

# Do It in the Road

Liberation News Service

1969

MADISON, Wisc. (LNS)—Students and non-students in the University of Wisconsin community, responding to publicity which asked “Why don’t you do it in the road?”, found out why when they turned up for a block party on Saturday, May 3.

They were driven off the streets by police with clubs and gas in what led to three nights of fighting between cops and at least 1,000 young people on the tree-lined Madison streets.

As of the middle of the next week, there were more than 115 arrests, with bail set at more than \$40,000, and several people injured.

People were dancing in the streets to music by a group appropriately called The American Dream when police ordered them to leave and began making arbitrary arrests.

When the crowd tried to prevent the arrests, police attacked. Soon the entire area was choked with gas, and cops were chasing people into their houses to arrest them. The people spontaneously began to fight back.

Barricades sprung up. From behind them, the people pelted the cops with rocks.

The next day, the authorities established a kind of martial law on Mifflin Street, a hip area which now seems like a full-fledged ghetto. Cops arrested people for the crime of sitting on their front porches.

When the sun went down Sunday night, the people, frustrated about being unable to prevent the arrests, renewed the fighting. They were chased into the university area, and within a short time, the police had gassed Fraternity Row, bringing that unlikely crowd into the streets shouting “off the pigs!”

While the issue itself was essentially apolitical, the action of the cops stirred a rebellion which revealed real grievances.

The cops repeatedly arrested Paul Soglin, a student radical who is alderman in that ward and who has been exposing real estate exploitation there. Soglin was bailed out by firemen whose strike was supported by students and opposed by cops earlier this year.

During the fight, windows were broken selectively. Real estate agents were hardest hit.

The block party had been publicized by “The People’s Grocery Store,” a community co-op which has raised student consciousness about consumer exploitation.

After the police busted the co-op windows, molotov cocktails were hurled at a hated supermarket nearby.

By Sunday and Monday nights, residents had developed primitive harassment techniques with real finesse. Rocks through windows and garbage fires were guaranteed to send the police helter skelter.

Barrages came from rooftops and stone-wielding alley snipers appeared, there were hit and run barricades as opposed to stationary mob barricades. By late Sunday, the crowd sensed its potential and moved to the main streets. By this time, planned actions were observed, especially smoke bombs and molotov cocktails.

The police were strongly reinforced, but now the situation was totally out of control. Weariness not police action, brought Monday night’s action to a close. By Tuesday, May 6, people recessed in the fight to face some of the political issues which had been raised.

At this point, different political responses are heard. The liberals are out in the streets with white armbands to protect “the students from the police.”

There were some street fighters haranguing people to go back and “do their own thing against the pigs.”

Others were circulating a list of books on urban guerrilla war available in the university library, talking about a people’s militia.

Still others are trying to build a political struggle around the issues of amnesty and housing. This would relate to student resentment against the rent gouging on Mifflin Street and the problems faced by working people in other parts of the city.

# fifth Estate

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