

Woodshuck

Harvey Ovshinsky

1970

John Carpenter is the U.S. Coordinator for the Toronto Peace Festival and chief scout for a “peace” caravan that will stop in Detroit at the end of June. The caravan of buses and trucks will originate in Los Angeles and make its way across the country, making select stops for free concerts, films, and speakers.

Carpenter met in Ann Arbor recently with myself, Jerry Lubin (ABX), Mike Gormely (from the *Free Press*), Pete Andrews (manager for the SRC), and a local ecology group.

The meeting was called to see if Detroit could organize a massive festival that would highlight the caravan. Carpenter ran down a fast, articulate line about “peace” festivals and their importance in the country. He used all the right words and every other sentence was dotted with references to Woodstock.

But when we started asking questions things began to get heavy. The ecology people wanted to know what all this had to do with them. Carpenter said that the caravan people would be cleaning up after themselves, listening to ecology speakers and generally treating the land with respect. The press would pick up on this, Carpenter said, and everyone could see how Woodstock Nation treats the flowers and the grass.

But the ecology people were nervous. They were having a hard enough time legitimizing themselves for the media, why should they associate themselves with a “peace” caravan?

Carpenter was quick to point out that the word peace meant something entirely different in Toronto. It meant only “inner happiness” and it had nothing to do with the war or politics.

That didn’t seem to upset too many people at the meeting, but it sure pissed me off. I started to speak and eventually got into an argument that went something like this:

Me: Who’s going to pay for the concert here?

JC: You people, with benefits and donations.

Me: Why don’t the promoters front the money?

JC: The caravan has nothing to do with the Festival. The promoters couldn’t care less about the caravan. They’re going to have 500,000 people there no matter what happens in Detroit.

Me: Then why have a caravan?

JC: Because it’s a caravan for peace. There’ll be a lot of brothers going to Toronto, to hear music and have a good time.

Me: You want us to spend our money and break our asses so flower children from LA can have a good time?

JC: That’s being negative...They’re our brothers

Me: And it’s THEIR business if they want to be used by promoters who stand to make two million dollars off a phony peace caravan.

JC: But Woodstock...

Me: Fuck Woodstock!

The meeting went on like that for awhile. There were definitely two camps. Lubin, Gormely and I said that the promoters should write a check for the toilets, showers, and park insurance. But Carpenter said it was Detroit's responsibility.

What it all boiled down to was that we didn't mind entertaining and being responsible for the caravan, as long as we didn't have to pay for it. Open City, PCAUR, and the Fifth Estate don't have the money it would take to rent showers and equipment for these-people.

Carpenter left the city the next day, and rumor was that he wasn't very happy with what happened in Ann Arbor. He expected to leave with a plan and have something to tell the people in Toronto. Dan Carlisle was appointed Detroit coordinator for the caravan, but he didn't know what was going on either.

Dave Marsh, an editor of Creem magazine met with Carpenter the day before I did, and he said he resented someone coming into Detroit, making the kind of assumptions about our community that carpenter did.

KNR went right into the Festival, very excited about it and the caravan, but ABX criticized the way the thing had been handled on their Rock and Roll News show.

No one seems to know what's going on, and no one really cares. If the Toronto Peace people want a caravan in Detroit, the community attitude is that they should pay for it.

But I don't think they're too worried. As we left the Ann Arbor meeting, I overheard Carpenter tell someone, "Well, we can always get Buffalo."

Go ahead, John.

fifth Estate

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