

We Brought Our Piss to Reagan

Fifth Estate Collective

1986

The lure of a spectacle and the fact that we love a parade made President Reagan's Sept. 24 Detroit campaign stop-over irresistible to us. A protest had been called by a liberal/leftist/labor/religious coalition and one could only expect the ritual "peaceful, legal picket line" with its predictable slogans and all imagination corralled by official demonstration marshals.

Having had our fill of these affairs, but wanting to greet Ronnie in proper style, we and several friends resurrected the old Eat the Rich Gang and the Workers Revenge Party from the mid-1970s and put together a send-up of the current drug hysteria. Under the name "People for Clean Urine," a leaflet was issued which called upon the populace to "Bring the President Your Piss!" and advised that all political or social concerns be forgotten and realize, "It's drugs!" that are the only 'problem.

The flyer asked people to "bring a sample of your urine to present to [Reagan] at Cobo Hall to show you are drug free" and announced that we would have a 5-gallon mass urine sample "to be given to President Reagan personally."

In the days preceding the demonstration we posted and passed out almost a thousand leaflets, and at the picket line they were enthusiastically grabbed up by the marchers. Even curious and confused Reaganites seemed interested in them, asking "Are you really serious?" Then, banners and signs flying, dressed in model citizen garb, we marched off into the midst of the 1,500+ anti-Reagan demonstrators and began a guerrilla theater skit.

The humorless leftoid marshals immediately assumed we were right-wing counter-demonstrators even though we were holding several one-gallon jugs marked "urine sample" and chanting "drugs, drugs, drugs," but when "our" Reagan came out to accept our offering they realized what was up.

After we gave a short speech praising him, "our" Reagan was so overcome by our advance compliance to his drug testing proposals that he began wallowing in the samples, then drank from the urine jug and, in a final burst of enthusiasm, poured the remainder over his head. The skit was well received and we had a good time, hopefully making some obvious points about the purpose of the drug scam diversion as well.

(Our leaflet is available for a self-addressed stamped envelope.)



"President Reagan" was so moved by the presentation of five gallons of drug-free urine by the Citizens for Clean Urine that he dumped the sample over his head.

Although the rest of the day's events were much as we had expected, the experience did have some interesting facets to it. Reagan has rarely been back to Detroit since 1980 when he was first nominated for President and has studiously avoided a town comprised primarily of blacks and workers who have never caught the upswing of the illusory economic recovery.

To insure a responsive claque for his short visit, the local Republican Party paid to have busloads of rich kids and students from suburban christian academies trucked in to create a stage-managed mini-Nuremberg rally when the Prez appeared. Once inside, these tight-assed little brats wearing suits or red, white and blue dresses yelped on cue when cards variously marked "Applaud," "Boo," or "Groan" were lofted by a Party hack at the appropriate point in Reagan's bumbling speech. The crowd was whipped into a patriotic frenzy as cheerleaders led chants of "Reagan, Reagan."

Outside, the lib/lab/left group pulled out a fair-sized crowd for these days in the middle of a work day to picket, but wound up being skewered in the media due to the hyperbolic predictions of U.S. Rep. John Conyers prior to the protest. Conyers, a black Detroit Democrat and one of the farthest left members of Congress, predicted that "30,000" people would picket Reagan, a figure totally absurd since even in the activist days of the 1960s, the largest marches here were never larger than 20,000!

What exuberance got into Conyers is not known, but the local media jumped on it to proclaim "march fails by 29,000" and let loose an unending stream of abuse against the demonstration seemingly way out of whack with what little threat it represented. The marchers were comprised of fairly straight-laced adults (a few young people were there but in a distinct minority) but the media's reaction betrayed a palpable unease that even this small display of dissent suggests that the ruling illusion is becoming unraveled more than is comfortable.

The media, as the major articulator of the "Reagan Era" charade, has settled cozily back into its traditional symbiotic relationship with power after a brief and superficial "adversary" relationship with the rulers. The arrogance and hostility shown by the editorial writers and fat-salaried TV commentators toward the demonstration is consistent with the world view of the multi-million dollar corporations who pay their salaries.

The only thing really shocking about the news coverage (The Detroit News said there were 30,000 present, "1,000 demonstrators and 29,000 insects") was that the liberals and leftists were shocked. As Baudrillard says in *Simulations*, "the only scandal is that there is no scandal." Slandering even the weakest complaint that we are ruled by scoundrels is not an abrogation of the daily lie machine's purpose but its ordained function.

Chirping along in unison like its big brothers, the now reprehensible *South End*, the Wayne State University student newspaper, ran a front page story on Reagan's visit that sounded like a Republican Party press release. Since the madcap editorship of Patty Maceroni is over, the new staff led by Tim Hart, whose grainy snapshot of the President adorned the front page (he was probably nervous in front of the leader), has led the paper back to the days of the old *Daily Collegian*. Ugly as a suburban supermarket throwaway, dull as dishwater (usually featuring hand-outs from the college PR department), you can almost hear these lame Jimmy Olsens snarling after the jobs they think their shiny shoes are preparing them for.



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