

see it every hour they are on the clock. Which brings us to the last bit to remember about social workers: they are workers. They have all the same attitudes about work that you do. At one time, they were idealists. They believed that with this career they would be improving people's lives every day and serving humanity. Most of them still believe this, but what's foremost in their mind while on the clock is what they might do when off the clock. While at work, they want as little interaction as possible with their bosses. They want as many and as long breaks as is possible. They almost never answer the phone or return messages. When they are typing in your answers on the computer they are really thinking about getting drunk, fucking, or the best way to make it out of the building with the computer, anything but the monotony of work. Usually all these things work to our advantage. Just be aware, it takes a long time for them to get to you, but when you are in front of them you won't be there for long. The questions will be quick and your answers should be too. Don't tell them any more than they need to know. Lastly, they may require more than your word; they may ask for paycheck stubs, sworn statements, rent agreements etc.

Bureaucracy - Government aid is a huge bureaucracy. Be prepared to get the run-around, be there all day, have caseworkers switched with little explanation, and have information relayed inaccurately. Combine caseworkers' lack of desire to work efficiently with bureaucracy's sluggish speed and you know you're in for a wait. You may spend 2 hours of your life in this tar-pit. And the fun doesn't stop once you leave the building. Expect strange letters in the mail detailing procedures that may not make sense, ordering you to the Division of Workforce Development for further bureaucratic insanity, and possibly even career counseling! And, of course, in 6 months you must return to renew your food stamps all over again.

Supervisors - Beware of supervisors. Maybe they too started off as caseworkers did. Maybe they think they are still helping people. But their job is to oversee the caseworkers, keep them in line, make sure they are not giving out too much of the State's funds, and make sure information is in order and people are not abusing the system. In this endeavor, as in most, the supervisor is your enemy. Don't be afraid; if you happen to run into them, remember that with a little creativity you can lose them in the bureaucracy.

You - Show up early in the week and early in the morning to ensure a shorter line. Bring along identification and either a friend or a good book. When in front of your caseworker say as little as possible! The answer to almost every question should be "no". You have no money in the bank, no income, no property. You share meals with nobody. Claim single-parent status if possible. It's

fine to lie about bank accounts, but we doubt you will be able to lie about kids, unless you have some killer counterfeit birth certificates. We have heard conflicting stories about their ability to verify your employment status. If you work under-the-table claim to be unemployed. If you must say that you work provide a copy of your lowest paycheck stub. If you get caught lying, *which we have never heard of happening*, they have the ability to suspend government aid from you for a long time. Don't let this scare you. *Everyone* lies and exaggerates their situation; it's expected. What's most important isn't that you make \$0, but rather that all your money goes to paying for utilities and rent, leaving you little to nothing for food. The ratio is important. You need to say that you are taking in less than you need to survive. If they have trouble swallowing your story here are a couple of good lies to fall back on; "Friends are loaning me money to get by" and "Friends are letting

me stay on their couch 'til I get off my feet." Of course they may ask for statements from these people (which can easily be forged). If they deny you food stamps, they will offer the option to appeal it and a free lawyer. Take both. You will, in all likelihood, lose the first appeal, but a lawyer assures us that, almost always, if you push it far enough, you will win.

GAME OVER

One thing we must emphasize that it is in our best interest for you to be open about your food stamps. We need to normalize people receiving government aid. We need to demonstrate to others the reality that we are in a class war, and that people are not afraid to steal from the enemy. Eliminating the stigma attached to government aid along with subverting ruling-class values has disastrous possibilities for their system. Personal, everyday things like getting food are a wonderful way to communicate with friends and family your class perspective. People tend to give ideas a chance, especially dangerous ones which lead to a complete break with the bourgeois paradigm, when they come from people they know and love. So spread the class war every time you sit down for a bite on Uncle Sam's dime.

The more money we get from the government, the less we have to work. The less we have to work the more time we have to riot. The more we riot the more money we get from the government. It's simple, perhaps too simple. But our goal isn't more government aid to smooth out capitalism; our goal is the abolition of capitalism and the State, and its inherent paternalism, brutality, and bureaucracy. As long as they keep us locked in cycles of work and dependency, we will lie and cheat to get their aid, but never be satisfied. Until the game of food stamps-the game of survival and appeasement-is forever destroyed.

There's nothin' you can give us that you ain't already taken from us.



WAR

#2 Autumn 2006

OUR DAYS ARE NEVER COMING BACK.

ST. LOUIS Against the drudgery of daily life and for a holiday without beginning or end FREE



When the bloody lips of progress move to kiss, we spit fire.

On the 2006 arsons ripping through city and suburban developments

"My belief is that it may have been just somebody, passerbys, riding by and seeing the fire and just "Rah, Rah, Rah! Oh, look at that fire!"

-Kerry Wilson, St. Louis Fire Investigator, on reports that a neighbor heard cheering at about the time the Compton Gate fire started, April 27, 2006

A fire. And another, and another, and another... We exchange silent smirks. Maybe outbursts of laughter among friends. A skipped heartbeat or two. Whispers of anticipation that the burdensome tide of regularity might be shifting. That the social conflict of this city, that between the rich and the poor, might be outwardly showing itself as such. Some, more daring than ourselves, articulate our buried rage for the prison we call a city.

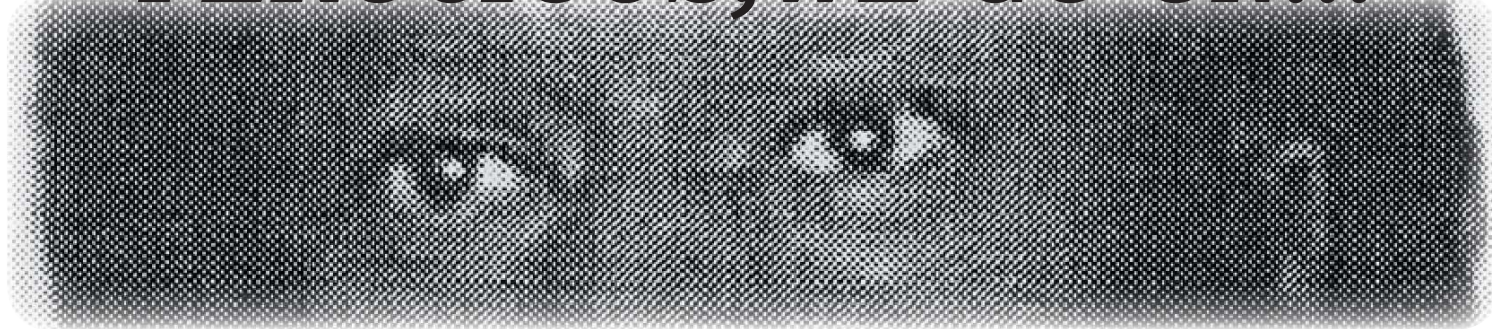
The arsons have thrown the media, mayor, police, and developers into a tantrum, but no one else seems to mind or feel threatened. The worry that one might be burned alive while exploring an empty building seems negligible when pitted against threats of eviction, one's kid spending a night in jail, or getting the boot at work. Hell, and when the one's who are responsible for those fears get publicly frantic, how can we not enjoy it. It's no surprise that no one's come forward to claim the \$65,000 reward money. Better to appreciate revenge than spoil the party.

FIRES, continued on page 6

Fire, Fire, Everywhere...

- January 17 - Pinebrook Estates (Edwardsville, IL), \$440,000
- April 27 - Compton Gate Condos (Grand & Flad), \$4 million
- April 30 - Stonebridge Villas, Milburn Estates, Lake St. Ellen (O'Fallon, IL), \$300,000
- June 14 - Vail Place Townhomes, Mississippi Place Townhomes (Lafayette Square), \$4.5 million
- June 20 - Doorways Development (Walnut Park), minimal damage
- July 13 - Beck Ave. Warehouse Lofts (Tower Grove South), complete loss, damage unknown
- August 29 & 30 - 2 Historic, but vacant homes on Cook and 1 on Finney (Grand Center), complete loss, damage unknown

STILL HUMBLE, STILL FEROCIOUS, WE GO ON...



In the crisp morning air we reach for the door, catching a glimpse of ourselves in the plate glass window bearing our employer's logo. Eyes bleary from abrupt dream endings, heart heavy from leaving a child crying for us not to go, head numb from the chatter of the morning news, and limbs sore from years of a wasted life.

The news vomits: "Riots in Budapest," "Uprising in Oaxaca," "General Strike in France," "Land Occupation in South Korea," "Trucker Blockade in Tacoma," "Carnival Riot in O'Fallon," "Student Walkout on South Kingshighway." Still we say: "It's not here. It's not us."

"I've been in the hole for a year now for stabbing a guard at M.S.P. [Missouri State Penitentiary] I got tired of working ten hours out of everyday for ten cents an hour. They smile and tell you you're doing a good job, but to me, I know only they profit from my sweat, tears, and servitude. I woke one day and said no more, I got two knife type weapons and went to work- funny no more came with a smile on their face saying, "You did a good job!"... A wolf has come and the sky is now falling upon their dreams."

-Missouri prisoner in Bonne Terre, April 29, 2004

Only when we actualize that we are each capable of acting will we understand clearly what we now only suspect: We can break the system. The recent events in St. Louis have shown us the developers are scared, the cops are scared, and the banks are most definitely vulnerable. Dumbstruck faces of South City developers greet us on the evening news. Fearful Illinois prison guards stand roadside picketing for better protection from those they cage. Business owners frantically call the cops and media to hunt down graffiti vandals. Teary-eyed Kirkwood cops crouch on all fours to clean a desecrated memorial with toothbrushes. Every available cop creeps through the blacked-out city sweeping the streets with floodlights hoping to catch us creeping in the shadows, hand gripping crowbar, eyes locked on Schnucks. Anxious school officials race back to the meeting room to make sure the kids don't walk out again. All this because of the actions of mere dozens in a region of millions. Some call us naïve to think the system can be broken; we think it naïve to think it can't.

Kids, full of themselves, laugh condescendingly at the South Grand wheatpaster's rage against a mental health system that destroyed him. They are too quick to mock one who has broke the chokehold and begun to speak on his own. They themselves have hardly lived a moment where they haven't accepted the voice of others as their own. A situation that is, without a doubt, much more worthy of mockery...

This is our second attempt to speak for ourselves against the crushing weight of the world we were born into. With near-total understanding of certain aspects of this society and limited understanding of others, we continue.

We believe state and moneyed power never let up their attacks. There is no social truce- only constant social conflict. We don't get a break from rent, bills, the screaming alarm clock, or the silent surveillance cameras. And those who force us into these compromising positions shouldn't and don't get a break either. We don't believe in just waiting for "the right moment" to strike back against the violence of this society, or the right social movement to come sweep us away. Right now is the right moment. And we, and our everyday fight-back, are the social movement.

If you find the spirit of this publication exciting, then we encourage you to photocopy it and to share it with your friends, family, co-workers, and cell-mates or simply leave it around town. Better yet make public your own attempts to make sense of and combat this miserable society.

For now, you can contact us at war_on_misery@hotmail.com

every bite we take.

- Because those fucks owe us! Because revenge is a dish best prepared with ingredients purchased with food stamps.

- Because if we are going to improve our lives, the step we need to take after we identify what side of this class conflict we are on, is to purge the enemies' morality and language from our minds. From birth, capitalists disarm us by polluting our heads with guilt, work ethic, shame, morality, passivity, etc. No more guilt about not having a job, having a low-paying, degrading job, or not being able to make ends meet. We must rethink who is at fault when we can't afford to give our kids a good life or can't afford to find someone to watch them occasionally so we can have a good life. We need to rethink who is to blame when we don't have the time to build intimate relationships, or the energy to help a friend when they are down. No more work ethic. Make no mistake, our labor is their profit. No more shame about being on government aid. No more charitable nonsense about how others need aid more than us. We are strong when we understand our collective situation; what unites us is our exploited position and our desire to break free of it. Don't be fooled into thinking funds are scarce. Politicians seem to always find ways to expand budgets for new wars, baseball stadiums, corporate welfare checks, and their bank accounts. No more morality about "turn the other cheek." Steal back what is stolen from you. No more nonsense about taking the high road. It leads nowhere. No more representation, no more pleading, no more spectating, no more passivity. Get out there and lie to get your money back! Ultimately, food stamps allow us the opportunity to challenge these brain diseases and then spread the antidote of subversion to friends and family.

- Because food stamps are less risky than survival-by-shoplifting, and easier and healthier than survival-by-working.

- Because food stamps means less time working, and more time spent with friends, family, subversives, and lovers; potentially scheming and plotting ways to make life less miserable for us and more miserable for capitalists (something that should go hand-in-hand).

THE RULES

Walk into the nearest Department of Social Services, Family Support Division office (in the city either 3545 Lindell or 4411 N. Newstead), through the metal detectors, and approach the information desk. Tell them you are applying for food stamps. You will get a form to fill out and a number. Fill it out and wait.

When your number is called, approach the window. You will be assigned a caseworker and told to wait again. This is the longest part of the day. Don't be afraid to complain back at the window if you have waited more than 15 minutes (30 to 45 or even an hour is common). It sometimes speeds up the process.

When your caseworker calls your name, follow him or her back to a computer, and answer a series of questions. After that, you're done. Congratulations, if you gave the correct answers, you now have food stamps.

THE PLAYERS

Caseworkers - For the most part, they want to help you. They are liberals, people who believe that capitalism can be made less exploitative. They see no essential contradictions in this society. Instead, they see many areas which need reforms; rough spots to be smoothed. They find government aid to be lacking. They see first-hand the paternalism and clumsy bureaucracy that makes it harder for people to receive aid. They also see the effects of budget cuts first-hand. To most of us, when politicians slash social spending by X we cannot possibly understand how that affects individual people. Social workers do. They

air ducts. The escape attempt fails, but electrical, telephone, and internet cables melt, cutting off power in one cell block, disrupting about half the video cameras, and causing more than \$41,000 in damages, forcing the jail to close for over a month.

October 11, Festus - At 4:15pm, employees at Ozarks Federal Bank on Veterans Blvd. hand over an undisclosed amount of cash to a robber who displays a gun and demands money.

October 20, Alton (IL) - Two men, with prepaid cell phones bought solely for this purpose, call to report two phony bank robberies, while a third, wearing a holstered handgun and a fake bomb made of road flares, walks into another bank- the U.S. Bank on State Street. Before walking back out, he approaches the manager who then leads him to the vault and places \$68,112 into his duffel bag.

October 26, Clayton - Police inside the St. Louis County Courthouse arrest three people for threatening three cooperating eyewitnesses delivering statements to the Prosecuting Attorney Robert P. McCulloch in the case of slain Kirkwood cop William McEntee.

October 31, Fort Leonard Wood - Kyle Snyder, the GI who deserted in April 2005 and recently surrendered, goes AWOL again after Fort Knox, KY officials renege their promise to discharge him and order him back to Fort Leonard Wood, where officials there will determine his fate. Kyle disappears from the Louisville, KY Greyhound bus station where Army officials had dropped him off.

November 7, University City - The Bank of America ATM at Washington University's Mallinckrodt Center is "extensively defaced" with green spray-paint.

November 7, Florissant - A man successfully robs the Arsenal Credit Union in Florissant Oaks Shopping Center.

November 9, Collinsville (IL) - At 4:15pm, a man robs the U.S. Bank on Beltline by showing the tellers a weapon, getting an undisclosed amount of cash, and running out of the building.

November 13, Carbondale (IL) - Saboteurs damage \$8,000 worth of heavy construction machinery being used to build a storage business. They use a drill to puncture the tires of a dumptruck and backhoe. They also drill a hole in the backhoe's engine oil panel and cut hydraulic lines on an excavator.

November 13, Spanish Lake - Around 11am, a man robs the Regions Bank on Redman Rd. and escapes in a minivan.

November 15, Imperial - Just before noon, a man informs a teller at Southern Commercial Bank on Main St. that he has a gun. He then receives money and escapes in a car without plates.

November 22, Florissant - Vandals bust out windows of a police car and 13 cars at Marty Cancila Dodge dealership on N. Lindbergh Blvd. causing about \$30,000 in damages.

November 24, Rocky Mount - An arson fire destroys 17 luxury boats valued at \$1.6 million at an Advanced Marine storage facility.



CHRONICLES, continued from page 5

try road and disappears with the loot.

August 25, St. Charles - Students at all three Francis Howell district high schools refuse to buy lunch from the cafeterias because the portions are too small, too expensive, and "gross." The boycott was reportedly organized through the internet.

Late August, Chesterfield - Ricky Bell, angry after his arrest for shoplifting earlier this year led to him being fired from his job, mails two death threats to the home of his arresting officer.

September 8, Wentzville - Two 17-year-olds escape from a psychiatric unit at St. Joseph Health Center by busting out a third floor window, descending onto the second story roof with a rope of tied-together bed sheets, jumping to the parking lot below, forcing two employees from their car, and speeding off.

September 9, Manchester - A Manchester police officer sitting in his patrol car running radar on Highway 141 is hit in the shoulder by shots fired from a pellet gun.

September 26, St. Louis City - Several people in a car, tired of being followed by an unmarked police car in The Ville neighborhood, ambush the cops as they turn the corner behind them. Thirty-three rounds are fired, striking one of the cops twice and rendering their vehicle useless. The police are unable to return fire and the shooters escape into the night. "There is not a night that goes by that I don't worry I will get a call that one of my officers has been shot," said Police Chief Joe Mokwa.

September 27, O'Fallon (IL) - Officials are forced to permanently close a \$10,000 exhibit showcasing the city's progress after unknown persons stole 13 of the 90 display banners.

September 27, St. Louis City - The police department's central computer system crashes erasing more than 7,000 reports. Police suspect employee sabotage may be to blame.

September 28, Roxana (IL) - A man being questioned at police headquarters picks a door lock while handcuffed to a wooden chair, runs outside, breaks free of the chair by smashing it in the parking lot, and escapes into a nearby neighborhood.

September 30, Affton - Around 30 anarchists behind a large banner reading, "FUCK Y'ALL!: Social Liberation, Not Anti-Immigration" crash the white-supremacist Council of Conservative Citizens' annual picnic. After the CofCC started a brawl, a picnic table lay overturned and 2 racists bloodied. For photos and more: www.stlimc.org/newswire/display/2272

October 5, Wellston - Molotov cocktails damage the homes of two city council members who, the night before, spoke in favor of adding more police to patrol the city.

October 8, Buffalo - At least 6 of 33 prisoners at Dallas County Detention Center attempt to breakout en masse. They kick a hole in the ceiling of the shower room, the only place without cameras, and stuff pages of a book into the opening and set them on fire, hoping to burn through the plywood barrier and gain access to the

FOOD STAMPS

A GAME OF APPEASEMENT

THE GAME Food stamps are the crumbs keeping us from both starvation and revolt. The State never grants us these crumbs out of generosity. Underlying all government aid is a threat, and we, the rabble, are that threat. Letter writing campaigns and petitions in no way force the State to toss us these crumbs. Rather, we coerce them with the threat that if we don't get free food, we will steal to survive; we will stop being passive victims and start counter-attacking.

In practical terms, food stamps are credit we get on a monthly basis, if we can prove we are desperate enough. And proving this is no small task, requiring patience, creativity, and the willingness to be humiliated. This government appeasement is paternalistic, stigmatizing, and obviously, never enough. Paternalistic because they dictate what we can spend the credit on. The message being, we are not mature enough to decide where to spend our money and what to spend it on. So we are given an allowance only to be used on certain foodstuffs (not the prepared variety, vitamins, or supplements) and only from accepting stores (anywhere within the United States). Additionally, they force us to provide documentation, more concrete than our own words, as proof of our starvation. Stigmatizing because we must provide a card every time we buy groceries, alerting the cashier and other customers that we cannot make ends meet. Of course, within that stigmatization is the enormous potential for subversion, which we will get to later.

Food stamps, like all crumbs, are not our goal. We don't want a bigger allowance, or a nicer, safer capitalism. Our goal is life. Food stamps are the result of our actions, the result of our attempts to live (read: riots, occupations, shoplifting, lootings, general strikes, rent strikes, bank heists). They are re-expropriation. In short, food stamps are a small victory in a long war against our class enemies.

WHY WE PLAY - Because work never pays enough, and the real material value of our work has been stolen from us by our bosses. Because everything should be available to those who need it. Because being on food stamps means \$150 a month we don't need to worry about.

- Because the more people get on food stamps the harder it is for politicians to take away. It gives us (the rabble, the working and between work(ing) classes) another venue in which we can collectively struggle.

- Because this economic system is based on the law of the commodity; that material objects, objects which we have produced and subsequently had stolen from us by capitalists, have a monetary value attached to them, thus requiring us to work in order to afford them. Food stamps turn this repulsive law somewhat on its head (only somewhat because obtaining and keeping food stamps can be work as well). Furthermore, the commoditization of food, like water, air, shelter, heat and transportation-necessities for mere survival as opposed to consumer goods-is infinitely more vile, sinister, and worthy of demolition. Just as we wouldn't dare think to pay for every breath we take, we should smash all attempts to impose a value for

CHRONICLES

Here again we report on those of us sporadically acting upon a world that continually acts upon us. Sporadic now, but through activities such as publishing this and the activities themselves, our self-activity and attacks (almost never mutually exclusive) will gain greater coherence. We cannot list every thrilling act of on-the-job sabotage and theft, small act of revenge against one's boss, one's school, the police, rapists, and racists, destruction of artwork, flag thefts and public burnings, church burglaries and vandalism, and shoplifting because they are so widespread that they either never get reported or are too numerous to fit on these pages. And, as we said before, we encourage these acts to take increasingly imaginative, collective, and coordinated forms. Now, proliferate!

2005

April 7, Manchester - In the last issue we reported that, on this date, 5 St. Louis City police cars had their windows knocked out. We overlooked the fact that on this same day, 13 tires were slashed on 9 Manchester police vehicles.

Sometime in April, Fort Leonard Wood - In order to avoid a second deployment to Iraq, Kyle Snyder, a combat engineer with the U.S. Army, deserts his Missouri Unit and flees to Canada.

October 17, Marion (IL) - Two prisoners escape from the Federal Prison Camp by walking away at an opportune moment.

November 19, Spanish Lake - Four teenagers, responding to their friend's recent eviction, break into the landlord's rental property, trash it, and set fire to a mattress on the way out.

December 9, St. Louis City - Someone breaks into a Maryland Heights police officer's personal car and makes off with his wallet, blank checks, and gun.

December 22, Waynesville - One-hundred miles southwest of St. Louis, the Pulaski County Sheriff's office fires one of its jailers for allowing a prisoner to have sex with his girlfriend in a records room. "She could have given him an AK-47, sticks of explosive or 300 pounds of oxycontin," Sheriff J.B. King says. "It's a total breach of security." There is no evidence the jailer took a bribe.

December 23, St. Louis City & County - More than fifty area taxi drivers meet and pool their money to help two fellow drivers in hiring an attorney to file a lawsuit against the Metropolitan Taxicab Commission. The commission's rogue inspectors consistently slap heavy fines on drivers for alleged violations outlined in its asinine 30-page rulebook. Other than what one driver calls the commission's "kangaroo court," drivers cannot really challenge these penalties. "We're tired of being pushed around," one of those who filed the lawsuit declared. Another driver spewed, "Everyday the owner takes a wad of cash outta my pocket, and when he can't watch over me, he gets his goons from the commission to scare me into being straight-laced. All so he can take Hawaiian vacations and

brag to his friends at cocktail parties how smooth and successful a business he runs. Fuck him." Three of the nine commissioners themselves own taxicab companies.

December 25, St. Louis City - Laclede Gas reveals that last year more than 2,000 cases of illegal gas hookups were discovered. The revelation is prompted by an investigation into a Christmas morning explosion that killed one man in a 30-unit apartment building at Hamilton Blvd. and Cabanne Ave. Detectives report that about half the units had turned the gas on themselves to avoid payment. In the months prior, Laclede had increased its rates by 40%.

December 26, St. Louis City - A man leaves with an undisclosed amount of cash after holding up Southern Commercial Bank at 4914 Gravois Ave.

December 29, St. Louis County - In the early morning hours, thieves steal an undetermined amount of cash from the armored car service Loomis, Fargo & Co. at 2220 Mason Lane.

December 30, Wentzville - The front window of Wentzville Pay Day Loans is smashed.

2006

January 4, St. Louis City - In the early afternoon, a man holds up the First Bank at 7256 Gravois Ave. and escapes with an undisclosed amount of cash.

January 7, Columbia & St. Francois County - St. Francois Sheriff Dan Bullcock releases a statement regarding three cars stolen from George Weber Chevrolet in Columbia last Fall: "The vehicles were being obtained with the help of a Weber Chevrolet employee without the knowledge or consent of the dealership." The investigation also uncovers a "payroll check forgery operation."

January 7, Warrenton - Paintballs are fired at a police speed trailer covering it with paint.

January 9, Potosi - At the maximum-security state prison, a death row prisoner repeatedly stabs a 19-year veteran unit manager (responsible for overseeing one of the prison's seven housing units) and injures two other prison workers. The attack occurs in the manager's office,

where inmates sometimes go for meetings or to air complaints. Tim Watson, a retired Dept. of Corrections officer, on the situation in the Potosi prison: "I got cut in the arm and stabbed in the shoulder... It's once or twice a month and we're talking serious, dangerous situations. Very life threatening... You could be in a housing unit where there's 150 or 100 even in a wing and you're out there by yourself. And you don't have anything but a radio and a prayer."

January 12, Millstadt (IL) - During the week of unusually warm weather, local skateboarders take over streets, disobeying all traffic laws and causing noticeable traffic problems. Local police issue a public statement warning the youngsters they are violating state law and asking parents to talk with their kids about proper skating locations.

January 15, Warrenton - A tractor trailer drives off with \$775 worth of unpaid gas in its tank. Two days earlier the gas station reported a \$285 theft.

January 17, Edwardsville (IL) - A vacant 5,500 square foot, \$440,000 home in the Pinebrook Estates subdivision is destroyed in a suspicious early morning fire. In the summer of 2004, vandals targeted and heavily damaged an Edwardsville subdivision construction site, breaking windows on unfinished homes and sabotaging construction equipment.

January 17, St. Louis City - A man successfully robs the U.S. Bank branch at 5418 Hampton.

January 28, St. Charles County - Officials attempting to tally the county's homeless population report "lots" of squatted rural barns.

January 28, Hillsboro - Three teenagers push past two officials, commandeer an employee's car, and escape from a state juvenile detention center. Two are later caught and the other is still at large.

January 30, Vienna (IL) - A young man, in the custody of the Johnson County's Sheriff's Department, escapes after a deputy briefly left him unattended in the booking room.

February 1, Maplewood - Around 40 people gather outside police headquarters to pro-



test the brutal televised police beating of a man two days earlier.

February 2, Weldon Spring - A man robs the local National City Bank branch late in the morning.

February 7, Fenton - Todd Beckman, millionaire president of the Tan Co. salon chain, cuts short his Mexican honeymoon after learning his \$2 million Fenton mansion suffered a devastating and intentional gas explosion. The walls and foundation are riddled with irreparable cracks and the home must be bulldozed.

February 10, Clarksville - A fire engulfs and destroys a replica Western town at the height of a long dormant sky lift that sits atop an American Indian burial ground. The land was the target of much opposition from Native Missouri tribes after owner Bill McMurtry sought to reopen the attraction.

February 14, Des Peres - Police announce the arrest of 18 college students (and possibly more to come) after a report of up to \$20,000 in missing merchandise from Dick's Sporting Goods since early December. Police allege a worker gave friends unauthorized discounts or simply allowed them to leave the store with merchandise.

February 14, Manchester - Eggs are hurled at Evangelical Free Church overnight after a local television news station runs a spot on the upcoming "Love Won Out" Christian conference that encourages people to suppress feelings of homosexuality.

February 16, St. Louis County - At least 28 school bus drivers stage a one-day wildcat strike amidst disputes with their employer Durham School Services over pay, reduced hours and routes, and health insurance. The strike, involving over 20% of the company's drivers, affects 11 county school districts - the most heavily disrupted being Clayton, Lindbergh, Kirkwood, Webster Groves, and Hancock Place. Drivers threaten more strikes if the company does not begin to cooperate with their demands.

February 22, St. Louis City - The *Riverfront Times* reports an upsurge of illegal underground parties/raves. Small groups of people have been breaking into abandoned warehouses, configuring sound systems and lighting, and informing people of the parties via word-of-mouth and cell phone text-messages. "This is completely outside the club circuit. It's gone back to that early autonomous, do-it-yourself, self-organizing ethos."

February 23, St. Louis City - Three FedEx employees are suspected of stealing packages and sharing the loot, which include a police officer's gun, large sums of cash, and a \$90,000 diamond ring.

February 24, St. Louis City - The message of a billboard for the "Love Won Out" Conference (see Feb. 14) is altered to read: "I questioned Homosexuality... AND MY ANSWER IS YES!" Graffiti next to the message reads: "RIGHT WING SCUM, YOUR TIME HAS COME!" Several days earlier, anti-moral vandals thoroughly vandalized another of their billboards with paint bombs.

February 27, Spanish Lake - Several rooms in Kirby Junior High School suffer heavy damage from vandalism and an overnight arson fire.

February 27, Swansea (IL) - A man escapes with a bag of money from Gateway Metro Credit Union after handing a teller a note demanding cash.

March 1, Collinsville (IL) - Five youth are arrested in connection with a two-week graffiti spree inflicting thousands of dollars in damages to a dozen area businesses by spray-painting "freedom," "give peace a chance," "revolution," and cartoon characters mocking the army.

March 9, Richwoods - A handcuffed man slips out of the back-seat of a Washington County sheriff deputy's patrol car and into the driver's seat and speeds off in the stolen car. Five hours later, the police find an empty car.

March 14, Belleville (IL) - Reacting to the early morning arrest of eighth-grader, Carl Simkins, dozens of demonstrators (including over 20 students) gather outside of West Junior High. The principal called Belleville Police to the school because Carl was 'insubordinate' (ignoring a teacher's order to leave the cafeteria before he had finished his breakfast). Fellow student Breanna Allmon: "[Carl] went outside after he was finished eating, and all of a sudden, teachers, the principal and the police were out there... They put the handcuffs on him in front of everybody. A lot of people were crying. I was crying." Students, many with permission from their parents, skip classes and circle the sidewalk in front of the school for three hours with signs reading, "Kids are People 2. We Want Respect Please," "Honk If You Think Kids Need Respect," and "Show Respect 2 Get Respect."

March 16, St. Louis City - Over 40 high school students, with the support of at least one teacher, walk out of their classes at Gateway Institute of Technology and hold a protest on the busy intersection of Kingshighway and McRee in south St. Louis. The students are furious that the superintendent did not consult them for his 'strategic plan' which includes longer school days, special schools exclusively for first-year high school students, the cancellation of the internship program, and mandatory school uniforms. Junior Reggie Smith explains, "It's up to us to learn, and

they makin' it harder when they makin' decisions without includin' us." Among other signs, one reads: "2:00...2:18, 3:00, Forever!"

March 21, Centreville (IL) - A prisoner is accused of setting fire to Centreville jail after igniting blankets in his cell two days earlier.

March 21, St. Louis City - In the early afternoon, a man successfully takes an undisclosed amount of cash from Southern Commercial Bank at 3207 Meramec St.

March 23, Marthasville - Multiple windows are broken out of a Marthasville police vehicle.

April 10, Madison County (IL) - A man, unable to pay a growing \$125 fine, breaks into the county animal control building overnight and escapes with his pet puppy dog, Titus. In the process he frees three other dogs. Earlier he had broken into the Human Society building next door looking for Titus.

April 15, St. Louis City - Security guards at the Venus Envy art event in St. Louis Center evict a group of transgender and "gender freaks" who had crashed the event with repeated guerilla theatre performances and the distribution of leaflets protesting the rejection of their performance applications from the female-only event.

April 17, St. Louis City - A man escapes on foot with \$8,000 and a revolver after robbing the driver of a Security Armored Car Service, Inc. van as he was walking into a check cashing business at N. Kingshighway and Page Blvd. around 10am.

April 17, Spanish Lake - At the Commerce Bank on Pattern Dr., a man demands money from a teller, receives the money, and escapes with it on his bicycle.

April 18, St. Louis City - After having been demoted earlier in the day (and angry over 8 years of the state garnisheeing his wages for 5 times the proper amount because of a "technical" error- leaving him with \$400/month to survive on), 53 year-old employee of Finninger's Catering Service, Herbert Chalmers, returns to his workplace, calmly walks past his co-workers, and shoots and kills one of the co-owners, 78, and her daughter and wounds the business manager.

April 22, Collinsville (IL) - A group of anarchists spoil and send home early an anti-immigration rally (of 5 people) by blaring music and obstructing their signs with flags and pro-immigrant signs of their own.

April 27, St. Louis City - A massive early morning fire completely destroys a block-long, upscale condominium development under construction at Grand Ave. and Flad Ave. inflicting \$3-4 million in damages. Investigators suspect arson

They make us strap time-clocks to our chests

"Work builds strong families."

- Banner in the Midtown Social Services building

We started this publication because we saw those around us follow the lead of the media and the baton of the police and resign themselves to the miserable state of this society - despite millions of signs, and oftentimes their own experience, suggesting it didn't have to be this way. We crafted *War on Misery* to radiate exactly this spirit of defiance, joy, and possibility, not to dwell on the despair that saturates our lives. But sometimes the violence of Capital becomes so vile and is so accepted by those who report it, that we cannot bear to gloss over our world's miserable normalcy. So here we deviate from words of hope and possibility because our eyes are too watery, hearts too heavy, and blood too boiling to swallow the reality. Listed below is the alarming number of those whose future was stolen from them by the madness of work - those who, because they needed another paycheck, are dead.

- A worker at LMC Industries in Arnold was killed in an industrial accident. December 2005.
- Wesley Dunn, 48, a tree trimmer for R&D Tree Service, plunged 75 feet to his death in Des Peres. December 5, 2005.
- Keith Myers, 34, a worker for Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad, was unloading coal at a power plant in Burlington, IA and standing on a ladder attached to the side of the train when a steel support beam from a water tower hit and killed him. December 5, 2005.
- A St. Jacob (IL) woman, 28, on her way to her second day of work at a new job, was stopped in traffic on I-44 when a tractor-trailer rammed her car from behind forcing it under a tractor-trailer in front of her and completely crushing her against its rear tires. December 6, 2005.
- John Eckstein, 53, a Franklin County dairy farmer, was killed by a bull. December 6, 2005.
- Donnell Corley, 32, was shot numerous times and killed as he walked to work on a north St. Louis street. January, 17, 2006.
- Matthew Hilmes, 39, a farmer near Breese (IL), died after being kicked by a bull. January 19, 2006.
- David Benson, 41, was killed driving from his home in Edwardsville to work in St. Louis when his car accidentally crossed the interstate median and slammed into an oncoming tractor-trailer. January 19, 2006.
- Jimmy Joe Storm, a truck driver, was killed in southern Illinois along I-57 after his tractor-trailer crossed the median and collided with two other tractor-trailers and a pickup truck. Five other people, including 3 children died in the wreck. January 26, 2006.
- Louise Dodenhoff, an elderly south St. Louis woman walking home from work at Maritz, was killed in a crosswalk by a car. February 2006.
- Tom Phillips, 80, worker at Spotted Acres petting zoo in Flora (IL), was mauled to death by an escaped black bear he was trying to corral. February 3, 2006.
- Marcella "Marcy" Hadley, 61, driving to work at Christian Northeast Hospital, was sideswiped by a pickup truck and killed. February 7, 2006.
- Richard Wolf, 53, a truck driver for Williams National Lease, veered off I-270 in Glen Carbon (IL) and slams into a barn instantly killing him. February 9, 2006.
- James Bellfield, 40, a painter for Thomas Industrial Coatings, fell into the Mississippi River from the Jefferson Barracks Bridge, which he had been painting the underside of. He had been trying to help 3 others who were left dangling by tethers after their scaffolding collapsed. After falling, the river's strong current swept him away, and he soon drowned. February 17, 2006.
- J.D. Croom, 27, a temp worker at Mid-America Fiber Company in Sauget, was sucked into a large machine at a speed of 40 feet/second, dousing him with chemicals and violently and fatally crushing him. March 22, 2006.
- Bob Eftink, 62, a MoDOT inspector, was crushed by a dump truck accidentally reversing over him in a construction zone in Old Appleton. April 2006.
- A man, 42, was crushed to death between the bed and the frame of his dump truck at J.M. Marschuetz Construction Company in Eureka. April 17, 2006.
- Sean Creath, 20, a landscape worker for Fetter's Landscaping, was crushed beneath the tires of a Bobcat tractor, suffering fatal, massive head injuries, after the small bulldozer, driven by a co-worker, lurched forward onto his boot and violently pulled him to the ground. April 18, 2006.
- Henry Jefferson Heath, Jr., 58, an IDOT worker directing traffic in a construction zone in Pontoon Beach (IL), was hit by the trailer of a jack-knifing truck and pushed into a parked IDOT dump truck, killing him instantly. April 26, 2006.
- Jeffrey Staley, 40, a highway construction worker for Collins & Hermann, Inc., was hit by a truck in Fenton (along with 2 co-workers) launching him off a bridge to his death 20 feet below. May 24, 2006.
- C. F. Rodgers, 53, was tying down a barge at Beelman River Terminal in Venice (IL), when he fell into the Mississippi River and drowned. May 25, 2006
- A 73-year-old worker for AmerenUE repairing electrical wires on a utility poll in University City was electrocuted to death. June 18, 2006.
- A dump truck driver for Wachter Inc. was crushed to death in Affton by a box of steel that blew over in the wind. July 21, 2006.
- Vladislav Yevrayev, 67, a Russian immigrant worker for the DoubleTree Hotel in Maryland Heights, trying to repair a switch in the service elevator, fell 8 stories down the shaft to his death, July 24, 2006.
- Robert Tackett, 56, an AmerenUE worker, was electrocuted to death in Ladue after walking into brush where an energized power line was partially hidden. July 25, 2006.
- Robert Graham, 69, a tree trimmer working in University City, fell 50 feet to his death after a limb he was cutting hit his ladder. July 26, 2006.
- A man painting an electric tower in Washington plunged 80 feet to his death hitting high-voltage lines on his way down. August 1, 2006.
- A highway construction worker for Multiple Concrete Enterprises is crushed to death between construction equipment and an out-of-control car in Frontenac. August 9, 2006.
- Kenneth Hoierman, 38, a MoDOT motorist assist worker, dies after being struck by a car in south St. Louis County. August 15, 2006.
- Mardie Oden, 44, a switchman for Alton & Southern Railway, was crushed to death between two trains in East St. Louis (IL). September 10, 2006.
- Tracy Hobart, 37, working a construction job for Chester Bross Construction Co. in Lincoln County, jumped from his backhoe after it started to roll down an embankment and was then run over by the machine and killed. September 12, 2006.
- William Crain, 35, a seasonal worker for MoDOT, was struck and killed by an 18-wheeler while erecting a highway sign in Marshfield. October 17, 2006.
- Leo Schleeper, 55, working for the Heneghan and Associates engineering firm, fell to his death while cleaning the interior of a water tower. October 25, 2006.
- A truck driver, 29, for Signal Logic Systems is run over and killed beneath his own slow-moving truck in Crestwood. November 6, 2006.

And these are just from the St. Louis area this year alone - and don't include the countless others who die violently on roadways racing to and from work or those who, because they can't take it anymore, hurl themselves in front of trains, slump over bathroom sinks, leap from fourth floor windows, or calmly exit Wal-Mart for the last time with ammunition or strong rope. From moments of silence... to something a bit more vengeful... to a world where no one will be terrorized by the alarm- nor time-clock...

"How much profit is enough for one rich man to make off my labor? He knows damn well it comes at the expense of me having time for my children. Family values means burn down the factory"

-Worker in Northern California Winery, 1999



folks are refusing to limit their newfound weapon of fire to issues of development. Perhaps the April flames of South Grand have triggered the imagination of a social war that no mayor, police official, developer, or left-wing politician can contain.

"[The fires] make me a little nervous."

-Developer Bill Hart after Lafayette Square burns twice in one night, June 14, 2006

Thanks to this year's punishing wave of arsons, development- an organ vital to the detestable system of work and social control- is now sick and exposed. Nowhere else is the wound so big. And it is here in this wound, for now at least, that we can break them. The phantom-like attacks have succeeded thus far in scaring the wealthy. So, until those marvelous days when the mob awakes from our slumber to look them in the eyes, refuse to serve them, overturn their cars, and occupy their mansions, let us be a city of ghosts- everywhere, invisible doers of simple, yet potent, acts against their developments.

The maggot developers are everywhere. They tell us *they* make the city. They tell us they are one of us. They steal from us, they profit from us, they call the cops on us. They are not one of us. We build their buildings, we pave their streets, we watch their kids. We serve them food, we pay them rent, we carry them on our backs. We are the fucking city.

They are foolishly bold with their public appearances. We are foolishly shy with our misery. They have phone numbers. They have construction sites. They have offices. They have cars. They have routines. They have storefronts. They have banks. They have campaign headquarters. They have vacation homes. The *least* we can do is scare the shit out of them. To humiliate them to their friends and expose them to their neighbors. To break them financially. To prove to ourselves they are not invincible. That *we* are big and *they* are little. The *most* we can do is make them obsolete. To, atop their corpses, construct a fresh society where parasites of human labor and prison guards of the collective human imagination are at last thrown screaming from the bluffs.

¹ Although there *was* a beacon of hope when the bricklayers struck this May- alas something to slow this city's structural progress- but a reserved hope given the false opposition this city's organized strikes have recently proved to be, notably Lohr.

² One has to wonder what he would say if he was in fact, as much of the city would love, shot in the gut.

³ In simpler terms, those who would clamor to burn us at the stake.

⁴ Just as we were going to press we learned of the area's largest arson this year, the \$7 million condo blaze on the Lake of the Ozarks (see *Chronicles*, August 2). So much for trying to have a grasp on things.



⁵ ⁶ Even a local Fox News report confirms what's really at stake in its report on a new Jennings development: "Retail Center to Pump New Life into Community."



Last July, Kirkwood cops stood around and watched 12 year-old Bam-Bam die. Hours later, one of those cops, William McEntee, lay dead in a pool of his own blood. And now authorities are blaming Bam-Bam's brother, Kevin Johnson, for McEntee's death.

A Cop Shot Dead - All Out to Defend Rockhead!

His conviction depends on the testimony of his neighbors. Whether they are lying and trying to settle a score with Rockhead or are snitches, *we don't care*. Rockhead, a.k.a. Kevin Johnson, is running up against the full force of the law. This March, those who know nothing of life under the boot-heel of American law & order will be filling the courtroom behind the county's best prosecutors working to send him to death row because one of their own, Kirkwood cop Sgt. William McEntee, took some bullets to the brain. When pig blood spills, the whole pen squeals. Just like those who defaced McEntee's memorial, those who allegedly intimidated the prosecution's witnesses, and those who have refused to cooperate with the police, we stand by Rockhead and encourage everyone reading this to do the same. His trial date is set for March 29, 2007 (subject to change) at the St. Louis County Courthouse in Clayton. The prosecutor: Robert McCulloch, whose father, a cop, was shot to death in the '70s. See the July 5 entry in the *Chronicles* section of last issue for more details.

related to a labor dispute or a radical environmental group.

April 30, O'Fallon (IL) - In various parts of the city, fires rip through four newly-constructed houses, heavily damaging three and totally destroying the other (a quarter-million dollar display home for a new 158-home development) delaying a grand opening event at that development.

May 2, Alton (IL) - Around 4am, a man escapes from Alton City Jail by cutting away part of a ceiling, climbing through an area of venting and ductwork, kicking out a top-floor vent, and repelling to the ground with a rope made from bed sheets.

May 5, St. Louis City - At two area gas stations, saboteurs break into fuel pump keypads and reprogram them to dispense free gas. One station reports \$10,000, or 4,000 gallons, of free gasoline was pumped (by 200-300 customers) before a customer reported the problem.

May 12, Bonne Terre - A prisoner at the maximum-security state prison repeatedly stabs a guard who had cited him for a conduct violation earlier in the week.

May 12, Dellwood - A man robs a bank on New Halls Ferry Rd. and flees in a car.

May 20, O'Fallon (IL) - More than 150 youths curse local cops and pelt their cars with rocks (destroying at least one windshield) upon leaving the annual Mayfest celebration. Police use pepper spray to disperse the unruly crowd.

May 26, Caseyville (IL) - Two people fire dozens of shots from a pellet gun at an Illinois State Trooper's police car and house, damaging both.

June 2, E. St. Louis (IL) - Police respond to a domestic disturbance call where no one at the home had called the police. The police are told to leave and after some shouting, a man is arrested. His 73-year-old mother, Louise Vaughn, comes to his defense and is also arrested. In the chaos, Louise bites the hand of her arresting officer, later saying "His hand must have gotten in the way of my mouth." Two weeks later, police go to arrest her again for new charges from the same incident but cannot find her. She is still at-large.

June 3, St. Charles - Thieves make off with a St. Charles School District pickup truck and a safe full of money from the Lewis & Clark Career Center School after breaking numerous windows valued at \$1,200.

June 5, Granite City (IL) - A woman and two men rob \$27,651 at gunpoint from the Granite City Steel Federal Credit Union.

June 14, St. Louis City - Early in the morning, unknown person(s) set fire to

two large developments under construction in the heart of the posh Lafayette Square neighborhood. One fire completely destroys the Vail Place Townhomes - a \$1.5 million loss. Another, set 37 minutes later and two blocks away, completely destroys three townhouses in the Mississippi Place development and seriously damages four others - a \$3 million loss. Several luxury cars also suffer damages from the heat of the blazes.

June 16, Alton (IL) - Shortly after 4:00pm, three people hold up Olin Credit Union and flee with \$35,750 into a waiting getaway car.

June 20, St. Louis City - Another new housing development is set on fire, but this one, in the Walnut Park neighborhood of North St. Louis, fails to spread and causes only minimal damage.

June 20, Troy (IL) - A woman robs First National Bank of Staunton of \$5,000 and escapes in a car after handing the teller a note demanding cash.

June 24, Greenville (IL) - A man escapes from Bond County Jail at 11:20pm by wearing a guard's uniform he stole from a storage room and walking out the front door.

June 27, St. Louis City - Police arrest two men for attempted arson as they approach a new multi-family construction site on the 6600 block of Minnesota. Police report one man had agreed to pay his nephew cash to set the fire, but had also tipped them off beforehand in order to collect the reward money for previous arsons.

June 28, Florissant - A man hands the cashier at the St. Louis Postal Credit Union a note saying he is robbing them. He takes the cash and walks out of the building.

July 6, St. Louis City - A man robs Southern Commercial Bank at 7201 South Broadway.

July 12, Kirkwood - Hours after the dedication of a new monument for murdered Kirkwood cop William McEntee, someone vandalizes the granite marker next to the police station by pouring a can of paint on it. Police Chief Jack Plummer says the fugitive culprit "reflects a portion of every society that is not happy unless they can pull everything down in the gutter in which they reside."

July 12, St. Louis City - During an early morning traffic stop on the 3300 block of Nebraska, police arrest a woman wanted for a parole violation. The woman, left unattended in the back of a squad car, slips into the front seat and drives away, later abandoning the car and disappearing into the darkness.

July 13, St. Louis City - An afternoon inferno destroys yet another condo development in the city. This blaze, also

intentionally set, guts a warehouse on the 4200 block of Beck Ave. being rehabbed into lofts and offices.

July 20, St. Louis City & E. St. Louis (IL) - Following a powerful storm and subsequent power outage, city residents loot businesses on Cherokee St. and South Grand Blvd. East St. Louis also reports incidents of looting.

July 30, Creve Coeur - In response to Israel's deadly military bombing campaign and ground offensive into Lebanon, someone spray paints a banner outside Shaare Emeth Temple that had read the temple "stands with Israel" to read the temple "stands with *murder*."

Late July, Charleston - About 50 prisoners refuse to eat meals at Southeast Correctional Center until something is done about the poorly prepared and unhealthy food.

August 2, Morgan County - A suspected arson fire rips through under-construction Forest Pointe Condominiums on the banks of the Lake of the Ozarks. Twenty-four lakeside condos are incinerated totaling an incredible \$7 million loss.

August 2, Imperial - Shortly after noon, a man robs Truman Bank by opening his briefcase and displaying a handgun to the teller, who hands over an undisclosed amount of money. The robber escapes in a car with no plates.

August 4, St. Louis City - The city's water division reports children and adults are illegally busting open 50-60 fire hydrants per day to keep cool during the month-long heat-wave.

August 7, Washington Park (IL) - Someone douses an accelerant on the tire of a city police car and sets it alight. The car and its radio equipment, valued at \$42,000, are destroyed and a nearby squad car is also damaged. The day before, police in neighboring Belleville shot to death an unarmed man wanted on shoplifting charges.

August 10, Webster Groves - While St. Louis hosts the U.S Air Force's week-long self-promotional Airfest '06, authorities discover a homemade bomb at the Army-Air Force recruiting office at 7930 Big Bend Boulevard. The improvised device does not explode or cause any damage.

August 12, Cape Girardeau - A man robs the William St. U.S. Bank at 11am.

August 14, St. Louis City - At 10:45am, a man holds up the Pulaski Bank at 415 DeBaliviere Ave. and escapes into a waiting getaway car with an undisclosed amount of cash.

August 18, Farmington - An armed woman carjacks a Security Armored Car Service truck while its guards refuel at a gas station. She later abandons it on a remote coun-

CHRONICLES, continued on page 10

FIRES, continued from page 1

If people are repulsed by anything, it is the exorbitant prices these new developments are going for- which, it must be said, only became public because of the fires. Surely 95% of the city could never afford these half-million dollar condominiums- money which dwarfs the reward.

Even the ones who set themselves up in Carondelet (see June 27 in *Chronicles*) clearly had no problems with the act itself. (Even though the alleged arsonist should have come from the backside to roast the pigs along with the rat who set him up!) A quick look at the accused shows he just wanted some cash so he'd never have to work again, pay bills, worry about the coming eviction notice, childcare, dental bills, etc. No love for property and rightfully so. But he ultimately saw himself outside the clearly declared social conflict and chose instead to go on just getting by - at the same risk.

But since everyone only whispers their excitement or shrugs with passive acceptance, we will be the first to publicly defend the burning of the city.

"It's a great hindrance to any developer"

- Alderman Joe Vollmer after the Beck Ave. blaze in his 10th Ward, July 14, 2006

The "No Gods, No Masters" anarchist graffiti seen on the half-bulldozed St. Aloysius Gonzaga Church on

the Hill this June was a promising show of a growing discontent (but given the context, only a clever warning). You only had to peek through the arched entranceway to see, blossoming from the ruins of the church, more new upscale homes- which are, judging from the incessant chatter of city officials and their blogging pro-city playmates, without a doubt, the city's new God.

The popular assault and subversion of development projects is nothing new: construction dumpster fires, sabotaged construction equipment, graffiti, squatting by workers on weekends and holidays, stolen tools, broken windows and kicked in doors, dragged lines of spray paint, heckling of speculators when they come to visit, or far more difficult to swallow, harassing, mugging, or even killing of rehab workers. The class war never stops dogging the ever more refined structures of confinement and exploitation known as progress. But something new is giving this war a coherence - clearly pronouncing it as a two-sided affair - and that something is the smell of plywood ablaze.¹ Finally, *they* are on their knees. Chris Goodson, Mississippi Place developer and police board president, openly called the fires "a shot in the gut."²

The Post-Dispatch, trying to uncover the motivations behind the city arsonists' targets, accidentally revealed who *they* are and, more importantly, the intimate interconnections of those developing the city and the mafia-like size of their web. Politicking aside, there is money to be made by politicians (left and right), construction companies, materials companies, future and existing businesses, even police and insurance companies, and of course, the developers themselves. A brief look at the contributors to the reward money- those who have the most at stake³- also reveals each of these sleazy enterprises.

Like any rebellious feat, let's not forget how playfully brilliant and scattered these acts have been- incredibly so as we marvel at the scale of the destruction. A \$100,000 summertime arson attack on an urban Seattle condominium development has launched its officials into a frenzy. The damage so far this year in St. Louis City is *100 times* that of Seattle: \$10 million! A number too large for us rabble to comprehend. We seem small both to the numbers and the spectacular acts. But are the acts themselves so spectacular? C'mon, really, what does it take more than the flick of a match- something every 8 year-old can do. And they are happening *everywhere*. From north city to south city to everyone's gettin' the idea! And not just in the city⁴, but in Illinois too. Four new houses lit up the Illinois sky in O'Fallon a mere 4 days after the South Grand blaze captured the imagination of the metro area. The dazzling timing got even better: the grand opening for the subdivision had to be canceled. A similarly-timed blaze two months later in Walnut Park almost cancelled a news conference featuring Mayor Slay. From bombed out neighborhoods to bourgeois ones, the dispossessed have reclaimed a frightful, and immensely playful, new weapon against progress.

Outspoken rivals of progress take a position as disturbing as its exponents- that of historical obsession. Reactionary hype for the city's historic buildings has even rubbed off on those who purport to be against this society- defending what exists because it must, by default, oppose the new vampire developers. But, no no no! Nothing is ours in its current state. Those who look nothing like us⁵ designed the city to move capital and maximize profit. The vandals who smashed tea sets, slashed old paintings, emptied a fire extinguisher into an antique rosewood piano, and otherwise thoroughly trashed an 1840s 8-building museum complex in Kansas City this August understood this infinitely more than many of the historical building-obsessed leftists in St. Louis.

At a glance, it would appear the Left has remained eerily silent. But, if anything, the development itself is most in line with what city liberals would like to see. In fact, the developers themselves are Democratic Party politicians, founders of non-profit city gardening programs, small-business supporters, and queer activists. And the development they push is hardly the tear-'em-down, slap-'em-up kind, but one of historic conservation, that is, the preservation of the 'old' city. They may not be advocating for the machine of Los Angeles or Atlanta, but for a humane Seattle, Minneapolis, Vancouver, or San Francisco- cities which, at their core, share the miserably efficient gears of L.A.

"It impacts way more than me and our development."

-Developer Ken Nuernberger at the scene of his smoldering \$10 million Compton Gate Condominiums, April 28, 2006

So much for preserving in the old city. The fire at the old mattress factory on Beck and the arsons of the historic buildings on Cook and Finney complete the utter brilliance of the fire phenomenon- that of a total attack on not just new construction, or new developments, *but on the city itself*.

And oh how tiresome this city's story is... St. Louis, like other Midwestern American cities, once the hub of wealth, reached a point where those who had actually produced the wealth, the rabble, began to make those who accumulated the wealth quite uncomfortable in their own neighborhoods. They tried to contain the rabble in ghettos and housing projects, only to see them trickle into all parts of the city. Unable to contain the ghetto, they made the entire city a ghetto. The wealthy decided to move to the outskirts where safety and solitude awaited. But the outskirts weren't empty. The wealthy overran small towns and farms. Property values skyrocketed and so did the rent... Again, the story is quite dull. The only thing worth recognizing is old news: The wealthy continue to move around, develop new frontiers, and displace the poor.

In this moment, the contested frontier is the city of St. Louis. The fight over defending land itself- the existent- on some arbitrary basis rings hollow. Where we are now is a haphazard point in our centuries of displacement. The anti-gentrification activists argue we have a right to be *here*. We say, not just here, but everywhere is ours. And it's not the land or territory worth fighting for, but life itself.⁶ So the grand project then becomes, not to defend a space to make it safe from the rich, but to do everything possible to *leave no safe space* for the rich.

Most of the fires have sent a clear message to developers and the wealthy they are trying to attract: "You are not welcome in our neighborhood." But the pyros sent their most promising message (that no anti-gentrification activist could decipher) on June 14 in luxurious Lafayette Square: "You are not welcome in your own neighborhood!"

Meanwhile, the corporate media has been busy playing policeman, imagining motives (labor disputes, anti-gentrification, crazy pyromaniacs!) and eventually settling on anti-gentrification. But what's not in the vocabulary of those talking heads are words for *all* that - specifically, an offensive on work *and* property *and* the cold, repressive rationality of the society. These acts they deem dangerous or crazy are only dangerous and crazy to them; to most of us they're *some of the only acts of class war carving out a safe, sane space in a psychotic city*- a city, despite its language of "smart development," tumbling clumsily toward the sterile nightmares of Dubai, Singapore, and Atlanta where every year is 1984: gated parks, police abound, surveillance cameras everywhere, anti-panhandling laws, barren, slick nighttime streets, nowhere to gather...

Maybe all this is leading somewhere. It is with wide eyes that we watch the popular disgust with the rhetoric of "urban renewal" find new channels beyond arson- O'Fallon's banner thieves causing the cancellation of pro-development exhibits and the Washington Ave. homeless marches of the past. And the recent string of car arsons in North County, the St. Charles church arson, the Wellston Molotovs, the smoldering Washington Park squad car, the combustion of Tan Co.'s millionaire president's Fenton home, the torched luxury boats in mid-Missouri, and the writing on the South City wall proclaiming "Potosi Will Burn!" shows that

GRAND



SOUTH GRAND

