

Other Scenes

John Wilcock

1967

Years ago the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was just about the only medium via which lazy, white liberals could salve their consciences when they happened to think about those poor, underprivileged Negroes down south. But the NAACP not only didn't advance the colored people very far but actively began to resist change when other more militant (such as SNCC & CORE) organizations came along. Maybe that's why it continued to get so many white "liberal" contributions.

Of course, the NAACP did manage to advance the career of some colored people—notably that of its director, Roy Wilkins, a cautious well-paid smoothie who became a member of America's official Establishment and now supports the war in Vietnam as one way for Negroes to get a better deal and better pay (in the U.S. Army). A couple of weeks ago when Martin Luther King (who's no firebrand radical, god knows) finally made the connection that Negroes were getting screwed even more AS A DIRECT RESULT of the Vietnam War Uncle Tom Wilkins predictably leapt in to protect his real idols, the Johnson gang of robbers and murderers.

King, says Wilkins, is "charming the Negro cause" by linking civil rights and the anti-war protests. The truth of the matter is that if these causes had been linked before the war might have been ended earlier and billions of dollars now wasted on bombs, shells and napalm potentially available to solve some of the poverty at home. By encouraging his stooge, Wilkins, to cut up King, LBJ is cleverly managing to get both protests off his back.

The political situation is at an impasse. Nobody I ever met wants to see LBJ continue as president but nobody has an alternative solution to propose. Oh God, do we have to suffer through another series of idiotic, hypocritical candidates for president who have absolutely nothing to offer that could find even minimally acceptable? The unctuous, racist, not-very-bright Romney; the rapacious, fake Rockefeller; the slanderous, slimy Nixon; the beady-eyed, opportunistic Kennedy; the vengeful, inhumane Reagan—what an uninspiring, hopeless bunch.

At one time I used to think that maybe, just maybe, the kids who have never gotten into the political bag might find a solution outside it. That possibility, a "nonpolitical" structure, could be built up to rival the existing one. But that's a dream. There is no way that political power can be achieved in this country without tackling the system head on. Johnson and his murderous friends would obviously be delighted if all the young protesters would drop out and get off his back.

In Southern California that's pretty much what is happening and it's an accurate reflection of the primitive, idealistic state the young people's society is in. But in SF's Haight-Ashbury the community has already begun to learn that the only way to protect itself against the repressive authorities (police, city officials, etc.) is to ORGANIZE and fight back.

City-owned movie theatre at Beaconsfield, England, discovered that there was more demand for the higher-priced seats so they "upgraded" three rows by raising the prices...

SF's *The Movement* (a black power tabloid) interviewed Negroes in Haight-Ashbury to find out why there was hostility between them and the hippie community, concluded that "when you've spent your whole life trying to become a white, middle-class person and all of a sudden white, middle-class kids show up and they don't look like

they're supposed to, in fact they say that whole thing is not where it's at, it's somewhere else—that causes a lot of tension”...

Allan Solomonow, convicted of tearing his name from his draft card, says the draft card law is invalid because it doesn't specify what must appear on the card. His sentence is postponed while this appeal goes through...

Meanwhile, the communist *Worker* charges editorially that the recent death of the three astronauts was “murder” by North American Aviation Inc. whose president admitted that the capsule was rushed through without proper testing. The *Worker* called it greed and pointed out that North American Aviation, one of the top 10 corporations fulfilling war orders (\$320 million so far) had killed so many women, children and old men so far that a trio of astronauts didn't make much difference to them...

How do you change Barbara Harris' make-up from a grubby, little chimney sweep to a glamorous seductress in 20 seconds? By covering the latter with easily-wiped-off flesh-colored powder and dirt, explains Joe Cranzano in the first issue of “Theatre Crafts” (\$5 annually ‘from 33 East Minor Street, Emmaus, Pa. 18049), a bimonthly devoted to similar backstage technicalities...

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