

Off Center

Sol Plafkin

1967

One nice thing about public feuds between politicians is that it gives everybody a rare chance to see part of what's going on inside governmental circles. We learn, that at least to some extent, many decisions are made on the basis of personal vanity, pride, and ego conflict—and not solely as the result of some impersonal “power structure” beyond the reach of our full comprehension or influence.

This writer, for one, believes that there is some sort of sense to reasonable political involvement -that the world is not just a bundle of economic determinisms fated to go only one way, immune to influence and alteration by us ordinary folks.

One apparent difference between the “hippy” of today and the “beatnik” of a decade ago is that the present-day “hippy” does not seek complete disengagement from today's mundane social problems as did his predecessor.

It may be just more than coincidence that the Artists' Workshop and offices of the Detroit Committee to End the War in Vietnam are on the same corner in town. John Sinclair, our beloved “hippy” leader, has proudly asserted that he is a member of the DCEWV.

And there's a lot more than rebellious cuteness in the slogan, “Make Love, Not War.” With the reactionary elements of our society calling for the lives of our young men in the pursuit of its current inhumane projects, those in love with “life” (the potheads, etc.) have no choice but to enter into some limited political activity against obviously useless wars.

Getting back to the Beck-Cavanagh squabble, we come to another truism—that, most of the time, life is too complicated to be separated into simple “good” and “bad” sides.

While this columnist recently stated that the Cavanagh — recall movement had inherent racist overtones and we would probably have to support our young whippersnapper chief executive, it also should be apparent that Jerry is far from perfect, and that Mary Beck is far from being a local adherent of ex-Gov. George Wallace.

Miss Beck, we should be constantly reminded, has been one of the few councilmen to demand that Police Commissioner Girardin stop allowing his officers to keep “dossiers” on Detroit citizens for their political, not criminal, activities.

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And now I must turn to one of my favorite topics, the Young Demmers. Many of you readers who go to Wayne have seen these kids in action. High — schoolers have also seen their “teeny-bopper” equivalent the Teen Dems.

It's quite an education to see these guys in action. There may be a future LBJ, JFK, or HHH among them. “The name of this game is win,” says Martin Slobin, chairman of the 17th District Young Dems, and former chairman at Wayne State. And you can't really hate these guys—for they come out against the war, for George Crockett, Jim Lafferty, and even for the legalization of prostitution (I'm sure that they would have approved prostitution if they'd been asked to.)

But one cant tell whether they really believe in these things or whether or not they just see a chance to elicit support for their personal political careers by espousing slightly unpopular causes.

So, in the same meeting, the State Young Democrats gave a standing ovation to Sen. Wayne Morse and then proceeded to endorse for national president of the Young Democrats one Eugene Konstant who is a self-admitted “hawk,” a quasi-dixiecrat, and a generally obnoxious personality in the bargain.

The alleged rationale for supporting Konstant is that if he is elected to the national presidency or some other high office in the Young Dems, he will “kick back” some national YD money to the Michigan kids.

The tragic part of the matter is that some kids who heretofore have supported some damn good causes, have now decided that their own personal egos are now at stake in supporting Konstant, and are willing to stake their whole political future on this spurious cause.

Thus, ideology gets lost in personality and the old Marxist answers just don’t seem to fit.

fifth Estate

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<https://www.fiftheastate.org/archive/30-may-15-31-1967/off-center>
Fifth Estate #30, May 15-31, 1967

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