

# Detroit Seen

Fifth Estate Collective

1990

## Threat of War Cancels Plans for *Fifth Estate* 25-Year Retrospective

That's as good a reason as any for why the observance of our 25 years of publishing is reduced to a short mention in this column. We had intended more, both self-congratulation and perhaps a deeper discussion about our origins and political evolution. But the idea of a retrospective special issue began to slip as this issue became overwhelmed with articles.

Twenty-five years is a long time for a radical project to exist. A special anniversary issue certainly would have been appropriate, and we are considering a possible future issue about FE history which would include reprints.

At quarter century, the FE project seems to be in many ways like the rest of what's worthwhile in this world. It's certainly not always an unambiguously joyful process; in fact, it's often difficult and frustrating, with occasional bitter conflicts among the staff—a result of strong personalities, strong opinions, and a long history together. That it happens at all, given the odds against it presented by this society, is a surprise. But when it does, it is extremely gratifying to us and, we feel, a genuine contribution, a unique contribution to freedom, community, solidarity and ecological harmony. And we haven't run out of ideas.

Other aspects of the project are for the most part in good shape. We're in the black (where else), and have attracted new voices to our pages over the last number of issues. Our readership seems to appreciate our efforts and we continue to receive generous material support.

One thing we hope to do is publish more regularly in the future, maybe by putting out smaller issues, including some reprint specials. Let us know what you think of this idea. We make no promises, though; regular or not, we still think the FE is worth waiting for.

**As the popularity of anti-authoritarian ideas grows**, more anarchist 'zines and papers are appearing, and circulation of the existing ones is expanding. If we are on the edge of another period of mass opposition to capital and the state, perhaps a mainstay of the periodicals of the '60s could be resumed—that of hawking revolutionary papers on the street and at events. In the '60s and '70s this was done both to spread the ideas and to provide an income for the seller and the paper.

Readers interested in doing street or event sales of the FE should contact Bert Wirkes weekday afternoons at our office.

**The anarchist dream of a boycott** of the voting booths was realized in a district adjacent to the Fifth Estate office when 95% of the eligible voters refused to take part in the November mid-term electoral farce. We congratulate these noble people who led the state in voter refusal, but give recognition as well to the 75% in the rest of Detroit who also didn't vote. In the state as a whole, only 36% ventured out to "vote for one fool or another."

While it's true that those who abstained may not have done so out of radical political commitment, it's just as true that they had no illusions about the voting process. This time around many friends told us that they planned to pinch their noses, hold their breath and go into the voting booth. They had compelling arguments—Forests Forever and Big Green in California, the anti-Jesse Helms vote in North Carolina, even the questions of the death penalty

and abortion rights in Michigan. Now that Republican toxic spongemop John Engler has been elected governor, the worst can be expected on these fronts.

But voting guarantees nothing, and gives the impression that an issue is resolved (Californians want to cut redwoods, etc.) when it has barely been posed. Its overall effect is to affirm and legitimate the very system that engenders all the injustices. Mass society cannot be voted out of existence; a free society cannot be voted in. As Henry Thoreau said in his essay on civil disobedience, "Even voting for the right is doing nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should prevail...When the majority shall at length vote for the abolition of slavery, it will be because they are indifferent to slavery, or because there is but little slavery left to be abolished by their vote. They will then be the only slaves."

With Bush hell-bent on war, the Student Resistance Alliance and Bad Attitude are calling for "day-after" demos when the shooting starts, to take place the day war is announced if announced before noon and the next day if announced after. Meet at Wayne State's Gullen Mall for a rally and then a march of "creative resistance." Meanwhile, we aren't waiting for them to make the first move. Other protests are being planned. Call the FE for info and updates.

**For the last fifteen years** the FE staff box has announced, "No copyright. No paid ads." Very simply put, a copyright designates a publication as private property protected by the state, and ads are the voice of capital.

However, in the latter case, we have made an exception this issue for the half-page ad for the Detroit Red Squad files distribution program [this issue, FE #335, Winter, 1990-91]. Our decision was based on two factors: Firstly, we support the aims of the release program and urge those who think they may have been spied upon to apply for their files.

Secondly, we think it is sweet justice that this paper, which was one of the targets for red squad infiltration and disruption, winds up having this issue partly financed by the city which originally perpetrated the spy activity.

# fifth Estate

Fifth Estate Collective  
Detroit Seen  
1990

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/335-winter-1990-91/detroit-seen>  
Fifth Estate #335, Winter, 1990-91

**[fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fifthestate.org)**