

Other Scenes

John Wilcock

1969

The U.S. Post Office, which god knows has enough to do just trying to keep the mail flowing, has taken it upon itself to prejudge the contents of private letters. I got a postcard the other day inviting me to the main post office to have a letter to me (from a friend in Denmark) opened in my presence. The letter was stamped “presumed to contain obscene matter” or some such nonsense and also bore an insolent warning that if not claimed within five days “storage charges” would be made.

What kind of a fucking system is this that “presumes” what is contained in first class letters and puts the onus on the recipient to prove innocence?

Inside the letter, by the way, was a porn postcard printed in Copenhagen from a dirty comic book originally published in Tijuana and reprinted in various American underground newspapers years ago. How did the post office know the contents? And under what possible conditions does it make sense to try to prohibit pictures from entering the country that have been sent from here in the first place?

THE UNDERGROUND: Local SDS offices across country, confused and angered by recent infighting by the national office, are declaring themselves independent of either side. A typical position paper is that filed by the Fayetteville, Ark., SDS chapter which alleges that both factions in the national office are “Stalinistic” and adds: “We feel that the people who will make a revolution do not need a vanguard to tell them how to run either that revolution or the society which will emerge.” [See “Letter to SDS,” FE #85, August 7–20, 1969].

Several of the most militant underground papers met in Detroit to form the Revolutionary Press Movement (RPM)...

California’s attorney general has barred the *LA Free Press* from printing any more names and addresses of narcs after the recent list that paper ran under the head: THERE SHOULD BE NO SECRET POLICE...

North Carolina’s radical *Protean/Radish* is feuding with its neighbor, the NC Anvil, which it accuses of “openly playing to a middle-class, middle-aged, academic audience, ever-bidding for respectability” while “masquerading as a radical underground paper outside the state in order to snap up national advertising”...

Underground newspapers are always getting hit for free subscriptions by college libraries which claim to have no money to pay for them. Currently writing conning letters is the latest of these cheap shits, Sacramento State College.

CAPITALIST PIGGERY: The cost of cars in Latin American countries looks like being a hot political issue during the next few years with the realization by workers that they’re being deliberately kept on a low production schedule so as to keep automakers’ profits up to a maximum level. Story was first broken in *The Nation* which revealed that the new auto plants—subsidiaries of giant American corporations—in Argentina and Mexico were specially constructed “not to produce.” The Mexican magazine *Sucesos* has pointed out that because of this, and through presumed secret agreements between supposedly “competitive” auto-makers, cars in Mexico cost twice as much as in the country of origin.

In all the fuss about whether the Green Berets are guilty of the murder of the alleged double agent, it seems to have been overlooked that virtually all Green Berets are guilty of dozens of murders already so why all these cowardly screams for justice? If they're so good at dishing out killing, let's see how well they can take it...

The telephone company's rationalization for having a monopoly was always that competition would make service "inefficient"...

Nobody should be allowed to own any building he doesn't live in.

THE MEDIA: *Life* magazine, already losing money and circulation rapidly, can't help but speed up the losses with its new (old fashioned) policy of devoting each issue to the week's stories that anybody who buys newspapers has already read. With all the staff and resources *Life* seems totally incapable of turning up anything new which should prove that it's staff are either incompetent reporters or else there's room at the top for somebody with some imagination...

Frozen TV dinners are reviewed amusingly and succinctly in the first issue of Les Levine's mostly pictorial new tabloid, *Culture Hero*...

General Dynamics took two pages in *Newsweek* to advertise its CL-215 plane that can be used to fly over burning forests and douse the fires. Maybe we should sell some of them to the North Vietnamese to use against the planes (does GD build those, too?) that start such fires.

Sports Illustrated has a special photo retoucher whose function is to "touch out offending pieces of human anatomy that sneak their way into the action shots of *SI* photographs."

PEOPLE: Sid Bernard, whose disguise as a benevolent scarecrow belies his talents as one of the nittiest-grittiest of reporters, is off to London to oversee the production of his book, *This Way to the Apocalypse*, a collection of social-Comment and reportage about the Yippies, Motherfuckers, pigs, Fugs and other symptoms of the sixties...

Kennedy's crony Gargan, who casually let the girl in the car die while he considered his master's career, was also the man who prosecuted Dr. Spock (on the behalf of the State of Massachusetts) whose crime was trying to save young men's lives...

"Power to the People is a very misleading slogan because it is all-inclusive. White people of America do not need power; they have it in full abundance. Power to the People sounds good but it is dangerously self-deluding." (Julius Lester)

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