

The Coatpuller

John Sinclair

1967

A lot has happened since the last time I wrote this column, and I still don't know what'll come of it, but all we can do is ride it out and see what we can do with it. My own situation has changed a great deal even though I certainly don't feel any different as a human being, but it sure is weird to walk or drive down the street and have strangers smile and wave because they saw me on TV and were given to believe that "John Sinclair is the high priest of the hippies in Detroit" or whatever.

The whole mass media change is something none of us have had to cope with in the past, and since it came upon us so unexpectedly there wasn't any time to "prepare" for it—it's just like, you do what you do every day for a number of years, with whatever success or failure (if those terms are at all relevant any more), you know people, have friends, enter into a number of relationships with various people, and all of a sudden you're there on TV, smiling and laughing, stoned out of your mind, and the next day you are someone else altogether for people who'd never even know you existed, and even for people you've known and talked to.

For example, I go to the Dairy Queen on Third and Canfield almost every day to buy a treat, right? And talk to the people who work there, joke a little, buy a banana split, right? So last week I walk up to the window and ask for a Jack & Jill sundae and say hi to the kid who works there, who now like clears his throat and says to me, "Gee, aren't you the head of the hippies? I saw you on TV the other night." And all I could tell him was, "No, no, I'm the guy who comes in here every day and buys a lot of Dairy Queens. Don't you remember me? I was here the day you opened..."

The media creates images and sells them—it is set up to help create merchandise, and perpetuate a way of life that brings much money and comfort to a few people and sells the rest a bullshit image of themselves that will keep them happy even though they know they're getting beat by the system every minute. This system keeps people in their place by making them believe that only a few people are responsible for what happens and that they, the people en masse, are all puny and single and will never have any effect on the world no matter what they do.

"Leaders" are created by the media image freaks and sold to the people to keep them happy. They have to have "leaders" or nothing could get done—why, they certainly couldn't do it themselves. Or could they? The media exists to keep people from asking that question, and it has done a pretty good job of blinding them to their own absolute reality, i.e., that they are FREE and can do anything they want to, if they believe in it hard enough. All this is true right now. But as long as the television people are given the absolute right to interpret the world for the common people, it will not be true.

What I am trying to get at is this: There is no "hippie movement," it can't be explained away like that, and there are no "hippie leaders" in the term that the media people would give you, i.e., a group of superior beings who dream up and direct all activity and then "give" it to you. So that people can come up to me and say, "Thank you for the Love-In, I really had a good time and I'm glad you put it on."

The point is, there is a lot more to what's happening in Detroit now than John Sinclair. I do what I can to help things move, and I only do that because I am able to do it. There are a lot more people involved in this revolution than the media could stand to have you believe—in fact, everyone who is changing within himself, anyone who is changing himself now, is a leader of the revolution—because that's what the revolution is all about. There are

a lot of people in Trans-Love who are working hard to make things better, including the editors of this paper, the musicians, and everyone else in the organization. There were a lot of people who were responsible for organizing the Love-In, and the Love-In itself wouldn't have been possible without the presence of everyone who was there—so everyone who was there should thank themselves for having such a groovy time, because it wouldn't have happened without each one of you who took part.

Think about it, people—and when they try to tell you again that John Sinclair is your “leader,” tell them that they're crazy. Because they are. They can only run your lives, and your consciousness, as long as you let them, and when you show them that you won't buy their silly bullshit they'll have to find another way to deal with you. The media only exists because you let it exist, and you can make it change as soon as you get hip to it. Don't buy their-images—create your own, and throw them back at the machine. It won't know what to do, because then it won't be able to control you.

I just wanted to get this off my mind and try to set the whole thing in some kind of intelligible context. Next time I'll get back to the business at hand. And remember—when you turn off the TV set, you start to live for real. Believe it!

fifth Estate

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