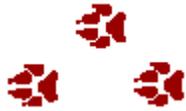


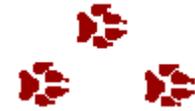


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WOLFE'S LODGE Claire Wolfe, Proprietor



Essays



This essay originally appeared in the Winter 1997 supplement to the Loompanics Unlimited book catalog. When I wrote it, I was apprehensive that readers were going to damn me either as a fed or as an irresponsible loony for advocating dangerous actions, so I filled the essay with cautions and, in my own opinion, wussed out on some of the more radical things that needed to be said.

The reaction was different than I'd anticipated. While many people offered constructive criticism, no one "shot the messenger." On the other hand, friends warned me to watch my backside because this time I'd gone too far.

*I still don't know how I feel about "Making Necessary Noise." So I offer it as a think piece -- one possible alternative in a world of unexplored options. I know we must **act** with strength and determination to restore our freedom. I still don't know if this is the best way.*

Several of the critics offered essential additions to my list of things to consider before "making noise." I've added a note at the end with the most important of their comments.



Making Necessary Noise

I'm coming to a conclusion I don't like at all. I've been edging toward it for several years, hating it all the way. But no matter how much I sniff around the idea, turn it upside down, examine it from all angles or peek into its dark interior, I can't say it's wrong. Increasingly, I'm convinced it may be both right and necessary -- even though it could rip apart the lives of a lot of good people.

Before I get to that dangerous conclusion, let me show you one example of what brought me to it.

Start with a question:

How many Americans resist filing federal income tax returns?

The official estimate from the IRS is five to 10 million. IRS bureaucrats admit privately the number may be as high as 35 million. Either way, a great many Americans say, "To hell with the federal government!" on April 15. And good for them. Let's take the very lowest figure: five million. Let us further assume that 80 percent of those non-filers are simply procrastinators-non-ideological folks who just don't get around to sending in the forms.

That still means **one million Americans** are risking their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor each year by consciously saying, "I refuse to submit."

The actual numbers are certainly larger -- giving us an awesome force on the side of individual liberty.

I often think, "That corrupt, doddering old system, simply **can't** hold up under this resistance." But look at the real world. What has that huge, stubborn force accomplished?

Nothing. Nada. Zip. Zilch.

RESISTING IN A WHISPER

Oh, yes, those who consciously resist the income tax, invasive drug laws, abstruse "regulations," or other forms of arbitrary authority have accomplished a lot on a personal level. Every act of independence is beneficial to the spirit. That's important. Very. But is it enough?

Five or 35 million Americans resisting tax laws...40, 50,60 or 80 million Americans resisting drug laws...and countless Americans resisting the very concept of excessive law...has had **no** positive impact on the country as a whole. It hasn't changed **anything** for the better.

The tax system hasn't collapsed. The income tax hasn't been repealed-as it should have.

In the 1920s and 30s, America's casual scorning of the Volstead Act (Prohibition) caused that pointless law to be tossed in history's garbage can. But the modern Prohibition against drugs-of-choice hasn't ended because millions are resisting it. Indeed, more -- and worse -- drug laws are being passed every day.

Across the country, despite our scorn, new regulations are being promulgated, more police agencies are being created, enlarged and armed, and more innocents are dying or being terrorized in the name of "law."

How can this be? How can millions of people be saying NO to bad government -- and not being heard?

Well, one reason we're not being heard is that we're whispering.

RESISTING WITH A SHOUT

My dangerous conclusion is this: We must not only resist bad laws with all our strength, but we must resist publicly, loudly and articulately. Some of us will be able to do this merely by advocating resistance in the abstract, as a matter of moral and historical right. Some of us will need to publicize our own, personal, principled resistance. Some of us may need to go so far as to stand in the public square and visibly disobey whatever damned law plagues us. All three of these courses could be hazardous to our health.

Nevertheless, we must make noise, make news and make a bloody nuisance of ourselves. We may need to get ourselves arrested, and ultimately may have to throw ourselves in front of tanks and machine

guns, if it comes to that.

We need to send a message to the world so loud it can't be ignored, even if some of us must die to do it.

STANDING ON PRINCIPLE

We have been quiet for a very good reason: because the government, media and in many cases our family and neighbors, regard principled resistance as criminal. We fear both their opinions and the dire consequences of breaking the law.

We must now turn that around. We must proclaim that resistance to bad laws is **right**. We must tell the world that we are not criminals, but fine, independent people of exactly the kind the country most needs.

Others are, of course, free to disagree with our viewpoint. But we ourselves must stop buying into the criminal paradigm, even subconsciously. We must proudly claim a new paradigm. We must make it clear that resistance is a matter of principle-and that we will never yield to unjust laws no matter who threatens us, no matter how dire the threat.

RESISTING THE IDEA OF PUBLIC RESISTANCE

Never have I been more in conflict with myself over an issue. I've spent a whole lifetime seeking privacy. I hate the idea of making public noise. I've spent a lifetime seeking beauty and peace, and I hate the idea of being dragged off to some dismal jail, or seeing my friends dragged there.

I also realize full well that what I'm proposing **is** dangerous.

In the past, I've warned readers never to trust anyone who urges them to commit criminal acts. Those arm-twisters are usually cops or informants. That goes double for anyone urging you to take the extra risk of "coming out of the closet" with public resistance. Don't trust them.

Don't trust me. And certainly **never** do anything because some writer or orator says it might be a good idea.

I'm not asking to be trusted or followed; I'm just asking you to hear and decide for yourself whether my conclusion is correct. If you have an effective idea and less dangerous idea for regaining freedom, I implore you to propose it and put it into action.

THE SCENARIO: ALTERING HISTORY

What could happen to us if we make an issue of our resistance? We could be arrested, prosecuted, jailed, demonized, laughed at, fired from jobs, shunned, fined, and our homes and possessions could be seized even if no charges are ever brought against us. Penalties are becoming more draconian. Federal penalties are increasingly being heaped atop state punishments. "Coming out" as resisters may inspire compulsive control freaks to take special pains to "get" and punish us. Some resisters will be made examples of, in the worst way.

It's bad. Let's never minimize what we might face. But the growing ruthlessness of government is all the more reason we must shout our objections.

An analogy:

Hitler began his persecution of the Jews with measures that, in contrast to the eventual horror, look mild. He first required Jews to wear yellow stars. They complied. He began confiscating their property. They hid possessions, sneaked them out of the country, bribed officials or simply surrendered. He walled

them in ghettos. Some went; some fled. He finally herded them into boxcars to their final destination.

All along, some resisted, some complied, just as we are doing now. But almost universally, whatever their actions, they remained quiet. Their "good German" (and "good" Polish and "good" other) neighbors were also silent about the outrages taking place in front of them. Some gentiles hid and helped the Jews. But they didn't speak up. No one made a public, moral cause of resistance. Of course, people were terrified of Hitler. And of course, it was unpopular to defend the Jews, who had been even more successfully demonized than tax resisters, militia members and drug users have been in modern America. The media and public institutions were firmly on the side of the Nazis, just as they are on the side of big government today. All very familiar.

Had a significant minority resisted Hitler -- vehemently, adamantly, loudly resisted -- many of them would have been killed. But they might have roused the conscience of the world. They might have shown Hitler there was a barrier he could not cross. They might have prevented the far worse slaughter that their silence allowed. We don't really know what **could** have happened, had people had the courage both to resist and speak. We only know what **did** happen when they failed to do so. None of these hopes ever had a chance. People didn't take the risk, and the ultimate fate befell them.

Silence is not safety. Silence, in fact, implies consent.

Which is worse: suffering now in defense of principle, or suffering later as the citizen of a tyrannical state?

HOW BAD CAN IT GET?

I don't know that it will ever get so bad here that freedom-loving people will be rounded up and sent to concentration camps. It's possible. I do know the future looks bad, very bad, for freedom.

What's **certain** is that, in the words of abolitionist Frederick Douglass, "Find out just what people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue until they are resisted with either words or blows, or both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress."

Or, in the more modern words of Dilbert, "The more crap you put up with, the more crap you are going to get."

Again, silence implies consent. Silence is "putting up with it" even when we silently disobey.

WHY MAKE NOISE NOW?

Many of us have become accustomed to living free in spite of the "law." A few years ago, even last year, I would have said, "Hell, why paint a target on your backside by going public with resistance?" But the situation has changed.

In the last couple of years, Congress has laid the groundwork for the kind of totalitarian citizen-tracking systems that have been long-rumored and long dreaded. As you read this, bureaucrats are building the computer systems, sending out the forms, writing the regulations and installing the machinery that will be used to make you a slave, pure and simple.

A pair of examples:

- Your drivers license was turned into a de facto national ID card. (Check it out: Public Law 104-

208.)

- Congress passed and Donna Shalala began sending out the forms for the "New Hires" database. It's worse than it sounds. (Check it out: Public Law 104-193, then get your hands on one of the forms.)

There's more. A lot more. Research for yourself and see how your life will be curtailed...will be **owned**...if you let these things happen.

Silent resistance doesn't stop bad law making. It actually encourages it, as legislatures pass more and more bad laws in an attempt to curb disobedience. How many more rotten laws are we going to take before we put a stop to this pernicious escalation of tyranny?

WHAT, SPECIFICALLY, SHOULD WE DO?

Specifically you should do only what your own wisdom dictates. Always. I'll mention only a few places to start and some cautions to keep in mind.

Frankly, some of this information is milder than what really needs to be said. But free speech protections extend only so far.

- Pick one or two laws that you especially oppose. Make sure you fully understand, and can calmly, lucidly articulate, the principles behind your opposition.
- Speak up every chance you get. In every forum you can find. Newspapers. Public meetings. Neighborhood gatherings. Don't just speak against the law. Speak on behalf of the right of resistance.
- Creatively defy bad law. Folks who plant hemp in the courthouse garden or pay their taxes in pennies may get useful publicity.
- Utilize the mainstream media where you can. But when biased reporting or no reporting is all you can expect, let it go. Put your energies elsewhere.
- Find every available form of alternative media, from the Internet to the walls of public restrooms, and use it. (For instance, you can paste stickers in restroom stalls with three or four lines explaining why a law is wrong and reminding people defiance is an American tradition.)
- Be flexible. Tactics must change as situations do.
- If there is enough community support to make it effective, shun employees of unjust agencies. Render their lives as uncomfortable as possible. And don't let them or yourself off with the old excuse that they're just the ordinary people doing their jobs. The engineers who drove the trains to the concentration camps were "ordinary." So were the guards. We usually have no access to their masters, but we can reach the masters through the employees. When masters no longer have minions do to their bidding, how can they enforce tyranny?
- Never go against your conscience, no matter what the consequences.
- Make it clear to everyone that you will not yield to mere force or terror tactics.
- Remember: the first and loudest to speak will become targets. This whole thing is going to work only if 1) a few people can make a big enough impression to change the conscience of the nation or 2) so many people rebel that the justice system overloads.
- Realize that there is a fine line between publicizing principled resistance and foolishly blabbing private matters. You'll have to find your own place to draw that line, and even if you draw it perfectly, you're still in danger.
- If you are announcing resistance to either tax or drug laws, understand that you are especially vulnerable. Under seizure laws, your property can become booty for a pirate agency; and enforcers offer cash bounties to anyone who will snitch on you.
- If you have the slightest doubt about the wisdom on this strategy, or about your own willingness to walk through hell for the cause of freedom, **DON'T DO IT.**

- Finally, remember the man who stood alone before the tank in Tienanmen Square. His "victory" was equivocal; the tank backed off, but the protesters were ultimately slaughtered. Yet his image still touches the conscience of the world. It will, ultimately, make a difference.

We must never violate principles. We must never initiate violence. And we should never harm the innocent. But at some point, unless government backs off, we will have to stop being nice. I don't recommend it. I merely predict it.

ONLY IDIOTS HEED CALLS TO ACTION FROM "KEYBOARD REVOLUTIONARIES."

A couple of months ago, I read an essay in which some self-proclaimed "patriot," (Call him John Brown.), ranted that it was time to start "taking out" government officials. Furthermore, he raved, anybody who didn't immediately rush out and start killing feds was a coward and a hypocrite.

John Brown himself, of course, wasn't about to go out and start bumping people off. Nooooo, he was much more comfortable in the role of "inspirational leader" behind his keyboard. Since no rash of fed-killings followed his exhortation, most readers must have realized old John himself was either a total fool, a hypocrite or an agent provocateur.

I may be a fool. And I may be accused of a lot of other things for writing this article. But I won't be a hypocrite. Here's where I stand:

I resist the income tax. Haven't filed in years. Never will, even if the IRS throws me in jail or in the gutter after taking everything I own. (They won't get much; I've made myself poor, and therefore a smaller target. If the IRS bothers me, their motive will be purely political.)

And when my state passes the enabling legislation to put the Big Brother drivers license into effect here -- when government and businesses require my "verified social security number" and biometric "security features" as a condition for dealing with them -- I'll go elsewhere, thanks.

Plenty of my acquaintances already refuse to get regular drivers licenses. Maybe they can teach us all a thing or two about the much more complicated problem of surviving without the national ID license. In any case, I plan to become the damndest, finest outlaw I can be when, "Citizen! Your papers please!" becomes an American reality.

Unlike John Brown, I'm not urging you to break the law. You're already breaking it just by living. If you value personal freedom, you're probably breaking laws and regulations more often than Bill Clinton breaks wind.

I **am** urging you to claim resistance as your right -- and as a necessity if we are to remain free.

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NOTE: Among comments made by my very wise critics:

Plan for the worst eventualities. Have bail money ready. Know who your lawyer's going to be. Prepare your family and friends for the possibility of your arrest.

In fact, one ideal way to "make noise" is to have a group of people support, by pre-arrangement, a smaller number who dare to take the risk of arrests, fines, etc. This might mean raising bail money, agreeing to care for a jailed friend's children, or a variety of other things. Left activists have been doing this for years. Be very careful, though, to avoid any taint of "conspiracy" that might get you all arrested.

Above all--SUPPORT OTHERS WHO TAKE STANDS FOR FREEDOM!



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