

Detroit Seen

Fifth Estate Collective

1986

As usual, let us begin this column with an apology for the lateness of this issue, as well as an appeal to readers who have been notified of their subscription expiration to send us their renewals. Also, a heartfelt expression of gratitude to those who have made a special contribution to help sustain our project.

Our 20th anniversary celebration on December 7th was everything we could have hoped for. We began with a potluck supper at the Bagley Cafe which gave friends and staff members a chance to talk, reminisce, and share good food. Our special thanks to the Bagley folks, Kemal, Terry, Ahmet, and Eugene, for the use of their restaurant and for the delicious dishes they added to the dinner. We then moved on to Alvin's Twilight Bar where the speeches were thankfully short, the comedy and FE roast by Dirty Dog the Clown was hilarious and the rock and roll of the Layabouts never better. More thanks to everyone who helped put that part of our celebration together including Diane, Tony, Barney and the whole Alvin's staff. It was great fun, but a lot of effort on everyone's part, so we may not celebrate another anniversary until our 50th.

We hate looking at big piles of old papers stacked around our office and we'll gladly ship you a back-issue assortment for distribution if you'll pay the postage. This is a by-weight arrangement so \$2 could bring you six pounds of papers selected in terms of what issues have the greatest availability. If you have a preference for an issue, let us know and we'll try to send that. Also available are Daily Barbarians which we will include in each order as well.

Two months after having refused to accept military ads in Detroit's Wayne State University student newspaper (see last issue), its editor did an abrupt about-face and agreed to print them after a threat from the college publication board neared a deadline. Patricia Maceroni, *South End* editor, facing dismissal for her stand, relented rather than, as she said "see the paper destroyed." It actually appeared that the paper would continue, but under a conservative staff which would have accepted the military ads in any event.

Although her turnabout shocked many of her supporters, Maceroni's decision may have actually been for the best. The contest between the paper and the university publication board received national attention and politicized the Wayne State student body like nothing had in years. There were rallies, demonstrations, confrontations with the campus police, petitions and debate that were a marked departure for the usually quiet school.

Although the paper once again prints military ads, each time one appears, it is accompanied by either a stinging antiwar commentary or by a parody recruitment ad. Reaction to this has been strong as well. Members of a local fraternity dumped a hundred copies of the paper at Maceroni's feet as a show of their disapproval, the newspaper office has received bomb threats, and a Navy recruiter showed up threatening that "Washington will hear about this" in reaction to a fake navy ad the paper had placed next to an authentic one.

Reaction by the *South End* staff to all of the opposition came from its Managing Editor, Chris Greenlee: "We must be doing something right." Stay tuned!

Although we are way into the New Year, it is worth mentioning the unique way Detroit celebrates two traditional holidays. Halloween (and the preceding Devil's Night, which is peculiar to Detroit in itself) is the occasion of the usual revelry, costumes and trick or treating, but in recent years it has also become a festival of fires set by the citizenry. This year the city mobilized 8,000 police and city officials to combat the rash of blazes and through their

self-congratulatory diligence, were able to reduce the number of fires this year to only 526. Although most were in dumpsters and garages, 61 occupied houses were torched as were 84 vacant buildings. Oddly enough Detroit's New Year's Eve tradition of firing guns into the air at Midnight causes little official concern. The police dutifully head back to the station house or for the safety of a viaduct while the inner-city population lets loose with their stored arsenals. Even hearing the occasional rattle of a machine gun is not uncommon. These holidays are celebrated in a mood of rebellious festivity, but there's no telling what the result would be if people approached the same activity in a serious frame of mind.

It's been our belief that we in Detroit first popularized the slogan "Eat the Rich" which we took from Terry Southern's humorous novel, *The Magic Christian*. During the middle '70s we daubed it variously on posters, t-shirts, graffiti and even used it as the name of our collective. It's been fun over the last decade to see it pop up around the world, but its most bizarre appearance came during last summer's TWA hijacking in Beirut. In a newspaper account sent to us, a photo shows a Shiite militiaman carrying an M-16 and wearing an "Eat the Rich" t-shirt, while leading hostages from the plane. Is any publicity good publicity?

You didn't have to stay tuned long for more on WSU's *South End* newspaper. The recruiter mentioned above apparently made good on his threat and the U.S. Navy has refused to pay for its ad which ran adjacent to an anti-war parody (actually the offending ad was from the Fall 1984 FE). So now the paper's ad staff and the school publication board have agreed not to accept any further ads from the Navy until they pay their overdue account. Take the deadbeats to collection!

In a letter on page four, a reader described our Spring 1985 edition as "drab and uninspiring" and was critical of what he called a "forlorn idealist" on its cover. In looking for quotes for our 20th anniversary issue we found that apparently we had sinned twice. The identical photo of the Vietnam war protester in downtown Detroit also appeared on our Oct. 31, 1968 front page as well. Belated photo credit for it goes to Oliver Shokouh.

E.B. Maple from the FE staff spoke on a panel at a symposium on Central America in early February along with the editor of the daily Detroit *Free Press* and an ex-AP Central American bureau chief. The symposium was held at a high school which gets its fill of authoritarian neck-ties every day, so Maple had a pretty easy time of it, getting the best reception from the kids. The two pros attempted to characterize the press as "trying to do their best" while remaining "objective."

But Maple soon had the *Free Press* editor screaming "balderdash" when he characterized the media as a "transmission belt for State Department handouts" whose real function was to shield power from popular criticism. Both of the newspapermen sputtered in return that news from Central America was never suppressed nor skewed toward the Administration. For no apparent reason, however, the AP reporter then related how, although he never distorted news, his stories often "got the ax" from "guys like Joe (the *Freep* Editor)". With that admission, Maple rested his case, handed out a bunch of *Fifth Estates* and *Daily Barbarians*, and talked with the students for about an hour after the panel ended. We all felt good about the results and are trying to set up more speaking dates at other schools and universities.

fifth Estate

Fifth Estate Collective
Detroit Seen
1986

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/322-winter-spring-1986/detroit-seen>
Fifth Estate #322, Winter-Spring, 1986

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net