

***Fifth Estate* Tool of the Year: The Sledge-Hammer**

reprint from FE #312, Spring, 1983

Fifth Estate Collective

It had to happen eventually, and it did. That repository of pre-masticated mediocrity, that script for dullards, Time magazine declared its "Man-of-the-Year" a machine-of-the-year—the computer.

All the powers of the technological order have entered into a holy alliance to call this spectre into being.

"Inventions come along when they're needed," mumbles Time. And when its world is fissuring and listing dangerously under the weight of its own contradictions, along comes a new technology to shore up and deepen the foundations of domination.

Information will eventually supersede money, which will become just another category of information. The world will come to be ruled by information, manipulated by the information priests in collusion with the old monied and political classes.

Information is authority and control, and computerization is its skeleton. A new dependency, growing out of the older forms and deepening them in its turn, isolates the human subject further from the sources of revolt and autonomy.

But of course, there will be love and poetry, though not the subtle love of the flesh or the poetry of the wind, but the aesthetic beauty of bombing patterns, and the love of "direct hits," and the poetry of circuitry where "performance must be measured by results."

Today, the computer promises utopia, reassures us that it will usher in freedom and dreams. It is already shaping our lives and our thoughts. Tomorrow, we will be chained to it, as we are to mass society: the television, and automobile, chemicalized food production, and chemical wastes.

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