

Pigs Attack Sinclair

John Sinclair

1968

Poet John Sinclair and MC5 guitarist Fred Smith were brutally assaulted, beaten, MACEd, and arrested by members of the National Security Police and the Oakland County (Michigan) Sheriffs Dept. while performing at a Michigan teen-club on July 23rd.



The scene took place at the Loft, located on Army Road in Leonard, Michigan (between Pontiac and Lapeer), where the MC5 had been contracted to play a dance job.

The following statements by Sinclair tell the story:

The MC5, our two equipment managers, and myself arrived at the LOFT to play a scheduled engagement. As soon as I stepped out of our van Kenneth Osborne, Captain of the National Security Police, a private police operation, accosted me. He was with another rent-a-cop and two Michigan State Police troopers.

He told me that he didn't want us to play "that song with motherfucker in it" and that if we did it he would have to close the show. I told him that I'd heard him and that he'd have to do whatever he'd have to do. We went inside, where I talked with club owner Harold O. Boumer about the money owed us.

After a few minutes of stalling around he left the office where we were talking and returned ten minutes later with \$100 cash, which he then offered me in partial payment of the \$395.00 outstanding debt.

After conferring with the band, I decided to put them on stage since there was a large and appreciative audience waiting to hear the MC5, and since we had gotten burned by another dance promoter, Mike Gaylord, twice the week before up north and needed the \$100 for food.

The band played "Ramblin' Rose," "Kick Out the Jams," and "Come Together" before the house announcer cut our set by telling the audience that the MC5 had "broken the rules" and would be followed by a folk singer. The kids in the audience were enraged and demanded that the band keep playing, so we obliged by doing our closing piece, "Black to Comm," after which we cleared the stage and our equipment team packed up the amps.

Apparently at this time the rent-a-cop Osborne decided to call the Oakland County Sheriffs Dept. for help. He didn't speak to us at this time, nor did Bouser speak to us. Our only verbal contact while we were upstairs (the Loft was formerly a barn and has their shows on the 2nd floor with a snack and recreation area on the first) was with the house announcer, who was somewhat drunk.

During "Comm" one of the assistant rent-a-cops came up to me and said "it's all over," and I agreed. We packed up our instruments and clothes while the equipment team did the same with the amps, and all our equipment, band members, and road crew were downstairs waiting to leave while I made a last check on the stage area and prepared to talk with the club owner. While I was still in the stage area Bouser and an assistant arrived and started apologizing for the actions of the police.

At this point the rent-a-cops had apparently blockaded the downstairs exit doors and wouldn't let anyone leave. I didn't see this because I was on the second floor. Before Bouser arrived upstairs some kids had told me that the police wanted to see me outside, but I smelled an ambush and chose to remain upstairs.

I told the messengers that the police could see me up there if they wanted, since all the lights were on and there were still maybe 100 kids milling around wondering what to do. It was maybe 11:00 P.M. by this time and they rightfully felt cheated. I was told that the kids downstairs were demanding their money back and/or demanding to leave, but the security police wouldn't let them go.

I was talking to Bouser and his assistant upstairs about the money. We were sitting on the lip of the stage, at least I was sitting down with Bouser sitting at my right and the other man standing in front of us, facing us. Bouser again apologized, saying he "had nothing to do" with the actions of the police and would the band please go on again and do a second set.

I was amazed when he said this and explained that we were cut off by the rent-a-cops and that our equipment was already downstairs waiting to go, as was the band et al. I also told him that we weren't interested in doing anything more at the Limberlost except go home, and what about the money.

Before Bouser could answer, I saw the police at the top of the [illegible]

I looked up at him and he told me, "Okay, John, get out!" in a pig-like snort. I asked him what he meant, looking at Bouser and back at the pig. He then told me, "Get out of here right now and get going." I replied, "I can't go until I get the money."

Then Osborne and his assistant both grabbed me by my arms very roughly and abruptly and pulled me to my feet. I tried to free myself from their grip by pushing myself backwards, and Osborne smashed me in the face and threw me to the floor. I don't know exactly what happened for the next few moments—the first thing I can remember is feeling repeated blows on my [illegible]

At this point I was sitting on the bench trying to wipe the blood off my face with the help of Lillian Ryand and Linda St. Aubin. Fred Smith was sitting next to me, without handcuffs, and the police who remained upstairs were trying to push everyone down the stairs and out the downstairs doors. Our bass player, Michael Davis, joined Fred and I on the bench until Osborne returned and ordered them both outside.

It was at this point that I asked Osborne what his name was and he told me "Kenneth Schultz." I asked his assistant for his name but got no reply except a filthy sneer. Then Oakland County Sheriff's Deputy D. Gilbert, badge no. 81, returned upstairs with Fred Smith, claiming that Smith had jumped him during the melee and would have to face assault charges.

Fred was handcuffed and we were taken off to the Oakland County jail, where we were booked for "assault and battery on a police officer." Osborne, who had posed as some sort of official police officer all night, attempted to sign

the police warrant against us but was told by the desk sergeant that he would have to go to the county prosecutor and get a warrant, since he wasn't an Oakland County Sheriff's Deputy.

Officer Gilbert then said that he would sign the complaint himself against both Fred and myself. We were then booked and taken to a cell on the second floor of the jail.

The next morning we were arraigned before Justice of the Peace Kenneth Hempstead, who set bond at \$2,500 apiece, and we were taken back to jail until bond was posted after midnight by [illegible]

found a warrant dating back two years to the day charging Fred and three other band members with being "disorderly persons" in West Bloomfield Township. He was arraigned on that charge before Justice of the Peace Powell, pled guilty, and was freed after I paid the \$60.00 fine.

We are prepared to fight the assault charge in court with the help of attorney William Segesta and the many witnesses to the beating at the Loft, and we are preparing to file suit against Osborne, Boumer, and the National Security Police to recover some of our damages.

Some of the girls who were pushed around by the police at the Loft will be making complaints to the Oakland County Prosecutor's office through their mothers.

The whole scene was a viciously premeditated fascist creep scene planned and carried out by the madman Osborne as an excuse to beat my head in.

The last time we played the Loft before last Tuesday Osborne and his rent-a-pigs tried to pull a similar creep scene but were verbally repelled by Ron Levine and Steve Harnadek (our equipment team) and myself, and they were lying in wait for us this time.

They won't get to do it again.

John Sinclair

[Note: some of this article is illegible due to a printer's error in imposing a picture over some of the printed text.]

fifth Estate

John Sinclair
Pigs Attack Sinclair
1968

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/59-august-1-14-1968/pigs-attack-sinclair>
Fifth Estate #59, August 1-14, 1968

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net