

The 'Unabomber for President' campaign

Scott Winokur

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A write-in vote for the Unabomber in the presidential election would be a waste of time, unquestionably, if you really cared about the outcome in November.

But I must say I'm intrigued by the extreme political pitch of the group proposing such protest votes—Unapack, a Boston-based organization touting the idea since the publication of the mad bomber's alleged manifesto last year.

Unapack wants no part of Ted Kaczynski, whom federal authorities are holding in a Sacramento jail on charges in seven of the 16 bombings linked to the Unabomber. The bombings took three lives and injured 23 others. Kaczynski's mother and brother pleaded for his life Sunday on the CBS News program "60 Minutes," but Attorney General Janet Reno has not decided whether to seek the death penalty in the case.

Unapack, however, completely endorses the ideas in the 35,000-word screed against society the government may try to prove Kaczynski wrote.

"Write in 'Unabomber'...not Kaczynski," the group said in flyers passed out at Chicago's Grant Park during the Democratic Convention. "He hasn't been proven the author...and besides, it's the ideas that matter, not the man."

And what are those ideas, as redacted by Unapack in its flyer and on its 500-visit-a-day web site (www.paranoia.com/unapack/)? Here are a few:

"Industrial society has been a disaster...people are humiliated and degraded by the technologies they've created."

"People...are utterly helpless...they have no choice but to join the parade...their fates determined by forces far beyond their control."

"Just undo it."

Thank heaven for radicals. They're often sort of right. Just be careful not to take them too seriously—or you could end up hopelessly marginalized (or worse, forever tainted by a police record).

Unapack stalwart Chris Korda of Somerville, Mass., 24, told me the group hopes to tally 1 to 3 percent of the ballots and possibly determine the outcome in California, where protest votes on the left could hurt President Clinton. Contributing to a Bob Dole victory didn't bother him.

"It doesn't make a difference. Dole and Clinton simply represent different wings of the pro-business party," Korda said.

He added: "We have a lot of support in Northern California. Up in pot-growing country, there's very strong antigovernment feeling. In the Bay Area, our support is the same as it is in Boston. If we get 3 out of 100 people, that's good."

"Our supporters are everyone who reads the Dilbert comic strip and feels the same apathy and alienation. People resigned to humiliating jobs and suffering. People who don't vote. It's a wide cross-section. Our goal is to create a rupture in the electoral system."

Korda said Unapack has raised more than \$25,000 through contributions and the sale of sarcastic bumper stickers ("Bigger cubicles! Longer weekends!")

In New York City, Unapack distributed 5,000 flyers last month and hung a 60-foot banner on an abandoned building in Brooklyn. Efforts to stir interest are also underway

at Columbia and New York universities, according to the group's Big Apple point man, Bill Brown, 37.

I asked Korda how—despite the group's attempt to distance itself from Kaczynski—he, personally, could identify with terrorism.

"I haven't committed any acts of violence," Korda protested. "I'm a pacifist. The Unabomber used violence to gain access to the media. It's not something I'd do, but he has presented us with an opportunity we must exploit."

Brown, who comes from McGovernite Democrat stock, took a softer stand: "this is a throwback to the guerilla theater of the '60s. It's educational."

I thought I'd heard such talk before, nearly 30 years ago, when little Leninists on campus ran around tossing off categorical imperatives and condemning anyone who disagreed.

"Of course we know all about them," Korda said, coolly.

"But we've learned from their mistakes. We've recognized that in a mass society you can't effect meaningful change without seizing control of the mass media. Our whole focus is on creating something irresistible to the media. In that sense, the Unabomber campaign is like a virus."

The Ted K Archive

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<web.archive.org/.../www.paranoia.com/~unapack/press/sfchron/winokur.html>

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