

Detroit Seen

Fifth Estate Collective

1984

Well, we hope that those of you who have complained for the last two years about our full-sheet size are happy about a return to a tabloid. However, after doing the layout for this edition in the smaller size, it confirms our contention that it is more time-consuming to put together, more difficult to find graphics and actually results in a loss of copy space. No decision yet on the size of the next issue; maybe we'll even go further in the other direction and put it out in magazine size.

Our last issue (the largest ever) was well received with many new subscribers signing up and a good percentage of renewals coming in after our first notification. Book distribution was better than usual and donations were sent in at a healthy pace. Our gratitude, particularly, to those who sent in an extra bit of money, or in some cases a chunk, along with their renewals or book orders. We greatly appreciate your continued support.

Crime Pays: In our Winter 1982–83 edition we reported on an incident in which three Detroiters retrieved over \$400,000 in unmarked bills which dropped unnoticed from a Total Armored Services truck onto the expressway. One of the three, a Donna Lewis, angered because she only received \$3,000 from the other two, called the cops and all three were later arrested for larceny. However, in a recent decision that left everyone gawking, Detroit Judge John Gillis ruled July 11th that “finding was not taking” and dismissed all charges against the three. He ruled that it was a civil matter between the three and the armored car company. The outraged prosecutor in the case compared this decision to the act of a Detroit teenager who recently discovered a bag containing \$4,000 and turned it over to the police. “There were some who called him a chump, but a lot more who commended him for his honesty,” the prosecutor said, lauding the boy. “I’m one of those who call him a chump,” responded the defense counsel for the three defendants! (Our friends in the Layabouts have penned a song entitled “The Ballad of Donna Lewis” for their next performance.)

Several years ago during our discussions in the FE about the nature of work, we made the point that the drive to and from our jobs was essentially unpaid labor time. Not that we needed confirmation, but capital does always seem to shamelessly admit its excesses. In an ad for a new “cellular car telephone,” the Ameritech Corporation of Detroit touts the new device thusly: Now you’ll be able to turn each and every minute of driving time into productive working time. If you spend even two hours a day in your car (!), that adds up to 520 hours a year—the equivalent of thirteen 40-hour weeks. So, the sooner you equip your car with an Ameritech cellular telephone, the sooner you can start using those hours to call more customers. Expedite more orders. Phone more prospects. Check more inventory. And do more business. Ain’t technology grand?

The Daily Barbarian, the title of which refers to the inhabitants of this society and not the paper’s frequency, is preparing another issue. We included its last edition as the centerfold of our Spring issue and 2,000 additional copies were distributed around Detroit. Reaction to the *Barbarian* has been positive, encouraging its staff to get working on a third issue (the first appeared in 1979). The FE staff is planning another of its fundraising picnics with some of the proceeds to go to the Barbarian and some to support the Vancouver 5. The Barbarian may be reached directly at Box 02455, Detroit 48202. Issue No. 2 is available through the FE.

If you were to read the daily papers and watch the local TV news you would get the idea that the election primary races for U.S. Senator and several House seats are events consuming the overwhelming attention and interest of the populace. However, even the *Detroit News* admits that at best only a paltry 22 percent of those who have bothered to register to vote will turn up at the polls. Most people will just ignore the whole process and turn vaguely to the media to find out which crook or hustler won this time around. The major media's role as legitimizer of the system becomes excruciatingly obvious in a case like this when common sense, given the general lack of interest in elections, would dictate that stories about voting should appear somewhere in the back sections along with other accounts of oddities...

Speaking of the media, they are all having a field day with the apparent corruption uncovered in Detroit Mayor Coleman Young's administration. Their barely disguised glee at discovering rampant cronyism, maladministration and outright fraud among the recently installed crop of black politicians and hangers-on does constitute the racism the mayor is always complaining about. Essentially, the white-controlled media is indignant about black hands being in the pork barrel instead of the white ones they are so used to excusing.

When Gary Hart was trying to win Michigan's rigged presidential primary election this Spring, his supporters passed out a leaflet entitled "The Gary Hart Difference." One of the apparent inducements for supporting him was that "Instead of expensive, complicated weapons that often do not work, Hart is the only candidate who favors cheaper, less complicated weapons that do." Given a choice that limited, weapons that don't work are certainly preferable to ones that do, but more than that, the quote shows how Hart, for all of his phony "new politics" rap, is still tied into the war system.

In early May some FE staff members attended a small gathering at the Autonomy Center in Chicago to meet with anarchists, libertarians and anti-authoritarians in the region, and to discuss a proposal to take part in an event in 1986 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Haymarket riots. We aren't very good at planning two months in advance, let alone two years, but we went along to meet people.

On Friday night members of the Autonomy Collective gave a presentation on the Haymarket events, and a video tape was shown on the Vancouver 5. The tape confirmed our own feelings against television—alternately boring us to death and convincing us of their guilt. We had a hard time understanding why any defense committee would use it, and said so, which prompted some interesting (but rather predictable) discussion on technology and the media.

One member of the Autonomy group claimed that it would be a "great thing" to get anarchists marching on the national news to let people know we were out there somewhere. We replied that by the time it got across the TV to the viewer the reality would be so distorted, so mediatized, that "anarchy" would be reduced to another voyeuristic experience to be consumed along with the rest of the fragmented, meaning-destroying messages of the news, the ads, and the Loveboat ideology of a simulated world.

A friend, who had traveled with us from Allegany County on the west side of the state of Michigan, said: Sure, he'd still like to "beat the drum" in his rural neighborhood to make contact with people, maybe even by way of television. One of us replied that he'd rather beat drums than be on TV, to which the Autonomy person said, with a wave of the hand, Aw, that's "just the same old FE line."

There was a pretty clear division between traditional anarchy and anarcho-syndicalists, and primitivists of the FE stripe plus a small group of sympathetic friends, though everyone had a good time, the Chicago people were gracious hosts, and we got a chance to talk about such questions face to face rather than polemically and anonymously through publications.

Everyone did agree that an action of some sort—a demonstration, a conference or group of small conferences around certain themes, a picnic, theatre and other events—would be a good thing to counter the leftish-liberal media event which will certainly be put on by Chicago politicians and opportunist grants-pimps such as the Chicago "People, Yes" group, and others.

The group then discussed "slogans" and "demands" and fortunately an argument for demanding a "four hour work day" (!!!) was nixed by nearly everyone present. A good number agreed that a "no hour, non-work day" would be preferable. It was clear that we were not all going to agree on everything, so everyone was left to follow their own ideas.

One idea that everyone seemed to find attractive was to gather as many diverse libertarians, anarchists, anti-authoritarians and other anti-statist and anti-civilization types who do not fit into these categories, to discuss where we have been and where we are going. It was agreed to organize a group of conferences, perhaps, around three basic but not exclusive themes: to commemorate the Haymarket martyrs, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Revolution, and to discuss the “Prospects for Anarchy.” An anti-Law Day demonstration on one of the days was another idea, and also a picnic.

All of this was very general, and certainly other ideas would be welcome, especially ideas for theatre and entertainment. Some people wanted to organize a labor conference as well. But it was understood that there would have to be much more collaboration and response to the idea over the next year before any of it could materialize.

So far the Chicago people have agreed to do some of the coordinating work and can be reached at the Autonomy Center, 3951 N. Ashland, Chicago IL 60613. People interested in a labor conference should write Resurgence, Box 2824, Station A, Champaign IL 61820. And if there is anyone out there in western or central Michigan who would like to contact our isolated anarchist friend in Allegan County, write PO Box 79, Pullman MI 49450.

As for the FE, we are calling for an earthquake on May First 1986 to wreck the armory where the Police monument to the cops killed at Haymarket is kept, as well as the police stations, banks, shopping malls, factories and offices which keep making Monday—and everyday—martyrs of us all.

Related in this issue

Staff Notes—As We Go To Press (FE #317, Summer 1984)



Fifth Estate Collective
Detroit Seen
1984

<https://www.fiftheastate.org/archive/317-summer-1984/detroit-seen>
Fifth Estate #317, Summer 1984

fiftheastate.anarchistlibraries.net