

Detroit Seen

Fifth Estate Collective

1976

Wowie zowie!—this issue marks the beginning of the 12th year of continuous publication for the Fifth Estate. In 1965, 17-year-old Harvey Ovshinsky came back from the West Coast after a summer of working on the Los Angeles Free Press with the idea of starting a similar “underground” newspaper in Detroit. After varying fits and starts the FE rapidly became part of the dope, rock and roll and marching in the streets phenomena of the ‘60s and early ‘70s. With the demise of the “Movement” and an accompanying reduction in circulation from a high of 14,000 in 1969 to a low of about 5,000 in 1974, the paper made one last stab at survival as a commercial, youth-oriented weekly. That effort collapsed in July 1975 when the present staff revamped the works into a monthly publication of libertarian communism having a circulation of 3,000. None of us feel an “awesome responsibility” or anything like that, to continue what has turned out to be an institution in Detroit, but we do plan to keep on rolling for the time being—at least as long as we can maintain a degree of relevancy and have a touch of fun...

As of next issue the mail subscription price of the Fifth Estate will be raised to \$4 per year due to increased costs in every aspect of our operation. This will still represent a small savings over the cover price of 35 cents for those out of state. Hopefully, local subscribers, who will be paying \$1 more a year, will see the advantage in the regularity of mail delivery, support for the paper, and the fact that subscribers are given a 10% discount on all books purchased from Ammunition Books. For this last issue, sub rates will remain at the old price of \$3...

A special note of thanks must be made to FE friends in Sacramento who sent us a \$50 donation which was collected at an Italian Anarchists’ picnic held in San Jose and to a reader in Seattle, as well as one in Chicago, who each also contributed \$50. Several others mailed in smaller but equally appreciated donations, all of which allow us to continue publishing.

In order to insure a constant source of revenue, we would like to find at least forty people who would contribute five dollars monthly as *Fifth Estate* sustainers. This would ease the pressure of financial hassles and allow more time for plans we have for larger papers and special issue supplements. If you have the inclination and wherewithal to be part of this effort, use the subscription coupon ‘farther back in the paper. Sustainers will receive at least one new publication each month as part of an appreciation for their support...

Check out page 15—we have just started a new events calendar for inexpensive and community activities. If you would like something listed, the deadline is about the 23rd of each month, and should be written out and either mailed in or brought over to our office; no phoned items please...

When Democratic Vice-Presidential aspirant Senator Walter Mondale arrived in the Motor City on September 9, he had an effect on voters and non-voters alike which he probably was never even aware of. His Secret Service-guarded car caravan rushing in from Metro Airport held up morning rush-hour freeway traffic on all of the incoming routes, forcing tens of thousands of commuters to be late for work and spend that much more unpaid labor time stalled in traffic jams—all for politics...

Lafayette Clinic has reported one statistic related to unemployment that is on the rise—the suicide rate. The local shrinks attribute the rise in part to the disastrous job situation in Detroit after reports of two separate incidents in which despondent unemployed workers took their own lives...

As part of its role in the gang hysteria designed to bring back the STRESS decoy murder squad, the Sunday supplement of the Detroit Free Press ran a long “human interest” story September 12 about the head executioner for STRESS—Raymond Peterson (five confirmed “kills”). Although the story, by Tom Ricke, laid out in no uncertain terms the cold-blooded murders that Peterson and his cohorts had committed, the emphasis was on the “tragedy” of Peterson, not his victims. Now poor Ray has to be content with \$30,000 in back pay, a police pension, and ownership of a trucking firm, but is still “haunted” by the killings. Ricke ends his pitiful tale of Peterson, allegedly used by the police and then dropped, as a man being “afraid to step on an ant” (but apparently not on a man!). If such concrete evidence exists linking Peterson to premeditated murder, why is he still running around loose living the life of Riley?...

Speaking of criminals: in the “Falling Out Among Thieves” Department this month, Detroit’s toughest street gang has suffered a “leadership crisis” as a result of the long-standing feud between (now ex-) Chief Phillip “Elmer Fudd” Tannian and Executive Deputy Chief Frank “New Breed” Blount. Tannian, criticized lately for his inability to control his gang, was apparently trying to appease the critics when he opened the DPD’s back door to the nation’s second largest criminal organization, the FBI, for their investigation of Blount and others’ involvement in the Detroit heroin trade (this is called setting a thief to catch a thief). It was of course purely coincidental that Blount and Tannian had long -been bitter rivals for power within the department, but Blount apparently took it personally and started putting pressure on his old buddy Coleman Young to get rid of Tannian. Coleman himself was already put out because Phil (“Jerry” to his friends) had forgotten all about telling his son about the investigation. Well, you know how these things tend to escalate, and even though everybody meant well, pretty soon Frank was threatening Phil’s life, then Phil started carrying two guns, then Frank started carrying three, then Phil dropped by Frank’s place unexpectedly with some friends and some search warrants and before you know it, all the squalid power-mongering that’s usually kept under wraps by these vermin was splattered all over the pages of Detroit’s daily advertising circulars. Then poor Coleman Young, as if he didn’t have enough troubles presiding over the city’s decline, was forced to step between the squabblers and send them to their respective corners with the appropriate reprimands. But even this didn’t solve the problem because Phil started crying when he realized Frank’s reprimand (“educational” leave at full pay—\$38,000 a year) was nicer than his (forced resignation with no dough). So now Phil has forced Coleman’s hand in an attempt to make him justify his firing to the concerned populace. The populace, however, seems to find him no less detestable than any of his brethren (and sistren) and his departure has been greeted with a roar of silence. For his part, Coleman is more preoccupied with justifying his own continued presence now that the same federal investigation is looking into his business affairs. And (gasp), to top it all off, another deputy Chief, Reginald Harvel, was so affronted by the suggestion that he might be involved in criminal activity that he shot himself twice in the chest to demonstrate his indignation. Harvel, who thought he would be “up and about in a few days”, is survived by a score of unserved subpoenas...

Next thing you know we’ll be hearing that Jerry Ford, about whom even the straight media could find nothing more to recommend him than the fact that his severely limited intellect seemed to rule out corruptibility, has been taking gifts and money from corporations like U.S. Steel...

And speaking also of Coleman Young, it always seemed to us indicative of the debasement of language today that anybody who ran for political office could possibly be honored with the accusation of being a communist; one earnest “revolutionary” organizer of our acquaintance (who is also a “revolutionary” university professor and “revolutionary” union president) was actually capable of maintaining a straight face when he recently referred to Young as a “true radical.” We’re wondering what he and other aspiring bureaucrats are thinking now about the news that their “true radical” recently crossed a picket line in Flint, because of a “prior commitment.” The leftoids and counter-culture newspaper writers who are used to distorting conceptions like “radical” to the point where they become meaningless will be hard put to defend this hack any longer even on their own warped terms...

Detroit’s repressive youth curfew and mandatory identification ordinances remain in effect because the organization committed to securing as many constitutional guarantees as possible has been unable to mount a legal challenge to these laws because of a lack of a defendant. If you want to contest either the curfew citation or an arrest under the I.D. law, contact the American Civil Liberties Union at 961-4662. One way of circumventing the demand of the police for identification is simply not to carry a wallet or purse when you’re not driving. Your papers make you legally part of the State—we all carry proof of our slavery in our pockets...

In addition to the incredible array of Medicaid and food stamp cutbacks currently being implemented in Detroit (and around the country), the Wayne County Department of Social Services is planning to institute the “California Plan” for welfare reporting, so named for its “successful” first use during Ronald Reagan’s tenure as governor of that state. Whereas welfare recipients presently are required to complete a lengthy, vague and intrusive Statement of Continuing Eligibility form every six months to continue receiving the so-called “benefits”, under the new plan (already tested in less-populous counties in Michigan), recipients will be required to fill out such a questionnaire, accurately and completely, every month. If for any reason any one of the questionnaires should not turn up on time, or turn up sufficiently incomplete, the recipient’s case will be closed and he or she will be forced to go through the entire bureaucratic rigmarole of reopening the case, a process which could easily take weeks. Given that many of the recipients in Detroit are disabled or have at best the “reading skills” of functional illiteracy bestowed upon them by the city’s educational system, it’s not difficult to imagine the great savings this further humiliation and degradation of “clients” will net for the efficiency-conscious WCDSS...



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