

The Coat Puller

John Sinclair

1967

“Do you love it, do you hate it
There it is, just like you made it”
—The Mothers of Invention

You have to live in the middle of the city to know what is really happening there—otherwise all you have to go on is what the “newspapers” and people tell you, and they very definitely have a vested interest in keeping the real news from you. The official responses to the Detroit insurrection have very little to do with what was actually happening, and people will soon find that out, although it may prove to be too late to do them any good.

You have to remember that the mass media in America exists for one purpose only: to sell the American way of life to Americans. If there weren't products to sell, and profits to be made from their sale, there would be no daily press and no television or radio. The whole network of “communications” is inextricably bound up by and with what are glibly called “business interests,” as are city, state, national and international “politics.” It is no coincidence that, for example, J. L. Hudson jr. was picked by the mayor and hailed by the press as the chairman of the “New Detroit” committee. Nor that the majority of the 37 members of the committee—all but a handful—are people like Edsel Ford, Lynn own-send (chairman of Chrysler), the presidents of Wayne State and Detroit universities, the presidents of banks, and other industrial bigshots.

The significant factor here is that none of these people LIVE in Detroit. They want to see Detroit put back together and functioning “as normal” because they are milking the residents of the city for every penny they can get. These men OWN Detroit, and they are very upset by the fact that their suckers—the people—dared to move against them in any way. They will do anything, which might yet include murdering people like Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown and Co. in the name of “freedom,” to insure the safety of their property, their sacred property which is more important to them than any human lives could be.

And everyone in the official world wants to know why the riots started? Were they organized? How could it happen in a great city like Detroit, where we have a racial problem? And so forth. The question is asked, and they want answers, just like in a news conference or a TV interview. There *must* be simple answers to simple questions, isn't that the way the world works? Like, yes, Virginia, there IS a Santa Claus, when there damn well AIN'T. They will lie to you just like that, people. I mean Santa Claus IS J.L. Hudson's in December, if you see what I mean. The American Way of solving problems is like healing a leper by covering up his sores with bandaids and sticking him away somewhere so the people can't see him and won't be bothered by that little taste of reality he represents. To discuss the riots in terms of “criminal anarchy and lawlessness,” to offer “cures” like more jobs for Negroes and a total assimilation of everyone into the Great Society, has no relevance to the reality of the situation at all. The problem is that the Great Society is untenable, it just won't work, and until the government starts talking about restructuring the whole American Way of Life there will be more and more riots like those going on all over the country right now. Riots are no answer, certainly, but they ARE the question, and people are going to have to start

speaking to that question unless they want to see the whole structure of this society collapse in a “depression” that will make 1929 look like a picnic.

These are not opinions, they are facts. I don’t have any eyes to argue with anyone about what’s happening. You can continue to deal with people and the state of America today any way you like, but the fact is that America is falling apart, and if you don’t want to see it go—I don’t—you’ll have to start dealing with reality, with the world *as it is* rather than how you wish it could be. Opinions are meaningless and not very interesting. The conditional simply does not exist any more—what happens is what happens and must be dealt with as such, and your “ifs” are just so much worthless nonsense. America is not at all the same place it used to be.

Nor is it the world you see on TV and read about in the papers, no matter how hard the official people want it to be what they say it is. People are put to work at meaningless jobs, making more cars to protect and insure the “economy,” they watch TV and are told that everyone should have all the shit they sell during the shows. They are run around in circles, working eight hours a day through the years making cars so they can buy them back from someone else, and they are starting to get hip to the whole scene. And by now they’re plenty mad about the way things are set up for them. They can’t articulate it like the politicians and newsmen can articulate their position, but since they haven’t been given the words to speak with they have to resort to simple action, like burning down the businesses who’ve been robbing them all these years and taking the goods home with them, no money down, no interest, no long-term monthly payments.

Whether you like it or not, people, the truth is coming to light, because the truth can’t be covered over forever. Those sores start to smell when you don’t even change the bandaids any more. There is no more reason or excuse for a capitalistic “free enterprise” system in America. Enough goods can be produced and distributed to take care of everyone’s needs. There is enough for everybody. The people are beginning to wonder why they aren’t getting it while others have everything they could possibly want, even with the TV and advertising media escalating the threshold of their impossible desires with every minute.

This is 1967, people, and the old ways of dealing with reality won’t work any more. The U.S. social structure has to be retooled completely to make it capable of working with the situation as it is, and no stop-gap measures will do any good. The country can be saved if you move fast. Do you want to save it, or would you rather hold on to your “TV dinners by the pool?” There aren’t any simple answers, but there is now a very simple question: what are you going to do? It’s entirely up to you—no matter all the rhetoric about “society” and you and “business” and “the government,” the system doesn’t function without the cooperation of the people who make it up. If people don’t go to work in the factories and stores, there is no business or industry. If young men refuse to go in the army there is no army. If you turn off your TV you don’t have to buy all that shit they sell you. It’s that simple.

But there are no ifs, interestingly enough. Either you do it or you don’t. Discussion is meaningless if no action results from it. My words are meant only to pull your coat to something you may not have realized, for whatever reason. I don’t mean to argue, I don’t have any “line” to follow or further and if I put some of you up tight then I’m sorry—sorry for you. This is important, because what I say has to do with your lives every bit as much as mine. I know what I’m doing, and what I have to do, and I do it. What you might say to me is only interesting, if that. And what your newspapers and TV have to say is lies, and I am not interested. It’s only sad, because it’s their ass that’s going up in smoke, not mine. I haven’t got anything to lose except maybe my life, and I’ve never owned that anyway.

Good luck.

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