Dear Emancipation,

I would like to make a couple comments on Ernst Staatsfeind's article *Solidarity and Myth* in the October 1981 issue. Staatsfeind objects to criticisms of Reagan tax policies because these ignore the legitimacy of taxation. While this may be true when these criticisms come from the AFL-CIO, I don't think it is impossible to combine current tax policies with the goal of ending government taxation. There are a couple reasons why anarchists could agitate for more egalitarian tax policies.

To begin with, Staatsfeind's argument that taxation of the poor and taxation of the rich are equally immoral is not true. It assumes that the rich and the corporations earned their wealth by their own efforts, that it is rightfully "theirs". Yet in reality this wealth has been ripped off from workers, and their ancestors. So when it comes to taxing the rich, morality is irrelevant. There is no honor among thieves.

Secondly, it is only fair that wealthy individuals pay more for government services since they benefit more. Do the Pentagon, FBI, CIA, and the military establishment protect workers' interests at home and abroad? Isn't it really the case that these exist to protect corporate wealth and wealthy individuals? How about corporate bailouts for Lockheed, and Chrysler, and general business subsidies? Why shouldn't the rich pay more for these things?

My disagreement with liberals and union bureaucrats is not because they pay lip service to tax equality. They are just as committed to government subsidies for U.S. corporations as the conservatives are. So the upshot of their "reforms" usually amounts to nothing more than shifting the tax burden from one sector of the middle and lower classes to another.

Criticizing both conservative and liberal tax and budget policies, however, does not provide an anarchist alternative. A viable anarchist movement requires agitation around immediate improvements consistent with our ultimate goals. There is nothing non-anarchistic about demands for lower taxes for workers and the poor. (It is probably wise to stay clear of demands for higher taxes on the rich, for the practical reason that the government would use such demands to raise taxes in general.) There is also nothing non-anarchistic about demands that the government continue vital social programs, which have been paid for by past exploitive taxation (and required due to past corporate-state collusion). We should carry this even further by struggling for self management of these programs by those who depend on them.

What would be non-anarchistic and self-defeating, would be to depend on the electoral process to make these changes. Ernst Staatsfeind is quite right when he mentions the general strike as one alternative. Other methods would include tax boycotts, like the one carried out last year by Detroit autoworkers. Perhaps sit-ins at government offices and other forms of civil disobedience would work too.

Perhaps this is a point on which Staatsfeind and I can agree. Whatever immediate demands are worth fighting for, they will have to be won through direct action. The AFL-CIO and its liberal friends have been trying class-collaboration and electoralism for one hundred years. These strategies have been unable to stem the corporate and conservative tides. It is high time that "solidarity" mean more than a parade slogan.

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E.S. Replies

The reconciliation of tax policy with the goal of ending taxation, while perhaps not impossible, seems unlikely in the extreme. This comes too close to "bombs for peace" logic for my own taste. My criticism was that such strategies, for Anarchists, misses the point. Even "egalitarian" or "progressive" taxes are used *by the state* to finance *its* objectives. The state thus is enabled to choose its field of battle (i.e. the legislature). If more people were to agitate instead for actual "self-management of programs by those who depend on them", including the appropriation (or expropriation) of necessary resources, the struggle could proceed to the level (direct action, etc.) on which Stein and I agree.

WISCONSIN OJIBWAY FACE EXXON THREAT

People:

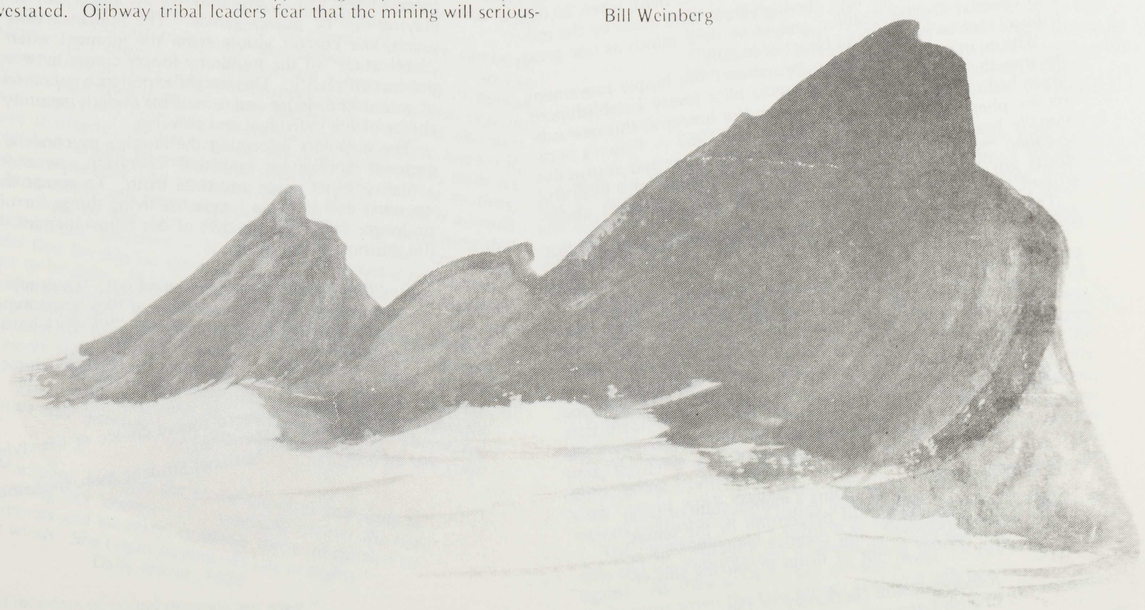
The all too familiar story of Native American land and culture being destroyed in the name of corporate profits reaches our ears again and again -- from the Pine Ridge and the Black Hills of South Dakota, from Big Mountain in Arizona, for Akwesasne in New York. Many fear that the Indian lands which lie on the mineral-rich Canadian Shield in Wisconsin may be the next. The Ojibway (Chippewa) reservation called Mole Lake, a small unspoiled area of woods and swamps in Northeastern Wisconsin faces an immediate threat. This threat comes from blind government bureaucracy and the vast multinational oil company, Exxon.

For centuries, the Ojibway gathered wild rice on Wisconsin lakes in the traditional manner. The long stalks are bent over the canoe and shaken with a "rice stick", causing the ripe grains to fall off. Those that fall into the canoe become the harvest. Those that fall into the water become the seeds for the new growth. One hundred and twenty-five years ago most of the Ojibway were pushed Westward by the United States Army to make way for the lumber and mining industries. One band of Ojibway -- the Sokaogon -- resisted. In 1855, a treaty was signed which granted the Sokaogon Ojibway twelve square miles with close proximity to six lakes from which the wild rice could be gathered. The documentation of this treaty was lost (allegedly in a Lake Michigan shipwreck) while being delivered to the Sokaogon. Since then, their land has been diminished to less that three square miles. This land is the Mole Lake reservation, shared by the Sokaogon Ojibway and some Suoix. It has proximity to only one lake which can be used for rice gathering -- Rice Lake. The wild rice is still gathered by the traditional method. The tribe's economy is somewhat supplemented by the Great Northern Bluegrass Festival which is held at Mole Lake annually. But for the rest of the year, the tribe's economy is base on rice gathering, the making of canoes and rice sticks and other activities centered around Rice Lake.

Exxon entered the picture in May, 1976. Upon drilling seventy holes in the ground at a location less than one mile from the Mole Lake reservation, Exxon discovered one of the richest mineral deposits in the world -- 75 million tons of sulfur, iron pyrite (which contains valuable zinc and copper) and trace elements of silver and gold. When and if Exxon goes ahead with its mining plans, it will leave Mole Lake economically, ecologically and culturally devestated. Ojibway tribal leaders fear that the mining will seriously pollute (if not actually drain) Rice Lake.

According to Exxon geologist, Ed May, the mining will lead "to the development of a new domestic mining district" that will "place Wisconsin in a position of being a significant supplier of minerals." Mr. May conceded that "contamination is bound to occur no matter how wisely a mine is designed or how dilligent the operators are." Exxon's callous attitude is expressed (somewhat euphemistically) in a technical project plan: "The Mole Lake Indians may have to accommodate new pressures coming from both the mine development and from newcomers."

A 1977 Wisconsin Department of Revenue Mining Impact Study informs us that iron pyrite reacts with water to form insoluble chemical compounds which can accumulate in still water. If Exxon goes ahead with its plans to dump the mine wastes in nearby wetlands, then Rice Lake's vegetation will be smothered by a reddish slime made up of these compounds. Rice Lake is connected to one of Wisconsin's major rivers, Wolf River. But the potential threat is larger still. The Impact Study further informs us that "since uranium is often found in metal deposits, it is likely that economically profitable quantities may be extracted along with other metals like zinc, copper, etc..." If uranium is mined it will mean (among other things) that highly toxic radon gas will pollute Mole Lake.

The Sokaogon Ojibway have held on to their culture and their ancestral home for countless generations. Mole Lake is the final landbase for their cultural survival. In the nearby town of Crandon (eight miles away) nearly all of the Ojibway drop out of high school due to the intolerable prejudices there. The tribe needs Mole Lake for survival. Exxon (a corporation so ruthless that it is already facing nine environmental suits over air and water pollution, as well as sixty-six notices of violation of state or local environmental rules) needs Mole Lake only to augment its already astronomical profits. The tribe is considering having Washington combed for a copy of the lost treaty which grants them their land. A Wisconsin environmental group, Dead Serious (P.O. Box 12142, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212), which supplied me with much information for this paper, is calling for Public Regional Environmental Impact Review to be made before the mining begins.

Bill Weinberg