

Detroit Seen

Fifth Estate Collective

1995

Welcome to the Winter 1995 *Fifth Estate*. This is only the second edition we've published this year, so you probably have not missed any issues. This issue also marks the 29th anniversary of continuous publication of the *Fifth Estate*. We probably should have a giant, wild celebration for our 30th next year, but if the 25th was any indication, the date may just slip by. However, if there is anyone in the Detroit area willing to organize a gathering/celebration event, let us know; we're up for it.

However, even if we let our 30th go by with a whimper, not a bang, the Beni Memorial Library wrote to inform us that Ann Arbor's prestigious Labadie Collection, which archives anti-authoritarian publications, has listed us as "the longest running anarchist journal in American history." Last year we surpassed Benjamin Tucker's durable turn-of-the-century *Liberty* and *The Radical Review* for longevity.

Most of our political and publishing efforts over the summer months went into organizing for a weekend of protests and actions Sept. 30 through Oct. 2 against the restarting of a dangerous nuke plant, Fermi II, in our region. The results of the demos are reported elsewhere in the issue and the two major anti-nuclear articles which appeared in a *Fifth Estate* special edition on nuclear power are reprinted in this edition.

In our rush to publish, the first edition of 8,000 we printed was so error ridden (including wrong dates and the most egregious mistake we ever printed by leaving out a crucial "not") that we completely re-did it for the next printing. Detroit's Jam Rag newspaper, a biweekly rock and roll publication, included a copy of it in its 20,000 press run. It still contained enough errors that one of our group kept referring to us as the "gang that couldn't shoot straight."

We have some copies of the special edition left over, so inveterate archivists or others interested are welcome to a copy from our office.

Our usual, but special thanks to all of you who sent in donations, bought books or ordered and renewed subscriptions.

It's A Long Time Coming Dept.: The Dec. 11, 1966 edition of the *Fifth Estate* carried the front cover headline, "Get That Tire," over a photo of the 60-foot giant UniRoyal tire on the expressway near the Detroit Metro airport. The tongue-in-cheek article expressed outrage at "this latest (architectural) monstrosity" and called for its destruction "by fair means or foul." Among a list of suggestions for its removal was, "Blow it up!" which sent the rubber company into a frenzy resulting in a 16-foot cyclone fence to protect it from terrorism.

We thought our campaign had borne results when we saw the tire's lights dimmed recently. However, we discovered it was only being refurbished with a "90s look." How about another of the suggestions, which was to "take it off its stand and roll it over the UniRoyal building down the road."

More than 80 officers from the Detroit Police Department's Special Response Unit, in conjunction with the U.S. Army and federal law enforcement agencies, held two mock anti-terrorist drills on Sept 30 and October 1 while many of us were busy protesting Fermi II. Both maneuvers occurred in our neighborhood; the first at an abandoned apartment building at W. Alexandrine and 3rd Avenue, and the second a week later on Selden between 2nd and 3rd in a large, six-story dilapidated, abandoned apartment building.

The drills entailed police scaling apartment building walls, ground exercises to cordon off conflict areas and surround targets. The attacks were marked by numerous rounds of automatic gunfire and intermittent grenade explosions.

Many of the largely low-income tenants on Selden, Alexandrine and Willis expressed fear, shock, and anger. In response to resident complaints that drills were being performed in their backyard, and to questions as to why they weren't forewarned, a deputy police chief stated, "Barricaded gunmen and hostage-taking happens in neighborhoods, so these are the types of places we need to train in." He defended the unannounced police operation, claiming residents weren't warned because law enforcement agencies did not want to attract a crowd that could disrupt the drill.

In urban areas across the country and around the world, cop war games are to remind poor and newly dispossessed populations to stay in line with their heads down low.

The evening of the recent non-event of the elections, former Detroit mayor Coleman Young was hospitalized with heart flutters. Maybe the old battleaxe was over-excited by the hullabaloo. It reminded us that we hadn't even bothered to comment on that other non-event, his retirement and the election of Dennis Archer as mayor.

We knew Archer was going to be mayor long before the votes were actually tallied; his bumper stickers were first noticeable on luxury cars in the city's wealthy northern suburbs where most of the real decisions are made. Archer was a well-heeled, well-groomed judge with the right credentials and the right connections. After his election, nothing changed except for the obvious glee of the white suburban power structure and the business community (a real oxymoron if ever there was one).

Only the existence of a totally wonkedout white racist fury could explain the hysterical hatred of Young by white suburbanites. One would have thought from their irrational rage that a black revolutionary guillotine regime had been in power all those years. In fact, the city's decline was little different than that of any other major urban population center, though the population suffered even more intensely because Bloomfield Hills and Grosse Pointe auto execs consigned the former Motor City to capital's trash heap, moving on to more pristine territories to asphalt rural meadows and exploit cheaper labor.

Young was frequently cantankerous, playing the "suburban racist" card on critics, but did capital's bidding with the dedication of any colonial servant. Archer makes the suburbanites happier because he's polished and diplomatic, and has few of the residues of civil rights, leftist and labor uppityness that made Young the darling of progressives. He's better public relations, fitting in nicely with the mantra of political and economic "change" accompanying every election that in the real world signals ever more ferocious business-as-usual.

Our first annual Lump of Coal Award (to be given every year when snowflakes start flying), goes to Wayne State University Department of Public Safety (that is, WSU cops) Sgt. Henry Villerot, who recently warned students at the central city university to shun homeless beggars on the campus.

"The reason we have so many panhandlers," the enlightened Villerot told the student newspaper, *The South End*, in mid-October, "is because we have so many people with a broad sense of compassion." He went on to warn people not to give them any money, explaining, "All it does is encourage the activity." Thus, according to Villerot's scintillating logic, the presence of hungry and homeless people is explained not by growing poverty and despair, but by the prior existence of people willing to feed them and provide them with shelter. The solution is to reduce the number of people with a broad sense of compassion; if people ignore the poor, they'll just go away—to hell, we suppose, right, Sgt. Villerot?

In mid-September, the first strike-wave over working conditions since the '70s hit the auto industry with walk-outs and even sabotage. The issue was forced overtime with the auto giants demanding more production from less people in an aging work force. At the key Livonia, Mich. engine plant, a worker dubbed "Edward Scissorhands" cut the power cables to the assembly lines and then destroyed the electrical blueprints for the factory. This kept Cadillacs out of production for days, costing General Motors millions.

Elsewhere across the country, workers, exhausted from unrelenting 60 hour weeks walked out demanding GM rehire some of the 5,500 workers it had recently dumped. This created a domino effect with GM plants shutting all over the country. In the end, the GM bosses in Detroit agreed to hire back some of those they've laid off in recent years to ease the work crunch. Workers died over 100 years ago for the 8-hour day, but the companies and their

political allies are determined to gouge their employees at increased rate, citing global competition, the need for increased efficiency, etc.

In the end neither the wage nor industrial systems were challenged, but to see any spark of resistance to the globalist attack on work and income standards is heartening in these grim days. We all need a victory now and then even, if it's Pyrrhic.

It is bittersweet for us to say good-bye to Sunfrog (Andy Smith), a staff member since the late 1980s when he joined us as a mere tadpole. He and his family, Lisa and Ruby, are adopting a gypsy-RV existence and heading out for adventure. They'll be visiting autonomous projects and searching for utopian communities around the country. We've urged him to send dispatches from their travels—sort of an "Anarchy on the Road" series, so although he will be missing from our community, he won't be from these pages.

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