



folkasing

- Road Wars
- Land Theft - Access Denied
- Criminal Justice Acting
- Exodus Update

On Russian Streets • Pedalling the Ocean
Underground Housing • News of the Skews
Critical Cyclists • Consultation Exorcisms • New Agendas

SOJOURN
necessity breeds ingenuity



Information is your weapon

The purpose of this magazine is to tool you up.
With accurate information and positive inspiration.
To expose hidden agendas and highlight new initiatives.
Standing for cultural diversity, community and respect.
To give fair voice to those who have none, have gone hoarse, or are frightened to speak.
To battle for a better environment - countryside, urban and psychological.
With no book, no badge, no flag and no anchoring affiliations other than the truth.

....Arm yourself

SQUALL costs money and that money has to come from the donations sent by people who value the work highly enough to dig into their coffers. The cover price only covers a fraction of the total cost. The magazine has been going for nearly three years and has so far managed to scrape by on very little finance and the dedicated efforts of a few people and those living around them who have accommodated the intolerant behaviour induced by such a work-load.

For this issue, we lost the entire magazine when the old computer on which the last eight issues have been produced crashed, two days before going to press. We need at least £750 to replace it. Meanwhile SQUALL 10 is in preparation and will, finances willing, be on the streets, droves and country lanes in mid April.

Lend us your support and we can continue to give you ours.

SQUALL

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Mailing List

To subscribe to SQUALL, simply send us your name and address along with as much money as possible. The magazine is currently quarterly and costs £1.30 per copy including p&p. We will of course, accept any extra money enclosed with gratitude, as a donation towards the running costs of the magazine. Please specify how many future copies of the mag you expect to receive (a year, the rest of your life[!] etc.).

Cheques made payable to SQUALL.

Much Respect & Without whom.....

Debbie Allen, Mathew, Nikki Spawls, Rosy, Andrea Latham, Gary HH, 64/65ers, The New Pegasus Posse, Chris McTof, Rainbow with the vid, Roving Jenny S, Irish Paul, Rainbow Church Collective, Dimitri, Chris, Andi Viz a Ve, Jim Paton, The SQUALL Ambassadors, The Cop Shop, All the folk at CHAR, Gavin, Julian, pHreaky Bob, Paul Guenault & Keiran McCarthy for the wheels.

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All pictures

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Concern for the Future - A young protester in action at Wanstead, 1994.

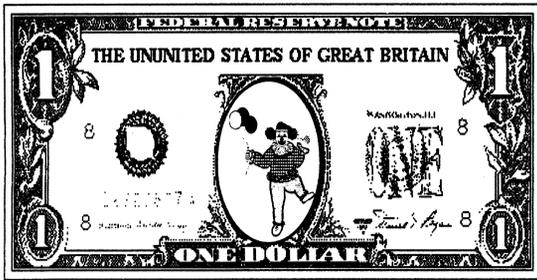
Inside Cover Pic: ©

Lift off - Road campaigners and local residents carry cars off the pavement and back into the gutter where they belong.

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The state it's in

Travels in a political Arena

The Latest Act

Since the Criminal Justice Act's arrival on the statute books there have been a number of arrests, but as yet no convictions. Top of the league table by a long way are hunt saboteurs, whose 95 arrests under the 'aggravated trespass' section of the Act represent the most used part of the legislation to date. There are also seven road protesters on charges under the same section of the Act. Four from a crane-climbing protest in Manchester associated with the No M65 campaign and three arrested outside of the Wimpey office in Bristol, during a protest over the Company's involvement in the construction of the M77 near Glasgow. All seven have pending court dates.

Information concerning travellers is much harder to collate than most of the other groups affected by the public order sections of the Act. Travellers have always been under-represented in terms of campaigning groups and are, by the very nature of their itinerancy, difficult to keep in contact with on a nation-wide basis.

Reports coming in suggest that so far the Act has been used mostly as a threat to travellers - to move on or face arrest. Twelve travellers in Glen Garry, Scotland, refused to move in order to challenge the law but in fact now face initial charges under the 1865 Criminal Trespass Act (a uniquely Scottish law). The word is that there are also outstanding charges against them under the Criminal Justice Act, which are only to be brought if a conviction under the Scottish Criminal Trespass Act is not

secured by the authorities. These travellers are being dealt with two at a time at a series of court dates beginning in March and going through to April.

There are as yet no reports of any arrests under the raves and festivals section of the Bill. The sections immediately implementable are those allowing police to order people assembling for an event to leave with their equipment and vehicles, and those allowing a constable to turn away anyone within a five mile radius that they consider may be heading for the event. The sections on the confiscation and disposal of sound equipment and other property are not likely to be activated by statutory instrument until around April of this year.

The same goes for the ex-parte/24 hours to get out/£5000 or 6 months imprisonment sections of the Act against squatting. These are not due for implementation until changes are made to the rules of court by the Lord Chancellor's Department and are expected around May/April time.

However, the sections allowing forced entry to be used against squatters by protected intended occupiers (PIOs) became implementable on February 3rd. **BUT DO NOT PANIC.** Anyone attempting forced entry to a property must possess either a certificate showing them to be a local authority/housing association PIO or a statement sworn before a justice of the peace or a commissioner of oaths, proving them to be a private PIO. Without these documents forced entry is illegal. If acting on behalf of a PIO, the people attempting forced entry must have

authorisation from the PIO. There are already reported incidences of 'heavies' kicking doors in, claiming they have the right to do so under the Criminal Justice Act. This is not the case. If such forced entry occurs, squatters and other occupants should telephone the police immediately and inform them that someone is breaking into your home.

It is vital to the process of both tracking misuses of the Act and keeping in touch with its implementation nation-wide, that anyone affected by

the legislation contacts one the CJA monitoring schemes (see page 44).

Non-violent direct-action explosions

There is no doubt that the incidence of direct-action protest has increased since the passing of the Criminal Justice Act last November. Passionate demonstrations of public concern, such as those at Shoreham, Brightonsea and Coventry, have clearly caught the attention of the media, involving as they do a wide variety of people never before participating in direct action.

As a consequence, many people have come face to face with truncheon-wielding riot police for the first time in their lives, and found such encounters to be as unpleasant as previously marginalised political protesters have always said they were (see 'News of the Skews' - page 10). Even the Daily Express ran a double page spread on whether the police had been "too heavy" at Brightonsea.

The crown of official embarrassment of course came in February, when Allan Stewart, Junior Scottish Office Industry Minister, was caught attempting a little raw devolution of his own with a pickaxe. Whilst visiting the site of the M77 construction outside Glasgow, it appears that he went temporarily berserk, ripping down road-protesters' banners and waving a pick axe with the words - "It's a useful thing a pick-axe. there's a lot you can do with a pick-axe". After a lamentable effort to suggest that he had been charged by protesters, a story no-one bought, he was forced to resign. His son is also the subject of an investigation after arriving on site with a loaded air gun (See 'Road Wars' - page 16).

Contributing significantly to the new climate of protest have been the major anti-road campaigns of the last few years. Environmental non-violent direct actions, such as those at Twyford Down and Claremont Road have helped create a new and different impression of the possibilities of direct action; usurping the old 'core of troublemakers' conclusion, used so casually to dismiss previous expressions of public dissatisfaction (see Towers of Strength - page 18).

The media have given far more coverage to the likes of the Shoreham and Brightonsea demonstrations than to any public protest in recent years, primarily because they clearly involve large numbers of 'ordinary' (a media term) people. Both the Claremont and Twyford campaigns inspired much local

support and participation, helping prime both the media and the general public with a new sense of overt political expression. Concerned people from all walks of life are seeing that involvement in non-violent direct actions are effective expressions in a deaf democracy. As more and more people lose faith in ignored consultation processes, official 'blah', and political unaccountability, the number of people who feel strongly enough to come out and make a demonstrative stand, increases. No-one could fail to be unmoved by the mother of Jill Phipps (the woman who died under the wheels of a veal truck in Coventry), who rose above her own grief to say that she too would be willing to die to see the end of compassionless veal exports. Media martyrdom aside, we are talking about real human beings here; people who feel this strongly.

Some observers have asked why it is that animal transportation in particular has inspired such vehement public outrage. What about people who have no shelter tonight, they say, or the increasing levels poverty in this country, or the long term social erosion caused by unemployment and the breakdown of communities etc?

These are certainly important points to remember although people do view animals as obviously innocent. Never the less, the lack of compassion and respect inherent in purely profit-motivated animal transportation, are factors missing from much of current politics. The consistent over-emphasis of economics as the most important facet of human development is squeezing the humanity out of human societies. It is reflective in the way we treat animals, the environment and each other.

Single issues and getting things done

From within the political arena, left and right, there has been a general slander directed towards 'single issue politics' and 'lobby groups'.

"We don't see pressure groups for what they are; one dimensional," said Michael Portillo last year. "I do not believe policy should be determined by lobby groups of whatever sort," agreed Tony Blair.

However, pouring passion into single issues has become the only way many people feel will ensure at least some progress somewhere. Whilst the political arena plays out its careful chess match, real life goes on and has needs. In order to campaign for the recognition of these social needs, it is necessary to stick at something.

Politicians are bound to find such lobbying an annoyance, reluctant as they obviously are to alter a pre-agenda'd game plan. However, they are supposed to be democratic representatives and lobbying your MP is the vestigial remains of democratic accountability. For the myopic political chess-players, the annoying fly buzzing round the light-bulb is an uncomfortable reminder that their game is not the only thing going on around here.



The Criminal Justice Act has certainly played a significant part in introducing 'single issue campaigners' to each other, and the common ground they all share is their battle for respect. Whether it be for the rights of animals or the rights of homeless people; the rights to decide whether your land is carved up by more tarmac or the right to be culturally diverse.

However, the Criminal Justice Act is just one of many manoeuvres, both legislative and covert, designed to engineer a society befitting a compassionless economic vision of Britain.

Even a cursory glance at the measures and motivations in the legislative pipeline, is enough to demonstrate the across-the-board political disrespect, presently prevalent:

The removal of the statutory provision for resettlement units is the subject of a clause buried within the currently debated Job Seekers Bill, and further erodes the availability of direct access hostels for homeless people. On top of this, the upcoming Homelessness Review will remove the statutory right of 'priority need' homeless families to permanent housing.

The last budget announced the cutting of funeral grants available to 'poor' families, under the pretext that they encourage funeral parlours to charge more. The same unbelievable logic was used to announce a cut in housing benefit under the similar pretext that it encourages landlords to charge more!

Landlords and funeral parlours charge more because greed is a characteristic of an unfettered free-market, not because they see the pound signs of benefit flashing before their eyes. Most landlords will not take people who are on housing benefit, considering the benefit system to be an unreliable rent-payer; a fact that most home-owning politicians would never know about.

Meanwhile single mothers are having babies just to jump the housing waiting list, or so we are told by a government intent on the avoidance of housing responsibility. Even if it were true, and it undoubtedly isn't, we should be questioning what this says about the availability of housing, not looking at reducing the opportunities for single mothers yet further.

The more this government stamps itself with such socially corrosive legislation, the more people come to realise that a complacent disrespect for social realities oozes out of every sub-clause of recent legislation. This has undoubtedly fuelled the number of people who now feel committed to protest campaigns.

But of course, except for the energetic few, it is not possible to be everywhere at once and indeed the effectiveness of campaigning often depends on concentrating on one issue. If you could say something once and have it registered, then single issue politics would be unnecessary. However, the experience of most people involved in grass-roots politics, is that official ears are severely clogged with power-wax. Thus progress depends on sticking with an issue until a fair voice is registered.

Democracy was never founded on the principle of ignoring people, but the British version seems to be running it that way. Polished but meaningless political verbals, may sound authoritative but they are beginning to make a cliché of language itself, so disconnected are they from any substance. People just don't believe the blah anymore, however many acting lessons or schools of oratory the particular politician has attended.

It is a major dichotomy that the political arena is annoyed with 'lobby groups', at the same time as requesting that we all feel included in the political process.

"It is time to bring government closer to the people it serves," says Tony Blair (Hansard 11/1/95)

Are we supposed to vote and then leave MPs and big business to get on with it? Upon what basis is such social trustworthiness expected?

There are an increasing number of politicians who have never met the reality of need face to face. Having left public schools and universities, politics has been their career-path ever since (see 'Shuffle, Shuffle, Snuffle' - page 12).

Tony Blair should take note of the fact that it takes more than a pre-arranged photo-opportunity in a run down council estate to put an academic career-politician in touch with real life.

In the absence of in-touch politics, single issue lobby groups have become the voice of current social concerns. They have multiplied in recent times, and the mutual adversity of facing a deaf political system, has led to interactions and cross-support based on common experiences. No wonder the likes of Portillo and Blair feel threatened. Not everyone is politically placated by the manufactured smiles of rubber lips and the cheshire cat.

DIY Community Care

There has been a proliferation of squat community centres and cafes recently, daring to operate an open door policy in the middle of cities. At a time when there is much debate about such things as community care and the rehabilitation of young offenders these DIY centres have been providing just such social initiatives. CoolTan in Brixton, The Rainbow Centre in Kentish Town and another in Cardiff; the Alamo in Blackburn and the Courthouse in Brighton, are amongst a number of such projects springing up nation-wide. Coming in through the open doors are people discharged from mental institutions - largactyled into a zombiedom, young rough and tough homeless people with "no respect for no-one, cos no-one's got respect for me", run-aways, drug addicts and alcoholics, as well as artists and dancers.

Such genuine care for the community has in fact been a feature of many of the

groups targeted for eradication by the Criminal Justice Act. Festivals for example, offered many thousands of people the chance to experience co-habiting with complete strangers; a unique and increasingly rare learning experience - especially when it's pouring

with rain.

Meanwhile money buys us a solid front door and perhaps a strong garden gate behind which we can isolate our small family units. Steven Norris, Minister for Public Transport and ex-VW/Audi dealer, all too convincingly stated at a recent Commons environment select committee, that people wanted private cars because "You have your own temperature control, your own music, and don't have to put up with dreadful human beings sitting alongside you." At free raves and festivals in sharp contrast, you share the music, the temperature control and the experience of dancing with other human beings beside you.

Before the public order legislation of 1986 and 1994, travellers could also gather together, forming communities often centred around fireplaces and stove-burners. Not the "hordes of marauding locusts" described by the Daily Telegraph, but people who find a greater sense of purpose in collecting fire-wood than in dealing stocks and shares. Something that perhaps the brigadiers and free market philosophers at the Daily Telegraph have little conception of.

Public order legislation over the last ten years, driven as it is by media hysteria and cultural prejudice, has severely curtailed such gatherings by limiting the assembly of people to 20 and of vehicles to six. This has also exacerbated the vulnerability of travelling families to an increasing incidence of vigilantism.

"No one will interfere with the traditional right of the gentlemen of the road to wander the lanes of Scotland, so long as they are on their own or there are only a few of them," said Home Office Minister, David MacLean with characteristic cruelty.

To those unfamiliar with festivals, free raves or communal campaigns, their contribution to community awareness may not be obvious beneath the black paint applied by ministers and media. But the point to rescue from beneath the misinformation, is that if people have no direct experience of living with each other, then the whole concept of community becomes alien to their attentions. Only through the direct experience of community - its trials, tribulations and celebrations - do people learn how to make living together work in reality. Otherwise of course, we end up with the situation that we have in the current political arena, where words like 'community' remain an unrealised rhetorical concept.

The existence of Agenda 21, an internationally signed agreement from the Rio Earth Summit of 1992 is gathering momentum and possibly represents a new opportunity to call such 'community' rhetoric to account. (see page 15)

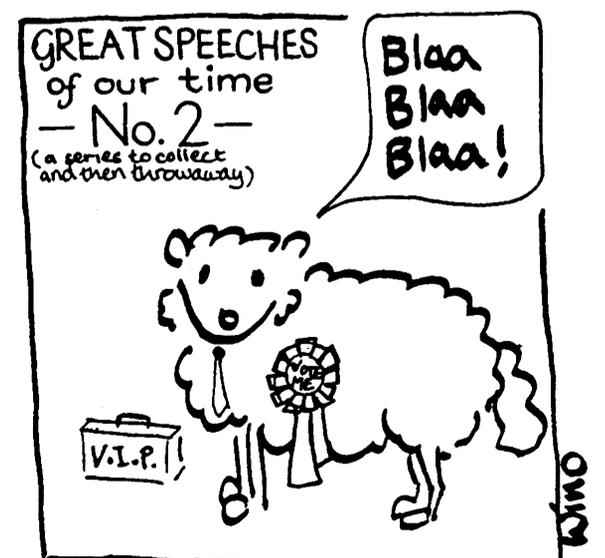
Thatcher was famous for saying "there is no such thing as society" and it

seems both her and her subsequent replacement, have followed policies attempting to ensure that such pro-market anti-community ideas, dominate our social reality. Almost as a contradiction we have consistent 'blah' on open government, citizen's charter, millennium celebrations and of course the national lottery. The lottery, as a good example, has been hyped up to become the new currency of the nation's conversation - something for us all to rally around as a nation, much of course to the financial benefit of both the government and the operating company, and, oh yes, some to charities to make it all palatable. They all make rather pathetic replacements for genuine community.

Meanwhile, if you talk to seventeen year old Dave in Luton, he'll tell you he was a homeless car thief at 15 but now has found purpose with the squatting and dance community regeneration posse, the Exodus Collective: "It was like eating bad apples all my life and then tasting a good one. I only want to eat good ones from now on," he says. (see Exodus update - Page 32)

On a wider political level, the need to cultivate a healthier respect for cultural diversity is ever more necessary, swamped as many are by the economic intentions of multi-nationals and other free-market myopics. It is undoubtedly such convictions that fuel the two 'unemployed' campaigners currently pitching themselves against the top libel lawyers employed by the \$24 billion-a-year junk importers - McDonalds (see Other Busyness - page 6). There is also a major grass-roots battle occurring in Russia and other east European countries, as western business opportunists come pouring into the vacuum. It is no small irony that the largest McDonalds in the world operates in Moscow, whilst women stand on the streets of the city in rows, trying to sell their toilet seats to make ends meet (see 'Western Promise' - International SQUALL - page 34).

On a global level, the threat to the environment is universal and demanding of a unified response as a matter of urgency. Cultivation of community is not only a matter of necessity for the long term health of our society, it is also a matter of utmost importance in meeting the global environmental threat posed by the erosion of human respect.



WESTMALADMINISTER CITY COUNCIL

As District Auditor John Magill's investigation of Westminster Council's late eighties "gentrification" and "social-engineering" policy draws to a close, new allegations about the extent of the bribery came to the fore at the beginning of Feb.

As reported extensively in the last SQUALL, Westminster City Council, under the leadership of arch-dragon Damn Shirley Porter, had selectively sold off council houses to "increase our support" in "key wards", as well as exporting homeless people out of the Borough as "they are not our natural supporters."

The newly uncovered documents show that in order to increase the attractiveness of council house sales, Westminster Council agreed to pay for unlimited free repairs to those houses, well after they had already been sold.

The confidential report, now in the hands of John Magill, shows that the 6,700 people who bought homes under the 'designated sales' scheme since the mid-1980's, have been given free or cheap servicing charges and indemnity against all repair bills, some of which have amounted to £20,000 per property. This is estimated to have cost nearly £30 million of tax-payers money, and once fully investigated, may add considerably to the £22.25 million surcharge on those implicated council officials, fingered by the District Auditor's provisional report last year.

A memorandum marked September 1 1987, written by former housing director and implicated official, Graham England, is included amounts the new evidence before the investigation

"Our whole home ownership policy, both right to buy and designated [sales] could be affected by adverse publicity that this will generate and this could effectively deter purchasers. We must find a solution to this problem urgently. It may be possible by exploiting loopholes in the present regulations to avoid collecting charges from lessees."

Back in 1987, Graham England's worry about "adverse publicity" could not possibly have predicted the "Disgraceful, Unlawful, Improper" headlines that would be splashed all over the newspapers seven years later.

It is still not known when District Auditor John Magill's full report will be published but it promises to be a corker.

Magill has resisted all the underhand attempts to have him removed from his post by the likes of Tesco heiress and ex-leader of the Council, Damn Shirley Porter and now looks set to give the westmaladminister politicians the public exposure they deserve.

Of course, once Magill's report is published, the 13 Westminster residents who filed the original complaint will still have to find the money to take the implicated officials to the High Court, an important step in the long haul to eventual justice.

"GET LOST - YOU'RE FROM THE DAILY MAIL"

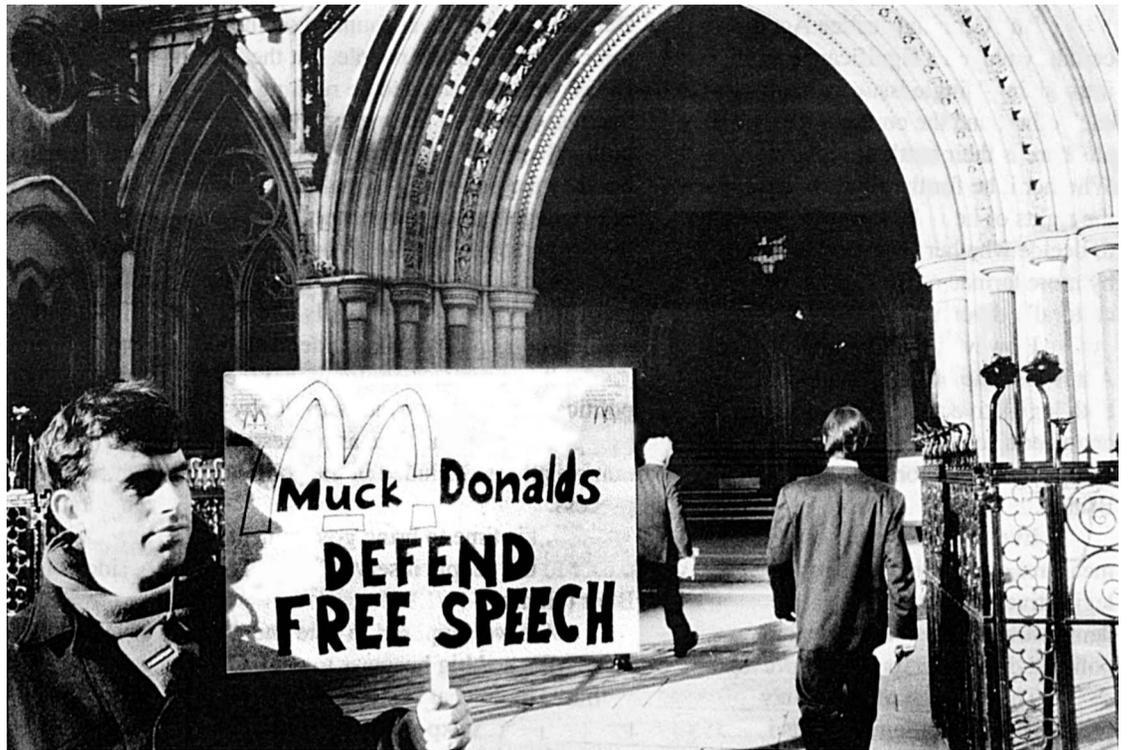
One of the classic incidences of the Brightlingsea demonstrations occurred in January when a group of middle-aged local people on the protest front-line were being interviewed by a reporter from the Independent.

Coming over to nestle in on the conversation, came another reporter from that most politically pre-agenda'd of all national newspapers, the Daily Mail.

"Hello, I'm from the Daily Mail," he said, sure of his social standing amidst the folk in the group.

But it seems as if a little exposure to the realities of heavy policing and political reticence, changes cosy impressions. One of the group turned to the Mail's reporter telling him to "get lost".

"You've been lying to us for 30 years," she continued. "We're not talking or listening to you again."



Set to become the longest libel trial in British history, the McLibel trial started up again at the high Court in mid-January. Dave Morris and Helen Steel are defending themselves in the High Court against the mighty resources of the \$24 billion-a-year junk food giants - McDonald's.

Having run for just over 6 months, the trial restarted in mid January and looks set to take another year. Both Dave and Helen are UB40s but find themselves far from unemployed as, without legal aid, they pitch themselves against McDonald's top libel lawyers who are suing them for the distribution of material critical of the burger giant's psychological manipulation of children, nutritional content of its food, environmental concern for the origin of its meat and the rights and conditions of its employees. It is a frontline protest, backed by a small McLibel support team, working full-time to defend the right to free speech and the ability of an ordinary person to criticise the invasion of their streets by a conglomerate.

STRESSVILLE UK

The working week in Britain now averages 43.4 hours, one hour more than ten years ago and two hours more than the next nearest European country, Portugal. According to statistics released recently by Eurostat, the EC's statistics office, both males and females in Britain work a longer working week than either sexes in any of the European Community countries.

Britain is the only country in the EC where the working week is actually increasing. Some of this increase is accredited to professional and managerial staff working long often unpaid hours to further their career in a highly competitive career market. It is also likely that the rise in 'itinerant' self-employed contract work, has similarly led to a furious increase in working hours in order

to met the high competition for the contracts. What is undoubtedly the case is that such a high average working week leads to heavy stress on those who are employed, and fewer opportunities for those that are not.

A recent report published the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported that between 1975 and 1993 the number of two adult households where both adults worked has gone up from 51 to 60 per cent, whilst the proportion of households with no earner has risen from 3 to 11 per cent. According to the same Report, the gap between rich and poor in Britain has increased dramatically, with the proportion of the population earning less than half the national average income, more than trebling since 1977.

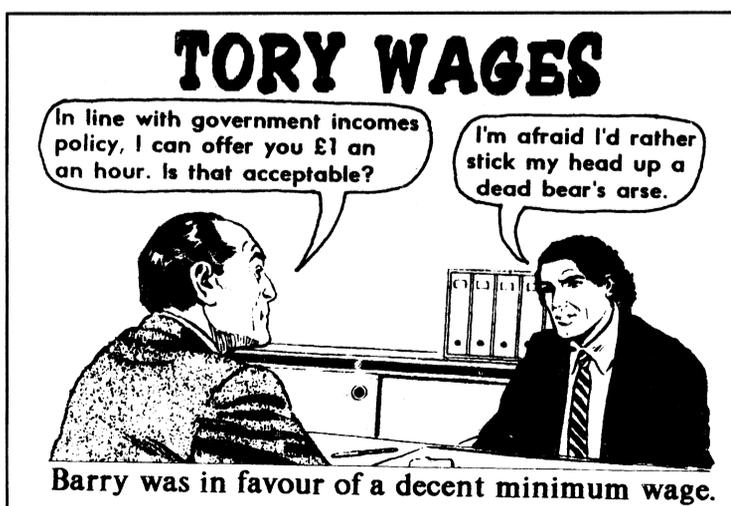
COMPENSATION AND APOLOGIES FROM TWYFORD DOWN POLICE

Police in Hampshire were forced by the courts to pay £53,350 in damages, after unlawfully locking up ten road-protesters from Twyford Down for up to 13 hours.

The court case took place in January at Winchester County Court and heard that the protesters had been arrested and locked up in May/June 1993 for the charge of obstructing a police officer. Their solicitor John Davis, pointed out in court that without a warrant, there are no powers of arrest for the minor offence of obstruction.

One of the ten protesters Dr David Abbot, described being "grabbed from behind by a policeman" and "taken to a black maria.". He was awarded £4,500 compensation for wrongful arrest.

The settlement also included an unreserved apology from John Hoddinott, Chief Constable of Hampshire. There are many more such court cases pending.



GET OFF YOUR LAND

Eighteen months ago a group of travellers bought two acres of land between Chepstow and Coleford, in Gloucestershire, near the site of the May Forest Fayre. They then applied for planning permission to have 10 'family units' (vehicles) on the site. Permission was refused. All subsequent applications have also been denied. The travellers received the decision for their last appeal in December, they were refused again and given three months to get off their own land.

Kate, one of those living on the site and fighting the case, told SQUALL the decision was devastating. There are eight children on the site, some settled at a local school and the eviction date on March 14th falls right in the middle of the school year.

Locals have been sympathetic and some spoke for the travellers at their hearing, but the council has acted regardless of positive responses and seems

to have no desire to even consider the travellers as a welcome part of the community. Kate said the travellers' land is a much sought after plot. Ironically the council would apparently prefer to see a house built on what it chooses to describe as an 'area of outstanding natural beauty'.

"What's really annoying is that they've been saying they want to make it easier for travellers to provide their own sites," Kate continued. Under the Criminal Justice Act local authorities no longer have a statutory obligation to provide sites. The Government has defended its move by suggesting travellers be encouraged to go through local planning procedures and secure their own sites.

Legally, the travellers could have been given permission to remain on the site with a review after two years. Even if the land is environmentally sensitive the travellers could have been given

advice or assistance in finding a new site in a less sensitive area. However, the council is clearly not after a positive solution. "We wanted a year if we got kicked off," said Kate, "so we'd have time to find another piece of land, but the council got what they wanted right down the line. We got no leeway".

The travellers now plan to go for a judicial review using the Children's Act to prove council negligence in not offering the families alternative accommodation and acting without any regard for the children on the site. At the very least they want a time extension until the end of the current school year. Their greatest fear, says Kate, is that "they will Criminal Justice us". There are rumours that local police have asked permission to forcibly remove them using the Criminal Justice Act if they fail to leave on the eviction date.

TRAVELLERS GET COMPENSATION FOR DISCRIMINATION

Travellers, Mike and Coral lived on the Beechen Cliff travellers site in Avon and had shopped at the Littlewoods department store in Bath for years, buying toys and clothes for their two children Sunshine (aged 5) and Tara (aged 13). So when Coral visited the store to buy a bottle of wine just over a year ago, she couldn't understand why the store suddenly refused to serve her.

"The shop assistant told me that she had been told by security not to serve me," recalls Coral. "So I asked to see the security and he came down. I asked him why they would not serve me and he said 'we won't that's why'.

"Then I asked if it was because we lived on a travellers site, and he said 'Yes, that's right'."

Mike and Coral in fact go to church each Sunday, and one day found their faces on the front page of the local newspaper after their local vicar came out publicly in support of the travellers' right to have some where to stay. "The vicar wasn't very popular in the area after that," says Mike.

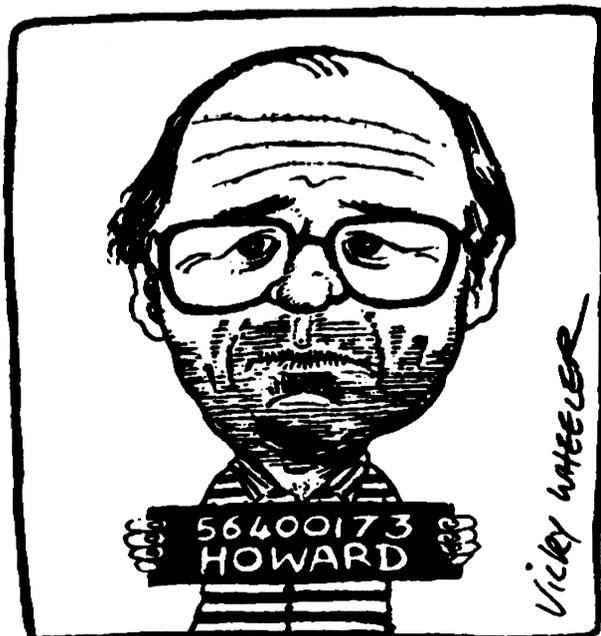
It seems apparent that the staff at Littlewoods now

recognised Coral from the photograph and, although had been unable to identify her as a traveller up until that point, now decided that discrimination was their policy.

"The security told me: 'You might go outside with that bottle of wine, drink it all and then come back in here intoxicated and cause trouble, or you might go outside give it to somebody else, who will drink it and then come back in here intoxicated and cause

trouble" recalls Coral.

Nothing she could do or say would sway the Littlewoods staff to budge from their racist stance. However, fortunately and indeed rarely in comparison to the current proliferation of anti-traveller discrimination and vigilantism, the Law Society got hold of the case. They threatened to sue Littlewoods for discrimination, receiving a public apology and £750 compensation in an out of court settlement.



Back in mid-November last year, the campaign group SQUASH (Squatters' Action for Secure Home) occupied this tasty looking property opposite Kensington Palace.

The building is owned by Sheikh Saif Bin Mohamed Al Nahyan, the ninth issue of Sheikh Zayid Bin Sultan - ruler of the United Arab Emirates. The property had been the salubrious home to various previously homeless species; moss, ferns and dead pigeons for the last ten years.

In return for an 'environmental donation' of £10,000, used to mend the Hyde Park gate, Kensington and Chelsea Council recently gave Sheikh Al planning permission for 23 luxury flats with servants' quarters and underground car-park. Who said planning rules were subjective?

SQUASH occupied the building for a short period, unfurling a number of banners and passing leaflets to the passers-by of Kensington.

TRAVELLERS ABROAD

There are indications that travellers are leaving this country to avoid prosecution under the Criminal Justice Act. Steve Staines of Friends, Families and Travellers told SQUALL a lot of people have left over the last year. Although assessing the numbers and their reasons for leaving is difficult he believes that the figure is probably hundreds: "I've talked to a quite a lot of people who are saying we're going to have to go abroad. That's certainly a recurrent theme."

The travellers' destinations seem to be Ireland, Spain and Portugal. In Ireland there has already been an official

response to more travellers than usual. One particular article in the Southern Star, in October, quoted a West Cork Councillor who expressed disquiet at the large numbers of 'New Age Travellers' moving to Ireland to "escape Draconian British Laws". There have been calls for similar measures against travellers to be introduced in Ireland.

Steve Staines detects a steady trickle of travellers to continental Europe. He says some have travelled to Ireland and then, instead of returning to Britain, have taken a boat straight to France, Spain or Portugal.



⊗ There has been an increase in the use of cameras by police on recent protests, including the invasion of Michael Howard's garden back in November last year. Working with the old 'core of trouble-makers' mentality, the authorities make an effort to find out who is behind all this public unrest, not realising of course that, 'though organised, it is leaderless and extensive.

Never-the-less, no-one knows what happens to all this footage and how much of it is used to target individuals seen on more than one or two demonstrations.

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA REVEALS THE TRUTH AND SAVES PROTESTERS

Members of Smallworld and Haggerston Film Co-ops were present at a demonstration that took place outside Hackney Town Hall last July (see SQUALL 8). So, when the police made an attempt to prosecute two of the protesters for assaulting a policeman, out came the video footage to show that it had in fact been the other way round.

Protesters, Jacob Secker and Simon Barlow, appeared before Old Street Magistrates Court at the end of January, charged with punching PC Terence Moore of Shoreditch Police Station on the head.

In their defence, the couple showed the stipendiary magistrate video-footage of the incident, shot by cameraman Gerald Coral. It clearly showed PC Moore throwing punches at Jacob Secker.

Despite claims by PC Moore that punching Secker three times to the body was necessary to restrain him, the magistrate ruled that PC Moore had used violence that was "not reasonable" and consequently dismissed the case.

Secker is now considering whether to sue the Police for assault instead.

HACKNEY TAT MAN SUSPENDED

The suspension of Hackney Council's £55,000-a-year Director of Housing, Bernard Crofton in October 1994 has caused quite a stir in the borough. There have been suggestions that the council is covering up a report, written by Crofton, in which he claimed that illegal immigrants working for the council were abusing their positions and committing benefit frauds.

In November, The Guardian ran a feature on the history of the case. The piece was supportive of Crofton and the idea that he is being scapegoated because his investigations have uncovered frauds implicating senior council colleagues. Crofton and his cronies in the council claim there is massive job fraud in the borough; employees being appointed with fake references, employment histories and

qualifications, in addition to a number of illegal immigrants amongst council staff.

These allegations sparked angry responses from those outraged that "illegal immigrants" should be held responsible for corruption within the housing department. Crofton and his much hated Tenancy Audit Team (whose attention, you may remember, strayed last year from council corruption to evicting large numbers of squatters with the aid of London Electricity and British Gas - See SQUALL 7) attempted an investigation into all staff who had joined the housing directorate in the last two years. There was much opposition within the department to Crofton gaining access to largely confidential information. His ultimate mistake was an unsupported allegation of

nepotism against Sam Yeboah, the personnel director. A council enquiry found no evidence of nepotism. Mr Yeboah accused Crofton of racial harassment and Jerry White, Hackney's Chief Executive, finally suspended him on charges of racial harassment and gross misconduct.

Crofton's disciplinary hearing, which began at the end of December, is being heard in secret by a sub-committee of five councillors, and is expected to run for about twelve days until the end of February. There is apparently pressure to complete the hearing before March, when Jerry White leaves Hackney for a senior local government position as a local authority ombudsman.

Council staff in the know have been told to keep quiet about details of the hearing or face one themselves.

ROAD-BUILDING HQs OCCUPIED

Office occupations have become a new and imaginative feature of the road-protesters' itinerary.

In mid-January a planned non-violent invasion of the British Road Federation offices on the Old Kent Road, was thwarted when protesters turned up to find riot police waiting for them. After adjourning for a cup of tea and a re-think, they decided to pay a visit to the Highways Agency instead. This organisation carries out the Government's road-building programme, as well as managing the existing road network.

The protesters walked straight into the building, and whilst some of them unfurled a 'Bulldozing R Future' banner from the building, others made their way to Chief Executive Lawrie Hayne's office. Mr Haynes was actually in residence at the time and made a

desperately nonchalant attempt to carry on as normal as several protesters sat in his office, some of them playing penny-whistles.

At one point Haynes left the room in order to find out what was taking the police so long to show up. During his absence, the protesters answered his telephone calls, telling the callers that "the Highways Agency had decided to concentrate on Bicycle lanes from now on, having seen the error of their environmentally unfriendly ways". Normal uniformed police did arrive but simply told the protesters not to use any electricity as this would lead to charges of theft. In order to comply more fully, one protester turned out the lights, testing Lawrie's nonchalance still further. Eventually the riot police arrived and the protesters were escorted from the office peacefully.

A couple of weeks later the protesters paid another visit to the British Road Federation's Elephant and Castle offices. After occupying the office for a short period, they then climbed onto the roof of the building to unfold banners proclaiming a change of name for the BRF

establishment. 'British Redundant Follies', announced one, 'Breathing Rancid Fumes', suggested another.

In sharp contrast to the lines of riot police present at the British Road Federation offices a few weeks earlier, there were only a few policeman this time around and, after escorting the office-occupiers off the premises, they left the protesters on the roof to come down in their own good time.

SPIKE ON THE MIC

Whilst animal rights campaigners from all walks of life were making an effort to prevent the export of veal from Shoreham, a row of squats in nearby Portslade-on-Sea were making a unique contribution to the proceedings. Hanging from the squatters' windows were speakers broadcasting music to protesters waiting for the next lorry. At one stage Spike Milligan showed up and, with a microphone fed into the squatters PA system, did an impromptu and from all accounts hilarious, stand up show.



There was much mirth when Robert MacLennan (Lib Dem MP - Caithness and Sutherland) stormed out of the launch of Charter 88's Citizens' Enquiry in January.

As Lib-Dem spokesman on Home Affairs at the time of the parliamentary passage of the Criminal Justice Bill, MacLennan had served on the committee stage of the Bill.

On several occasions the chairman was forced into asking him to speak up, so muffled and hesitant were his interjections. At one stage, as he stood up to introduce an amendment he himself had tabled, he muttered: "For the life of me Mr Chairman. I can't remember why I tabled this ammendment." There were titters and sighs all round from the rest of the committee. Indeed colleagues have actually gone on record in Hansard as referring to him as 'The Mogodon Man'.

Despite assurances from other members of the Lib-Dems home affairs team, Bob never did speak up in support of squatting as a housing safety net as they had promised. At one stage Bob sidled up to an observer in the public gallery and asked him why he was there. "Because I care," said the incensed observer much to MacLennan's bemusement.

So when MacLennan paced up to Helena Kennedy QC at the launch of Charter 88's Citizen's Enquiry, no one could quite believe the fury with which he spoke.

"You deliberately ignored me," fumed Bob. "You saw I had my hand up to make a point but you deliberately ignored me.DeliberatelyYou're all just here to ridicule politicians." And then, despite Helena Kennedy's rather amused apologies, he stormed out of the debating room with his entourage of researchers trailing behind him like the flustered dust of an anally-retentive comet.

"Never mind Bob," called out an assorted itinerant, as the comet passed down the aisle. "You had your turn but for the life of you, you couldn't remember what to say."

It was a Citizen's Enquiry after all; designed as an opportunity for the citizen to air their democratic concerns. Most citizen's who spoke talked of how politicians rarely listened to people's genuine concerns, preferring instead to steer the debate along the lines of their own pre-determined agenda. Bob, as the only MP present, did his profession no great service by obviously misreading the Citizen's Enquiry brochure. As for ridiculing politicians, well, it seems we can leave that job to take care of itself - with the Mogodon Man, I think we're in safe hands on that score.

As Nigel Evans (Con MP - Ribble Valley) will tell you, his constituency is a "beautiful rural constituency". In fact, he'll tell you many many times. Thus was the experience of the panel on a two hour live chat show on the Criminal Justice Act, broadcast on Radio 5 at the end of last year.

And of course in his "beautiful rural constituency" he has absolutely no time for travellers and ravers who would wreak the havoc of hell upon his "beautiful rural constituents".

Placed on the table in front of him during the entire course of the programme, were five sheets of Houses of Parliament



Actors of Parliament

paper, bedecked with a green portcullis. Written on each was the party line on the most prominent parts of the Criminal Justice Act and from these he did pour forth a torrent of repetitive bleets. Regardless of the points raised by the other members of the panel (a lawyer, a civil liberties campaigner and an assorted itinerant), the Radio 5 listeners were treated to an unceasing verbage on the "victims of crime" and the "victims of the victims of the victims of crime", and "the frail grandmothers of the victims of crime" and "the little girl with blonde pigtales who once met a victim of crime." etc.etc

When the civil rights campaigner asked Nigel how his constituents would feel if a big motorway was about to slice its way through his "beautiful rural constituency", he replied that the law-abiding citizens of Ribble Valley would all "register their protests through the proper channels". It was pointed out that the environmentally concerned citizens of the "beautiful rural constituencies" of Hampshire had done exactly that, when the M3 was about to carve it's way through Twyford Down. However, it didn't seem to have any affect on the eventual anihilation of two official Sites of Special Scientific Interest and several Archaeological Monuments....."I wish just for once these civil liberty people would remember the victims of crime," replied Nigel.

So it was with some amusement that SQUALL opened a copy of Hansard (29/11/94) to find Nigel Evans on a new crusade for the "victims of crime".

"I must say that I happen to represent the most beautiful rural constituency (sigh) in the United Kingdom," he gushed. "Let us think for just a moment about some of the sleepy villages and hamlets around the UK which are invaded invariably on a Sunday, by car boot sales." Yes - this weeks scourge of the nation is car boot sales.

"Why should they [the villages] be condemned to suffer even further because there are no controls over car boot sales."

Condemned? Suffer?

"Gisburn is another area which has suffered greatly because of the sales. The Gisburn car boot sale happens Sunday after Sunday, and heavy traffic is passing through

Gisburn on those days."

Perhaps we missed something here at SQUALL, but as far as we know Gisburn is not a world-renowned car boot sale centre, towards which thousands of articulated car boots gravitate every week.

But for Nigel it seems to be a major problem for which he has a solution.

"We are all crossing our fingers and praying that at some stage in the near future, we will get the Gisburn bypass to relieve that heavy traffic."

Another road through his "beautiful rural constituency"?

Oh how the countryside gives way to political expedecancy, particulary with the Government considering to put tolls on main roads, inevitably leading to more traffic coming off those roads and passing through the likes of Gisburn?

Meanwhile back on the Radio 5 programme, the assorted itinerant read out a quote from the The Council for the Protection of Rural England, a response to the Criminal Justice Act that ought to have appealed to Nigel's rural pretensions. It read:

"We would be concerned about any measures that would restrict opportunities for the public to express their opposition to activities which threaten the environment, such as new roads construction."['Aggravated Trespass' CJA Section 68&69]

"What about the victims of crime?" replied Nigel.

Accountability, wouldn't you just love some?

Anyone looking for reasons why the Labour Party put up such a limp opposition to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill would of course have plenty to choose from. Another one became apparent recently after Labour party members received a leaflet marked - 'Leave Country Sports Alone~A Labour Supporter's Campaign'

"It is essential that we protect wildlife habitats," said the leaflet. "But we have to face the fact that 80% of the countryside is in private ownership. The State could not equal the investment or commitment of country sports in nature

conservation without massive regulation and a heavy burden on the tax - payer."

Amongst many other gems claimed by the leaflet, we had:

"Hunting is relatively humane.....The Labour Party is damaged when it is seen to be associated with an extremist movement some of whose members use violence to promote it's cause." And the absolute classic: "Labour must not go down in history as a party anxious to abolish the pleasures of others."

The fact that a recent opinion poll suggested that 80% of the population are against fox hunting seems to have passed them by. Instead they insist that "The Labour Party needs to win rural seats to win the next General Election. An anti-country sports policy is a vote loser in rural constiuencies but wins the Party no votes even in urban and suburban seats."

So when the right to peaceful protest took it's greatest knock for a many a while with the 'aggravated trespass' clauses of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (billed by the Tory government as designed for Hunt Saboteurs), perhaps it was none too surprising that the opposition proved less than vehement. For the Chairman of the 'Leave Country Sports Alone' campaign is none other that Baroness Mallalieu QC, Labour's Home Affairs spokesperson in the House of Lords.

One of the buzz-phrases in the Labour Party at the moment is "increase the membership". And so it was that Tony Blair has appointed Peter Kilfoyle (Lab MP - Liverpool Walton) as the new head of the Labour Party's Youth Task Group.

Peter Kilfoyle appeared in The Independent (8/12/94), with his first bit of media coverage in the new job, saying that would be happy to talk to a range of interested groups including ravers, new-age travellers and environmental campaigners.

"Eco-warriors are a fact of life," he said. "It's easy to say that they feel disenfranchised from normal channels of political protest, but we have got to open up lines of communication."

Many people of course viewed Kilfoyle's rally cry with cynicism, saying that now the Criminal Justice Bill is an Act, the Labour Party were safe to put their mouths where their votes never were. Hoping that we'd all forget their lack of action when action was called for, the cynics suggest they are now attempting to 'vote syphon' the unexpected level of public opposition to the public order sections of the Criminal Justice Act.

Interested in "opening up lines of communication", as long as they are genuine exchanges of course, SQUALL wrote to Peter Kilfoyle at the beginning of December:

"Should you wish to write a letter putting forward the Labour Party's position on some of these issues - giving reasons why young people (and older ones!) should not feel disenfranchised - then we would seriously consider publishing it." By February there had been no reply whatsoever from Kilfoyle. And so we write again:

Dear Labour Party, No thirst was ever quenched by the talk of water. Love SQUALL.

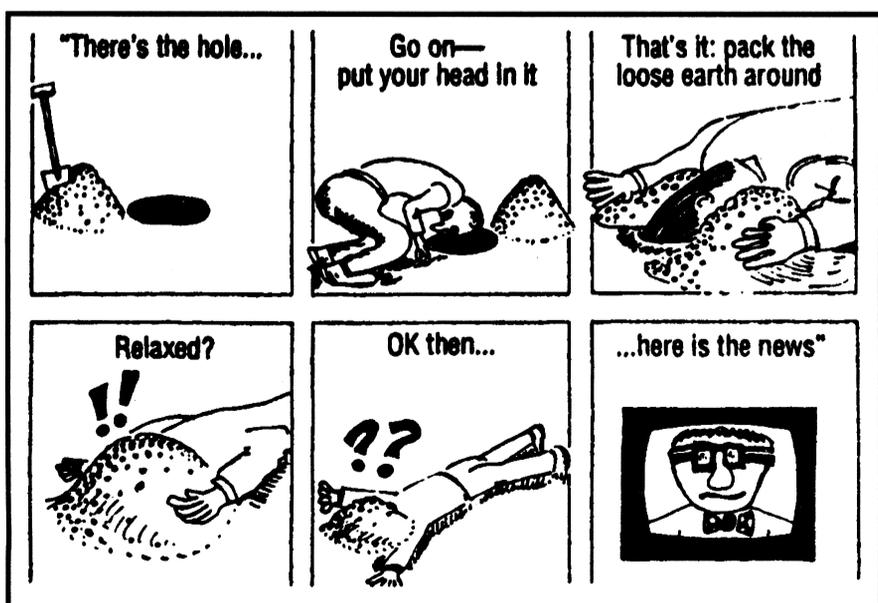
News of the Skews

A look at the skew-whiffs of the British press.

At the end of last year, both the Guardian and the Independent carried a review of the year in pictures. Of all the photographs that were used, only one image was published by both newspapers. The picture was taken in Hyde Park, during the trouble that came at the end of a demonstration against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill back in October of last year. As you can see from the reproduction opposite, the photograph shows a police charge on horseback, seemingly attacked by a number of protesters carrying sticks.

Was the picture, which both the Guardian picture-editor Eamonn McCabe and the then Independent Magazine picture-editor Colin Jacobson describe as a “medieval battle scene”, truly representative of a year of strong opposition to the Criminal Justice Act?

SQUALL spoke to both McCabe and Jacobson to find out why they chose such a picture to represent the year. We also present two other pictures that tell a slightly different story to the one suggested in the content of the photograph they showed.



For Colin Jacobson the picture “summed up and symbolised a year of diverse protest, everything from motorways to civil rights.”

Whether or not it was reflective of the proliferating non-violent forms of protest seemed less of a consideration. “You have to look for pictures that are going to stay in people’s minds, that don’t necessarily make a value judgement,” he says.

However, the caption accompanying the version of the photograph did seem to qualify the picture with an undeniable value judgement.

“THERE’S A RIOT GOING ON” bellowed the headline. “Four years ago, it was the poll tax battle that brought violence to the heart of London. This year, on an October Sunday in Hyde Park, a demonstration against the Criminal Justice Bill turned into a pitch battle, with rioters throwing broken bottles and iron railings and the police reciprocating with baton charges.”

The dictionary definition and obvious implication of using the work *reciprocation* clearly suggest the heavy handed police activities on the day were *a reply to*, rather than *a provocation of*, the violence that ensued at the end of the demonstration.

Although Jacobson considered that it wasn’t clear from the photograph “whether the police are charging the protesters or the protesters are charging the police”, the inferred slant given by the caption is less ambiguous.

Eamonn McCabe could not remember the name of the Bill against which the demonstration took place. However, he did consider that “every 50 or a hundred years, things change in the policing and governing of people. It seemed to me to be an image that said: ‘Are the police really gonna take over now?’. There’s something about the small guy up against the power of all those horses.” Whether or not it was a fair reflection of anti-CJB protests was something McCabe said he didn’t know about. To be fair to both Colin Jacobson and Eamonn McCabe, their job is to choose memorably powerful photographs. In particular, they are both considered by photographers as picture editor’s with a higher than average attention to the art of photography.

“The primary motive was the quality of the image, it was visually stunning,” says Jacobson. “It was fresh and different, dramatic and confused, quite extraordinary. Almost a medieval pitched battle.”

“There’s the power of the horse,” says McCabe. “The fact that it’s blurred and moved makes it more powerful. It has such a medieval feel.”

The accompanying caption in the Guardian talked of “the thousands of photographs taken by professionals and amateurs. The one that stands out was taken by Andrew Wiard.”

Wiard’s photograph was in fact one of a set of previously unpublished prints, sent out by the Network Photo Agency specifically to meet the end of the year press-photo market. Asked about why he had not tried to represent the vastly more proliferating imaginative non-violent protests that occurred last year against the Bill, Jacobson was of course thinking of image (it is the picture editors job to do so).

“We could have used other images from Claremont Road or Twyford Down, but these would have been a bit predictable. So much of that stuff had been used and the subject was too familiar.”

In fact, when Jacobson was still at the Independent, the word amongst freelance photo-journalists, was that he considered “new-agey stuff” to be a “tired angle”; including in his list of disinterests, the Claremont Road eviction. Colin Jacobson has now left the Independent in order to work full-time on ‘Reportage’, a photographers’ magazine he himself founded. It comes as no small irony that the next issue of Reportage is to be almost exclusively devoted to images of the Claremont Road eviction, taken by photo-journalist Gideon Mendel.

For McCabe, the question of whether non-violence was a feature of recent protests was not clear cut. “It’s very hard to tell,” he says. “It’s like these animal protests. Are these general animal protesters or are they people keeping aggravation with the police going a bit longer? It’s a very thin line, at the moment the story seems to be that it’s local people getting up and protesting.”

SQUALL conducted a straw pole of first impressions to Wiard’s photograph. The majority impression was one of a dramatic and violent scene. In News of the Skews Issue 8, we reported that the 15 minute fracas outside Downing Street during a seven hour, predominantly peaceful, anti-CJB demo last July, made up the exclusive contents of all 16 of the photographs appearing in the press on the following day. The police were even quoted deep in the text of one article as saying “The people at Downing Street were a very small minority of the march, which in the main passed peacefully.” No matter - violence and drama sells. It makes us gasp.

But what every editor must ask themselves is, what part does violently emotive media coverage play in perpetuating violence as the absorbed norm of overt political expression? The past year saw many non-violent protests such as the climbing onto the roof of Parliament, the invasion of Michael Howard’s garden, the resistance to the eviction at Claremont Road, amongst many others that might have made a more up to date reflection of modern political protest, as well as good photographs. A new breed of non-violent direct action protesters have made a serious effort at redefining what can be done with anger and dissent. To ignore such activity is to hand the stage over to the violently expressive, and then who of course is responsible for the performance?

The photograph that both the Independent and The Guardian selected for their review of the year. Taken by photo-journalist Andrew Wiard.



Protesters run for safety as police horsemen gallop through park. ©



Freelance journalist Tim Malyon interviewed Sam Court as she lay on a paramedics' stretcher after the Hyde Park demo in October. He sent SQUALL the tape.

"They started charging and all I remember was that he pushed me and then the copper kicked me in the back and I fell over," said Sam. "I put my hand over my head to shield it and he started whacking my arm - I just laid on the floor then. He kept telling me to get up and I tried to get up but I just fell over and then some people pulled me out."

Fellow protester, Roisin Chamberlein, said: "If you put somebody in battle-dress in front of a crowd who are already excitable about something, they are demonstrating against and feel very strongly about, then the armed force provokes heightened feelings and that's what happened. All the way along the route, there were just ordinary bobbies looking pretty bored; then suddenly you get ones that are saying - 'We're expecting trouble' If you expect trouble, you get it."

The paramedic added: "We'll probably take her to Mary's or St. Thomas's Hospital. There's another one that's been hit by a horse, we're gonna send her off to hospital for X-rays."



Shuffle Shuffle Snuffle

Not only were the Queen's speech and the budget bad news for homeless people, so to is the Labour Party shadow cabinet. Tony Blair has now finished shuffling his subordinates. Shuffled out is shadow housing spokesperson JOHN BATTLE, relegated to the obscurity of 'open government'. In his place, we get the sharp suits and crocodile smile of NICK RAYNSFORD.

Kit Nash, a squatting activist and member of The People's Housing Information Service, watches the manoeuvres.

Last May, barely 200 people held a small but lively march against homelessness. It was organised by hostel residents, tidied away in the Government's so-called 'rough sleepers initiative'. The marchers included John Battle. His speech and John Major's sick denunciation of beggars two days previously, helped ensure good coverage in the media.

Since it was a bank holiday weekend, John Battle had obviously made this obscure, scrag-arsed march a personal priority. He could have been putting his feet up at home in Leeds or buttering up his constituents there. You don't usually get northern MPs to weekend events in London, unless there's lots of kudos attached and much fluttering of the 'great and good', neither of which was on offer.

That was typical of John Battle, who proved to be a jewel in the political mud. His housing role was only a junior shadow ministry, and it was obvious he was kept on tight leash by his boss, the odious ex-student politico Jack Straw. Never the less, he made a better impression than any other shadow housing Minister since Thatcher crawled from the slime. He didn't go down too well with bankers, building societies, Housing Corporation bosses and council big-wigs, and he had no time at all for the Sir George Young fan club, eager to preserve its grants and jobs, which Sheila McKechnie was running at Shelter. The people John Battle impressed - the people he listened to and respected - were homeless people, tenants, squatters, housing co-ops and others who, being at the brunt end of housing, *know* what's going on. He advocated, and was inspired by, self-help solutions and self-organisation. Unusually for a politician, he knows the energy and creative power of people coming together to meet their needs themselves and believes in the wisdom of those at the sharp end. Oh...and he was an appreciative reader of SQUALL, which I hope he remains.

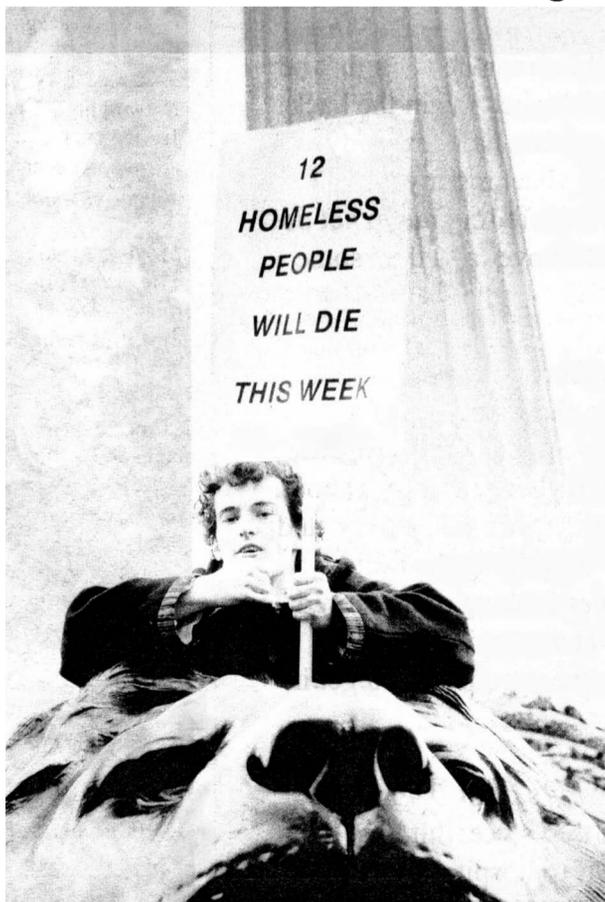
Some people thought John Battle was just a ranter. He's certainly good at that, but he also had an excellent grip on the complex issues in housing and never sunk to empty slogans. With Straw and Blair breathing down his neck, it's hard to know what else he could do. At least he ranted a lot of the right stuff.

JOHN BATTLED BUT WILL SLICK NICK?

In a way, it's surprising Nick Raynsford hasn't had the job sooner. He's been the Labour Party's Mr Housing for more than a decade. Former boss of SHAC and latterly a 'housing consultant', he won the Fulham bye-election in 1986, lost that seat, then bounced back

as MP for Greenwich in 1992. Endowed with plenty upstairs, he's the ultimate technocrat in the many legal and financial intricacies of housing, baffling to most politicians. In fact at one stage, he was sort of informal consultant to the government as well as the Labour Party. When housing benefit was introduced around 1982, the system was so complicated that Nick Raynsford was reputedly the only person who really understood it. Civil servants used to ring him up for advice when they got lost in their own maze!

With his public school smarm, Raynsford is obviously a much more 'suitable' Labour suit to impress the bankers and building societies than John Battle ever was. He's likely to hit it off with the career campaigners as well. Now that Sheila McKechnie has been succeeded at Shelter by Chris Holmes (ex-housing boss of Camden Council and previously the man whose caution kept CHAR constipated for years), and with the Tories heading down the pan, Shelter and Labour can be expected to start croaking the same off-key ditty once again.



Housing won't be Slick Nick's only concern. He's also keeping the job he had before as shadow Minister for London. That says something about Labour's priorities. In the '40s and '50s, when the parties both boasted they could build more houses than the other lot, housing was one of the top jobs, with a seat in cabinet. Now Labour makes it half a job for a bod at least a notch below cabinet rank.

NO RESPECT

A techno-whizzo he may be, but Raynsford is a cold fish who's shown little real respect for homeless people. They're the last voice he's likely to listen to. You wouldn't find *him* in Trafalgar Square supporting a couple of hundred hostel residents, street-dwellers and squatters! He's anti-squatting and chronically patronising towards those who don't rate as his equals. He doesn't find wisdom or ideas coming from the streets, because he doesn't look for them. Homeless people are there to be done good to by ever-so-concerned, highly intelligent liberals like him. That's why, like most politicians, he misses out on so much that John Battle was almost uniquely plugged into.

YOUR MOVE, NICK

For all his expertise, Nick Raynsford knows nowt about the great unacknowledged resource of homelessness; the ideas, ingenuity and energy of homeless people. On past form, he doesn't want to know either. Maybe the best thing we can say to him and his party is what some earlier squatters, the Diggers, said when the revolutionary government they had fought for turned out well Blairish - promoting the interest of the minor squirearchy and the emerging middle class, but negligent of the people's needs. Announcing their pioneering squat at St George's Hill, (near Weybridge, in Surrey) in April 1649, the Diggers said:

"We are made to hold forth this declaration to you that are the Great Council, and to you the great army of the land of England, that you may know what we would have, and what you are bound to give us by your covenants and promises; and that you may joyn us in this work, and so find peace. Or else, if you do oppose us, we have peace in our work and declaring this report: And you shall be left without excuse."

So what about it Nick? It's never too late to "joyn with us in this work". Or will you be left without excuse?

WORKING THE NET

A growing number of grass-roots campaign groups are using internet and electronic mail to get their message networked to a global audience. Professional information manager **Ben Schneider** continues his series of articles on who is using the net and why SQUALL readers should know about it.

The variety of people using the Net is incredible. Sure, many of the users are in business and education but as I mentioned in the last article, its unregulated nature means that anyone can put whatever they want onto it.

It is as a result of this that there has been a swell of Net use in this country amongst environmental and social justice campaign groups. One major advantage of posting information on the Net is the instantaneous way a campaign group can inform others of a demonstration or rally. Just before Claremont Road was finally evicted (RIP), both Road Alert and the No M11 Link Campaign posted information on the 'Alert' news-group in the environmental network GreenNet, asking for people to come and support the Claremontians during their eviction.

The Hunt Saboteurs Association posted an article (news-group: animal.rights) announcing that the first court case of arrested sabbers under the new Act was taking place on December 14 last year. The court case was adjourned.

Meanwhile, Smallworld, the alternative video news agency, posted an article on the gen.media news-group letting everyone know that their avidly awaited video news magazine, 'Undercurrents No2' (see review on page 27) was out and about.

There are also regular news updates from both Earth First! and Road Alert, with information on the progress of specific campaigns.

PHreak on the other hand are an actual dial-up service accessible through a net modem. Instead of dialling your internet

provider (see accompanying box), you set your communications software to PHreak. The service offers the user 20 minutes of FREE access per day. For longer access time subscription costs are only £5 a month. You can find some of SQUALL 7 on PHreak, as well as all of SQUALL 8 and very shortly the SQUALL 9 you are reading now.

PHreak is not strictly speaking the internet. It does however, allow all Net-wide electronic mail to be sent and received, but does not offer other Net facilities. What it does have is 'local' bulletin board and information from the New Economics Foundation, a radical think tank. It also offers a selection of Net-wide bulletin boards, such as alt.pagan and alt.hemp.

According to PHreak's Chris Smith the service was set up to "give alternative groups a site in cyberspace where they can hang out". Much of the Net is taken up by computer program-swapping, business and mainstream, so that PHreak provides an opportunity for assorted itinerants to enter an arena and communicate with a larger percentage of like-minded individuals than might normally be found on the Net itself.

Groups like PHreak give me hope

that the future of the Net will not just involve the expression of dollars for data. The groups mentioned in these articles are on the frontline of their issues, enabled by Internet to proactively comment alongside the more conventional voices that usually dominate the airwaves

comments, updates and net-news write to Ben Schneider c/o SQUALL or e-mail : <squall@intermedia.co.uk>

SOME OF THE GRASS ROOTS GROUPS ON THE NET

Smallworld

Film and distribute the alternative news video magazine - Undercurrents. They also train people to use camcorder to record events.
e-mail: <smallworld@gn.apc.org>

No M11 Link Campaign

As the name suggests, an environmental protest organisation aiming to hinder the completion of the M11.
e-mail - <nom11@gn.apc.org>

Road Alert

Involved in anti-road building campaigns all over the country
e-mail: <roadalert@gn.apc.org>

Earth First!

Many local environmental NVDA groups.
e-mail: <snufkinsdef@gn.apc.org>

Hunt Saboteurs Association

campaign and protest against blood sports
e-mail: <hsa@gn.apc.org>

Freedom Network

Networking information re: Criminal Justice Act and other associated actions and events
e-mail: <freedomnet@gn.apc.org>

Moving Target

The alternative urban cyclist's mouthpiece
e-mail: <movingtarget@gn.apc.org>

Cornerstone

Resource centre for many groups including Earth First
e-mail: <cornerstone@gn.apc.org>

Seed

Contains info on underground campaigning organisations in the UK. This is on World Wide Web, an internet application allowing even faster referral to sound and images. Editions of SQUALL will be found on this bulletin board in the near future.
<http://web.cs.city.ac.uk/homes/tgs1001/home.html>

Getting Hooked Up

To get 'hooked up' you need four tools: a computer, a piece of communications software, a modem and an account with an internet provider.

1. Most computers are able to work with the internet - check with the internet providers and support services mentioned in point 4 if in doubt ie. your computer is very old.
2. The communications software enables the computer to send and receive information from an external source.
3. The modem converts small epics of computer code into electronic signals which can be sent down a telephone to a receiving computer.
4. An internet provider is an organisation which has a large central computer which has access to an internet entry point or 'node'. The provider can store electronic mail (computer post) and holds internet applications such as news-groups (computer newspapers).

Costs to join up vary with each access provider and often depend on the different special services they offer.

GreenNet, a member of the global Association for Progressive Communications has a join-up fee and varying subscription charges for commercial or non-profit organisations and how much time you are 'on-line'. For non-profit groups, it costs £15 to register, £5 per month subscription and 4-6p per minute on-line time.

Demon, one of the most popular commercial internet providers charge a £12.50 join-up fee and £10 per month subscription with full internet access and unlimited time.

Internet Users must of course be aware that there is the cost of using the phone line too! The larger internet providers will usually have numbers all over the country, so that you will be charged at the local call rate, rather than national rates, wherever you are dialling from.



juxta POSING

"People should not think the way of getting themselves heard is by lying down in front of bulldozers or chaining themselves to a tree. I am a reasonable man and listen to reasoned argument."

Brian Mawhinney - Secretary of State for Transport - BBC Greater London Radio December 1994

"At the time of the 1989-90 public inquiry I was secretary of Waltham Forest Transport Action Group, a body of some standing in this borough. Our application to be heard was submitted in good time but I was simply not allowed to speak. The inspector said that he wanted to close the inquiry and did not want to hear any more. If I had been allowed to speak, I would have been told that all the most important issues were outside the scope of the inquiry."

Stephen Ward - Letter to the Guardian 7/12/94



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Critical Mass

by Patrick Field



A woman pushing a baby in a buggy, holding the hand of a small child and carrying a bag of shopping, waits at the kerb while a stream of her fellow humans pass in motor-vehicles. The road is obstructed less than a hundred metres away. To stop and let the family continue their journey would not delay any of the drivers, but in their anxiety to keep moving they overlook this. Each one defiantly uses the threatening power of the machine they are piloting to assert their priority. Motorists are not bad people, but city traffic has a personality of its own; ill-tempered, selfish, bullying and pushy.

Motor traffic dominates our streets. It turns the places we live into war-zones, where a moments lapse of concentration can have serious, even fatal consequences.

Attempts to accommodate motor-traffic have dominated land-use planning in Britain for forty years. The car is so central to the idea of freedom and satisfaction through consumption, that huge sacrifices have been made by everyone in futile pursuit of unlimited mobility. Children have lost their autonomous mobility. Local services have been displaced to suburban locations where they are only accessible to the motorised minority. The very air we breathe is poisoned.

Motor-culture has a fierce grip on human imagination. It is hard for people enmeshed in motor-dependence, or whose dreams of power and autonomy rest on the ambition to own and use cars, to contemplate life without the metal plague. Car-culture generates so much spending and earning activity that any prosperous people find the idea of life without its pervasive

economic influence frightening.

At the same time the, limits of motor-culture are obvious to all city-dwellers. Advertising for cars becomes increasingly surreal - exotic locations and weird symbolism - as it gets more difficult to say anything good about them that does not demand an ironic response. The image of car as liberator becomes less sustainable every day. Dismantling motor-supremacy will involve problems. It is also a huge opportunity to increase the amount of justice and joy in the world.

If all the tools devised by the restless invention of our species were ranked by benefit minus disadvantage, the pedal cycle would be up there with the sewing-machine, the fiddle and the printing press. The bicycle is a free lunch. It carries its rider at speeds that match any other form of urban transport. It is easy to park, simple to manufacture and maintain with a long service life. The problems associated with its use; exposure to inclement weather, inability to carry children or freight can all be overcome with imagination and technology. A bicycle provides life-prolonging physical exercise. The bicycle is not a free lunch. It is a lunch you get paid to eat.

If human organisation persists for another two hundred years the 20th Century will be regarded as a cul-de-sac where the chimeral promise of unlimited mobility offered by more complex machines briefly outshone the bicycle's potential to increase the absolute total of human happiness. We are a long way from exhausting the diversity of this potential. We have only scratched its surface.

Critical Mass assembles at 17:45 on the last Friday of every month under Waterloo Bridge outside the National Film Theatre. With participation running at 200 or more it provides a chance for cyclists to temporarily displace motor-traffic from the city streets, enjoy the warm applause of pedestrians and show that it is possible to have a happy time on the streets of Central London at six o'clock on a Friday evening. Fresh air and fun - yes. Fumes and frustration - no.



Ⓢ Crossing the political bridge by bike - Critical Mass rides for clean air and cycle sanity every month



Local Agendas

Anna Makismow has been involved in discussions on local Agenda 21 implementation with both Lewes Council in Sussex and Camden Council in north London. Now operating out of a squatted church in Kentish Town, she takes a look at how squatters, travellers and environmental protesters fit the Agenda perfectly.

Agenda 21 is based on the realisation that we cannot have a healthy society or economy in a world with so much poverty and environmental destruction, and acknowledges the need for major changes in attitude and lifestyles. It encourages individuals "to become an active part of the search for a sustainable future." The attendant governments agreed in Rio that by 1996, every local authority should have developed a local Agenda 21.

While awareness and opposition to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act grows, it is perhaps a good time to remind people that many of those who will be the first to be criminalised under this Act are already contributing to finding solutions to some of the global challenges which our head of state accepted at Rio.

Travellers and squatters have been branded by the Government as having nothing positive to offer but this is not the case. Agenda 21 identifies "unsustainable consumption" as one of the main causes of "the continued deterioration of the global environment." Most travellers and squatters do not perceive material possessions in the same way as other sections of society, and perhaps the whole of society could learn a lesson from the simpler-way that they live.

The Agenda states that "to make urban life more sustainable, governments should see that the homeless, poor and unemployed get access to land, credit and low cost building materials. People also need security of tenure and legal protection against unfair eviction."

Many of the one hundred thousand or so people who are squatting or travelling in this country would now be homeless, had they not adopted a 'Do it yourself' approach to their need for a home. Agenda 21 sees homelessness as a symptom of a "global environmental and development crisis". Instead of putting criminal sanctions on squatting and practically outlawing the travelling lifestyle, the Government could fulfil some of its Agenda 21 commitments by supporting people who maintain a

building that nobody else is using or who live in a truck or a bender.

By putting criminal sanctions on peaceful but direct protest, the Criminal Justice Act will outlaw one of the most effective ways of highlighting problems within society, non-violent direct action (NVDA). As the suffragettes in this country demonstrated, NVDA can act as force for positive change. A lot of NVDA in recent years has been focused around environmental issues eg. road schemes, nuclear power and the protection of wildlife. Those actions raise awareness of what is happening to our planet and possible solutions to environmental problems which, according to Agenda 21 should be everyone's concern.

Anti-nuclear campaigners promote "ways of minimising and limiting the creation of radioactive wastes", whilst road protesters "encourage forms of transportation that minimise emissions and harmful effects on the environment." These are both stated aims of Agenda 21.

Protests increase public awareness of the choices we face as we move into the 21st century. They also allow ordinary citizens to bring their views and feelings into the political debate. The Government should accept these protests as prods in the right direction.

Free parties may not appear to be an environmental issue but a lot of young people go to them and young people are crucial to the success of Agenda 21. The government's desire to suppress free parties along with squatting, travelling and eco-action has led to a blending of ideas, resources and information between these groups.

Information about environmental destruction and eco-action is appearing at parties and festivals, donations at free parties have helped to set up environmental community centres and housing projects and even a DIY urban farm in Luton, all in previously unused buildings. 'Parties with a purpose' have arrived and should be given space away from residential areas and encouraged.

Politicians and bureaucrats are struggling to implement Agenda 21 and are asking for all the world's citizens to help, at a time when people on the fringes of our society are becoming more aware of the responsibilities we have in actively creating the world we want to live in. These people should be encouraged not criminalised. By suppressing diversity and dissent, the government is closing one path through which a sustainable future could be reached.

Through co-operation at all levels between government, local authorities and citizens, a sustainable 21st century can be achieved. We must work together for a brighter future.

What is Agenda 21?

Three years ago, Britain signed a new international agreement pledging a commitment towards community empowerment. Since then 'Agenda 21' has become the new buzz word sweeping through grass roots organisations, whether working to clean up local rivers, setting up community centres or providing local housing schemes. But what is it and does it mean anything? **Andy Johnson** looks into potentials of a new flag.

Agenda 21 is a document signed by 70 countries, including Britain, at the Earth Summit in Rio (The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development - UNCED) in 1992.

It is a long, rambling, vague tome, outlining certain policies that countries should adopt in order to achieve "sustainable development".

At its heart is the principle that all sections of a community, including businesses, trade unions and grass roots organisations should join together to provide basic shelter, food and warmth (development) to the poor and vulnerable, in ways that do not harm the environment (sustainable).

What has caught the imagination of grass roots organisations is that this partnership includes local authorities; and that by 1996 every local authority in the country is directed by the agreement to be undergoing its implementation.

Agenda 21 contains much that was specifically designed for developing countries. As such, its brief covers an enormous range of topics, from the role of farmers and indigenous peoples, to "combating deforestation. Some of its terms of reference, specifically those applying to the poor, apply equally to so called 'wealthy' countries such as Britain. Especially now that the levels of poverty in Britain are on the increase.

It is important to remember that Agenda 21 is not a binding agreement. There is absolutely nothing under international law to compel governments to act on their promises. In diplomatic parlance, it is known as 'soft law'.

The effectiveness of Agenda 21 will therefore come from people being familiar with what it says and applying pressure on the authorities to keep to their internationally agreed directives.

Take the words of Michael Heseltine at a pre-conference meeting in March 1992:

"In our view, Agenda 21 should represent a high level political commitment. The key to Agenda 21 is that this is a document for everyone with a part to play in delivering sustainable development, not just governments."

Reading between the lines, Michael Heseltine seems to be handing the Agenda over to local resources and Human skills,

directing them to provide the basic necessities for their own communities.

The chapters that affect the poor in this country are all in Section 1 of the Agenda. They are Chapter 3 - Combating Poverty, Chapter 4 - Changing Consumption Patterns and Chapter 6 - Protecting and Promoting Human Health.

Each chapter is further divided into 3 sections. If we take Chapter 3 - Combating poverty as an example, the sections are The Problem (Basis for Action), The Solution (Objectives); Achievement (activities).

Under 'Basis for Action' in Chapter 3, are such pearls of wisdom as: "The eradication of poverty and hunger (and) greater equity in income distribution remain major changes everywhere.... A specific anti-poverty strategy is therefore one of the basic conditions for ensuring sustainable development."

Under 'Objectives' we have: "To provide all persons urgently with the opportunity to earn a sustainable livelihood," and "To develop strategies and programmes of poverty eradication and alleviation, employment and income generation."

Under 'Activities': "Focus on the empowerment of local and community groups," and "Contain immediate measures to enable these groups to alleviate poverty."

They are all very fine words, even if they don't say anything specific. But that emptiness leaves the field wide open for groups to come up with their own initiatives and at least be in with half a chance of getting the local authority. In a sense it is a flag with which groups can walk into their local authority and claim the ground.

Already such projects include cultivating local land (allotments, permaculture projects etc.), LETS Schemes, local produce and co-ops coming under the heading of developing the local economy and tree planting, wildlife sanctuaries and meadows.

It shows what just may be possible, but Roae Bridger, the Agenda 21 Officer at The Ecology Centre, advises that ideas are going to have to be original and serious. It's no good just tacking Agenda 21 onto the back of any old half baked scheme.

She is also optimistic about local authority action, on the grounds that they have some environmental awareness and are always competing with each other for one up(wo)manship.

"Broaden the idea," she says. "Make it a community project and try and involve as many people as possible. Look at what other groups are doing and look at it from a different angle."

"Agenda 21: A Plain Language Guide" published by the Centre for our Common Future

"Rescue Mission Planet Earth" - A children's version of Agenda 21 published by Peace Child International is association with the United Nations,

"A step by step Guide to Local Agenda 21" published by the Local government Management board,

and other books on the subject, are all available from the London Ecology Centre, Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London, WC2 9HJ. Send an SAE for a list.

Road Wars



SQUALL's road protest round up and down the country

No M77 battle hots up in Scotland

Road protesters at the self-proclaimed 'Free State of Pollok' in Scotland, were confronted by a foaming MP at the beginning of February, when Allen Stewart, Scottish Industry Junior Minister and Con MP for Eastwood, threatened protesters with a pick-axe.

The Minister turned up at the protesters' second encampment at Newton Means with seven other people, including Dan Pollard - head of Wimpey Construction, demanding a guided tour of the site.

"He arrived at the camp at about four o'clock on Sunday afternoon, and had obviously been drinking, you could smell it on his breath," says Lindsay Keenan, one of the protesters at the brunt end of the minister's drunken wrath. They

came along purely to intimidate us, screaming and balling at everyone. Then he started to push me around." Allen Stewart then snatched up a pick axe, threatening Lindsay with the words "There's a lot you can do with a pick-axe".

After declaring his innocence, and stressing that his actions were purely in self-defence, Stewart resigned two days later having discussed the matter with his family. What was not widely reported was that Stewart's son and a friend, were also at the scene that day. After an impromptu search by police, they were found to be in possession of loaded air pistols. Stewart senior and junior now face investigation and possible charges. Lindsay Keenan and Lewis McCallum, another protester, have vowed to take out private suits against Stewart if the authorities decide against prosecution.

At the beginning of February, a tip-off to protesters from an source at Wimpey

- the main contractors on the M77 site, led to the discovery that three tree-cutters had chopped down around 300 trees in a secluded area along the route. This led to the setting up of a second camp at Newton Means in order to prevent further tree-cutting. Over 1000 trees have so far been lost.

Actions are, as SQUALL goes to press, occurring every day, with up to 200 protesters padlocking themselves to machinery, trees, workers (!), vans and chain-saws. An increasingly popular action at Pollok is 'tree-spiking'; a process used in Australia to prevent the logging of rainforests which involves driving six inch nails into the condemned trees, in an effort to thwart the chain-saws. Spiking trees with dozens of nails does not harm them but renders their trunks almost immune to the chain-saws. Although Wimpey's progress has been severely hindered, the sheer number of trees, coupled with the finite resources of the campaigners, has meant that trees are still being felled.

When the protest camps were originally set up, relations with the local police and security were amicable enough; each side recognising that the other had a job to do. But, as Wimpey have become more desperate to complete the work, relations have deteriorated rapidly.

"The atmosphere between police, security and protesters is well past the cup of tea stage," says Dani King, a campaigner on site. "Things are getting heavier day by day," adds Lindsay Keenan.

The M77 contract makes road-building history as the first of it's kind to incorporate the cost of disruption by protesters. As a result of vehement local protest, the construction costs will almost certainly go over budget. With Wimpey footing the bill for protesters' obstructions, be prepared to see security actions in excess of those witnessed before on other anti-road campaigns.

A support action in solidarity with Pollok campaigners saw 12 anti-roads protesters occupy a Wimpey crane in the centre of Manchester at the beginning of February. The occupation lasted three days and the protesters only came down after security guards lit fires beneath the crane. Three of the protesters were arrested and charged with malicious mischief and breach of the peace.

A few days later back at Pollok, three Earth First! members were arrested after pouring concrete into a security guard compound. Jake Hunter and Paul Murphy, two of the three, declined to accept the bail conditions of staying away from the Pollok Free State and Wimpey Sites, and are now in Barlinnie Prison. Their next bail

appearance is on February 27. Protesters are planning a campaign to publicise their plight and, as Dani says: "The policy of bail conditions that depend on not protesting, is obviously a tactic designed to keep anti-roads protesters out of the way."

Members of the No M77 campaign, which Earth First! say will be "the largest campaign of civil disobedience an environmental issue has ever seen in Scotland", believe that "what happens at Pollok Estate will affect the future of environmental preservation in Scotland".

The M77, which has a history of opposition since the '60s, will thunder its way through 1,018 acres of the largest stretch of green-belt land around Glasgow, carrying an estimated 53,000 vehicles by the year 2007. The main permanent protester's camp situated on its proposed route has been described by Tim of Road Alert as the "most welcoming camp I have ever been to."

The STARR Alliance, an amalgamation of local community and environmental groups, have offered an alternative strategy entitled: 'Instead of the Ayr Road Route'. Published last August, the report was banned from libraries in the area, despite the fact that three Glasgow MPs had signed documents in favour of the strategy.

The vehemence of opposition to the M77 has been fired by the fact that the area is supposed to be protected. In 1939, a conservation agreement, the first of its kind in Scotland, was drawn up to provide a guaranteed protection of the area. At the time, the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) declared that: "The said lands should remain forever as open space or woodlands for the enhancement of the beauty of the neighbourhood and, so far as possible, for the benefit of the citizens of Glasgow."

In 1974, this agreement was "reluctantly waived" by the NTS, in what seems to have been a pressured backtrack.

Up to now, no Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been carried out on the proposed route and, in a letter to Friends of the Earth from a member of the Cabinet of the European Commission, "should have been carried out before the Secretary of State gave development consent".

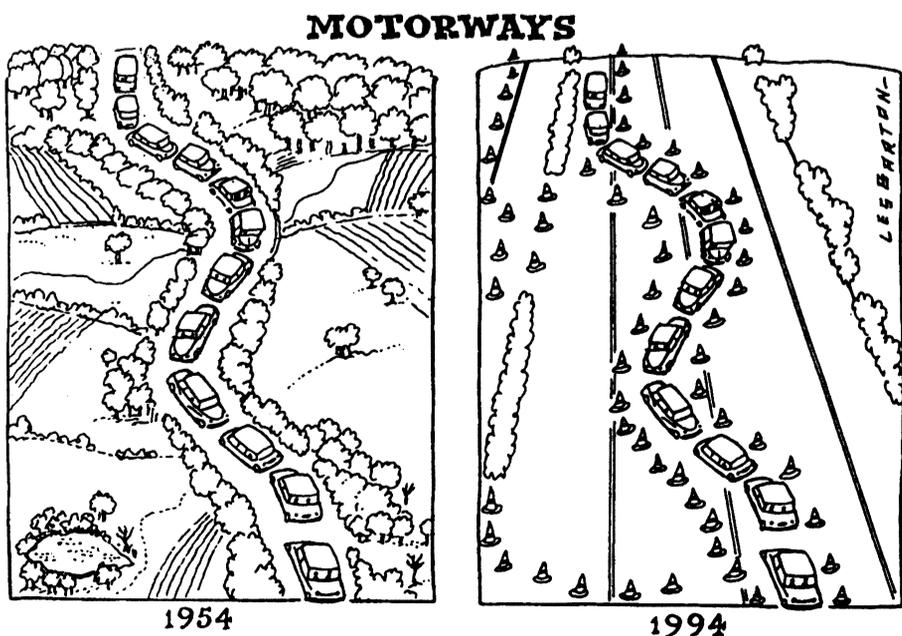
The Scottish National Trust state in a letter to Strathclyde Regional Council, that they believe an EIA should be carried out and that the council should seriously consider alternatives as a part of the EIA.

A march against the M77 is planned for February 25. Beginning at noon, it will head from St. George Square in the centre of Glasgow, to Pollok Free State on the edge of city. The march will be followed by an action and a party.

Policy Shift or Shifty Policy?

Last year saw the government starting to reconsider its road-building programme, with public opinion swinging away from tarmac and towards the environment.

The catalytic conversion of





government policy has been further induced by the publication of two major reports. The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report, published last October, stated what every one already knew; that car pollution is bad for our health. The second, and even more damning report was from the Transport Department's Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (Sactra), published in December.

The Secretary of State for Transport, Brian Mawhinney, has unveiled plans to reduce this year's spending on roads from £2 to £1.7 billion. Environmental groups have heralded this as a long overdue concession to a growing public concern.

British motorists drive the highest yearly car mileage in Europe, while public transport usage is one of the lowest. Of course, this fact cannot be laid entirely at the feet of the British public as it has been the subject of much 'political encouragement'. It was Thatcher herself who, in the early eighties, coined the phrase "the great car economy", as one of her 'visions' of a future Britain.

Public transport is a fundamental component of British infrastructure and suffers as an affordable, accessible system of transport, when left to the private sector. Already, public investment in rail transport in Britain is amongst the lowest in Europe.

Moreover, the streamlining (cut-backs) and fragmentation of the rail network into bite sized portions in preparation for rail privatisation, will make it difficult for future planners to co-ordinate expansions in the system. This is aside from making it more difficult and expensive for the public to travel by rail.

The most condemning aspect of the Sactra report is the conclusion that building more roads does not alleviate transport congestion but, in many cases, seriously exacerbates the problem by encouraging more car use.

The findings of the 242 page report were made available to erstwhile transport minister, John MacGregor, in May 1994. His decision to shelve the report may be attributed to his staunch defence of the £2 billion-a-year programme and has angered many environmental campaigners who believe that its findings could have influenced the many public enquiries into road developments that have taken place since then.

Mr MacGregor's departure from the transport post, and Dr Mawhinney's installation last Autumn, would seem to have been in preparation for such an

apparent change in Government policy. Indeed, Dr Mawhinney is keen to stress his 'green credentials' and is reported to be setting up an environmental policy unit in order to co-ordinate the environmental assessment and planning of the road building programme. The new unit is billed as being accessible to anti-roads campaigners, environmental groups, statutory bodies and other lobbying groups; time, of course, will tell on that score. An announcement is expected in February or March.

The DoT still has a large portion of its initially planned ten-year, £23 billion commitment to road projects yet to spend. The shelving of a few of the more visibly embarrassing projects cannot be claimed as proving the new transport minister's 'green credentials'. The consciousness of Britain has been woken up to the environmental destruction caused by more roads through the dedicated efforts of anti-roads campaigners. But there is a very real danger that the converted middle Englanders will be swiftly anaesthetised once more by false promises coming from a Government, highly dependant on the road lobby, and an economy highly dependant on the motor industry.

A30 Honiton - Exeter on the back burner

One of Dr. Mawhinney's postponed routes is the A30 Honiton-Exeter 'improvement' which, like the Newbury by-pass, would form part of a euro-route, dubbed the 'motorway by stealth'.

During the public inquiry, the road was presented as a local scheme, for local traffic. After the postponement was announced, it was immediately referred to as a private-funded DBFO road (design, build, finance and operate).

DBFOs operate with private consortia building and paying for the construction and maintenance of the road for a fixed period (up to 25 years). The consortia recoup their money in the form of "shadow tolls" - the DoT will pay them years after the roads have been completed according to the volume of traffic using the road. Thus the roads will get built now but the DoT, and hence the taxpayer, will be getting the bill years later. The consortia are generally alliances of the biggest construction firms with banks

and consultants - a number of Conservative MPs and ex-ministers who have Directorships in these ad-hoc alliances.

The A30 Honiton - Exeter route, with virtually all its clearance work completed, was due to start construction on the main contract in about three months. There are currently two bender camps on the proposed route, which campaigners fear will be cleared in two to three months time, despite the DoT suspension of operations. Exactly what the future holds is unclear. There appears to be nothing to stop the Government shifting responsibility to the private sector and then claiming non-involvement when the work starts again.

Actions against the A30 continue and the main protesters' camp is currently at Fairmile, near the Honiton end of the route.

The Third Battle of Newbury pitched against vested interests

The six lane, £66 million Newbury by-pass, with its linked £24 million junction, is a significant proportion of Brian Mawhinney's £300 million saving on this year's road budget. Put on hold for a year, Roger Higman of Friends of the Earth believes that "The political embarrassment of another Twyford Down was too much" and "would have made Twyford Down look like a dress rehearsal".

The campaign against the road, known as the 'Third Battle of Newbury' has gained support from many professional bodies and people, including a powerful lobbying force from Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace.

The planned route (and remember - it has only been put on hold for a year) will destroy 12 miles of unspoilt countryside, including up to six Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

The postponement of the road has provoked a ferocious response from the pro-road contingency. This group who imaginatively call themselves 'By-Pass Now' includes David Rendell (Lib-Dem MP), Lord Caernarvon (who lives in Hampshire - Newbury is in Berkshire), and a number of business people including Sir Gerald Whent, the head of Vodaphone (recently prosecuted for speeding at 45 mph in a 30 mph zone. "My speed was safe and my means were adequate," he said in his defence).

At a meeting of Newbury District Council, a motion was passed to donate £8,000 (of tax-payers' money) to By-Pass Now. One member of the council, some of whose land had been compulsory purchased by the DoT for the project, was not allowed to speak or vote on the issue because he had 'a financial interest in the matter' - he is opposed to the road. By-Pass Now have a meeting with Brian Mawhinney on the February 15. It is suggested that the ease with which a relatively small campaign group have got access to Dr. Mawhinney ears, is more a little connected to the fact that an MP and a Lord are among its members.

The Third Battle of Newbury are

currently drafting a report to the District Auditor regarding the legal aspects of public money being donated to By-Pass Now. By-Pass Now are solely concerned with the financial benefits that a new road would bring. "The whole thing is not about relieving traffic congestion. It's about money and profits, particularly for the businesses involved in By-Pass Now," says Letty, one of the protesters at the site.

No M65 Campaign - Up in the air and facing the flak

Stanworth Valley in Lancashire is now the site of the biggest 'sky village' in Europe. Seventeen tree houses interconnected by aerial walkways, some of which are 60ft in the air. Not far away is another camp set up on Holebottom Wood, one of three connected stretches of woods that together form the largest piece of ancient woodland in Lancashire. Both encampments stand in the way of an M65 extension, and are packed with environmental protesters determined to prevent Amec construction from carrying out their destruction.

"The Campaign is hotting up, we are reaching the eleventh hour," says Larch, one of the No M65 protesters.

Several protesters that have also been squatting six cottages in the proposed path of an M65 slip road, since last December. They have a court date in mid-February and are expecting the bailiffs around the end of the same month.

"We've got about twenty lock-ons, bunkers and major reinforcements," continues Larch. "It's like a mini war-zone."

The determination, as well as the methods of preparation, are similar to those cultivated at Claremont.

"The occupation of these homes will send a clear message to the Government that we shall defend Lancashire from the bulldozer to the last house and the last blade of grass and beyond," promises Hyper, another of the No M65 protesters.

The proposed twelve mile route will destroy over 50 homes, as well as steep-wooded valleys, woodlands and other wildlife habitats. It will also pass within yards of local schools.

The Department of Transport are currently in the process of seeking an eviction order against the tree-dwellers. The best that a Blackburn councillor could come up with to explain the necessity for more environmental destruction was that "it will attract industry and improve the quality of life". High levels of unemployment have made the demand for jobs a major issue. To address this demand, interest should be directed towards creating sustainable employment; not just levering an environmentally-destructive pre-agenda with the quick dangle of a short-term job carrot. Meanwhile, the protesters at the No M65 encampments find themselves far from unemployed as they prepare to defend their woodland position against the bulldozers and bureaucrats, set to arrive in droves in the coming months.

Towers of Strength

Last December, the longest eviction in post-war European history took place at Claremont Road, East London. Resisting it all the way, with imagination and resilience, were over 400 non-violent direct action stars. **Jim Carey** spoke to five of them, whilst **Nick Cobbing** dangled from the roofs with his camera.

“It was probably the most amazing week I’ve ever experienced in my life, the most rich, intense, thing - furthest removed from anything I’ve ever experienced in my normal life otherwise.”

Phil - Last person evicted from Claremont Road.

“The phenomenal thing is, Amsterdam was the longest eviction before this one at two and a half days and they had AK 47s and Kalashnikovs, so the fact that we held out with ingenuity and non-violence - that was the beauty of it.”

Martin - Evicted after nearly three days on the wooden tower.

On Monday November 28, 700 police, 200 bailiffs and 400 security guards surged in to Claremont Road, East London and spent the next four days and £2 million evicting one of the most imaginative political protests of modern times.

Whilst the No M11 Campaign didn’t stop the £240 million link road from carving its way through Leytonstone, it did play a major part in forcing the environmental implications of road building onto the national political agenda. More than that, it also showed a nation disillusioned with political accountability, that they can come together to protest in a *significant* way.

“They did one eviction previously that we hadn’t been warned about so we were frightened by surprise things,” recalls Phil. “But we knew it was gonna happen this time when we did get all the confirmations. In the beginning I hadn’t expected so many people but obviously they got the feeling. Because we knew, somehow it seeped out that this one was for sure - so we had about 400 people there at the beginning and the tension was just unbelievable.”

Alison was one of several protesters, watching the arrival of the eviction force from a 100 ft high scaffolding tower, specially built to resist the eviction.

“They just surged down the street and there was all these helmets and uniforms pushing everybody out and it was kind of scary at first. Most of the time you feel completely disempowered when you’re faced with loads and loads of police, but we had a sound system at the top of the tower and it was playing ‘Music for a Jilted Generation’ by The Prodigy. It made it seem that it was *our* eviction. We couldn’t control what happened but we had complete control of the sound. The music took everything over, raised everyone’s spirits and kept everybody together.”

Phil was also watching the arrival from the scaffolding tower, dancing as the diggers droned:

“It was two’o’clock and the time was ticking. We had music

playing on top of the tower, blaring out full volume. We were all raving when the police cars came round the corner and filled up all of Grove Green Road - completely packed. Suddenly loads and loads of these blue helmets surged in, moving everyone off the street.”

One of the first things the Police did, was to cut off the electricity to the street in order to silence the music. Twenty minutes later however, and much to the puzzled annoyance of the police, the sound system came back on courtesy of an underground electricity source. Code-named ‘Vicki’, a specially prepared tunnel stretched out beyond the police cordon and for many more hours, provided both a food supply and a power line; pumping the music and morale of those resisting the riot squad. “It made it all quite euphoric,” says Maxine of the music and the atmosphere. She was lying locked-on to the road itself as the eviction force flooded in:



pen & ink: Jimmy Johns

““We didn’t realise how many of them there were. We thought there was gonna be about a couple of hundred, maybe equally matched with the number of protesters. I was lying there reading the newspaper actually - trying to be as cool as possible. They just walked on me cause they didn’t really see where I was. The house in front of me was crumbling, so somebody had put up some scaffolding. They removed that as soon as they arrived, even though they knew that was the situation. I started to get worried when after 2 hours of being there, they moved out all the media and legal observers. “

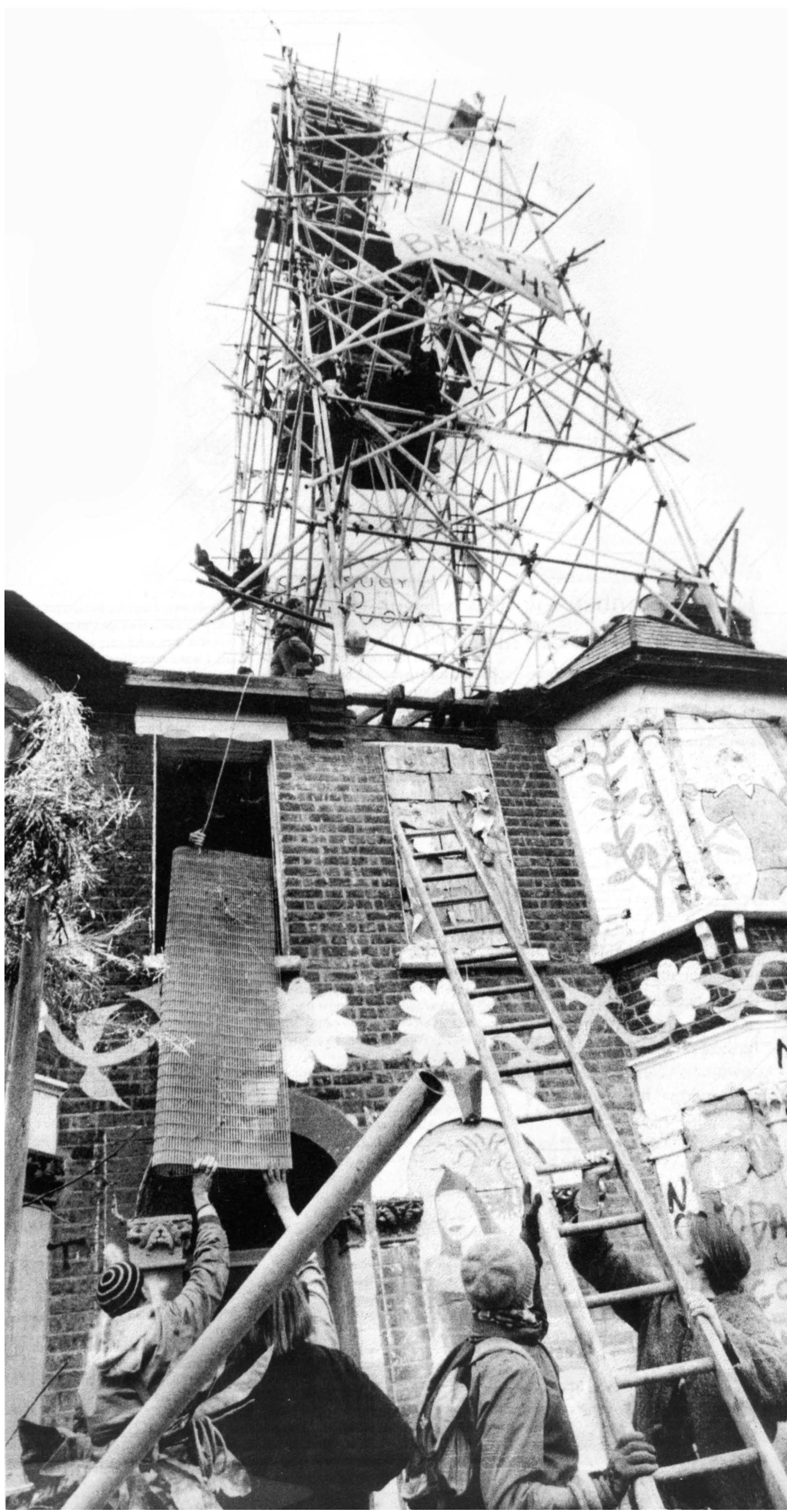
Having lived in the area for much of her life, Maxine had very definite reasons for locking her arm into a specially prepared tube, sunk into the road itself.

“It was very upsetting for me when the Green was bulldozed. I used to stand there to get the bus to school. It’s a really poor area, there’s no money getting pumped into to rejuvenate it. There’s nothing for young people to do around here - it’s a really stifling place. They could have given £20 million to the area to rejuvenate it but then there’s this road costing over £200 million, just for commuters to drive more cars into the city - more pollution, more children get asthma, more people get generally unhealthy. The No M11 Campaign was brilliant. The way they secured those houses was like a fortress. I could not believe there was people underneath the houses with rubble on top of them - so brave.”

The diversity of techniques developed to resist the eviction of Claremont was a striking example of the inventive possibilities of non-violent direct action. There were protesters locked into the road with strapping, protesters sealed into the basements of the condemned houses and protesters dangling in netting stretched across almost the entire length of the road. Every tree in the arboreal line that separated the road from the tube track supported a tree-house packed with locked-on protesters. The roofs of the houses were crammed, as were the wooden tower on the top of No 15 and the 100 ft scaffolding tower that was later to become the last refuge.

Lock-ons have become an evolved feature of non-violent direct action, reaching an advanced development on the No M11 Campaign. Using hand strapping devices known as ‘Karabiners’, it is possible to lock your hand to a metal rod at the end of a sunken tube. Only the locked-on person is able to unlock themselves, leaving the bailiffs and police powerless to remove them, other than by drilling into the tarmac or concrete. Some protesters locked into the ground through obstacles such as mattresses, corrugated iron and steel plates, rendering their removal even more difficult. From his position on

continued →





the wooden tower, Martin could see the ground lock-ons lying amid the throng of riot police, bailiffs and security guards.

“The ground lock-ons were the most lonely and unglamorous because no-one can help you. You’re down there on your own and they’re standing above you and can do what the fuck they want.”

By the time the police arrived at 2.20pm, Maxine had already been lying

locked to the road for 3 1/2 hours.

“I was dying for a piss,” she recalls. “But I held it in.

“When they first arrived the police tried to get us out but we said we are physically attached to the road and you can’t pull us out. Then I got this dust in my face which everyone in the tree-house opposite me later said looked on purpose. Then I got hit round the head with something - I don’t know what it was but I had a massive lump on the back of my head. The security

guards were laughing but the police said ‘oh are you alright?’, but I don’t know if they were very sympathetic at all. I was eventually dug out with a pneumatic drill at around 8pm on Monday. - I felt woozy but I decided not to go to hospital. The next day I was sick and went to the hospital, they said it was concussion.”

Martin spent the days of eviction either on the roof of a condemned house with his head in a noose, or perched on top of the wooden tower:

“For the noose they did a special operation,” he recalls. “A cherry-picker went to one part of the house and everybody went over to that part and they sneaked round and took the noose. It was a big success for them when they cut the noose off - they really believed someone was gonna do it.”

One of the highly effective and ingenious resistance techniques was the use of rope-netting stretched from the roofs of the condemned houses across the road to the tree-houses.

“The nets were a major success,” recalls Martin. “Supplies were coming in and people could go up and down the whole street on the nets. They can’t cut you from underneath the net unless they actually grab hold of you. They were chasing Kie around the nets for hours. He was dancing round like a fly - it was brilliant. When they actually got hold of him they not only cuffed him but they had a policeman on each foot and put a bag over his head. We’ve actually got that on film thank god.

“The nets connected everything, we started losing when the nets went - we were suddenly individuals not connected up.”

Eddie arrived at Claremont Road only a few days before the final eviction and found himself spending

two cold nights in the nets.

“This is all a new scene to me, I came down on Thursday just to help out - just to observe. I do a lot of rock climbing and I asked if they wanted rock-climbers to go up the scaffolding. But they said there was too many people on the tower so I stayed on the nets.

“I didn’t move out of the net for 2 days. I had only a T-shirt and a jumper on, so I caught mild hypothermia and was vomiting. A policeman come up to me and asked for two minutes of my time. I said OK fair enough, I’ll listen but I’m not gonna take any notice. I said the only way you’re gonna get me off this is if you explain to one of the organisers - one of the persons I really respect. If they tell me to get off the nets then I’ll get off the nets. They explained it to a guy I knew and he told me to get off the nets. They escorted me off and the first thing I did was find a fire.”

“At night, after all the press and media had gone away, the bailiffs started cutting the nets with people on them,” recalls Phil. “It was a really dodgy thing ‘cos obviously the protesters had to be close enough so that the bailiffs wouldn’t cut the net but if they were too close, the bailiffs would start nabbing them. I saw one really hairy moment when they cut the net and someone fell but just managed to grab the net again.”

Most of the protesters held their breath however, when one girl fell through the net and into a crumpled and motionless heap on the tarmac.

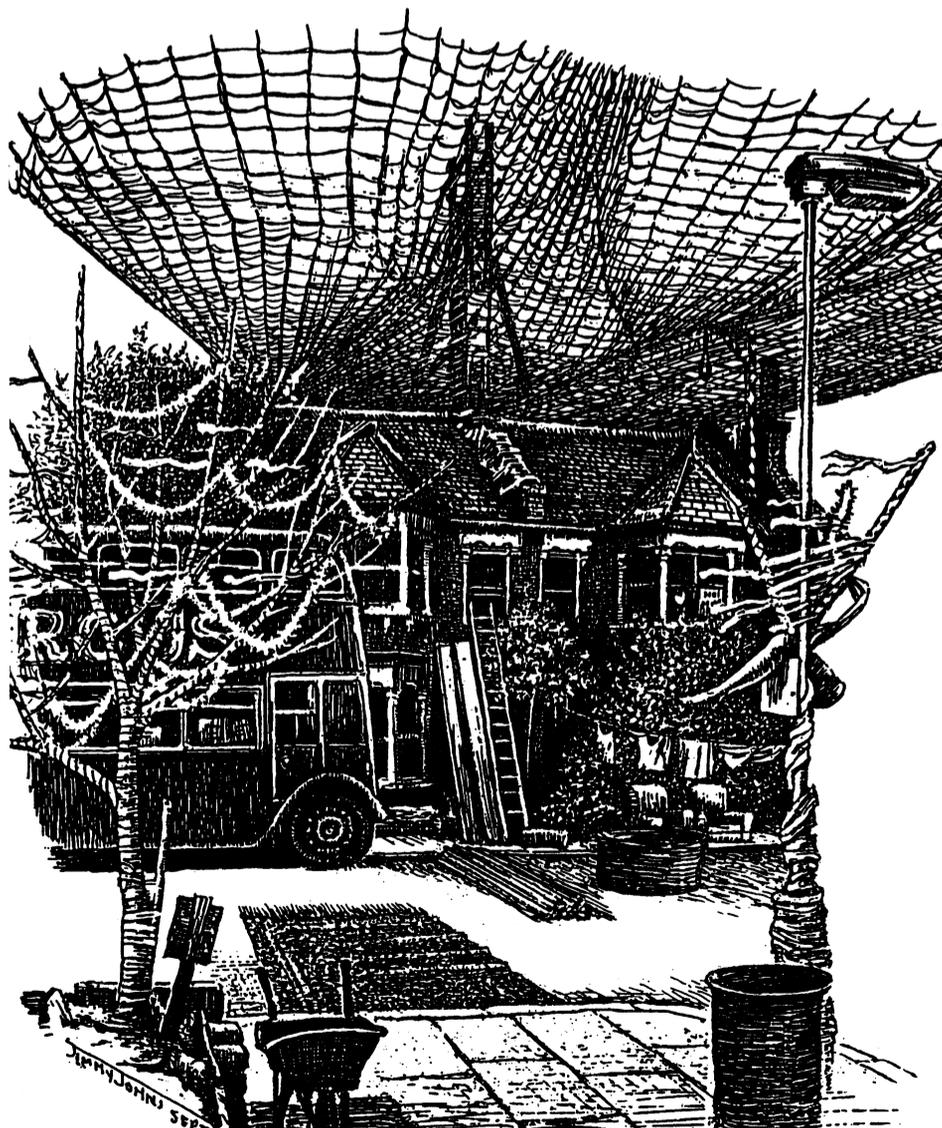
“They ripped a hole in the nets and a girl was falling through,” recalls Maxine from her road lock-on position by the first house. “They were trying to grab hold of her, so she put her feet on the digger and everyone shouted for the digger to stop. It didn’t stop so she fell right onto the floor and I thought she was badly hurt.”

Fortunately she recovered later, with bruising her only injury.

“When she fell out of the netting, people started to get very scared,” continues Maxine. “It just looked like danger demolition - looked like they did not give a shit how they were gonna get people out as long as they got people out. I mean they didn’t get a stretcher for her, they just carried her out. It was like ‘let’s just get rid of these people’.”

For Martin, the final showdown came on the wooden tower built on top of No 15 Claremont Road, the house lived in for ten years by Mick.

“In the end there was 6 of us left on the tower locked-on to the wooden tower. It was Mick’s house and because Mick had lived there for ten years and was on the roof with us - he was hardcore. The sheriffs had to draw straws who was gonna have to take that house. They went from being really violent and aggressive people and then seeing that all we could do was resist - we weren’t gonna hurt them. They had these Stanley knives to cut the



pen & ink: Jimmy Johns

strapping and they dragged me off.

“On the way down in the cherry-picker they both went ‘Respect - you lost but due respect. We’ve never had to do anything like this before.’ - absolutely phenomenal.

“They were gonna give me a hiding ten minutes before, that is the power of the whole thing to change people. They’re just tools of the state and they were scared - up to that point they thought we were gonna give them a good kicking and throw bricks on their head and all that. We looked them straight in the eyes and we said it’s not personal - that is the important thing - it’s not personal. Up to that point because they were scared as well, it was personal with them. But they were just one ideal and we were another ideal and all we could do was hang on for dear life, then they sort of chilled out. We’re training them; they’re learning from us.”

The availability of hot food and tea during the days of the eviction proved essential to the continuing moral and internal warmth of the protesters. Over in Mick’s house an open fire was kept going, to which a number of the protesters flocked as a respite from the freezing nights. The Jazz Cafe, a previously permanent and communal feature of Claremont Road, also made a heroic reappearance.

“During the day I tended to be up the tower because we were worried about them sending up a crack team of climbers when no-one was really guarding it,” recalls Phil. “By Tuesday evening I relaxed a bit. It was brilliant, I’d come down, wander along the roofs and help Keith set up the Cafe on the roof of the flat house. He was making beans on toast and cups of tea for people! Then I’d wander over the nets to Mick’s house and sit down in front of the good fire they had going in there. Then I’d wander over the nets to the tree-house for a chat.”

For many people the plate of beans on toast, the hot cups of tea and the very existence of the cafe were warming features of a cold siege, and fuel for perseverance.

“One thing I realise in retrospect was that all the effort we put into building towers, bunkers and the most insanely complicated barricades - if we had spent a tenth of that time organising blankets, loads of food, thermos flasks and gas stoves, we could have had people up there for ages,” observes Phil. “A lot of people went down in the night just because they were shivering to death.”

By Wednesday night the roofs had all been cleared. Only the scaffolding tower remained, smeared with grease and illuminated by powerful halogen floodlights; a formidable monument to resistance and visible from all the surrounding police road blocks. Most of the arrests made during the eviction were of people who were trying to break back into the site in order to get provisions to the remaining protesters. Throughout the course of the eviction, a radius of about



a half mile round Claremont Road resembled a full on military operation, with the press photographers kept in a small ‘sheep’ pen across the tracks and away from the thick of the action. Road blocks were heavily manned and the tube track lined with riot police, illuminated at night by passing trains but otherwise lying quietly in wait for any would be cordon-breakers. The large graveyard on the other side of the tube tracks was full of shadows; sealed off by police and patrolled constantly with torches off. Chief Inspectors warmed themselves by fires throughout the night, whilst hundreds of hard hatted security guards milled around smoking,

all dramatically illuminated by powerful floodlights. From beyond the heavily manned police road blocks, evicted protesters and late arrivals shouted support to those still on the tower after over three days of eviction.

“There was loads of support from people cheering across the road - ‘Power to the Tower - Power to the Tower’. It was brilliant,” says Phil recalling the morale boost.

Alison had been up the tower for almost the entire course of the eviction, only coming down twice in the night to visit the fire at Keith’s roof-top cafe, and to speak to people still left on the

roofs. Once everyone else had been evicted from the site, she, Phil and five others, were left to hold the tower:

“First of all they came up and said ‘There’s a really bad weather front coming in. We think its dangerous and you ought to come down,’ she recalls. “So we radioed base on the CB and they said it’s a load of bollocks. Then they came up again and said ‘This is a scaffolding expert and he says your tower is leaning by 13 degrees - so we figure its really dangerous and you’d better come down’. But that was a load of bollocks too, ‘cos compared to the block of flats over the road, the poles

continued →





were straight. Then they came up and said 'Right we're gonna evict you using minimum required force'."

The bailiffs and security guards decided that they didn't want to have anything to do with dangling 100 ft up in the air trying to remove people from the tower, so the cherry-picker boom arms that stretched up to the protesters, were full of police.

"We had this big thick chain that Greenpeace had paid for, and we chained ourselves to each other and to the scaffolding," continues Alison. "They came up with these bolt croppers and they didn't touch the chain. Then they came up with these big hydraulic bolt croppers and we sat there looking really smug, thinking this is a really big chain, it cost a couple of hundred quid - they're never gonna get through it, but they did. We weren't really expecting it to be that easy for them. They tied a bit of rope to me and I kept untying it; all I could do was hold onto the scaffolding poles. The policeman said 'You said

you wouldn't resist, I'm gonna put quick cuffs on you and it's gonna hurt'. Then they sat on me and I didn't really have much of a chance. They put me in the cherry-picker and sat on me all the way down."

A large number of the protesters evicted and brought out of Claremont Road report being photographed or filmed by the Police. Many of these were given a notice not to return to the area and asked for their names and addresses, including Alison:

"I could see they were doing it to everybody from when I was up the tower watching everything, so when I got down I covered my face. I could see through my fingers that there was a police photographer on Claremont Road and then they led me to the junction of Grove Green Road and Claremont Road where there were a couple of police with a video camera set up on a tripod. They were filming me even though I had my hands over my face. They had no right to be asking us - I told them my

name was Norma Leven-Link and my address was 66, Claremont Road."

After Alison and five others were removed from the tower, Phil, who had elected not to lock-on, was left sidling around the edges; balancing on the scaffolding poles 100 ft up and moving whenever the mechanical boom arms swung near.

"It was about 1-2pm on Thursday afternoon when the last people went down. I didn't have any water because after they got the last person they tipped it all away. Then they went through all the stuff on the tower and started moving that. I managed to get three blankets and move to the top. For some reason they took everything else down off the tower and left a saw. There were some spare bits of wood that were used to barricade the tower so I cut them up to keep myself warm and made myself a coffin-like thing; tied it all up with ropes, laid some planks over the top and slept in that. It was a bit too small and my feet poked out the end and got really cold but it was OK - I had a warmer nights sleep that some of the people who had been in the tower before.

"There was a police negotiator coming up in a cherry-picker to see if I was alright and to let me know that he had my best interests at heart - looking at me constantly in the eyes and speaking in a most sincere way, saying that it was my well being, and 'you know it's very dangerous' and 'I'm concerned for your safety Phil'. I was in fact calling myself Mike Link cause then we get mail arriving at Claremont Road for M Link, but he found out I was Phil.

"Basically the whole thing was a sleep deprivation exercise. I was sleeping quite soundly actually but he was hassling me all night, coming up to see if I was alright.

"At dawn I was asleep in my coffin and the whole tower started shaking. I lifted up a couple of wooden slats in front of my face and suddenly the police were on me and they had me. It was the same police who had been really matey the day before and now they were saying - 'You move and you're fucking....' They were really

aggressive as they put cuffs on me and then they suddenly switched back, smiling and saying 'We're friends again now - Were you cold over night? - Did you have enough blankets?'. It came out in the press that I had voluntarily left the tower at 7 am but it must have been a police press release 'cos I didn't volunteer."

That extra night on the scaffolding tower cost another £500 000 of eviction time, pushing the total cost of the eviction to £2 million and the total cost of evicting all the No M11 protest occupations to £6 million.

The aim according to Maxine was always to "make it as expensive as possible to build the road", acknowledging that the only place that the DoT and the Government have any remnants of feeling, is in their wallets and bank accounts.

"The road's costing over £200 million and it's unnecessary. I personally think it's justifiable that people can go out and protest. People have said 'Look I'm sorry but I'm not taking this anymore.'"

"Direct action is a theatre," observed Phil after a long recovery sleep. "The media like that. A mixture of symbols and real decision making - wars and celebrities - they flip back and forward - they drop interest really quickly. Direct action is totally direct; it's real and not just mediated politics. The agreement on non-violence is ritualised. It's like a performance everyone knows they're gonna get evicted, everyone knew that we're not gonna stop them building the road at this point. It is a form of ritual but at the same time it's completely real."

"It is a massive force to be reckoned with," adds Alison. "The trouble is convincing people that everyone of them counts. One of the biggest things a campaign like this can achieve is getting individual people involved in the empowering experience of non-violent direct action and that changes them and their attitude to everything they come up against in life."

It is certainly the case with Eddie, despite the hypothermia and vomiting he suffered after two nights in the nets.

"Now I've seen the energy and how fantastic these people here are, you'll see a lot more of me," he says. "I've no longer got my van, I sold it last Sunday night - you know pollution and that, but I'm still mobile - I've got my bicycle. I'm not a political person never will be, but there's a road protest in Preston I fancy going to."

The 500 protesters that resisted the eviction of Claremont Road last December, helped give back a stolen significance to ethical and environmental voices. With passion, commitment, inventiveness and just cause, the No M11 Campaigners fought for our right to breathe; both with our lungs and our social concerns.



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AND HERE IS THE NEWS...

'Undercurrents 2' is the Small World collective's second selection of video footage from campaigns around the country. As well as corking coverage of key anti-Criminal Justice Bill/Act actions this issue brings news from protests as wide-ranging as a campaign to stop a golf course being built on common land in Hampshire, and worldwide demonstrations against World Bank projects and their appalling ramifications for the poor they are supposed to help.

Delight, resignation, horror, anger, empowerment: its all here. The magazine format makes it ideal for watching in instalments but you're unlikely to switch off half way through. Some of the footage is incredibly emotive, particularly images of the brave and dedicated fights for Solsbury Hill and Claremont Road and the shots of protesters facing out private security firm jobs in 'Unreasonable Force'.

The 'Street News' item includes coverage of the Twyford Down mass trespass, the anti-M77 blockade of Tarmac's offices in Glasgow, disabled activists demonstrating at the Tate Gallery and a lovely piece on 'ethical shoplifting' in Norwich where demonstrators took mahogany products from Jewsons and handed them over to the police for investigation, reporting them stolen from the indigenous peoples' of the Brazilian

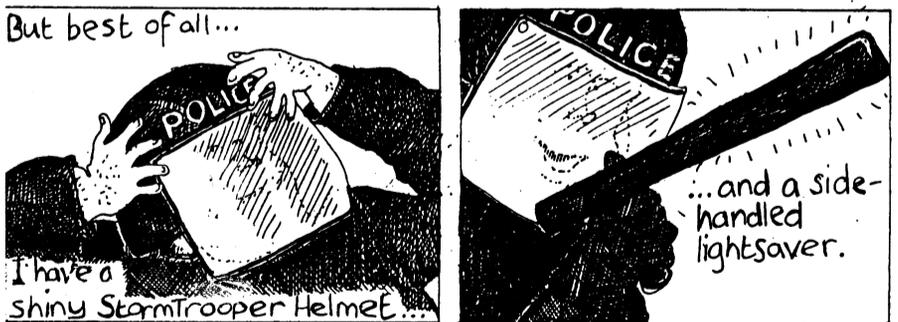
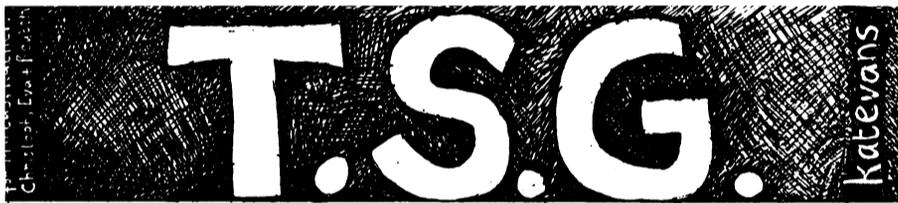
rainforest.

This really is unobtrusive (as unobtrusive as a camera can be) and sensitive reporting. Those being filmed are allowed to tell their story and witty editing (check out the brilliant use of cheesy ads in 'Washes Whiter'), apt music and good information combine to leave you oh so glad that someone is out there doing this.

By the end of the 112 minute vid a feeling of exhaustion is replaced by a desire to do something. If you find yourself screaming at television news for what it does and doesn't cover, if you wonder why the tv media agenda is so narrow and predictable, then this is your news.

If you would like a copy of Undercurrents 2 then contact Small World at the address shown below.

Small World is a non-profit making organisation committed to supporting campaign groups working on environmental and social issues. If you have a news story that you want others to hear about, grab a camcorder, film it, and send the footage to SMALL WORLD, 1a Waterlow Road, London N19 5NJ. Tel: 0171 272 5255.



Under Cover of Eviction

Sexual harassment of female protesters is an issue too often ignored or obscured in the battles for justice. **Debbie Shaw** lifts the lid on those security guards and private stewards who believe that female protesters are 'asking for it'.

Women involved in direct action have been the focus for acts of violence and sexual harassment that, in other circumstances, would have resulted in prosecution. But, due to lack of witnesses and the problems of identifying which of any number of security guards (most visibly, Group 4 and Reliance Security personnel) have actually been involved, requests for legal aid have been denied on the basis that a successful prosecution is unlikely.

Rebecca Lush, herself the victim of a violent assault, cites cases at Twyford Down, Solsbury Hill, and the M-11 and M-3 construction sites: "This is something that happens daily on every single site where women take direct action. Some of the guards take a great deal of pleasure in trying to degrade you."

Women have been the victims of everything from sexist language and gestures to actual violent assaults. Pob, who was evicted from a bender site on the route of the M-11 in Leytonstone, describes being separated from her friends, thrown

into a bed of stinging nettles and held down while her dungarees were ripped in an attempt to pull them down. "One of the men started to put his hands down my trousers. My friends were up a tree and couldn't see me. They shouted to ask if I was OK and the guards shouted back that they would 'take care of me'. Their manner was insidiously horrible."

Sexual harassment, Pob says, takes a lot of forms and while violent assaults are difficult to prosecute, humiliating comments and gestures offer even less possibility of redress. As Rebecca points out: "Quite often women are embarrassed to talk about it."

A society which sanctions the criminalisation of lifestyles gives implicit licence to this sort of activity by creating situations in which thugs and bullies can come to be seen as representing the forces of law and order, fighting a border war against dangerous dissidents. For centuries, the violation of women's bodies has been implicitly condoned in times of war (witness

the recent mass rape of women in former Yugoslavia). It doesn't take too great a leap of the imagination to understand these assaults to be 'perks of the job' for security guards playing at soldiers, with protesters identified as the enemy. While male protesters have also been victims of violence, it is the particular sexual nature of the assaults on women which makes such a comparison relevant.

The Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA) cites numerous cases where women have been specifically targeted, including one incident in which a six-strong gang tried to drag a woman into a woodland boasting loudly that they were going to gangrape her. The HSA publication 'Thugs, Wreckers and Bullies' also details cases where women, like Pob, have been sexually molested while pinned to the ground on the pretext that they are being searched for weapons. This appears to be a common tactic, even though, as the HSA points out in their report to a Home Affairs Select Committee looking into the case for Government controls on the private security industry, searching a person without prior authority is an offence, even for a police officer.

The humiliating nature of these assaults, verbal as well as physical, ensures that the victims are reluctant to come forward and report what has happened. This has the unfortunate effect of confirming women's bodies as legitimate targets. If no-one complains, then it is assumed that women who take part in direct action are somehow 'asking for it' and those who do complain can be singled out as isolated incidents.

Since complaints against them, Group 4 and Reliance have supplied their guards with identity badges but this does not alleviate the problem of needing corroboration to secure a prosecution. Rebecca's case, for example, was taken up by the police but dropped due to lack of evidence. The reason given for the refusal of legal aid, in all these cases, is that, without witnesses, the case has little chance of success. Pob was suddenly released by her captors when one of her friends appeared at the entrance to the site and Rebecca concurs that such assaults "usually happen when women are alone and there is no-one around to witness it".

Both Liberty and the HSA, in their reports to the Home Affairs Select Committee, have described cases of sexual assault as examples of the type of violence meted out to peaceful protesters by employees of private security firms. Both make recommendations for the regulation of the industry and the implementation of procedures to ensure the accountability of all individuals used in the policing of protest sites.

Women who are prepared to talk about their experiences give examples such as their shirts being lifted and their breasts exposed when being hauled off the top of diggers. Group 4 are unsurprisingly cagey about revealing whether their employees are issued with any guidelines with regard to how women specifically should be handled in these situations. The fact also remains that, even were security firms made to be answerable to a governing body or, as Liberty suggests, banned from policing sites where their accountability cannot be regulated, this does not prevent the Hunts, for instance, employing unaccountable individuals as unofficial stewards who they can then deny knowledge of. The problem again becomes one of finding corroborating witnesses to any attack. If even violent assaults cannot be proved, then what possibility do women have of effectively complaining against insidious sexual harassment?

Although reports in the national press have given some coverage to attacks on women, these less visible assaults tend to be obscured behind more sensational broken bones and bloody noses. As Rebecca emphasises: "This is really a major problem that is not talked about enough." It is a problem that needs to be separated from the wider debate about state regulation of the private security industry and discussed on the basis of women's rights to take part in peaceful protest without feeling that they are liable to the type of attacks which leave them embarrassed into silence. In a climate in which Universities, for example, are becoming increasingly sensitive to the implications of sexual gestures and suggestive language, it is an outrage that women who are exercising their lawful right to protest should be made to feel powerless to act in their own defence. However, as Rebecca makes clear, this will never stop women from taking part in action. The insecurity which compels some men to prove their masculinity by attacking women can be used against them. Women in numbers are a force to be reckoned with. As Rebecca concludes: "We just have to look after each other and stick together."



Support or Coercion for the Mentally Ill?

The long-term policy of closing old mental hospitals and enabling people to live in the community is now well advanced. Many young people, even those with severe problems, have never had more than short spells in hospital and are consequently less institutionalised and more independent than they would have been in the past. The policy has its problems but overall it represents an increase in freedom and opportunity for those regarded as mentally ill.

As always, the support services for people living in the community are inadequate and under-resourced, many people are suffering as a result. This has led to a reaction, particularly from the Tory right, attacking the whole idea of care in the community with some going as far as to call for a return to the old hospital-based regimes.

At the same time a small number of highly publicised violent incidents have been used to create an atmosphere of panic in the press and in government. We are told that community care is leaving dangerous and disordered people on the loose; unsupported and unsupervised.

The overall effect is to drive a greater wedge between "them"; the mentally ill, and "us"; the law-abiding fearful public. The old hospital system reinforced the idea that mental illness was an irreversible condition and that the best thing to do with lunatics was to separate them from decent people and control them by force. The same attitude has been adopted with regard to squatters, travellers and ravers; isolate them, force them to conform or lock them up.

Fortunately the Tories don't have the option of returning to the old hospital system; the changes are too far advanced for that and many old hospitals are already closed and sold off. Nor are they prepared to significantly increase the funding for community care, which is an obvious answer to the problem, simply giving people the support that they need.

Instead the Government are pandering to prejudice by introducing a new policy of supervision in the community.

The first stage of this is Supervision Registers. Already in place in most areas, the register is a list, maintained by the local health authority or health trust, of those users of mental health services judged most likely to harm themselves or others. The registers have been hurriedly introduced by the Government without any legislation to back them up - although this is on its way. At present local health authorities could decide not to implement the policy but only a handful have done so.

The Register has been opposed by User groups and by mental health campaigns such as MIND. The new policy is at fault in a number of fundamental ways:

* the criteria for inclusion are vague and will be open to wide interpretation from one region to another.

* the decision to register is the responsibility of a consultant psychiatrist alone.

* there is no right of appeal to an independent body.

At the same time as introducing the Criminal Justice Act, the Government is planning legislation on mental health, similarly restricting individual rights and targeting a group already disadvantaged and discriminated against.

by Andy Porter

* it is unclear how widely information on the Register will be circulated.

* there are no additional resources available for operating the registers and there is no guarantee that people who are registered will get the services they need.

Even the Royal College of Psychiatrists have criticised the new registers, largely on the grounds that they will be completely ineffective. In some areas the Register exists but psychiatrists are not putting any names on it. Users of services are anxious that the registers will increase prejudice and stigma and create a small group targeted as the really mad and dangerous ones. Registration will be solely on the basis of a psychiatrist's judgement, no actual crime or act of violence needs to have been committed. How long before employers, insurance companies and other

agencies start asking applicants: "Are you, or have you ever been, on a supervision register?" A new and permanent form of social control will have been introduced.

Inclusion on the Register is already seen by users of mental health services as a coercive and negative step based on an arbitrary decision which they have no real opportunity to challenge. There is a real fear that people will stop using services simply to avoid the risk of registration.

Worse still is a piece of legislation announced in the Queen's speech: Supervised Discharge Orders. Under this legislation some people will only be discharged from hospital if they agree to certain conditions; primarily continuing with medication.

At present, under the 1983 Mental Health Act, people can only have compulsory treatment if they are inpatients detained involuntarily under one of the Mental Health Acts on grounds of mental illness and significant risk to self or others,

The new legislation extends the state's control to people who are no longer subject to the terms of the Mental Health Act (that is as the Act currently stands. The legislation may take the form of an amendment to the Act). This is a profound and significant erosion of human rights. People who are well enough to be discharged from hospital will now have their right of choice concerning treatment denied.

In practice the legislation will be mostly applied to people diagnosed as schizophrenic or manic depressive and who are being prescribed major tranquillisers - for example chlorpromazine (also known as largactyl) and depixol. These are strong tranquillising drugs which suppress psychotic symptoms (delusions etc.) but also have proven short and long-term side effects which are damaging to health. These include parkinsonism and tardiv dyskinesia, a condition involving serious problems with muscular control leading to muscle spasms, shaking and other movement problems. The condition can be irreversible particularly if the drugs are taken long-term.

People with a history of psychotic experiences, like schizophrenia, at present have to make a difficult decision whether or not, and for how long, they take the medication, but at least it is their own decision. Only if they are acutely ill is the decision taken for them. It is a very different matter to impose this potentially harmful medication on people who are well enough to make a rational decision not to take it.

We all expect the right to choose whether or not to have medical treatment. This right is going to be denied to a small section of the population that already suffer from discrimination and prejudice. It is a cheap alternative to providing people with the care and support that they actually need.

Supervision registers and supervised discharge orders should be seen as another attack on our rights and opposed by us all.

Andy Porter is the Director of MIND in Brighton and Hove and is also an active campaigner against the Criminal Justice Act.

It is 10.15pm on a cold November night at the Rainbow Arts Centre in Kentish Town, London. In the cafe - a former hall of the church that has been squatted for the last two years - Equator is trying to explain the difficulties of coping with many of the area's homeless population attracted to its warmth and shelter.

Many have problems which Tor is loath to label. Our conversation is constantly interrupted by an elderly woman called Helen. She is chatty and warm, wearing what appears to be an evening gown with a fur wrap. She is insistent that we should be enjoying our tea.

Far from being impatient, Tor concentrates on tending to Helen's enquiries and needs. To her, people are people and any problems they have stems from isolation.

"Basically homeless people feel helpless because they don't have the support they need," she says. "They need to express themselves and this is a place where you can express yourself. Community holds people together, it tends to the isolation they've gone through.

"We've all been done over by things. The best way to help people is to help them realise themselves, to empower them to go out and do some good - not dwell in their own heads."

No-one is turned away from the Rainbow Centre. But nor are they allowed to take advantage of the community spirit.

"Anyone can come," says Phoenix. "But if they're violent or drunk they get told to go away for a few days and chill out before they come back. If they stay violent they get banned. If the Rainbow Tribe is not for them it's up to them to go and find something that suits them."

Forget Politics - Lets Talk Homes

Jim Paton, long-serving member of the Advisory Service for Squatter's and a housing activist for the last 30 years, kicks off a new series on the false housing myths behind which the politicians hide. Each issue's facile folly is accompanied by a look at positive solutions coming up from grass-roots level.

Facile Folly No. 1: Empty Properties.

There are 764,600 privately owned empty homes. That's a lot more than belong to councils (71,000) or housing associations (17,500) or the government (12,400). If only the owners could be forced or persuaded to rent them out, most homelessness could be solved.

Rubbish! This is not only Tory dogma (give landlords more 'incentives' and homelessness disappears), it is also curiously accepted by many concerned liberal-types who think they know about housing and homelessness. Trouble is - they don't.

Most homelessness is hidden. The only figures the government tries to collect are about homeless families and a few others in the 'priority need' housing category. This is what the media often puts requotes as the extent of British homelessness. It isn't. There are no reliable figures for how many single people are homeless, and the estimates are huge. It's very unlikely that even all of these private empties could come anywhere near to solving the problems.

Market Madness

Most of these houses are never going to be let anyway. Some are simply in the process of being sold; others are empty because people have had to move and can't sell, or else they've been repossessed by mortgage lenders who can't sell either. They are not likely to be rented, as doing so could mean missing a possible sale. Even if they get flogged at auction, it's often to speculators or developers. These houses are mired in an old English eccentricity, boosted by Thatcherism, that views houses as investments, rather than places to live.

Of course, there are still some places which *could* be rented - and certainly shouldn't be left standing empty while people are homeless. But where does that get us? Private renting is always short-term. Assured Shorthold Tenancies - virtually the only form of private letting used - usually lasts for six months or a year. That's less than experienced squatters often get, at least up to now. A big expansion in private renting might make an initial temporary dent in homelessness, but after that it would create as much as it solved. As tenancies run out, people lose their homes, often to be replaced by others able to pay more rent. 'Market mechanisms' in rented housing just crank up exploitation and evictions, creating a merry-go-round

that heads nowhere.

As soon as the market for selling houses picks up a bit, private renting turns into a big dipper. Gentrification becomes profitable again and tenants get tipped out in preference to dodgy 'development'; creating fewer homes for richer people. Anyway, the Government has just about removed private renting as an option for most homeless people, with the further restrictions on housing benefit announced in the last budget. Landlords have become more wary about letting to people on housing benefit than they were before. That includes low-paid workers, as well as people on Income Support etc. Most landlords just don't rent to such people full stop.

Short-Life Side Track

A marginally better idea - though only just - is what is called 'short-life' housing. It's a system which used to be called 'licensed squatting' and grew out of the squatting movement of the early '70s, when councils were eventually pressurised into legitimising squatting - at least to some extent. Short-life simply means getting permission from the owners to use their property temporarily. At the outset, squatters and homeless people were able to set up co-ops and negotiate short-life licenses with councils or other big bureaucracies; it was a reasonable means of self-help housing, even if it did involve compromises.

Nowadays, the scene is much more institutionalised. It's very unusual for new small co-ops to be able to get any short-life. It mostly goes to, or at least through, big housing associations. (Although the excellent work of Housing Action Zone in Luton¹, covered in SQUALL 8, is a rare exception to this, just going to prove that creating pressure by squatting can still get you what asking politely never does!)

These days, councils have very little empty property that they're willing to short-life, and often aren't involved. The focus is much more on private owners. That doesn't usually mean the one-off individuals who own most private empty homes, but commercial or institutional private owners, which is a much more limited pool. In London, the pool is rapidly being mopped up by short-life deals. The Empty Homes Agency² promotes a lot of these deals and can give advice about setting up short-life. Schemes by which housing associations offer to manage places on behalf of private landlords', amount to virtually the same thing under a different name.

There are two big drawbacks with short-life. Most of it is in very bad condition and you need money to make it officially habitable (although squatters could do it for very little). The Housing Corporation, one of the original quangos, dishes out government grants for such schemes which used to be called 'mini-HAG', but are now known as 'SHAG'. No, honest, the corridors of power weren't infiltrated by Anarchy in the UK's Smut Fest. The Corpy thought this one up all by themselves! Anyway, SHAG money is given only via big housing associations, who control the works and have to monitor the organisation actually using the places. The

wallydom, waste and delay this often leads to, is well described in the experience of Exodus's HAZ in SQUALL 8.

An even bigger drawback has been documented in reports by West Hampstead Housing Association³ and Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁴. When your short-life is up, there's often nowhere to go. Maybe there's another place for another year or so, maybe not. Only 15% of short-lifers whose homes are taken away get secure housing, about 65% get moved to more short-life and about 20% are left homeless. Short-life is stacked with people who have lived in this precarious way for up to 20 years, with no prospect of a secure home. It has much the same pressure and anxieties as squatting, but less control over your own circumstances. In the long term, it screws you up! More short-life without a route to a secure home is a dead end.

Sustainable Homes

We certainly shouldn't let homes - whoever owns them - stand empty and go to waste. But neither should we let the state get away with pretending that homelessness can be seriously reduced by it; 'legitimising' or 'rationalising' the process of filling the empties.

Whether it's the Tories 'stimulating the rented market' or Labour relying on the bureaucratic expansion of short-life, homelessness isn't going to be solved by yet more temporary housing, from which people get constantly moved on. We need sustainable homes. That means a secure place for as long as you want it; anything from a month to the rest of your life. It also means homes to fit the many different ways and households in which people actually live and to meet changing personal and social needs.

Sustainable homes can't be provided by private renting or short-life. Owner-occupation doesn't do the trick either, as the collapse of the housing market over the last seven years has proved. The Government has recently cut income support for people with mortgages. It never did more than stave off eviction for a year or so anyway, and now it'll come too little too late for thousands. "No job, no home" is not sustainable housing.

Even in 1991, Advisory Service for Squatters found that 5% of people seeking their advice were former owner-occupiers.

The only route to sustainable homes is by *building* a lot more of them with secure renting in mind. Does this mean bigger empires for arrogant housing associations and councils, as well as £millions in profits for Laing, Wimpey etc.? Does it mean thousands more brick boxes and swathes of greenfield land gobbled up for new estates? Not if we can stop it.

And not, as it happens, if the Tories can stop it either. Watch out for their new 'green' excuse for not building houses - as espoused recently by some backbench MPs. This ersatz greenness is based on an weaselling-out of responsibility and a failure of the imagination (or is it eyesight?).

Anti-facile antidotes: Let's Talk Homes

Building new homes for secure renting needn't mean concreting land or slinging up crap. It needn't be under the direct control of those very wonderful 'community' housing associations and democratic socialist councils we all love so much. Even building industry snouts can be kept away from the trough. What's the magic formula? There isn't one..... there's a few. The required magic is no more than hard graft - we can build them ourselves.

Although it's not the only show in town, the Walter Segal system is a self-build method which enables people to produce their own homes with virtually no skills. It's based on a timber construction design, in which all the components are renewable, producing good, well insulated houses with a life span of up to 300 years! It's ideal for sloping sites and odd bits of urban land unlikely to be usable for anything else. The Walter Segal Trust⁵ can tell you more about it.

Homes for Change⁶ in Manchester are a group building their own homes by higher-skilled methods, whilst cheap and easily-erected dome houses, built by homeless people in the USA, have had publicity lately. The Community Self-Build Agency⁷ can give information about the whole field of self-build.

But how can homeless people pay for self-build? The average giro doesn't stretch to land and building materials and much early self-build was done by people with money.

Tenant and Agency Services⁸ (formerly CHISL) have been able to tweak the Housing Corporation grant system to create a permanent self-build-for-rent scheme at about council rent levels, enabling people who have worked on the houses to be paid the value of their labour even if they leave later. They have an excellent leaflet explaining the scheme.

Of course, as with short-life, government grant systems involve some compromises and lots of bureaucracy and frustration, but it can be worth going for. A recent example of a group that pulled it off is Diggers' Co-op in Brighton, where they build Walter Segal houses with turf roofs and flowers.

But there are also alternatives to grappling with the state for grants. Radical Routes⁹ is a network of housing and worker co-ops committed to "alternatives in working, housing and education in order to take more control over our lives". They have helped groups set up their own co-ops without public funding and without being registered with the Housing Corporation. They have their own 'ethical investment' scheme which makes loans to member co-ops, raising over £100,000 in this way since 1992. They have a lot of expertise and can advise on several other ways of raising money. So far they don't have a presence in London, but are active in many other places. Have a look at their excellent booklets *How to Set Up a Housing Co-op* (£1.50) and *A Simple Way to Solve Homelessness* (50p), which explain how small co-ops can start off renting collectively (an improvement on the official short-life structure) and move on to buying permanent places - all paid for by housing benefit.

Then there's rural 'Low Impact' housing. SQUALL 8 covered what's going on at Tinkers Bubble and elsewhere in Somerset. Amazingly, folks there have got the District Council on their side and are within a whisker of getting the County Council to approve the principle of giving planning consents to 'low impact dwellings'.

Long-term places for travellers, benders, tepee sites and other ideas have so far only scratched the surface of what's possible. There's still a lot of scope for innovation in low-impact homes. (See 'Underground Houses' - page 41)

Could there be scope for low-impact housing in the cities? In a way, we have it already. A cardboard box or a bang is low-impact, isn't it? But we want better than that! Conceivably, with care and the right site we might develop from boxes and bangs to our own improvised but adequate, self-built homes, as is done in many cities all over the southern half of the planet. But such developments are unlikely here. In an urban area, anything like that is bound to be temporary, with the same drawbacks as short-life. The idea might be more relevant as a squatting or campaigning tactic than as an attempt at sustainable housing.

You've seen the statistics about empty homes, but have you ever seen figures for empty offices, pubs, shops and warehouses suitable for conversion to decent

housing? No, neither have I. Building homes ourselves includes turning such places *into* homes. Glass and concrete office blocks aren't usually suitable, but older offices are, as well as many other buildings. There's loads of this sort of property rotting away in London, and in other towns and cities it's even more abundant. Needs lots of dosh, of course; you have to buy the places to get security. That's where Radical Routes ideas come in handy and Homes for Change have looked into a scheme for using EC money. Their idea was to employ themselves as contractors to do the work and use the 'profit' to fund the non-housing half of a combined work and living scheme in an old warehouse. The project did not work in the particular warehouse they chose because of difficulties associated with the specific building they chose. However, the potentials for the idea are many.

All this is only small scale stuff, of course. At the present rate, ideas and projects like these are just as unlikely to crack homelessness as are 764,600 private empties.

But they *do* create sustainable housing that people can afford. Grass-roots ideas that work don't have to stay at the present level. They can catch on and spread, limited only by our energy and determination to make what we've got meet our needs and dreams.

Private empties, on the other hand, are finite, insufficient and unsustainable as either worthwhile or affordable homes. We're better off trusting ourselves. The state, whichever party runs it, isn't about to tackle homelessness seriously. If we don't do it, nobody will. If the state does contribute anything new, then we're going to have to show them how first.

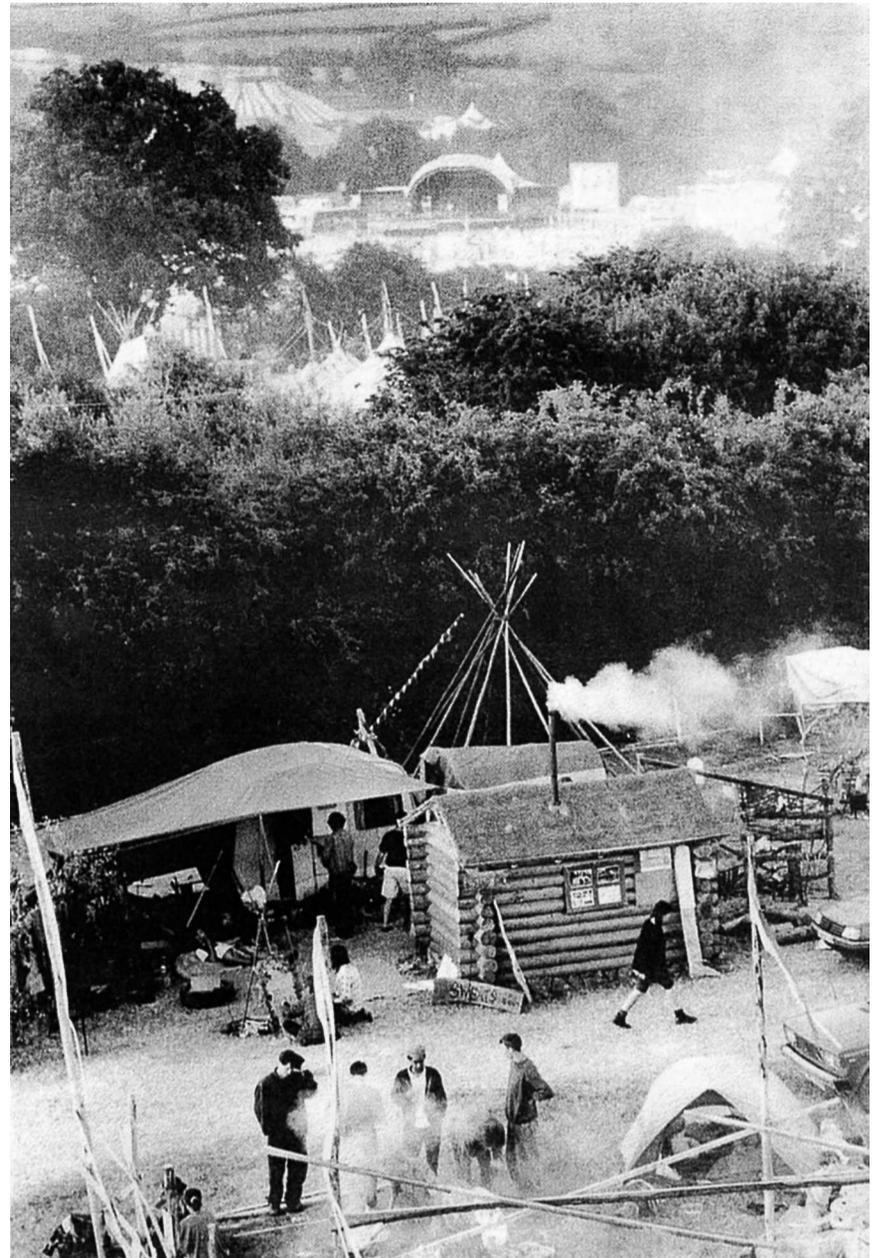
None of these ideas are easy. They all involve hard graft against many obstacles, over long periods of time, by committed groups of people; doubly difficult if you don't have a secure place to live in the meantime.

In lieu of immediate housing remember SQUATTING IS STILL LEGAL and it's staying legal despite the tightening grip of the Criminal Justice Act.

It can give you somewhere to live while you get a permanent idea together, and it has to be a step on the road in itself. As HAZ has shown in Luton, carefully planned squatting can put us on the map, build credibility, campaign for what we need, prove to ourselves what we can achieve, as well as creating cohesive organisation. HAZ aren't all the way to sustainable homes yet, but they're well down the road.

It's time to start thinking about *strategic* squatting - squatting on towards a long-term goal, rather than just the next eviction. The new laws won't make squatting a crime, but they *will* make evictions a lot easier and quicker. That means the most successful squatting in future is likely to be more collective and more strategic anyway.

The journey of a thousand miles can start with three people and a couple of pints. But if we get our



©

Working experiments in alternative housing

boots on next morning, start taking single steps, and keep at it, we've an excellent chance of making it home. If you get there before me, put the kettle on.

(1) Housing Action Zone - EXODUS, HAZ Manor, Bramingham Lane, Barton Road, Streatley, Luton LU3. Tel: Sam 01582 561 627.

(2) EMPTY HOMES AGENCY, 195, Victoria St., London SW1E 5NE. Tel: 0171 828 6288

(3) Short Life Housing, Long Term Homes - £7.50 from WEST HAMPSTEAD HOUSING ASSOCIATION, 2 Grangeway, London NW6 2BW

(4) Housing Research Findings No. 81 Free from JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION, 40, Water End, York, YO3 6LP. Tel: 0904 629 241

(5) WALTER SEGAL TRUST, 57, Chalton Street, London NW1 1HU. Tel: 0171 415 7092

(6) HOMES FOR A CHANGE (Manchester) TEL: 0161 232 9801

(7) COMMUNITY SELF-BUILD AGENCY, 40, Bowling Green Lane, London EC1R 0NE Tel: 0171 415 7092

(8) TENANT AND AGENCY SERVICES, 2-10, Belvedere Road, London SE19 2HL Tel: 0181 768 0890

(9) RADICAL ROUTES, C/O Common Ground, 24, South Road, Hockley, Birmingham B18 Tel: 0121 515 3524 or (for leaflets) 25A, Stanley Road, Whalley Range, Manchester M16 8HS



© Glenn Jenkins outside the boarded up Oakmore Hotel in Luton; one and a half years after the Exodus Collective were violently evicted by riot police

It's convoluted, it's devious and it's about to be publicly exposed. SQUALL investigates the latest underhand political manoeuvring, designed to halt the EXODUS and smother the public enquiry.

SQUALL readers may remember the articles published in the last issue, charting the embattled history and victories of inspirational community warriors - the Exodus Collective. Well, almost needless to say, the plot has thickened yet further since then.

We last left the story with Bedfordshire County Council's Policy and Resources Committee giving the go ahead for a £150,000 public enquiry into a multitude of strategic police operations with possible high level political involvement, designed to put an end to Exodus's progress. The enquiry was to be chaired by Michael Mansfield QC and all looked set for exposures galore. No surprise was it then, that the course of events became the subject of further political manoeuvres.

Only two weeks after the council's Policy and Resources Committee had given the go ahead for the public enquiry, the decision was reversed. The Conservative councillors on the committee had always been against a public enquiry, whereas the Labour councillors had mostly been in favour. When it came to the vote, the Lib-Dems made the difference and voted for the enquiry. Before implementation, however, the decision required ratification by a full council meeting.

In the two weeks that elapsed before this full meeting, it was the Lib-Dems who mysteriously changed their position. Councillor Liz Ledster, deputising as leader of the Lib-Dems, elected to table a motion suggesting that a complaint be made to the Police Complaints Authority (PCA) about the affair, instead of holding a public enquiry. As a result of this motion, the matter was referred to the council's Police Committee for a decision on whether to file such a complaint.

Council police committees are designed to liaise between the council and the local police force. They are made up of councillors from all three parties as well as local magistrates. Top level members of the local police force are also in attendance. The Police Complaints Authority (PCA) investigate allegations of misconduct against the police, but are made up entirely of the police themselves.

The Exodus Collective had always studiously avoided any complaints to the PCA for two main reasons. Firstly, they did not trust the police force to conduct an enquiry into their own operations against the Collective.

Secondly, Exodus knew that a complaint to the PCA would lead to an investigation dragging out for years, during which time the police would refuse to answer any questions put to them by journalists and councillors - 'the matter being the subject of an investigation'. Despite six named police operations against them, despite the collapse of a court case after the police were found to have planted ecstasy on a member of collective, and despite the collapse of 40 other charges levelled against them, Exodus decided not to make a complaint to the PCA.

Imagine the exasperation of the Collective when the public enquiry was taken away from under their noses and a council complaint to the PCA offered instead.

Under an obscure section of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the council's Police Committee have the power to file such a complaint to the PCA. It is a piece of legislative knowledge that Exodus say Liz Ledster is unlikely to have known about; without assistance that is.

After being questioned by both a journalist and members of the Collective, Liz Ledster revealed that in the week prior to changing the Lib-Dem position on the enquiry, she visited the Home Office in London and had a meeting with Sir Leonard Peach, chairman of the Police Complaints Authority, at a seminar in Olympia in London. She claimed the meetings were short and insubstantial but the implications suggest otherwise.

"Liz is actually alright as a person," says Glenn Jenkins, a spokesperson for Exodus. "But they used her, they manipulated her. We think she was asked to find another way and then given help to draft this new motion - calling for a PCA enquiry and thus avoiding the public enquiry. Liz got dragged into it - she thought she was

helping out."

The full public enquiry was to have investigated both the strategic and illegal police activities against the Collective, as well as the possible involvement of local politicians in helping engineer the attacks.

This latter part of the enquiry would not of course form part of any PCA investigation and yet the possible covert involvement of local politicians could be a vital link in the discovery of what went on behind the scenes.

The three local MPs are John "Banish all gypsies into the wilderness" Carlisle (Con MP-Luton North), Sir Nicholas Lyell - the Attorney General (Con MP-Bedfordshire Mid) and Graham Bright - parliamentary private secretary to the Prime Minister (Con MP - Luton South).

It was John Carlisle who spoke out against raves during the parliamentary debates on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, citing Exodus as a prime example of why the law needed to be tightened.

He actually met members of the Collective twice, but after "having sought legal counsel", refused to do so again, despite being their constituency MP.

It also seems increasingly evident that the Deputy Chief Constable of Bedfordshire, Michael O' Byrne, was the man behind the strategic planning of the six specific police operations (four of them begin with the letter A - Anatomy, Anchovy, Anagram, Ashanti - and two are unknown - see 'Riding the Blows' SQUALL Issue 8). This is the man who walks around with a sergeant-major's stick under his arm, having been trained in both strategic planning (Scotland Yard) and law (Kings College, London - called to the bar in 1978), before careering his way to the position

of Deputy Chief Constable after only 25 years in the force.

Meanwhile, a Labour councillor decided to file a separate complaint to the PCA concerning the perjury in court of an Inspector Elliot, the on-the-scene coordinator of several of the operations against Exodus.

One of the very few charges leading to an actual conviction of a member of the Collective, involved a statement from Elliot claiming that Glenn Jenkins, a high profile spokesperson from Exodus, had been involved in breaches of public order, after the Collective were violently evicted from a previously disused hotel at the beginning of 1993. Two other prominent members of the Collective had been similarly charged in the same incident, although their charges were later dropped.

Asked in court whether the police had deliberately targeted high profile members of Exodus for arrest, Elliot denied this, citing Jenkins as the only member of the Collective that he knew. However, in previous witness statements made by Inspector Elliot, concerning charges once again targeting the high profile Exodus members, he had claimed that he in fact knew several members of the Collective. As a result of these discrepancies, local councillor John Jefferson filed a perjury complaint to the PCA as an 'offended observer'.

Another councillor, Jim Thakordiin then asked the police why Jefferson's complaint had not appeared in the council's Police Committee documents. He was told by O'Byrne that: "Before deciding whether this allegation constituted a complaint, he had to decide the psychological and professional suitability of the person making the complaint".

"I wasn't sure whether he was saying I was mad or thick.... or both," says Cllr Jefferson. Deputy Chief Constable O'Byrne then said that Jefferson could not make the complaint because he was not the one against whom the offence had been made. O'Byrne sent documents concerning Jefferson's complaint to four members of the Lib-Dems, including Liz Ledster, in an apparent attempt to persuade her that the Police could handle its own investigations, so trying to stave off the Council's original decision to hold a full public enquiry.

"He actually leaked about 15 pages of personal correspondence in relation to the complaint, whilst the complaint was in progress," says Cllr Jefferson.

The leaking of the documents pertaining to Jefferson's complaint was in fact a reprehensible break in proper procedure, as PCA complaints are supposed to be personal between the complainant and the police.

"So I faxed a three page letter to county hall demanding his immediate suspension from duty," continues Jefferson. "And there I am sitting at County Hall and my mobile phone rings. I actually had to hold the phone two inches away from my ear because O'Byrne went on one saying; 'I'm fed up with your antics'. He carried on being generally abusive so I just pressed the off button and left him hanging in mid-air.

"My argument is that at that point he shouldn't have rang me anyway because

The Pharaoh's Men

Drowning Again

I had instigated complaints proceedings against him. As far as I could see he was trying to intimidate me."

Shortly afterwards, the Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Alan Dyer, met Lib-Dem councillor Liz Ledster outside a council meeting to tell her that by reading out O'Byrne's correspondence at a council meeting, she had got him into trouble. As a result, Deputy Chief Constable O'Byrne was required to appear before a disciplinary hearing on the matter, the result of which was a rather lame - 'there will be a tightening of procedure'; failing to acknowledge that O'Byrne had made a deliberate and improper attempt to apply political pressure on Ledster and the Lib-Dems, in order to engineer a vote against the public enquiry.

Not at all ironic is the fact that O'Byrne is in fact the officer in charge of police complaints in Bedfordshire.

"O'Byrne was actually turning up to Policy and Resources and full council meetings," says Cllr Jefferson. "Now, in all my time at the council, I've never known a senior officer to turn up to either."

Months went by with no word from the PCA's investigation into Inspector Elliot's perjury. In the meantime, and to no-one's surprise, Deputy Chief Constable O'Byrne began refusing to answer journalist's questions about the affair, on the basis of "no comment - subject to enquiry".

Meanwhile Tim Malyon, a freelance journalist and author of several articles on Exodus, rang the PCA to discover that Deputy Chief Constable O'Byrne had not filed the complaint at all. Prompted by being discovered, and with Jefferson demanding that the complaint be filed, O'Byrne then finally put the complaint through to the PCA and more months of waiting ensued.

John Jefferson then wrote to O'Byrne to find out what progress, if any, the investigation was making. O'Byrne told Jefferson that because the alleged perjury had occurred in a Magistrates court, there were no full transcripts available and therefore it was not possible to substantiate the complaint. However, knowing full well that there would be clerk-of-court's notes, as well as barristers and solicitors' notes of the case, Glenn Jenkins telephoned Birnbergs, Exodus' solicitors, and came up with a transcript within two hours. Deputy Chief Constable O'Byrne could not explain why, despite being both a trained lawyer and a detective, he had not been able to do the same.

Cambridgeshire Police Force have

now been given the responsibility for investigating the complaint and have accepted Birnbergs transcript as evidence. They say that the investigation will be concluded within the next 3-4 weeks.

This episode provided the Exodus Collective with the perfect example of why they had never wanted anything investigated by the PCA in the first place. It has been a hard slog even for such a small and easily investigated complaint.

"The complaint was actually made on February 10th 1994," observes Cllr Jefferson. "So it's going to have taken over 12 months to investigate it. It took from February to September before the file was even sent! The significance of that is the fact that O'Byrne leaked correspondence about the complaint before it had been filed and didn't file it until after the council's initial decision to hold a public enquiry."

The immanent result of the investigation into Jefferson's complaint also leads to the possibility that Glenn Jenkins' conviction will be overturned as a result of Inspector Elliot's perjury. The conviction, one of the very few police charges against Exodus not to be thrown out of court, was actually secured after two female scene-of-the-crime officers signed a statement, a staggering five months after the incident for which he was convicted, claiming that Jenkins had called them both "slags". He has always denied this

Meanwhile, the council Police Committee met in January to decide whether to refer the full investigation to the PCA. Glenn Jenkins made an application to speak to the Police Committee personally, an unusual request and not part of standard police committee procedure. Despite this however, a motion was passed by 13 votes to 8, allowing Jenkins to address the Committee.

Imagine the scene then as the council Police Committee, with Chief Constable Alan Dyer and Deputy Chief Constable Michael O'Byrne present throughout, listening to Glenn Jenkins chart the history and the evidence of the strategic police operations levelled against them, as well as the collapse in court of 40 charges against members of the Collective. John Jefferson also stood up and recounted the whole scenario of the PCA complaint against Inspector Elliot, citing it as a perfect example of the very reason why Exodus had no faith in the PCA to hold an accountable and fully investigated enquiry.

"There were audible gasps from the committee as they heard what had gone

on," says Cllr Jefferson. "Even Tory councillors, who were normally going 'oh it's that fucker Jefferson again'. Suddenly they're privately coming up to me afterwards and saying: 'Something's gone very wrong here. We don't agree with you 100%, but something needs to be done here and there are definitely questions that need to be answered.'"

With the public gallery packed with members of the Exodus Collective and much to the embarrassment of Deputy Chief Constable O'Byrne, the Police Committee decided *unanimously* not to refer the matter to the PCA after all, but to send it back to the full council meeting in order that they might once again consider a full public enquiry.

"A week before the Police Committee meeting, the local papers were trying to paint it like Exodus are trying to hammer the old bill," says Glenn Jenkins. "All the newspapers done a big spread on it without even talking to us. A full page and not a word - that's ethical journalism for you.

"'Exodus versus the police the battle resumes' was the headline. But the first thing I said to the Police Committee was that I'm not anti-police, I'm anti a particular type of police and that's what this enquiry is all about. I told them that my brother is a policeman and we all respect people that put themselves up in front of weaker people. Who can not respect that? But what we're talking about is an abuse of that position."

Whilst all this has been going on, Bedfordshire County Council's budget has been cut and it now looks possible that come March, when a Council decision on the Public Enquiry is expected, the money might not be available to fund it. The motion however, is to be put before the council in two parts. Part A says that the Council supports the public enquiry and part B says that they will fund it. It looks likely that the council will accept A but perhaps not B.

"This issue is so important about the method and nature of policing," says Glenn Jenkins. "We're confident of getting the enquiry no matter what."

One thing is certain, when the enquiry goes ahead there are more than one or two officials, previously arrogant in the surety of not being caught, who will be ending up with bad egg all over their face. Not least of these will be Deputy Chief Constable Michael O'Byrne, whose meteoric rise through the ranks is already rumoured to have been brought to a full stop, one step short of Chief Constable status, by the public exposure of his tactics.

WESTERN PROMISE?

The market forces a new revolution

“The raw capitalism which has captured Russia’s imagination will turn around the economy in 1995”.

So says Andrew Cowley of The Economist in the magazine’s perky publication ‘The World in 1995’. Of the 150 million imaginations he refers to, 20-30% of adults and nearer 40% of children live below the official poverty line. Now that’s raw capitalism.

Cowley quotes opinion polls showing that under 5% of Russians take an active interest in politics. Indeed low voter turnouts for local elections do indicate disillusionment with the country’s infant democratic process.

This is no surprise. The devolution of power within regions since the disintegration of the USSR has been haphazard and chaotic. Inflation is high and unemployment, the running sore of capitalism, is rising: 1 - 2 million currently (plus an estimated 4 - 7 million hidden unemployed). Benefits - at present hard to come by and, as a percentage of a person’s former wage, pathetically low against inflation - are hardly worth claiming.

As for housing, traditional, low-cost state provision is slowly disappearing as privatisation is sold to the people. The government claims that by Summer 1994 some 29% of the total housing stock consisted of private homes. This trend has slackened due to a complex privatisation process (particularly difficult in communal apartments) and, perhaps, as people realise that ownership means maintenance costs and property tax.

The number of empty properties in Russia is on the increase and set to grow further as private enterprise sinks its teeth into the property market and private companies and Russian mafias buy up buildings and begin playing that familiar speculator’s game; leaving homes to rot.

Which brings us neatly on to the homeless and the squatters. Research into Russian homelessness in English is sparse so Squall spoke to Dimitri, an ex-squatter from Moscow. He spoke of a “ridiculous housing

problem”, exacerbated by a massive and unpredicted influx of refugees since 1991, of perhaps as many as 200,000 people sleeping rough in Moscow. If you’re going to survive winters up to eight months long with temperatures as low as -20 degrees, ‘rough’, in Moscow, means underground. Dimitri described a sort of wintertime underground city in Moscow with basement squats connecting beneath the streets.

Staggeringly he estimates the number of hidden homeless, by British definitions, to be tens of millions simply because it has long been common practice for extended families to share rooms and for people to live communally in small spaces. Seventy percent of young couples are forced to spend their first year of marriage living in cramped conditions with parents and thus, almost inevitably, 40% of first year separations are attributed to housing difficulties or family rows. Accommodation problems are the most common grounds given for divorce.

Since 1986 up to 35,000 young people have been housed in MZhKs - Youth Housing Complex schemes - around 700 housing projects designed to help young people to build their own homes or renovate buildings. Despite this, at the beginning of the 1990s, an estimated 2.5 million young families were waiting for state housing. Two-thirds of these lived in hostels or shared rented accommodation. In other words, only one-tenth of young families had their ‘own’ place to live. At this time 70% of young people who changed their jobs did so because of their accommodation. Forty per cent of 15 and 16 year old students, forced to move to cities for compulsory secondary education, were living in hostel accommodation.

The homeless in Russia have absolutely no rights. They are treated as criminals. If you are stopped on the street without a ‘propiska’ (a residence permit required for major Russian cities) you can be arrested and automatically imprisoned for thirty days. Dimitri said that people arrested in this way have their hair cut short immediately (for easy identification on escape) and are jailed. Prison work, if

you agree to it, includes factory jobs or, more commonly, street cleaning. If you work you get a blanket and a cigarette ration, if you refuse, you are allowed nothing except one meal a day.

Squatting in Russia is a civil offence and occurs mainly in St Petersburg and Moscow with pockets in Siberia and in provincial Russian summer-houses or Dachas - which are squatted in the winter. Surprisingly, from October to April squatters cannot be evicted at all in law. Less surprisingly, illegal evictions do occur in these months especially if private business/Western companies’ projects are being impeded.

In addition to this safe period for squatters, another piece of bureaucracy seems to work in their favour. Demolition workers and builders receive extra money (around 25%) for working in the winter so they often put off starting work until the winter months. Then, of course, there may be squatters in the building they want to work on ... they cannot be evicted in the winter months so the work is delayed. Dimitri said that in state-owned properties, this cycle has gone on for years. Private owners are much more likely to carry out illegal evictions. Where owners pursue legal eviction, squatters can be removed almost immediately after proceedings have begun.

Your average Muscovite squatter is likely to be either a worker or a family tired of appalling hostel conditions and long state housing waiting lists. Young artists, radicals and illegal immigrants or refugees are also increasingly to be found squatting. Refugees are not supposed to be registered in major cities unless they have relatives there, but many live in Moscow illegally.

Squatting as a political act was not really known in Russia until around 1990 -’91. At this time two large 16-floor tower blocks in Moscow (being built for already well-housed, top state-workers), were squatted. One by more than 30 families on priority waiting lists occupying workers’ hostels, the other by punks and

radicals. In the few months the squats lasted, they supported each other and received considerable media coverage although, generally speaking, squatters are not keen to draw attention to themselves or link up with each other. There is little information about squatting and, as Dimitri pointed out, SQUALL would be illegal.

Squatting in St Petersburg is much easier. It is an old city with lots of grand, old houses awaiting demolition. Once homes for well-off families, each house now accommodates about seven families who share kitchens and bathrooms and live in one room per family. One current St Petersburg squat is the ‘House of Peace’; a large squat housing 20 permanent residents with up to

charity who promised to ensure they would receive a good funeral. The old people were then systematically murdered.

Other post-Soviet additions to the homeless population include ex-soldiers, sent home with nothing following the withdrawal of troops from former Soviet republics, and workers who used to be provided with flats by their factory or plant. These days most companies have sold the hostels where they previously housed workers from out of town.

In the present competitive chaos, with Japanese imports flooding the market, wage arrears are a real problem. Andrew Cowley may be right, consumption may be increasing and the sale of cars may be higher than ever, but such rhetoric is of



Down the Pan: Desperate Moscovites selling toilet seats.

Pic: Chris Groner

150 homeless using it as a temporary hostel.

Jevgenija, a Russian journalist, told SQUALL that Nochlezheka, a charity campaigning for the homeless in St Petersburg, say that the number of homeless people in the city is 12 - 14,000 and rising steadily. There are six million people in the entire region and only one homeless shelter with beds for 30 people. She said that in recent enterprising years, large numbers of people have been conned into selling their flats and thus rendered homeless. It is apparently not uncommon these days for alcoholics to find themselves on the streets having sold the rights to their flat to some dodgy businessman for a couple of bottles of vodka.

The Russian Mafia are now getting involved with buying and selling property big-time. All sorts of scandals are developing. One particularly gruesome story from Autumn ’94 involved the prosecution of ‘businessmen’ accused of swindling and poisoning over 30 old people. After answering ads in newspapers these people signed over their houses to a phoney

little comfort to Dimitri’s mum who, as a state oil-engineer, had not been paid for four months to December. Last November the government admitted that, at the beginning of October, 48% of reporting enterprises owed wages to their workforces. As a result, Dimitri explained, people are selling absolutely anything on the city streets and some are refusing to pay their rent.

The Yeltsin administration has promised the situation will change. The government says it will improve benefits and alter the ‘propiska’ laws. However, Jevgenija noted with some disgust that Yeltsin passed a law in November 1993 stating that the homeless would be provided with jobs, flats and medical care. She followed the story closely and waited for something to happen. It didn’t. No funds were made available and as state housing disappears from the picture (waiting lists now consist mainly of veterans, the disabled etc), the homeless, many of whom are those who simply cannot afford to buy their own place in Russia’s burgeoning free market, are left to fend for themselves.

CAUGHT IN THE CROATIAN CROSSFIRE

The war in Croatia is raising fundamental questions about what happens to property, and those who live in it, when territory changes hands.

For the past two years human rights activists in Croatia have been trying to prevent the brutal eviction of people who are leaseholders of flats which, prior to the war, belonged to the Yugoslav National Army (YNA).

Before independence the YNA owned about 38,000 flats in Croatia. Under socialism apartment rights were often issued to tenants, these rights were analogous to ownership as they were inheritable and exchangeable. After the army's withdrawal the residents of these flats remained. Many of them were pensioners, war veterans, medical staff from military hospitals and other YNA employees. Their legal status is clear, they should retain full rights as leaseholders.

In July 1991 the Croatian government passed a decree which invalidated all transactions involving YNA-owned property and declared that these properties belonged to the Republic of Croatia and were "at the disposal of the Ministry of Defence". This decision turned the residents into squatters overnight.

Evictions began in 1992 when the MOD claimed that the flats were needed for the Croatian military, war invalids and widows. Propagandist slurs against the occupants began, they have since been variously described as traitors and Serbian extremists.

The Croatian president Franjo Tudjman claimed that there were 6,000 Serbs in flats needed for Croatian war invalids. At a press conference in July 1994 he said: "You musn't forget mostly these people who are evicted are people who are directly or indirectly involved in aggression against Croatia."

However, evictions seem to have been carried out regardless of the ethnicity of occupants.

Paul Miller of Amnesty International told SQUALL that Serbs, Croats and people of mixed parentage have been

evicted. Tudjman also claimed that evictions were only being carried out "on the basis of court decisions". On the contrary, it is clear that many evictions have



taken place unsupported by court orders. The government decree has been used to evict people all over Croatia in areas including Zagreb, Split, Pula, Osijek.

Since the evictions began Amnesty has received information concerning allegations of police brutality during evictions. Human rights activists' demands, that a moratorium be placed on such evictions until the policy has been reviewed, have so far been ignored.

Many evictions have been resisted with occupants supported by friends, human rights activists, lawyers, journalists and occasionally a few members of the Croatian parliament. Dom (Home) - an organisation started by those directly affected by the evictions - has been campaigning along with the Anti-War Campaign in Croatia. Their actions have included a hunger strike outside the Croatian parliament.

Over 5,000 flats have been "reclaimed" by the Croatian government. The Croatian Branch of the Balkan Peace Team (BPT) estimate that 15 - 20,000 people have been forced onto the streets in this manner over the past two years.

In Autumn 1994 the police in Zagreb took the decision to use force to carry out evictions. Police and/or soldiers have since used

physical violence, intimidation and ethnic and gender-based slurs whilst carrying out evictions. Those refusing to leave have often been seriously beaten. Evicted families are often forced to stay with family and friends while Croatian soldiers turn up to take their belongings into storage (which they have to pay for themselves). Paul Miller noted that there are cases of possessions disappearing altogether after evictions. Social workers appear to offer orphanage places for children; this is the only help offered by the government.

In numerous cases the occupants hold the rights to the flat but the government refuses to respect their papers. One such family living in a tiny flat in Split, who had already been sharing their home with two refugees since 1992, were forced to live for 20 days with a soldier who, declaring that the flat was his, barged his way into their home with a tank of gasoline, a bomb, and the help of the military police. Due to a bureaucratic cock-up the soldier had been granted rights to the apartment by the Ministry of Defence before the appropriate office had decided it belonged to him and notified the family. This is not an isolated case. The Balkan Peace Team have reported several clashes between angry war veterans and confused tenants.

WEIDERDAM DEVELOPMENT PROTEST

Three hundred squatters are occupying an area of between 30 and 40 acres of semi-woodland and marshland in Bremen, Germany.

Former owners of Weiderdam, previously allotments with orchards, have been bought out by a building company which has planning permission to build flats on the land.

The area is ten minutes cycle ride from the city centre, next door to a huge park. Lots of the plots have small cottages or wooden huts built on them. Many of the squatters are ex-tenants, some elderly, some

families. Others are newcomers, activists, and travellers parked up on the site.

Some tenants moved out when the weather started to get very cold but one visitor told SQUALL that a thriving community, strengthened by the threat of eviction, has been built up. The squatters have already built towers and walkways, Claremont-stylee, and await the first attempts at demolition in February. There have recently been rumours that the construction company has offered the squatters an alternative site.

ZAIRE'S STREET CHILDREN

The Pekabo drop-in centre in Kinshasa offers the city's growing population of street children the chance of medical care, a wash and a rest. The centre does not have the funds to offer food or beds to the children who have, disturbingly, often been thrown out of home after being accused of sorcery.

It seems that witchcraft is the reason used to get rid of children who are a financial burden. If someone in the family falls ill or there is some financial difficulty a child is

frequently forced to confess to casting spells.

The current economic crisis in Zaire is destroying traditional supportive extended family values. However, family sizes are not reducing because social standing is measured by the number of children you have and workers at the Pekabo centre say that rather than make the connection between family size and poverty people would rather scapegoat one child. Prior to Zaire's current crisis there were 8,000 street children (1990 figures). Aid workers say the number is far higher now.



WORLD BANK EVICTIONS

“One pound in every seven of Britain’s contribution to the Bank is spent on projects involving the forcible resettlement of people.”
(1994 World Bank Briefing)

Current World Bank (WB) projects throughout the world are leading to the dispossession and involuntary resettlement of up to two million people.

Since 1948 as many as 10 million people have been forced off their land for dam projects alone. A 1994 World Bank review admits that WB projects, intended to alleviate poverty, invariably exacerbate it. It is clear that the main beneficiaries of these projects are the multi and trans-national companies who receive lucrative construction contracts.

An Ecologist briefing on the Bank’s activities says that the WB has acknowledged that “projects involving resettlement have increased landlessness,

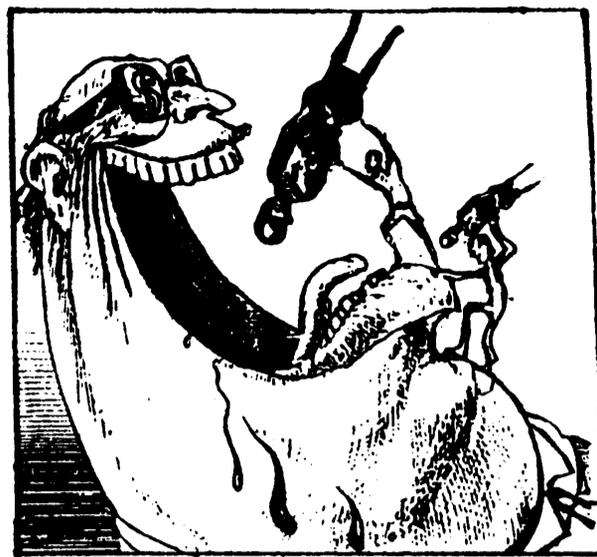
increased joblessness, increased homelessness, increased marginalisation and increased food insecurity”.

The Bank’s own resettlement policy clearly states that, following eviction, people should be relocated and their living standards matched or improved upon. This simply does not happen. In addition, before projects are approved, the numbers of people likely to be evicted are grossly underestimated. The Ecologist briefing notes that “an urban development sector loan to Pakistan was recently approved by the Bank on the assumption that only 500-600 people would have to be resettled: a subsequent field trip by Bank staff found that the true figure was likely to be in excess of 20,000”. The WB has been unable to give a single example of a project where resettled people have been rehabilitated.

In the case of the controversial Sardar Sarovar dam

project in the Narmada valley, India, the Bank completely omitted to take into account 200,000 people affected by the dam and its related canal systems. The dam’s opponents are clear that the costs of the dam have been grossly underestimated and its benefits to the region exaggerated. Medha Patkar, India’s leading and seemingly fearless environmental activist and Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement) have been fighting to prevent the removal of thousands of families from the Narmada river valleys to barren “relocation camps”. Protesters have repeatedly been banned from entering the area to support villagers. Many have been arrested and beaten.

In the summer of 1994 a ban was placed on music, dancing, “gesticulating” and “slogan shouting” against the project. Medha Patkar went on hunger strike for 26 days in November/December, demanding a government guarantee that work on the dam would stop.

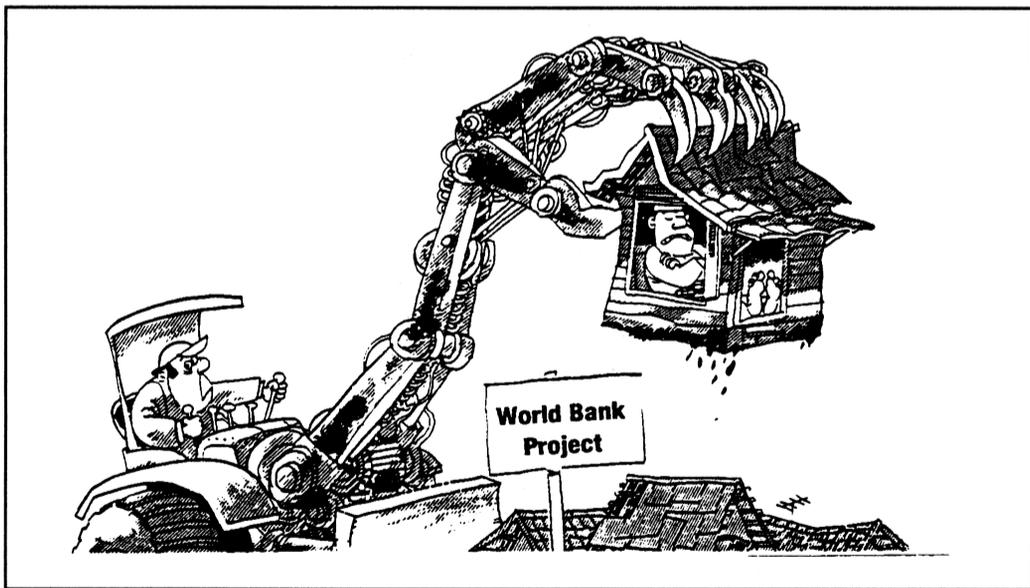


Construction has now been delayed and the Indian Supreme Court has condemned the government’s failure to answer key questions about the dam, and has asked for a new plan including rehabilitation of displaced families, a reassessment of the height of the dam and environmental protection.

Again in India, in Singrauli, the WB is giving money to projects in an area already home to the Rihand dam, 12 open cast mines and five coal-fired power stations. In this area more than 300,000 people have been displaced to make way for the projects in 25 years, some families have been evicted without compensation four or five times. Despite this, in 1993, a further \$400 million loan was approved

to expand coal-fired power stations including those at Singrauli. Virtually no cash has been made available for resettlement.

There have been calls for changes in the WB’s policy and for penalties and incentives to be introduced to help ensure resettlement programmes are well-planned, funded and followed through by the Bank’s staff. Despite recent claims that they are abandoning their mega-project obsession, WB management tends to ignore the flouting of loan conditions, including resettlement provisions. Its current plans to simplify its staff directives, reducing mandatory procedures, suggest no positive changes on the horizon.



CHIRAC CHANGES HIS SPOTS

The mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, recently made an unprecedented show of compassion for the city’s homeless announcing that empty Parisian office buildings could be opened for use as winter shelters for the homeless.

His critics observe that as mayor he has systematically priced housing out of the pockets of the low-paid and suggest that perhaps this “dramatic conversion” (*Liberation*) has some connection

to the withdrawal of Jacques Delors from the presidential race, leaving Chirac and Balladur as the only likely left-wing candidates. How cynical!

It seems that since Delors’ withdrawal, Chirac and Balladur have been battling it out to see who can be kindest to the homeless and squatters alike.

On December 20th Abbe Pierre, the 82 year-old staunch housing campaigner, assisted 120 squatters in their occupation of a

financial services company’s headquarters in the Left Bank of Paris.

Similar occupations in the past have not solicited any official sympathy but this time Mr Balladur told the squatters they could stay and, not to be outdone in the eyes of left-wing voters, Mr Chirac then reconnected their electricity and water and went on to promise to find other offices for the rest of the Paris homeless population! Go on then Jacques. Let’s see ya!

YANGTZE HOMELESS

In December, the £22 billion construction of the immense Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River began.

The creation of a 600km-long reservoir will lead to the destruction of 140 towns, 4,500 villages, several cities and the removal of 1.13 million people from their homes as well as the eradication of a number of plant and fish species. In 1992 a vote on

the project saw at least one third of the delegates at the National Peoples’ Congress voting against or abstaining.

Opponents of the project claim the human and environmental costs are in no way justified by the perceived benefits. Funds for the relocation of people affected by the dam have yet to be secured.

UNICEF REPORT

A recent Unicef report has revealed that wars around the world in the past decade have left 2 million children dead, 4 to 5 million disabled, 5 million in refugee camps, and 12 million homeless. The organisation argues that “the rising tide of poverty, and the social disintegration linked to it, threaten security throughout the world”.

The report is Unicef’s contribution to a Social Summit

being held in Copenhagen in March to mark the 50th birthday of the UN. The report says it is time for world leaders to recognise that the fight against social dislocation, poverty, population growth and environmental degradation are no longer just the concerns of the poor. The UN has called for “a shift in international strategy to ensuring security through development instead of arms”.

Letter From Asia

Glyn Walters

Here in the land of the rice paddy, the rainforest and Buddhism, housing is a much more down to earth issue than the political football it is in Britain and Europe. People who have little money, land or contacts simply build their homes wherever they can. It could be in the forest, next to the luxury hotel or even in the cemetery. Whatever the situation, if a family can make ends meet in a location that doesn't bother anyone else, they do it.

In Bangkok, Thailand, people build wood and corrugated iron shacks along the edges of the city's numerous canals. They ignore the stench of the semi-raw sewage from the water underneath and children even catch dead fish from the surface, presumably to eat.

These days, big developers are infilling many of the canals in the centre of the city, because of their high real estate value. The result: yet more condominiums for the rich and more flooding and water-borne disease for the poor in the low-lying areas of town.

Indeed, the gulf between rich and poor in Thailand's cities is now reaching obscene proportions. Everywhere these days, one sees luxury cars, mansions and condos, while on every street corner people scrape a living together selling anything they can. However, unlike '90s Britain, there is no begging and no social security system. Of course, the greatest advantage of being well-off in the tropics is that you can shield yourself from the heat, humidity, dust and poverty by retreating to the cool cocoon of air conditioning.

Air conditioning is the great saviour of the new urban middle classes throughout hot and sweaty SE Asia. Cars, homes, offices, shops, shopping malls - all are protected from the poor, nasty polluted world outside. Why, you can even wear a suit and tie to the office just like in the West!

Those SQUALL readers concerned about the impacts of new development on the British countryside should consider the struggling environmental movement here in SE Asia. Here schemes are huge, "democracy" is in its infancy, the ecology is very fragile and economic growth is hurtling along at eight to 15% every year! China is currently experiencing the biggest and longest period of growth ever seen, anywhere! The temptation to jump on the bandwagon to a nirvana of dark-windscreened, air-conditioned Toyota 4-wheel drive to the golf-course which used to be rainforest heaven, is unbearable. Do you want to see the nearest thing in the world to Orwell's 1984? Go to Singapore.

However, there are many, many good aspects of life in this part of the world. The fruits of the land are abundant and cheap; you can knock together a really decent bamboo and palm house for next to nothing. Social problems are on a far lower scale than in Britain, and people seem genuinely happier with their lives, whatever their situation. In Malaysia, for example, squatters are either encouraged to apply for low-cost state housing in other areas of their town, or if large numbers want to stay where they are, the

government will consider building new houses, flats, or longhouses in their area. Malaysia has "Squatter Affairs" ministers, who, through federal and national governments, try and sort out squatter problems in consultation with them and other locals.

This enlightened Malaysian approach is even extended to foreign squatters! In Malaysia a lot of foreign workers are brought in to work the plantations and other big industries, but find themselves unable to afford local rents. People band together and build their own communities using local materials resulting in large squatter settlements. Hence headlines like "Low-cost housing schemes for squatters" and even "Committee to draft guidelines on Foreign Squatters" are not unusual. Oh, to see such things in the Daily Mail!

Meanwhile, in Thailand, a row over land reform has almost brought the government down. The Land Reform Minister was found to have given land to some well-off friends and relatives of his, when the Land Reform Law entitled only the poor and needy such claims. Not only this, but it happened on the island of Phuket, one of the richest pieces of real estate in the whole of Asia because of its huge tourism earnings.

The British equivalent of this would be the Agriculture Minister giving his or her cronies in the transport industry common land to build roads on or mine gravel on. Now that of course never happens! If it did, surely there would be an outcry that would shake the Government to its very foundations, like here in Thailand - Wouldn't there?

have you had enough



of the old routine?

Lofty Tone's Column

I'm not one to nick the artistic inspiration of others but there are times.....

It all started in late October. I was off to visit a bunch of squatters in Hackney who had offered to throw open their doors for an all night chill out party after the SQUALL benefit gig at the Hackney Empire. On my way to Ladbroke Grove tube station I noticed a hand-written sign on Portobello Precinct: "Don't feed the pigeons - they are vermin."

"They're just flying rats," a local trader explains to a session musician as they both lunchbreak on take-aways from the nearby wholefood and Italian delis. It's an alfresco canteen, the precinct, and the fat vermin pigeons clean up on a regular basis.

I think a little more about it until two hours later when I'm opposite Hackney Town Hall in an ex-Sally Army hostel, now a squatted art gallery, viewing some enormous skeletal bird-like sculpture made out of old rubber tubing. At its feet in a glass-fronted case are the clean white skeletons of two pigeons, immaculately intact.

Impoverished artists tend to use available materials for their creations, and many of London's long-term empty buildings - mere gambling chips in the property booms between recessions - are littered with the spindly remains of ex-pigeons. I'm reminded of the image of a crucifix made entirely of pigeon skeletons I'd seen earlier in the year, casually exhibited on a staircase at Artillery Mansions. A pertinent artistic statement - irrefutable evidence of the obscene neglect. That particular squat's most recent human residents (a firm of property consultants) had vacated

the sixth floor in 1973, but on the eighth floor I was shown a large four bedroomed flat occupied only by those flying rats and their decomposing parents, and generations of their ancestors, and of course piles and piles of their shit rising like stalagmites from the floor beneath a sturdy guano-encrusted curtain rail.

Back in Hackney they're draping a banner across the front of the building; "Spikey Thing with Curves" it reads. Is it a contribution to the Spikey Vs Fluffy debate or a nod of acknowledgement to those flying vermin who seem to have such an easy time of it, getting food in their bellies and a roof over their heads?

A week or so later I'm on agit prop duty at the Kensington Gardens, one-day, political show squat; a block of 50 empty flats opposite the Royal Residence of Kensington Palace. I've shared my obsession with fellow activists who have promptly presented me with my very own Spikey Thing with Curves - a pigeon skeleton with outstretched wings. A fine specimen, probably lived on lasagne from Portobello Precinct - only a couple of miles away as the portly pigeon flies. Within half an hour it is mounted, framed and being exhibited outside on Kensington Gore to the passing rush hour crowds: "Sole resident 1989-94."

The following day the place is boarded up, our posters ripped down, our banners gone and our artwork doubtless in the vaults of some shrewd Bond Street dealer waiting for a nineties retro at the ICA.



PAST PLOTS FUTURE FIELDS

Qualified solicitor and lover of open space, **SHIM SOLOMON** looks into the exclusivity of land ownership, and the covert erosion of public access.

The public order section of the Criminal Justice Act has its roots in Enclosure - the process by which common land was privatised and made exclusive throughout the centuries. Both curtail our freedom of movement in the open air and our experience of outdoor space.

Today this is particularly noticeable in towns and cities. As community consumers, we are overloaded with places to go *into* and stay for a while. Work in the office, shop or factory; recreation in shops, restaurants and clubs etc. By contrast the choices to be *outside* are limited. Apart from pavements and roads, the right to roam and loiter without intent, is confined to parks or one of a handful of remaining commons.

Nor is it much different for most people in the countryside. Apart from the confined areas of country parks and picnic sites, freedom to roam is on a strictly public footpath basis, with a legal entitlement to passage but none to loiter. Legal rights on such precarious strips of land cater only for those who want to get to know the land by passing and then re-passing whilst on the move.

Knowledge of the land and its potentials largely lie buried in the past, with the call for land-use rights currently incumbent upon a few activists and co-operatives. This may in part be due to a general ignorance about the exclusivity of British land ownership and of the continuing covert 'theft' of public access.

However, for a few select people a different relationship to the land exists. As well as receiving additional financial help from the state by virtue of owning substantial tracts of land (set aside), owners accumulate more wealth by charging for its use. In the past, masses of people, having become estranged from the land, reacted to stem the tide of lost access.

There are recent signs of a reawakening knowledge of a stolen natural inheritance that may yet manifest

itself in a clamour for better public access to the fields, hills and forests of our own country.

BRIEF HISTORY LESSON IN STOLEN LAND: THE ENCLOSURES

"The fruits of the earth belong to us all
and the earth itself to nobody."
Rousseau

After the Normans conquered England on the familiar date, they handed out the land to about 180 barons in a bid to placate local leaders and unite the incoming Norman aristocracy. William the Conqueror had a land census drawn up known as the Domesday Book and, armed with the knowledge of exactly who owned what and where, he was able to lay claim to, and subsequently give away, vast tracts of land apparently belonging to no one.

Acres of common land enclosed in England and Wales.

18-19th Century	7 Million
1845-1864	1/2 Million
1858-1958	1 Million

Exclusivity was however tempered, as ancient rights to public land use continued to be respected, at least for a while. Such rights were known as common rights and were held by commoners over land which, whether privately or publicly owned, came to be known as common land. Common rights allowed the mass of people to successfully subsist, giving a wide variety of rights to use land, including the right to graze animals, to glean the fields after harvest, to gather nuts and berries, to fish for all kinds of fish - including salmon and to take wood for fires and building.

However, then came the 15th Century. This was a time of massive change for the British public. Not content with their substantial acreage, landowners wanted more land for more wealth and more hunting.

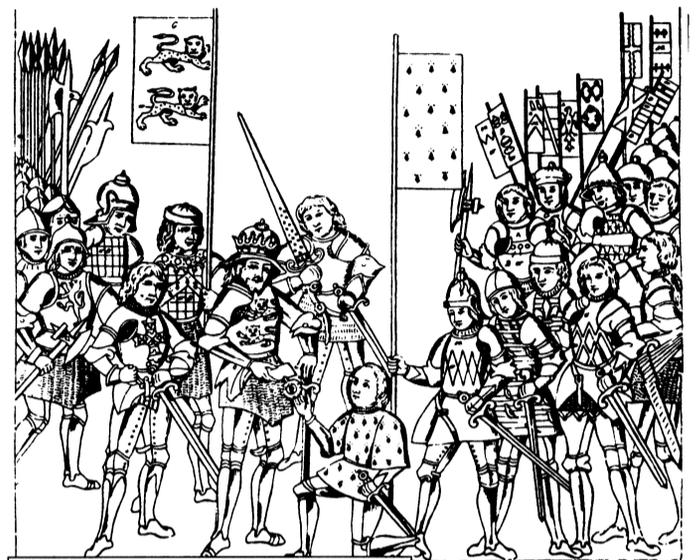
A shortage of unclaimed land meant that landowners now turned their attention to

unfenced woods and common lands. Common land was turned over to sheep farming, as this brought in more wealth than arable farming. Not only did the landless begin losing their common rights and thus their ability to feed themselves, they also lost control of their own working lives; forced as they were to take up jobs in service of the landowners. However, whilst being forced into the position of having to work full time, then as today, full time work was not available to all. Sheep farming required less labourers than arable, with the result that many thousands of landless people found themselves without jobs. Some stayed on in their villages dependant on poor relief, some left the villages to squat in the woods - developing into self sufficient communities of artisans, others left to seek employment elsewhere, whilst the rest joined the swelling band of vagrants.

Nor was recreation ever to be the same again, enclosure had reallocated old hay meadows and common land to individual farmers, robbing the poor of the space for their recreation.

In 1649, the British Parliament was born after an eight year civil war and the execution of Charles 1st. The substitution of monarch by parliament did nothing to halt enclosure and the misappropriation of land. A selfish catholic ruling elite was simply replaced with a selfish protestant ruling elite.

Enclosure had become the landowner's weapon, with parliamentary enclosure as the new ammunition. New laws meant that land was enclosed merely on the say so of those holding the majority of land. The result was the 'theft' of yet more huge tracts of common land.



William the Conqueror creates a new Earldom

The other form of enclosure was 'piecemeal enclosure', a slow process by which individual land owners bought and sold strips of land until there was enough land to enclose.

As a prelude to today's public banishment from the land, the industrial revolution in the 18th century saw the poor move from the countryside into towns. As a result, land gradually became less contentious, as people became less aware of what was being taken from them, dispossession became an accepted state. Land ownership began to be something their collective memory could not recall. Moreover, the landless no longer had the time to protest - their new employers forced them to work up to 16-18 hours a day, six days a week.

Common land continues to disappear to this day. Land we often refer to as a 'common', such as Wimbledon Common for instance, is not in fact common land at all. Particularly in towns and cities, this land is owned by trusts and corporations with agreed access for the general public. Actual Common land allows common rights, such as the picking of berries and nuts etc. mentioned earlier in this article. Common rights however, do not include access to all the land, only passage to and from picking the berries or fishing etc. As a consequence, as long as passage is ensured in some way, such as the placing of a path around the edge for instance, then the rest of the land can be fenced off as unavailable to public access. In 1986, there were only 1.5 million acres of common land left, with the public having no rights of access over 1.2 million of those acres



© Benny Rothman, imprisoned for his part in the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass in 1932, speaking at the Twyford Down Mass Trespass, July 1994

WHO DOES OWN THE LAND ?

A myth perpetuated in John Major's so called 'classless' society, suggests there to be an increasing amount of equal opportunity for all to be 'successful' and rich. The richest people today, so goes the myth, are drawn from the ranks of pop stars, business men and women and now national lottery winners, whilst the once comfortable landowner is continuing to starve in some draughty garret; forced to open the family mansion to the general public (for an admission fee of course), in order to make ends meet. However, this myth is false.

Not only have landowners of more than a few acres managed to keep their land and multiply their wealth, a significant few have actually increased their wealth with financial help from the government, through national subsidies such as tax relief and exemption from rates. Nationally financed spending on agriculture was twice as high as EEC spending within the UK in 1978, showing such subsidisation to be mostly provided by the British taxpayer.

Having to rely on figures from 1976 (because the Royal Commission for Income and Wealth responsible for investigating such information was closed down by the Tories in 1979), it can be clearly seen that owning land is a precursor to wealth. The richest 1% of the population owned 52% of the land, whilst the next richest 2-5% of the population owned 22% of the land.

Looking at the year 1976, the Earl of Derby held onto a 70,000 acre estate, including land and property in Bolton, Bury, Salford, Manchester and Liverpool, and in return received a gross income made up of rents and agriculture of £300,000. By 1985 this would have been the equivalent of £2.9 million. Another example is the royal family and Crown Estates, who in the year ending

31st March 1984, earned £2.5 million off property rents in St James' (central London) alone.

Finally, consider the Church. Their property portfolio consists of shops, offices, US property, housing, industrial property and farms, all charged out at market rents. In 1986 the church earned the irreligious sum of £45 million pounds, although its property portfolio has considerably slimmed down since then due to bad housing investments.

A major point to rescue from the maths is that land ownership is extremely concentrated. Ninety six per cent of land falls into the hands of five main groups and that's not including land covered in houses and flats. The scarcity of land created by such a concentration of ownership leaves the rest of us to compete for just 4% of the land.

FARMERS

In addition to rents drawn from the land, income is derived from subsidies and grants provided by the government in connection with agriculture. Most of these are far from fairly distributed. The subsidies were devised to encourage farmers to grow crops in response to a problem noticed during WW2, when the basic food supply nearly failed. The subsidies were intended to stop people starving in any future war.

An attempt to prevent over production is the reason for continuing existence of the subsidies currently in place. However, they were not designed with an efficient modern industry - made up of relatively large holdings - in mind, but for continental holdings, where the majority are small, family based holdings run on ancient peasant principles.

In 1986 the average size of a European farm was as follows: West Germany -38 acres, France - 65 acres,

UK - 170 acres. Bear in mind that in the UK, 40% of farms are less than 50 acres, making the 170 acre average deceptive. Put another way, small holdings in the UK make up a tiny fraction of farmland acreage, most of which is huge farm holdings owned by rich landowners.

Yet it is the image of the poor, struggling smallholder that is promoted by the massive media machine of the National Union of Farmers, and relied upon to maintain a vast selection of subsidies and grants paid out 'equally' to the 60% of farmers who own more than 170 acres, as to the 40% who own less than 50 acres.

European subsidies guarantee a set price to the farmers for their produce. The burden of this subsidy falls on the consumer, who ends up paying far more than the world market price and who also pay for the mountains of food not sold on the open market, their subsequent storage and later disposal.

Farmers are also paid for not doing anything. When they are said to be "setting aside" land, they receive £253 per hectare to do so. Designed to prevent surplus, this policy is known to have made one large farmer a tidy £200 000, simply for not doing anything with his land.

Other assistance comes from national sources such as those which exempt farmers from VAT and rates and compensate them for owning land of poor agricultural quality - officially termed 'less favoured' land. This amounted to some half a million acres between 1984-1985, and payments of £131 million.

In 1984 the Sunday Times estimated that the average subsidy payout was £20,000 to each farmer, leading them to conclude what can only be obvious; for large land-holding farmers any farming business could be made profitable by anyone.

Who Owns What?

%age of England and Wales (1986 figures)

Pension Funds, Insurance Cos	1.2
Common Land	4
Owner-occupiers farmers less than 50 acres	4
Public Bodies inc. Forestry Comm., MoT, MoD	12.6
Richest 6% of pop incl. Dukes and Ladies	74
Everybody else	4.2
TOTAL LAND	96%

THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

"I turned my steps towards the distant woods.....among the woods I forced my way.....Then up I rose, and dragged to earth both branch and bough with crash and merciless ravage.....[but] When.....I turned away...I felt a sense of pain when I beheld

The silent trees and the intruding

sky.....With gentle hand touch, For there is a Spirit in the wood."

(William Wordsworth - 'Nutting')

Many people appreciate trees and many trees are owned on behalf of people by the Forestry Commission. But is the Commission as publicly minded as it should be?

For example, out of the seven possible chairpersons since its formation, five have been private landowners. Secondly, it has total responsibility for dishing out grants to those wanting to plant forests; this it can do to anyone, however wealthy they already are. The main planters, however, are still the traditional large landowners or pension funds administered through one of the four main private forestry companies.

Many Forestry Commission forests, including all those planted for wood-profits, are conifer forests and therefore dark dense wildlife-free zones. This is in contrast to the vast majority of native British woodland. Forestry Commission forests were not set up to conserve or protect our woodland, but to reduce our reliance on imported wood for building. Such timber is unreliable in strength, as the trees are forced to grow fast for quicker profits, rendering it less usable by builders and weakening the economic argument for the continued expansion of these sorts of forests.

More recently there has been a change in European Law directly requiring the use of trees as an alternative to fossil fuel. The Government's intention is to pay farmers to plant trees on their 'surplus land'. The question arises - Why isn't one single payment made for the planting of these trees, which take only a few years to grow, on 'set aside' land?

The other major concern about Forestry Commission forest is the amount being sold off into private hands. In all, 800 000 acres were sold between 1986 and 1994, with yearly sales increasing. A Parliamentary Written Question (Hansard 12/12/94 Col 504) revealed that 114 woods covering an area of 22,649 acres are currently up for sale on the open market. This means that the positive aspect of Forestry Commission owned forests - that it gives access to the

17th & 18th Century Laws and the Landless

- 1660 Publications banned and radicals removed from official posts
- 1661 Illegal to collect more than 20 signatures on petitions for matters established by law
- 1662 Squatters evicted from woods and commons and migrants stopped and checked
- 1671 Game Act: Unlawful to hunt unless freeholder or long leaseholder
- 1715 Riot Act
- 1723 "Black Act": 50 new hanging offences for such things as cutting turf, taking wood and cultivating waste land.

public (albeit on a temporary basis in the form of a permissive right, rather than a legal right in perpetuity) - is also lost. This is because it is rare, by contrast, for private owners to offer even a permissive right, unless such terms have been agreed prior to sale. According to the Rambler's Association, only 15% of land sold by the Commission into private hands is still open to the public.

LAND PROTESTS: PAST AND FUTURE

"That man I remember well, and at least two centuries have passed since I saw him: He travelled neither on horseback nor in a carriage. Purely on foot he undid the distances. Carrying neither sword nor weapon.....He never fought with another of his kind - His struggle was with water or with earth, with the wheat, for it to become bread,...Where he lived, everything a man touched would grow. The hostile stones hewn by his hands took shape and formI think that those who made so many things ought to be masters of everything..."

(Pablo Neruda - 'The People')

"The first man who having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying 'This is mine' and found people simple enough to believe him."

Having enclosed the land, owners now found themselves with time on their hands, whilst labourers provided their food and income. They began to draft new laws, specifically a highly artificial property law, which converted that 'theft' into unalterable rights for the advantage of a privileged few.

However, these changes did not go unchallenged. Leading campaigners such as Gerard Winstanley, writing around the time when enclosures were reaching their peak during the 17th century, played a part in the protest by naming all land owners as the adversary and their ancestors as "robber barons", who "first did murder their fellow creatures men, and after plunder or steal away their land".

And then there were the activists (the Levellers and the Diggers) who, whilst not attacking private ownership itself, did attack the lack of public access to the land and the cultivation rights to vast amounts of productive earth, such as that beneath hunting forests or commons. However, protest words alone proved inadequate and so direct action proved

necessary.

Between 1649 and 1650, a group of Diggers ploughed up St George's Hill Common (which incidentally is now a golf course), cultivating it in order to draw attention to their cause. Other Digger groups did the same with commons in Northants, Kent, Barnet, Middlesex, Beds and Leicester - to name but a few. In 1639, in Northants, a group of small farmers marched to a nearby green and pulled down the hedges of the local enclosing landowners.

Resistance continued into the 19th century, fuelled by new government laws, further restricting public access to land (see table below). The 1830 'Last Labourers' Revolt' saw labourers throughout southern England, East Anglia and southern Midlands, burn hayracks and the new threshing machines that were taking away their jobs.

No-one was killed and only a few land-owners were injured. Nonetheless, rather than entertaining the legitimacy of their claims, the government reacted by hanging 19 people, imprisoning 600 and transporting 457.

This heavy-handed response forced direct action for land rights to take a long sleep, only reawakening briefly in the thirties, with the Kinder Scout mass trespass in the Peak District.

In England there were no other groups to threaten the new system of land ownership. The next group in the hierarchy were tenant farmers and they were beneficiaries too. Large landowners bought the land of small land-owners and then leased it to tenant farmers, who in turn took on employees.

By contrast, it was the tenant farmers in Ireland who were themselves at the bottom of the pile, forming themselves into the Irish Land League in protest at high rents and absentee landlords. Although they did put their demands into parliamentary channels via their MP, it was not this route that won them their cause but direct action ranging from rent strikes to violence. The government, fearing civil unrest, embodied their demands in the 1881 Irish Land Act. A few large landowners do still exist, but Ireland is essentially a land of peasant proprietors with an average holding of only 60 acres.

Fifty years later, and after 50 years of campaigning, the landless were handed a small concession. In 1906 they were given access and rights over the tiniest pieces of land imaginable, the custody of little patches of ground of their own - allotments.

MID 20th CENTURY RIP-OFFS

The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act empowered local authorities to enter into access arrangements over "open" country. Although such arrangements are temporary and can be withdrawn by the landowner at any time, they have allowed greater lawful public access. Six miles from Skipton in Yorkshire, 14,000 acres is now open all year round, save for 30 days when the public is once again excluded to allow grouse shooting.

However, this Act is deceptive, as most countryside remains locked up. In Oxfordshire only 0.4% of park land is open to the public, amounting to 111 acres; leaving 27 000 acres reserved to private use - usually to allow pheasant shooting.

The 1968 Countryside Act was positive in that it extended the definition of 'open' country to include woodland, river and canal bank, as well as rough grazing, also giving the local authority the power to buy land for public use. However, its main aim was to protect the countryside from the invading masses, hence the creation of country parks and picnic sites. As one influential planner of the day eloquently put it: rather than spreading a "thin layer of gambolling humanity across the whole island.....people were to be herded into small areas of little scenic or wildlife value where they could do no harm".

Such fears of 'damage by footsteps' were of very little environmental consequence, particularly in comparison to that caused by other factors such as industry. What did matter was how the resource was managed. But this was to be the last attempt at any land access legislation. It suited the landowners very well, for while they continue to ensure that all of their land remains in the hands of their family forever, the devices of country parks and picnic sites makes them seem like that they have finally compromised.

This couldn't be further from the truth. In the words of the Earl of Kinrara, owner of 12,000 acres in West Sussex, he "deliberately created a country park under the Countryside Act, on 60 acres of poor quality land.....there is no charge for admission, but it gives the opportunity to say : 'You can't go there, but you can go to the country park'".

FUTURE ACCESS FUTURE PROTEST

For a minute, forget such attitudes and the new trespass restrictions in the Criminal Justice Act 1994, and instead focus on the fact that a different relationship with the land is both possible and

preferable. Take just one example: In Sweden, trespass is not presumed, access is. People there have the right to roam, wander and camp over all the land with only a few exceptions such as MoD land and land immediately surrounding houses.

Similar rights of access are badly needed in this country. What is also required is a greater accountability for land ownership. The obscurity of who owns what, aided and abetted by the dissolution of the Royal Commission on Income and Wealth by the Tories in 1979, allows a tiny minority of super land-owners, unchanged for hundreds of years, to go unnamed and unnoticed. In turn, the public's awareness of our lost rights of land access should be increased, leading to demands for their reinstatement. Non-violent direct action mass trespasses, not seen since Kinder Scout in 1932, are starting to reappear. There were a number at Twyford Down last year and more are planned for specific places in 1995.

"I bounded among the hills.....I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides of the deep rivers and the lonely streams, where-ever nature led." (Wordsworth)

Better land access is now necessary to ensure that our contact with the natural environment and appreciation of landscape, does not end up the sole preserve of poetry and imaginative thinking.

Glynn Walters who wrote the 'Get On Your Land' in the last issue of SQUALL is in New Zealand researching land tenancies and will be returning later in the year to initiate the Land Reform Group he mentioned at the end of his article. Shim Solomon, author of the above article will also be involved in the setting up of the group. Both can be contacted c/o SQUALL, 2, St Paul's Road, London N1 2QN. Anyone interested in helping to form a Land Reform Group should get in contact.



Kate Evans



Below the Sod

Andy Johnson delves into the possibilities of living down-under ...in Britain.

Deep in the suburban heartlands of Bushy Heath, Hertfordshire, between the rows of uniform houses, and next door to the pub, there is an eight metre wide hole.

The hole, located in his back garden, belongs to the Rabbi Jonathan Black. By the summer, hopefully, it will be his home.

Rabbi Black refers to his new house as a "basement bungalow". This is to overcome the prejudices of most people, particularly builders, to the term 'underground house' or 'earth sheltered dwelling'.

Mention underground living to most people and they'll conjure up images of dank cellars or a grimy London Underground Station.

"It is, after all, only a basement," says Jonathon. "And 'basement' and 'bungalow' are terms most people are familiar with."

As far as Jonathan knows, his future home is the only underground urban street development in the country. "The house will be completely submerged," he continues. "The roof will be only a couple of feet higher than the surrounding ground level and will be covered with a 150mm of soil."

The other 15 underground houses in Britain are mainly built into the side of hills. There are also thousands of above ground houses with turf roofs that qualify as 'earth shelters'.

The house, which will have three bedrooms, three reception rooms, three bathrooms and a utility room, will be lit by natural sunlight.

"The house will have two sunken patios level with its floor," says Jonathon. "They will be surrounded by normal patio doors which open onto the outside. You will also be able to see out from them, to the surrounding trees and houses. All the rooms, except the bathrooms, will have natural light. And on a nice summer's evening two thirds of the house can be thrown open."

When the house is finished Jonathon will be able to sell his existing home, complete with half of the garden that is left. He puts the cost of building his underground home at no more than a house the same size above ground.

"Although if I was to do it again, I could do it for less," he says, "because we haven't had the advantage of years of experience in building. You only learn the most economical ways of doing something as you go along."

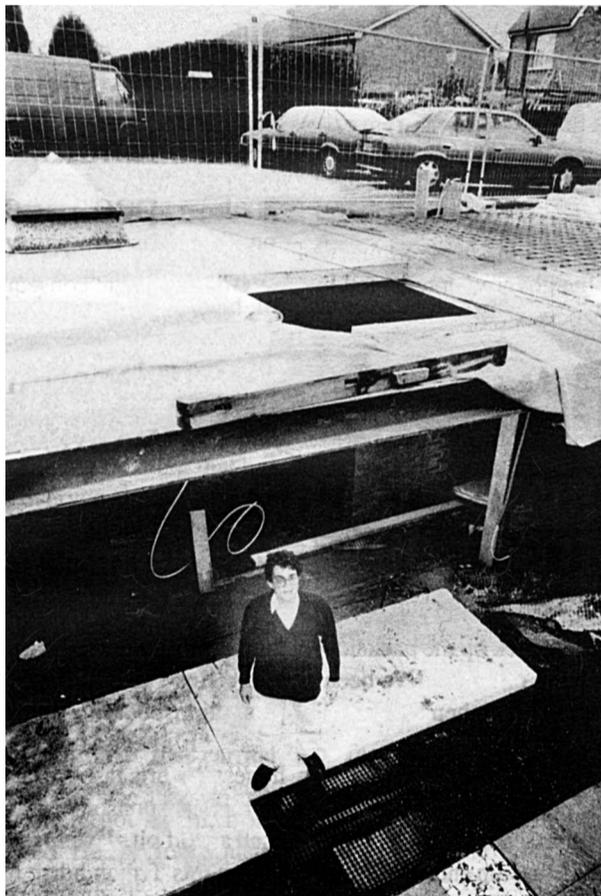
Peter Carpenter lives at the British Earth Shelter Association's headquarters in Monmouth, Wales. It is called the "berm house", although strictly speaking it isn't.

"A berm is normally applied to a house built above ground with earth banked around the sides," he says. "The one here is carved into a bank. So the

elevation is at ground level and the roof slopes into the bank." The primary advantage of earth sheltered dwellings is energy conservation, although they are also pretty nifty at conserving land.

Peter's interest began after seeing an underground dwelling in America back in 1979. "It was a very cold night, but warm and cosy inside," he says, "and no sound of the wind."

Peter came home and tore 7000 tonnes of earth out of a Welsh hillside. He built his house inside and put 1000 tonnes of earth back, providing 20 feet of soil



⊙ **Going underground**

insulation along three sides and the roof. Along the front he built a glass corridor which he surrounded with salvaged masonry.

"The house here is the most energy efficient in Europe," he says. "It collects sunlight from the glass corridor, which is an old method of solar heating and lights all the main rooms. In summer a conservatory gets too hot, but under the soil it stays cool. In the winter the soil loses the heat slowly so it remains warm."

Underground houses retain a constant temperature throughout the year because the ground is not affected by air temperature and gains and loses heat slowly.

An outside air temperature of 70 degrees will not change the lower soil temperature, and nor will an air temperature of zero degrees. As well as costing nothing to heat, Peter reckons the house has a maintenance free

life span of about 500 years.

Back in Bushy Heath, Rabbi Jonathon is convinced about the environmental benefits.

"Judaism has always had a strong emphasis on ecology and living in harmony with the environment," he says. "So we've always been environmentally aware. You won't have to heat this house in the winter."

Peter and Jonathon's house illustrate the two main kinds of underground housing. Jonathon's is a court yard, or atrium design, and Peter's a berm. Surprisingly, Jonathon didn't have much trouble with the planning authorities, who actually and unusually said they were very excited about it. Peter on the other hand found planning to be one of the main difficulties.

"They merge with the natural landscape and have a great energy concept but this has no effect on the planners," he says. "It's very difficult to get planning permission. We're trying at the moment to get permission to build low cost, low density local housing. But it has met with considerable opposition.

"We are trying hard to get into the planning system. We have links with the parliamentary Labour Housing Association and alternative issue groups. But the planning rules say you that you can't develop in the country."

This may seem fair enough. But it's important to bear in mind that the current housing target is to build another 2 million homes in the next 25 years.

"The current housing target hasn't changed," Peter says. "But it's not sustainable. Land is a finite resource. With Earth Shelters you don't lose land."

This is because the ethos of earth shelters is that they should merge into, and become part of, the surrounding landscape rather than intruding on it.

Peter also points out that there is nothing unusual about using the earth as a shelter.

"It's old fashioned," he says. "It's been done for thousands of years."

And he doesn't just mean caves. The ancient Chinese used to live in court-yard houses to protect them from the harsh winter cold and harsh winter sun. In 800AD the people of Cappadocia, in Turkey, carved chambers into the sides of soft rock. There is also the ancient rose red city of Petra, in Jordan, so called because the setting sun casts a pink glow over the rock face it is carved into, complete with classical facades.

"Awareness is growing," says Peter, "but in this country we are really still at the beginning."

There are numerous books on earth sheltered dwellings and how to build them - many at low cost. For more information contact the British Earth Sheltered Association, c/o Peter Carpenter, Caer Llan, Berm House, Lydent, Monmouth, Gwent. NP5 4JJ. Tel: 0600 860359.

Peter's book - 'Sod It' - is available by mail order. It lists earth shelters that can be visited, including public buildings such as the Sir Joseph Banks building in Kew Gardens.

Pedal for



© A household of helpers give the Pedal for the Planet expedition a push-start from Greenwich Meridian

"The idea was originally conceived by my colleague Steve, in Paris about three and half years ago," recalls Jason. "He was working as an environmental consultant at the time. I think he was pretty manicked out actually - not a lot of friends. He went a bit cuckoo and thought this idea up."

Three and a half years later, after gargantuan amounts of blagging, determination, synchronicity and ingenuity, that 'cuckoo' idea is being realised. The Pedal for the Planet Expedition set off from the Greenwich Meridian on July 12, crossed the English Channel from Rye Harbour in Surrey, cycled down through France and Spain to the Algarve in Portugal and then pedalled off into the Atlantic Ocean on October 13th, heading for Pier 61 - Fort Lauderdale Harbour, Florida, USA.

"A mate of mine who works in a genetics laboratory, says we're about 50% nature and 50% nurture, and it's that 50% nurture that really inspires me," says Jason. "You've been given a load of putty clay in your hand, so let's see what you can make of yourself."

"It's really easy to get defocused and lulled into this wishy-washy existence. It

takes a good snap and kick up the backside for me to think - hang on! God, I've been caught napping again - and then to try and maximise life."

The 30ft pedal-boat 'Moksha' (Sanskrit for Freedom), was specially built at Exeter Maritime Museum and, weighing only 350 kg, seemed too flimsy a craft to be dealing with the 40ft+ waves that the world's largest oceans will throw at it. Waves, however, are the least of the problem.

"The boat is self-righting," explains Steve. "The only thing that can go seriously wrong is if we run into a super tanker 'cos these seas are full of international shipping. We have 3 knots in this boat - hundreds of thousands of tonnes of steel coming at you at 20 knots is my worst fear."

So far though, the boat and its crew have safely crossed both the English Channel - the busiest shipping lane in the world and, as SQUALL goes to press, the Atlantic Ocean.

Between the conception of the 'cuckoo idea' and the expedition's departure, has been three long years of preparation. This has seen Jason and Steve

An expedition around the world? Nothing unusual about that these days. An expedition cycling round the world, crossing both the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean in a 30ft pedal boat? Now that's unusual. And if you were to learn that the expedition's co-ordinating office is in a London squat and that it has no money whatsoever in its bank account, you might be thinking - 'They're nutters'.

But wait up with the hasty diagnosis because as SQUALL goes to print, Jason Lewis and Steve Smith are on the verge of landing on the shores of Florida, having pedalled and weathered a three and a half month Atlantic crossing from Portugal. In the flurry of activity that preceded their departure, **Jim Carey** grabbed a few words with them and their support team.

thoroughly immersed in a myriad of diverse activities including sponsorship, promotions, boat-testing and media.

"It's been a fucking nightmare to be honest," snorts Jason. "The whole business of raising sponsorship and the media is such a wolf pit. I've found that I've had to put on this Trojan horse mentality - cloak and dagger. It's been interesting and I've learnt and developed more tools and skills - I know how the PR and sponsorship world works and I know that I really don't want to have anything to do with it."

Fortunately, despite an erratic team sheet through-out the years of preparation, the expedition managed to recruit a filmmaker/cameraman on the final furlong of the preparation for departure.

Kenny Brown had been squatting in London for over six years, shooting home movies and helping to organise several squat cinemas:

"When I met Steve and Jason, they were both quite strange. They were thinking - 'What's he like?'. They didn't have a CV of all the adventures they had done, it was more like: 'we are doing this' full-stop. I had planned an expedition going across

Russia on bikes but that fell through. I'd spent too much time dealing with maybes - people promising things that aren't happening. Meeting people that are determined to pull things off is much more worthwhile."

Also recruited for the first leg of the trip was another London squatter, Martin Gascoigne. His job was to transport the pedal-boat from Greenwich, down through Europe, stopping in Paris, Madrid and Lisbon for press calls.

"The expedition concords with quite a lot of things that are priorities for me. It's bicycle centred, I like their general 'get up and do it' attitude, and it was an ennobling idea to see in action," says Martin, a keen cycle enthusiast.

The aim of the expedition, besides the personal challenges involved, is to inspire the world with the potentials of pedal power and, by visiting schools on their way round, inspire children with a sense of adventure.

"The green angle of the expedition, is very simply that it can be done," says Kenny. "There's no power involved except for human power. The Pedal for the Planet expedition could have been done hundreds

the Planet

of years ago. You don't need loads of technology - very simple ideas can move us forward. It's about changing people's habits. It's not taking a car when you go shopping; it's people realising they have choices rather than presuming something is a necessity. That will change more things in the world than any laws."

"Moving away from the motor car is inevitable now," adds Martin. "I think bicycles have a lot to say on a number of different levels, both in terms of economy and in terms of people's health. So this is a very direct way of kicking things off"

For Jason, the school visits are an important part of the trip; a part of same questioning of pre-set ideas that drove them to attempt the journey in the first place.

"Me and Steve want to experiment with ourselves. We're sick of sitting around like do-dos in this society just being told what to think and how to behave. For us the whole trip is very much a questioning procedure. And we want to pass on some of that to the children. Try and instil a mentality of not just lying down and saying 'OK, that's the way I've been told, so that's the way it is'. Not just taking it for granted but seeing what's best for them and the whole system they're living in.

"But I know all the kids won't be leaving the class going: 'God I've really got to re-evaluate my life now'. Mostly they'll identify with the boat, they'll want to know about the sharks and the really bad storms and how you're gonna have a crap - anything that's different and exciting. If they come away with even a little bit of the reasons why we did it, even if they think: 'crazy lunatics in a boat', then that's great in itself - you can't ask much more than that. I think it will fill them with a bit of adventure and that will be a good thing."

The enormity of the undertaking and the small number of people involved, has meant that the team have had to do a lot of lateral thinking to overcome the difficulties of the expedition. Certainly the expedition has some well known official patrons, including Sir Ranulph Feines, Jonathon Porritt and The Duke of Gloucester. It also has some material sponsorship such as bicycles, army rations and a satellite transmitter. Financial sponsorship on the other hand has not been forthcoming.

Some money was raised via an idea dreamed up by Steve's dad; offering to put the names of anybody who gave a tenner onto the hull of the boat. SQUALL's name, along with about a thousand others, forges through the seas at this very moment. This brought in £10,000 which was inevitably spent in no time at all. The biggest single cash injection of the expedition so far actually came from a benefit night held in a London squat two weeks before they left. Pooling culinary and musical skills and throwing open their doors for a small admission fee a household community of

London squatters managed to secure the £1000 necessary to get them to Portugal.

"I can't think of anybody in that house that didn't help the expedition," says Kenny. "Everybody did something, whether it was packing the van at five in the morning 'cos we had to rush off to a press call, to sitting up half the night emptying out bags of food and sorting out the packs for the Atlantic. That just wouldn't happen in any other situation. There is a support from the immediate community - you wouldn't have that if it was a rented office or a rented house. It's part of the lifestyle of squatting if you like, being with other people and doing things with them rather than everyone separated."

The same household gave over a room to the Expedition for use as its main office during the final month before departure. Satellite co-ordinates of the Atlantic crossing are still plotted onto the Atlantic Navigational charts that stretch across it walls.

By the time they reached Portugal, the benefit-party money had been spent. Three hundred and fifty miles off the Portuguese coast, Jason, Steve and the good ship Moksha called in for minor repairs at the island of Madeira with absolutely no money. By phoning someone he'd met in Portugal, who had a son that lived in Madeira, Kenny was able to arrange for someone to meet and sort them out with marina space, equipment and hospitality. Such a talent for pulling things off and making things work, is something that has been cultivated in everyone involved in the challenge of running such a major expedition almost exclusively on ingenuity and determination.

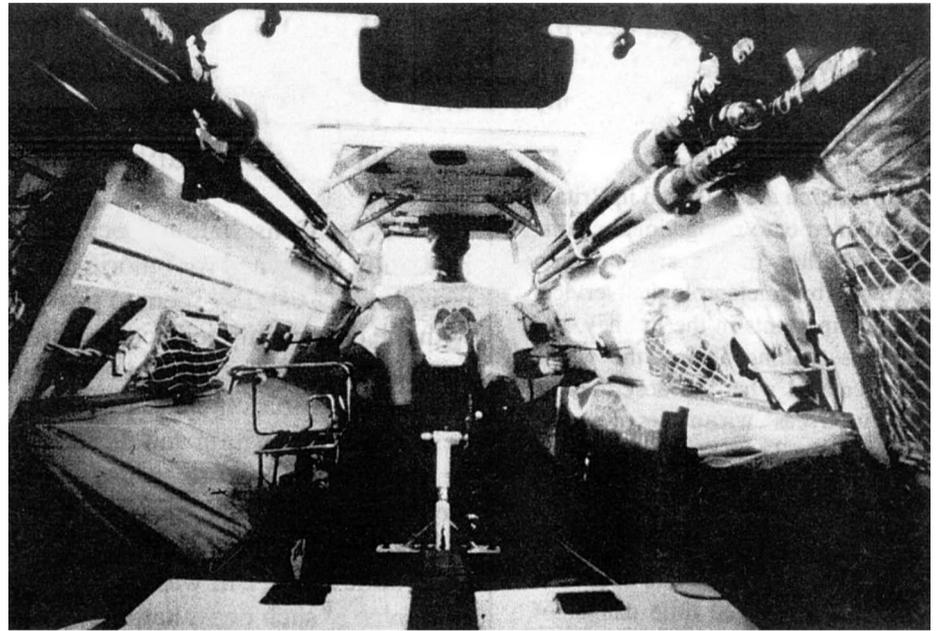
"Getting down to Portugal was an expedition in its own right," observes Kenny wryly. "A four man team and a boat across Europe on £80 a week!"

The one tonne trailer that carried the boat through Europe had been blagged, borrowed but definitely not stolen, from the ominously named 'Heavy Boat Squad' of the Metropolitan Police; the van pulling the trailer was borrowed from a parcel delivery company. The food taken on board for the Atlantic crossing consisted of 5 years-past-the-sell-by-date army rations Jason had wangled through contacts he'd made with the army.

"It's been blag, blag, blag all the way," laments Kenny. "I've learnt a lot about how to make things work, one of those being sheer determination."

They also leave behind several large debts; a fact Steve was well aware of just before leaving Portugal:

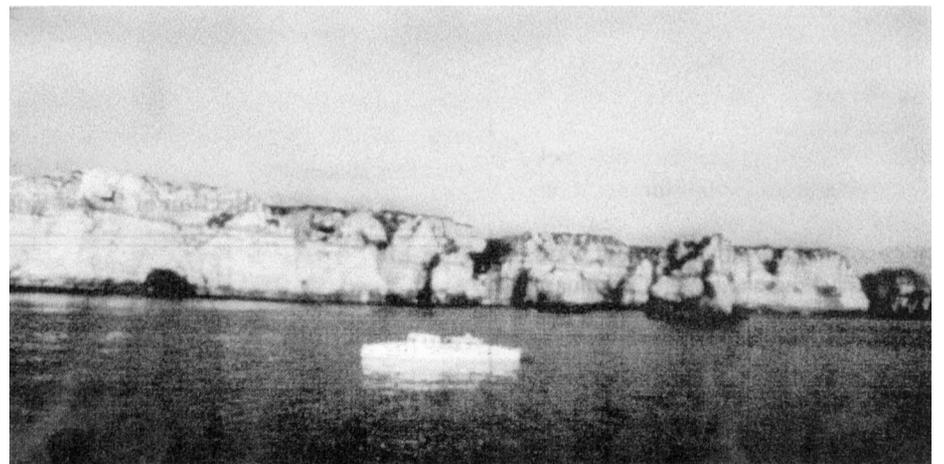
"If you really want to be mentally and physically free then the last thing you want to do is invent a round the world expedition which will cost hundreds of thousands of pounds," says the very matter



(above): Steve, pedalling the ocean waves inside the good ship 'Moshka'.

Pics: Kenny Brown

(below): The expedition departing Portugal for the Atlantic crossing.



of fact Steve. "What has become a very serious external influence is the fact that we still owe so much money. When the shit hits the fan, the thing that will keep me going is the fact that I am indebted to people. So my priorities are firstly to repay my family and friends financially and secondly because there are now thousands of people who would love to see us do it."

The hope of the expedition when it reaches America is that, having proved they can stay alive and get across the Atlantic Ocean, sponsors will be far more forthcoming.

"Any expedition gets more attractive to sponsors the closer it gets to completion," says Kenny.

Despite the financial millstones and insecurities hanging round the expedition's neck, the mental attitudes of those involved remains firmly fixed on success.

"I feel remarkably calm and composed," said Steve just prior to cycling off into the Atlantic. "People around me are feeling more nervous than I am

apparently. I think I'll be scared the first time I experience bad weather because I've never been at sea in very bad weather in a boat this size. But we won't be panicking. I'm confident that we'll both be quite business like about it."

"I don't really get worried about crossing the Atlantic," adds Jason. "What I find more worrying is sitting around not doing it. The human body is a lot stronger than we give it credit for - yeah, at the end of the day you might die but then so fucking what, you could die crossing the street - run over by some lunatic pizza express delivery man on a mission."

There were some sobering reminders however.

"I think once I start out it will hammer itself home a bit more," says Jason. "The other day, my dad was sitting there after tea and he said 'so have you made a will yet'. So I said 'what do I want to make a will for - I've got nothing to leave anyone' and he said 'well, we just wanted to know in case anything did bob back - what to do

with it, whether to burn or bury it' - Like my right foot or something! That was a big bucket of cold water over my head. My strawberries and cream came flying out of my bowl."

But for Jason, the philosophy of life overrides the fear of death.

"Not a lot of people have the privilege to get to that point and I think that's when you really start living to the maximum and you say 'yeah I'm alive!'. When you're faced with not having it, that's when you really appreciate it."

Regular satellite updates of their position are collected in Britain and plotted onto navigational charts. The weather in the area is then predicted by a meteorological service. At certain points in the journey, sea currents running against the winds have created what are described as 'confused seas', with waves of around 30ft or more. There have been several occasions when they have been blown back miles.

Despite this, progress has been good, with an average rate of around 45 miles a day and little danger of them running out of their 106 day rations, especially if the good fortune they had at Christmas continues.

On the Yule day itself, Steve and Jason came across an American Cable Laying boat anchored two thirds of the way across the Atlantic, and, just before tucking into an unexpected Christmas dinner, Jason phoned to say: "We are thoroughly enjoying ourselves. Don't bother booking us in for the rest we planned for when we reach America."

Five hours later they were back in the pedal boat, cycling through force eight winds and waves of over 40ft high; one of the more turbulent ways to digest Christmas dinner! On January 26, the good ship Moksha pulled into one of the Turks and Caicos Islands just north of Cuba. Approaching the island proved to be one of the most hair-raising parts of the journey so far, as the dramatic changes in water depth around the islands, lead to notoriously choppy seas and exposed parts of the reef. Despite these last minute difficulties, the team made it to the island, stepping ashore into a swarm of school children, given time off school to watch the two "lunatics" arrive. One of the stories they had to tell the children was of the night over the mid-Atlantic ridge, when a whale used the boat as a back-scratcher - "A rather scary experience in the dead of night," according to Jason.

"It feels like being paroled into a tropical heaven after a long stretch of hard labour and solitary confinement," relayed Steve over the phone from the Turks and Caicos.

They didn't hang around for long however; casting back into the ocean eight days later and heading up to Florida. Their estimated time of arrival in the US is mid to late February.

"Then it will be back to square one," says Kenny. "Except in America we don't know anyone and we're illegal."

Consultation Exorcise

Most Government legislation is preceded by a so-called 'Consultation Process'. This involves the publication of a consultation paper stating the Government's position on the issue due to be legislated over. This consultation paper invites the "widest possible public debate".

These Consultation Processes have become nationally renowned for ignoring the responses that they provoke. At best they seem to provide the Government with the opportunity to become familiar with the arguments they may meet in opposition to their plans. This better enables them to predict the points that will be raised in opposition and therefore what verbage will be necessary in order to ensure that their agenda reaches the statute books regardless of the responses received during the consultation process. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill was one of a long line of good examples of such consultation farces.

The organisations listed below are just some of the many established groups that either published reports critical of the Criminal Justice Act or went on the record as being against some of its sections.

The Law Society (Sections against squatters)

Save the Children (Sections against travellers)

The Children's Society (Sections against travellers)

Housing Law Practitioner's Association (Sections against squatters)

National Association of Probation Officers (All the public order sections - squatters, travellers, raves and festivals, peaceful protesters.)

Council for the Protection of Rural England (Sections on

aggravated trespass and trespassory assemblies - against peaceful protest)

Shelter (Sections against squatters and against travellers)

CHAR - Housing Campaign for Single People (Sections against squatters)

The Housing Institute (Sections against squatters)

The Rambler's Association (Sections on aggravated trespass)

Penal Affairs Consortium (All the public order sections - squatters, travellers, raves and festivals, peaceful protest)

The Prison Governor's Association (All the public order sections - squatters, travellers, raves and festivals, peaceful protest)

National Council for Voluntary Childcare Organisations (Sections against travellers)

National Children's Bureau (Sections against travellers)

Commission for Racial Equality (Sections against travellers)

Barnardos (Sections against travellers)

National Association of Chief Officers of Probation (All the public order sections - squatters, travellers, raves and festivals, peaceful protest)

Association of Metropolitan Authorities (Sections against squatters)

Association of London Authorities (Sections against squatters)

Greenpeace (Sections on aggravated trespass and trespassory assemblies - against peaceful protest)

Friends of the Earth (Sections on aggravated trespass and trespassory assemblies - against peaceful protest)

The Metropolitan Police Federation (Sections against squatters)

Association of Chief Police Officers (Public Order sections putting onus on police)

What use the telescope if it is held to the blind eye; what use the fog horn if it is blown in the deaf ear? 

Life after the CJA: Public Order Monitoring

by Liz Parratt, Campaigns Officer, Liberty

Liberty fears that the new public order powers in Part V of the Criminal Justice Act are likely to exacerbate the very 'problems' there were supposed to 'solve'. Furthermore, they may lead to an increase in the routine violence meted out to peaceful protesters by private security personnel, who are already notorious for taking the law into their own hands, for example, at anti-hunt protests and anti-hunt actions. They may feel that their assaults have a greater legitimacy now that their victims are labelled as potential criminals just for trespassing. Farmers and other landowners who use violence to evict travellers may feel they have greater justification than before the Act.

Worst of all, the new laws risk breaching internationally agreed human rights standards by outlawing the freedom from discrimination, equal protection by the law, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, and the right to privacy and family life.

Liberty has launched a new Public Monitoring Project aiming to subject the use of the new laws in Part V to the closest possible scrutiny, with three aims in mind:

1. By exposing abuses and keeping them in the spotlight of public attention, some restraining influence may be possible over the way the new powers are used in practice. It may be possible to reduce the likelihood of similar legislation being introduced in the future by showing that injustice and intolerance are not vote-winners; gathered material will be used to put pressure on any future governments to repeal all measures breaching international standards.

What we would like to know:

Exact date and time of incident.
Precisely what happened in as much detail as you can remember.
What you were doing immediately before the incident.
Numbers of the police officers involved, or descriptions of private security personnel.
Names and phone numbers of any witnesses, and any photographers, press or independent video makers who were there.
Reasons for any arrests and/or charges.
Your own address and phone number.
The name, address and phone number of your solicitor, if you have one.

2. We aim to identify and support test cases to challenge specific measures in the Act in the Appeal Courts of England and Wales, and in the European Court of Human Rights.

3. We will also try to ensure that defendants receive the best possible legal representation by referring people to appropriate solicitors where necessary. We'll also put lawyers working on similar cases in contact with each other wherever we think this might be helpful.

The monitoring will be conducted in two ways:

1. We are strongly encouraging anyone who is affected by the new public order measures to provide us with written accounts of their experiences, preferably using our standard monitoring forms. This includes anyone who is stopped, searched, detained, evicted, ordered to leave land, or who has their property confiscated or their home destroyed, as well as anyone banned from organising a protest or other event or prevented from attending one, and anyone who is subject to an Interim Possession Order (new measures to evict squatters).

2. We are also planning to provide legal observers for a limited range of key protests and other events where we consider that an independent eye-witness account would be especially useful, or where we might be able to have some restraining effect on policing in practice.

While many people are keen to get hold of legal observers, far fewer are confident about providing their own written accounts of evictions, arrests for aggravated trespass etc. If you've never written up something like this before, please don't be

put off. Structure your report around the usual questions, examples of which are shown in the accompanying table.

Although Liberty can't provide observers for every event, our modest aim is to find out *everything* that happens to *everyone* under Part V of the new Act, and use both to discredit this Government and get the measures repealed by the next one. We can compile far more evidence if people write to us as well as relying on legal observers. So, even if your account is brief, we would rather hear from you than hear nothing.

Furthermore, if we're really going to kick the Government into touch and influence how the measures are used in practice, the fear that *everyone* knows their rights, knows their public order law, and is ready to record and publicise their own experiences of injustice, violence and malpractice should prove to be a useful irritant.

Several organisations are assisting Liberty with monitoring. They will be assessing the need for legal observers at particular events, and reporting arrests under Part V of the Act; we have also asked them to monitor arrests under the Public Order Act 1986, the use of Breach of the Peace powers, and any public order incidents involving private security personnel.

Other organisations, notably SQUASH (Squatters Action for Secure Homes), are launching their own projects to monitor uses and abuses of the new laws. So, ideally, contact the people on the table in the first instance. If you're not sure who to contact, phone the Liberty Campaigns office instead.

Travellers

We are keen to find more people to help with monitoring travellers evictions. If you're a traveller, or have friends or family who are, then do please contact us if you would be willing to help.

Local Groups

During 1994, numerous local Liberty groups were formed by people campaigning against the Criminal Justice Bill. Liberty groups also campaign on a wide range of other human rights issues, with the ultimate aim of securing a Bill of Rights for this country as we believe this is the only way our basic human rights would be safe from the whim of government. If you would like to start a local Liberty Group contact Mary-Ann Stephenson on 071 357 8689.

Calling all Lawyers

At the time of writing, Liberty has about 30 lawyers who have generously agreed to act as legal observers on an occasional basis, in their spare time. However, we desperately need more, particularly outside London. We provide full briefing and instructions, food, transport and those flattering bright yellow legal observer jackets. Most of the work takes place on weekends, sometimes at short notice, although anyone who could observe on weekdays would be a great asset. Trainee lawyers are especially welcome. If you know any lawyers who would be interested in helping with out monitoring work, or who would like to find out more about what's involved, please ask them to contact Liz in the Campaigns office.

Contacts

Raves	Advance Party, PO Box 3290 London NW2 3UJ. 0181 659 9439
Squatting	SQUASH 2 St. Paul's Road, London N1 2QN 0171 226 8938
Travellers	Steve Staines Friends and Families 33 Bryanston Street Blandford Dorset DT11 7AZ 0258 453695
Hunt Sabs	Hunt Saboteurs Association PO Box 1 Carlton Nottingham 0602 590357
Anti Nuclear Weapons Protest	Eyrlis Rhiannon YCND 162 Holloway Road London N7 8DQ
All other protests*	Liz Parratt Liberty Campaigns 21 Tabard Street London SE1 071 357 8689
or	Freedom Network The Old Dole House 372 Coldharbour Ln London SW2 071 738 6721

*NB this includes roads - Road Alert are helping to publicise the monitoring project but otherwise they're too busy with current road protests to take more phone calls.

The Freedom Network and Brighton Justice are both co-ordinating support to defendants such as protests outside courts and letters to those in prison. Freedom Network to above, Brighton Justice are at 12 Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY.





The Post Bag

- letters to SQUALL

Love & Rage

Dear Squall,

I feel obliged to reply to the article 'Love Over Pain', by C J Stone in Squall 8.

There is no division between love and hate, each of them is futile if applied indiscriminately on its own. The lion only lies down with the lamb in dreams, and if you suspend 'confrontation' I'm sure the capitalists will gladly ask you to bring your own mint sauce.

Creativity is more than dyed hair and juggling - it's about changing how we live, work and all aspects of our society. When such changes work they are a threat to the current set-up, because of that they are attacked (no other justification is needed) either by the police, the media or both. The media and police follow orders or their own interests - they don't change sides because you smile at them!

The ruling class has power, this is a fact that affects all our lives (improves theirs, ruins ours - which is why they won't give it up). How does change happen? Every concession has to be forced from our rulers. Yes, escalation is a threat - but what do you think the CJA is? Look at how police armaments have been refined over the last few years. They don't care about levels of violence, they just want to effectively repress dissent.

Escalation is not our response alone and, in fact, we have a choice - to continue opposition or to go home and give up! If we oppose repression we can either choose a policy of symbolic martyrdom ("come and see the violence inherent in the system") or we can do all we can to resist. Those who think that attacking the police is never a threat to the state must have forgotten the lessons of Trafalgar Square 1990. If we are not prepared to defend ourselves from police attacks we will achieve nothing. These attacks are not an emotional

reaction - they are a tactical move designed to show that anyone who protests is a legitimate target.

Anyone who wishes to unite "a massive portion of British culture" would do well to understand the nature and tactics of the police and follow the example of the Trafalgar Square Defendant's Campaign in defending all victims of police attacks rather than dismiss those who you disagree with as "agent provocateurs nutcases" and "paid agents of the state".

In love and rage,

Makhno's Outraged Ghost.

Mutual Respect?

Dear Squall,

I write because my house has been squatted two times in two months. The experience has been a nasty one. What happened runs against squatters' claims to improve empty property, and my own long-standing commitment to see housing need met affordably and comprehensively. This letter should raise several disturbing issues for readers of SQUALL.

I completed purchase with a mortgage of a house in Kentish Town, London in October 1994. I arrived to find squatters in the house who I persuaded to leave in two days. Major building work on the roof, and front and back of the house was then able to start. Shortly after the first phase of the work was completed, the house was forcibly entered by different squatters (all male). After they were told the facts about the house but refused to move, I then had to use the PIO law to secure their eviction.

The experience left me feeling dirty, violated and exhausted. It left me anxious and short of sleep. It took days

out of my work schedule as a self-employed trainer.

The cost to me of the squatters' occupation and removal has been at least £1,000, money I wanted to spend on refurbishment of the house. Apart from serious damage to the front door, one or more of the squatters stole an answer phone, a telephone, cleaning brushes, kitchen scissors, mugs etc. They opened my post and broke academic confidentiality with students who had sent their essays to me. They cracked a ceiling, scrawled in marker pen across a mirror and used up my large supply of tea and coffee. They used my gas and electricity and central heating system.

There are some more issues for squatters to think about:

1) The intelligence about what was genuinely empty and neglected was pretty poor. Scaffolding had only just been taken down. Domestic rubbish waited for collection. I was frequently in and out of the house.

2) A quick look at the inside of the house would have shown that this was not a genuinely empty property - very recent correspondence all to me, the supplies in the kitchen, the old but working Hoover etc.

3) The slamming of my own door in my face was unimaginably offensive when my girlfriend and I came to persuade them to leave without my having to resort to the law.

4) The theft and damage have got nothing to do with meeting housing need. This is petty criminal activity.

5) The failure to say sorry. Admitting a mistake would have been an act of just a little maturity. Some reparation or return of my goods would have been even better. Admittedly one of the squatters did say he had learnt a lot from the experience and would think twice about who he squatted with in the future.

I have some experience in the field of social housing and know full well that housing need in this country is not being

met by the present Government. I am also aware that squatting is a reflection of that housing need, and am not against the squatting of genuinely unoccupied and disused properties by people who are homeless.

However, experiences like mine only strengthen the hand of Michael Howard and others who want ever tighter criminal laws and excuses not to meet housing need. In their own interest, squatters have a responsibility to see that the outrageous behaviour I suffered from is stopped in its tracks. Yours sincerely,

Hilary Barnard
Kentish Town,
London.

Solidarity - The Key

Dear Squall,

I've read issue 8, sent to me by a British friend. I'm not a squatter or traveller myself (maybe in the future) but I'm more or less an anarchist and very interested in the squatter / traveller movement. My experience of squats in England has always been positive. The first time I came to England I made contact with comrades in a squat in Oxford, it was three years ago and the people I met there are among my dearest friends.

I came to London last October for the Anarchy in the UK festival and slept at Claremont Road; a lovely place, friendly people, really open and hearty. And such a place is to be demolished to build a motorway!

There is a squatter's movement in Italy, 'though a bit different. Basically squatting for housing is less widespread, while there are lots of squats used as social and political initiative centres - the so-called 'social centres'.

I find this kind of lifestyle

a real creative experiment for a different society, a different way of life, different human relationships. Living without property and against property as the 'right' to own.; experimenting 'in the field' ideals of solidarity and justice Well, what more could I say? Thank you for existing.

Love and solidarity, no retreat, no surrender,

Cati,
Forli, Italy.

A Criminal Justice Fact

The people are growing stronger
In truth it is a fact
That the power of the people's
from
The criminal injustice act
They thought that they could put
us down
Then right before their eyes
All oppressed united
join hands and swiftly rise
The act it seems was drafted
for a chosen few's convenience
So what's left for the rest of us
Down right disobedience

Ant,
Plumstead.

Banking on Depression

Dear Squall,

Thank you very much for the copy of Squall which contains many interesting if somewhat depressing articles and illustrates the amount of campaigning we have to do on so many different issues.

Best wishes, keep up the struggle.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Banks MP
House of Commons,
London SW1.

Sheffield DIY Conference

Dear Squall

Friday 16th December was the start of a mega weekend for a lot of people, not least myself, a massive shot in the arm for DIY culture. With Claremont over, consumermass coming up, a lot of people seemed to be on the edge of mania, itching to move on to the next issue, but not knowing what to tackle next. I, for one, viewed the invitation from Sheffield to attend a conference on DIY culture as a holiday, a respite from the madness of Babylondon. Fuck was I wrong, the people in Sheffield had recycled a beautiful stone school on the top of a hill overlooking some amazing scenery. Needless to say the building had suffered some institutionalised vandalism

before being left to rot (who are the criminals?). In true DIY tradition wood-burners were brought up by the Freedom Network and Ben from Brighton provided a PC to record the skool register and data base the collected wisdom.

To record the entire retinue would be impossible here but there were workshops on subjects such as LETS schemes, mainstream media, alternative media, building and open space recycling, children's prisons, agenda 21 and, one dear to my own heart, direct action.

Regional problems were solved with a national brainstorm. Questions were answered in all sorts of areas, telephone numbers were swapped so fast the pens kept catching fire. Among the contributors were Guilfin, Effin, Freedom Network, Snooze News, Small World Media, Preston anti-roads Campaign, No M-11 Campaign, Advance

Party, CND, Sheffield SU and SWP.

A whole-hearted thanks to Veggies Catering who not only kept us going night and day but cooked food from the supermarket skip run for those who had run out of money, (off-licence, get thee behind me) and Smokescreen for the kickin'.

Also Moses, Barry, Richard of the Old Skool Collective who hosted the weekend.

More DIY conferences are in the pipeline, Rugby and Cardiff being the next venues. If you want in on the next one phone one of the Freedoms. It's not just about established groups, it's about establishing groups and if you come you may go away empowered to start your own regional group in the knowledge that you have the support and advice of people all over the country.

Cheers,

Claremont Kit



CONTACTS

Advisory Service for Squatters (ASS) - Gurus of the Squatting world. Open for advice, practical and legal, at 2 St Paul Rd, London N1 2QN from 2-6pm. Tel: 0171 359 8814.

SQUASH, Squatters Action for Secure Homes - Voluntary group opposing squatting aspects of CJA. Actions, lobbying. Meetings on the second Tuesday of every month at 7pm. SQUASH, 2 St Paul's Rd, London N1 2QN. Tel: 0171 226 8938.

Liberty - "National Council for Civil Liberties." Campaigning against Criminal Justice Bill, will be taking HM Govt to Euro. court if Bill passes. Mainly media, lobbying & parliamentary (esp. European). Liberty, 21 Tabard St, London SE1 4LA. Tel: 0171 403 3888.

Freedom Network - Networking opposition to the Criminal Justice Bill. Currently co-ordinating over 50 local, anti-CJA groups nationwide. Contact for one near you. The Freedom Network, c/o The Green Office, The Old Dolehouse, 372 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, London SW9. Tel: 0171 738 6721.

Exodus Collective - 'A movement of Jah people'. Seriously active collective creating housing, parties, community and bringing life back to Luton. See article page 32. Long Meadow Community Farm, Chalton Cross, Sundon Road, Luton, Beds. Tel: 0582 508 936

Advance Party - "The Right to Party?" Representing ravers, party-goers, festies & organisers. Campaigning against Criminal Justice Bill, information, action, 'rights cards', meetings. Advance Party, PO Box 3290, London NW2 3UJ. Tel: 0181 659 9439 or 0171 700 0878.

Advance Party Reading, PO Box 1072, Reading, RG1 5YR. Tel: 0734 451547.

Advance Party Cambridge, PO Box 12, Mill Road, Cambridge CB12 2AD.

Homeless Information Project - HIP Southwark's advisory service for squatters. Practical & legal advice, CJB info, meetings. Mon - Fri 4 - 7pm at 612 Old Kent Rd, London SE15 Tel: 0171 277 7639.

Bristol Housing Action Movement - 'Homeless? Don't be - Squatting is still legal!' - A collective of squatters and friends who advise and assist wherever possible. Still operating from a box no. until they find new premises. PO Box 56, Green leaf Bookshop, Colston Street, Bristol, Avon.

M-11 Link Road Campaign - NVDA against the M11 extension. Massive resistance: where to next? Successful, very active group. c/o Wanstead Environmental Centre, The High Street, London E11. Tel: 0181 989 8741.

Road Alert - Coordinating anti road protests across the country. Direct action arm of Alarm UK. Opposition to Criminal Justice Act. Information, latest news, actions, networking & a wicked occasional magazine. Road Alert, PO Box 5544, Newbury, RG14 5FB. Tel: 0635 521770.

Alarm UK - Set up following Alarm's London success in defeating road proposals. Network of groups and activists opposing damaging road schemes & the CJB. Co-ordinating 200 community groups nationwide. Alarm UK, 13 Stockwell Rd, London SW9 9AU. Tel: 0171 737 6641.

Friends, Families and Traveller's Support Group - "All citizens of a free society should have the right to travel and the right to stop without fear of persecution because of their lifestyle." Setting up monitoring groups for post CJA abuses. SAE for information to this very deserving group: Steve Staines, 33 Bryanston St, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 7AZ. Tel: 0258 453 695.

Labour Campaign for Traveller's Rights - Well-respected group fighting for traveller's rights and concentrating on 1968 Caravan Sites Act demanding full implementation, wider definitions to include 'new' travellers, grants and release of unused Govt. land for sites. 84 Bankside Street, Leeds LS8 5AD. Paul Winter: 0532 486746. Jenny Smith: 0275 838910.

Hunt Saboteurs Association - National umbrella for local groups. Very active in opposing CJA. Along with Road protesters, represent the most painful NVDA thorn in the establishment's side. Days of action - all year - get involved. For information on local groups: HSA, PO Box 1, Carlton PDO, Nottingham. Tel: 0602 590357.

121 Centre - Cafe, bookshop, meeting place, advice centre for those interested in squatting, women's issues, unemployment and the state of the nation. Run by squatters at, 121 Railton Rd, Brixton, London SE24. Tel: 0171 274 6655.

The 56a Info Shop - News, action & meeting place, books, teashop, records, comics. Squatting, counter-culture & lots of small press stuff. Open Mon, Thurs, Fri 3-7pm. 56 Crampton St, London SE17.

Cool Tan Arts - A collection of artistically active squatters who run regular cafes, lots of workshops, informative cinema & video, events & music. Cool Tan now have only a short time before the new owners of their building want them out - sahould be moving to new premises. Make the most of this innovative centre before it's too late. Contributions, ideas & help on new project welcome. For more information contact Cool Tan Arts, The Old Dolehouse, 372 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, London. Tel: 0171 737 2745/0100.

Rainbow Centre - Networking point for tribal issues, squatting, travelling, festivals, dongas, anti-roads, eco & Criminal Justice. Arts space, workshops, meetings Information. Currently under threat of eviction - support essential. Agenda 21 features highly in future plans - want to find out more? Rainbow Centre, The Olde Church, 23 Highgate Rd, Kentish Town NW5. Tel: 0171 267 1828.

Monolith News - Magazine for travellers of the New Age and all interested. No. 17, news, reviews, legalise stonehenge - whose heritage?, festivals, operation snapshot, earth mysteries. 50p & A5 SAE + 50p for each back issue. Monolith publications, PO Box 4, Syston, Leicestershire LE7 4RD.

Stonehenge Campaign - Stonehenge belongs to you and me. Regular newsheets, information, listings & meetings. SAE + donation to; Stonehenge Campaign, 99 Torriano Av, London NW5 2RX.

Small World - "Just Do It." A non-profit making organisation committed to supporting campaign groups working on environmental and social justice issues. Produce 'Undercurrents', a quarterly alternative video magazine. Features Criminal Justice Bill, direct action, M11 and anti-roads campaigns, topical environmental issues. Videos available from; Small World Media Ltd, 1A Waterlow Rd, London N19 5NJ. Tel: 0171 281 7320.

Contraflow - Part of the European Counter Network. Radical mag with occasional articles on squatting and travellers. Available from the 56a Info Shop (Address above).

ByPass - "Cross currents in under-the-counter culture". No. 4 mag review and listing over 400 small press zines, pamphlets, books & whatever. Excellent production connecting you to "a whole chunk of the independent, alternative and dissident underground". No. 4 may be lastr in this format 0- get it while you can. £1.20 to: ByPass, PO Box 61, Wallasey, Merseyside, L44 8HZ.

FIN (Free Information Network) - Local activists & motivators. Newsheets published as and when containing up to date information, festival news, events etc. SAE to your local branch.

AberdeenFIN - 36 Buchan Rd, Torry, Aberdeen AB1 3SW

EFFIN - c/o York, The Coffee Bar Grassroots, 58 Charles St, Cardiff

GuilFIN - PO Box 217, Guildford, Surrey.

Maidstone FIN - (new) PO Box 263, Maidstone, Kent.

ManFIN - Dept. 53, 1 Newton Street, Piccadilly, Manchester, M1.

MerseyFIN - PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 6AU.

Mother Clan - 29 Silverton Crescent, Moseley, Birmingham B13 9NH.

NeverNeverFIN - 8 Campbell Rd, Southsea, Hants.

NottFIN - c/o The Rainbow Centre, 180 Mansfield Rd, Nottingham.

Oxfiend - Box A, 111 Magdalen Rd, Oxford.

RatFINk (formerly TVFIN) - c/o RSI, 30 Silver St, Reading.

SheffFIN - The Ecology Co, 199 Crookes Valley Rd, Sheffield.

SouthwestFIN - (new) c/o Wild Pear Court, Combe Martin, North Devon.

WalsallFIN - c/o 17 Newhall House, Newhall Street, Cladmore, Walsall WS1 3DY.

