

The Conch Republic: Proclamation of Secession

...Continued from page 1

To proclaim this, an explanation is in order. To wit: The original Conchs came from the Bahamas to the Florida Keys because they were sickened with tyranny, arrogance, abuse of rights and lack of compassion for humanity by a despot English King. They were known as "Conchs" because they raised flags with the tough, hard conch shellfish, protesting they'd rather eat conch than pay the King's taxes and live under his abuse. Now, 400 years later, we find similar dictatorship from the State and Federal levels.

We serve notice on the government in Washington to remove the roadblock in Florida City, across the highway from "Skeeter's" Last Chance Saloon. It discourages tourism, upon which we rely, and it obstructs the everyday flow of business from the mainland to the fabulous Florida Keys. We also ask Washington to put up a permanent border to a new foreign land.

We also serve notice to the bureaucrats in Tallahassee to pull out your State Troopers, DEA agents and all other

busybodies who try to tell us how to live, buy and sell properties, and generally confuse the issues of our local government.

We, as residents of the Conch Republic, refuse to suffer any longer from fools and bureaucrats in Tallahassee and Washington! We're not going to beg or beseech them any longer for help. We want one simple thing — Equality.

Here is our flag we so proudly fly. It has a conch shell, sunburst and stars of the Southern Cross and Big Dipper.

We secede from the United States.

We have raised our flag, given our notice and named our new government.

We call upon the world to recognize us as the Conch Republic.

We call upon our residents, the Conchs, to join us and stand together, lest we fall apart - Fall from fear, from a lack of courage, intimidation by an uncaring government whose actions show it has grown too big to care for people on a small chain of islands.

Know ye, that we hereby present this proclamation to the world.

referred to as Conchs, the "nation" took the name of the Conch Republic.

As part of the protest, the new Conch Republic immediately declared war against the United States (symbolically breaking a loaf of stale Cuban bread over the head of a man dressed in a naval uniform), then quickly surrendered after one minute (to the man in the uniform), and applied for one billion dollars in foreign aid.

The mock secession and the events surrounding it generated great publicity for the Keys' plight — the roadblock and inspection station were removed soon afterward.

In the 26 years since, the anniversary has been marked with good times and unique adventures that showcase the wacky, zany and otherwise unpredictable fun for which the Keys is known.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COCONUT TELEGRAPH:

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*Bruce
Alan*

History of Conch Republic

In 1982, the United States Border Patrol set up a roadblock and inspection point on US, in front of the Last Chance Saloon, just south of Florida City. Vehicles were stopped and searched for narcotics and illegal immigrants. The Key West City Council complained repeatedly about the inconvenience for travelers to and from Key West, claiming that it hurt the Keys' important tourism industry.

When the complaints went unanswered by the federal government and attempts to get an injunction against the roadblock failed in court, as a form of protest they declared the Keys' "independence" on April 23, 1982. Since the federal government had set up the equivalent of a border station as if the Keys were a foreign nation, they might as well become one. As many of the local citizens were

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Tearing Down To Rebuild Rethinking Complaining

We all know someone who has elevated the process of complaining to a high art. Sometimes funny, sometimes exhausting, these people have the ability to find a problem just about anywhere. In its more evolved form, complaining is simply the ability to see what's not working, in one's own life or in the external world, and it can be quite useful if followed to its natural conclusion—finding a solution and applying it. However, many of us don't get that far, and we find that complaining has become an end in itself. In small doses, this is not a big problem, but if complaining has become a huge part of our identities, it may be time to take a good look at how we are spending our energy.

Complaining is a person's way of acknowledging that they are not happy with the way things are. In a metaphorical way, when we complain or criticize, we are tearing down an undesirable structure in order to make room for something new. But if all we do is tear down, never bothering to summon the creative energy required to create something new, we are not fulfilling the process. In fact, we are at risk for becoming a stagnant and destructive force in our own lives and in the lives of the

people we love. Another issue with complaining is that we sometimes tend to focus on other people, whom we can't change, as a way of deflecting attention from the one person we can change—ourselves. So transforming complaining into something useful is a twofold process that begins with turning our critical eye to look at things we can actually do something about, and then taking positive action.

When we find ourselves complaining, the last thing we need to do is get down on ourselves. Instead, we can begin by noticing that we are in the mode of wanting to make some changes. But rather than lashing out at somebody or an organization, we can look for an appropriate place to channel this energy—not our neighbor's house, but possibly parts of our own. Finally, we can ask ourselves the positive question of what we would like to create in the place of whatever it is we want to tear down. When we do this, we channel a negative habit into a creative process, thus using our energy to change the world around us in a positive way.

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