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Demolition Derby: reflections on ‘primitivism’

The Red Menace

1989

The Red Menace *review the Canadian primitivist magazine, Demolition Derby.*

Demolition Derby is a new revolutionary newspaper from Canada. Politically it situates itself in what could loosely be described as the “anti-authoritarian primitivist” tendency, with an emphasis on opposition to technology and environmental themes. The approach taken by *Demolition Derby* (and others such as a *Fifth Estate*) is refreshingly different from the familiar parliamentary cretinism of the Green Party on the one hand and the just plain cretinism of the likes of *Green Anarchist* on the other (with their support for national liberation rackets and the “informal economy” of hippy shopkeepers). Here opposition to the ravages of industrialism is clearly posed in terms of the abolition of the money/work/wages will also warns system and all that upholds it. As a one article in *Demolition Derby* puts it: “we desire neither a green army, nor a green state, nor green money”.

While we are not sure how far down the “primitivist” road — or footpath — we want to travel (some argue for a return to a

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Retrieved on December 22, 2009 from libcom.org

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hunter gatherer lifestyle), the critique of industrial civilisation advanced by *Demolition Derby*, *Fifth Estate*, John Zerzan and others needs to be taken seriously. We ourselves are certainly anti-progress, in the sense of opposing the idea that the continual expansion of a production offers a never-ending improvement in quality of life. We would agree with the group Interrogations, whose 'Questioning Ecology' text is included in *Demolition Derby*, that "from factory production to industrial mechanicalness, from automation to word processing and robots, a cycle which renders humans inessential has come into being" and that today, "the development of the productive forces is simply an expression of the domination of commodities".

A long article in *Demolition Derby* criticises anarcho-syndicalism, in particular the version of it espoused by the U.S. leftist outfit the Workers Solidarity Alliance. The ideology of self-management, whose 'radical' horizons stretch no further than democratically running the existing factory system, is subjected to a well-deserved demolition job. There is also a good anti-nationalism piece, translated from *Brouillon pour une critique sociale* (another Montreal-based journal).

A criticism we would make of some people in the 'primitivist' scene is that they have abandoned any class perspective and talk solely in terms of a struggle between humanity and capital (see for instance the text 'Countering the mystique of the proletariat' by Interrogations, translated in the August issue of *Fifth Estate*). We would remind them that the despoliation of our planet, the massacres of Beijing, Halabjah and elsewhere, etc., etc., were masterminded not by the evil spirits of a metaphysical capital, but by our rulers who are human, all too human. A classless society is something to strive for, but realising it first involves a class struggle against the human defenders of capital.

Encouragingly one of the contributors to *Demolition Derby* does state that he actively supported the printworkers strike at Wapping a couple of years ago. Where exactly *Demolition*

Derby stand on the question of class will hopefully be made clearer in future issues.

The Red Menace, Number Four, September/October 1989.