

APPENDIX TWO

PEACEFUL ACTS OF OPPOSITION

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

This document is an attempt to reduce the philosophy of voluntary simplicity to a list of broad proposals for personal action. While any such list will be incomplete, to some degree controversial, and everywhere in need of creative interpretation, it is hoped that what follows may nevertheless provide imaginative individuals with the raw material needed to begin practicing simplicity and shaping a simple life.

1

Affirm life.

★ ★ ★

2

Privilege being over having.

★ ★ ★

3

Take a second look.

(Dissatisfaction with our material situations might be the result of failing to look properly at our lives rather than the result of any 'lack'.)

★ ★ ★

4

Read and talk about voluntary simplicity.

★ ★ ★

5

Isolate yourself from consumer culture for long enough to unlearn it.
(Find your own 'Walden Pond.' Stay until your private business is complete.)

★ ★ ★

6

Declare independence.

★ ★ ★

7

Remind yourself that those who know they have enough are rich.

★ ★ ★

8

Personally redefine the meaning of wealth.

★ ★ ★

VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

9

Stop the upward creep of material desire.

★ ★ ★

10

Commit to 'downshifting.'
(A more radical simplicity may follow.)

★ ★ ★

11

Create personally fulfilling and meaningful ways to shift your energy and attention from the material to the nonmaterial side of life.

★ ★ ★

12

Dedicate your imagination to thinking up a poeticized life based on an equitable share of nature.
(The possibilities are infinite.)

★ ★ ★

13

Compose yourself.

★ ★ ★

14

Determine what your chief purpose in life is.

★ ★ ★

15

Avoid possessions irrelevant to your chief purpose in life.

★ ★ ★

16

Do not confuse 'standard of living' with 'quality of life.'

★ ★ ★

17

Consume less – for yourself, for others, and for the Earth.

★ ★ ★

18

Be conscious of time poverty.
(Choose time over money or things.)

★ ★ ★

19

Reduce working hours.

★ ★ ★

20

Vote with your time.

★ ★ ★

21

Be mindful of how you earn a living and what it stands for.

★ ★ ★

22

Live beneath your means.

★ ★ ★

23

Save your raise.

★ ★ ★

24

Know your finances and spending habits, precisely.

★ ★ ★

VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

25

Vote with your money.

★ ★ ★

26

Fund sustainable democracy rather than the mega-corporations of advanced capitalism.

★ ★ ★

27

Buy local / green / organic / fair trade.

★ ★ ★

28

Avoid all goods you know or suspect were unjustly manufactured.

★ ★ ★

29

Think very carefully about what housing is necessary.
(Most people appear never to have considered what a house is, and are actually though needlessly poor all their lives because they think that they must have such a one as their neighbors have. — Thoreau)

★ ★ ★

30

The 'conspicuous consumers' are not so much sad as foolish — relinquish to them the pursuit.

★ ★ ★

31

Dress down.

★ ★ ★

32

Cultivate a vegetable garden and grow fruit trees.

★ ★ ★

33

Acquire a taste for minimalism.
(Lose yourself in the unceasingly eloquence of silence. Gaze at the stars on a clear night.)

★ ★ ★

34

Be humble.

★ ★ ★

35

Celebrate art.

★ ★ ★

36

Hold onto that mystical tingle associated with aesthetic experience.

★ ★ ★

37

Meditate and/or create your own spiritual exercises.

★ ★ ★

38

Devour yourself alive.
(Explore your intellectual passions, your aesthetic sensibilities, and your sensuality.)

★ ★ ★

39

Be creative.
(Find your own way.)

★ ★ ★

40

Read.

★ ★ ★

41

Keep a journal.

★ ★ ★

42

Walk in nature.

★ ★ ★

43

Recognize yourself as a citizen of the world.

★ ★ ★

44

Think global, act local.

★ ★ ★

45

Foster community spirit and be open to others.

★ ★ ★

46

Give some of yourself away as an unconditional gift.

★ ★ ★

47

Travel inward.

★ ★ ★

48

Enjoy solitude.

★ ★ ★

49

Take a short 'retirement' every so often to indulge a burning passion.
(Retire progressively.)

★ ★ ★

50

Be a thoughtful non-conformist.

★ ★ ★

51

Slow down.

★ ★ ★

52

Seek the infinite in great music.

★ ★ ★

53

Find a way to earn some money doing something you love.

★ ★ ★

54

Avoid unnecessary technology.

★ ★ ★

VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

55

Declutter all aspects of life.

★ ★ ★

56

Value self-reliance.
(Avoid paying people to do things you can do yourself.)

★ ★ ★

57

Entertain yourself for free.

★ ★ ★

58

Share your expertise.

★ ★ ★

59

Lend when asked and borrow when necessary.

★ ★ ★

60

Make your own.

★ ★ ★

61

Buy second-hand.

★ ★ ★

62

Never go shopping without a purpose or for entertainment.

★ ★ ★

63

Avoid television.
(It quickly becomes a general anesthetic that wastes life glamorizing behaviors and values that are poisonous to life.)

★ ★ ★

64

Avoid and reject as much advertising / mass media / consumer culture as possible – or else the product may be you.
(Do not be a corporate advertisement.)

★ ★ ★

65

Destroy some or all of your credit cards.

★ ★ ★

66

Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.

★ ★ ★

67

Reclaim the vast wealth of the commons.

★ ★ ★

68

Protect and respect the commons.
(Oppose further privatization.)

★ ★ ★

69

Reduce your ecological footprint. (Do some research.)

★ ★ ★

VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

70

Become a vegetarian or reduce meat consumption.
(Eating simply and creatively can be cheap.)

★ ★ ★

71

Do not own a car or make driving the exception.
(Walk or ride a bike. Use public transport. When necessary, hire or borrow a vehicle.)

★ ★ ★

72

Avoid air travel.

★ ★ ★

73

Conserve water.

★ ★ ★

74

Progress towards 100% green / renewable energy.

★ ★ ★

75

Take energy reduction / efficiency seriously.

★ ★ ★

76

Explore 'living off the grid,' at least in part. Consider getting a water tank and solar panels.

★ ★ ★

77

Waste not.
(Refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost. Avoid plastic bags and unnecessary packaging.)

★ ★ ★

78

Be stoic during those times when simple living may be tough.

★ ★ ★

79

Seek inspiration from the greatest simpler lives of the past and present.
(Buddha, Diogenes, Socrates, Jesus, Marcus Aurelius, St Francis, Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Helen and Scott Nearing, Joe Dominguez, Charles Grey, Jim Merkel, Anastasia etc.)

★ ★ ★

80

Object loudly to the existence of poverty amidst plenty.
(Leftist politics and/or religious belief entails trying to live the solution.)

★ ★ ★

81

Occasionally ask yourself awkward questions.

★ ★ ★

82

Make no excuses.

★ ★ ★

83

Affect the quality of your day.

★ ★ ★

84

Think carefully about the ways our society might be set up structurally to oppose voluntary simplicity and how you might be embedded in that structure. Struggle creatively for reform.
(Individuals are needed.)

★ ★ ★

85

Invest in a book on voluntary simplicity and leave it in your common room at work and/or lend it to curious friends or family members. Ask if you can leave another copy in your local café.
(Alternatively, improve and then distribute this document.)

★ ★ ★

86

Treasure your electoral votes.

★ ★ ★

87

Join your union.

★ ★ ★

88

Protest.
(If necessary, consider civil disobedience. Make non-violence absolute.)

★ ★ ★

89

Raise children to have few material wants.
(Be an example.)

★ ★ ★

90

Stand up.

★ ★ ★

91

Trust thyself.¹

★ ★ ★

92

Live deliberately.²

★ ★ ★

93

March to the beat of your own drummer.³

★ ★ ★

94

Advance confidently in the direction of your dreams, and endeavor to live
the life which you have imagined.⁴

★ ★ ★

95

Be the change you wish to see in the world.⁵

★ ★ ★

(ENDNOTES)

1 Ralph Waldo Emerson.

2 Henry David Thoreau.

3 Henry David Thoreau.

4 Henry David Thoreau.

5 Mahatma Gandhi.

We have only this moment, sparkling like a star in our hand –
and melting like a snowflake.

