Eastown Boycott Ends

Fifth Estate Collective

1970

The boycott of the Eastown Ballroom apparently has had an impact on the people who run the place.

Ballroom manager Bob Begairis recently met with representatives of the Universal Angels, an off-shoot of Open City, which has been coordinating the boycott.

The Angels felt that the ballroom was not serving the interests of the patrons, but rather just after the money. "We set up picket lines on several weekends to let people know what we were trying to do and I think we substantially hurt their business," Jim Caffrey of the Universal Angels told the Fifth Estate.

Since Russ Gibb sold his interests in the Eastown, the ballroom is owned solely by Begairis and Gabe Glantzh.

The group specifically demanded that prices be lowered, more local bands be hired, admit bikers wearing their club colors, provide a first aid station and generally fix up the ballroom.

The meeting with Begaris produced mixed results, but the Angels felt that he was generally sympathetic to the demands. Begairis agreed to set up a first aid station with the help of Open City, has put in new water fountains and hired more people to do clean up work.

The ballroom has begun hiring most local bands in the last few weeks, although the high prices have continued. "Begairis told us that this was the fault of the bands and their managers who demanded high prices of the ballroom," Caffrey said. Begairis did say they would institute a week night show with low prices and local bands. Also there would be a hassle door where those without the full admission fee could explain why they should be let in at a reduced rate.

There was no agreement on the issue of bikers wearing their colors inside. Begairis feels that people are "paranoid" about seeing bikers; the Angels felt this was bullshit. Bikers come to every free concert, sometimes with their whole club, and there is never a hassle.

It looks like the boycott is for the most part over although the Angels felt all of their demands should have been met, not just part of them. The significance of the action was in the pressure the power of the people was able to bring to bear on an institution whose primary function should be to provide the community with culture.



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