

Protests ain't like the good ol' days

Like any true fan, I camped out on the steps of Tigert Hall last Tuesday night to make sure I'd get a good seat for the first rally of the semester. Yes, it meant missing my Wednesday classes but, hey, if I did it for Springsteen I can do it for SCAAR. (That would make an interesting slogan: "Do It For SCAAR!") Remember free love? Remember the sixties? Remember when a lot of student rallies were attended by a lot of students?)

Well, before I knew it, Wednesday had arrived and so had the fun. Clothes were being symbolically washed, typewriters were being symbolically smashed and a carnival atmosphere prevailed. The rally was lighthearted but still serious, just as SCAAR had planned it.

However, not everyone was happy. I strolled over to the concession stands and began chatting with a man who was selling what he called Protest Posters.

"I'll tell 'ya," he said, "I've been workin' these rallies for over 20 years and things sure ain't like they use to be. It used to be you could whip up a few "Flower Power" and "Make Love—Not War" posters and be up to your neck in customers.

"But nowadays, the kids are picky. They want what we in the business call 'issue-oriented' posters. Well, heck, I'm not even sure I know what they're protesting against — 'cept maybe typing.

"So, me and my partner — who ain't here right now — whipped up these three-sided thingamajiggers. On the one side you got your anti-apartheid slogan an' on the other side you got your anti-SDI slogan an' on the other side you got your anti-kitchen sink slogan.

"To tell the truth," he said shyly, "I haven't even sold enough posters to break even. I'm gettin' blown away by that other stand over there."

I had to shove my way through a crowd just to get near the other stand. The manager agreed to chat with me while he ran the register.

"Right now, this is our hottest item," he said, and he held up

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what looked a huge memo pad with a handle attached to it. On the top sheet was printed, "I OPPOSE," followed by a barely visible dotted line. He ripped that off to reveal "NO MORE -----" on the second sheet. After the fifth sheet, which read, "STOP -----" I began to understand.

"See, this little baby comes with a free magic marker so you can fill in your own personalized protest. Whenever a speaker mentions an injustice you hadn't thought of, or when the cops show up, or when you just get bored, you can rip off the top sheet, write in something new and let everyone know exactly what you're concerned about at that particular moment. It's quick and it's fun!"

The manager began to get excited and he leaned forward. "But, let me tell you," he whispered conspiratorially, "this is just the beginning. In the fall of '87, we're premiering a brand new line of electronic protest signs. The handle has a built-in keyboard so you can punch in your favorite slogan and the video screen has excellent graphics, four-color capability and stereo sound.

"Imagine this: You punch in 'Stop Apartheid' and it flashes across the screen. That's followed by computerized scenes of unrest with gunfire so realistic it'll scare the bejeebers out of white supremacists for miles around. Finally, the whole mess dissolved into pictures of brotherhood and peace."

"It's gonna be big — *real* big. We're predicting \$20 million in sales by 1990, as long as," and he shuddered involuntarily, "as long as the Democrats don't screw up and win the '88 elections. Most of it doesn't matter — it never does. They can win the House, they can win the Senate, but they *can't* win the White House. Do you know how low our sales were during the Carter years? *God*, I hope they don't win the White House!" So do I, I thought. So do I.