

Detroit Seen

Fifth Estate Collective

1980

When we start receiving letters asking if we are still publishing, we know it's time to get an issue out. One reason that the gap between our last issue and this one must appear so large to those who receive the FE by mail is that the edition published at the time of the Republican Convention was not mailed to subscribers. Because of a shortage of staff and funds at the time, we distributed it in Detroit only. Unfortunately, none remain available for distribution but a reproduction of it is on the opposite page as well as a selection from the text.

Hopefully, in the next few months we will be able to turn out more frequent editions; we miss publishing an issue as much as some of you have said you miss the paper. As well as sending encouragement, some readers have continued to support this project financially at a time when it is severely needed (see below). Many of you have been exceedingly generous. However, we want to single out for special appreciation those comrades (many of whom have been active in anarchist circles for over sixty years) who meet regularly to raise funds for the libertarian press world-wide. Although at times they have sharply disagreed with our positions, they continue their unflagging support. In recent months they have collectively as well as individually sent us over \$250 for which we express our gratitude and our respect for their continuing commitment to the libertarian movement...

The morality of daily life:

At a time when the state says there are 617,000 people out of work in Michigan, or 14.1% of the state's workforce, the auto industry is putting the squeeze on workers with overdue car payment loans. While continuing to lay off thousands of workers, the Chrysler Corporation (through its credit division) tells these same workers that being out of work is "not an acceptable reason" for not paying their car loan payments. Threatening to repossess those cars for slowness of payment, Chrysler Credit Corporation is demanding that workers sign "reaffirmation agreements" which state that the worker accepts his "moral obligation to pay, and reaffirms and promises to pay Chrysler" the amount due. The dictionary defines "moral" as pertaining to the discernment of good and bad. In Chrysler's terms, it is bad to lose your job, but good to pay your bills ...

Consumer Corner:

Detroiters who ride the busses to work have faced a cutback of services due to layoffs and an increase in the fare, from 50 to 60 cents, and from 25 to 35 cents inside Grand Boulevard on lines heading downtown. People should know that it is within their power to lower bus fares by engaging in strategies of what the Italian workers have long referred to as "self-reduction." Reduction, that is, of the cost of living. A person who takes the bus to and from work fifty weeks out of the year (we don't recommend it, but some do) will be spending an extra dollar a week, which adds up to a whopping fifty bucks a year. Well, you can pay the fare increase or keep paying 50 cents or even less by keeping a pocketful of pennies and nickels specifically for riding the bus, and dropping an unwieldy combination

of them into the fare box which adds up to fifty cents or even less. And while you are at it: ask for a transfer, too. If you don't need to transfer but disembark near a bus stop for another line, brighten someone's day who happens to be standing there waiting for the bus, and let them ride for free! Paying less, and enjoying it more ...

Someone should... figure out a way to put a system of "self-reduction" into action for electricity bills. Not only are we constantly faced with rising electricity prices, but the extra money we pay is not necessarily going to "operating costs" or anything even vaguely resembling them, but as political contributions to defeat anti-nuclear referendums in other states. Not only do your electric bills go to build unsafe nuclear reactors somewhere upwind from you, but you are helping to finance expensive, slick advertising campaigns to defeat anti-nuclear proposals elsewhere. In Maine, on 23 September a referendum calling for an end to nuclearism in that state was defeated by a wide margin due to a major campaign funded by corporations and power companies around the country, including \$5,000 contributed by none other than Detroit Edison. The pro-nuclear forces had ten times as much money as the essentially grassroots, liberal anti-nuclear groups. and money doesn't just talk, it hollers. We are not advocating that people organize anti-nuclear referendums, but the people who began the drive to rid the state of nuclear power could see the cooling towers of the Maine Yankee nuclear plant from their front porch, so we hesitate in taking a too-critical stand on anything people do to oppose it short of voting for politicians. It is bad enough giving Edison any money, but to end up financing pro-nuclear campaigns is really insulting. One idea is to skip one bill, and send them a note explaining why, and then resume payment the following month so that they can't turn off your electricity for not paying altogether. And if you are planning to leave the state (perhaps you are moving to Maine) you can string them out several months at least before splitting. The money you withhold may have gone to pro-nuke campaigns coming up in November in Oregon and South Dakota ...

The Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan joined forces in the Detroit area last August, in hopes of putting together a march through the city. But the city council denied their permit for a downtown site, in favor of one a little off the beaten track. To make a long story short, the Nazis and the Klan decided to call off their racist rally, but not after a lot of breast beating from local lefty groupies.

Detroit's own Stalinist councilman, Kenneth Cockrel got the most publicity when he announced that he would organise a counter-march to "kick (Nazi & Klan) ass," if the two groups went ahead with their plans. We're sure that a lot of people in the city could get behind that sort of recreational activity, but seriously now, we can't see our 'old pal' Kenny driving up in his shiny Corvette to kick anybody's ass. That's a job for the "cannon-fodder," not the chiefs. But it's still good publicity for a professional politician who's got a career to keep in mind ...

While on the subject of the aborted Nazi/Klan rally, an interesting letter appeared in the *Detroit Free Press* (8/22/80) from socialist luminary Saul Wellman (with 42 others, as the *Free Press* put it). It seems Wellman and his pals wanted to publicly disassociate themselves from the actions of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and support the Nazi/Klan's right to demonstrate and make public their racist views—all under the armed protection of the state. Stating that "We affirm the right of all persons to publicly argue their viewpoints, however repugnant, provided they respect the rights of others. This is a precondition of both democracy and socialism," Wellman and his chums finished by saying, "We socialists seek to unite with others to defeat them before they grow."

But Saul Wellman has a history in which actions speak much louder than words. Caught in the heat of an argument with FE staff members Wellman admitted that while he was a commissar in the Stalinist Abraham Lincoln Brigade (funded by the USSR to fight in Spain during the 1936 revolution): "We killed you in Spain. I killed more anarchists and Trotskyists than I did fascists!" He apparently hasn't changed his views much in the intervening years as part of his recent political activity has been the distribution of Santiago Carrillo's (head of the Spanish CP) book *Dialogue on Spain* in which he admits and gives support to the Soviet secret police prisons existing in Spain in 1937—prisons where anarchists and other revolutionaries were tortured and executed. Old soldiers never die...

Poor Ma Bell

Seems unscrupulous customers are taking advantage of her invitation to phone by credit card but using phony numbers—all to the tune of \$30 million annually. This includes a known loss nationally of \$18.6 million in calls billed to unrelated third parties (not nice unless it happens to be the FBI or Dow Chemical) and \$13.5 million in

fake credit card calls (nice). In Michigan illegal calls have doubled in the last year alone. Last year Bell prosecuted 631 persons nationally for making illegal calls and says that they have been making checks of call destinations and caller patterns but will not divulge the results publicly. Information on credit card dialing may be obtained from *Overthrow* (formerly *Yipster Times*), Box 392, Canal St. Station, New York City 10013.

Although 690 cops were laid off in September, the city has not fallen victim to the hordes of thugs and goons as all the papers and politicians predicted. It's hard for us to lament the plight of the discharged police men and women—to us it's just 690 less hired guns on the street. Now if they would just get rid of the remaining 3,000. And they just might! The city's strategy is to recycle cop labor by laying off highly paid regular cops and replacing them with unpaid volunteer Detroit Police Reserves (holster sniffing cop lovers). The recruitment program, which began in 1946, has increased its attempts to recruit reserve porkers since the layoffs. Many of the volunteers who pass through the ten-week program later get jobs as security guards. And the recruitment is up. These authoritarians will not be satisfied until the policification of society is total, and every neighborhood, every city block is under their vigilance. As for the laid off cops, let them use their training to exact their revenge on their administrators. One reptile will devour another.

A note on the local coverage of the Polish strikes. It was sickening to see the likes of Bill Bonds and other news announcers extolling the courage and the combativeness of the Polish workers. If Detroit workers went on a mass strike calling for an end to rising prices, a stop to phony elections, an end to wage labor, organizations independent of the unions (which play a role in relation to the state and the companies parallel to that of the official unions in the Eastern bloc), these same commentators would be howling shrilly for the government to send in the Federal troops.

The Grinning Duck social club has had its wings clipped and found itself temporarily without quarters after the owner of the space it was occupying (Larry Raymond) went berserk and made a cowardly attack on one of the members: Quite a punch-up ensued and the Duckers decided to look for a place with a more stable landlord. The Duck had increasingly been the center for satirical plays, inventive music, poetry and wild parties, mostly with a libertarian flavor. A new space is currently under search and hopefully the Duck will be flying soon.



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