *Hunters and Gatherers: Economic Behaviour in Bands*, in Stuart Plattner (editor), *Economic Anthropology*, Stanford University Press, 1989, pages 21–48. Cashdan discusses a study by Richard Lee, who found that a certain group of Kung Bushmen worked a little more than forty hours per week. And she points out on pages 24–25 that there was evidence that Lee’s study was made at a time of year when the Kung worked least, and they may have worked a great deal more at other times of year. She points out on page 26 that Lee’s study did not include time spent on care of children. And on pages 24–25 she mentions other hunter-gatherers who worked longer hours than the Bushmen studied by Lee. Forty hours per week is probably a minimum estimate of the working time of fully nomadic hunter-gatherers. Gontran de Poncins, *Kabloona* (cited earlier), page 111, stated that the Eskimos with whom he lived toiled fifteen hours a day. He probably did not mean that they worked fifteen hours every day, but it is clear from his book that his Eskimos worked plenty hard.

Among the Mbuti pygmies who use nets to hunt, “Net-making is virtually a full-time occupation [...] in which both men and women indulge whenever they have both the spare time and the inclination.” Turnbull, *Forest People*, page 131. Among the Siriono, the men hunted, on average, every other day. Holmberg, pages 75–76. They started at daybreak and returned to camp typically between four and six o’clock in the afternoon. Holmberg, pages 100–101. This makes on average at least eleven hours of hunting, and at three and a half days a week it comes to an average of 38 hours of hunting per week, at the least. Since the men also did a significant amount of work on days when they did not hunt (pages 76, 100), their work week, averaged over the year, had to be far more than forty hours. Actually, Holmberg estimated that the Siriono spent about half their waking time in hunting and foraging (page 222), which would mean about 56 hours a week in these activities alone. With other work included, the work week would have had to be well over sixty hours. The Siriono woman “enjoys even less respite from labor than her husband,” and “the obligation of bringing her children to maturity leaves little time for rest.” Holmberg, page 224. For other information indicating how

hard the Siriono had to work, see pages 87, 107, 157, 213, 220, 223, 246, 248–49, 254, 268.

## Violence

As mentioned earlier, numerous examples of violence can be found in Coon's *The Hunting Peoples*. According to Gontran de Poncins, *Kabloona*, pages 116–120, 125, 162–165, 237–238, 244, homicides — usually by a stab in the back — were rather common among his Eskimos. The Mbuti pygmies were probably one of the least violent primitive peoples that I know of, since Turnbull reports no cases of homicide among them (apart from infanticide; see *Wayward Servants*, page 130). However, throughout *The Forest People* and *Wayward Servants* Turnbull mentions many beatings and fights with fists or sticks. Paul Schebesta, *Die Bambuti-Pygäen vom Ituri*, Volume I, Institute Royal Colonial Belge, Brussels, 1938, pages 81–84, reports evidence that during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Mbuti waged deadly warfare against the village-dwelling Africans who also lived in their forest. (For infanticide, see Schebesta, page 138.)

## Competition

The presence of competition in hunting-and-gathering societies is shown by the fights that occurred in some of them. See for example Coon, *Hunting Peoples*, pages 238, 252, 257–58. If a physical fight isn't a form of competition, then nothing is.

Fights may arise from competition for mates. For instance, Turnbull, *Wayward Servants*, pages 206, mentions a woman who lost three teeth in fighting with another woman over a man. Coon, page 260, mentions fighting over women by Australian aboriginal men. Competition for food may also lead to quarreling. "This is not to say that sharing [of meat] takes place without any dispute or acrimony. On the contrary, the arguments that ensue when the hunt returns to camp are frequently long and loud [...]." Turnbull, *Wayward Servants*, page 158. Coon refers to "vociferous arguments" over sharing of whale meat among certain Eskimos. *Hunting Peoples*, page 125.

## Conclusion

I could go on and on citing concrete facts that show how ridiculous is the image of primitive peoples as non-competitive, vegetarian conservationists who had gender equality, respected the rights of animals, and didn't have to work for a living. But this letter is already too long, so the examples already given will have to suffice.

I don't mean to say that the hunting-and-gathering way of life was no better than modern life. On the contrary, I believe it was better beyond comparison. Many, perhaps most investigators who have studied hunter-gatherers have expressed their respect, their admiration, or even their envy of them. For example, Cashdan, page 21, refers to



the hunting-and-gathering way of life as “highly successful.” Coon, page XIX, refers to the “full and satisfactory lives” of hunter-gatherers. Turnbull, *Forest People*, page 26, writes:

[The Mbuti] were a people who had found in the forest something that made their life more than just worth living, something that made it, with all its hardships and problems and tragedies, a wonderful thing full of joy and happiness and free of care.

Schebesta writes, page 73:

How varied are the dangers, but also the joyous experiences on his hunting-excursions and countless journeys through the primeval forest! We of an unpoetic, mechanical age can have no more than an inkling of how deeply all of that touches the forest people in their mystical-magical thinking and shapes their attitude.

And on page 205:

The pygmies stand before us as one of the most natural of human races, as people who live exclusively in compliance with nature and without violation of their physical organism. Among their principal traits are an unusually sturdy naturalness and liveness, and an unparalleled cheerfulness and freedom from care. They are people whose lives pass in compliance with the laws of nature.

But obviously the reasons why primitive life was better than civilized life had nothing to do with gender equality, kindness to animals, non-competitiveness, or non-violence. Those values are the soft values of modern civilization. By projecting those values onto hunting-and-gathering societies, the GA Movement has created a myth of a primitive utopia that never existed in reality.

## **Green Anarchism and revolution**

Thus, even though the GA Movement claims to reject civilization and modernity, it remains enslaved to some of the most important values of modern society. For this reason, the GA Movement cannot be an effective revolutionary movement.

In the first place, part of the GA Movements energy is deflected away from the real revolutionary objective — to eliminate modern technology and civilization in general — in favor of the pseudo-revolutionary issues of racism, sexism, animal rights, homosexual rights, and so forth.

In the second place, because of its commitment to these pseudo-revolutionary issues, the GA Movement may attract too many leftists — people who are less interested in

getting rid of modern civilization than they are in the leftist issues of racism, sexism, etc. This would cause a further deflection of the movements energy away from the issues of technology and civilization.

In the third place, the objective of securing the rights of women, homosexuals, animals, and so forth, is incompatible with the objective of eliminating civilization, because women and homosexuals in primitive societies often do not have equality, and such societies are usually cruel to animals. If one's goal is to secure the rights of these groups, then ones best policy is to stick with modern civilization.

In the fourth place, the GA Movements adoption of many of the soft values of modern civilization, as well as its myth of a soft primitive utopia, attracts too many soft, dreamy, lazy, impractical people who are more inclined to retreat into utopian fantasies than to take effective, realistic action to get rid of the technoindustrial system.

In fact, there is grave danger that the GA Movement may take the same route as Christianity. Originally, under the personal leadership of Jesus Christ, Christianity was not only a religious movement but also a movement toward social revolution. As a purely religious movement Christianity turned out to be successful, but as a revolutionary movement it was a complete failure. It did nothing to correct the social inequalities of its time, and as soon as the Christians had an opportunity to make a deal with the emperor Constantine they sold out and became part of the power-structure of the Roman Empire.

There appear to be some disquieting resemblances between the psychology of the GA Movement and that of early Christianity. The analogies between the two movements are striking: primitive utopia = Garden of Eden; development of civilization = the Fall, original sin, eating the apple from the Tree of Knowledge; the Revolution = Day of Judgment; return to primitive utopia = arrival of the Kingdom God. Veganism probably plays the same psychological role as the dietary restrictions of Christianity (fasting during Lent) and of other religions. The risks taken by activists in using their bodies to block logging machinery and so forth can be compared to the martyrdom of early Christians who died for their beliefs (except that the Christians' martyrdom required far more courage than the tactics of today's activists do). If the GA Movement takes the same path as Christianity, it too will be a complete failure as a revolutionary movement.

The GA Movement may be not only useless, but worse than useless, because it may be an obstacle to the development of an effective revolutionary movement. Since opposition to technology and civilization is an important part of the GA Movements program, young people who are concerned about what technological civilization is doing to the world are drawn into that movement. Certainly not all of these young people are leftists or soft, dreamy, ineffectual types; some of them have potential to become real revolutionaries. But in the GA Movement they are outnumbered by leftists and other useless people, so they are neutralized, they become corrupted, and their revolutionary potential is wasted. In this sense, the GA Movement could be called a destroyer of potential revolutionaries.

It will be necessary to build a new revolutionary movement that will keep itself strictly separate from the GA Movement and its soft, civilized values. I don't mean that there is anything wrong with gender equality, kindness to animals, tolerance of homosexuality, or the like. But these values have no relevance to the effort to eliminate technological civilization. They are not revolutionary values. An effective revolutionary movement will have to adopt instead the hard values of primitive societies, such as skill, self-discipline, honesty, physical and mental stamina, intolerance of externally-imposed restraints, capacity to endure physical pain, and, above all, courage.

*P.S.* Letters addressed to me sometimes fail to reach me, so if you should write to me and get no answer, you can assume that I did not receive your letter. — TJK

Sincerely yours,

Ted Kaczynski

Enclosures: Photocopies of pages 28 and 29 of magazine *Bears and Other Top Predators*, Volume 1, Issue 2.

Photocopy of article "Sibling Desperado," *Science News*, Volume 163, February 15, 2003.

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# Letter About “Myths of Primitivism” By Kevin Tucker

As if it wasn't bad enough to have published the Ted Kaczynski interview once, publishing it a second time only serves to provide an example of what the title “Myths of Primitivism” means. And even worse is the fact that it comes “endorsed with” anthropological data. Is there, in fact, anyone who has read it in its entirety? What anyone with half a brain gets out of it is that Ted doesn't quite understand the concepts of anarcho-primitivism (AP), green anarchy (AV) or anything else like it. This despite years of effort on my part, by John Zerzan 13 and by the many others who have run into Ted's methodologically and ideologically limited arguments.

Your arguments are just nonsense. Point by point (all refer to primitive societies):

Hunter-gatherer societies were vegan: “Hunter” is part of the term that describes them. Anyone who claims that the hunter-gatherers were or are vegan is simply an idiot. It's that easy. That has nothing to do with an AP perspective, even if the interviewers were vegan and AP. Ted confuses animal rights with AP, AV, etc., and I hope that people not only understand that rights are against anarchy, but also that rights are civilized and that liberation is against to her. It really isn't that difficult.

Most primitive societies were “cruel to animals”: The existence of specific cases of cruelty is not the same as a society being “cruel to animals”. Human beings are not perfect, just as no animal is, nor does it need to be. Things continually happen that are far from ideal.

I agree with Ted, we shouldn't try to lay down principles about how we should always act towards each other and other species, but can the AP movement be blamed for trying? I do not think so.

Animal liberation is about ending the systematic torture and enslavement of animals, not their pain or death when the time comes. Similar acts of “cruelty” can be found in all species, and while I don't like it, I don't mean to assume that I know more than they do. Is playing with an injured or dead animal an act of cruelty or is it a means of familiarizing young individuals with the animals they depend on for their existence? Usually I'd say the latter is usually the correct answer, but does this mean the former never happens? Of course not, but that doesn't contradict the AP either.

III. The absence of gender equality: This is really another topic and one would hope that other anarchists would be able to pick it up quickly. Equality is a matter that refers to rights. It is a legal matter. Egalitarianism instead refers to having equal access and treatment. It is a social issue. The nomadic hunter-gatherer societies lacked not

only equality, but also the socio-political institutions that could establish it. However, they have been the most egalitarian societies that have ever existed.

Ted brings up the subject by commenting on the beating of women among the Mbuti, not realizing that he refutes himself with the same quote: "...and women are expected to hit back with blows." Patriarchy is sustained not with violence, or with male violence, but through the institutionalization among women of a submissive role that implies assuming as a virtue not responding to aggression. Simply put, non-egalitarian societies make women powerless and without initiative. Typically, in nomadic hunter-gatherer and horticultural societies, women not only instigate fights, take revenge, defend themselves as individuals or as a group, and hide food and other social contributions, but also refuse to see themselves as victims of a situation over which they have no control. They are autonomous and independent. This brings us back to egalitarianism.

And this also refers us to the inclusion of Ted's examples of sironó that show clear concepts of patriarchal domination and preference for male individuals. This is common among horticulturists, among whom sedentary lifestyle, population growth and its consequences lay the groundwork for civilized thinking and behavior, which is why the AP speaks of domestication. Having concepts and socializing them are two different things, as Yolanda and Robert Murphy's classic work, *Women in the Forest*, demonstrates to anyone who really wants to investigate the female perspective of this "male domination". Not surprisingly, women carry out religious rituals and celebrations without giving full authority to men. It is a performance that occasionally goes beyond the stage.

Again the key is domestication. The Inuit and Aborigines have similar concepts of a religious order defined by men, but have domesticated dogs that carry the surplus of their societies, as well as a high rate of sedentary lifestyle or close contact with sedentary societies, respectively.

Far from providing proof of the "myths" of PA, Ted has merely overlooked the efforts that people like me have devoted to investigating these "gray areas" of domestication and sedentary lifestyle and to looking at the "ugly" and "unusual" aspects. romantics" of primitive life to understand what exactly they might mean.

"The Primitive Society of Abundance" or the Jobless Thesis : This has been a controversial issue ever since Marshall Sahlins proclaimed it in the mid-1960s. It has been furiously argued both ways, both for and against, and there is evidence showing that some collecting societies

hunters "work" between 20 and 30 hours a week and that others "work" twice as many hours or more. It is something that has to be examined band by band and cannot be said to be true or false in general.

I agree that the emphasis should not be on the arbitrary distinction between "work" and "not work" but on the existence of work itself. Work is something you do for someone else. It's a job whether you farm a farm for a surplus or sell electronics at a department store chain. Nomadic hunter-gatherers, like most individuals in primitive

societies, did not work, period. Leisure is the sacred cow of capitalist society and there is nothing to be gained by feeding it.

However, disagreeing with the terminology does not completely dismantle the argument, or part of it. I think the term “work” is problematic and I avoid using it, but Ted has raised this issue to a ridiculous degree, as if calling into question the foundations of AP theory in general. I just don’t see it as important.

Most of these societies were non-violent : There is no basis for this argument. There is no war between nomadic hunter-gatherers because they lack the motivations and social context for it. If the composition of each gang is so fluid that it includes people from all the other gangs that gang might be fighting, there isn’t much reason or incentive for war. War appears with the material and ecological needs of semi-sedentary societies in which kinship is central (in relation to the ownership and production of orchards) and therefore solid enough to create an “us” and a “them”..

Violence occurs, and possibly more often, between nomadic hunter-gatherers who settle their conflicts within their own gangs. But that violence is an outburst that lacks the drama or mask of societies made up of strangers. It is kept in check by social reality and rarely reaches such an extreme that the parties to the conflict cannot either overcome it or split. The inflexibility of sedentarism is what amplifies the roots of violence and makes war possible.

SAW. The existence of competition and violent competition : This revolves around a phrase from Ted: “If a fight is not a form of competition, then nothing is.” And this is manifestly false. Fights happen because animals have a wide range of emotions, not because we see the world as an ordered hierarchy in which we must defend our position. Most fights have to do with relationships, not because of “partner access,” but because anyone who has been in a relationship can attest that it is highly emotional and that a sexual or romantic relationship carries so many emotional aspects that often cause emotional outbursts of all kinds.

“Food disputes” are often indicative of feelings in general. And what is here called an argument is rather the give and take that goes on incessantly among the nomadic hunter-gatherers. It is a social adjustment mechanism, but nothing serious. There are arguments over food, but only a foreigner brought up to think in crude scientific simplicity would see them as a form of competition. Fights and arguments occur without conspiracy or grand schemes.

VII. Damage to the environment : this point is presented without providing evidence and is questionable. Again, remember that humans are not angels, but it is impractical to destroy what you depend on for life. I assume that by overhunting he is referring to the highly controversial “Pleistocene slaughter theories”. And where is the “reckless use of fire”? Fire has often been used to promote the growth of certain plants, but it can hardly be considered unwise.

Unfortunately there is not enough space here to really go point by point, so I will rely on the common sense of the readers. Ted is a revolutionary in the strict sense. He does not allow his goals to be blurred by fantasies about what has been or could be. I

appreciate those who dismiss utopian thinking, but it's one thing to discuss the murky areas and another to essentially turn utopianism on its head and throw it all away.

And finally, anarchy works thanks to personal responsibility. moralism? Perhaps it is not the primitivists who should revise their "romanticism."

For Wildness and Anarchy, Kevin Tucker

# Letter of Reply to Kevin Tucker by Ted Kaczynski

Dear Editors:

Concerning Kevin Tucker's letter to *Anarchy* (Fall — Winter 2006, pages 72–72): In my extensive correspondence with Kevin, he would never under any circumstances admit that he was wrong about anything. Whenever I pointed out a fact that he found inconvenient, he would manipulate words, assigning eccentric meanings to them in order to make the inconvenient fact go away. Kevin continues to use this trick in his letter to *Anarchy*. I pointed out examples in foraging (= hunting and gathering) societies of what clearly constitutes competition as that word is normally understood, but Kevin doesn't want to believe that there was competition in foraging societies, so he changes the meaning of the word, implying that competition isn't competition unless there is a "conspiracy" or a "grand scheme."

He uses the same gimmick in response to the facts that I cited showing lack of gender equality in foraging societies. Kevin claims that equality is a "legal issue" and that therefore irrelevant to foraging societies. But since when is equality exclusively, or even primarily, a legal issue? Only since Kevin decided to make it so in order to evade the inconvenient truth. Maybe Kevin should explain to John Zerzan, the patriarch of anarchoprimitivism, that the concept of equality is irrelevant to foraging societies, because Zerzan has repeatedly stated that prehistoric foragers had "gender equality"; e.g. in *Future Primitive*, 1994 edition, page 16, and in an article titled "Whose Future," in *Species Traitor* number—published by Kevin Tucker himself.

Kevin claims that gender relations among foragers were "egalitarian." His explanation of what this means is vague enough so that it is difficult to see how it applies in concrete cases, but it seems plausible to describe some foragers, e.g. the Mbuti, as "egalitarian" in Kevin's sense. It seems much less plausible to apply that term to certain other foragers. E.g. among the Bushmen studied by Richard Lee, girls in their early teens were forcibly married to men much older than themselves. "I cried and cried," said one such girl, "I ran away again and again." Nancy Bonvillian, *Women and Men*, second edition, 1998, pp. 21–23.

In a letter to me dated 4/7/03, and in support of his claim that no patriarchy was apparent among the Australian Aborigines, Kevin referred me to A.P. Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines*, 1964 edition.

Kevin's choice of authorities is astonishing because Elkin (pp. 132 — 38) reports that Australian women had no freedom to choose their own spouses, that young girls



were often forced to marry old men and therefore had to work to provide their aged husbands with food and water, and that on certain ceremonial occasions women were subjected to compulsory sex, of which they sometimes lived in terror.

True, Australian Aboriginal women had means of resistance. but clearly those means were insufficient to prevent the forced marriages, compulsory sex. etc. In our society there is no forced marriage. Rape occurs, but modern women have far more effective means of resistance than Australian women did: They can call the police. If the rapist is caught, he will serve a long prison term. Wife-beaters too can be jailed. But Australian women had no such recourse.

So on what grounds does Kevin claim that Australian Aboriginal society, or any foraging society, was more egalitarian than modern society? Well, he implies that modern women are “persons without agency,” that they don’t “fight back,” and that they are “subservient.” But I think most modern women would find that description insulting. No such description fits most of the women I know.

Kevin now discounts the evidence from Australians and Eskimos (Inuit) on the grounds that they had dogs and (Kevin claims) “high rates of sedentism or close contact with sedentary societies.” This is a technique characteristic of certain anarcho-primitivists. Whenever anyone points to counterexamples that discredit their idealized images of foragers, they say. “Oh those people don’t count because they had dogs” (or because they were in contact with agricultural or pastoral societies or because they were not sufficiently nomadic or whatever). But the Mbuti had dogs, the Bushmen had dogs, and as far as I know all recent foragers (“recent” here means recent enough so that we have eyewitness accounts of them) had dogs, with the exception only of the Tasmanians, the Andamanese. and the Indian of Tierra del Fuego. See Carleton S. Coon. *The Hunting Peoples*, 1971 edition, p.XVII. And, as far as I know, nearly all foraging societies outside of Australia, Tasmania and the far north of North America either were sedentary, or had been in contact with agricultural or pastoral societies for hundreds of years, or else had been thoroughly ruined by the intrusion of Europeans before anyone got around to studying them. So were are these perfectly pure, highly nomadic, dogless foragers, free of all contact with agriculturalists or pastoralists, on whom the anarcho-primitivists base their theories? I don’t know of any, and Kevin doesn’t name any. As far as I know, all foraging peoples were “impure” in one way or another by the time anyone wrote a detailed description of them, so you can always discount any evidence from recent foraging societies on the ground that they were in some way “impure.” What the anarcho-primitivists do is this: They automatically discount any evidence that conflicts with their theories on the ground that the people from whom the evidence is derived were not perfectly pure, 100% nomadic, dogless foragers, but they uncritically accept any evidence that supports their theories, regardless of how “impure” the foragers in question may have been. When you reason that way you can prove anything you want.

Anyway, Kevin has his facts wrong. He says that the Australians and the Eskimos had “high rates of sedentism or close contact with sedentary societies.” Over most

of Australia the Aborigines were highly nomadic, not at all sedentary and had no “close contact with sedentary societies” until the arrival of Europeans. See Coon, op.cit. pp. 105, 217, 253; Aldo Massola, *The Aborigines of South-Eastern Australia*, 1971, p. 78, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2003 edition, Vol. 14, article “Australia.” pp. 434–38. Some Eskimos were sedentary, but the ones mainly cited in my interview were those described by Gontran de Poncins in his book *Kabloona*, and these lived very far from any sedentary Eskimos. From Poncin’s account it appears that their only contact with a sedentary people (Europeans) was through a single, extremely isolated trading post and one missionary who “went native” to such an extent that he seems to have lived at a more primitive level than the Eskimos themselves. The Siriono were definitely nomadic and their population was very sparse. Read Allan R. Holmberg, *Nomads of the Long Bow*, 1969 edition.

Kevin claims that foragers’ quarrels over food were “light hearted,” but he offers no evidence to support this claim. The food quarrels I’ve read about don’t look light hearted to me. You can read about them yourself and form your own opinion. See Coon, op. cit., p. 125; Holmberg, op. cit., pp. 79–81, 87– 89. 151, 154–56; Colin Turnbull. *Wayward Servants*, 1965, pp. 120, 157–58. 198. Paul Schebesta. *Die Bambuti-Pygmiden vom Ituri*, Vol. II. part I. Brussels. 1941, p. 97, mentions a quarrel over the distribution of meat that “almost led to bloodshed,” which does not sound very light hearted. Among the Bushmen, according to Richard Lee, improper distributions of meat could lead to “bitter wrangling.” Bonvillain, op. cit., p. 20. If the wrangling was “bitter” than it was not “light hearted.”

In discussing foragers’ work, Kevin employs his usual gimmick of changing the meaning of words to conclude that foragers don’t work at all. I agree with Kevin that modern work (for an employer) is demeaning servitude and therefore should be distinguished from the work of autonomous bands. But much of what foragers did was very hard “work” as that term is normally understood. Using a more conventional definition of “work,” Kevin says that some forager bands worked only 20–30 hours a week, others twice that or more; hence, up to 60 or more hours a week. I don’t know of any normal foraging bands whose total working time was as little as 30 hours per week, but Kevin’s admission that some foragers worked 60 or more hours per week should serve as a corrective to those anarcho-primitivists who state without qualification that foragers only worked some very small number of hours. (E.g. *Green Anarchy*. #), p 13: “the hunter- gatherer workday usually did not exceed three hours.”)

I’d like to answer more points from Kevin’s letter, but I’m out of space.

Civilization in general, and modern technological civilization in particular, is an incalculable disaster. The world would be far better off if the human race had remained permanently in the hunting-and-gathering stage. Accordingly, we need a revolution against civilization. But the anarcho-primitivists do a grave disservice to the cause by carrying their admiration for foraging societies to the point where it becomes a kook cult.

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The Ted K Archive

Ted Kaczynski, Kevin Tucker  
Ted Kaczynski's Interview with a Turkish Primitivist  
2005

[tapatalk.com/groups/cacst](http://tapatalk.com/groups/cacst).

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