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Notes from New England

[Commentary]

*"Please accept this ragged purse
of high notes."*

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), then revived in issue 59 (October 2006) as Notes from the Northwest, & appearing since issue 75 (October 2010) under its original title. It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

Notes on Occupy

This year's election, every major election in fact, & every minor one really, is about what laws are going to be discussed and voted upon by whom in the halls of power. Laws that affect each one of us, no matter how much we may try to turn away and ignore it all. It's about the fact that the US and its economic and military might shadows the world. And yet, despite this, we each have a legal say in this situation.

We ended slavery. We got women the right to vote. These never should have *had* to be victories. But they were. We won the civil rights debate. We are slowly winning GLBT rights & overturning laws against marijuana & psychedelics. Nobody is going to hand us these victories. Mass opposition didn't stop the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We didn't have enough representation in DC. But we changed the numbers, & war with Iran has not occurred.

Ideally, we would not be concerned with these things. We would be busy building a paradise from the generous bounty this planet offers all life. But we are brutish conscious animals, as inclined to violence as to empathy.

Our time is finite on this planet, & most often politics is an ugly ugly thing, mostly brings out the worst in people. Many people in the Occupy movement have not & will not involve themselves in electoral politics, call it all a sham, & all political parties alike. Vote Green, they say, or turn away entirely.

I believe this attitude to be the problem with Occupy now. There was such a great promise last fall but no follow-through, no ideas to drive the societal narrative beyond protest. Nobody wanted to say what Occupy was about. Everyone wanted it to be about everything, so that nobody was excluded. So it became about nothing. People got bored and left, joined other movements, filled their time with other things. Now, in an election year, with a chance to summon millions into a broken election system to overwhelm it with new blood, nothing happens. Occupy celebrates its anniversary by trying (& essentially failing) to occupy again. It's frustrating as hell to see it all happen, and so much not happen.

I don't know that Occupy has time left to still matter. I do know the clock is ticking.

Maybe its purpose was to turn attention to the economic disaster happening in this country, and then dissipate. I don't know. I do know that the same bastards are in office now as last fall, and the only chance we have to follow through on the Occupy promise is to swarm the election with new voters, empowered to believe that they can make a change, and that change can be good as well as bad.

This world is suffering mightily in so many ways, as perhaps always. Occupy was a sudden shock of light. That light is fading. Voting is not in itself an answer, but it sure as hell beats just sitting still, ignoring the obvious, and letting the darkness move in without a fight. The bastards hope more people stay home, for whatever reason. They don't care why, just that many do. One less vote they have to suppress.

