

# Off Center

Sol Plafkin

1967

Let me predict this: Jerry Cavanagh is definitely on the way out! It may not come as a result of the current recall movement, but it will happen soon.

I don't think that there's a single reader of the FIFTH ESTATE who gives a damn about the Mayor's sex life, but there are a hell of a lot of people in town who do care about his political, ethical, intellectual, and possible, financial corruption.

The onetime "boy wonder" of Detroit politics has in recent days just added two new items to his shit list. The more obvious piece of crap was his direct and almost vitriolic opposition to the "district" plan for the election of city councilmen.

"A step backward?" he proclaimed pontifically after State Rep. Jackie Vaughn III's historic proposal swept through the House of Representatives by a 3-1 margin. The mayor covets his present relationship with a relative impotent council and known damn well that the election of councilmen by districts would result in a hell of a lot more militant council which would be directly responsible to their smaller constituencies.

Poor Jerry was taken aback when he found the Negro community—who would stand to gain a 300 to 400% immediate increase in their representation on the council—was 100% for the plan (with the exception of the UAW's Nelson Jack Edwards—who really doesn't count as a Black "leader").

Jerry's miscalculations on the Negro support of the "district" plan sort of messed up—but not completely—a much more nefarious project: the recall of Councilman Mary V. Beck.

Miss Beck has shaken the stuffings out of Cavanagh's arrogance and pomposity. She hasn't covered all the areas of criticism that I would like to see brought up, but then, we all have different approaches to social and political problems.

So, what was Miss Beck's horrendous deed that makes her subject to a retaliatory recall? She charged Cavanagh with the failure to do anything significant to deal with the apparently rising crime rate in Detroit.

Ah, says Pope Jerry, you're anti-Negro, Miss Beck. For we all know that anyone who talks against crime is prejudiced!

Come now—can the crap, Jerry! People are a little more sophisticated than that now. You were able to use the unfortunate police crackdown of the winter of 1960-1 to garner Negro support for your-upset victory over Louis Miriani—but that stuff doesn't sell anymore.

If your gendarmes weren't so busy shaking down prostitutes, spying on "hippies," and selling field day tickets—maybe more of them would be available to protect the small businessman (both white and Black) from criminal activity.

In fact, most of the supporters of the movement to recall Cavanagh have gone out of their way to avoid racial innuendoes. For example, the West Side Courier in a recent article describing the increase in petty crimes on the West Side specifically used the adjective "white" to describe the unapprehended criminals that were molesting citizens in that area.

But that doesn't bother Jerry. He has deliberately made a racial issue out of the efforts to recall him. In his desperation to re-enlist the support of the Negro community which had been alienated from him last year after his hasty proposal of a "stop-and-frisk law, he has injected the issue of bigotry where none existed.

So far, he has succeeded in recruiting Rep. John Conyers as one of his top captains in rescuing his own faltering image. The entire apparatus of Conyers' First District Democratic Organization has been mobilized to push the Recall Beck petition campaign. I doubt whether this mutual political backscratching will help either gentleman very much.

Rep. Conyers is already in trouble for his double-dealing on the Powell issue and this latest deal isn't going to help him much with the vast majority of his constituents who see Cavanagh as just another fake white liberal leader who utters an occasional word about constitutional rights as his men in blue go around banging up citizens with impunity.

I'm not saying that Mary Beck is my exact ideal of a public figure. But she was part of the liberal slate that won control of city government in 1961. Query: Was it she that really changed or was it the gradually encroaching Cavanagh nepotism that choked up city hall and forced her into her present position of political isolation?

Getting back to the "district" plan for electing councilmen and providing "instant representation" for the Black community—while Cavanagh (and also, unfortunately, Mel Ravitz) came out screaming against it, it was Mary Beck and former "reactionary" mayor Louis Miriani who, while not endorsing it completely, said that it might be of some value.

# fifth Estate

Sol Plafkin  
Off Center  
1967

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/31-june-1-15-1967/off-center>  
Fifth Estate #31, June 1-15, 1967

**[fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/31-june-1-15-1967/off-center)**