

# **The rise of the Unabomber right**

**How American conservatives fell in love with Ted Kaczynski.**

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Pop quiz (and no googling allowed): who described modern life as akin to being trapped in a “large communal hall, serving as the social focal point for many cultures and peoples throughout the world that were typically more sedentary and agrarian”, whose inhabitants traded “privacy – and its attendant autonomy – for the modest comforts and security of collective living”, in the bargain surrendering their “ambition” and “the drive... to strike out for conquest and expansion”?

Was it a) Ted Kaczynski, the mathematician, technophobe and domestic terrorist known as the Unabomber, who killed himself aged 81 in a federal prison last weekend? Or was it b) the influential, anonymous right-wing scribe and publisher who goes by “L0m3z” online?

Another one: who lamented “the Neolithic Revolution’s consequences for human freedom”, and how the emergence of sedentary and agricultural modes of life “represented a domestication of man”, giving rise not just to the tyrannical state, but to “drudgery, alienation from nature, reduced physical health, and increased susceptibility to epidemic disease”?

Was that a) the Unabomber, or b) the (again) anonymous online far-right diet guru who goes by the *nom de plume et de guerre* “Raw Egg Nationalist”, and who urges his followers to take up animal protein as a means of resisting the “terrible plan for life in the near future” hatched by “globalists” in Davos.

If you answered b) to both questions, then congratulations. It means you have some sense of the weird waters coursing their way through today’s very-online right, carving a sensibility that resembles Kaczynski’s. Call it the Unabomber right.

Once confined to an online fringe, this constellation of writers and online shit-posters is increasingly edging its way into the conservative mainstream. L0m3z has published in *First Things*, the intellectual organ of religious conservatism (where I’m also an occasional contributor). Upscale right-of-centre publications in Britain have likewise engaged them more in bemusement than the condemnation befitting a group that casually imagines a future in which “beige-type people” serve whites, or who fantasise about race war.

It’s a world-view that shares both Kaczynski’s yearning for a return to nature and his rejection of any effort to ameliorate industrialism’s baleful effects through economic reform. But where the Unabomber resorted to terrorism to disrupt what he called the “power process”, today’s rightists mostly dabble in edgy memes and lifestyle escapism: the dream that weightlifting, “clean eating” and the like are how you resist Davos Man.

In one respect, today’s Unabomber right is more radical than the man himself. In his 1995 manifesto, “Industrial Society and its Future”, Kaczynski traced modern misery to the Industrial Revolution. The age of machines and economies of scale, he fretted, had dramatically narrowed the scope of individual freedom. His imagined Arcadia thus stretched back to the 19th century, when the yeoman still “had the sense... that he created change himself”, unlike industrialism’s victims for whom “change is imposed on [them]”.

The actual history of yeomanry in the United States is far more complicated and tragic (the American yeoman was a more abject victim of debt and speculation than the urban proletariat). But never mind all that: at least the Unabomber had one foot in a plausible theory of modern alienation.

For his e-right successors, by contrast, the traumatic rupture with Arcadia took place long, long ago, when the autonomous “barbarian” was goaded into the communal “longhouse” of agricultural society, condemned ever after to be henpecked by the eternal feminine, now appearing as a Catholic nun, now as a corporate diversity and inclusion manager.

By locating the trauma in the almost-mythic past, or in the conquest of the masculine by the feminine, the Unabomber right sidesteps most political-economic solutions to the all-too-real crises of industrial capitalism. After all, industrialism’s victims have been able, from time to time, to subject market and technology to political determination, partially and haltingly in the reforms of the early 19th-century US president Andrew Jackson, more fully through Roosevelt’s New Deal a century later.

Notwithstanding its griping about multinational corporations, the e-right isn’t interested in class analysis. On the contrary, the movement’s intellectual leaders drip with contempt for anything like labour rights or social democracy.

A February tweet from “Bronze Age Pervert” – real name Costin Alamariu, the Yale-educated Plato scholar who serves up the movement’s ideas with a side of homoerotic aesthetics – is typical: “Ancient European languages [sic] word for ‘bad’ is derived from their words for ‘dark’ as in ‘dark-haired,’ referring to the pre-Aryan inhabitants of Europe that formed the serf classes under a warrior aristocracy. Bad/dark = associated [with] socialism, communitarianism, pacifism, gynocracy.” A stock character in this world is the “leftist” (and likewise the Christian) as a weak or degenerate type who seeks to undo hierarchy or natural aristocracy.

Here, too, the Unabomber right follows its namesake. It is often forgotten that Kaczynski opened his manifesto not by vituperating against technology, but with a pop-psychological profile of a certain “leftist” type, often using language that is a striking echo of today’s e-rightists: “Leftists tend to hate anything that has an image of being strong, good and successful. They hate America, they hate Western civilisation, they hate white males, they hate rationality.” And so on, for several thousand words.

The mind reels from the contradiction: here you have an extremist driven to committing terrorism as a protest against technological rationality and industrial capitalism, who nevertheless feels compelled also to defend “success”, “America” and “rationality” against attacks by would-be egalitarians. Before venting his rage against industrial production, the Unabomber took on those determined to ameliorate its negative consequences.

A similar contradiction lies at the heart of the e-right. Perhaps it’s no contradiction at all: these are typically men who hold fast to the original faith of market-driven meritocracy but who revolt against their own perceived low status in the system. It can’t be that corporate-led globalisation – and its attendant ideologies, such as multicultural-

ism – are natural outgrowths of the market system itself. Rather, these developments must have resulted from “bad/dark” actors hijacking the system: women, racial minorities, “communitarians” of various stripes. (This also explains the e-right’s curious reverence of Elon Musk, whom they view as a “true” meritocrat and a neo-frontiersman, notwithstanding the Tesla boss’s reliance on green subsidies.)

Should you be worried about this online ferment? Not for now. While the Unabomber was a rare, malicious fanatic who took to political violence, the remarkable thing about the market system is that it has created a niche for his latter-day spiritual sons. You might enjoy the occasional steak tartare. When these guys do the same thing they call it “resisting the Great Reset”.

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<[newstatesman.com/comment/2023/06/unabomber-american-right-ted-kaczynski](https://newstatesman.com/comment/2023/06/unabomber-american-right-ted-kaczynski)>

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