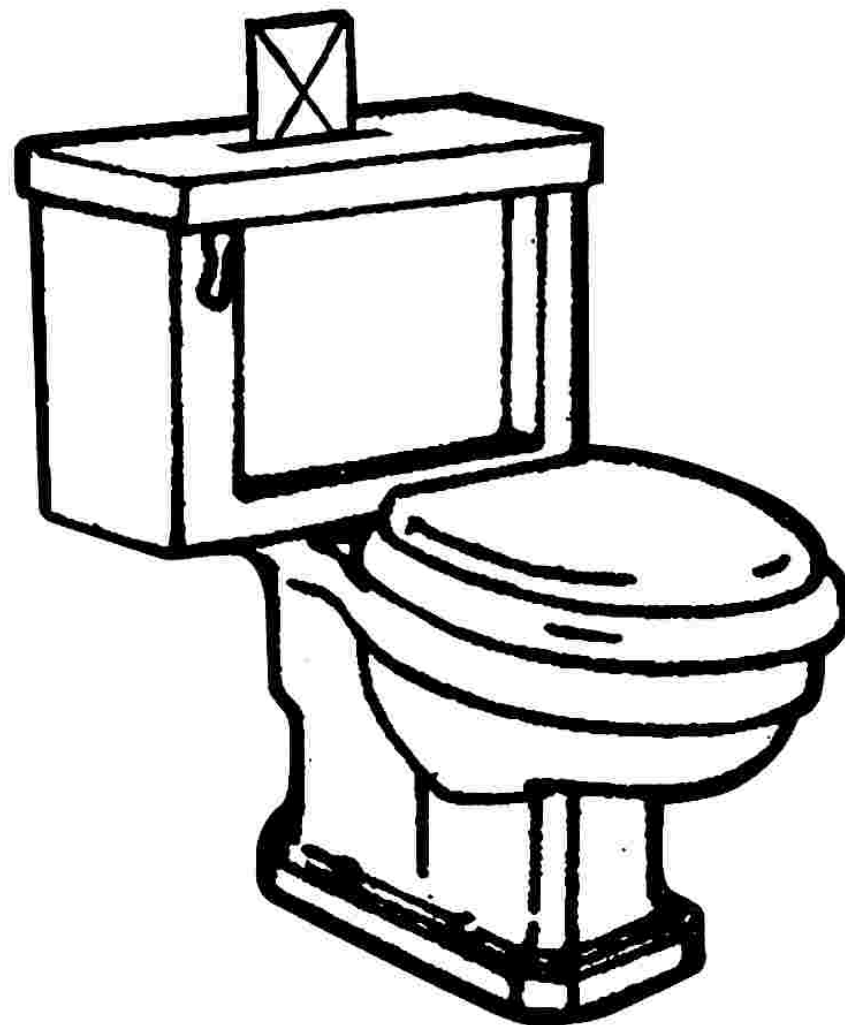


don't vote: organise!

voting vs direct action



Read And Destroy!

Paraphrased from a Crimethinc zine— www.crimethinc.com
Zine by Garage Collective — www.myspace.com/garagecollective
More zines can be found at www.zinelibrary.info

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Often when we ask each other, "Who are you going to vote for?" , the reply can be varied. Some people aren't too bothered, or don't really care — others reply that they don't know enough about politics. Why is this? The process of voting is meant to be the foundation of our democracy, the only time we have a say in our affairs, yet clearly, voting is totally ineffective and too far removed from our everyday realities to make any direct results on our lives.

Could it be this is why so many people feel disempowered? Anonymously ticking a box every four years does not make you feel included in the political process, let alone play an active role in it. And what does the political process have to do with our everyday lives, like where and how we work? In reality, the process of democracy and voting is made void every time we have to go and work for someone else.

In fact, voting for people to represent our interests (real, tangible interests) is the least efficient and effective means of applying political power. The alternative, broadly speaking, is acting directly to represent our interests ourselves. This is known as direct action.

Occasionally it is misunderstood to mean another kind of campaigning, lobbying for influence on elected officials by means of political activist tactics — but it properly refers to any action or strategy that cuts out the middle man and solves problems directly, without appealing to elected representatives, corporate interests, or other powers.

Concrete examples of direct action are everywhere. When people start their own organisation to share food with the hungry, instead of just voting for a candidate who promises to 'solve the homeless problem'. with tax dollars and bureaucracy, that's direct action. Zines, flyers, vege gardens, garage workshops, co-ops, workplace unions, community groups — all types of direct action. Direct action is the foundation of the Do-It-Yourself ethic, hands on and no nonsense. Without it, hardly anything would get done.

In a lot of ways, direct action is a more effective way for us to have a real say in society than voting is. For one thing, voting is a lottery — if a candidate or party doesn't get elected, then all the energy people put into supporting them is wasted, as the power they were hoping the power they would exercise for them goes to someone else. With direct action, you can be sure that your work will offer results — and the things you develop in the process, whether its experience, contacts or recognition in your community, or organisational structures — these cannot be taken away from you.

Voting consolidates the power of a whole society into the hands of a few politicians — through the force of sheer habit, or enforced through other, less subtle techniques, the rest of us are kept in a position of dependence. This means a small number of people get to decide how society is run, and as a result, benefit from all the wealth of this world. The rest of us are left to work and struggle! However, direct action, at home or at work, makes us familiar with our own resources and capabilities — and shows us the power of individual and collective action.

Voting is glorified as 'freedom' in action. It's not freedom — freedom is being able to decide what the choices are in the first place, not picking between Pepsi and Coca-Cola. Direct action is the real thing. You make the plan, you create the options.

Voting creates conflicts that distract from the real issues at hand, as people get caught up in the drama of one party against another, one candidate against another, one agenda against another. With direct action, on the other hand, the issues themselves are raised, addressed specifically, and often resolved.

Voting is only possible when election time comes around. Direct action can be applied whenever one sees fit. Voting is only useful for addressing whatever topics are current in the political agendas of candidates, while direct action can be applied in every aspect of your life, in every part of the world you live in.

Those of us who are totally disenchanted with representative democracy, who dream of a world without politicians, can rest assured that if we learn to apply the power that each of us have, the question of which party is elected becomes a moot point. They only have that power because we delegate it to them! Direct action puts power back where it belongs, in the hands of the people from whom it originates. Don't vote — organise!