

# Off Center

Sol Plafkin

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One of the biggest problems of “rebuilding Detroit” after the July 23 rebellion will be the attitudes and actions of the very powerful “white liberal” leadership in our community.

These paternalistic gentlemen have not, I can assure you, learned any significant lessons from the events of the past few weeks and are still insisting on keeping up with their meddling with their dirty paws in the growing determination of Black people to truly emancipate and govern themselves.

Example: After grass-roots Black leader Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. gave a fiery presentation of his Black Power theories on Lou Gordon’s TV show recently, he was followed in a separate segment by UAW Secretary-Treasurer Emil Mazey.

What were Mazey’s impressions of Rev. Cleage? Oh, said the eminent labor statesman, Cleage (whose stand for Black separatism merely recognizes the reality of conditions imposed by White society) is the Black equivalent of the Ku Klux Klan!

Yes, my friends, you’d better believe it. These are the thoughts of our “liberal” friends as the “long hot summer” gradually comes to a non-unlamented end.

Mazey, of course, who resides in Grosse Pointe, is one of those “leaders” who vigorously opposes the “district” (or ward) plan of electing Detroit councilmen which was introduced by Rep. Jackie Vaughn III. This more representative plan would allow for the peaceful airing of grievances and could reduce the necessity for the employment of alleged “lawless” Boston Tea Party revolutionary techniques.

Rev. Cleage, when he ran for Common Council in 1965, implored the voters unsuccessfully when he proclaimed, “you’d better elect me to the Council, so we can do our fighting verbally in the Council chambers, rather than physically on the streets.” How prophetic his words were!

The “district” plan of electing councilmen is supposed to lead to corruption. Yes, another “White Liberal,” Councilman Mel Ravitz, who has been opposed to the plan, admitted in a recent issue of the Detroit News that with the constant surveillance of council members by the mass media, it is almost impossible for them to fall prey to corruption or graft.

In the same article, Negro Councilman Nicholas Hood admitted that under the present Civil Service system there is almost no patronage for a Councilman to dole out (with the exception of a few summer jobs)—thus eliminating another criticism for the days of old “ward” politics.

Hood, you may remember, had to abandon his home during the recent insurrection and would have a tough time getting elected from a Black district where he couldn’t rely on the support of the White daily press and UAW-type “white liberals” who put him in office as a “proper Negro” in 1965. He hasn’t had the guts to oppose the “district plan” in open defiance of 99.9 percent of the Black community, but he won’t antagonize his white backers either by openly declaring his support for it.

Never underestimate the power of the Underground Press. In the last issue of the *Fifth Estate*, my fellow writer Ben Habeebee complained about the lack of support by the Prentis St. people for two kids who were arrested in

a “narco bust.” Well, Black people in Harlem decided to take the “law” into their own hands just after Ben’s article appeared.

When two detectives picked up a Black girl on suspicion of carrying narcotics, 100 brothers just moved in on the arrest and freed the girl from the cops’ custody.

Though one detective suffered a sprained wrist, it was essentially a non-violent demonstration. (Hark ye, Rev. Martin Luther King.) Just sheer Black power!

Sorry to see the reaction of Jewish “leaders” and “responsible” Negroes to SNCC’s attack on Israel and Jewish ghetto merchants. Maybe I ought to form a “Jewish Friends of SNCC” to demonstrate that there are still some of us who are basically happy with SNCC’s new image of dynamic militancy, even though we may not agree with every single aspect of their philosophy.

These once well-intentioned White folks just don’t understand that Black people themselves must have control over their own destiny and that Whites no longer have the right to say what are “proper” Black positions.

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