



Des Moines Mutual Aid Monthly

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ART BY ANDREI SOKOLOV

Back to the Future

BY COMRADE JENOTS

As a general pall of pessimism and doubt sets in on the left over the last few years, we ought to ask: what sort of literature keeps one engaged with ideas whose realization is still somewhere off in the distance, behind long stretches of barbed wire, immiseration, ICE raids, imperialist war, and every other demon of capitalist life?

Only a few years ago, it was commonplace for leftists to gripe about so-called “theory”. For Lenin, this term simply meant the distillation of the history of the working class into clear lessons and observations. For your typical leftist, it is a synonym for an arcane writing style and useless ideas. Thankfully, these gripes have mostly gone out of fashion online. The “anti-theory” crowd has no more to show for their opinion than anybody else, and everyone knows it.

Normally, those who griped about it were insistent that anyone who was in favor of reading theory had to justify this activity by making theory “accessible to everyone.” Of course, this laughable idea rests on the unspoken belief that every single ordinary person has to intellectually understand arguments and claims in order to do revolution (or, even more ridiculous: that no matter how complex an argument, it can be distilled to something simple and equally convincing). Which implies, of course, that revolution is more similar to peeling a potato than it is to designing a space rocket. Nothing could, in reality, be further from the

truth, and most people who were or are ever asked to engage with “theory” are members of organizations that openly identify as left-wing and revolutionary. It is pretty clear this is not the same group as “ordinary people”. This should be obvious, but then—one would have to take a quick look around to find it out, and that’s dangerously close to “theorizing”.

What is offered in its place is usually utter tripe: petty busywork, directionless militancy, social clubs (not *inherently* bad, by the way) masquerading as revolutionary organizations, and in general—a lot of acting out, misbehavior, self-backpatting, and a *legendary degree of petulance* that would make an actual infant blush.

Leftists need to read theory, because *leftists are the ones who openly claim to have a way forward*. A claim to have a way forward has to be something another person can understand, evaluate, and defend or argue against. People who claim to have a way forward should be able to understand, and should have some deeper familiarity with, their enemies and interlocutors. Everything else is mere rhetoric, and there are enough lies and deceptions on the left to almost give heft to right wingers’ mostly delusional tirades against us.

Theory lives in a very different universe from things like faith and hope. “Regular decent people,” whether they are educated or not, whether they are politically engaged or not, do not necessarily need to engage with theory—with the nitty gritty arguments on behalf of views we already

have but need to evaluate deeply and interrogate from many angles. Many of them have neither *hope nor faith in a better world*. These are often unacknowledged preconditions for seeking out more serious engagement. Theory might nurture these, sometimes, but other things might do better. A person doesn’t try to build a rocket to the moon unless they *already believe on some level that it’s possible to get there*.

Here’s a thought: The history of the left wing movement has produced an immense amount of fiction writing. Why don’t we urge those who aren’t already hopeful, those who are skeptical but open-minded, who are not already engaged with left-wing organizations—to engage in activities that open their minds to new ideas through an accessible medium such as fiction? Specifically, fiction about other ways of living, fiction that depicts how human beings could in principle work together in a decent society, fiction that *argues for the realistic-ness of utopia*? Fiction that makes a stronger, more intelligible, more visceral argument than the sadness that pervades the left. Something that appeals to any and every person’s hope for a real human future—hope upon which reasons can later stand.

Some places to start:

William Morris — *News from Nowhere*
Alexander Bogdanov — *Red Star*
Ursula K. LeGuin — *The Dispossessed* ■

K2 is a Prison Guard’s Best Friend

BY COMRADE PATRICK

Since the beginning of the year, at least three people incarcerated in Iowa’s prison system have died from the use of K2. These deaths, like most issues affecting people the state has locked up, have gone wholly unnoticed by the servile capitalist media. The drug, also known as spice, is a synthetic form of marijuana. Unlike natural marijuana, the chemicals used in this drug to mimic THC can be dangerous, causing neurological problems, seizures, psychosis, and, in some cases, death. K2 is also undetectable on drug tests, making its use popular in institutionalized populations, including incarcerated people and members of the military.

Iowa’s carceral authorities have made the most of the K2 problem, and have used its presence in prisons as pretext for a number of abuses. A letter you send to a prisoner is no longer read by them, but scanned, emailed and printed, under the suspicion that K2 could be behind the stamp. Despite this fact, prisoners’ mail is still delayed for weeks or held back entirely, as if K2 could be trafficked through an email. Incarcerated people have also been subjected to solitary confinement and had their visitors turned away on suspicion of K2 use or smuggling the drug into prison.

These responses have nothing to do with mitigating K2 use and everything to do with further repressing prisoners. Prisons refuse to admit that the vast majority of contraband brought into prison arrives in the lunch boxes and pockets of corrections officers. Two or three COs have been fired for bringing in K2, another fact the capitalist media has failed to report on. Prison authorities thus implicitly accept the fact that its staff are bringing in the drug, while using its presence as an excuse to crack down on whoever they please in prisons. If wardens actually want to stem the tide of K2 in prisons, they should investigate and fire the dirty guards on staff and treat any drug abuse as a medical, rather than disciplinary, issue. They are incapable of taking these obvious steps because the function of Iowa’s prisons is not to deliver justice, but to discipline and contain populations which are surplus to capitalist production.

We nevertheless join Iowa’s incarcerated people in demanding an end to the crackdown and an investigation into the actual culprits of K2 smuggling as an immediate step on the road to the abolition of prison generally. None of us are free until all of us are free.

This article was written with reporting provided by incarcerated people in Iowa’s prison system. ■



ASK

DES MOINES
MUTUAL
★ AID ★

Dear Des Moines Mutual Aid,

I attended the local No Kings rally and I left very confused. Every sign said something different and unrelated, the speakers were very disjointed, it was just all confusing. Can you help me understand what they were about?

—AS

Dear AS,

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. These events lacked a main thing, so no, we cannot help you understand.



Dear Des Moines Mutual Aid,

If the master’s tools will not be used to dismantle the master’s house, what are we supposed to use?

—SB

Dear SB,

Killdozers.



Dear Des Moines Mutual Aid,

Did Joppa stop their heater and propane program they maintained for years? We got no warning.

—RF

Dear RF,

We don’t know, they won’t return our phone calls. Maybe they ran through all their grants and donor money on their drop-in center that is always closed?

To be fair, DMMA had trouble sourcing heaters this year because the company that makes them was donating them to hurricane relief in North Carolina, but we eventually found sources. Unfortunately DMMA doesn’t have the resources of JOPPA and can’t get to every camp currently.

We hope Joppa can resume this service, or at the least return the heaters they took from the campers that we provided, but we don’t have an answer currently.



This edition of Ask DMMA’s Answer Committee was comprised of Comrade Sid, Subcomadante Amenaza, and Subcomadante Ronnie. Keep sending your questions to desmoinesmutualaid@protonmail.com ■

SHOW ANNOUNCEMENT:

“BRING THE HEAT” BENEFIT SHOW

FEATURING BOOTCAMP, WANDERER,

TRAFFIC DEATH, & SKINNED ALIVE

SATURDAY JANUARY 10th, 2026 at XBK

DETAILS/BUY TICKETS AT XBK.COM



The Great Propane Heist of 2025

That time Officer Methy thought he got us

BY SUBCOMADANTE RONNIE

The following is an account of one of our crews being detained by the pigs for over an hour and nearly arrested for giving propane to homeless people. All involved have been cleared by investigation of having committed any crime.

A crew of four of us were doing our regular propane delivery route to homeless camps for the Winter Survival Program. One drop required driving onto a private lot to meet campers at the back for the handoff. We initially took no notice of a pig waiting for us in the parking lot. I said to my passenger, “he must be taking a meth break”. We drove to the back and started unloading the tanks near a dilapidated old water tower, joking that we looked like we were targeting critical infrastructure. That’s when the pig came up on us hot, speeding towards us, and barking orders. Officer Methy’s neck veins were bulging, his eyes were wild, and he had that mustache that we all know means they

have no self control. We immediately called the campers and told them what was up and to not meet us yet.

The pig immediately called in back up and we soon attracted the attention of the crime scene investigation unit van and three squad cars. Officer Methy was barking for our ID’s, which the two drivers gave, the other two denied that request. He kept asking us what we were doing and why we had so much propane. We didn’t answer any questions and couldn’t stop laughing in his face, his anger and false authority was just too funny. The pigs in the CSI van examined and photographed the tanks over and over, as though they were about to crack the case that would make them Sergeant.

As a few of us lit up cigarettes, Officer Methy announced that we were all being detained. We demanded probable cause and he said they were investigating a bunch of gas station propane thefts. We got to laughing harder as we realized that this wasn’t a simple trespass

investigation—generally a citation with a fine, but that it is now a burglary investigation with the possibility of arrest, vehicles impounded, and the propane our friends needed to survive being seized.

I decided to speak for the first time and offer up the receipts from the purchase. The pig examined the receipts that matched exactly what was in front of him and decided he needed to call the place where we got the tanks. He was unable to reach them, probably too shaky from the meth and anger to operate a phone. One of us calls them, puts them on speaker, and they confirm we bought them and that they enjoy our business and our use for the tanks.

Eventually the Sgt. that showed up told Methy they got nothing and it was time to go. Methy warned us we are still under investigation and they all left as we were laughing hard. They never solved the greatest crime of 2025 and we got the propane to the people. ■

Des Moines Mutual Aid Points of Unity:

- o. We believe in working shoulder to shoulder and standing in solidarity with all oppressed communities. We ourselves are oppressed, and our mutual aid work is a fight for our collective liberation. We do not believe in a top-down model of charity. Instead, we contrast our efforts at horizontal mutual aid, the fostering of mutually beneficial relationships and communities, to dehumanizing and colonizing charity.
1. We believe in community autonomy. We believe that the communities we live and organize in have been largely excluded from state social services, but intensely surveilled and policed by the state repressive apparatus. Capitalism is fundamentally unable to meet people’s needs. We want to build self-sustaining communities that are independent of the capitalist state, both materially and ideologically, and can resist its repression.
2. We are police and prison abolitionists. Abolition and the mutual aid that we practice are inextricably linked. We don’t rely on capitalist institutions or the police to do our work. We believe in building strong and resilient communities which make police obsolete, including community systems of accountability and crisis intervention.
3. We work to raise the political consciousness of our communities. Part of political education is connecting people’s lived experiences to a broader political perspective. Another component is working to ensure that people can meet their basic needs. It is difficult to organize for future liberation when someone is entrenched in day-to-day struggle.
4. We have open disagreements with each other about ideas and practices. We believe there is no formula for resolving our ideological differences other than working towards our common aims, engaging with each other in a comradely manner, and respecting one another, whether or not we can hash out disagreements in the process.
5. We are a revolutionary organization. We are united in a basic agreement that the ultimate goal of revolution is the abolition of the state and of social classes, and that the state’s institutions are not a means to achieving that end. We are against participation in electoral politics, because we are for the development of mutual aid as an alternative and widespread institution. ■