

# Detroit Seen

Fifth Estate Collective

Hi, remember us? We put out a paper called the *Fifth Estate* every once in a while. Seriously though, we hope the reports of events in this issue such as the protests against the Detroit incinerator and the Toronto Anarchist Gathering give the idea that we've been doing more than just lazing about since our last issue. In fact, the last seven months have probably been the most active ones we've experienced in recent memory.

As the current radicalization appears to be generalizing at a rapid pace, our elation about actual events and our hopefulness about future possibilities make us want to share our reports and ideas with readers all the more. We work on the *Fifth Estate* out of a sense of sharing and desire for communication, not duty, so we also feel the loss when our walls are filled with blank rather than completed pages of lay-out. We want to be involved in the middle of the fray and write about it often. Hopefully, we'll be able to accomplish this and not put such spaces between issues, but we bet you've heard that promise before.

Remember the old Joni Mitchell tune, "Big Yellow Taxi," with the line about putting trees "in a tree museum" and "charging a dollar just to see 'em"? Well, it looks like it's come to be with the opening of Project Nature, a 2,000 acre "nature-theme park" in Michigan's Pigeon River Hill country near the tip of the lower peninsula. Upon entering you are escorted around on a motorized tram to see "exotic animals from all over the world" (actually, mostly deer) with stops at ersatz "wild" and "Western" exhibits which have been carefully manicured out of what once was an authentic wilderness. Perhaps most pathetic is the "Vistacore Theatre" which promises 27 projectors and multiple screens to allow the modern viewer to experience a vivid, sensory view of man's relationship with the natural world." One doesn't know whether tears or anger is most appropriate when confronted with an image of a wage-worker on a two week vacation sitting in an air-conditioned theatre trying to find the exquisiteness of nature through a celluloid representation.

**The well-known witch Starhawk** spoke about empowerment to 300 people (80% of them women) in a Detroit suburb on April 25. The slides illustrating her talk consisted of many images of the goddess taken from varied societies and eras. Starhawk looked and acted a little like a mother-goddess herself.

Although some of the literature distributed that night heightened that impression and smacked of cult of personality, Starhawk spoke humbly of her insecurities and choices. Stories about her own activities centered on civil disobedience and communal living. Her gentle advice to isolated individuals was to try to find others to work on a common project, and she warned us to try to be as non-judgmental of others as possible.

Starhawk provided only general attributes of the goddess: nurturing and nature-centeredness. She carefully avoided the traditional political vocabulary, words like "platform," "mobilize" and "parties." Starhawk seemed to be familiar with the political terms as well as their role in unfortunate historical precedents where individuals had been transformed into a mass. She tried to communicate a vision which could avoid the pitfalls of earlier attempts to "organize."

The audience listened politely but unenthusiastically to her words. Her mention of affinity groups did not rouse them. The collective pagan ritual which followed her talk generated a lot more interest. Everyone was invited to take part in it; many participants seemed to hope ecstasy would come from the chants and gestures and some did respond uniquely and creatively.

There seemed to be little connection between specific concerns and the all-purpose incantations. Starhawk mentioned more than once the upcoming actions against the Detroit incinerator, but only one participant picked up on her cue.

**Eat the Rich Dept.:** Shades of *The Great Gatsby* or Louis XVI: Lee Iacocca's income for 1987 was \$17.9 million as Chairman of the Chrysler Corp. This kingly sum exceeded the total personal income of all the residents of Upper Michigan's Keewenaw County by \$1 million and topped the annual budget of Petosky, Michigan (a medium size city) by \$7 million. Such immense personal wealth passes mere commodity consumption no matter how grandiose the lifestyle and translates into social power—the ruling class personified. The fact that Iacocca can actually be admired by great sections of the American public for his gluttonous lifestyle while millions go homeless and hungry speaks reams to how deeply ingrained is the culture the rich and powerful rule by.

**Many liberal and Christian peace groups** have given great praise to the organization of Detroit mothers working to stop the violence and drug use among the city's teenagers. The group called Save Our Sons and Daughters (SOSAD) has been compared to the Mothers of the Disappeared groups in Central America.

However, on a recent march down Woodward Avenue, the SOSAD banner was carried by the ROTC unit of a local high school. The students were out in full uniform complete with boots, silver helmets and mock rifles. The message sent out by the march is very disturbing.

SOSAD has a commitment to stop youth-on-youth violence in Detroit, but by including the ROTC contingent in their march, it implies an approval of American youth killing the youth of other countries in wars for the interests of the U.S. government and corporations.

The Mothers of the Disappeared in Central America have engaged in spirited resistance to the government death squads funded by the U.S. Their American counterparts seem not to recognize the U.S. government's role in oppressing this country's inner city youth. By encouraging ROTC and military service, SOSAD has falsified any comparison between them and the mothers in Central America.

**Thousands of Yahoos** arrived at the Highland Recreation area near Detroit in July for the National Campers/Hikers Association's annual "Campvention." The required gear for their giant camp-out included 30-ft. recreational vehicles, complete with VCRs, microwaves, air conditioners and golf carts to get around in. County officials spent two years fighting off environmentalist objections to the planned decimation of the area to make it suitable for the campers. In the end, the county cleared 120 acres, cutting down 26,000 trees to turn a once beautiful wooded terrain into a giant parking lot for RVs. With such a warped vision of camping and hiking by all involved, one wonders why they didn't just clear a section of the freeway and have the "Campvention" there.

**"Who the fuck are the Friends of Belle Isle?"** barked Detroit's arrogant Mayor Coleman Young when asked by reporters whether the conservation group had been consulted about his plans to turn the city's island park into a race course. Young, as usual, made the decision with only his corporate buddies in attendance. Foiled in his attempt to ruin the idyllic nature of the park with his plan to bring casino gambling to the island, he has now decided to destroy it with Formula I racing cars. Hizoner dodged all questions about what 60,000 drunk race fans will do to the tranquil character of the park and what the track itself will do to the habitat for the island's miniature deer.

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/329-summer-1988/detroit-seen>  
Fifth Estate #329, Summer, 1988

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