

Justice/Fast

Fifth Estate Collective

1970

On July 28 a Fast will begin. A Fast for Justice. A JUSTICE/FAST for John Sinclair. July 28 marks the date a year ago that John was sentenced to 9-1/2-10 years in prison for possession of marijuana by Recorder's Court Judge Robert Colombo.

John is a political prisoner. It took a two-month effort by the Detroit Narcotics Bureau using two full time undercover agents to trap John into giving them two joints back in December 1966. No charge. He gave them the marijuana and Judge Colombo himself ruled that the transaction was a case of "illegal entrapment," that is, the police created the crime! Still, this evidence was allowed to convict John.

John became the target for this railroad job because he is a dangerous man. The spirit and energy that he released in the Ann Arbor and Detroit area were too threatening to the house of cards that the pig has erected. John's work in Artists' Workshop, Trans-Love Energies, the White Panther party, with all of his poetry, this newspaper, the *Argus*, the *Warren-Forest Sun*, his own magazines and books; all of this was too much for the pig to tolerate.

But fortunately the pig has moved too late. The forces that John had helped set in motion have taken on a momentum of their own and continue to grow and flourish even with John 500 miles away in Marquette Prison.

John is a political prisoner. He is being held without bond although through the appeal of his conviction he is challenging the very constitutionality of the Michigan narcotics statutes. He is being held without bail although the Michigan House of Representatives has passed a bill reducing the maximum penalty for possession to the time he has already served. Even Gov. Miliken has spoken in favor of the bill so that our state can join the 27 others that have lessened barbaric anti-dope penalties.

John is a political prisoner. He has been shipped to Marquette Prison in the Upper Peninsula 500 miles from his attorneys and his wife and two children. His mail has been restricted and censored and visits denied to friends, media and business representatives.

The people are determined to see that John is set free. On July 28-31 supporters and family of John are going to fast for the four days. "We see this as a cleansing process for our bodies and spirits. It will be a testimony to our outrage and our physical statement to the state," a spokesman said.

Also planned is a full-page ad in the Detroit *Free Press* during the fast and a Rock 'n' Roll/Feast benefit on August 2 at one of the ballrooms. Money is needed for the ad and for continuing legal expenses. Send contributions to JUSTICE/FAST, 1105 N. Stephenson Hwy., Royal Oak, MI 48007 or call the White Panther Party in Detroit at 831-9623 or in Ann Arbor at 761-1709 for more information.

The poem and article on this page were written for us by John Sinclair. They are the reason he is not with us. FREE JOHN NOW!

WELCOME

“... is that feeling you have
when you finally do reach an awareness,
an understanding which you have earned through struggle.
It is a feeling of peace. A welcome feeling
of peace.”

John Coltrane

Welcome.

Please come in and
have a seat with us. Break bread. Yes. Sit with us,
hold the hand of that
human being next to you. Yes. You have come a
long long way,
we can see it in your eyes. And the way you stand,
the human grace that marks your movements,
Yes. Welcome. We have been
waiting for you
It is time you came to us.
Yes. It is time
for all to come. It is a time now
when all can come, to sit with us,
to sit with us in peace. You have come through
the hardest part, and you know it. Yes. You can
feel it.

You wear it in your cells. Yes. Please break bread with us. A little rice. And pass pipe there
to your friend. Yes. And now we will sing, we will sing together,
we will sing the song of our lives,

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Yes Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

YES Yes Yes

Yes Yes

Yes

9 February 1967

6:00 a.m.

The Coatpuller

Note. John’s Coatpuller column appeared regularly in the *Fifth Estate* from December 1965 until his imprisonment last year.

This one was written at the height of the July 1967 Detroit rebellion and contains one of the best impressionistic sketches of that week. [FE #35, August 1–15, 1967]

You know that it would be untrue / You know that I would be a liar / If I was to say to you / “Girl,
we can’t get much higher”—/ Come on baby light my fire / Come on baby light my fire / Gonna set the
night on/FI-YUR

—“Light My Fire,” The Doors

“Light My Fire” rises through the radio ranks for weeks and, when it hits number one on the stations, the people respond and burn the city down. Or play Archie Shepp’s FIRE MUSIC album as background music for the Detroit purification: the scope and feeling of the people’s mood is there; an elegy for Malcolm X.

The television people are scared and stand frowning in doorways, sit clenching their teeth in front of their sets, as the news makes its way through the burning city—the police can’t hold them, the STATE police can’t hold them, the Michigan National Guard can’t hold them, “bring in the Federal Troops, we gotta stop them crazy niggers before they tear the whole city apart and carry it back to their living rooms piece by piece,” they yell.

Soldiers in battle green and tommy guns hold down the banks and furniture stores where there’s still furniture. Troops massed at the Woodward Hudson’s entrances to keep the plastic castle safe from lawless, pillaging looting criminals as the governor and the President of the U-nited States call them on TV, and still the fires burn, the stores fall, the people set the night on fire.

You can watch it on TV if you like, a new taste of instant reality for the folks back home—but the bad guys are throwing rocks at the good guys’ cameras and it gets kinda scary out there for us good folk, doesn’t it? Still it’s weird to turn on the set and watch your own city burn down, shots and sounds of the rioting alternated with “The Guiding Light” and the early morning golf lesson just like the world was carrying on business as usual, except there’s news every hour now and the reporters for once don’t have to make it all up, they’ve got something more real than they can handle screaming at them and calling them names.

No, baby, it’s not a “race riot,” or anything as simple as that. People just got tired of being hassled by police and cheated by businessmen and got out their equalizers and went to town. The mode of the music changed and the walls of the city shook and fell. Yes they did. Oh it was Robin Hood Day in merry olde Detroit, the first annual city—wide all—free fire sale, and the people without got their hands on the goodies.

While families climbed through A&P windows and picked the stores clean, carting home the groceries they’d been paying their lives for all these years. Free furniture and color TVs, guitars and leather coats, shoes and clothes and liquor.

And when their energies turned from smashing the stores they would go for the police, and not, you’ll notice, their neighbors.

The dirty, rotten hated police who came to bring “law and order” made for the owners and bosses and bigshots to protect their precious property. Just now someone tells me, “If there was any hatred, it came from the cops—the people weren’t hostile at all.”

The people just wanted what was theirs all along. They’d been waiting long enough, and it was time now to do it. On a lovely hot Sunday morning they saw the hated po-lice dragging off 80 people from a blind pig, and they’d had enough. This country is built on a powder keg of plunder and greed, and the fuse burned down, that’s all. The people watched the Man’s TV and knew it was a lie. THEY didn’t live like that, and there was no way in hell the Man could make them believe his lies any more. Their frustration and desperation mounted until they couldn’t get no higher, they were invisible now, got no secrets to conceal. When you ain’t got nothin’, you got nothin’ to lose. A white boy said that. And the stores came down.

As of this writing over 4000 people have been arrested and jailed, with bonds starting at \$10,000 and going up. That means NO ONE gets out until trial. The jails are full—the City, the County, the House of Correction, those arraigned were taken to Jackson Prison to be held for trial, those who just came in were held in empty DSR buses until the jails had room for them. The system was breaking down. The President got up on TV with R. Strange MacNamara weeping over his shoulder and whined for “law and order.” Riots broke out in other cities all over the country. The television programs began to look stupider and less human than usual next to the reality news reports every hour. The reality news had stars and extras the folks back home had never been allowed to see. And these new stars were all “criminals,” thousands of them sit rotting in jail until they’re allowed their lawful “day in court.”

The people ruled the city for a minute, and may still be ruling when this is printed. The hypocrisy of “democratic capitalism” stood exposed, naked and ugly. The troops protected the owners’ possessions and shot the people down in the streets for money. Sing it, shout it, scream it down—the news is out, people, you own the town.

Related

John Sinclair’s writing in *Fifth Estate*

fifth Estate

Fifth Estate Collective
Justice/Fast
1970

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/110-july-23-august-5-1970/justice-fast>
Fifth Estate #110, July 23-August 5, 1970

[fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fifthestate.org)