

# Interview: Roman Gribbs

R.B. Mandarin

1969

**Fifth Estate:** First of all, let me congratulate you on your victory.

**Roman Gribbs:** Thank you.

**Fifth Estate:** I understand that Mr. Austin issued a statement calling for brotherhood and unity between his supporters and yours.

**Roman Gribbs:** Yes, Mr. Austin did that. He ran a fine dignified campaign. He has earned the respect, admiration, and adulation of many people in this city. We plan to work together. We must work together to make Detroit the city where we can live together and prosper together.

**Fifth Estate:** Do you feel you have the support of the black community?

**Roman Gribbs:** Yes I do. I feel I do. The Negro people want law and order too. They want to feel safe in their own neighborhoods. I plan to make it safe for any man to walk through his own- neighborhood. I think this is what the Negro people want. I think this is what all people want. People are people, and I plan to be mayor for all of the people. I feel we will have this sort of unity.

**Fifth Estate:** What specific methods do you propose to use to make the streets, as you say, safe for any man to walk?

**Roman Gribbs:** I think one sure way is to have more police and better police. I've already considered many ways of beefing up the police force and giving them more power to be more effective. For instance, I'd like to see every police officer trained in the use of walkie-talkies. I've used them a lot myself. We have a name for them you know. Call them squawk boxes. Hell, if every police officer had his own squawk box, we could avoid a lot of useless driving around. They could just call up some more police officers on their squawk boxes and surround these punks, the troublemakers. I think it would be quick and quiet. It would work. We would be respected.

**Fifth Estate:** What do you plan to do directly for the people?

**Roman Gribbs:** Well, I would like to see Detroit become a good city to live in, a good place to be.

**Fifth Estate:** Culturally?

**Roman Gribbs:** Yes.

**Fifth Estate:** Could you elaborate on that. Do you have any plans, any approach to upraising culture in our city?

**Roman Gribbs:** Yes, I'll elaborate. First of all what you have to do is find out what the American public wants. What the people think. What movies have been the best sellers of the year. "The Graduate," "Midnight Cowboy," "Easy Rider." They're about being young and...well...sex. One's all about New York and you know about sex there.

**Fifth Estate:** Yes.

**Roman Gribbs:** Well, I feel it's necessary to a certain extent to realize these things and work with them.

**Fifth Estate:** How do you plan to do this?

**Roman Gribbs:** There's many ways to approach the problem. For instance, we might have some of our policemen let their sideburns grow a little longer, or even have a couple of them comb their hair like Dustin Hoffman.

**Fifth Estate:** Do you think the people would then think of the policeman as more of an everyday person. Someone he's liable to meet on the street?

**Roman Gribbs:** That's right. Or see in the movies.

**Fifth Estate:** So you foresee this as being helpful also in dealing with the younger people, particularly the students?

**Roman Gribbs:** I don't know.

**Fifth Estate:** What do you think of the current student trends. Things such as demonstrations leaning toward revolution?

**Roman Gribbs:** I'll tell you what I think of revolution. FE: What do you think of revolution?

**Roman Gribbs:** I think that there's two types of what you might like to call revolution going on here. The students, the students I'm saying now are influenced by sex and violence and the idea of dramatic, attention getting revolution in the streets. This appeals to this generation. I've never seen anyone really pull this kind of shit off though. They want to act...

**Fifth Estate:** How old are you?

**Roman Gribbs:** Thirty-two

**Fifth Estate:** I read in your campaign literature that you were thirty-nine.

**Roman Gribbs:** No, I'm thirty-two. I mean, yes, I'm thirty-two. I mean I'm thirty-nine. I'm thirty-nine.

**Fifth Estate:** What did you think of the Moratorium?

**Roman Gribbs:** What moratorium?

**Fifth Estate:** The October 15<sup>th</sup> Moratorium against the war in Vietnam.

**Roman Gribbs:** I thought it was fucked up. I mean most of those people were there just to walk around to see it for themselves. Most of it was just done for attention. There are very few people who are really involved, who really want it that way. I think the public is being used.

**Fifth Estate:** How old are you?

**Roman Gribbs:** Thirty-two. Yeah. Thirty-two.

**Fifth Estate:** What do you think of rock and roll?

**Roman Gribbs:** For the most part I think its too loud. I'm not saying anything against rock and roll...wonderful...it just doesn't say anything. What does it say? "I lost my baby, da da da da." But I like it. I like the Beatles. Rock and roll, you know, is a communicator. It involves everybody. You take somebody over 40 and he knows who the Rolling Stones are. Johnny Carson knows all these people. He has them on his show, and a lot of older people watch it.

**Fifth Estate:** So in effect, you think- there is a marked dichotomy present in rock music. It says something while not really saying anything, so to speak.

**Roman Gribbs:** Yes, that's right.

**Fifth Estate:** Wouldn't that make you then a sort of sour utopian. Do you mean to be taken literally?

**Roman Gribbs:** I do definitely mean what I say to be taken literally, yes to make people aware of the true criminality of our times, All of my work is directed and will continue to be directed against those who are bent, through stupidity or design, on blowing up the city or rendering it uninhabitable.

**Fifth Estate:** Let's talk a bit about your family...

**Roman Gribbs:** My brother is a clergyman.

**Fifth Estate:** Actually, what I'd like to talk about is your wife and children. Your immediate family, so that...

**Roman Gribbs:** But my brother is a priest, and my mother was very religious.

**Fifth Estate:** Then I suppose you feel that your upbringing may have had an effect on your later life; possibly that this guided you toward a career in servicing the public?

**Roman Gribbs:** Yes, as I said, my mother was quite religious.

**Fifth Estate:** What about your father?

**Roman Gribbs:** I don't wish to discuss him. My mother detested him.

**Fifth Estate:** Oh, I see. What sort of person was your mother then?

**Roman Gribbs:** Very religious. Very. But now she is crazy. My brother was more religious than I was actually. He still is. She would lay on top of him, while I was tied to the bed forced to watch. It was very shocking, yet quite moving. She writes to me all the time begging me to return. I would rather not discuss it.

**Fifth Estate:** I'm sorry. Let's change the subject then. Do you have any particular fears that might effect your taking office?

**Roman Gribbs:** No, I'm not afraid of anything. I was in the ambulance service in the war. You saw the war. I don't know if it was the best or the worst side of combat, but the ambulance service gave you a pretty objective view of the war. After all, the soldiers were at least carried away by the spirit of combat. Its really different sitting around and dragging off the wreckage. I don't think I'm scared of anything.

**Fifth Estate:** Would you at least admit though that you have a number of major problems to immediately face and attempt to deal with?

**Roman Gribbs:** I don't know.

**Fifth Estate:** Haven't you attempted to assess these problems as of yet?

**Roman Gribbs:** I don't know.

**Fifth Estate:** Would you support the use of heavily armed police to maintain order on college campuses?

**Roman Gribbs:** I don't know.

**Fifth Estate:** Would you support an inquiry into alleged Mafia connections in city government?

**Roman Gribbs:** I don't know.

**Fifth Estate:** Do you feel that there has been an alarming increase in incidents involving obscenity on college campuses here in Michigan?

**Roman Gribbs:** I don't know.

**Fifth Estate:** How do you plan to deal with drug abuse. Are you in favor of stiffening the penalties for marijuana offenders?

**Roman Gribbs:** I don't know.

**Fifth Estate:** Where do you live?

**Roman Gribbs:** I don't feel that that matters, or for that matter, that it even should matter.

**Fifth Estate:** How old are you?

**Roman Gribbs:** I don't know. I mean I'm thirty-nine. Yeah. I'm thirty-nine.

# fifth Estate

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