

The Academy Award of Protest

Jerry Rubin

1969

This is the greatest honor of my life. It is with sincere humility that I accept this federal indictment. It is the fulfillment of childhood dreams, climaxing years of hard work and fun.

I wish to thank all those who made it possible: my mother, my father, brother, wife Nancy, Stew and Gumbo, Spartacus, Tom Paine, the Boston Tea Party, Ho, Che, Fidel, Huey, Eldridge, Lenny Bruce, Walter Cronkite, and last but not least—Richard J. Daley.

I realize the competition was fierce, and I congratulate the thousands who came to Chicago. I hope that I am worthy of this great indictment, the Academy Award of Protest.

With my indictment I join the list of outstanding world figures who have crossed the state lines to create civil disturbance: the Beatles, Elvis Presley, the late Marilyn Monroe, rock bands, the President of the United States, and Joe Namath.

And you know who else is guilty? The hippies who dressed in psychedelic Indian clothes, boarded British ships, and threw tea overboard in 1773! They crossed state lines with intent to destroy property.

“Supernatural” is the only way to describe the anti-riot law.

Congress passed it as a warning to the game of football. Fans who cross state lines, and then tear down the goalpost, are subject to arrest.

The crime is not the act, but your INTENT at the moment of crossing state lines. It is against the law to think bad thoughts while crossing a state line.

You can even break this law in your own home! A telephone call to someone in another state is enough. Or a letter. Or an interview on radio/TV which is broadcast from one state to another.

The yippies broke the anti-riot law when we mailed a postcard to Daley telling him that we were going to put LSD in the water supply!

You do not even have to be at the scene of the riot itself. You can jet-plane into a town, give a speech, and then jet 10,000 miles away. If a riot takes place after your speech, no matter where you are, you are guilty of “causing” it.

You can break this law without violence or damage to property.

A riot is defined as a “threat of violence or a danger of damage to property.”

The yippies in Lincoln Park were a riot. So is a baseball crowd. A Beatles concert is a hell of a riot.

Where does one draw the line between “free speech” and “inciting to riot?” It’s fairly simple.

If your speech is ineffective, it is protected by the Constitution.

If your speech is effective, you are “inciting to riot.”

Effective speech—speech which moves people is against the law.

All new laws give government increased power over the people. Since crime-prevention is an essential aspect of law-enforcement, the anti-riot law requires a husky Police State for its enforcement.

The FBI is forced to tap our phones and read our mail in search of violations before they happen. How far off is the day when the FBI sets up check points at state borders, examines “passports,” and prohibits entrance to potential “rioters?”

Congress was in a mood described best as “Mob rule” when it passed this law in 1968. The fires of Detroit and Newark were still smoking. Racist Southern Congressmen wrote and lobbied for an anti-black bill, screaming that riots were fomented by a national conspiracy, by agitators traveling from state to state, by International Communism.

The purpose was to jail Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown. Congress hallucinated that there would be no riots if there were no agitators. America thinks the “solution” to racial oppression is to pass laws against those who fight the oppressor.

There was a “conspiracy” in Chicago. It was a conspiracy of thousands to oppose an illegitimate and immoral political party.

We went to Chicago to oppose the Democratic-Death Party, to have our counter “festival of life” in Lincoln Park, to express our revolutionary politics of life-style.

As the Walker Report documented, the cops rioted. Our long hair incited cops to riot. We are indicted under the federal anti-riot law because our long hair incited cops to violence against us.

These indictments are the responsibility of Richard Nixon. They were delayed for weeks waiting specific and personal approval from the White House.

They represent a bald attempt by the government to use punishment to stop demonstrations. The United States government thus repeats a classic error of all dying empires: under-rating the bravery of her youth.

The major result of these indictments will be to excite every young kid across the country to want to cross state lines and become a “rioter” by the time he is a teen-ager.

Yippie!

fifth Estate

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/76-april-3-16-1969/the-academy-award-of-protest>
Fifth Estate #76, April 3-16, 1969

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