

Demo in Dow Land

Protest rally of 400 persons at the Dow Corporation stockholders meeting

Judie Davis

1968

There is a book about the founder of Dow chemical called "Herbert Dow and Creative Chemistry." Dow Chemicals is the primary manufacturer of napalm. Midland, Michigan is the seat of this bed of creativity.

Last week the Clergy and Layman Concerned about Vietnam sponsored a protest rally of 400 persons at the Dow Corporation stockholders meeting.

Driving into Midland, the scene seemed set by Antonioni; miles of factory complex, low little plastic-dust covered red brick buildings with grim white lettering; chemical research, biochemical research radiology research, blocks and Mocks of the same little buildings. I feel certain it was a Dow representative who told Dustin Hoffman in "The Graduate" that his future lies in plastics.

It was raining when we got there and after driving around for a while we found a damp clergyman and a few barefoot girls with signs. We joined them pamphletting on Main street until we found a place to have coffee.

My friend Ken and I are not the protest marching types we may look to be and we were as amused by the locals' reaction to us as they were by our very presence there. Everyone laughed a lot and so did we.

We met a nice high school sympathizer who shared his french fries with me, and a lovely grandmother type from Athens, Ohio who told us to stay in threes and with the group in case of trouble.

By afternoon the sun came out in time for a nice picnic in Central Park, across the street from the school where the stockholder's meeting was being held. Protesters were not allowed in the meeting and all of Midland's 32 police officers and some state police mingled about to keep it that way.

The whole effort was strictly of the early civil rights variety; organized by the clergy, the effort was ultra pacifistic, the songs, early Joan Baez, the majority of the protesters young and determined.

Protests against Dow and napalm started during the summer of 1966, with this last one being the biggest and most organized. These facts remain:

Midland, Michigan has the highest percentage of Ph.D.s and millionaires of any community of equal size in the country. It has the largest organization of Birchers, estimates of 3 to 7 chapters within the city and the stockholders voted overwhelmingly to continue napalm production.

When ol' Herbert H. Dow founded the company, he specified that no Negroes, Catholics, or Jews were ever to be employed. Midland now has two Catholic schools, about 4 1/2 Negro families and a sizable Jewish community. Obviously these people have chosen to live there.

I think this is called open minded and liberal and undoubtedly has something to do with creative chemistry.

fifth Estate

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