Through the Prism of Nonviolence

(Why) I Am an Anarchist

By John Heid

"All our problems stem from our acceptance of this filthy, rotten system." — Dorothy Day, *The Catholic Worker*

"Our experience today is the strange one of empty political institutions in which no one has any confidence any more, of a system of government which functions only in the interests of a political class, and at the same time of the almost infinite growth of power, authority and social control which makes any one of our democracies a more authoritarian mechanism than the Napoleonic state." —Jacques Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity*

"The task at hand is not to abandon or deconstruct civil society but to establish our civilization on a foundation of justice." —Jim Corbett, *Sanctuary For All Life*

The business-sized, lime green envelopes began appearing in the neighborhood in August. Two landed in our mailbox. The contents were identified in bold print: "Official Ballot Material Enclosed." It's election time, with its implied summons to perform the quintessential civic duty, voting. Refusing is branded unpatriotic or anarchistic, or both, and once again the door opens for that lively discussion I have not had since the last presidential election. The topic: anarchism. This single word stops other conversations in a crowded room. While electoral politics is just the tip of the iceberg in a serious conversation about anarchism, the election is still someplace to start.

Why does the mere mention of anarchism cause a Pavlovian response of disgust, even righteous anger? I often hear: "Well, that's pure violence, mayhem and madness. You just want to smash the state." Historian Howard Zinn once asked: "How did the social philosophy of anarchism become such a dirty word?" Why does this issue of voting, or rather nonvoting, let alone anarchism, rile our friends and family?

Catholic Worker co-founder and lifelong anarchist Dorothy Day observed: "How strange it is that the anarchists I have met have been the most disciplined of men (sic), lawful and orderly, while those who insist that discipline and order must prevail are those who, out of plain contrariness, would refuse to obey and are the ones most unable to regulate themselves."

In the opening chapter of *Anarchism and Christianity* the French philosopher and sociologist Jacques Ellul wrote: "By anarchy I mean first an absolute rejection of violence. Hence I cannot accept either nihilists or anarchists who choose violence as a means of action."

Institutionalized violence is the primary tool of the state. The military-corporate-academic complex is the *terra firma* of democratic republics. In the US, no major party from ultra-conservative Republicans to liberal Greens has a nonviolent platform. Not one of them significantly addresses the military budget, let alone nuclear weapons, drone warfare, forced occupation of other states, etc. Not only are such matters left off the ballot, they're not even on the table. State violence is non-negotiable. There is no "Bernie fix," nor is there a Green Party fix. All matters of social import take their place in the shadow of US militarism. Civil rights activist Diane Nash once said, "If violence truly brought about social change, by now we'd be living in a utopia."

Anarchism envisions another way to build community, ensure security, and exercise liberty. In other words, anarchists seek a civil society worthy of the concept, not one regulated by violence and man-made laws that compel people to act justly out of fear. We're talking about "building a new world in the shell of the old"—a favorite phrase of Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker. This construction is two-fold. Challenging and dismantling the old, tried and failed means of "might-makes-right" by means of non-cooperation with the "tyrannical forces of State and Church"—as Catholic Worker and anarchist Ammon Hennacy wrote—and simultaneously engaging in civil initiative. These two practices operate in tandem.

Civil initiative was most notably practiced here during the Sanctuary movement of the 1980s. US citizens, who believed that no one should be denied the basic rights that constitute a civil society, took direct, personal responsibility for refugees fleeing violence in Central America. Often risking arrest, Sanctuary anarchists worked at feeding, clothing, sheltering and transporting the refugees to safe havens. According to Sanctuary activist Jim Corbett, civil initiative "must be societal rather than organizational, nonviolent rather than injurious, truthful rather than deceitful,... substantive rather than symbolic, volunteer-based rather than professional, and based on community powers rather than government powers." These concepts are the heart of civil society.

Even though an ideal anarchist society may never be fully actualized, we can put our energy toward an anarchist movement as a social model. While challenging the status quo of domination enforced with its military/corporate apparatus, we can work together to create non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian, grass roots bodies which respond to the needs of civil society. Personal responsibility is fundamental. We cannot delegate our responsibilities as human beings and members of society to bureaucracies and institutions, state or church. This is not to say that these institutions do not have a role in the current complexion of our society. They absolutely do. Still, their presence is no substitute for personal, civilian responsibility.

When your only tool is a ballot, then all issues look like a big bucks lottery. On November 8, election day, I will vote with my feet, like I do most days. Civil responsibility is not a one-night stand. My day may include resupplying water stations along remote Arizona desert trails for refugee sisters and brothers walking north, or gathering discarded produce and dry goods for redistribution to families in need, or attending some consensus-based organizational meeting. My civic voice is not muted by my absence at the polling station. Hardly!

Anarchism challenges me to dig deep and think outside the ballot box, and then put my feet to the tasks at hand. At the end of the day, my motivation is best articulated by Dorothy Day. "What we would like to do is change the world."

—John Heid lives and works at the Casa Mariposa Community in Tucson, Arizona.

Canadian Whistleblowers, Public and Environment: *Unprotected*
Canadian Nuclear Industry: *Protected*

By Kelly Lundeen

You have regulatory staff that are aware of increased risks, suppressing other risks, and failing to report them to the public, and failing to put conditions on reactor operators. All of these contributed to Fukushima and we're seeing it at the CNSC [Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission]. — Shawn-Patrick Stensil

Senior Energy Strategist at Greenpeace Canada, Shawn-Patrick Stensil, was one of five to receive a missive from an anonymous group of whistleblowers people May. The authors of the letter that brought up hazardous procedural and technical matters appear to be insiders at the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC). The letter was also sent to two CNSC commissioners and the president Michael Binder who have not only dismissed it, but publicly mocked its authors and muzzled Stensil.

The letters have been the subject of CNSC meetings. On August 17 the allegations in the letter were repudiated by a CNSC strategic advisor who instead upheld the regulatory enforcement and character of the Commission. Binder belittled the authors' adeptness and when other staff made disparaging comments toward the authors, he responded, "So if you're correct, we're into a conspiracy theory." At another hearing Binder turned off the microphone when Stensil attempted to address issues raised in the letter. Stensil had been invited to speak by the CNSC, as he has for the last 15 years. The *National Observer* asked the Commission why he was not allowed to speak; the response was that it didn't want public input.

Given the gravity of the issues and the public mandate of the CNSC to govern nuclear utilities and preserve public safety, mocking and muzzling unfavorable news are inappropriate and exactly what the authors expected when they wrote, "we are not confident in whistleblower protection." The letter alleges that a Fukushima-sized disaster could be prevented by following guidelines and completing adequate reviews of reactor licenses. Five case studies were given as evidence that decisions about nuclear plants' operational fitness were made by the Commission without adequate information. In one case, environmental assessments completed for the Darlington, Ontario nuclear reactor were not released prior to a refurbishment review, because it wasn't required. In another review of the same reactor, the seismic hazard was underestimated by a factor of two. Unfortunately under CNSC president Binder, appointed by Canada's former Prime Minister Harper, the direction of the CNSC has been to cut costs and support the industry, leaving the public vulnerable and leaving safety to chance.

—*National Observer*, Aug. 18 & July 19; Ottawa *Citizen*, July 18, 2016

Taking Lead from Nukewatch, More Experts Calling for Abolition of Land-based Nuclear-Armed Missiles

By John LaForge

In "End the First-Use Policy for Nuclear Weapons," in the August 15, 2016 *New York Times*, General James Cartwright and Bruce Blaire argue that US presidents should no longer allow "their senior commanders to plan for the first use of nuclear weapons," and the writers called for the complete elimination of US land-based missiles (the Minuteman IIIs) and of all 180 US nuclear weapons deployed in Europe (the B61s)—urging President Obama to start getting rid of them now. The two disarmament actions have been promoted by Nukewatch staff, members, volunteers and supporters for decades.

General Cartwright is a former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a former commander of the US Strategic Command. Blaire, a former Minuteman missile launch officer, is a research scholar at Princeton.

A week earlier the *Times* said in its lead editorial, "Some defense experts, like former Defense Secretary William Perry have argued that the land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles are no longer needed. In other words, the time has come to think seriously about whether that leg of the traditional air-sea-land nuclear triad should be gradually retired."

Nukewatch's newest book—*Nuclear Heartland, Revied: A Guide to the 450 Land-based Missiles of the United States*—includes a surprising chronicle of other high-level experts and former military commanders who have called for abolishing the Minuteman IIIs.

Here are excerpts from the Op-Ed:

Adopting a policy of no-first use of nuclear weapons *"would reduce costs by gutting the rationale for retaining the large arsenal of land-based strategic [Minuteman III] missiles in silos across the Midwest and the tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Europe. Those [weapons] are mainly for first-use; they are a risky option for second-use because they are highly vulnerable to enemy attack. Eliminating these weapons entirely would be the best option.*

"Phasing out land-based missiles ... would save about $100 billion over the next three decades. President Obama could begin the phase-out of land-based missiles before he left office by instructing the Department of Defense to remove 450 weapons from the operationally deployed category and transfer them to long-term storage.... These missiles are surplus weapons no longer needed for deterrence.

"A no-first-use policy would also reduce the risks of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons. By scrapping the vulnerable land-based missile force, any need for launching on warning disappears."

Help increase the strength and volume of the abolition movement by ordering a copy of* Nuclear Heartland *now, and stock your local library.

☒ ***Yes!* I would like to order _____ copies of the revised edition of *Nuclear Heartland*.**

☐ My payment of $ _____ ($25+$5 shipping/book) is enclosed.

Please contact me at (Phone) _____ or (Email) _____ to confirm my order.

I understand that my order will be shipped via media mail to the address below.

Ship book(s) to:

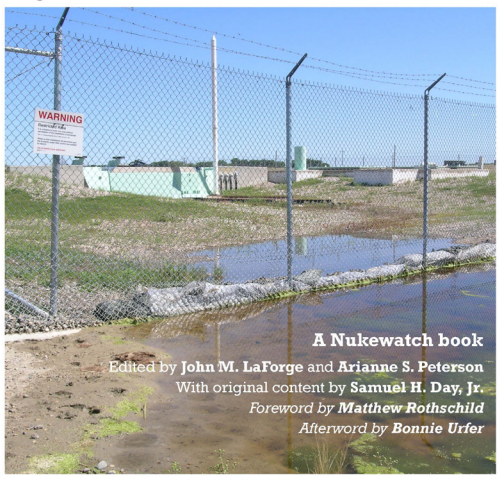
Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Please return this form to:

Nukewatch
740A Round Lake Road
Luck, WI 54853

Or, order online at nukewatchinfo.org!

Order Nukewatch's newly revised guide to the 450 US land-based missiles today!