

Who Runs

Newspapers

"Underground" newspapers are being sold to high school students in Observerland. These articles will be blamed for boosting their circulation - but it's too late. The Fifth Estate and the Ann Arbor Argus are already in town.

In Plymouth, a young man who sold the paper near City Hall was arrested and charged with being a "disorderly" person for selling "an indecent or obscene paper."

At Clarenceville High School earlier this year, the Fifth Estate became an open issue when the administrators temporarily expropriated copies on display. The "hippie" papers have been a problem, open or otherwise, in most other schools.

Why are these papers, so strongly concerned with police and drugs and protest, so popular among middle-class suburban youth? Who are the people who write for, edit and finance them? Observer Newspapers writer Dennis L. Pajot went out to meet them....

UNDERGROUND

By DENNIS PAJOT

Livonian Rick London ambled beneath an "End The War Now" banner stretched across boarded windows of a dilapidated building beside the Lodge freeway in Detroit.

He pushed open its heavy, red painted door and stepped inside to the Fifth Estate newsroom.

Propping his feet on a desk in a narrow, warehouse-like room festooned with angry posters denouncing "imperialistic insults to Ho Chi Minh, Che Chevara, blue collar workers and womanhood," he prepared to receive a man wanting to place an advertisement.

London is listed as a staff writer with the underground publication but explained, "We try to do things the way we want society to be; nobody specializing in anything, working collectively to get everything done."

He suggested that the Observer Newspapers interviewer wait for the arrival of fellow editorial staffer, Peter Werbe, however, because "he knows more about it."

Werbe, in turn, answered questions about production and staffing, but deferred financial inquiries to Bill Rowe, "our managing editor."

NAMES LISTED ON the porch door of a nondescript white clapboard house just around the corner from Ann Arbor's S. University Street business center include males and females.

Neither the banner of the Ann Arbor Argus, nor the name of its founder-publisher-editor appeared.

Yes, he was there, said a girl who opened the door. Please come in.

"In" was the newsrooms of the publication currently drawing obscenity charges in Observerland.

"IN" WAS THE living room-dining room of a sparsely furnished household (three understuffed chairs, a day bed, four desks, three typewriters, one jukebox, a television set, record player, chest of drawers-file cabinet, and pigeon hole copy shelves - plus lumber used for a current building project).

THE GIRL disappeared into a kitchen and soon could be heard washing dishes. A young man in an undershirt scarcely looked up from a window seat.

Capitalism In The Commune

How They Get Their Money

By DENNIS PAJOT

The "underground" tabloids frankly advocate revolution against the American capitalist society. Yet they use the capitalist system to gain readership in suburbia.

The papers are the "Ann Arbor Argus" and the Fifth Estate.

Both are currently the subjects of obscenity charges brought by municipal authorities and counter-charges of suppression of free press brought by vendors in Observerland.

They are published in Ann Arbor and Detroit, respectively.

Middle class, white, disenfranchised young Metro-Americans who profess preference for anarchy and communes form the hard core publishing groups.

Both publications are hawked on school grounds, in "head shops" (stores dealing in hippie culture items) and on the streets of Observerland for sums comparable to the price of your morning or evening journal.

"Sellers keep half the bread," Ken Kelley, chief of the Ann Arbor Argus editorial group, told Observer Newspapers in an interview this week.

Peter Wurvey, an editorial group member of the Fifth Estate, said he wasn't sure of money matters. He said he leaves these to "managing editor" Bill Rowe, who was not available for comment.

PUT TOGETHER literally underground, in the basement of a dilapidated former store building at the corner of the Lodge freeway and Warren in Detroit, the Fifth Estate has its own printing plant.

The Argus contracts its printing. Preparation is accomplished in the living room, dining room and hall of a sparsely furnished house in Ann Arbor.

Neither advertises its existence on the

From upstairs came the sounds of someone performing the rituals of day-starting.

Presently a goateed young man, fully dressed and wearing his thick blonde hair in flowing waves below his shoulders, entered.

Ken Kelley asked the girl for a cup of tea and settled into a chair to explain his operation and its staffing.

Seven persons live in the house, supported to a great extent by the income from his publication, he explained at one point.

Soon after the interview began, commune residents five and six came in: the Argus managing editor, Howard Kohn, who also writes for "establishment" newspapers, and his wife.

WHO ARE THESE publicists who spread blatant criticism of American capitalism laced with gut language, live in communes and perform collective duties?

Who are the writers who want worldwide student and worker revolution, anarchy and "pure" communism?

Who are the editors who select columns offering "establishment defying" legal advice, a philosophy of "energy-giving-sun worship," use of drugs and art that emphasizes disgust with "the pigs" (policemen)?

Who are they, whose products contain the private terms of genteel society - "obscenities" which are so attractive to the adolescents, the frustrated and the questioning?

A SIMPLE SUMMARY is that they are disenfranchised young Metro-Americans from diverse backgrounds with one trait in common - aversion to traditional organized religions.

Such a summary, admittedly incomplete and oversimplified, was drawn from "thumb-nail" biographies of more than a dozen leading functionaries on the staffs of the Fifth Estate and the Ann Arbor Argus.

Kelley, the Argus founder, who is also minister of information for the White Panther party, is a former Roman Catholic, professing rebellion against all organized religion.

Werbe, a successor to departed Fifth Estate founder Harvey Ovschinsky, said, "I'm a third generation atheist" and "I'd rather attend church than take part in many other functions of this society."

exterior. Both have changed locations frequently. The Fifth Estate has a listed telephone. The Argus does not.

Argus circulation currently runs about 16,000, according to Kelley, with about 1,000 in the Detroit-Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area, 4,000 nationwide and 300 to combat troops in Vietnam.

THE ARGUS has about 1,200 paying subscribers on its mailing list. Servicemen may subscribe free. The remainder are franchised to vendors or sold by staff members.

Wurvey said Fifth Estate circulation varies from a high of 14,000 to a low of 3,000. About 2,500 copies are mailed around the world "why they want them I don't know," he said. The remainder are sold through 95 stores and street hawkers.

A "cooperative" trucking outfit known as National Underground Distribution (NUD) carries both publications from presses to vendors.

Problems encountered by peddler Dietrich in Plymouth "are typical of the pig harassment all around the area," according to Wurvey, to whom "pig" is an "in" term for law enforcement officers.

Kelley echoed the same opinion, and added that "harassment" has been encountered by the staff also. He said a favorite "pig" maneuver is to "plant" marijuana on a target staff member or production location.

Wurvey complained that a store selling the Fifth Estate resisted "pig" orders to desist and was closed down by municipal building inspectors who "suddenly" discovered a faulty ceiling.

DESPITE THE PROBLEMS, the Fifth Estate has been publishing since 1965 and the Argus is going into its 15th bi-weekly edition. How do they meet expenses?



COVER STORY - Confrontations with police are a top "hard news" theme of underground newspapers. This cover from a recent Fifth Estate edition illustrates their viewpoint that police "pigs" are the instruments of oppression in America, forcing observance of "establishment" priorities. (Reprinted with permission).

LONDON, ONLY participant directly from Observerland, is the brother of Craig London, who is president of the political activist "Peace" organization, Pax of Schoolcraft Community College.

London grew up in Detroit. His family moved to Livonia when he was 14 and he attended Bentley High School.

He enrolled at Wayne State University and attended two quarters with "no major in particular," dropped out and has been working "off and on" on the Fifth Estate for two years. He has worked at "other jobs" during the off periods.

He calls his home background "middle class" but won't publicize his father's income range or occupation.

Asked his attitude toward religion, he said "I can't hardly remember."

Howard Kohn, Argus managing editor, also has a writing position with the U-M student newspaper, The Daily.

His father is a farmer earning about \$6,000 annually in a small town near Bay City where Kohn was raised. His father was a pacifist in World War II, serving in the army as a non-combatant. He refuses to hunt.

Kohn himself is a former Sunday School teacher who once aspired to be a minister. He attended a Lutheran school

for eight years. His wife "would still sing in the church choir, if I'd let her," said Kohn.

Like Kelley, he says he's in rebellion against organized religion now. He is in his early twenties.

AT THE OPPOSITE END of the socio-economic spectrum, one of the Argus writers and sometimes benefactors is Neil Bush, Columbia University degree holder in math and political science, graduate school law student at U-M and the son of a "rich" Jewish garment manufacturer.

Bush helped Kelley found the Argus. He was among the first campus protesters at

Continued on Page 38

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