

RISING WITH SUPPORT



photo by e. larrowe

Inman have earned us the wrath of Mayor Sam Massell. Three weeks ago members of the vice squad arrested more than ten *Bird* sellers in two days on charges of selling newspapers without a peddler's license. No other newspapers' sellers were arrested or questioned about licenses. A court hearing and a temporary restraining order (TRO) ended arrests prior to a full hearing June 5.

The defendants in the case are Vice Squad Chief E.F. McKillop, Police Chief John Inman and Mayor Sam Massell. Following the TRO hearing, McKillop denied harrassment charges by saying, "If you were being harrassed, the building inspector or fire inspector would be coming out to check your building." He was speechless when we told him the fire inspector had been there the day before. Later we got a letter from the fire department with a list of preventive measures we should take. The fire inspector sent a carbon copy to McKillop. All requirements had been met before Saturday's fire.

During the week of arrests, Massell, his spokeswoman Roz Thomas and some policeman made several telling remarks about the *Bird*. A cop who arrested a seller told him, "We never had to go ahead before, but now we do, and the *Bird* is going out of business. If you quote me in court, I'll call you a liar." Thomas told a *Bird* staff member she had defended the *Bird* in City Hall meetings, but after being quoted in an article about the new police chief, she was withdrawing her support and protection. Massell himself said the *Bird* had turned into a hate sheet, that it had "shouted fire in a crowded theatre" and no longer deserved any rights. McKillop, Thomas and Massell have all been subpoenaed to appear in court for the full hearing.

The week after the sellers hassles and the fire inspection, the US Post Office notified us our papers would not be accepted for mailing if they included the abortion referral ads we've been running for three years. For one week we altered all but one ad that was impossible to change to comply with the 1861 law the post office was using. That ad was blacked out.

Then it was back to court, another TRO and the next week abortion ads ran as usual. Date for the full hearing is not yet set. We don't yet know if the City Hall and Post Office hassles are connected.

The following Friday someone said, "Do you realize we got through a whole week without a new hassle?" At 5 am the next morning, the biggest "hassle" so far exploded. When experts commit arson, they know how to set the fire to insure no telling evidence is left behind. Despite diligent efforts, the fire department has found no clues to link anyone to the crime. The cowards come in the dark and blow up everything including the evidence, so it's impossible to tell who the actual culprit is. Yet, it's clear who has created the current atmosphere conducive to this crime. It's very possible that someone reading or hearing about the mayor's recent comments and recognizing the police harrassment for what it was, figured they'd do the mayor a service by doing the dirty work. The responsibility goes back to the mayor for the atmosphere, the adverse comments from someone in power, just as much as if he said to the right person, "A bomb might stop the *Bird*." And the blame is shared by policy-makers who encourage the shooting of picketers, the suppression of demonstrations by police violence, the neutralization of communities through drug addiction, and the maiming of Vietnamese with anti-personnel bombs.

We made it out this week, we will next week, and we'll stay in business. But even with all the help and support, it isn't easy (understatement of the year). Our biggest obstacle, of course besides finding \$4,000, is finding a new office. It has to be cheap. People are bound to think we're a risk. Massell himself and his business and family interests own or manage an incredible amount of property. But we can use temporary quarters and our homes as long as necessary. We will find a place eventually. Meanwhile, we know it's the people who count, not the place. Thanks to everyone.

-candy hamilton

Julian Bond

The cowardly attack by nameless cretins on The Great Speckled Bird is part and parcel of a continuing pattern of extra-legal harassment begun with the sanction of Atlanta's corporate ruling class. From its beginning as a small thorn in the side of the monopoly press to its present eminence as one of America's strongest voices for the unrepresented, the Bird has printed the news Atlantans couldn't get elsewhere.

Fly on, Bird! The sad lesson to be learned from this attack is the necessity for members of the counter-culture to involve themselves in building a political movement strong enough to make newspapers secure from midnight bombings in Atlanta, Brown people secure from round-the-clock bombings in Asia, and all people secure from the ravages of the continued oppression forced upon them in 20th century America.

Julian Bond
Atlanta, Georgia

Georgia Communist League

Several days ago, the offices of the *Great Speckled Bird* newspaper were burned to the ground. The Georgia Communist League (Marxist-Leninist) joins with other groups and individuals in Atlanta in condemning this fascist attack.

For a number of years, the *Bird* has been a progressive, anti-imperialist force in Atlanta. It has been active in opposition to the US government's aggression against the Indochinese people; it has given support to the black liberation movement; to the fight against the oppression of women; and also given coverage to the strikes of workers in Atlanta.

In particular, the *Bird's* recent exposures of the corrupt local government of Sam Massell and the tiny handful of rich who control Atlanta has particularly infuriated these same people. Because the *Bird's* stories have thrown light on these capitalists' greed and exploitative policies, these powerful men—with Sam Massell as their spokesman—have stepped up the harassment of the *Bird* in the last few weeks.

Mayor Massell has called the *Bird* a "hate sheet" which should not enjoy freedom of speech. This is only natural. Massell will *only* protect the "freedom of the press" of the capitalist newspapers, which lie in order to cover up the evils of this system. As long as this class of people run things, this is all that "freedom of the press" can mean.

The question which all progressive people want Mayor Massell to answer is this: *Will you make it illegal to "hate" injustice, corruption, exploitation, and aggression???*

The burning of the *Bird* office is another recent incidence of repression which mounting against the people, such as the framing of Henry Whitlock. This attack on the *Bird* is a temporary set-back for progressive forces in Atlanta and everyone should come to its aid against harassment. But these attempts by the ruling class to crush opposition to its policies can only further expose their real nature and in the end will bring their downfall!

-georgia communist league (marxist-leninist)