

Detroit Seen

Fifth Estate Collective

1983

When you get to be our age, it seems easy to forget your birthdays, but it probably should be noted that last November marked the 17th anniversary of our first issue. The paper has gone through a number of marked changes since those first days (we became an explicitly anti-authoritarian paper in July 1975), but we continue on, our commitment intact and looking forward to the next 17...

This is our first issue of the new year (and almost on schedule) and comes amidst the expression of new possibilities which suddenly seem to abound everywhere. Almost daily we receive reports of a new publication (see News & Reviews) or anarchist activity or further confirmation of the hopelessness of traditional politics. Will the revolution be here soon? Doubtful, but what does appear possible is an end to the isolation and obscurity of anarchist and libertarian communist politics and the growth and interconnection of libertarian projects. We get a sense of that mood from our readers as well whose response to our publication has been increasingly heartening, both from your letters and by your financial support. In fact, our quarterly schedule seems woefully inadequate at this point, but the drudgery of wage work and the travels of some of our staff make us currently unable to respond fully to the challenge of publishing more frequently.

For the time being, our interim Newsletter will have to fill the gap, but that only goes out to several hundred people who have ordered books or the like. We are hopeful that our new cooperative quarters (see front page) will augment our project and become a center for expanded libertarian activity in Detroit involving more people. One way to get involved with the paper is to submit articles, reports of activities, book reviews, graphics or whatever you think worth printing. (We are a bit picky about what we print, so please don't take offense if we can't come to an agreement on publication.)

There is a possibility that we are on the edge of a new upsurge in radicalism and one which will be unhobbled by the pathetic leftism of yesterday, but it requires an effort from each of us if we are to create our dreams. Our vision of a world which has eliminated the state and capitalism and replaced Authority with cooperation and love seems like a distant utopia at this point—one which could be snuffed out with the ease of a finger on a button. But how we lead our lives and the depths of our resistance to this vile society will mark us as well as create the potential for a new world.

On page 4 of our last issue the photograph of demonstrators confronting helmeted police neglects to indicate that the protest occurred in Oakland, California in 1969 and that the upraised hands contain flaming draft cards (which is difficult to make out in the photo)...

As word gets back to us about the last issue, it seems as though many people didn't understand why we printed the "Modified Mercalli Seismic Intensity Scale" [FE #311, Winter, 1983] on page 2. The actual scale is for measuring the intensity of earthquakes empirically rather than numerically such as on the Richter scale, and we thought it provided a poetic metaphor for revolution. Guess we all have our flops, but save it for the coming quakes, particularly you readers in California.

Our second anarchist potluck dinner was held on Sunday, January 30th, to continue a long tradition of such dinners and picnics which have been held throughout the country to help finance the libertarian press and support

political victims. \$94 was collected and it was decided to send all of it to the five victims of the anarchist witch-hunts in Canada who were arrested in British Columbia for the Direct Action bombings (see story elsewhere in this issue). Though no date has yet been set, we plan to carry on with these dinners, to enjoy the food and discussions and help keep alive the principles of mutual aid and support.

In keeping with this, we want to express our sincere gratitude to all those readers who have sent in contributions, large and small, to keep this project going and in particular, the generous donations received recently from the Florida picnics.

Three of us had the pleasure of attending the March 2nd gathering in Hollywood, Florida, and had the opportunity to meet the people who have been the backbone of support for so many publications over the last 50 years. Great food, enthusiastic singing and comradeship marked the day as well as a collection which totaled over \$1,100 which was sent to Spanish political victims, several anarchist newspapers in Europe; including a new Northern Italian anti-militarist paper, and the Fifth Estate. We have said previously that these dinners have been our model for our gatherings and our attendance at one confirmed our notion.

Regarding subscription renewals, please remember that your prompt response is of great help to us financially and also cuts down on our paperwork. Please note when you look at your address label on this issue whether or not there is an asterisk (*) next to your name. This asterisk means that your subscription is about to expire and you would help us greatly if you would send in a check to renew as soon as possible. And if you have changed your address, please be certain to send in both your old address and your new when notifying us of the change.

A demonstration in support of Dan Rutt, indicted by a federal grand jury for refusing to register for the draft, was held on February 4th at the Detroit Federal Building. 100 spirited supporters were there to back Rutt in his decision to oppose cooperation with any preparation for war which he considers immoral. Rutt is the first Michigan resident indicted since registration began more than two years ago, and his attorneys, members of the Detroit chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, feel that the government has applied selective enforcement by choosing to prosecute only a few among the more than 700,000 young men who haven't registered. Jim Lafferty, one of Rutt's attorneys, said: "The Reagan administration hopes that by prosecuting a few 'Dan Rutts' who are public, outspoken leaders of the draft resistance movement, that they can thereby intimidate the hundreds of thousands of others into registering for the draft." Since Dan Rutt bases his registration refusal on his devoutly held Christian principles, it remains a mystery to us how he can bravely dismiss the authority of the State while still submitting to the authority of archaic religious beliefs. What is important to us, however, are Rutt's actions, and we support him in his efforts against the government. For further information you may contact: The Draft Resisters Defense Committee, 798 Student Center Bldg., Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202 577-3451...

In other draft news, no news is good news. Paul Jacob, the Arkansas draft resister who chose to go underground rather than face prosecution, remains safe as of this writing (see last issue). The Universal Life Church, a non-religious organization (511 Davis Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007), has initiated a local support group for Jacob and will make available posters and information about his case as well as raise money and make preparations for people to travel to Jacob's court appearances in Little Rock, Arkansas, should that occur, to show solidarity with his refusal to take part in the military draft registration. In Jacob's words: "My body is not government property to be nationalized by those in power...a free society has no slaves." Support all draft registration resisters.

More fall-out from the November elections: Voters handily defeated a dumb-as-a-stump Reaganite in favor of a UAW-backed liberal Democrat James Blanchard with many leftists we know flocking to the booths to cast their vote "against reaction." Leaving aside the fact that Blanchard had an amazingly illiberal record during his term in the U.S. House of Representatives on issues like armaments, his first utterance in office was that he planned to institute a 16% tax hike, make deep cuts in social programs and begin lay-offs of state employees in an attempt to balance the state budget. Gee, sure glad the horrible Republican didn't get into office.

USA Today, a "national, general interest newspaper," has hit the streets of Detroit with 3,200 modern coin boxes looking appropriately like TV sets. *USA Today* gives messages in the same manner as the tube—bland, cool, simple and short. Nothing there to give offense, stories of earth-shaking importance pared down to two sentences with much of the rest devoted to *People Magazine* format star-mongering, a heavy dose of sports, and a psychedelic colored back page of weather. The paper is produced near Washington, D.C. with facsimile pages beamed via satellite to regional printing plants where a few inches of local news is crammed in and then out onto the streets. It's all

high tech and big bucks and an attempt by a reactionary Gannett Corporation to even further homogenize the appearance of reality with its trivialization of the world around us—it's the triumph of form over content. At a press conference held in Detroit at the beginning of February, the president of Gannett (nothing like his paper, he says he always wears only grey and black) was asked what he does to relax. He answered, "I work." Must be an interesting guy. Boycott this flashy rag.

Probably the most entertaining University of Michigan Board of Regents meeting took place recently in Ann Arbor when a man rose and Made "obscene hand gestures" and danced around the regents' table for 15 minutes while the University president and executives watched (they must have enjoyed it if they let it go on for that long). Before the local cops appeared and took him away to a psychiatric unit, the man stripped off his clothes and quoted the bible and other obscenities.



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