

SQUALL

n e c e s s i t y b r e e d s i n g e n u i t y

No. 10

Summer '95

Magazine for Sorted Itinerants



Sowing the Seeds

- The Land Comes Alive
- Kraaking Dutch Squats
- Born on the Road
- Cashing in on Culture



no flags

no fences

no faking it

The State it's in

The 'new politics of protest' is now a phrase branded about regularly in the national media.

Journalists are sent to report on the activities of the new politics, feature writers go out of their way to invent some personalities behind it; opinion writers, on the other hand, don't go out at all but still try desperately to squeeze it into a neat and manageable sociological context. All the debates are valid, though some of the conclusions are laughable.

To some extent the 'new politics' is a dissatisfaction, smouldering away through the long culturally-barren and socially corrosive years of Conservative Government and finally bursting into flames with the onset of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill (now an Act).

The Criminal Justice Act (CJA) is identified by many as one of the great cultural hammerings of modern times, a draconian monster sent to squeeze the living daylight out of diversity and dissent. It is of course just one of several such monsters.

However, the distinguishing feature of the CJA is that it specifically targets sections of society by name (unauthorised campers/travellers], squatters, aggravated trespass [environmental protesters], raves and repetitive beats etc). This direct labelling is unusual for legislation, which usually alters situations via backdoor changes in procedure rather than naming the target. It is a distinguishing feature indicative of the fact that the public order sections of the Act were always more of a PR exercise than a legislative necessity. Thus the sections specifically define the sacrificial 'scapegoats', for reasons of maximum public effect.

The law targeted certain groups and those groups have responded. Each individual campaign found that it was not a lonely piece of kindling but part of a fire ready to burn.

Too many people enjoy dancing to the sound of "repetitive beats" for that particular CJA phrase not to become the laughing stock for a generation. A symbol of every draconian length the Government will go to in order to decimate any culture contrary to its monetary myopia. With an average membership age of 62, does anyone in the Conservative Party have any idea about modern culture? And if a surgeon doesn't know what he's doing, should he charge in with a flailing scalpel? But charge in they did. 'Repetitive beats' - Satire becomes reality; so spawning what newspapers have recently been referring to as the 'new politics' of protest.

It is a testament to the scapegoat mentality that authored much of the CJA, that the main sections on squatting are still not yet enforceable. The Law Society and other legal organisations always maintained that the public order sections of the CJA were some of the most clumsily drafted sections of legislation in living memory, and none more so than the sections on squatting.

As a result, the changes to the rules of court, necessary to bring the squatting sections of the Act into force, have not yet been issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department.

After conducting two consultation processes in an attempt to disentangle the mess, the Lord Chancellor is still unable to sort it out. Deadlines come and deadlines go, and all the Lord Chancellor's Department will say now is that "the court rule changes may be issued later on this year sometime".

Word behind the scenes is that, with Michael Howard happy to have had his little law and order run-around with squatters, the court rule changes may well be phrased in such a way as to make those sections effectively unusable anyway. The courts don't want the grief.

That's not to say that the CJA is not inflicting the damage for which it was designed. Section 61 (police powers to evict unauthorised campers) is now regularly used to lever travellers from their encampments, often with only a few hours notice (see 'Going Round in Circulars', page 29). For the most part, travellers move on rather than risk losing their homes and being arrested for the new criminal offence of ignoring the order to leave. The one exception so far occurred in Scotland where an encampment of travellers refused to move on despite police orders to do so under threat of the CJA. They were consequently arrested and taken to court. However, in what might prove to be an important court precedent, the Sheriff threw the case out because of a dispute over who owned the particular piece of land the travellers had camped on.

Hunt Saboteurs still come top of the arrest list for CJA offences. Along with road protesters they have been the main targets for the aggravated trespass sections.

But if you really want to be made aware of how the Government gets what the Government wants, regardless of

legislation, simply look at the number of free festivals both this summer and last. Despite Michael Howard's best efforts, the Criminal Justice Bill was not law last summer and yet the number of free festivals, once the subject of huge free information lists, could be counted on two hands. This year they can be counted on one. How has it happened? By whispering in the ears of Chief Constables, by making licence applications more difficult, by making health/safety and noise level criteria prohibitively strict. In their place we have more and more commercial festivals, commanding huge financially prohibitive entrance fees (see 'Cashing in On Culture', page 36). The Government of course are quite happy to let profit-motivated organisations continue to milk the need for dance and festival, just as long as they are under official control and the source of tax-payments.

The Government hardly needs legislation to enforce methods of control, a situation further highlighted by the dramatic fall in the number of traveller's vehicles prior to the arrival of the Criminal Justice Act.

Operation Snapshot, with its computer-aided police surveillance, has been used to direct harassment, forcing many travellers either off the road or abroad. Similarly, the news-manufactured hysteria whipped up to maximise the PR potential of the Criminal Justice Act has

But when people can't get into the dance hall *or* the democratic process, for want of an excessive entrance fee, then they will create their own.

also led to an increase in vigilante activity against travellers.

One very serious piece of legislation about to take many people unaware is the Job Seekers Bill currently weaseling its way through the parliamentary process. The fact that the co-signatories of the Bill are Michael Portillo and Peter Lilley is more than a hint about what sort of legislation it is going to be. Anyone who looks or acts in a way that 'militates' against finding paid employment can have their benefit stopped. Anyone who refuses a job offered to them, regardless of suitability or pay level, will lose benefit. It doesn't take much to work out the ramifications of this dire attempt to remold UB40's into slaves for the Portillo ship (see 'Compulsory Reprogramming', page 10).

Think about it: Road protests, land occupations, community squat cafes, environmental protection, McLibel - where would they be without the volunteered labour of UB40's, who use the Government's reluctantly-given wage of £42 a week to do work that is vital, though economically unrecognised. Whereas the Criminal Justice Act took on specific groups of people in hand-to-hand combat, the Job Seekers Bill will be pulling the carpet out from underneath individual feet. Be prepared.

The "new politics" referred to recently in national newspapers is in fact a dance of survival; very often using celebration as a political weapon. The triumphs of the rave and squatting collective, Exodus, in the face of high level political opposition are one example (see 'Keeping the Momentum' on page 15). The party thrown in Bosnia for a war-torn people by the Glasgow free-party collective, Desert Storm is another (see page 38). The ingenious sky-walkers up at the No-M65 Campaign in Preston are yet another (see page 22).

Changing the political atmosphere can also be a long test of endurance. The McLibel campaign currently taking on the financially gigantic might of the McDonalds Corporation, has led to the public exposure of some of McDonald's dismal environmental and nutritional record. Because libel suits do not qualify for legal aid the two co-defendants are having to don the wigs themselves. A task involving huge amounts of legal analysis and court preparation. There is, of course, a massive personal cost but their determination is producing remarkable results. The copious quantities of adverse media publicity has led the £26 billion-a-year Corporation to seek ways of quietly putting an end to the trial (see Page 8). It has now lasted nearly a year.

Political atmospheres, prone as they are to power-hungry and hidden

motives, are rarely to be trusted. The Nolan Committee recommendations on the conduct of MPs lists honesty, selflessness, objectivity, accountability and openness as standards of public life. But it will take more than an MP's charter to re-install a long-disappeared faith in the integrity of the parliamentary process. The domed Lobby Hall in the Houses of Parliament is a vestigial organ of

democratic accountability for the citizen, a fact testified to by the rise in the number of professional lobby firms meeting friendly MPs in the offices of Whitehall. If you've got the cash, then you can ensure the minister's ear.

This is not democracy - this is an increasingly unequal financial exclusivity, with respect for little else. For all Nolan's recommendations on the activities of politicians, public accountability and consultation are still only evident as expedient words masking a predetermined agenda.

But when people can't get into the dance hall *or* the democratic process for want of an excessive entrance fee, then they will create their own. In disused halls or open fields; with talking circles, festivals, dances, community centres - co-operation and direct environmental protection.

We cannot live without respect. And when respect is missing - injustice thrives. When respect is missing - we must give it back to ourselves. If a new politics is needed, it is the politics of a respectocracy. It is needed now and now takes effort; the survivors dance.

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 and no anchoring affiliations other than the truth.

▲▲▲▲ **Arm Yourself**

SQUALL is a non-profit making magazine, staffed entirely by unpaid volunteers. It is a labour of necessity. The finances required to research, collate, print and distribute the magazine are raised from benefits gigs, donations and magazine sales.

We urge anyone with the capacity to organise benefit gigs to help us out. We urge anyone with available money to contribute. However small - it all adds up.

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Much Respect & Without Whom.....

Debbie Allen, Nicki Spawls, Andrea Latham, 75A Collective, Shim, Chris McTuff & The Tofu Love Frogs, UNL Liberty Group & noMad Collective, pHreak, 64/65ers, Rainbow Church Collective, Molly Malones, all the folk at CHAR, Paul Guenault, Roving Jenny S, Anomie, Small World Posse, Kieran McMahon, The Tragics, Mr Social Control, Patience Agbabi, Mark Kelly (ex-Mr Nasty), Barnstormer, Billy Bragg, Razz, Tony Allen, ASS, Andy Vizave, Martijn, Jim Paton, Ben Schneider, CopyArt, Flick & Ivan, Petra, The Captains, 52Bers.

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Nick Cobbing

It's a Shell Out

In May, protesters picketed the Shell AGM at Queen Elizabeth II Conference Hall, London; climbing onto the roof and burning the oil conglomerate's flag.

Shell have decimated the lands of the Ogoni tribe in Nigeria, in a relentless drive to extract oil, even seeking the co-operation of the Nigerian Government militia in quelling objections from the Ogoni people.

During the course of the protest action, a live mobile phone-link was established with Greenpeace activists squatting Shell's Brent Spar oil platform in the North Sea. Shell, with the consent of the British

Government, plan to sink Brent Spar as a financially expedient way of decommissioning the structure. Greenpeace argue that the presence of 130 tonnes of radioactive sludge on the platform is likely to cause intolerable pollution and that Shell should fork out the extra £34 million necessary to tow it to land for dismantling.

John Gummer defended the British Government's decision to give Shell the go-ahead saying that the pollution would be insignificant and that the UK was "the clean man of Europe". The decision has been criticised by the European Union Environment Commissioner, Ritt Bjerregaard, as well as by North Sea European states including Germany, Denmark, Belgium and Iceland.

Paying the War Machine

One of the biggest arguments used by the Government in favour of the British arm's trade is that it provides jobs and so helps the economy.

Britain's arms manufacturers account for some 20% of the world market for arms exports. However, in 1994, the British arms industry was subsidised by taxpayers to the tune of £2 billion.

The Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD), a government office that reports to the secretary for trade and industry, insures the exports of British industry, both civil and 'defence'. The 'defence' industries now account for half of its business.

The ECGD guarantees industry refunds on contracts if the importing country

defaults on payment. Those defaults totalled some £4.08 billion in 1994; arms manufacturers claimed £1.96 billion of it.

In 1992-93 (latest figures available) 53% of the arms defaults were from Asian buyers, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia. Other defaulters included Mexico, ex-Yugoslavia and Nigeria. There were more claims on exports to Iraq (£430 million) in the three years to March 1993 than on any other single country.

As with most industries, the arms industry operates on a credit system. Goods are manufactured to buyer's specifications and then shipped. Only upon receipt of the goods will the buyer be expected to complete payment for them. The arms are already in the hands of the buyer when the buyer cannot, or refuses to, cough up. Thus, it would

seem, not only are Britons and British companies involved in producing weapons used in the massacre of people such as the East Timorese and the indigenous peoples of Southern Mexico, but it would appear that the taxpayer is helping to foot the bill.

Rather than pay oppressive regimes to rid themselves of their political opponents, £2 billion would go a long way in getting some of Britain's unemployed population back to work. And not in menial, soul-destroying jobs, but in imaginative schemes to improve the quality of life in this country. Put one way, £2 billion per year would pay 200,000 people £10,000 each, per year, to work on Agenda 21. Put another way, £2 billion would get over 150,000 nurses back in the NHS; saving lives, not destroying them.

British Aerospace supplying Oppressive Regimes

British Aerospace's Annual General Meeting was targeted by Arms Trade Protesters in April.

Three shareholding protesters were forcibly ejected from the meeting amid angry scenes about arms sales to oppressive regimes.

BAe Hawk aircraft supplied to the Indonesian military for 'defensive' purposes have been implicated many times in the invasion of East Timor and the massacre of its population by neighbouring Indonesia. Conservative estimates put the number of deaths at over 200,000. Many observers point to the gas and oil-rich fields off the northern shores of East Timor which have attracted the interest of wealthy Indonesian and Australian industrialists. The increasing competition for resources in growing Eastern Asian economies means that whoever can control these fields will control a substantial portion of future energy production in the area.

Shareholding protesters stalled the meeting's agenda by firing question after question about the company's involvement in arms exports including the supply of 10,000 electric shields and 5,000 electric shock batons, worth £2 million, to Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Royal Ordnance premises at British Aerospace

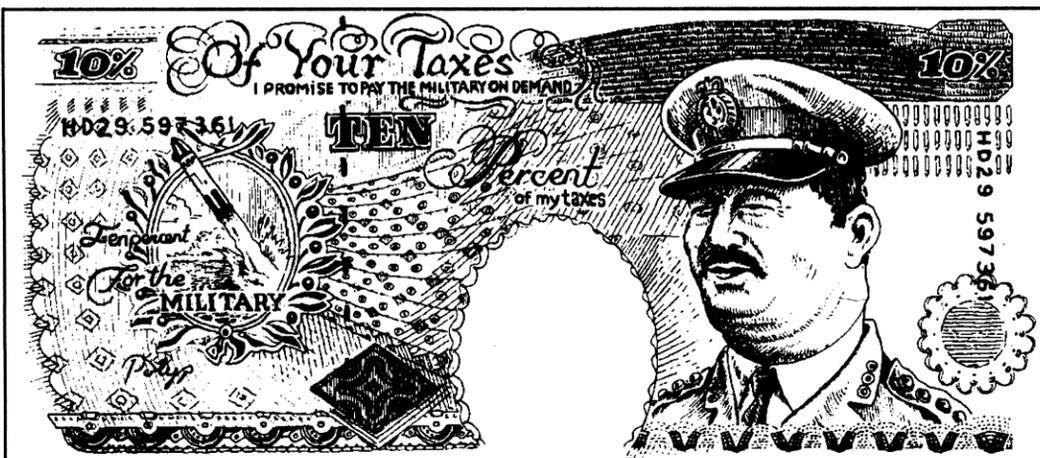
were used to demonstrate the hardware and the offer was made on BAe headed notepaper.

In response to the allegations of shock batons, BAe chief executive, Dick Evans, confirmed that a number of employees had been "disciplined" but refused to reveal details both about the contract itself and what action had been taken against those involved in the supply.

The two allegedly involved in the deal were Royal Ordnance sales director Philip Morris and general sales manager Martin Trengrove. The pair broke the 1968 firearms act and so, one might expect, a crown prosecution should be in order. However, Hugh Colver, BAe's director of public affairs said: "It's an internal disciplinary matter and we wouldn't want to discuss what the charges were."

Morris was suspended but the suspension ended when the investigation was complete. "That's where the matter ends..... yes, he's still with the company," added Colver.

Incidentally, Hugh Colver CBE was previously a press secretary at 10 Downing Street, and a former press chief at the Ministry of Defence. Besides his work with BAe he is also currently press officer for the Conservative Party.



Hackney Blah

Hackney Council's former Director of Housing, Bernard Crofton, has been sacked for racial harassment following a decision by a disciplinary panel at the end of March.

Crofton wrote a report earlier this year blaming 'illegal immigrants' for corruption and fraud within the housing department and was disciplined for unsupported allegations of nepotism against personnel director, Sam Yeboah (see SQUALL 9).

The panel concluded that Mr Crofton's behaviour had been "intolerable and unacceptable". During the course of the hearing Ken Ostler, head of the Tenancy Audit Team (TAT) was sacked and said he had effectively "cut his own throat" by supporting Crofton. He also claimed he had been escorted from his office "like a criminal", not too dissimilar to the way he and his TAT 'untouchables' escorted hundreds of squatters from their homes like criminals over the past year or so. A professional auditor, Keith Burchall, took over from Ostler at TAT at the beginning of March.

During the time Crofton's case was being heard a total of 19 Labour councillors, occupying nearly all of the top jobs, were sacked. All, that is, except the much-hated chair of the housing committee, Slimey

Matthews, who stated last year that he could not wait to use the CJA against squatters.

In a recent interview with Inside Housing magazine Matthews wound up tenants at Lincoln Court in Stoke Newington by referring to what they are reputed to call their "beautiful estate" as a "crappy 1970s' tower block". He has also angered tenants by announcing that 19 poorly maintained estates in the borough, a total of 7,000 of the 36,000 remaining council properties, are under consideration for sale to housing associations.

Because of the personnel shuffles on the top rung of the council, and Tony Elliston's replacement of Jerry White as chief executive, Crofton is said to be hopeful that his appeal, due to start in June, will get a 'fair' hearing. He is appealing because, according to the Hackney Gazette, "the council made almost 50 procedural mistakes during the original 22-day hearing, which was branded a farce after the five-member disciplinary hearing was whittled down to two following three resignations".

The truth of this case will probably never be known to Hackney residents and in terms of uncovering fraud in Hackney housing department, it seems that the rot is so deep (with new cases of department workers committing benefit frauds popping up all the time) that any enquiry will be a case of the bent investigating the bent.

Stonehenge Welcomes its own

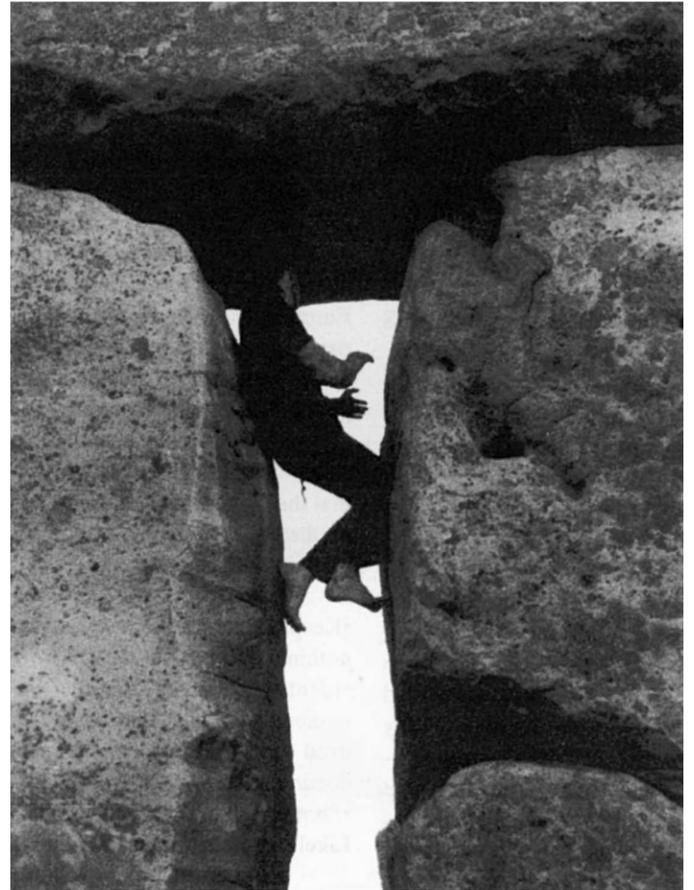
VE Day was commemorated at Stonehenge this year when 300 people descended on the stones just before dawn. Security guards looked on bewildered as the pilgrims arrived, virtually simultaneously, from all points of the compass.

Dawn was welcomed by a note from a conch shell as the crowd sang, danced and cheered. Tourists eagerly snapped photographs although they were reluctant to leave the 'official' path that surrounds the stones.

People climbed over the stones and a respectful silence was observed when a representative of those gathered thanked their grandparents for defending their freedom, and honoured those who "fought and died to keep this island free from a totalitarian police state".

Later in the morning a police van arrived, but left soon after. One police spokesperson said that no laws were being broken and there was little they could do.

In contrast to this happy gathering, the anniversary of the 'Battle' (read: massacre) of the Beanfield was commemorated less than three



Kirsteen Jock Atkinson

weeks later.

Upto 100 people gathered at a site near Stonehenge only to be met with a police presence that astounded those present. The Wiltshire Constabulary had, it seems, been tipped-off well in advance. Perhaps expecting more people than the VE Day festival and determined to stop anything before it began, three helicopters watched the crowd

along with at least 100 police officers.

It would seem that the Wiltshire police force, far from allowing the VE Day event to go-ahead, had been caught with their pants down. The sight of police officers breaking up VE Day celebrations would have given the press a field day so the gathering left alone. No such luck for the Beanfield commemorators.

Acquittals for five arrested in Hackney Homeless 'Incident'

Peter Silver, of solicitors Peter Silver and Co, represented Robert Walker who was charged with Violent Disorder contrary to Section 2 of the Public Order Act.

He along with four others, represented by solicitors Hodge, Jones and Allen, were all acquitted of public order offences following the incident which occurred on Green Lanes after the Hackney Homeless Festival in Clissold Park last May (see SQUALL 7).

Peter Silver believes that "quite frankly, there was a violent disorder after the festival but I think a jury of 12 people have indicated quite clearly that they think it was perpetrated by a bunch of thugs in blue uniforms and crash helmets. I can't speak for the jury but I can only assume this is what they thought".

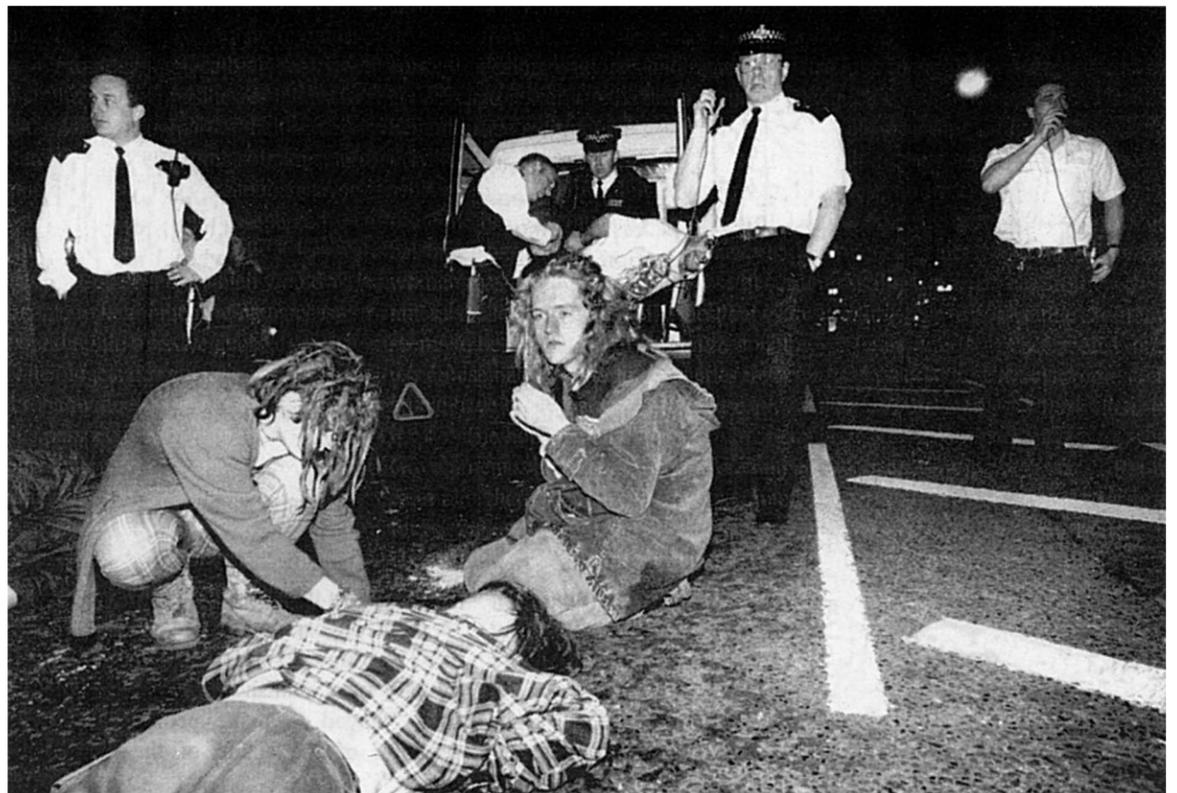
Nick Cobbing's photograph (below) was useful in the case because, says Mr Silver, "It shows the attitude of the police," who are quite evidently not administering first aid to a "very badly injured man" lying on the ground after he had been beaten around the head by police, whilst attempting to run out of the way. The picture also refutes police claims that paving stones, bricks and bottles were thrown at them; the road is completely clear of missiles. The injured man's civil action against the police is pending and this photograph could again prove useful evidence.

Mr Silver told SQUALL that

the police case was very weak. He has no doubt that the violence, following an excellent and peaceful festival, was "totally unnecessary" and

thinks there would have been no trouble had the police not turned up. "There should be people in court charged with grievous bodily harm and if

found guilty they should be treated the same as everyone else. That means 5 years. But because they're policemen, they're not."



Nick Cobbing

ID or not IDthat is the serious question

A national identity card system, in one form or another, is likely to be introduced next year - Despite fierce opposition from the Government's own party and Baroness Thatcher.

In early April John Major promised the introduction of compulsory identity cards to help "deter crime and make it more likely that we will catch criminals."

This appealed to the roused rabble of the Tory rank and file, but the Government quickly back-pedalled when libertarians within the party - led by the Conservative Way Forward (CWF) group - objected on the grounds that it "would have very serious implications for the traditional liberties of the British people."

The CWF is a right-wing pressure group headed by Baroness Thatcher. A pamphlet published by the group in April said: "There should be no requirement on the citizen to establish his or her identity unless suspected of a crime or applying for some state service, nor to explain why he or she chooses to be in a particular place."

And Michael Stern, a Tory back bencher, said: "It's alien to the way we live, we breathe, as free citizens in this country."

Of course, more usual civil liberties groups objected on similar grounds, but it was the threat from his own party that chastened John Major and

beelzebug himself Michael Howard, who produced the Green consultation paper in May.

Staunch right-wing xenophobes also oppose identity cards on the grounds that they will be the first step towards abandoning border controls with Europe. The May consultation paper outlined a much watered down approach. It detailed six possibilities that, according to Howard, are simply intended to stoke up the debate. He insists that the Government is "neutral" on the issue. The six options are:

- Keeping the status quo, i.e. do nothing
- Identity Travel Card: A passport type card that could be used as a European travel document.
- Photographic Driving Licence: Likely to be introduced in July 1996 but could double up as an ID card.
- Driving Licence ID Card: A merging of the travel card and driving licence. Foreign nationals would have to apply for a parallel card.
- Multi-function Card: A card with name, date of birth and nationality written on it, an a micro chip containing more detailed information.
- Compulsory Card: The above options are more or less voluntary, the compulsory card could follow any of those models and speaks for itself. This could cost £600 million to introduce.

Despite the consultation photograph ID cards for motorists, and almost certainly for benefit claimants, will be in place by next year. This will cover about 70% of the population and is seen by some as ID cards through the back door. What the Government wants, the Government gets.

Social Security Secretary, Peter Lilley opposes the introduction of compulsory cards, but he does want them for benefit claimants in the belief that they will cut fraud.

Why he believes this is anyone's guess considering that only five per cent of benefit fraud involves false identity.

The arguments against ID cards on the

grounds of traditional liberty, that no-one should be treated like a criminal until they become one (or grows dreads) are obvious.

But there are also more pertinent arguments against their effectiveness in doing what they are designed to do.

There is however, little evidence that this is so.

The Green paper itself states: "The effect of an identity card scheme on crime more generally is difficult to quantify with any precision." And it acknowledges that to be effective the police would need wider powers to check identity.

Ann Oweres, director of Justice (The British Sections of International Commission of Jurists) says: "To be effective, identity cards would have to be compulsory, regularly checked, and backed by national data bases, for example, of fingerprints, residence and immigration status. The card would be a gateway for future checks."

This would undoubtedly lead to harassment of the young and those from non-British backgrounds as it has in France where the zero immigration policy has led to random checks at road blocks and metro stations of those who do not look French.

There is also the fear that such wider powers would be used to harass the travelling community, those who do not conform, and those who resist. Groups on whom databases are already being clandestinely drawn up.

Another problem is that of verifying and correcting the information held on an individual.

In early June, a trainee probation officer, Gareth Thomas, had his future career threatened when a routine security check identified him as someone from the same country, with the same name and near date of birth who had served a two year sentence on a serious conviction ten years previously.

The security check came before Gareth's first trip to a prison. He wasn't told why he was denied entry and only found out what was wrong when his tutor rang to tell him she had been informed of the conviction by the Kent probation service, who had got it from the police's national computer, and he would fail his course.

A few years ago Australia attempted to introduce ID cards with overwhelming public support. When the reality came to light this support turned to mass opposition. Indeed, in 1953 wartime ID cards in this country were abolished because they "tended to make people resentful of the action of the police."

Where There's Muck

The remorseless ingenuity and recycling capabilities of travellers has triumphed recently in the Irish Republic.

A tinker family moved onto some land in the Dublin area, much to the annoyance of the local authorities. As a result the City Council arrived with truck loads of manure and dumped them next to where the family were staying. The

authority claimed that the excrement was designed to help build a city park nearby, but there was little doubt why they had placed it there.

Never-the-less, after a few weeks of waiting, the tinker family decided not to be intimidated by the smell any longer. Did they move off site? No, they bagged up the manure and sold it to local garden centres and horticulturists.

Nuclear waste trains given lick of protest paint

Three people were arrested in May after sitting in front of a train carrying nuclear waste and painting it with anti-nuclear slogans.

Christopher Gwyntopher and Katie Andrews, both seasoned campaigners, were charged with obstructing an engine under the 1886 Malicious Damages Act.

Oliver Stoll was charged with criminal damage for painting the train with a danger sign, the words "danger" and "death" and an outline of a child in remembrance of the nuclear shadow of Hiroshima.

Nine other people took part in the action, at Stratford Station, east London, by leafleting passengers on adjacent platforms and outside the station.

Nuclear waste from Bradwell Power Station, in Essex, is transported through London every Thursday on its way to the Thorpe reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

"Even if an accident doesn't happen," said Christopher Gwyntopher, "there are radiation emissions from the train. A Geiger counter gives a

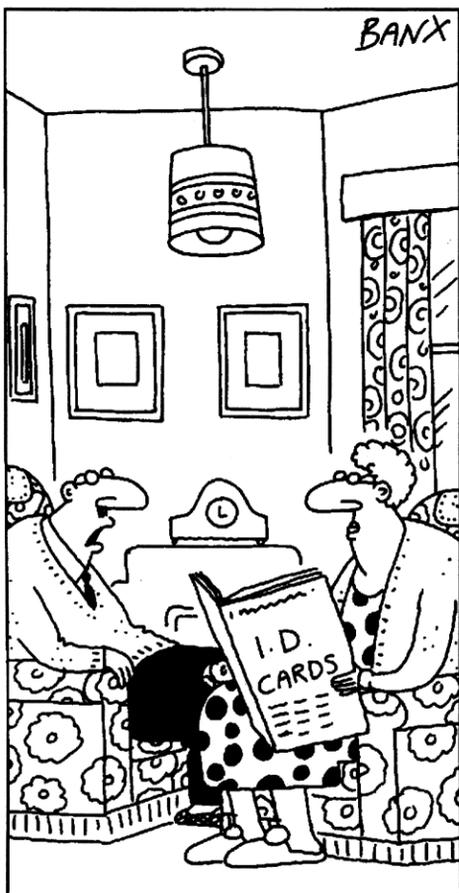
reading from 400 metres and the train crew's own instructions tells them not to remain near the wagons unnecessarily.

"If there was an accident which punctured the container," he continued, "according to work done by a consultant engineer, an area of 28 miles downwind of the train would have to be evacuated or else people would die of radiation sickness".

The activists delayed the train for ten minutes, long enough for it to be painted, as part of a London-wide action against the train.

In December, two CND campaigners, David Polden and CND vice chair Pat Arrowsmith, were arrested for carrying out a similar action.

They are due to appear at Snaresbrook Crown Court on July 24th at 10am. The three people arrested in May appeared before Stratford Magistrates Court on June 19th. The maximum sentence for obstructing an engine is two year's imprisonment. A London-wide action against the shipment of nuclear waste through the capital is planned for October 14th.



'People without identities should have nothing to fear'



Freelance Journalists Targetted

Four freelance journalists covering demonstrations were arrested in the first week of June, heralding what may be a change in police tactics towards NVDA protests.

SQUALL also understands that in April, during an action against the A3 in Hindhead, Hampshire, security guards sprayed white paint onto camera lenses.

Nick Cobbing, a freelance photographer who works for SQUALL and Corrie Cheyne, of Small World Video, were among five people arrested during an action against the launch of the new Alfa Romeo saloon car in Baker Street, London.

About 15 members of the Revolutionary Pedestrian's Front - one of several groups sprouting from the anti-roads movement - gatecrashed the launch, read out the Government's accident statistics and pelted the car with flour and paint.

According to Corrie, she and Nick had lingered to photograph the aftermath when showroom staff made a "citizen's arrest" and held them until police arrived.

"I told them that I was a freelance journalist filming for Small World," she said. "They (the police) confiscated the camera, tape and battery belt which they will hold until August." Nick

also had his film confiscated, although it had been accidentally exposed.

Nick was arrested despite telling police that he was photographing the event for New Statesman and showing them his NUJ card. Both were held for 22 hours and bailed until August. They were arrested for criminal damage and assault although have not yet been charged.

Equally suspect was the arrest of writer Ursula Wills-Jones and photographer Justin Cooke during a demo against an open-cast coal mine in Garforth, near Leeds, on June 1st. They were covering the event for the Big Issue North West and were among 19 people arrested for aggravated trespass - the first arrests for demonstrations under the CJA other than hunt sabs.

Both were carrying NUJ cards and again the police refused to believe they were freelance journalists. They were held for 13 hours before being charged and are due to appear in court on July 4th. Jason's film, however, was not confiscated.

"In the last couple of years video has been used in evidence and the number of people being cleared due to video evidence is worrying them," Corrie told SQUALL. "This year alone five cases have been overturned or did not make it to court because of Small World footage."



Nick Cobbing

Critical Mass, 26th May. Approximately 500 cyclists took part in a demonstration of bike power in Central London. This photograph was taken at the junction of Amwell Street and Pentonville Road where a cyclist, Kate de Pulford, was recently killed by a skip lorry. On mass, the cyclists stopped at the busy junction, dismounted and many raised their bikes in the air as a gesture of respect and defiance. Critical Mass is taking off big-time.

New Police Baton goes Lethal

In May this year, Brian Douglas became the first person to suffer fatal injuries inflicted by the new US style batons employed by the police.

He was arrested in south London on May 3, for a minor traffic offence and was struck several times on the back of the head. Police claim he was found to be in possession of a lock-knife, some cannabis and a CS gas container, and that a scuffle broke out as they tried to arrest him.

Douglas was kept in a police cell for 15 hours before being taken to St Thomas's Hospital, where he died on May 8. During his detainment in the police cells he was visited four times by police surgeons, all of whom failed to realise that he had a fractured skull.

The police maintain that there is no evidence to suggest the baton-injury sustained by Brian Douglas was the cause of his death. But the new polycarbon batons recently introduced by the Metropolitan Police have been a major cause of concern and warnings over accidents waiting to happen.

A north London police station recently held a private demonstration of the new batons for local dignitaries. At the demo it was stressed that the batons are "defensive weapons" for dealing with "violent or potentially violent" prisoners. The emphasis was very much on dangerous criminals. Police can choose between a 26 inch hollow baton or a 24 inch solid one. Both are equally effective.

At the meeting, it was explained that there are three phases of baton use.

The first is in a situation

of confrontation which has not developed into violence. In such a case the baton is drawn from behind the back and held against the back of the leg where it can't be seen. This is so an already tense situation is not exacerbated but the baton is ready for use if necessary. The second is to warn off aggressive "prisoners" should they make to attack the police officer. In this case the baton is pointed at the other person at arms length. The police officer shouts "back" while taking a step backwards. The third phase is to use the baton to strike the assailant. According to the police the batons are designed to "cause minimal injury".

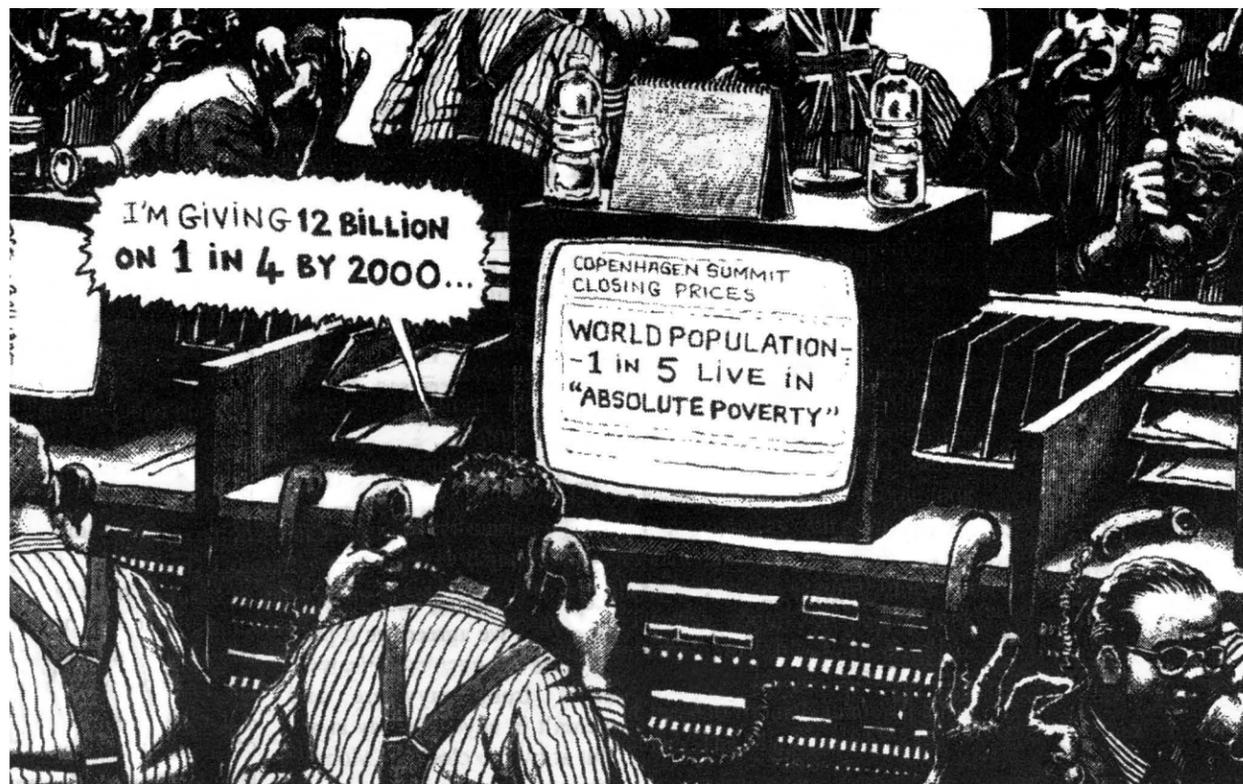
The first target is the upper arm which is struck once and then the officer steps back. If this fails the second target is the upper thigh with similar strike and backward step. If this fails to deter the attack then the

next line of defence is to strike the arm and leg in quick succession.

When asked by a member of the audience what happens if somebody ducks, the police instructor admitted that in such a case they have to be careful because it is possible to strike their head.

She also admitted that the force of the baton is such that: "It is quite possible to break somebody's arm."

Obviously, something went wrong with the procedure in Brian Douglas's case and killed him. The disciplined procedures described above also seemed to be little adhered to when police attacked road protesters outside the London Weekend Television Studio in May. (see Nightmare on LWT Street)



What the Eyes Don't See - The Mind Doesn't Have to Ponder

Families living on Taylor's Avenue gypsy site in Cleethorpes were evicted at the end of May.

The land was first occupied in 1991 by around 15 gypsy families who had previously been kicked off a number of official sites in the neighbouring borough of Grimsby.

They then found themselves on a piece of county council land on the salubrious Taylor's Avenue; the Mayfair of Cleethorpes. A court case, started by Mandy Smith and strongly fought, quickly followed. The judge ruled that under the 1968 Caravan Sites Act, the council could not carry out an eviction until an alternative site had been found. He also ordered that amenities including rubbish collection, toilets and water be provided.

Over the next four years 30 alternative sites were looked at. Every one was objected to by local residents and rejected. Within a year the net-curtain-twitching-brigade had mobilised and launched a

residents' action group to protest against the Taylor's Avenue site. The Grimsby Evening Telegraph began printing stories every week, joining a campaign which peaked two years ago when the then lady Mayor led a 100-strong not-in-our-street march in opposition to the site.

Finally time ran out, no alternative site had been located and the case went back to court. Christine Price and others living on the site worked hard, attempting a planning application, but this time the magistrate saw it as a straightforward criminal justice eviction case and, by this time - under the CJA - the council no longer had a statutory obligation to provide another site so they simply didn't bother.

The community of around eight families who were left on the site has been broken up as, once again, they have been forced to shift. The settled (in houses) residents' final and shameful word was printed in the local rag: "They didn't really bother us too much. We just didn't like looking at them."

Pause for Thought

"So-called Jazz compositions may contain at most 10% syncopation; the remainder must consist of a natural legato movement devoid of the hysterical rhythmic reverses characteristic of the music of the barbarian races and conducive to dark instincts alien to the German people (so-called 'riffs')."

From legal regulations on dance orchestras in Nazi occupied Prague

"Jazz is music that is based on rhythm and entirely ignores or even shows contempt for melody, music in which rhythm is indicated primarily by the ugly sounds of whining instruments so insulting to the soul...."

Josef Goebbels 7th March 1942



McLibel Appeal For Assistance

Two unwaged environmental activists are being sued by the McDonalds Corporation for distributing leaflets critical of their environmental, nutritional and employment record.

Although the largest of its kind, it is in fact one of many such actions initiated by the burgher giants to stamp out all criticism.

McDonalds have hired top libel QC Richard Rampton to fight the case. The McLibel, two on the other hand, have no formal legal representation because libel suits do not qualify for legal aid. Rather than give in however, they have decided to fight the complex court case themselves, using their own resources.

In order to do so they are required to constantly analyse

copious quantities of witness statements and court documents. They have a small but well organised support campaign but they need more support.

The work is vital because it has led to a full public exposure of some of the truths behind McDonalds' friendly family fun image. For instance, one of McDonalds own scientific witnesses admitted in court that there is indeed a link between fast food and cancer. An actor who for many years played the part of the Ronald McDonald clown now says he was involved in the "brainwashing of children". The \$1.4 billion that McDonalds spend on advertising each year has ensured that Ronald the Clown is now second only to Santa Claus as the most famous celebrity amongst children in the United States. McDonalds

have also finally admitted that they imported beef from Brazil (a rain-forest country) during the mid eighties; a fact they had previously denied.

These are just a few of revelations coming out of what looks set to be the longest libel trial in British legal history. But they need your support.

McDonalds makes \$26 billion a year in profit, whilst the two co-defendants being sued by them receive £2,200 a year as UB40s; Richard Rampton QC earns £2,000 a day.

Funds are required for the huge amounts of administration, as well as for bringing authoritative witnesses to the high court on their behalf.

The McLibel Support Campaign needs money and help and can be contacted at No. 5, Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX - Tel/Fax: 0171 713 1269.

Police Shut-Down Free Parties

Police shut down two Bank Holiday raves at the beginning of May, without resorting to the Criminal Justice Act.

Attracting more than 3,000 people over the VE day Bank Holiday weekend, one of the raves featured sound systems Virus, Vox Populai, Jiba, Oops and Cheeba City.

United Systems (US) organised the party at a disused RAF base near Woodbridge in Suffolk. Jim, a spokesperson from US, was at the event when police arrived: "I heard one of the police officers say, 'We're sorry we've got to do this but we've got orders from above'. The previous night they'd come on site to ask us to turn the noise down and we adhered to that and struck a deal where they were going to leave us alone and we agreed we'd pack up Monday evening. We were miles from anywhere and weren't in anyone's way at all. But at two 'o'clock on Monday afternoon they arrived on site to

shut us down."

The police confiscated tens of thousands of pounds worth of equipment from all the sound systems present including Cheeba City's 6K rig and their vehicles.

However, as the CJA can only be used at night, the officers on site had to satisfy themselves with Public Order legislation to enforce the shut-down. Arguments between officers and several of the organisers ensued and four arrests were made.

US contacted Peter Silver, the solicitor who successfully defended the 23 people arrested at Castlemorton Common in 1992. Within two weeks all confiscated equipment had been returned.

An event happening near Bangor the same weekend, featuring sound systems Transient and Babel, suffered exactly the same fate. Again in the middle of nowhere, the event was attended by up to 1,000 people over the weekend. Just after midday on Monday officers arrived to close the party down. Again organisers

allege that the police said they were happy for the event to go ahead but they'd had orders from above. No arrests were made at the Bangor gig and although sound equipment was confiscated it was returned shortly afterwards.

A growing number of people on the free-party scene do not view these events as coincidental. There is a belief that, even where no public nuisance has occurred, local police officers are coming under increased pressure from the Home Office to eradicate unauthorised events.



Howard: Nauseating.

Compulsory Reprogramming: The Job Seekers Remould

The co-signatories of the new Job Seekers Bill, presently making its way through the parliamentary process and heading rapidly towards statute, are Peter Lilley and Michael Portillo. Small wonder then that the new Job Seekers Allowance is destined to be a vicious piece of work. **Andy Johnson** forewarns of the

There are times when satire becomes reality. There are times when it is possible to be suckered by a political hustle of such stupendous cunning that the initial response is to shake the head and emit a low, long, whistle. Until the reality that you've been well and truly satirised turns the whistling note flat. Try this:

In October 1996 the Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) will replace unemployment benefit and income support for the unemployed.

In its place will be a contractual agreement signed by the so-called Job Seeker enforcing a responsibility to find work of any nature and any pay.

The new JSA will be suspended for two weeks if the claimant refuses or fails to carry out a "direction" given by the employment adviser with whom they have entered into a contract.

JSA will be suspended for four weeks if the offence is repeated.

There are, as yet, no concrete guidelines as to what this contractually obliged "direction" might entail. It could, in effect, be anything. However, there are a few alarming clues.

The Government's consultation paper on the JSB (Job Seekers Bill) states: "The benefit rules will be changed to enable benefit to be stopped where the unemployed person's behaviour is such that it actively militates against them finding work."

"Advisers (will be able to) direct job seekers to improve their employability through, for example, attending a course to improve their job seeking skills or motivations, or taking steps to present themselves acceptably to employers."

How this will work is anyone's guess. But, theoretically, it gives one individual the power to tell another to look more feminine or to get a hair cut, take earrings out or put on a suit.

When the Bill was discussed during a House of Lords committee in April it was described by the Liberal Democrat peer, Earl Russell, as "the most arbitrary power I have ever seen conferred in English law. It gives one person total control over the life of another. It gives them the power to direct those people to do all sorts of different

things, most of which have probably not yet been imagined, on pain of total loss of benefit. In fact, it becomes remarkably close to forced labour".¹

For the first two weeks of suspension there will be no one-off hardship payment unless you have children or care for an elderly or disabled person.

Hardship payments may be paid for someone with a four week suspension. It is not yet clear whether they will have to endure a month without income before they can apply.

Under the JSA, the claimant will have to complete a back to work plan in the same way as now. Except, as the JSA enforces a binding contractual agreement, the powers of direction will be specific to each individual.

These powers will apply immediately to those already claiming unemployment benefits and income support, not just new claimants.

The Bill does include a "without good cause" exception for failure to carry

....theoretically it gives one individual the power to tell another to look more feminine or to get a hair cut, take their earrings out or put on a suit.

out a direction. But ethical objections are almost certainly unlikely to be considered good cause. Neither is personal unsuitability to the job offered. The level of pay will definitely not be considered good cause.

When Earl Russell spoke of "forced labour" it was not political posturing. Clause 16 of the Bill deals with denial of benefit. It makes it clear that refusal to take a job, or apply for one, on account of low wages does not constitute good cause: "When determining good or just cause any matter relating to remuneration shall be disregarded."

There is no minimum wage in this country. One million people earn less than £2.50 an hour. Three hundred thousand people earn less than £1.50 an hour. A study in Manchester last year showed that half of all jobs advertised in local job centres paid less than £100 per week. A third of those paid less than £57 per week.²

Refusing to take a job of such a low wage will lead to the suspension of benefit under the JSA.



Accounting for work-related expenses, such as travel and improving one's appearance, it is possible that a person may be forced off benefit to take a job which leaves them with less weekly income than on benefit.

Asked if this was the case during the House of Lords committee stage the Government minister, Lord Inglewood, replied: "I am not going to give a straight answer to that."³

two weeks.

However, claims for hardship payments under the JSA will be based on the current system for claiming hardship payments. Under this system, in 1993/94, more than half of those who applied were refused payments - 145,000 people.⁴ There are serious concerns that many applicants will find themselves without an income for 26 weeks.

There will be two types of JSA. These will be structured along the same lines as the current arrangement with income support and unemployment benefit.

Those who have paid enough National Insurance will receive a "contributory" based benefit. Except this will last for six months rather than one year it is at present.

Those who have not paid National Insurance will receive a means tested, or "income based", benefit.

JSA will not be paid to someone if a member of their family with whom they live is in receipt of JSA or has savings of over £3,000.

Concerns have been raised that this will cause tension in families where young people over the age of 18 still live at home but cannot obtain an independent income. These rules could force the break up of families because younger members will leave home in order to qualify for benefit. This comes from a government which promotes the family. Such an outcome will also push up the social security bill, which the JSA is supposed to cut, because those who leave home will consequently seek housing benefit.

Many practices of the current system are extended through the JSA. The presumption that 16 and 17 year olds have a guaranteed training place and so do not qualify for any benefit remains. (Although hardship payments will be made in special circumstances under the JSA). Also, there are currently provisions to suspend benefit by between 20 and 40 per cent for those

who fail to complete mandatory training courses. Under the JSA, benefit will be suspended for two weeks in such an event. Four weeks for a second offence.

At the same time as the JSA consultation paper was introduced in November '94, a host of new back to work schemes were announced in the budget. These were due to begin in April 1996 - the original start date of the JSA.

The JSA will not only push people into poorly paid, insecure jobs, but also into job training schemes that read in the statistics as "in work" and therefore not "unemployed". It is a situation that also smells suspiciously similar to "work fare" rather than "welfare".

One example of a new course is WorkWise. Due to be introduced in April '95 this will be compulsory for all 18 to 24 year olds who refuse other training schemes or bad jobs at their 12 month restart interview.

A trial run of WorkWise, involving 10,000 participants, showed that one in seven people dropped out of the four week course during the first six months of the scheme.⁵ They left in the full knowledge that this would result in a benefit cut of up to 40 per cent - a testament to the unsuitability of the scheme to their lives or aspiration threshold levels.

Community Action, which pays an extra £10 per week for work carried out on behalf of the community, is also to continue for the next three years. The latest figures, for 1993/94, show that only 13 per cent of participants found full time work through this scheme.⁶

The Job Seekers' Allowance is the handiwork of employment secretary Michael Portillo and social security secretary Peter Lilley. It works on the premise that having a job is an obligation regardless of pay, job description, or personal fulfilment.

The very notion of unemployment and the unemployed is to be abolished. The definition is replaced with the concept of busy people actively fulfilling their obligation to society by desperately seeking work. Any work. At any price. However unfulfilling. Any regard to the individual's right to determine their own future is ignored.

A leaked employment department paper⁷ suggests that inexperienced front-line staff should (not) be allowed to make decisions over benefit disqualification. It states that this practice should be phased in because such staff may run "an increased risk of assault".

The Criminal Justice Act is an attack on lifestyles, involving strong collectives and communities, whose members have the support of each other. The JSA attacks the individual.

A fundamental aspect of the JSA is to save money. The Government expects to save £140 million in the first two years.

A fundamental lie of the JSA is that a substantial minority of those who claim unemployment benefits do so because they are lazy.

An unpublished government survey⁸ shows that already claimants are being pushed onto inappropriate courses against their will. A chief complaint they make is that advisers did not take their wishes into account. It showed a "definite thrust for vocational work related programmes coming from the claimants themselves" - a consideration absent from the JSA.

As Squall goes to press, the Job Seekers Allowance Bill is wending its tortuous way through parliament and is presently in the House of Lords. It's introduction has already been put back from the originally planned April '96, to October '96.

The Government say the delay allows them to ensure a smooth introduction of the new procedures. For thousands of people on benefit there will be nothing smooth about the JSA when it comes chiselling its way into a job centre near you.

1. Hansard 27.4.95: 1102

2. Hansard 27.4.95: 1123

3. Hansard 27.4.95: 1127

4. 'Working Brief' Feb '95 iss 61.

5. Hansard 26.10.94: 677-680

6. Hansard 21.7.94: 402

7. 'Market adjudication to the front line under JSA' Employment Dept. 1.12.94.

8. 'The Employment Service national customer satisfaction survey 1993' Research and Evaluation report 93, May 1994.



Actors of Parliament

Until recently, Graham Bright (Con MP - Luton South) seemed to have a sure footing on the giddy political career ladder as parliamentary private secretary to the Prime Minister, John Major, a job he had held since 1990.

In 1994 he was one of the MPs named as contributing the least to parliamentary debates but as far as free festivals and parties went, he had already done his damage.

In 1990, the same year as he got the job as PPS to the Prime Minister, Bright authored a private members bill - the Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act which reached the statute books during that parliamentary year, leading to heavy fines and imprisonment for organisers of unlicensed raves. Free and unlicensed parties reeled from the hammer-blow and an emerging communal phenomenon was forced to look elsewhere for its collective ecstasy.

The upshot was that people with the need to dance were identified by more commercially orientated rave organisers, who secured licences with their capital and then cashed in on the new culture with the kind of extortionate entrance fees that have since come to be taken for granted.

Since that time, up to 26 people have died in commercial rave clubs, with dehydration as one of the primary causes of death. To swell the profits made from raves even further, water taps are often turned off to maximise water sales at the bar, and the clubs are packed to increase the takings on the door, raising both the temperature and the potential for fatalities. A problem not encountered when dancing in open spaces.

It is no small irony - and perhaps not even coincidence - that Graham Bright is one of the Exodus Collective's local MPs up in Luton. In May this year, members of the Collective sought and obtained a meeting with Graham Bright at his constituency office. Bright thought they had come to talk about a community centre the Collective intend to open in central Luton, but they had in fact come for other reasons.

It just so happens that Whitbread breweries have their headquarters in Graham Bright's Luton constituency and are a powerful force in local politics. Indeed, Samuel Whitbread is the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire.

When Exodus ran its new year rave at the end of 1993, 10,000 people attended. The pubs of Luton were empty and even the local police commented on the decrease in alcohol-related crime in the area on that night and indeed on their rave nights in general. Truth is of course that raves and alcohol don't mix much and thus Whitbread must surely have viewed the burgeoning rave culture as very threatening to its sales.

Exodus asked Graham Bright whether or not he knew that 26 people had died in legal licence, commercial night clubs - the places he had described as safe when pushing his Bill through.

He replied that he didn't know anything about it and that he had not come to talk about a piece of legislation he was involved in four years ago. Bright told Exodus that all the documents relating which organisations he had consulted with during the passage of his private members bill had been lost.

Exodus then asked him whether he knew Ian Greer, of professional parliamentary lobbyists Ian Greer Associates. Bright replied that he knew of him. Exodus then asked him if Whitbread, a major client of Ian Greer, had lobbied him in connection with introducing the Entertainments (Increase Penalty) Act.

At mention of this, Graham Bright stood up and slammed his desk with both fists demanding that the Exodus Collective members get out of his office. One of the Collective intimated to Bright that they had just recorded the conversation, at which point Bright asked them to sit down, saying wanted to know about the 26 deaths in commercial rave clubs.

"We chipped and left him flapping," commented an Exodus Collective spokesperson afterwards.

An exchange of letters since that time has led to an assurance from Graham Bright that he would look into the 26 commercial rave club deaths.

As for the lobbying on behalf of Whitbread, it is difficult to know whether a profit-motivated involvement in hammering free parties will ever be fully exposed. Further letters from Exodus to Bright have produced replies but each time the question over Whitbread's involvement has been ignored. Graham Bright on the other hand was removed as PPS to John Major, given a knighthood and then shovelled to the rather more backwater job as one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Conservative party.

Odd that really, because his sidelining occurred roughly six months before the cash for questions, MPs and lobbying scandal broke in the media, with Sir Graham Bright's name implicated in a series of scandals that also involved Ian Greer Associates.

"Who spiked the dance floor? - we reckon he did," says an Exodus spokesperson.

A Nightmare on

LWT Street

Jim Carey reports on the vicious verbals and violent aftermath of a recent Richard Little John programme on road protests.

London Weekend Television's Richard Little John show prides itself on being 'Live and Uncut' but some serious cutting took place the day they invited members of the road protest movement onto the show.

Little John, an ex-Sun journalist and presently a columnist for the Daily Mail, is renowned for trying to rubbish the guests invited onto his programme, particularly if they are opposed to his hysterically right wing opinions.

Roger Geffen, a Reclaim the Streets spokesperson, was elected to face Little-John's flak, whilst several NoM11 road protesters and residents of the Rainbow Centre sat in the studio audience. "If I had my way, the last house in the way of the M11 would be flattened with the protesters still inside it," frothed the walking Sun editorial as he introduced the first section of the programme.

"It was very evident from his remarks that he had invited me onto the programme to slag me and the other M11ers off," says Geffen. "Basically, he wanted to set us up as laughing stock for piss artists returning from the pub

find that they don't have public enquiries. They invite objections and put them in the waste paper basket and then build the railway. If you go to a demonstration in France and you tangle with the riot police there, then you'll know about it. We are a very tolerant society in this country." The bizarre irony of this statement would become an all too apparent nightmare after the show. But for the moment Little John hadn't finished his own efforts to bin the voices of dissent.

At one stage in the programme, the camera fell on a Camden resident in the audience and Little John asked what he thought of the Kentish Town Rainbow Centre.

"I think you'd rather like to reclaim your street from some of the kind of people we've got here tonight," he coaxed. "No not really," replied Reg Wright, the Camden resident. "I knew nothing until I went to see it this afternoon. I think it goes unnoticed."

Little John looked a little deflated but seized on Reg Wright's postscript comment that sometimes the forecourt was a bit messy outside the Centre, asking Rainbow Centre resident Les, how he could justify the fact

with a pre-prepared banner announcing a 'Live and direct action'; with masked stage invaders spraying Little-John with silly string.

"We figured we'd turn the tables and give him a bit of a taste of direct action," says Del, a core activist on the No-M11 Campaign and Reclaim the Streets. "They cut quickly to the adverts but the banner was seen and the point was made." The seemingly omnipresent Group Four security officers then came on to the stage in order to remove the protesters.

"Little John was completely dumbfounded," recalls Del. "When the programme came back on after the commercial break, we were out in reception and could see him up on screen stumbling with his words."

After their removal from the stage, the protesters did not put up further resistance, having done what they came to do and even saying good-bye to the studio staff afterwards. "There was a bit of running around in the studio with Group 4 security chasing us around but there wasn't any particular hassle inside there. In the end we left amicably," says Del.

However, 'amicable' is not the the word to describe the reaction of the police who were waiting outside the LWT building.

"We were coming out of the studio at the audience entrance on the LWT forecourt - quite normally leaving in a group with high spirits and then from all sides came police with their truncheons out," recalls Del. "They were just like thugs, storming in with scowls on their faces and whacking people with truncheons."

It was an unbelievably heavy-handed attack on a group of avowedly non-violent direct action protesters, well after even verbal confrontation was necessary. There seems to have been no provocation for any police aggression at all as the protesters were actually leaving the building and a threat to no one.

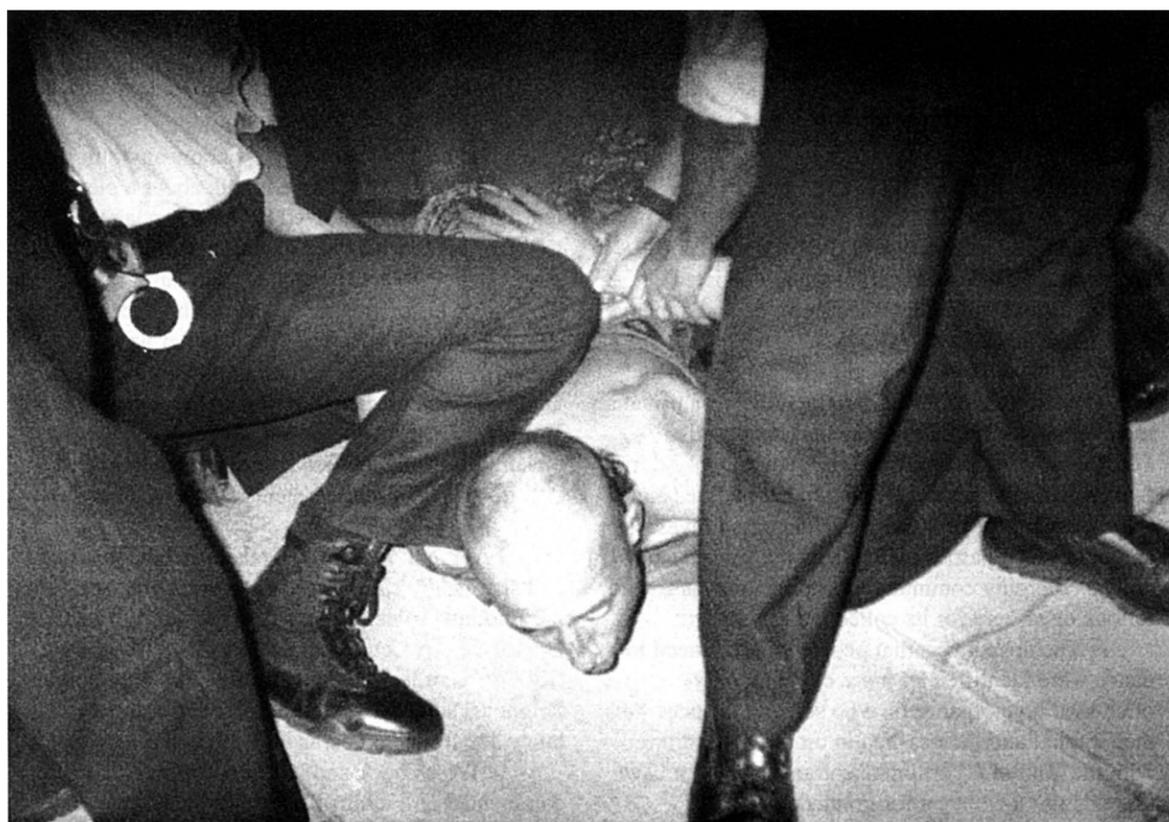
However, several protesters received severe bruising from the onslaught but none more so than Pob. After the police had truncheoned a friend of Pob's called Danny, she stepped in to try and help him escape the crowd of police that were surrounding him as he lay on the floor. As a result they turned on her.

"It was two policemen that hit me, one of them whacked me on the head," she recalls. "I was semi-unconscious when he had me against a wall and put his foot on me so that I couldn't move. Then I was thrown on the floor and a friend told me that I had banged my head on the ground. When I came round from being unconscious I was on my back, not in a recovery position. There were three policemen standing round me saying 'We've got you an ambulance' - and there's me lying on the floor covered in puke."

Eye witnesses say that the police had initially refused to call an ambulance, not believing that Pob was genuinely hurt. During her 15 minutes of unconsciousness she vomited and eventually an ambulance was called.

"The ambulance crew asked the police whether they were coming in the ambulance," remembers Pob. "They said 'No, we'll follow on' - but they never turned up at the hospital." Pob was taken to St Thomas's Hospital near Westminster Bridge, where she spent the night undergoing medical tests.

"Because of all the swelling, the fluid build-up and the fact that my pupil's weren't responding, the hospital were sure I had fractured something so I was in X-ray for 2 hours," recalls Pob. "I had quite a bit of neck jewellery which they had to cut that off because my neck was swelling. It was so scary lying in that hospital bed - I thought I was going to be in a wheel chair because they put this neckbrace and spinal strap on me and I wasn't allowed to move. I couldn't feel my legs for three hours -



Sheila Freeman

Riot police pinning a man down the hard way outside the LWT building, London, May 5th.

on a Friday night. We'd got that impression beforehand but hadn't quite expected him to be so vitriolic."

"Little John is ignorant," observes Les, formerly a community outreach worker in Liverpool and now a resident at the Kentish Town Rainbow Centre. "He's addicted to the power he's got himself into. He doesn't realise that the wind up he's got himself involved in doesn't stop when the camera stops. Inside he's really burning up - after the camera stopped he just collapsed."

In fact Roger Geffen stood his ground well, keeping commendably cool in the face of the Little-John's vitriolic onslaught; answering poison with reason - whenever he could get a word in edgeways that is. The other guest on the programme was Michael Stephen, Conservative MP for Shoreham and member of the Environment Select committee.

"We are a very tolerant society," opined Stephen. "If some of those protesters went over to France they'd

that environmentalists are so messy.

"Imagine a messy house," replied Les. "As you clean it up it looks even messier to start with. Most of the metal and furniture is recycled material. We use the mess that the city throws away. We're not perfect but we're working on it."

Not getting much mileage out of that avenue of vitriolic pursuit, Little John turned his attention back to Roger Geffen. "You are hypocrites aren't you," he foamed. By which time Roger Geffen realised it was time to cue the protest.

"Towards the end of the interview I said, 'Look, I didn't come on this programme to be trivialised by you, I came to talk about very serious issues of civil liberties and environmental issues'," recalls Geffen. "At that point a load of people invaded the stage and they cut to some adverts."

The invasion had in fact been planned all along,

there was just tingles.”

A spokesperson for Kennington Police admitted that there had been a 999 call out to LWT that night but refused to give any information as to the nature of the incident, saying it would be “subjudice” to do so. Upon being asked whether that meant the incident had entailed activities that are likely to be the subject of a court case, he retracted saying he couldn’t give any information whatsoever because of the Data Protection Act.

Statements from eye-witnesses are currently being collated with photographic evidence, with the intention of

suing the police.

The personal consequences of the attack are very apparent to Pob, who now needs follow up physiotherapy to restore the mobility of her neck. Two days after the incident, a man attacked by police with truncheons in south London died from the same type of injuries as Pob had received. He had been treated in the same ward of St Thomas’s Hospital as Pob, and truncheons used to inflict his fatal injuries were of the same type, recently introduced by the Metropolitan Police Force.

“I’m just really freaked about it,” winces Pob. “It

pretty much humbles you and I’ve gone a bit quiet. When that guy died - it totally blew me away. I got this cold scary feeling - there but for the grace of god - and who is it going to be next?”

Has there ever been a more blatant example of a politician proven instantly wrong? “We are a very tolerant society,” Michael Stephen MP had assured the television audience. “A touch of irony there,” says Del.

And a painfully unfunny one at that.

NEWS OF THE SKEWS

“It’s a victory for common sense. The building was deteriorating badly. The squatters are delightful people who have become part of the community. They have mended the roof and repaired the windows. Just by being there, they have put off vandals and thieves.”

Even if you had ten guesses which newspaper ran this quote you wouldn’t get it.

This issue’s News of the Skews goes on the positive because the above quote was found not in one newspaper but in three, all on the same day.

And what’s more, the three newspapers that ran it have been the most viciously anti-squatter news manufacturers over recent years. We’re talking The Times, The Daily Telegraph and most unbelievably of all... The Daily Mail.

The articles, all appearing on Saturday May 20th, were almost identical, commanding 10 column inches plus photograph in the Telegraph, ten column inches plus large headline in The Times and no less than half a page with photograph in The Daily Mail.

“Squatters at The Grange win over villagers and building society,” trumpeted The Telegraph and “Village hails ‘victory for common sense’ - Judge allows DIY squatters to stay in 27-room mansion,” heralded The Times. “Eviction plans dropped after homeless mend 16th century property with dole money,” hailed The Daily Mail.

What is going on? Not one anti-squatter sentiment is expressed throughout any of the articles - no reference to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act - no reference to the ‘hordes of marauding locusts’ and ‘anti-social parasites’ descriptions that these newspapers have used to define squatters in the past.

Instead, we have: “Squatters are being allowed to stay in a £250,000 country mansion - because they have improved it,” as the first line of The Daily Mail’s version of the story. And in The Telegraph: “John Halliday, chairman of Pulham St Mary Parish Council until the recent

elections said: “Everyone was very concerned about the way The Grange was deteriorating. It had been empty for four years and was becoming dilapidated. The squatters came along to a Parish Council meeting and explained what they were doing. They seemed an amiable bunch - they invited us to have a look round and asked people to call in for a cup of coffee. I took up the invitation with several other villagers and I was impressed by what I saw’.”

The Times takes Halliday’s quote even further: “The roof had been mended, the windows repaired and they had started decorating. They have also begun to tidy up the grounds that became overgrown in recent years. They were homeless young people and there was a large empty house. It seemed a pretty good marriage. Before they moved in, thieves started to target the place and fire-places were ripped out but now it is lived in, it is secure.”

The Telegraph pointed out that whilst the Leeds and Holbeck Building Society were seeking a possession order against the squatters: “Villagers raised a petition and protested saying that the squatters were ‘delightful people, who were repairing a previously dilapidated building’.”

The Telegraph, in true Telegraph stylee, also mentioned that the Grade II listed building was “recently the subject of an appeal in the Buildings at Risk section of Period House and Garden”.

So what is going on?

The story is a synchronous one.

Two of the squatters, Matt and Sarah, were hitching one day and were picked up by someone working for BBC Look East. They told him about the disused 16th century grade II listed Grange building near Diss in Norfolk and he replied saying the local BBC might be interested in doing a little story on it. Consequently Look East contacted the squatters at the Grange, arranging for a camera crew to visit the building. The following day it appeared on four Anglia News bulletins on the local BBC station. Soon after this Anglia Press Agency and a local photographic agency called Assignment, sent some journalists to interview the squatters and take pictures of their new manor.

Lo and behold - story sold - Times, Daily Mail and Daily Telegraph.

“The thing was that we did have a lot of local support and we have made good connections with the local community,” says Paul, a squatter on the Grange. “So when the press agency journalist went to talk to the local community, they only found good things to say about us. So there’s nothing bad in any of the articles.”

Previous to this cornucopia of positive national press coverage, the squatters at the Grange had only had a small amount of coverage in the local paper and a short news story in The New Statesman.

This nice, unusual, historical story from the shires turned the media monsters into eulogisers. Cracking.

And one equally nice twist to the story is the part played by Jim Paton, a member of the Advisory Service for Squatters, in ensuring that the national papers had anything to write about at all.

“We wouldn’t have been here if it wasn’t for him,” says Paul. “He came walking across the fields with his compass and map from the local train station and he brought a pie that he had cooked as well. We told him the story of the squat and that the Leeds and Holbeck Building Society were taking us to court and he sorted out all the paperwork. We went up to the courtcase in Leeds with all this legal paperwork and struck a deal. He was amazing - we wouldn’t have even shown up in court to put our case if it wasn’t for him.”



Nick Cobbing

A NEW HOUSING BILL: FRAGMENTING THE OPPOSITION ?

The imposition of new measures to remove the statutory right of ‘priority need’ homeless people to permanent housing has been in the pipeline for a while. It now appears that it will manifest itself in law as part of a new Housing Bill. **Joe Oldman**, from CHAR (Housing Campaign for Single People), reviews the likely contents of a further erosion of the opportunities for homeless people.

It has recently been announced that the Government’s review of homelessness legislation will form just one component of a large housing bill, likely to be scheduled for the next session of Parliament. The review is primarily designed to abolish the statutory right of certain groups of homeless people deemed to be in “priority need” of access to permanent accommodation.

Proposals for the complete bill were not included in the Government’s consultation paper - “Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies”; instead the Government appears to have made a series of individual consultations on the different elements that are likely to appear in the Bill.

This breaking up of the bill into different elements suggests another, now familiar, attempt to fragment opposition to its overall impact. The Government may well consider it advantageous to cloak the homelessness review within a larger housing package including a superficially attractive revival of ‘Right to Buy’ for occupiers of housing association homes.

Although the proposals contained in the homelessness review element of the bill will have an immediate and adverse effect on the rights of homeless people, the rest of the bill may have an equally devastating effect on the long term interests of homeless people. Particularly the ‘Right to Buy’, which although populist in the short term, in fact translates as a further erosion of social housing.

This article anticipates the release of a Government White Paper, due out this summer, and is designed to assist as many readers as possible to respond as soon as it becomes available.

ALLOCATIONS VIA THE WAITING LIST

There are few indications that the Government has shifted from the basic position that waiting lists should be the sole route into permanent social rented accommodation. The Department of the Environment (DoE) is attempting to take the debate away from an examination of the overall decline in social housing and towards an agenda concerned with the allocation of a continually diminishing supply of social rented housing.

The DoE continues to argue that the statutory homeless gain an unfair advantage over waiting list applicants, despite recent evidence showing that the majority of local authorities do not give automatic priority to ‘statutorily’ homeless people. There is widespread concern among homelessness charities, including Shelter

and CHAR, over the further narrowing of the definition of statutory homelessness.

The Bill is concerned with the redistribution of a dwindling stock rather than any measures to increase the overall supply. The Government is hoping to feed on the frustration of those who have applied for housing through the waiting list, a transparent attempt to use homeless people as scapegoats for the lack of supply. The Bill is likely to focus on ad hoc, short term initiatives and the removal of the statutory right to housing in the face of new regulations restricting the payment of housing benefit.

DEFINITIONS OF PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION

The DoE has already made clear that it would like to see a redefinition of the right to long term permanent tenancies in the social rented sector. This has also been the basis for some local authorities to argue that the granting of assured shorthold tenancies (private accommodation) fulfils their duties under the homelessness legislation. Assured shorthold tenancies make it easier for a landlord to evict and were initially introduced through the Housing Act 1988, in an unsuccessful attempt to revive private renting. Other evidence for this shift can be seen in the Housing Corporation consultation paper “The policy of assured shorthold tenancies”, which suggests a wider use of assured shorthold tenancies by housing associations. The National Federation of Housing Associations has said that the proposals could significantly reduce the security of tenure of probationary tenancies and will serve to further erode the notion of permanent social rented tenancies.

LOCAL HOUSING COMPANIES

The proposed transfer of council stock to local housing companies (partly private) may still entail local authorities maintaining a controlling interest (20% to 50%) in transferred stock, thereby allowing local authorities to maintain some nomination rights to a percentage of the transferred stock. However, there is a fear that these semi-private housing companies will lack accountability, and that rents may see substantial increases, especially in stock with high levels of disrepair. Pilot studies are currently being carried out to look at the feasibility of this proposal, and the Government may consider incentives to facilitate schemes by, for example, freeing up the use of capital receipt money collected under the Right to Buy. Although this remains to be seen.

Whatever the outcome, it seems unlikely that these schemes will increase the availability of permanent housing to single homeless people, although homelessness charities believe it is vital that local authorities negotiating such schemes, should set aside specific allocations to single homeless people.

PROBATIONARY TENANCIES

The Government is currently consulting on the use of ‘probationary tenancies’ as a method of dealing with tenants who harass or cause a nuisance to their neighbours. A pilot scheme is currently being carried out by Manchester Council and North British Housing

Association. New tenants will only be granted a secure tenancy after a twelve month probationary period, during which time they will have to demonstrate they are not causing trouble.

Although strong measures to combat harassment should be supported, it should be achieved through better housing management intervention and greater co-operation between local authorities, the courts and the police. Indeed, homelessness charities agree that there should be strong legal sanctions. However, the application of sanctions should be applied to everyone regardless of their housing tenure. Probationary tenancies could be used by some local authorities and tenants to discriminate against certain groups of new tenants, without offering appropriate legal safeguards.

LICENSING OF HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMOs)

The publication of the Government’s consultation paper: “Houses in Multiple Occupation: Consultation Paper on the Case for Licencing”, arose from increased publicity surrounding the deaths of, and injuries to, people living in HMOs. It was also related to a desire to curb the use of holiday B&Bs by homeless people. Licencing would mean that rented accommodation would have to meet certain standards of health and safety before becoming available for let. The Housing Minister David Curry recently said that the current status quo on HMOs was unacceptable and that the Government would be tabling legislation as part of the housing bill.

It seems unlikely at this stage that the DoE will introduce compulsory licencing. However, it may introduce incentives for discretionary licencing on an area basis. Given the thousands of single homeless people living in unfit, overcrowded HMOs at risk of death and injury, and given that these proposals will further expand the private rented sector, homelessness charities believe it is vital that there should be a mandatory licencing scheme rather than a reliance on local discretion.

RIGHT TO BUY FOR HOUSING ASSOCIATION TENANTS

The Government is proposing to extend their ‘Right to Buy’ policy to housing association tenants, excluding those living in sheltered housing or hostels. With further sales of local authority homes grinding to a halt, the Government is keen to revive ‘what it sees as the popular carrot of Right to Buy’, in the run up to the General Election. There is also speculation that the Government may extend the Tenant’s Incentive Scheme (TIS) to provide existing tenants with grants to buy on the private market, thereby freeing up association stock.

The Government have reduced subsidies to associations making them more reliant on private investment, which has in turn led to significant increases in association rents.

Many commentators are concerned that if substantial discounts are offered on association homes under a Right to Buy scheme, it may undermine private investment in the sector. This is because associations may be unable to raise sufficient income from their remaining stock. On TIS, there are questions over whether this is the best use of a subsidy that could be used to build additional homes. These measures could have a dramatic effect on a housing associations’ ability to accommodate homeless people and associations may be increasingly marginalised and left with the poorest stock.



POLITICALLY PALATABLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPOSAL

Exodus - Keeping up the momentum

ENCOURAGING PRIVATE RENTING

Although the DoE is examining measures to encourage expansion in the private rented sector, this will be limited by restrictions in the payment of housing benefit based on the difference between average rents and market rents in an area. Although the private rented sector has a role to play in addressing housing need, especially for younger mobile groups of people, it seems inconceivable that there could be any substantial expansion in the sector given the bias towards home ownership.

With regard to single homeless people, the Association of Residential Letting Agents has said that the majority of responsible private landlords are not in a position to provide the care and support that vulnerable homeless people are likely to require. It seems more likely that increasing numbers of single homeless people will find themselves trapped in poor, unsafe and overcrowded rented accommodation at the bottom end of the market.

HOUSING BENEFIT

None of the proposals likely to be in the new housing bill can be taken in isolation from the operation of the benefits system. The proposed new ceiling on the amount of housing benefit payable seems to contradict the DoE's desire to expand the private rented sector. There has been no research to demonstrate what the potential impact of the changes will be and, although the Housing Minister says the changes are modest, the Social Security Advisory Committee has warned that changes in the housing benefit system could increase poverty and force people into unsatisfactory housing or homelessness.

If the draft regulations go through in their current form, they may also have a significant impact on voluntary sector special needs housing outside direct housing association management (special need housing includes supported housing for elderly people, people with disabilities, mental health problems, or drug and alcohol problems). Rents that are referred to the rent officer are subject to the proposed changes; this could affect many projects for homeless people, especially as rent officers are often unable to appreciate or recognise the additional costs associated with special needs provision. However, the Government may exempt voluntary sector housing, following consultation with the Social Security Advisory Committee. The outcome of this will be known at the end of June when the regulations are laid before Parliament.

WHAT DOES IT ADD UP TO?

These proposals are likely to see a further polarisation of housing between the well housed and the poorly housed or homeless. It seems unlikely that they will do anything to increase the supply of affordable housing.

Measures to expand the private rented sector seem to be contradicted by restrictions in housing benefit and a reluctance to bring in mandatory licencing to protect people living in private rented housing.

The long fight to obtain a public enquiry into strategic operations levelled against the Exodus Collective in Luton were detailed in the last two issues of SQUALL. Since that time Bedfordshire County Council have voted almost unanimously in favour of backing such an enquiry. Now enter, stage right, Micael Howard.

At a council meeting conducted on April 27th and attended by around 72 councillors, only one Tory voted against the motion, with four Tory abstentions; the others voted in favour. Due to a lack of local authority funds available to finance the enquiry, Bedfordshire County Council voted in favour of an application for funding from the Home Office.

It would of course be an irony worth celebrating if the Home Office did indeed finance an investigation into the strategic police operations and political manoeuvres, designed to halt the progress of a dance and squatting collective. However, the road to justice is dogged by devious mal-intention and the Exodus Collective are being forced to stay on their toes every step of the way.

Following the Council's decision to support the public enquiry Council Chief Executive, Dennis Clegget, sent a letter addressed to the Michael Howard. The letter informed him of the Council's decision but subtly changed the Council's request in a way that has roused the Exodus Collective once again.

"It's a right sly letter," comments Glenn Jenkins, spokesperson for the Collective.

The letter read:

"I am writing to you to bring your attention to a matter considered by the County Council at its meeting on the 27th April 1995, when it passed a resolution expressing its belief that a public enquiry should be held into the activities of the Beds Police and others, against members of the Exodus Collective and others, in order to examine claims and allegations of malpractice by the police in the investigation and prosecution of cases.

The Council requested that I should pursue the need for this enquiry with you and offer to make available a venue for an enquiry. The text of the resolution, passed by the Council, is attached to this letter. [The text says that the Council were in favour of Michael Mansfield QC as chair of the enquiry].

It may be helpful if I explain the background to this matter, as the Council has not to my knowledge previously called for an enquiry into the activities of the local police force and would not likely make such a request to you. The matter has been considered by the Council on a number of occasions and in October '94, it was resolved to refer the matter to the former Police Committee of the County Council with a request that they consider to refer it to the Police Complaints Authority. In the event, the Police Committee in January '95 noted this request but did not take any further action. The Council's concern essentially arises from the circumstances and outcome of a series of prosecutions against members of the Exodus Collective. A large number of cases have not resulted in any conviction and the circumstances have raised questions about the gathering of evidence and the preparation and presentation of evidence to the courts, which have not been satisfactorily answered. As background I enclose a copy of an article in the New Statesman and Society dated 21st April '95, which was circulated at the Council meeting

and also the Chief Constable's report to the Police Committee of the 17th June '94, which describes incidence related to the Exodus Collective.

I should add that it was clear from the County Council meeting on 27th April 1995, that the proposal for an enquiry has broad support from all political groups on the Council and that the Council has only reached a view that an enquiry is necessary after prolonged debates on a number of different occasions. It was felt that there were a number of unanswered questions that only you could satisfactorily resolve because of your powers touching a range of agencies other than the police over which neither the PCA, nor the County Council or new Police Authority have any jurisdiction."

What the letter seems to be asking for is not the funding to press ahead with the enquiry, but for the Home Office to investigate the matter themselves.

"We're hardly gonna object to the Police Complaints Authority and then give the enquiry to the Home Office," says Glenn Jenkins. "The Council motion said, and what they should be asking for, is that the Council agreed to an independent public enquiry chaired by Mansfield, although they didn't have the funds to finance it. The Council's decision was that the Home Office should be lobbied for funds, not that Michael Howard should come up with his own enquiry; a whitewash and an explanation rather than an investigation."

Meanwhile, the leader of the Tory group and new leader of the Police Committee, Cllr Phillip Hendry appeared on the front page of the Luton On Sunday (30/4/95) saying: "I don't think Exodus are whiter than white and maybe our police force is not whiter than white either - these are things that need to be established." The newspaper also reported that the Council had asked for a Home Office enquiry.

Exodus replied to the article saying: "We have done our time in court and we were cleared of the charges - this enquiry is into police operations, not whether we are whiter than white. Furthermore the Council did not ask for a Home Office enquiry, they asked for funding for a Michael Mansfield independent enquiry." Exodus stated that they would not accept a Home Office whitewash saying: "Any impartial look at our case would shake the conscience of any so called democrat."

The Luton on Sunday printed the letter (7/5/95) with an editor's note agreeing that the motion carried by the Council was indeed that a request be made for Home Office funding, not a Home Office enquiry.

The Chief Executive's letter to Michael Howard concludes:

"I should be glad to provide any further information that you require and would be happy to attend any meeting if it would be helpful to you in reaching a decision. Similarly, if there are any points that require clarification please let me know."

Local Councillor, John Jefferson, has now approached Council Chief Executive Dennis Clegget, saying that if any meeting does take place with Howard, or representatives at the Home

Office, Exodus want to be present, considering themselves in a better position to clarify points about the case than Clegget himself.

"What we'll be telling the Home Secretary, whether through Clegget or to his face, is that we wouldn't let him touch this case with a barge pole. What we want is the funds to be released from the Home Office," says Glenn Jenkins.

Exodus are also approaching the Labour group on the council, in order to instigate a complaint against Clegget's misrepresentation of the Council's decision.

Whilst Exodus await the outcome of the latest manoeuvres, they have started up their twice monthly raves again, with local police taking a less antagonistic stance. Exodus have informed Bedfordshire Police that they will liaise with members of the local police force because they are not against community policing per se. As such their dialogue with the local police is now conducted through Chief Inspector Andy Nash. He has attended meetings with the collective at HAZ manor, promising to put in writing police support for Exodus's plans to turn a disused warehouse in Luton into a community centre. Exodus have also secured assurance from Bedfordshire Police headquarters at Kempston that they will not pull Nash off the job. Nash's predecessor, Chief Inspector Brown, came to be vocally and publicly supportive of Exodus' initiatives and was consequently transferred to an office job miles away.

One of the recent Exodus dances held in May was conducted at a quarry and landfill site just a quarter of a mile from Bedfordshire Police Headquarters at Kempston. Exodus told the local Kempston newspaper that the party was a demonstration. Indeed, Exodus's original plan was to organise three parties and then wait a while, holding it down whilst negotiations on the community centre and the public enquiry were taking place. Their decision to hold a fourth party so near to Bedfordshire Police Headquarters, was taken to demonstrate their intention not to stop their activities whilst negotiations take their time, so robbing them of momentum.

"We're not talking to the trees anymore," says Glen Jenkins. "We know that negotiation can be just lip service, so we're showing that we intend to continue doing our work for the community without permission until something concrete is established from all the talking."

Indeed at 6am, as the rave was entering its final furlong, local police actually asked a nearby shopkeeper to open early so that members of the Exodus Collective could buy more water for the ravers. Meanwhile they have had some hard and constructive talks with Chief Superintendent Gary Banks, divisional commander for the area.

"They know we know what's been going on. They know we're wised up to their ways," says Jenkins. "So Chief Superintendent Banks is beginning to talk to us like we're not stupid. And now maybe something will get done."

The Roots of Sustainable Development

By next year each local authority must have prepared its own Agenda 21 - the great universal DIY fix-it manual for the global woes of poverty and environmental pillage. With this impending deadline, the local Agenda 21 bandwagon is beginning to rumble into life. And on the face of it, an exciting, shiny, bandwagon it appears to be. **Andy Johnson** investigates.

Agenda 21 is the document Britain put its name to, along with many other countries, at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. For a full brief of what it says see SQUALL 9, or read it. Briefly, however, at its core is an instruction to every local authority to come up with a plan, a local Agenda 21 (LA21), to alleviate poverty in ways that do not harm the environment.

The weighty tome that is Agenda 21 comes down to two words - Sustainable Development. This notion is important. So important, in fact, that emphasis through repetition is not out of place. The core notion of Agenda 21 is the alleviation of poverty (development) in ways that do not harm the environment (sustainability).

Anyone who has entered a ramshackle disused building and made it habitable from salvaged supplies will be at home with this principle. As will anybody who has taken to the road and adopted a lifestyle with little ecological impact. Many groups believe that Agenda 21 will provide a source of funding for their community projects. Agenda 21 is not going to be like that.

The document stresses that community groups - businesses, trade unions, pressure groups and ordinary folk - should come together to discuss what their area needs. As the elected representatives of each community, the local authority should take the lead in this process. And from extensive consultation with the community they should draw up an extensive action plan; a local Agenda 21. Many local authorities have taken such a lead, with areas such as Cardiff streaking ahead. Others have shown little interest and have been elbowed into the process by a few concerned council civil servants or local pressure groups.

The latest figures available for local authority activity were released in March and stem from a survey by the Local Government Management Board. Of the 541 councils in the country only 303 responded to the survey. Although it is important to bear in mind that Scotland are lagging somewhat behind because of the recent shake up of local authority boundaries. Seventy one per cent of the respondents said they were committed to the LA21 process. Of those, 80 per cent had delegated the extra duties to existing staff. Only ten per cent had appointed a new staff member. It is not clear what happened to the other ten per cent.

Agenda 21 says that local authorities should "enter into dialogue with its citizens" to learn what needs to be done. This "consultation" is currently the main area of activity. A typical starting point is like that carried out by Islington, north London, in mid-May. An all day conference was organised, on the initiative of the local Friends of the Earth group, with the bill picked up by Islington Council. Among those present were local people, the local Friends of the Earth group and other such environmental organisations, neighbourhood associations, Islington's two MPs, local councillors, the local chamber of commerce, and volunteer groups. A list of topics for discussion was handed out at the beginning of the day and each person chose two they wished to discuss. People were then put into their specialist workshops and spent the morning discussing one topic and the afternoon the other.

With the exception of LETS, the topics focused

mainly on environmental issues; waste management, recycling, traffic and pollution. A list of those bodies present reveals them to be, in the words of one attender, "all white and middle class".

This picture is repeated across the country. But it is not so negative as it might appear. There is recognition that, for various socio-economic reasons, the poor and non-white sectors of the community are not being included. It is something referred to as "the same old faces" syndrome. But, as there is recognition, there are attempts to include everybody. How to do this, for example, was discussed at Islington.

Chris Church is quite an expert on Agenda 21. He is its co-ordinator for the United Nations Association Sustainable Communities Project. "The



first thing about all consultation is that in the beginning it is awesomely slow," he says. "This is because you have to move at the pace of the most wary. People feel a lot of alienation, through poverty and lack of equity. Where people are coming together some very interesting issues are emerging and there is scope for real community action. Not just changing what we're doing, but how we're doing it. But if people don't start talking to each other that won't happen."

The emphasis at the moment is very strongly on "consultation". But this process involves bringing together groups who know little of each other - if indeed they knew of each other at all - and breaking down barriers between them. It is a local community action plan which has to involve the entire community.

Peter McDonald has recently been appointed by Croydon to be their Community Officer for LA21.

"It's about brain-storming to come up with concrete proposals," he says. "At the moment it's in the active consultation stage. As to what happens, that depends on the feedback we get."

Jan McHarry works with Chris Church at the United Nations Association. "It's groups coming together who haven't met before and finding out they have a lot in common," she says. "It's forging partnerships. Where the council want the council to set up something specific, that's the next stage. Plans are being made."

It appears that at the moment LA21 has little to offer in the way of tangible effect. But there is, possibly, a point to the consultation as John

Headstrong, a seasoned squatter and someone interested in the possibilities of Agenda 21, attests.

John went along to a conference organised by the UNA on environmental development last December. It followed a similar workshop pattern to that carried out in Islington. He joined the homelessness workshop. "They were talking about getting more money from central government and I butted in saying: 'You're going way off on a tangent. The solution is that in this country there are empty buildings and things get thrown away all the time.' I gave them an example of a house with no floorboards, no pipes and no water which, two weeks later, not only had floorboards, pipes and water but double glazing all round." John also says that at the conference he met many local councillors, not normally friendly to squatters. But they were there as individuals, as was John who nevertheless described himself as a squatter and broke down some barriers.

Although there appears to be an over-emphasis on the environmental side of Agenda 21, and a lack of focus on the alleviation of poverty, Chris Church is optimistic this will change. "We know the answers on transport and waste management," he says. "What we are lacking is the political will. But how do we get out of the 'green ghetto'? There are councils in Gloucestershire and Leicestershire who are addressing the issues of poverty. But what is important is that poverty is a state of exclusion. So it's not just a matter of tackling poverty, but tackling exclusion."

"I worked in the anti-poverty unit in Newham last year," he continues. "There you had families moving one light bulb from one room to another. What strategies do you adopt to talk to them about global warming? You don't. You have to look at their needs first."

Chris points out that Agenda 21 is not a "fix it" nor a "magic wand" but that, through the process of widespread consultation and barrier-breaking, these issues can begin to be addressed.

An obvious example of how it can be addressed under Agenda 21 is LETS. Another is Track 2,000; a Cardiff based recycling scheme that moves beyond paper and bottles. Track 2,000 was set up by two local individuals and proved so successful that Cardiff City council took it up. Instead of filling landfill sites with household goods such as furniture, heaters and fridges they are collected by the council and, if repairable, taken to a depot. Here they are repaired by unemployed people who also pick up useful skills. Then, if anybody on the dole or someone who has recently acquired an unfurnished house needs something they go to the depot to see what's available. This is a scheme that has Agenda 21 written all over it. The irony is that it was set up before Agenda 21 was an intelligible concept in a bureaucrat's mind; 1991.

Brett Willers is Cardiff's Environmental Strategy Officer, who now oversees Agenda 21. He says that Cardiff's Agenda 21 process really started in 1991 because the council is environmentally inclined anyway. Their strategy was built up after 40 meetings with local residents and one almighty conference.

"I was appointed four years ago," he says. "And I recently saw that Derbyshire have only just advertised a post similar to mine." This is why Cardiff are way ahead of the field. But there are internal fears over what will happen once the boundary commission re-organises Wales because the effectiveness of a strategy depends on those running the town hall.

Ian Brown is an elected Cardiff City councillor

Populating the International Promise of Agenda 21

There are plenty of reasons for being cynical about the substance of abstract international agreements, but there are good reasons for demanding that the promises made during and after the Rio Summit of 1992 be fulfilled. **Jim Carey** looks at the opportunities represented by the UK Government's high international profile on Agenda 21.

and deputy chair of the city's environmental services committee. He is more sceptical about the effect Agenda 21 will have. "There's a fairly healthy bullshit factor between what we are doing practically and Agenda 21," he says. "It's passed me by because it's things we do anyway."

In other words, what's happening in Cardiff would have happened with or without Agenda 21. Ian cynically believes that by next year a lot of consultants will have been paid and the authorities who were going to do things anyway will get on with them, and those that weren't, won't.

Chris Church says that four different things will come out of local Agenda 21s. Firstly will be the vision thing; the document each authority produces outlining the direction it intends to take. The second will be a method of measuring exactly how sustainable communities are. This is followed by practical projects, such as local people turning a piece of wasteland into a nature park. The final point is that this will create empowered communities unafraid to do things for themselves. "It's creating a culture where councils understand more about what people want to do and see their role as enabling them to do it, or staying out of the way," he says.

"There is no pot of money," he continues by way of warning. "Councils are already cash-strapped. They have to accept that they are no longer in control; local businesses have to accept that they are not the only people who can talk about the economy; voluntary groups have to accept that they are not the only one's wearing haloes.... No-one on the planet has yet come up with a Local Agenda 21. I don't guarantee it, but what I do know is a lot of existing things aren't working."

Blah or brilliance? On the surface, breaking down barriers and uniting communities in the cause of common good can only seem exciting and, from that angle, Agenda 21 does have enormous potential. But to achieve that potential depends on those involved in the decision-making process. That, in turn, depends on the community. So perhaps those members of the community with the greatest practical knowledge on combating poverty in a sustainable way are necessary to push the community out of its "green ghetto."

While 200 occupiers were completing their week long land protest at a disused airfield in Surrey, John Gummer, Secretary of State for Environment, was puffing the UK Government chest at the Commission for Sustainable Development in New York.

The irony of these two simultaneous events lies in the fact that both the land protesters and John Gummer were talking about the same thing - Agenda 21.

The Commission for Sustainable Development is a once yearly meeting within the UN system, designed as an opportunity for nations to report on and discuss their implementation of Agenda 21. It also aims to produce protocols on ways to proceed. It is a testament to how well the UK Government thinks it is doing with its own Agenda 21 implementation, that both the Secretary of State, John Gummer and the Environment minister Lynda Chalker attended the conference.

In a similarly high level Conference on Poverty held in Copenhagen in March, the UK Government kept a low profile, sending only a junior minister as a representative. The headlines all too briefly pointed out: "Major accused of insult in snub to poverty summit." (The Independent 13/2/95)

Levels of poverty have risen to such an extent in the UK over recent years that Oxfam, who have previously only operated abroad, have decided to commence poor-relief schemes in this country. The UK Government's record on poverty is poor in itself, leading them to show little interest in accounting for such an embarrassing situation in an international arena. On the other hand they consider there are international good marks to be obtained from being seen as an Agenda 21 prime mover.

"The UK Government see Agenda 21 as an environmental process - that's quite apparent in the different profile they have played at the Commission for Sustainable Development and the social summit in Copenhagen," says Tom Bigg, UK administrator for the UN Environment and Development Committee.

Whether or not the UK Government have the right to consider themselves as champions of the environment is very much open to question, John Gummer on the other hand considers Britain to be the "clean man of Europe".

"When you look at what is being done through Agenda 21 - and in other countries where local Agenda 21 is more tied to social issues and equity - it's clear it is far more than just environmental protection and maintaining the status quo," says Bigg.

And so it seems that whilst the UK Government considers it's environmental record to be good one, it plays a high profile on Agenda 21 conferences and make promises about its implementation. Once these promises have been made, it is then up to campaigns like The Land is Ours, along with non-governmental organisations concerned with both the environment and social equity, to highlight what it is that the UK Government has actually agreed to.

In this way, the large tracts of the Agenda 21 concerned with the relief of poverty and homelessness through community initiatives and low impact dwellings, might then be a promise the UK Government did not know it

had made but which it is now obliged to keep.

The promise reads:

"Access to safe and healthy shelter is essential to a person's physical, psychological, social and economic well-being and should be a fundamental part of national and international action. The objective is to achieve adequate shelter for rapidly growing populations and for the currently deprived urban and rural poor through an enabling approach to shelter development and improvement that is environmentally sound."

So says Chapter 7 of Agenda 21. And there's more....

"All countries should as appropriate, support the shelter efforts of the urban and rural poor, the unemployed and the no-income group by adopting and/or adapting existing codes and regulations, to facilitate their access to land, finance and low-cost building materials and by actively promoting the regularization and upgrading of informal settlements and urban slums as an expedient measure and pragmatic solution to the urban shelter deficit."

One of the major demands presented by The Land is Ours group is that favourable planning procedures should be established allowing construction of low-impact dwellings and small subsistence agriculture on self-owned land. At present, caravans, benders, tepees or garden sheds are the subject of strict, and as many have discovered, subjective, planning restrictions. Similarly, the right to live on land and grow your own food, is restricted by discriminatory criteria concerned with the economic significance of the crop you intend to grow. For instance, the residents living on their own land in benders at Tinkers Bubble in Somerset have been told that the thousand apple trees they live with and tend is not economically significant and therefore does not entitle them to live there. They are presently appealing against the ruling.

There are a number of such efforts to get the concept of 'low impact dwellings' into local planning policy around the country, and perhaps now the time for a breakthrough is imminent. It is certainly the subject of growing demand.

One recent precedent for the implementation of Agenda 21 on a local level occurred after the Planning Inspectorate sent an investigator to examine an appeal by a caravan dweller living on his permaculture garden in Pembury, Kent. The local council claimed that the occupier did not qualify for the planning permission necessary to live on the land and therefore that both he and the caravan should be removed.

However, in language uncharacteristic of usual planning inspectorate reports, the inspector decided the caravan occupier should be allowed to live on the land for a trial period of three years.

The report stated:

"The caravan would enable a holding to evolve of a type in tune with the sustainable development approach of both the Government and the county council, in the light of local Agenda 21 from the Rio Conference."

The decision is undoubtedly an important precedent, highlighting the real-life possibilities presented by Agenda 21. Tom Bigg describes the decision as "very enlightened" and just the sort of local level implementation that Agenda 21 calls for. The fact that a planning inspector makes note of the necessity to "live in tune with the land" is a ground shifting consideration in its own right and a good start on the road to more of the same.

Many cynics have argued that Agenda 21 is just one more abstract international agreement, with the lack of any statutory stipulations rendering it fallible to lip service only. However, as the UK Government plays up its international profile on Agenda 21, it now seems that public reminders of what the agreement promises in terms of community level, low-impact housing, availability of land and alleviation of poverty, might start producing the kind of results John Gummer didn't have in mind.

"The UK Government have gone quite a long way to setting up the infrastructure for Agenda 21 on a national level, so it should now be possible for people with a particular interest in Agenda 21 to get their perspective across," says Tom Bigg.



Counting the Costs of the Freedom to Drive

In July 1994, under questioning from a House of Commons Select Committee, officials from the Department of Health admitted that on one day in 1991 160 people died as a result of air pollution in Britain.

On Friday 13th December 1991 record levels of nitrogen dioxide sent the measuring equipment at the Government's official air monitoring stations off the recordable scale. The report that substantiated the death toll remains, to this day, unpublished.

Since that day the nitrogen dioxide smog has returned in December 1992 and December 1994; it is not known how many people died on these occasions.

World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines from South East England to North West Scotland. Only in London did the Dept. of Environment issue a health warning telling people with respiratory problems to stay inside. A press release from the DoE on the same day warned motorists to "use cars responsibly".

On the 4th of May Sir Paul Beresford, environment minister, told BBC Radio: "The biggest triggering factor is that there has been a drift of pollution from mainland Europe.... really what we've got to do is explain to the rest of Europe to behave as well as we do." Sir Paul should know that Britain has the worst record in Europe for nitrogen dioxide pollution and, compared to Germany's 200 official pollution monitoring stations, Britain has just seven.

Levels of Britain's serious airborne pollutants are rising and many now regularly break WHO guidelines.

official pollution measuring stations in London. One is situated in Russell Square in the middle of a park, surrounded by grass and shielded from the road by trees. The second is on the top of an office block in Bridge Place, Victoria. It is difficult to find a quieter street in Victoria. The siting of a monitoring station so far above the ground also raises a few questions. Pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide, benzene, particulates and sulphur dioxide are heavier than air and will generally concentrate at ground level, particularly in warm, anticyclonic weather.

Following directives from central Government (see below), Westminster Council have been quick to implement their own pollution monitoring programme. Whilst they have vastly improved on the Government's policy by siting their stations next to roads, it is the roads being monitored that obscure the facts.

A prime example is Oxford Street, shopping mecca of the West End. Unfortunately, in the section where the monitoring station is sited, Oxford Street is open only to buses, cabs and cyclists. Meanwhile, 600 yards away, is Park Lane, a mile-long, eight-laned monster carrying traffic around the City's inner ring road.

A public helpline has been set up by the Government to pass on information on air quality, as recorded at official monitoring stations. Air quality is described as "good" until low-level ozone pollution reaches nearly double the limit set by the WHO. Consequently, Friends of the Earth discovered that there were more than 300 occasions last year when ozone pollution exceeded WHO limits, yet the helpline still announced that air quality was "good".

The May 3rd DoE press release states: "Air quality is described as 'very good', 'good', 'poor' or 'very poor' Classifications are designed to give a broad indication of pollutant levels but they also take account of European Community standards and World Health Organisation guidelines."

After a series of asthma scares last Summer the DoE promised it would be bringing in initiatives aimed at decreasing the amount of pollutants and improving awareness of the dangers of pollutants. Following The Royal

Commission on Environmental Pollution report and Sacra's findings in December 1994 (see SQUALL 9) much was hoped for from the Department.

Finally in January Environment Secretary, John Gummer, launched 'Air Quality: Meeting the Challenge' a series of pollution policies "intended to bring cleaner air to every one of Britain's towns and cities". However, Councils will only be obliged to draw up plans for "air quality management areas", they are to "consult", "appraise" and "review". Councils have been given

responsibility for tackling air pollution but no power to implement legislation and very little money either.

In 1952 Harold Macmillan was faced with serious smog in London. He rejected bringing in legislation and said: "I suggest we form a committee. We cannot do very much, but we can be seen to be very busy and that is half the battle nowadays."

In 1995 John Gummer, talking of his air quality initiative, said: "(it) will offer reassurance to all those concerned about the link between air pollution and respiratory illness"

Asthma in Britain. As percentage rise in hospital admissions between 1979 and 1991:

South and West England; 160 to 200 per cent.

The Borders, Scotland; over 400 per cent.

Scottish Highlands; 160 to 200 per cent.

Northern England; between 130 and 160 per cent.

East Anglia and Oxfordshire; 100 to 130 per cent.

North and West Wales; 50 to 100 per cent.

In early May this year Britain experienced its first taste of summer. Temperatures soared to 27°C. Along with the sun came Nitrogen Dioxide and low-level ozone. Hot, sunny weather is usually a result of atmospheric high pressure bringing still air. Pollutants that would normally be carried away are left to collect at ground level. Hot weather keeps pollutants closer to the ground.

On the 3rd of May low-level ozone levels exceeded

Officials recognise that one single category of pollutants, particulates, routinely contribute to the deaths of 10,000 Britons every year while other pollutants such as low-level ozone are implicated in the asthma epidemic, now affecting one in seven children.

The Government is not only failing to inform the public of the dangers it is also failing in its responsibility to collate and maintain accurate information. This can be confirmed by looking at the two



The car is the single biggest contributor to atmospheric pollution in Britain:

Nitrogen Dioxide is implicated in asthma and other respiratory diseases, over 50 per cent comes from vehicle emissions while the rest comes from industry, primarily energy production.

Carbon Monoxide affects the central nervous system, 90 per cent of it comes from vehicle emissions.

Benzene is a hydrocarbon and a proven cancer-causing chemical, 82 per cent comes from vehicle emissions.

Particulates are tiny particles produced by burning fuel. Estimates, based on US studies, suggest they are responsible for some 10,000 deaths in Britain each year from respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, approximately 50 per cent of particulate pollution comes from vehicle emissions.

Ground-level **Ozone** is produced by the action of sunlight on gaseous pollutants, mainly hydrocarbons and nitrogen dioxide. It is held as the primary pollutant affecting asthmatics and others with respiratory problems. It is difficult to attribute ozone to a single polluting device but when considering the amount of hydrocarbons, nitrogen dioxide and other gaseous pollutants that come from vehicle emissions it is difficult not to hold the car as the primary producer of low-level ozone-producing chemicals.

Sulphur Dioxide is the only prominent pollutant that the car is not largely responsible for, some 70 per cent of it coming from power stations. Sulphur dioxide is the gas responsible for acid rain, combining with water in the air to produce sulphuric acid.

Road Building in Chaos

As a part of his 'greener' transport policies, Brian Mawhinney, the Transport Secretary, announced last December that, of the 22 road-building schemes due to commence by 31st March 1995, nine would be held over leaving 13 to go ahead.

It appears however that under a combination of political pressure, cost overruns and administrative chaos only six of these schemes have begun.

Staff at the Highways Agency, responsible for overseeing the £2 billion roads programme, say that Dr. Mawhinney's lack of political direction is a major factor in the chaos. His attempt to distance himself from the pro-roads stance of his predecessors (notably John McGreggor) have seen him initiate a national transport debate and consider a Green Paper on transport policy.

There can be no doubt that the chaos in the Department of Transport and, in particular, The Highways Agency, is as a result of the hugely successful anti-road protests and a consequent growing awareness in Britain that more roads mean more cars mean more pollution. Mawhinney knows that the arguments against road-

building are now overwhelming, he also knows that the powerful road-lobby can no longer get away with a carte blanche on government transport policy.

However, as yet, there are no solutions being offered. Road plans have been shelved, not axed, road pricing is being dismissed, increases in the cost of petrol will not penalise the biggest polluters and will simply mean the rich can use their cars whilst the poor have to rely on deteriorating public transport. Fashionable debates on energy tax, restricting car-parking in inner cities, banning cars from inner cities, creating legislation for 'greener' engines and improving public transport come and go but nothing even vaguely substantial has been done. Road and rail privatisation moves ever onward and bus deregulation now sees companies fiercely competing for popular routes while services on quieter, less-profitable routes deteriorate.

Mawhinney's reputation within his own department is also deteriorating. His intentions may be good but unless ministers and civil servants support him his ideas will never be acted on. It would be just as easy to replace Mawhinney as it was to replace McGreggor. The next Transport Secretary might not even have the intentions, let alone the support, to 'green' the DoT.



DoT Compensation Claims Feared

As well as the swelling costs of policing new roads against protesters, rules on compensation have also affected budgets for proposed roads.

Following a judgement in a case involving one Colonel Owen last year, the DoT now has to account for the cut in property values as well as the noise nuisance people suffer from new roads in its compensation payments.

The case that gave rise

to this precedent was not very well publicized and many affected property owners and residents may not be aware of their new rights to compensation.

In another largely ignored case the DoT was criticized by the Ombudsman for not paying compensation to a group of householders affected by the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

There are fears in the department that these two cases could open the floodgates to thousands of compensation claims.

A30 Exeter Honiton ByPass.

This 16 mile 'improvement' is part of the Trans European Road Network and is to be put into Privately run hands.

Known as Design Build Finance Operate (DBFO) this technique looks to be a popular one with the DoT, keen to pass the responsibility for road projects over to the private sector.

The project is currently out to tender and although several trees and

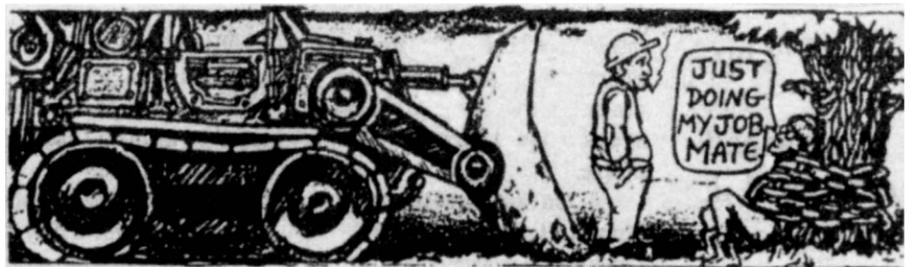
hedgerows have been ripped out, construction has not yet begun. There are rumours that no-one wants to take this particular road on.

This may be in part due to the fact that the protesters at two camps along the route are growing in number, especially since the eviction of Stanworth Valley, and the threat of a long campaign of digger diving and crane climbing looms large. Actions up until now have been small and in response to limited clearance

work.

Having seen what happened at Twyford Down, the M11, Pollock, Stanworth Valley and Newbury, potential contractors may be loathe to get involved and shoulder the security and eviction costs as well as the cost of the road itself.

An A30 Action Office will be up and running soon in conjunction with SCAR (South Coast Against Roadbuilding). Contact Road Alert for details.



Trans European Networks and The Derby ByPass

TENs (Trans European Networks) is the largest infrastructure plan in the history of Europe.

Hundreds of new motorways, airports, tunnels, bridges and high-speed trains are being proposed costing around £320 billion.

"The European Union needed a big idea and came up with TENs," says Garet Harding, assistant to Labour MEP Anita Pollack. "It wanted to create wealth but forgot about the environment."

Of the 220 projects that make up TENs, 126 of them are new roads. Together they would add 15,000 km of roads across Europe. The bias towards roads in the TENs plans was pushed through the European Union (EU) by the transport lobby of road constructors before the relatively more eco-friendly European Parliament gained power under the Maastricht Treaty.

The European Round Table of Industrialists, which set TENs in motion, is an influential lobby group of 45 top industrial leaders which has enjoyed intimate connections with successive EU presidents and commissioners. It founded the European Centre for Infrastructure Studies (ECIS) which published a report in 1984 called 'Missing Links'

pinpointing the Channel Tunnel, among other projects as "necessary for economic growth and progress".

Both ECIS and the European Commission have announced that the hurdles to TENs can be overcome by setting up special agencies for each project. This, they argue, could allow them to be pushed through without environmental impact assessments and public hearings ever being carried out.

If the TENs project were to go ahead, CO2 emissions in the EU would increase by approximately five percent over the next 15 years, say Greenpeace, which contradicts the EU commitment to stabilize CO2 emissions. This is aside from the increasingly dangerous levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, benzene and low-level ozone that vehicle exhaust emissions are responsible for.

Many local bypasses, particularly the A30/A303 corridor and South coast routes, are well-disguised British components of the Trans European Road Network (TERN). The DoT, in a covert manoeuvre, have a policy of refusing to discuss national and European implications for supposedly local road schemes. Thus, at public inquiries into road schemes, local residents are sold the idea

of relieving local congestion and never get to hear that their bypass is really intended to carry juggernauts from Eastern Europe to Ireland.

One case in which the DoT have come close to admitting their real intentions is the A564 Derby Southern Bypass. The bypass, say the DoT in a press release, will "attract long distance traffic into the Derby-Stoke corridor".

Contracted to Tarmac at a projected cost of £128 million, the 16-mile road is intended to link the A50, M1 and M6. The A564 is being built to assist access to a new Toyota car works, locals in the area should prepare themselves for the new cars to be exported, presumably by road, all over Europe.

"To help build more cars we need more roads," say Earth First!: "the madness continues."

There have been several actions at the bypass, all have been arrest-free and peaceful. Unfortunately for protesters, Tarmac ripped out all the trees, hedges and foliage along the route very early in the building process and there is no realistic area left to site a protest camp. Regular actions will, however, continue.

Contact Road Alert for details.

Reclaiming the Air

Concern over the effect of pollution on the health of the nation has spawned widespread environmental direct action. *Andy Johnson* talks to some of the hundreds of people who recently reclaimed the airwaves on a North London street.

A child jumping up and down on the roof of a recently trashed car shouting “Kill the car, not us,” embodies many symbolic connotations. Not least the reversal of a deadly relationship between the two.

Further appropriate symbols come tumbling from a bicycle-powered sound system, Rinky Dink, delivered succession after succession of repetitive beats in the same busy London street as the child and trashed car. And more yet in the swarm of illegally gathered dancers attracted to it. Throw in a few jugglers, fire breathers, ad-hoc drumming jams, folk bands, bunting, a free cafe, 400 environmentalists and thousands of market day visitors and you have a spontaneous street party.

Or, in the words of Roger Geffen, one of the many

inspirations behind Reclaim the Streets: “the possibility of what can be done when you reclaim the streets and give them back to the people.”

On Sunday May 14th Camden High Street in North London was reclaimed for an afternoon. It was the first action by Reclaim the Streets - an evolution of anti-roads campaigns such as the No M11 and No M65.

Their choice of target was inspired. Camden High Street is a main northern artery through London, designated a priority “red” route by the Department of Transport.

But on Sundays it is packed with thousands of market visitors as car and pedestrians habitually jostle for road space.

The organisers behind the action knew that as soon as they managed to halt the traffic, market shoppers would flood the road - leaving the police with no alternative but to close it.

The action had been planned since February. Two sacrificial cars, brought specially for the occasion, had been parked overnight in a nearby side street.

While 400 demonstrators left from a meeting point in nearby

Kentish Town, 20 activists preceded them. They drove the cars into the High Street and smashed them into each other - blocking the road.

Most of the demonstrators did not know where they were headed. Although the action was well-publicised, the location had been kept successfully secret.

“We knew that a demonstration was planned for somewhere in London,” said Superintendent John Gillespie of Kentish Town police, “but we didn’t know where until they arrived.”

“Roughly translated,” said one police officer, “we got caught with our pants down”.

After demonstrating to London Underground that penalty fares do not deter fare-dodgers, the main body of protesters arrived minutes after the blockade of the High Street.

“We jumped out of the cars and put up bunting and tables very quickly,” said Sheila, one of the core initiators. “There was nothing the police could do. The minute it happened everybody else showed up. And then people simply filled up the car-free space provided.”

The police quickly realised

there was nothing they could do. They siphoned the trapped traffic off the High Street and then closed it.

Many key members of Reclaim the Streets are fresh from anti-road protests. They take their inspiration from the effective non-violent direct action of this movement but now intend to crank the transport debate up a notch.

“It’s in line with trying to get traffic out of cities,” says Sheila, “because they’re for people and not traffic. To curb car culture and show what life would be like without cars.”

Roger Geffen expands: “The car is implemented in many different crimes. Pollution, asthma, global warming and the danger they pose to everybody else. Cars are congesting our towns and cities. Our houses are being knocked down to make way for more roads. It’s no longer a question of whether we are prepared to make the sacrifice, but that life would be better without them.”

The issues are serious. The Reclaim the Streets action came on the same day many similar actions around the globe took place in response to World Climate Action Day.

A report published in the *New Scientist* (12.03.94) suggested that fine particles in exhaust fumes could be responsible for 10,000 deaths a year in England and Wales.

And, although environmental and health organisations are wary of saying pollution causes asthma, there is strong evidence that it worsens the condition for asthma sufferers. Especially during hot weather.

Last summer, according to Camden council, vehicle exhaust fumes frequently caused air quality to breach European guidelines in the area.

According to the National Asthma Campaign, asthma is the only easily treatable chronic condition in the Western world that is on the increase. Israeli researchers have discovered that there are

more asthma sufferers in industrialised regions while researchers in Munich have discovered a “definite association between reduced respiratory function and increased traffic load”. (*British Medical Journal* ‘93: 307).

“When pollution levels are higher,” says Tony Bosworth, transport and pollution campaigner with Friends of the Earth, “more people visit doctors for asthma, more asthma medication is sold and more asthma sufferers are treated in hospital.”

Ozone is something we need more of a few miles up in the atmosphere to deal with the sun’s UV rays, but at low level it causes chest tightness and breathing difficulties. It also destroys vegetation.

According to the DoE and Friends of the Earth, low-level ozone is more prevalent in rural areas. Low-level ozone drifts, from its source, out to the cooler and less congested countryside.

The most deadly pollutant, however, are fine sooty particles called particulates that come mostly from burning fuel. Diesels, in particular, produce high levels of particulates. An American scientist, Joel Schwartz, who works for the US government’s Environmental Protection Agency, estimates that 60,000 people a year in America die as a direct result of particulates. Most vulnerable are the elderly, followed by those with heart or lung disease.

From these results Schwartz calculated that deaths in England and Wales attributable to particulates run at about 10,000 a year. Two thousand of these would be in London.

But, as Tony Bosworth points out, we don’t breathe in these chemicals separately. “When we’re out walking or cycling we breathe in a nasty cocktail of all of them,” he says.

According to Friends of the Earth, catalytic converters are not the solution. While they are effective at reducing the flow of poisons from exhaust fumes, the sheer expansion in car ownership projected for the next 30 years will cancel out their effect. There are currently 25 million cars on Britain’s roads. According to the DoT’s own figures, by 2025 this number is expected to double.

“If they are allowed to,” says Tony, “the benefits of catalytic converters will be wiped out.”

This view is not just held by environmentalists. The Royal Commission on Pollution, the House of Commons Environment Committee and the House of Commons Traffic Committee have all recently come to the same conclusion.

“What we have to do,” says Tony, “is get people out of their cars. Not just through a political framework but by putting out a different message. The propaganda put out about the car does affect people’s behaviour. But people can’t



Nick Cobbing

make a choice unless there is a decent, reliable alternative."

In Camden the two sacrificial cars had been well and truly sacrificed. A budding new-age entrepreneur could have hired out large sticks at 50p a minute and made a tidy profit, such was the fervent desire of passers by to vent their resentment against the car.

As children jumped on their roofs, and firemen poured sand down their petrol tanks to prevent a final act of defiance, Camden High Street was awash with bobbing heads. There was almost a festival atmosphere - a sort of aperitif for the summer.

Camden High Street is intersected by a junction of five major roads. From the relative vantage point of a small bridge that crosses the Regent's Canal this junction could be seen to be gridlocked. The sun, glinting from the windscreens, trembled in the gaseous haze produced. A shimmering sea of filth.

"Brian Mawhinney, the transport secretary, says that if you ask the individual if they want to do without the car they say no," says Roger Geffen. "The transport debate is cynical. He is asking the wrong question to get the wrong answer. If he asked collectively if we want to get rid of the car, we'd all say yes."

A survey of the traffic jammed motorists bears out this view. Most drivers interviewed were annoyed at the immediate inconvenience. But there was agreement that something had to be done about the city's traffic problems.

Even a taxi driver, always good for a reactionary view, said: "I think there's too much traffic. They should take all the cars off the road and provide a proper bus service. And they should cut taxi fares in half so that people can afford to use them. People should be

able to walk without breathing all these fumes in."

The day was a peaceful one. Superintendent John Gillespi described it as "quite humorous", although it is known that the local police were annoyed at the action.

During the day there were no arrests. But at the end of the demo - scheduled for 5.30pm but extended by a couple of hours - 10 people who refused to move when the road was re-opened were arrested on obstruction and public order charges. Most were later released with cautions.

Road protesters are not alone in targeting this new, invisible and deadly smog. Recently the Government said that local authority powers to close roads under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 can include health considerations.

Camden Green party are making noises to the effect that traffic through Camden should be halted during hot weather. Meanwhile, parents of children with asthma are going to the High Court to force Greenwich Council to close its main through-road at times of high pollution.

A week after Reclaim the Streets, 100 parents and children spent the morning rush hour leafletting drivers on the dangers of pollution at a major junction in Islington, north London.

"It is women and children who have to breathe these fumes in," said Joss James, one of the organisers.

"This is the first action," says Roger Geffen. "We want this to become the permanent state of things. We shall be taking the campaign to all aspects of car culture - including advertisers, manufacturers and the streets. We have moved the debate on from anti-road to anti-car."

Sing a song of direct action ~ Solsbury reunion

Kate Evans '95.

It did come to pass that on the fourteenth day of the third month of the year that was 1995, there was a great anniversary gathering of many people who never quite made it to Solsbury Hill when it was all happening, but fanned the party a year later.

And there did come together a multitude of hippies and they did stand and stare in amazement at the muddied, fucked up stretch of desolation which cut a swathe through Solsbury Hill.

And so the hippies did join together in an encampment and there was much drumming and singing and much was drunk and smoked.

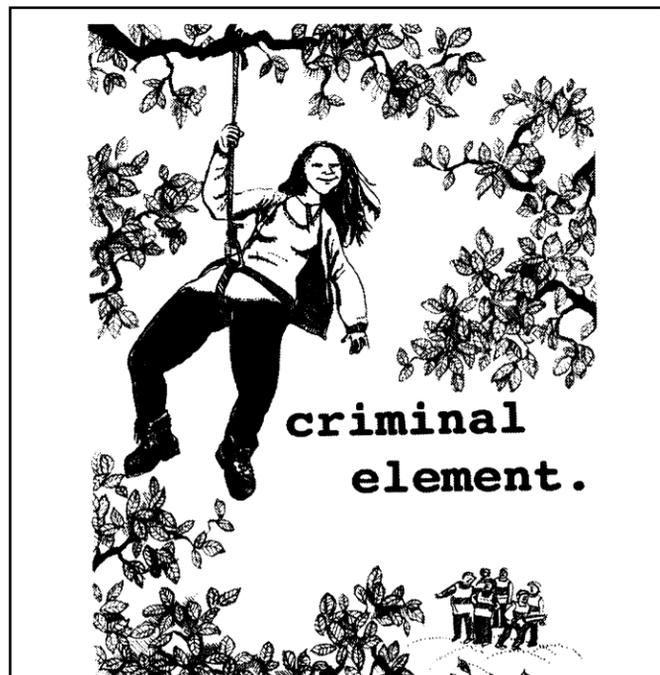
Then forsooth, in the morning the hippies did rise up, up to the top of Solsbury Hill, and they listened with patience to rallies and to speeches. And then (this is the good bit) they did with one accord clasp the hands of each other, and spread out into a ring, and there were happy smiling hippies as far as the eye could see.

And then a great rage did come upon the hippies and they did swoop down upon the roadsite, and the gates and the fences were as butter before them, and the utmost efforts of the yellowjackets were in vain.

And so the hippies did come to be in occupation of many cranes and diggers, and they did drum and sing with hilarity, and they did taunt and tease the yellowjackets from a great height.

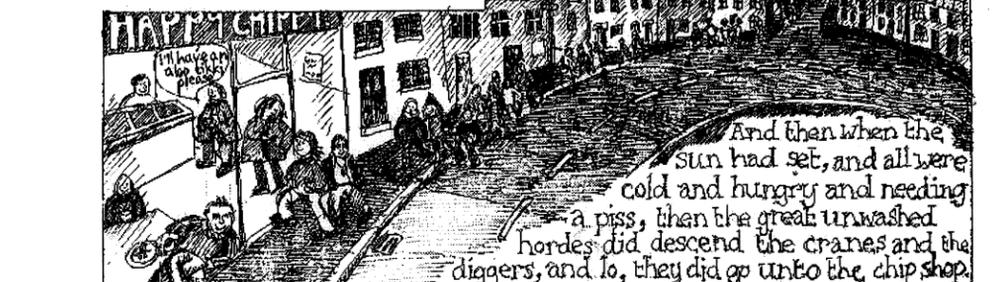
And one man, Jim, did hear the call of the righteous, good environmentalists, and he did cast aside his jacket of much yellowness, and he did quit his job. And verily did the smelly, crusty hippy types rejoice.

And then when the sun had set, and all were cold and hungry and needing a piss, then the great unwashed hordes did descend the cranes and the diggers, and lo, they did go unto the chip shop.



Cartoons of peaceable
sedition
by Kate Evans

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In Defence of Stanworth Valley



Andrew Testa

The eviction of No M65 protesters from Stanworth Valley at the beginning of May saw over 60 arrests. The eviction took five days, a testament to the effectiveness of tactics employed by activists. **Ian Freeman** documents the eviction and history of the protest, **Catherine Grivas** offers a personal account of the experience.

Viva Stanworth

by Ian Freeman

Thursday May 11th 1995 saw the first anniversary of the No M65 campaign and the moment was marked by a mass trespass of the route.

With 75 people bail-restricted from the site due to the previous week's eviction of Stanworth Valley, the 20 or so unaffected protesters marched

peacefully along the five-mile scar in the Earth that Amec, and MacAlpine have so far managed to gouge out of the South Lancashire countryside. Cuerden Valley Nature Reserve is now criss-crossed by three motorways and, not surprisingly, local people now understand the need for direct action.

Exactly a year previously, Lancaster and Liverpool Earth First! began the action against the M65 by first occupying a farmhouse on route and then moving into Cinder Path Woods. Despite

persistent direct action, protesters were unable to stop the cutting of trees. By June 21st '94 only two trees remained occupied. They were under seige for two weeks whilst the sheriff got the paperwork right. By August 2nd the woods were completely destroyed.

Subsequently, a camp was established in Stanworth Valley and the first significant action involved Greenpeace providing two JCBs to dig up roadworks and a hundred people to wear 'Trees not Tarmac' T-shirts and plant

trees. By the end of the summer the first platforms were up in the trees and by April this year, after one of the wettest winters this century, 41 tree-houses had been built with 6km of polypropylene rope strung between them forming what was to become an effective system of walkways. The Tofu Love Frogs appeared and together with Tragic played a stompingly good gig in the valley.

The legal battle to stop the destruction of Stanworth Valley ended on April 26 and that weekend more than 300 activists gathered to defend the trees. In a defiant party mood, last minute preparations made way for Beltane celebrations. With music all around and the forces of doom and destruction gathering on the hill, the contractors compound was stormed by naked protesters

leaving Group 4 in an embarrassed quandary.

Monday morning (May 1st) saw the start of the madness. The Sheriff hired a team of climbers to do the dirty work, although this didn't stop bailiffs endangering lives with crazy stunts. People defending walkways, some 70-90ft high, had them cut from underneath them. Without any warning people were grabbed and had their harnesses cut. Astoundingly, bailiffs with no knowledge of safety procedures were sent into the trees with knives, an immediate betrayal of the Sheriffs pre-eviction agreement. No-one had expected the Sheriff to stick to his word, but no-one expected aerial knife fights. In one incident someone was stabbed in the hand. In another, someone was dragged down with a rope round their neck resulting in rope-burns. It is pure chance that there were no deaths or serious injuries.

Adrenalin flowed, tempers flared and the media put out distorted reports of violent resistance which they subsequently admitted were lies. Indeed, it was the unsafe procedures used by bailiffs that were violent. Despite a brutal first day, only five tree-houses had been taken and 10 people arrested. Some of the cut walkways were replaced. Although 53 vehicles had pulled up that morning, along with a lot of costly 'he-man-power', to hack down the woods, all they gained at the end of the first day was a pathetic amount of ground and they were still unable to get the cherrypickers in.

First light on Tuesday and you could already feel the temperature rising. The dawn



Andrew Testa

During an attempt to dislodge protesters from trees a security guard produces a knife.



Andrew Testa

chorus was drowned by cries of “Aruga!” followed by machinery; the chainsaws were early. More madness on the walkways, absurdity on the ground, a helicopter in the sky, cameras out of shot and, up in the trees, a different world. The Sheriffs climbers moved in again and took another six tree-houses, but they still hadn’t cleared a way to the valley floor.

The cargo nets which had been so effective at Claremont Road proved difficult to defend and despite spirited attempts to delay the bailiffs with interesting knot workshops, at least five people were mauled and removed. Wednesday night and Liz’s tree on the west bank of the valley was re-occupied and walkways replaced. With over 50 arrested by now and some re-arrested for breaking bail conditions, they had now cleared a way for the big cherrypicker to get to the valley floor.

Unleashed chainsaws ripped through the valley, carelessly (or purposefully?) felling trees onto inhabited trees to screams of “murderers”. Bulldozers gouged the earth, hitting the shallow roots of beech trees, also inhabited; more screams, then silence.

Thursday morning and what seemed like security, but later turned out to be police, were seen cutting walkways with blades tied to poles. A man with a chainsaw was in the trees, and then for some reason decided to scamper down. It emerged that some particularly enthusiastic and successful protesters had been isolated in readiness for the day’s operation. However, before the cherrypicker arrived, all the walkways had been replaced and improved.

The walkway leading out of the compound was well-defended and, together with the

whole system, remained an extremely effective means of delaying the eviction and providing escape routes for those who needed to get out.

Friday evening and it was done. Over 120 people had been removed from the trees, over 60 arrested and all (plus 13 arrested in February whilst defending six houses further along the route) invited to a serious party in, on, under, outside and around Blackburn courthouse on June 13th at 1.30pm.

The local population of Blackburn had been won over. Support came flooding in from local people. Free bus rides led to free chips and free beer and almost led to popular uprising. Visible proof that you can’t kill the spirit beamed out of those woods; people made the connection that this is not a game. Lives were put at risk because lives are at risk; at risk from big business ravenously consuming our environment, creating more transport chaos, more pollution in the pursuit of profit.

So far, the No M65 campaign has added an extra £2.2 million to the cost of this senseless road. And the campaign goes on with actions planned and more and more people coming out to defend their environment. The anti-roads movement has gained strength and support from Stanworth Valley and the whole country is, perhaps, realising that we can do something to stop the madness.

Skills and harnesses are now focussing on the new DBFO road near Exeter, with Sequoias and giant Oaks inviting offers of occupation and the private sector planet-wreckers taking a second look at the cost involved. Let’s make it unworkable. VIVA STANWORTH.

No Compromise

by Catherine Grivas

Lancashire Under-Sheriff, Andrew Wilson’s assertions that protesters had been violent was widely circulated in media coverage of the Stanworth Valley eviction.

What constitutes violence is a matter for debate. There is no doubt for me, having spent two days and three nights in a tree-house hearing the continual sound of trees being chainsawed, the hideous crack as the trunk finally gives way followed a couple of seconds later by the crash of branches hitting the

ground, that this was the most disturbing and technically violent aspect of the eviction.

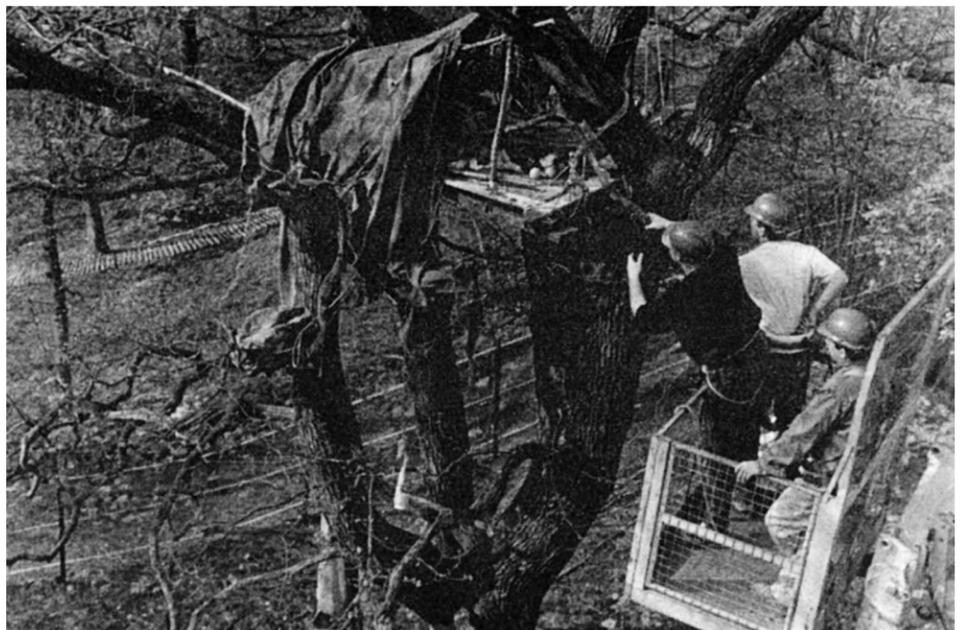
I did see behaviour I considered constituted violence; a stray boot connecting with the hard hats from the protesters after some unnecessary pulling and twisting from the Sheriff’s men. I was surprised by the Sheriff’s men (and they were all men) undertaking to evict 60 feet from the ground without adequate safety harnesses, nor being clipped onto anything. The speed and ferocity with which the sheriff conducted the first day of the eviction could only exacerbate the situation. How does one respect or respond to those who will put people at risk, those who don’t seem to respect themselves?

The whole eviction was

very emotional, I saw and cried plenty of tears, but it was underpinned with humour and positivity. At times I had the feeling of being a spectator at some dangerous and exciting sporting event. The reality of losing an old wood is sobering. It is only a consolation that we cost the Department of Transport a lot of money. Money they won’t be able to spend on more roads. I feel a massive amount of frustration at the arrogance of a state that will continue to build roads against the wishes of a large percentage of the population.

On one of my many visits to Stanworth Valley I met a local retired couple who had attended the initial public planning meeting for the M65. They registered their opposition to the road extension but felt it had been a waste of time going through the “proper channels” as “those in power had already decided they were going to build a road and did not want to enter into discussion about it”.

This was my first environmental campaign, I doubt it will be my last. The environment is only one aspect of what people in Britain today have to fight for. We are also deserving of jobs, education and housing, respect, liberty and justice. Being part of the No M65 campaign has introduced me to many people from a wide range of backgrounds. Their resourcefulness, commitment and positivity is enlightening. A common criticism is that we are idealistic. As the campaigning group Earth First! say, there can be no compromise in the defence of Mother Earth, there is no future without her. It’s not about idealism, it’s about realism.



Catherine Grivas

Pro-Newbury Bypass Lobby grows

Since the Newbury bypass campaign was put on hold last December by Brian Mawhinny, a pro-bypass campaign has been launched and is growing increasingly powerful.

The pro-road group is attracting those local business people with vested interests in the financial potential such a road would bring. Two recruits to the pro-bypass group are the Lib Dem Newbury Council, who have donated £8,000 of public money to the pro-bypass group (see SQUALL 9), and the Earl of Carnarvon.

The Earl of Carnarvon told the House of Lords that the causes for the delay in building the road were "innocuous" and he cited all the benefits that a

new road would bring; jobs, tourists, trade etc. What the Earl forgot to mention, apart from the increased traffic, pollution, asthma and lung complaints was the fact that he is a local landowner whose land would run adjacent to the new road.

Land next to a proposed road acquires a vastly over-inflated value. Blue Boar properties (who own and run many motorway service stations) recently paid over £1 million for five acres of land next to the proposed bypass. Since being put on hold, the value of that land has plummeted to just £5,000. Unfortunate for Blue Boar but rather handy for Lord Porchester who sold them the land and son of - you guessed it - the Earl of Carnarvon.

Meanwhile the rest of the pro-bypass lobby have taken to the streets of Newbury, pointing to the congestion and screaming

their demands for the bypass to be re-implemented as soon as possible, it being the only possible solution to the traffic problems. Unfortunately, there is money behind the pro-lobby and their activities are beginning to be noticed. In the words of one local anti-bypass protester: "If you tell someone something often enough they will eventually believe you."

And the pro-lobby have the resources, both financial and influential personnel. In Parliament, on the 24th April, Sir David Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he had received since Christmas in favour of the Newbury bypass and how many against the road. The answer was 440 letters, 2,770 pre-printed postcards and two petitions totalling 10,700 signatures for the road and 320 letters and 50 pre-printed postcards against the road.

Question - Is this a reflection of pro-road feeling in the area or a reflection of the resources and influence of the pro bypass group? If you tell someone something often enough and loud enough they will eventually believe you - how do adverts work?

Another factor discovered from the answer to Mitchell's question was that the House of Commons heard (the only reason for asking the question in the House) that most of the pro-road letters and postcards were from the local Newbury area. Most of the anti-road letters were, apparently, from outside the area. The continual refusal of ministers, and the DoT in general, to refuse to recognise that new roads are of national, not local, significance is all-pervasive.

There is, therefore, a very real danger that the road may be re-instated. The power

and resources of the pro-road contingent may give the Government sufficient excuse, and significant ammunition in terms of pointing to apparent local support, to go-ahead and build the road.

By December, the decision to go ahead with the road should have been made. If it does Newbury will lose three Sites of Special Scientific Interest, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Badger, Kingfisher and Dormouse habitats, heathland, two civil war battle sites, at least two chalk rivers and associated floodplains not to mention the health of its children and all in the name of business, commerce and, of course, profit.

Contact: "The Third Battle of Newbury" 01635 253079 or 01488 608388

Road Shorts

Minister Sanctions Car Protest

Steven Norris, Junior Transport Minister recently stated that pedestrian groups were "within their rights" to push cars parked on pavements back into the road.

Norris, speaking at a local authority launch of "Don't Choke Britain", went on to admonish anti-car group Reclaim The Streets saying: "They appear to want to return Central London to a park-like pastoral calm."

He Continued: "The Pedestrian Association is not simply the elder chapter of Reclaim the Streets. what they are doing is very sensibly pointing out that many short journeys do not have to be made by car."

Road Activist Award

Emma Must, who helps run Alarm UK, has been named as one of six "environmental heroes" by the Goldman Environmental Foundation in San Francisco. Must was imprisoned during the protests on Twyford Down for defying an injunction and went on to help set up Road Alert! through Alarm UK, now co-ordinating over a hundred anti-roads campaigns. The Award, worth £47,000, will be spent on the campaign.

DoT Backs down

The DoT has finally backed down from suing 76 protesters for £1.9 million over protests at Twyford Down. Instead it is to sue for £1,000 per head. Criticized in Parliament as a waste of money, even if the DoT is successful the recovered funds will not pay for the legal fees incurred in bringing the case to court.

A299 Thanet Way

Is a popular tourist road, taking Londoners to Margate in the summer. A bypass is being planned that will destroy beautiful areas around Herne Bay, as well as rural land around Whitstable. According to Road Alert! few local people are aware of the extent of the plans and, as they rightly observe, £65 million is a lot of money for a "local" scheme. A Beltane gathering kicked off what one protester said, "could be the campaign of the summer".

Laing Four Freed

Conditional Discharge for Crane Climbers

The first road protesters in the country to be charged under the Criminal Justice Act, the so-called 'Laing four', finally came to trial on April 11th and 12th.

The four defendants were all activists from Manchester Earth First! and were arrested after occupying a crane belonging to Laing construction company on the Oxford Road, Manchester, with a banner saying "The CJB won't stop me!" on the day the CJB became law, last November 4th.

At that time, Laing were bidding for a contract to build sections of the M65 development near Blackburn. Although a number of other

protesters were released with a caution, the four defendants were all charged with two offences under the CJA: 'Aggravated Trespass', and failing to obey a senior police officer.

The defendants, Pete, Paul, Chris and Oli all pleaded not guilty to both charges. They put up a spirited defence based on the requirement for the prosecution to show that not only did the protesters obstruct work on the site, but also that they intended to obstruct work. The defendants claimed they only ever intended to demonstrate against the CJA and to force a statement from Laing on the environmental impact of the M65 development, and they

never intended to stop the crane from working. For some reason the magistrate never looked entirely convinced by this explanation of events. But, to be fair, he never looked entirely convinced by the police's version of events either, especially their explanation of how the protesters came to believe that they would not be charged under the CJA when they came down.

Eventually the four were all declared guilty. They were given a conditional discharge, should they be found guilty of another offence in the next year they could still receive a sentence for the protest.



"There is one thing more important than the downland, however beautiful, however precious. That is the rule of Law."

Mr Justice Alliot sentencing Twyford protesters for breaking a High Court injunction.

BORN ON THE ROAD

Giving birth on the road may seem to be a daunting prospect. But why should it be?

Debbie Shaw outlines some problems faced by mothers living an unconventional lifestyle and argues that travellers are in an ideal position to reclaim child birth.

Tarot was born on site at the Molesworth festival in Cambridgeshire while his mother, Lyn, took a break from serving food to festival-goers from her mobile cafe. His birth was planned for the Silvermoon festival in Cumberland but he failed to make an appearance so Lyn drove through the night to reach Molesworth, expecting any minute to go into labour.

“We notified the local hospital and arranged that, when I needed the midwife, someone would go and tell the police at the gate and they would call her and conduct her onto the site. At about 5 o’clock on the Sunday I began to feel a bit uncomfortable so I thought I’d have a lie down for an hour or so. Ten minutes later, I called to my friend, ‘This baby is coming - right now’. It was only when it was all over that somebody remembered to call the midwife.”

Lyn is a grandmother with seven children, the last three of which were born on the road. While all of her children were born easily and with the minimum of medical intervention, she warns that a happy birth depends very much on the mother being in control of her situation. “It’s wrong to move a mum about when she’s about to deliver or if she’s just delivered. It’s always stressful. Stress at that particular time, when you’re getting the breast feeding together and everything, is not a good idea.”

The birth on a site near Bristol in 1989, when the arrival of a midwife pushed the number of vehicles over the Public Order Act limit and precipitated an eviction, is now part of traveller folklore. It serves to illustrate the callous disregard with which travelling mothers are treated.

Charlotte is very pregnant. She had hoped to still be living at Claremont Road when her baby was born but has been moved on twice since then. She has opted for a hospital birth but has had trouble finding one that would take her. “Nowhere would take me because I was NFA (no fixed abode) and in the end I had to give a false address.” And, with the threat of eviction hanging over the site where she is currently living, she is scared that she and her baby will be homeless by the time she leaves hospital.

The organisation Safe Childbirth for Travellers monitors cases such as Charlotte’s and attempts to intervene in evictions where mothers are involved. Their spokeswoman, Frieda Schicker, stresses that the powers granted by the CJA are discretionary and that the DOE guidelines for local authorities recommend that the presence of pregnant women and newly-born children should be taken into account before an eviction proceeds.

Home Office guidelines for the police, however, are less clear and this is one of the issues on which Frieda is campaigning for change. She is concerned that evictions which take place where a mother is due to give birth, or a newly-born baby is present, should not go unrecorded and is currently preparing a new information pack, detailing inappropriate uses of the CJA under these circumstances. As she says: “If we get details we can use them. We try to help in individual evictions but, ultimately, the more cases we have on record then the higher the chance of engaging the interest of the press and politicians.”

The case of Tracy Wales, recently reported in the national press, is a small but significant victory. With the help of the Public Law Project, another campaigning group, Tracy and the other mothers on a site won the right to stay, using DoE guidelines as leverage. Frieda recommends engaging the support of midwives, doctors, health visitors and local social services departments. The Health Visitors Association recently passed a resolution to support her campaign and individual midwives have

also pledged their support.

But, the fact remains that healthcare professionals only get involved when a woman is in a position to have her pregnancy monitored on a regular basis, or where she is in one place long enough to take advantage of post-natal care. As Charlotte’s case proves, ante-natal clinics generally require a permanent address and a referral from a GP. Frieda cites the horrifying case of a woman who was turned away from a hospital when she was in labour because she had no referring letter. She was forced to give birth in the accident and emergency unit of another hospital which had no trained obstetric staff available.

In theory, no hospital should turn away a person who is in need of care but, in practice, as more NHS hospitals become self-governing trusts, it is only in their interests to treat people who bring them a guarantee of health authority money. In other words, unless you are registered with a GP you are a low to nil priority. The implicit message here is that, if you don’t conform to the dominant lifestyle, then you have no right to expect access to healthcare services. Frieda has recorded the case of an Irish Traveller who was actually sent a bill for maternity care from the hospital where she gave birth.

Germaine Greer pointed out, in her book *Sex and Destiny*: “The logistics of delivery of health services force the continuation and intensification of the trend to manage births in the atmosphere of crisis and disease.” In other words, what many tribal and nomadic cultures see as a natural event to be celebrated by the whole community, Western societies see as a medical problem to be dealt with in private. Traveller mothers are in a position to challenge these assumptions.

Lyn, as well as other experienced mothers I spoke to, stressed the importance of not seeing childbirth as an illness. “You need to have a plan. Decide what sort of birth you want to have. Don’t let other people make your decisions for you.” The consensus was, if a mother is fit and healthy and knows what to expect, very little can get in the way of her having a happy and successful birth under any circumstances. These were the suggestions:

- Know your rights. By law, a midwife must be called to a birth but it is not compulsory for a doctor to attend. Equally, a midwife cannot refuse to attend you, even if you decide to give birth in a bender halfway up a Welsh mountain.
- Gather information about any aspect of your pregnancy or birth that you are not sure about so you are equipped to make sensible and rational decisions.
- Have an advocate - your partner or a friend - who can make your wishes known to healthcare professionals, leaving you free to concentrate on actually having the baby.
- If you do attend ante-natal clinics, ask for your record card and keep it with you.
- If you do decide to give birth in your home,

remember that you need space (the midwife will have to do some nifty manoeuvring), plenty of hot water and reliable lighting.

- Get a birthing pack together, including everything that you are going to need when the time comes. Most midwives are happy to give you a list and some are prepared to lave a pack of sterile instrument with you.

Although many hospitals are staffed by people who look down their noses at anyone who doesn’t live in a suburban semi, some have been enlightened enough to allow travellers to park-up in their car park for the duration of the birth and until the mother feels happy to move on. If an eviction is imminent, this may be a viable solution, but it is better to be armed with as much information as possible to contest the eviction. Prior to the CJA, Safe Childbirth for Travellers successfully contested an eviction in North London where a woman was due to give birth, during which time the sale of the land fell through and the travellers were allowed to stay.

When *Sex and Destiny* was first published, the press reacted with horror to Germaine Greer’s suggestion that ‘The extended family offer(s) a sense and a context to mothering which two-bedroomed villas in the suburbs do not’. Children brought up on the road have the advantage of a ready-made extended family. As one traveller mother pointed out: “I have hundreds of children.”

Safe Childbirth for Travellers can be contacted at 6 Westgate Street, Hackney, London E8 3RM. Tel: 0181 533 2002. Frieda would like to hear from anyone who has suffered an eviction before, during, or shortly after childbirth. Identities will be protected.

The Women’s Environmental Network give out information on environmentally safe products for babies (the new ‘leak-proof’ disposable nappies can endanger the health of dogs). They can be contacted at Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2EA. Tel: 0171 354 8823.

Guideline 13 of the circular published jointly by **The Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office**, 23rd November, 1994 reads: *Local authorities should also bear in mind that families camped unlawfully on land may need or may be receiving assistance from local health or welfare services. When they have decided to proceed with an eviction, they should liaise with the relevant statutory agencies, particularly where pregnant women or newly-born children are involved, to ensure that those agencies are not prevented from fulfilling their obligations towards those persons.*

The Land Comes Alive

On April 23rd, St George's Day, 300 land activists descended onto a disused airfield in Surrey. Over the course of the following week a demonstration of possibilities took place, highlighting what could be done if access and use of the countryside were not the exclusive preserve of the wealthy few. **Jim Carey** spoke to some insiders and reconstructs the story.

Right up until the night before, everyone thought the 'Land Is Ours' Occupation was to take place on St George's Hill in Surrey. It certainly made historical sense. In 1649 the Diggers had chosen the spot to squat and cultivate crops, an action designed to establish the rights of people to occupy land and grow their own food. In 1649 however, St George's Hill was a stretch of wasteland. Today it is an exclusive golf course and private estate, with million pound mansions and private tennis courts to match.

For the months preceding the occupation, several national newspaper references announced that a land action was due to take place on St George's Day - April 23rd, and that it was to be a historically thematic occupation based on the activities of the Diggers. It didn't take much guessing to arrive at St George's Hill as the most likely site. Indeed, up until the night before, everyone thought it was.

"Are you going to the action on St George's Hill, oops I mean St George's Day," was the common joke.

And so as a small group of initiators unfolded the map of Surrey that night, a vital decision had to be made about whether to go to the place now so obvious.

Right from the conception of the idea, it was decided that one of the most important features of the occupation was that it should be a proactive rather than a reactive action. That it would show what the culture could do, rather than simply criticising the Government for their efforts to prevent it being done. In keeping with this theme, the opportunity of demonstrating the potentials of a piece of wasteland over the course of one week seemed preferable to battling with the police in a shortlived ritual occupation of St George's Hill.

The decision had to be made in secrecy. The world and its dog thought the convoy would be heading to St George's Hill on April 23rd and so, provided absolutely no information leaked out about the new site, it was a good decoy.

Consequently, many of the protesters transported to the new site at Wisley airfield in Surrey, arrived in

surprise; the necessity for secrecy meant that it could not have been done any other way.

Whilst the convoy of coaches made its way from London, two people did a final reccy of the site. A police helicopter had buzzed overhead earlier but otherwise the area seemed clear.

And then suddenly a police car appeared at the other end of the long airstrip. Had they guessed? The two recciers sidled off between the crops and made their way back through an adjacent farm to the front gate. When they reached the entrance, the police car had gone, suggesting they had only been checking the site as a 'possible'.

By this stage, the front gate, which had been unlocked the night before by activists, was wide open and a farmer was burning some grass nearby. Fortunately, he drove off the site in his tractor but had left the gate open as if intending to return shortly.

Over the radio it was possible to hear that the convoy was being trailed by the police, and that they had stationed motorbike officers on the bridges over the A3. However, a third reccier, cruising the locality and visiting local police stations, reported there to be no build up of riot vans at any of the stations in the area; although he had noticed a police car continually driving up and down the road on the southern perimeter of St George's Hill.

At one stage, as he was looking for Woking police station, he stopped to ask a man in a green jacket where the police station was.

"No problem," says the man. "I'm going there myself, give me a lift and I'll show you." As he prepared to climb into the car, the third reccier noticed the dark blue trousers and shiny shoes and lunged over to remove the stacks of 'Land Is Ours' literature strewn over the front seat. Fortunately, the policeman was too busy balancing a tray of McDonalds breakfasts to notice the stack of leaflets go flying into the back of the car. "Much going on today," asked the reccier, recovering his composure.



Nick Cobbing

“No not really,” says the policeman. “Very quiet today actually”. Intelligence indeed!

It was looking good - but had the farmer who was burning the grass gone to tell the police about finding the front gate unlocked that morning?

Tugging gratuitously at several roll-ups, the two recciers by the gate were still waiting anxiously when three Ford Sierras pulled up to the gate. “Is this the site?” cried the driver from a hastily unwound front window.

“Yes, but where the fuck’s the convoy?” came the reply from one of the recciers. They didn’t know - they were from the Guardian newspaper. No convoy, no occupiers but three car loads of Guardian journos and photographers!!? How did they know? Apparently they had been given maps, but if they knew, who was going to be arriving next - the convoy or the police?

To some relief, it was the convoy that came

A cavalier packed with police top brass pushed its nose into the gateway preventing its closure

sailing through the gate five minutes later, accompanied by yet more journalists, satellite vans, TV crews, radio cars and unlock the gate one more time.....here come yet more journalists. The gate keepers locked the gate and waited for the second convoy due in from Fleet service station, whilst the first convoy, with attendant media entourage, swept off into the distance to set up at the far end of the airfield.

In the meantime, the farmer returned in his tractor to burn more grass. A little bemused, he carried on his business. He enquired as to what the activity was all about, was told about the Diggers and access to the countryside and seemed content enough as long as he could continue to come in and out to burn his grass.

Whilst opening the gate to allow him out, a cavalier packed with police top brass pushed its nose into the gateway preventing its closure. As one of the gatekeepers tried to close the gate, the cavalier unexpectedly edged back and then, when the gate had been closed, sped away with the policemen inside, smiling?

The next the gatekeepers heard was that a police road block had been erected, meaning vehicles coming from Fleet were now unable to get through.

Up until this stage, all vehicles allowed on site were asked to unload and drive off again. It was an attempt not to give the authorities the opportunity to pull the ‘no more than five vehicles’ section of the Criminal Justice Act.

The next arrivals were the top brass police again, this time accompanied by a flat capped man described as the land leaseholder - John Maiklam. His identity was checked before he and the police were allowed on site. They disappeared up to the end of the airfield to speak to the activists who were setting up.... Silence.

Then the news came over - a deal had been reached, the occupiers stated they would occupy the land for a week and leave it better than they had found it. The land leaseholder had said OK. The police road block was lifted, the Fleet convoy arrived and all vehicles were allowed on site. The opportunity had been established.

That night a procession snaked its way on foot from the Wisley site to the St George’s Hill golf course three miles north, planting a tree on the spot where the Diggers had squatted. There were plenty of police in attendance although they did not intervene. Special Branch photographers skulked round the site, directed by their earpieces to photograph protesters for the great unaccounted files kept no one knows where, for reasons no one knows what.

The planted tree was fed with white wine before the procession made its way back through the woods in the pitch black and pouring rain. There was some seriously deep sleep had that night.

The next morning, at the first of the many talking circles that were to become one of the most impressive features of the occupation, a traveller stood up:

“Either we say to ourselves that we’re content just to hold the site and eat biscuits for breakfast in the pouring rain. Or we’re going to act as if we’re going to be here a long time and make sure that we sort the place out and really live here.”

The decision was made. This was a proactive site.

By the end of the week a kitchen, a bread oven, wood chipping walkways, a willow dome and several allotment beds had been constructed. A local woman had lent a bath tub to the site, which was placed near a stream. Water channelled into the bathtub was heated by a fire constructed underneath, providing an unexpected hot bath in the middle of nowhere.

One of the quiet celebrities of the occupation was a 63 year-old allotment holder called Eric, who travelled down from nearby Sutton, in order to help construct allotments on the site. His considered and earth-oozing espousal of working the soil on an allotment rubbed off on everybody. The occupiers were down there for a reason - and one of those turned out to be learning more about that reason. Access to the land - a reconnection with something fundamental but missing for so long.

“I’m pretty simple on top,” explained Eric holding a vegetable. “But this organic onion is 10,000 words - I grew it on my allotment”

The occupiers travelled out to nearby shopping centres giving out leaflets and meeting members of the local population to explain the reasons behind the occupation, as well as the historic local precedent set by the Diggers. Many locals returned the extended hand, visiting the site with their families. Also visiting the camp during the course of the week was the local Vicar, who brought his guitar down to the site and played along to Billy Bragg’s on site gig. The result was an almost unanimous local support for the aims and conduct of the occupation, a fact the multiple media attention could not ignore.

And boy did they not ignore it. Newsnight, Channel 4 news, Sky News, BBC South-East, London Tonight, Radio 4’s Today programme, World Tonight, Costing the Earth and Farming Today, Radio 5 Live, Southern Counties Radio, The Guardian, The Independent, The Independent on Sunday, The Observer, New Statesman, The Daily Telegraph, Sunday Telegraph, BBC Wildlife Magazine, Time Out, Dutch United Press and German TV.

It’s always a difficult situation having the media poking its camera lens into your life and, indeed, some of the more media-cynical occupiers of the camp felt uneasy about it. To a large degree the successful construction of the camp was due to collective experience gathered through festivals and traveller’s sites. The idea of living for a week in a media display case sat incongruously with some people’s idea of being in the countryside with a set of bender poles.

Broadcast descriptions of the camp as “the rag-bag army - cut to the shot with the daisies in their hair, Dave,” didn’t help that unease. Neither did headlines such as: “There are pixies at the bottom of my field”.

However, during the powerful talking circles that genuinely ran the camp in an unhierarchical way, these concerns were voiced but a consensus was reached that a big part of such a campaign is to seek publicity for a vital political issue. Although much of the important politics of land issues went unreflected by the media coverage, it did serve to reintroduce the whole issue of land - a subject which up until now has commanded nowhere near the amount of attention it warrants.

In a sense the ‘Land Is Ours’ occupation warmed

By the end of the week a kitchen, a bread oven, wood chipping walkways, a willow dome and several allotment beds had been constructed.

up the issue as a media topic, leaving the subject open to be populated with the hidden truths behind land exclusivity and access. At one talking circle held in the middle of the week the police were invited to attend. One officer did not fully understand the response he received after admitting that the police “had not managed to gather much intelligence about the intentions of the occupiers,” a comment that dissolved the circle into an unrestrained bellyfull of ironic laughter.

On the Friday night, the Golf club on St George’s Hill gave unexpected permission for the camp to perform a play written and first performed on Twyford Down. Definitely not par for their course, and one more demonstration of how smooth the whole operation was proving to be. Once again most of the camp marched up the Hill - did the theatrical business on a fairway - and marched back down again.

On the final day the entire camp was deconstructed and all except the willow dome and the allotments were taken from the site. Every brick transported in to help construct the site was carted back up the hill. It was hard work but made for a tidy and well-sorted action, against which very few could complain.

The land was indeed left better than it was. The publicity surrounding the land issue was left better than it was. The protesters’ knowledge of how to construct a smooth-running occupation was left better than it was.

Timing seemed to fall miraculously in place throughout the entire course of the week - maximising its potential as a powerful example of all that is possible. The land must want to be ours.

The New Lords of the Land

No sooner had the Wisley / St. George’s Hill action ended than another intriguing leaflet was going around Oxford. ‘YOU HAVE NOT BEEN INVITED TO A 24 HOUR PICNIC’ it said.

Uninvited picnickers assembled on May 27th and set up camp at Shirburn Hill, beautiful chalk downland near Watlington, with stunning views over the Thames Valley. It’s part of 4,000 acres which the so-called “Viscount” Parker, the self-confessed “9th Earl of Macclesfield” claims to “own”.

Parker allows no access to this uncultivated land, and even opposes conservation management. It is crossed by one footpath, which he tries to obliterate, regularly removing the signposts. Hostile and paranoid, even by the standards of the aristocracy, Parker delights in personally evicting “trespassers” and has even been disowned by the Country Landowners’ Association.

Having seen nothing of the alleged “earl”, the picnickers went to see him, with The Independent and Small World in tow. Crossing the drawbridge of his crumbling moated castle, and banging endlessly on the portal, they eventually encountered him. All he would say was “I’m rather busy just now, but you will be removed in due course”. He expected the police would do this for him. No such luck. Old Bill reckoned there was no damage being caused (without even coming to check) and they had better things to do.

The next day he tried again, sending a bunch of “Park Rangers” to see off the intruding “morons” (his description). It seems they ranged no further than the pub, because - as Parker gleefully told the Press Association - they reported that no trespassers could be found and “they must have left”. The handful of locals resolutely asserting their right to use the footpath could have told him different. Nobody within half a mile could have missed the deliberately conspicuous site, now swollen with supporters from the Rambler’s Association and others. When the Oxford Times assured him the land was still occupied, Parker was livid, but too late. Twenty four hours having stretched to 30, the picnickers were lazily packing up a happy camp.

They say you know a revolution is really happening when the police change sides. Hasn’t happened yet, but the “earl” and his ilk, deserted and deceived by traditional allies and flunkies in this case, are beginning to look a little isolated. Times are changing!

**Viscount Paton, 27th Earl of Shirburn Hill
(On behalf of the other 26 Earls)**

Fruit of the Earth

The wine and wisdom of Eric.

(as shared with *Jim Carey*, amongst others)

To be sitting on an exclusive fairway; watching a play about protesters, performed by protesters at a place symbolic of protest, was certainly something. But to be handed a bell jar full of Eric's fruit blood wine was truly something else. And there he was with two of them, criss-crossing the St George's Hill fairway, sharing out the wholesome ferment. One good slug served to wash the taste buds with enthusiasm and fire up the internal stove.

Which vineyard had sired such fruit? And which genius had drawn from it such a wine? I had to ask.

"The raspberries are from me garden, the grapes from me brother's garden and the blackberries are from me allotment," explained Eric. "I always like to have some on the go."

Eric Hickson is a 56 year old father of five from Sutton in Surrey. Despite qualifications as a tiller, plumber and mosaicist, Eric worked for the local water company as a labourer for 21 years before leaving paid employment to concentrate on his allotment. He has spent the last five years immersed in soil, a fact he will testify to with more seed than sound bite, if asked.

"See this organic onion," he says. "It's more than 10,000 words." Eric heard about the Land Is Ours Occupation via a leaflet given to him by his brother.

"I went on the protest to try and represent allotments," says Eric. "I came down on the first day and slept overnight but the old bag of bones ain't up to it that much now. My allotment called me back to Sutton for two or three days and then I went back down to Wisley armed with seeds and spuds and other things to put in the ground. I was down every day after that, to work on the allotment."

The Land Is Ours allotments were a wonder to behold. Eric and others dug, and thoroughly derooted the soil, before planting a variety of herb, vegetable and other plants. Eric's quiet espousal of the benefits of working with the earth were a forceful reminder of how access to the land is a health requirement.

"I do feel that when you work with earth and start recognising the patterns of seasons and the weather, you start to feel that rhythm in you to some extent and its very, very relaxing. I think that working with the soil is as close as you can get to, literally, your roots as a person."

Protest actions are not something Eric has taken much part in before, except for the sandwich boards outside the Houses of Parliament that is.

"Well they tried to double the rents on allotments in Sutton. So I made these sandwich boards as my protest against the raise in the allotment rent.

"I got me boards and walked up and down Sutton High Street with them. and then I carried them up by tube and walked up and down outside the Houses of Parliament - Go Green, Grow Green, Eat Green, Be Green, See Green, Touch Green - LIVE - Use them or lose them. Allotments under pressure now."

Eric also wrote a letter to his local council protesting about the increase in rents and, whilst up in Westminster, delivered a copy of it to his constituency MP, Olga Maitland.

"She did invite me to her surgery, but I don't think I want her sort of surgery. I'd rather swim with a great white, it would be a more delicate operation."

Instead, Eric came to the Land Is Ours occupation. "At my age I'm fairly open-minded, I've seen a few things. I found that once I started to get to know the people at the occupation, I realised they'd been representing me in my absence. I looked around for a practical application and so on the first day, whilst the people were marching across to St George's Hill as a token, I helped dig the latrines. I had me shovel there so I could make me mark."

Whilst several occupiers were learning about allotments and seed cultivation from Eric, he in turn was learning about some the wider political issues concerning land.

"What does concern me is the fact that the land is being eroded so fast; from access to it, to working it, and this erosion is accelerating. I fully realised this for the first time when I went down to Wisley. I've always felt a bit of an oddball in Sutton but having met these people, I've realised that there's other people who think as I do."

After 21 years working for the local water company, Eric was sacked for what he calls "speaking straight" and remembers word for word one of the conversations with his employers that preceded his dismissal.

"I was in an interview with senior management and I commented on the poor money they paid. They said: 'Oh, I don't know Eric, its pretty good the way things are right now.' It was an implied threat to keep quiet or lose my job but of course it was a red rag to a bull, cos I felt like I was reading it as it is, not as the words say.

"So I said: 'I don't have to go outside these walls to

know that this is a microcosm of what's happening in this country. And what's happening is that when it comes to paying my water bill, you want me to pay six months in advance, but when it comes to my wages and the meagre money you give me, I have to wait five weeks before you pay me one month of what you owe me. While my wages have been marking time, the cost of water has outstripped my income by over 50 per cent, on a commodity that I'm helping put out to the public.'

"Well this is senior management I was talking to and they might be alright when they're loaded for a particular game but when you throw them a curve, its a test of whether there's a brain in there or not. So, there was two minutes silence: presumably for the dead. They were hoping I'd die and I thought they had. Well I give him his due, the man on £70,000 odd a year, came back with a right snappy answer... after two minutes.

"He said: 'Well Eric, we have to pay the full amount for our water just the same as you do'

I said: 'I don't think its persona non grata, as long as there's none of the jolly brown stuff on the end of my nose.'

He looked at me and said: 'I've just got this job as assistant managing director and do you think I've got some of the jolly old brown stuff at the end of my nose?'

"I replied: 'Well you must have known someone mustn't you?'

"And he says back: 'I'll have you know I worked very hard to get where I am today.'

"To which I said: 'Do you think I haven't?'

"They says to me: 'Why are you so annoyed Eric?'

"I replied: 'It's working here for 21 years that's done it to me.' and they called me: 'a cynic' and I says to them: 'A cynic is just an optimist whose lived too long.'

"After a few conversations like this, I was out the door. The terrible thing about it is that I was trying to get through to the person behind the facade and having stripped away the facade, the frightening thing is that there's no one at home. That was a terrible shock to me 'cos I thought the intelligentsia was running the system while I did the work, but it's not true. Provided you're willing to say yes in the right quarters, preferably the hind quarters, then you fit into the part. Presumably that's why I rose to such dizzy heights as a labourer, when really I'm a qualified craftsman."

Eric was dismissed from his position as being 'unsuitable' and not able to be 'left on his own to work unless heavily supervised'. The dismissal is the subject of an upcoming industrial tribunal.

"They don't remember 21 years of working on my own searching for leaks, digging up the highway, dealing with the public, putting it all back together in good order and safe. Twenty one years - and I never once clocked in late. If they're talking reliability, well I happen to believe in responsibility."

Eric is now more than happy to be redirecting his sense of responsibility, away from working for what he calls "the fat cats", and more towards his allotment.

"I first got the allotment to be able to cope without having that job. I've always liked the idea of working with the ground and working my own vegetables but I also think we are losing more ground to development. When you're in a society that you find difficult to come to terms with because of greed or whatever, then you find that the worst aspects of our so called civilised society can take something away from you that you don't deserve to have taken from you."

The land protesters occupying the site at Wisley were there to demand that land taken away from public access be recognised and returned. Many modern ills, including poverty and homelessness stem, largely, from the exclusivity of land ownership and from the behind the scenes measures taken to preserve such imbalance. But what many land protesters learned from Eric, were the personal benefits of having contact with the land; of working the earth and feeling it in you.

"We are, I feel, 95% animal and to deny contact with the earth is to be looking for psychotherapy. It's a time when the body is physically active that the mind unravels problems quite naturally and I feel that is of high therapeutic value. I do feel that if there was more allotments, there would be less people with psychological disorders. It's also rewarding when you can take something home that you can eat, that isn't full up with crap."

Eric's experience and his willingness to share it placed manure in the potentially sterile soil of sloganeering. And no-one could taste the man's wine and not marvel at the health potentials of working with the land, rather than against it.

LOFTY TONES

We must do free lunch
says *Tony Allen*.

A mate was over from the States in February, he's a founder of Stephen's Farm in Tennessee which was set up in the sixties and is rediscovered every few years by the current wave of anarchists and DIY advocates. He told me to turn off the light and then waved what seemed like a sparkler in the dark. Piezo electrics apparently. A strip of plastic and a mini gizmo on the end, shake it about and the gizmo sparkles. "The strip is in fact two strips," he explained, "each with a very ordered molecular structure - one pointing one way and one pointing the other. Any movement creates energy."

"Imagine it twenty foot wide, half a mile long and floating on the sea!" He was getting enthusiastic. "That'd generate some amps and power, a few two bar electric fires, wouldn't it?" I agreed - I love this sort of talk.

There's a serious case can be made for a self-sufficient life-style, and I'm just the sort of smartarse urban armchair utopian to make it. The scenario that's squatting my brain, and most of my mate's brains, is a rural paradise of eco-warrior communities, permacultured orchards and hemp fields complemented by equally idyllic greened cities buzzing with wild-life, invention and imagination. Nice. And there's just about enough resources to slot in everybody's variation and satisfy all but the most die-hard of soul-less materialists. It's simply a matter of gatecrashing our own fantasy.

Sometime in the late seventies I was wandering round the Festival of Mind, Body and Spirit, sneering at the consumerism of it all and resolving never to go there again, when I discovered an exhibit that wasn't trying to sell me anything. A rather eccentric, middle-aged woman was riding a makeshift exercise bike while knitting and watching the telly. On closer inspection it became apparent that the bike was rigged up to a dynamo and battery and that her leisurely pedalling was in fact generating power for the telly. An elegant PR job for DIY culture and I've never forgotten it, although I've never done much about it either. Some years later I came across the same technology powering the lights and sounds for the small-scale cabaret tents at summer festivals.

Even more recently I heard tell of a job-lot of pedal power generators going cheap in Amsterdam. It transpires that they are Second World War vintage models, originally designed as auxiliary power supplies for submarines. Which all makes perfect sense when you think about it - a sub gets knocked out of it in battle, engines go down, a few able seamen start pedalling and Hey Presto! - Let there be light!

I spent about ten days at last year's Glastonbury Festival hanging out with the SQUALL crew in the Green Futures Field, surrounded by eco-buffs building alternative saunas, mud-wrestling and sitting round camp fires. It's a much more relaxed way to do the festie. Okay, there's a blip of activity for a weekend in the middle when lots of punters and noisy bands turn up, but for the most part it's a holiday. I did a couple of stints as MC for the Rinky Dink seven person pedal power stage (a single, a tandem and a double tandem). This year it's the energy source for the Rainbow Dragon tent and I'll be there MCing again and persuading the festie-goers to donate their legs and pedal for power.

But why stop there? Every home should have one. If you want to watch telly, net surf, or heat water for the communal jacuzzi; first you have to get pedalling. And for all those who can't pedal, because they are too old, too young or too ill; forget the energy wasting fun runs and sponsored walks, let's have "sponsored knees up?" recruiting all those fitness freaks on exercise bikes in health clubs up and down the land - get them doing something useful for a change.

Beyond that, there's all the excess sexual energy of the pulp gangster generation lolling around waiting to be harnessed. Now I know this must seem dangerously close to advocating a return to national service, but I prefer to see it as a sort of rough blueprint for a new international sport involving teams of testosteroneed lads competing with each other to charge up the most electricity.

"Nuclear power? On yer bike."

Going Round In Circulars

The increasing eviction of traveller sites is being facilitated by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act in ways contravening government directives. **Jim Carey** reports on the hounding and the lipservice, and also at travellers' attempts to create planning law precedents.

“Every eviction is caused by the knock on effect of an eviction somewhere else,” observes Steve Staines, a co-ordinator of the campaign group Friends and Families of Travellers. “Travellers move to a place that they think is safe and then that site gets bigger, so it gets evicted. The whole cycle goes on and its a cycle of nonsense.”

It is certainly an unsustainable situation for many travellers, particularly those with children, who grow tired and angry at never being able to park up for more than a few weeks before being hoisted needlessly from their resting place. It is one of the reasons why organisations such as Save the Children and the Children's Society fought so vehemently against further eviction measures contained within the Criminal Justice Act.

By way of placating concerns voiced by such social rights organisations, certain government departments have issued a number of circulars directing local authorities to give consideration to the needs of travellers.

In one DoE circular (18/94), it says: “In particular, where Gypsies are camped unlawfully on council land, are not causing great nuisance, and have no alternative authorised accommodation to go to, authorities should consider tolerating their presence on the land temporarily”.

It goes on: “It will continue to be the policy of the Secretaries of State that Government Departments should act in conformity with the advice that gypsies should not be moved unnecessarily from unauthorised encampments when they are causing no nuisance and have no authorised site to go to.”

So there are the words - but where is the reality?

The eviction of the Beechen Cliff travellers' site near Bath at the end of last year, provided one of the most striking examples so far of the dirth of substance behind these circular recommendations.

The Beechen Cliff travellers site was situated at the disused and rapidly deteriorating Beechen Cliff Lower School on Wells Road in Bath. The City Council, as befits the predominantly right wing politics of Bath, had sought an enforcement notice against the travellers, despite the fact that Avon County Council were in favour of applying for planning permission to establish the site. Avon



The Beechen Cliff traveller's site near Bath. Recommendations made by DoE inspectors that planning permission be granted were over-ruled by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

consequently appealed against Bath's decision to evict the site, resulting in the matter being referred to the Department of Environment.

In DoE circular 1/94, it says: “Vacant land or surplus local authority land may be appropriate (for the provision of sites)”.

The DoE sent an inspector, Mr RJ Tamplin, who spent many months interviewing neighbours, local authorities and the travellers themselves, before writing his report and making recommendations about appropriate courses of action. In his report, Tamplin acknowledges that the number of travellers at both Beechen Cliff and at nearby Rainbow Woods, “reinforces the evidence that there is currently an urgent need for provision in Bath”.

Indeed DoE circular 1/94 says; “In deciding what level of provision is necessary, it is essential for authorities to have up-to-date information and to maintain records of trends.....in their areas.”

Tamplin also acknowledged the site to be barely visible from public vantage points, with complete visual anonymity achievable via “a judicious screen fencing, which itself need not harm the appearance of the area.”

Ironically, despite Bath's protestations that the travellers were ruining the site, Tamplin points out that the more important visual effect of the site comes from the “derelict and ugly condition” of the disused school; damaged by fire, partial dereliction and vandalism predating the arrival of the travellers. As such it remained an eyesore because the local authority had failed to do anything with the empty building.

The inspector's report goes on to say: “During the inquiry and my site visit it became apparent that local residents accepted that some of those occupying the site were worthy of certain respect. This is born out by the petition and letters of support and reinforces the argument that those on site are generally a reflection of the population at large, albeit with a preponderance of the younger and probably less conventional part of the community.”

Having concluded his enquiries, Tamplin recommended that the site should be allowed to exist for three years, with any overcrowding problems limited by a restriction of site pitches to nine caravans or trucks. In the eventuality that the Secretary of State for the Environment would chose to disagree with this recommendation,

Tamplin suggested that the travellers currently living on the site should be given at least nine months to move on and not the 12 weeks that Bath City Council were attempting to enforce. His reasons for recommending this alternative were written in the final paragraph of his report: “I consider that the presence of the several children on site who attend local schools/playgroups merits sympathetic consideration. So to does the fact that the site is the only home for many of the occupiers.”

Indeed, in another DoE circular (18/94), it says: “Authorities should also bear in mind their statutory duty to make appropriate educational provision available for all school-age children in their area, whether resident temporarily or permanently. This duty embraces in particular traveller children, as noted in para. 5 of Circular 1/81 and para 9 of Circular 11/92 from the Department of Education and para 6 of the annex to Welsh Office Circular 52/90. Authorities should take particularly careful account of the effects of an eviction on the education of children already enrolled at a school.”

Tamplin then submitted his completed investigation with his recommendations, for the Secretary of State, John Gummer, to consider. And the result?..... Gummer overruled both of Tamplin's recommendations and gave Bath City Council the right to evict the travellers within 12 weeks.

“They came and served notice on us one week before Christmas,” recalls Mike, one of the travellers on the site. Mike lived at Beechen Cliff with his partner Coral and their two children Sunshine (aged 5) and Tara (aged 13). They have since moved their bus to London.

“Tara was happy in Bath,” says Coral. “For the first time in her life she could start school on the first day of term with everyone else. It's been really hard on her.”

Despite farcical situations like the Beechen Cliff enquiry, travellers and the groups campaigning on their behalf, continue to explore the possibilities of planning permission for temporary and permanent sites, as a respite from constant eviction.

But the fight is a long one. In April of this year, the DoE overruled Avon County Council's attempt to establish planning permission for a site at Racecourse Quarry in Woodspring.

Three years previously, a number of Travellers

Matt

moved had moved onto the quarry site; leased by Avon County Council from the landowner Lord Wraxall, as a gravel storing area. As the Council were not using the site, they allowed the travellers to stay there. Lord Wraxall, on the other hand, wasn't happy about this at all.

Educated at Eton and Sandhurst Officers' College, Lord Wraxall happens to be chairman of the North Somerset Yeomanry Association and President of Woodspring Conservative Association. Small wonder then that Wraxall was appalled at the prospect of travellers staying on land that he owned. Woodspring District Council (due to become North West Somerset Unitary Authority next year) are notoriously anti-traveller, a recipe for many a Tory hernia bearing in mind the area is a passing place for travellers moving between Avon and Wales. Not surprisingly, Woodspring District Council served a planning stop notice on the travellers, potentially leading to heavy fines for the contravention of planning laws. At the same time Lord Wraxall tried to wrestle his land back from Avon County Council. In response, Avon applied for both planning permission for a travellers site on the land and a compulsory purchase order allowing them to acquire the property at market value from Wraxall.

Meanwhile Avon temporarily rehoused the travellers on a site at Willamead, an ex-mobile home tourist site originally bought by Avon for a road building scheme. The existence of a mobile home site licence meant that the travellers could stay there for three years. Once again there were children and pregnant travellers on site.

Meanwhile the DoE sent an inspector down to jointly consider both Avon County Council's compulsory purchase order against Wraxall and the application for planning permission on the Racecourse Quarry site.

A major factor in the enquiry was the pressure put on the inspector by Liam Fox (Con MP - Woodspring). Fox is a Parliamentary Private Secretary to none other than Michael Howard and testified against the travellers during the course of the enquiry. After a three year enquiry the inspector overruled both applications and the land was handed back to Wraxall.

Battling with the landed gentry is of course nothing new, but it is worth noting the current forms in which these battles are fought. Another case in point involves the Semly site in Wiltshire, which became the object of Lord Talbot of Malahyde's prejudiced attentions in April this year.

The Semly site has existed for at least four years, and perhaps as much as eight. It is surrounded by woods; with the nearest neighbour over half a mile away, and the next nearest a full mile away. Recent evictions of other sites in the surrounding counties had forced travellers, including once again pregnant mothers and children, to seek sanctuary at the relatively safe Semly site. Some of the travellers at Semly had not been in one place for more than a month in the last two years due to constant eviction.

Lord Talbot of Malahyde is what is known as an Irish peer and is therefore not entitled to sit in the House of Lords. Never the less he does sit in Wardour Castle fuming about the existence of travellers in his area.

"A better site you couldn't think of in terms of nuisance to neighbours," comments Steve Staines from Friends and Families of Travellers. "But along comes Lord Talbot with flanking police officers and tells everybody to leave his land."

The following day the police turned up with Section 61 notices (CJA police powers to order unauthorised campers to move when there are 6 vehicles or more) and the forty vehicles on site were given three and a half hours notice to move. In a Home Office letter sent to police



Nick Cobbing

Mike, Coral, Tara and Sunshine. After their eviction from Beechen Cliff they moved back to London with their bus, hoping the anonymity of the city would give them respite from constant harassment

forces and local authorities around the country, advising them on the provisions in the Criminal Justice Act, it says: "During the passage of the bill through parliament, the Government undertook to draw the following point to attention in relation to this provision when a circular was issued. The decision whether or not to issue a direction to leave is an operational one for the police alone to take in the light of all the circumstances of the particular case. But, in making his decision, the senior officer at the scene may wish to take account of the personal circumstances of the trespassers; for example, in the presence of elderly persons, invalids, pregnant women, children and other persons whose well-being may be jeopardised by a precipitate move."

There were indeed several children on the site and one pregnant traveller called Jenny was forced to drive her heavy vehicle offsite whilst in the seventh month of pregnancy. She had no-where to go. Despite protestations from both Friends and Families of Travellers and the Children's Society the chief superintendent at the scene was adamant there would be no negotiation.

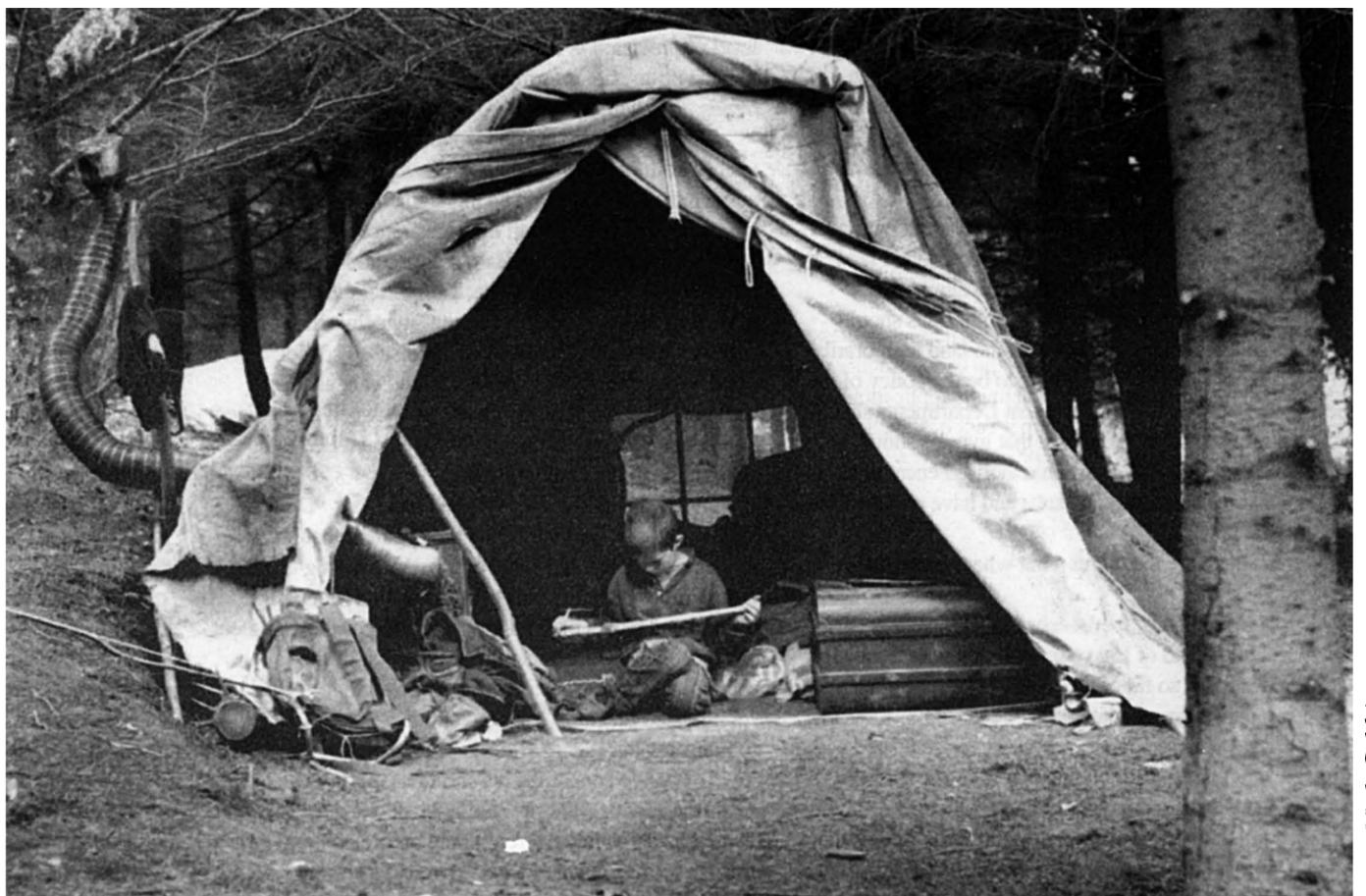
According to local sources, the pressure on the police to act in this case had come from "three floors up" and it now looks likely that Lord Talbot of Malahyde was doing some of the whispering. Although the owner of the Wardour Estate, his ownership of the stretch of land upon

which the Semly site was situated is in some doubt. At the same time as the police served a section 61 CJA notice on the travellers, Lord Talbot also took out an order 113 civil county court action. In the accompanying affidavit, the land ascribed to the ownership of Lord Talbot was in a different place to where the travellers site was. If it had been necessary to attend the court case in Salisbury, Lord Talbot would have lost on this point alone.

Despite the fact that Lord Talbot told the travellers and other observers to remove themselves because it was his land, a Wiltshire County Council memo makes reference to his interest in the land as being in his capacity as chairman of the Commons Committee for the area. However, the police do have powers under section 61 of the Criminal Justice Act to direct travellers to leave if there are more than six vehicles, although this is discretionary on the senior police officer, particularly when there are pregnant women and children on site.

Up until April of this year, the Semly site had been tolerated as a resting place for travellers as it was not causing a nuisance to the locality. However, a few words coming from the castle so it seems, renders such toleration and government department recommendations, instantly dismissable.

There is still strong hope that planning permission can be obtained for certain sites, particularly where



Nick Cobbing

The benders on Tinkers Bubble may soon be enshrined in planning precedents as acceptable 'low-impact dwellings'.

travellers are trying to settle on their own land. Indeed, a few precedents might spark off opportunities for many.

As a consequence, planning permission for 'low impact dwellings' is being vehemently sought by many travellers and small subsistence settlers, in order to set just such precedents and find respite from continual harassment.

One opportunity for establishing an important precedent is in the application made by the bender dwellers at Tinkers Bubble in Somerset. The residents of this wooded area near the village of Norton Sub Hamden, own the land themselves and have made a planning application to live there and tend the small subsistence agriculture they have established on the site. Due to the current agriculture and residency criterion of 'economic significance', their thousand apple trees and small number of animals, does not qualify even one person to live on the land under existing planning law. The residents of Tinkers Bubble have applied for twelve.

The DoE once again sent an inspector to conduct a two day public enquiry into the situation in the local village hall.

"It went extremely well," says Chris Black, one of the residents at the Bubble. "We put up a good case and a lot of the local objections fell away."

Their first application for planning permission had been narrowly defeated by seven votes to six. "Quite a few locals did stand up and object - it's got a lot to do with the house prices," observes Chris.

However, their current appeal against that decision is backed up by a well researched and composed proposal drawn up by Simon Fairlie, until recently a co-editor of The Ecologist magazine and now full time resident of Tinkers Bubble.

The plan involves a certain amount of agricultural work to be done and costed against what people are getting on the dole. The proposal suggests that people who want to work their own land should be able to do so, with £2,500 as the minimum agricultural income necessary. At the moment, anyone who wants to show an agricultural need to live on the land, has to show a vast turnover, unfeasible without chemical fertilisers and machinery. The residents have indeed lived on the site for a couple of years, despite not having secured planning permission; a situation that has allowed the locality rise above their initial adverse reaction by experiencing the reality behind the stereotype.

When they first arrived, local parents threatened to remove their children from the village school unless the headmaster got rid of the Tinkers Bubble children, who had also started attending. The headmaster to his credit stood his ground and refused. The objecting parents recanted and left their children in the school. The same thing happened with the local shopkeeper, threatened with loss of custom unless he refused to serve the travellers living on the Bubble. Once again, he refused to comply with their threats. One traveller, called Fraggie, who doesn't live at the Bubble, but who came to visit a resident who was about to have a baby, had her bus burnt out by local vigilantes. However, things have changed in Norton Sub Hamden since the initial hysteria.

"There's been an enormous change in attitude in most of the local people - they've decided that we're not so bad after all," says Chris thankfully. "A lot of them have come up and had the odd cup of tea and are friendly. To begin with, there were all these wild stories that we were the spearhead for hundreds of other people that were going to come and live in the woods. But we've shown that we're relatively serious about keeping it to a small number of people and living with our subsistence agriculture."

The decision on whether to allow Tinkers Bubble planning permission or not, has been called in by Environment Secretary, John Gummer, for his personal attention. All eyes are now on Gummer to show signs that the circulars published by his department do not remain insubstantial rhetoric.

"We've got a fairly good chance and we're fairly optimistic," says Chris Black. "If we don't win this time, we'll win eventually. Gummer would be sensible to cut a long story short and give us the permission, but we have no intention of giving up and going away anyway."

(There is to be a Channel Four programme exclusively about Tinkers Bubble to be shown on July 10th at 8pm)

Planning permission is a highly subjective process and very prone to discriminatory prejudice. Friends and Families of Travellers recently conducted an analysis of planning applications in south-west Britain. They found that whilst 90 per cent of travellers' planning applications failed, 80 per cent of planning applications made by settled people succeeded.

The original consultation paper, setting out the measures made manifest in the Criminal Justice Act to curb Britain's nomads, said that travellers "should be encouraged to move into settled accommodation".

This begs three questions. What encouragement? Why do travellers have to settle? and Where are they to settle?

The answer seems that there's little encouragement beyond the words, and so, in true DIY style and without waiting for more words, travellers are attempting to find peace from harassment through establishing bender sites and subsistence agriculture; thereby remaining free from the bed and concrete breakfast nightmare. Sustainable and fulfilling - the right to live on your own land.

Up until now the Government haven't allowed this either. It remains to be seen whether anything substantial can be teased from the placatory rhetoric contained within government circulars.

It's the JEWEL IN THE MUD AWARD

There's still taxi's driving round London with Union Jacks flapping from their aerials. In town centres all round the country, bunting strings of red, white and blue have been left dangling from balconies; the lingering commemoration of the end of the second world war, the end of the battling.

But there are a group of people for whom the battle has not finished. Whether they be the gypsies despised and gassed by Hitler, or the new travellers despised and legislated against by the British Government, the war of survival has never ceased for those with the urge and the need to live a travelling life.

This issue's Jewel in the Mud Award goes to a stunningly emotive reminder of one of the more blatant expressions of that war. Appearing in the second section of the Guardian (31/5/95), the article retells the story of the Battle of the Beanfield - the Bloody Sunday of the travelling movement - and was written by Neil Goodwin, director of Channel Four's Operation Solstice documentary on the nightmare etched in the memory of all travellers.

"This month's victory picnic at Stonehenge may not have been noticed amidst the other VE day celebrations, but the end of the second world war did not escape the notice of Britain's travellers. 'We have gathered with the most peaceful of intentions to honour the brave men and women who fought and died to keep this island free from a totalitarian police state,' came the announcement at Stonehenge.

"On June 1, 1985 police ambushed a convoy of vehicles on its way to the 11th People's Free Festival at Stonehenge. Over 1,000 officers from five constabularies cornered travellers and festival-goers in a field on the Hampshire/Wiltshire border for several hours. Having refused to negotiate an alternative festival site, the operation commander, the then Assistant Chief Constable of Wiltshire, Lionel Grundy, ordered his men to attack the convoy.

"The violence that followed was recorded by an ITN camera crew, headed by reporter Kim Sabido. In an emotional piece-to-camera he described it as the worst police violence he had ever seen: 'The number of people who have been hit by policemen, who have been clubbed whilst holding babies in their arms in coaches around this field, is yet to be counted... There must surely be an enquiry after what has happened here today.'

"Four hundred and twenty people were arrested and taken to holding cells throughout the south of England. Travellers' homes were systematically looted, smashed and burnt. Seven dogs were destroyed by the RSPCA.

"Interviewed in 1991 for Channel 4's Critical Eye programme, he confirmed that 'some of the nastier, more controversial shots, including that of a woman being dragged by her hair had 'disappeared' from the ITN library."

The article then goes on to describe the history of legislative reprisals that followed the police hysteria....

"A new ban on processions meant that two or more people walking to Stonehenge could be arrested. The festival became an excuse for 'trashing' a lifestyle, in which, for thousands of young people, a bedsit on wheels had become a

viable alternative to scratching a living in a decayed inner city.

"Once born, the Peace Convoy was identified like the striking miners, as another 'enemy within'. Since the Beanfield incident the Government has spent millions of pounds hounding Britain's community of (what was then) approximately 15,000 travellers in attempts to make their lifestyle untenable."

The article concludes.....

"Nearly every day there is a minor Beanfield battle, either at the hands of the police or vigilantes. For the victims of this covert war there has never been a peace from which to safely commemorate 'battles' like the Beanfield."

On the same page was the reprinting of an eyewitness account written by Nick Davies, who reported the Beanfield incident for The Observer ten years ago...

"There were vehicles spinning in all directions. There were policemen trying to stop them by throwing anything they could lay a hand on - sticks, stones, even their own shields. There was glass breaking, people screaming, black smoke towering out of burning caravans - and everywhere there seemed to be people being bashed and flattened and pulled by the hair.

"The police commandeered a couple of convoy vehicles and started using them to ram loose cars. Some of the convoy turned nasty and started driving at speed into the police but, one by one they were battered to a halt and the men and the women and the children were led away, shivering, swearing, crying, bleeding, leaving their homes in pieces behind them.

"Over the next 12 months the truth was to seep out slowly in court cases which ended in humiliating defeat for the police. But that evening, I walked away in the strangest of moods. Over the years, I had seen all kinds of horrible and frightening things and always managed to grin and write it. But as I left the Beanfield, for the first time I felt sick enough to cry."

Travelling Under Pressure

Department of Environment figures on the distribution of travellers show that there has been a dramatic fall in numbers over recent years. SQUALL takes a look at some of the ways in which the roads of Britain have become the subject of an ethnic whitewash.

There is no doubt that the imposition of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act is having a significant effect on the ease with which traveller sites can be evicted. It is worth noting however, that the push to rid the country of travellers was in operation long before the Criminal Justice Act arrived as a further eviction facilitator.

Figures published by the Department of Environment show that between July 1993 and July 1994, the number of unauthorised vehicles fell dramatically in almost every part of the country, some by as much as 68 per cent. The overall national figure decreased by 14.1 per cent (see box).

Bearing in mind that the Criminal Justice Act only came into force in November of last year, these figures bear testament to a systematic drive to destroy the travelling community, with or without legislation.

The greatest difference in the number of unauthorised vehicles is in the South West region (made up of Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire), where the 728 vehicles resident in the area in July 1993 had plummeted to 382 by January 1995.

A further breakdown of the South West regional figures, clearly demonstrates that the county contributing the largest drop in numbers is Avon. Dropping from 332 in July '93 to just 61 in January '95.

At first sight this seems incongruous with Avon County Council's efforts in the past to help establish sites. Avon is a hung council but, in previous years, the Labour group have made moves to

ensure adequate site provision in an area associated with travellers for hundreds of years. Indeed, up until 1993 some progress was being made with site provision in the area. Then local elections brought in a new wave of Liberal Democrat councillors from Bath.

As befits the city of Bath, these new Lib Dem councillors were right wing in attitude and began to align their votes with the Tories over issues related to travellers, thus outnumbering the Labour group. During local elections there were a spate of leaflets seeking to capitalise on the national hysteria created to ease in the Criminal Justice Act. Travellers became the pawns of local political backbiting.

One election leaflet issued by the Liberal Democrats slated Labour for seeking planning permission for a travellers site in Brislington. The politically expedient reason they gave was that the site would disturb a family of local badgers.

"Badgers save Brislington" the leaflet proclaimed. "Your [Lib Dem] Focus Team are pleased to announce that plans for a Travellers Site at Bath Road, Brislington have now been dropped following the discovery of a badger sett near the proposed site.

"Labour Councillors," it scoffed, "voted to continue with the plans".

However, one month later the Liberal Democrats showed little concern when another family of badgers were forced to relocate from their sett in nearby St George's, after a property developer bought the site to build on.

Any Labour councillor working for the rights of travellers thus became the target of accusations of being in support of "the filth and degradation" brought by the travellers.

Such pawn-playing served to further ferment local misinformation surrounding the lives of travellers; with the new right wing Lib Dem councillors knowing

they were onto a sly winner with the use of such racially inflammatory rhetoric in a city like Bath.

During recent years, an unholy alliance between Lib Dem and Tory councillors has formed everytime the travellers' sub committee met to consider the future of particular unauthorised sites. The sub committee consists of four Labour, three Tory and two Democrat councillors.

One of the main tactics used by councillors to oppose site provision, is to vote for the referral of particular planning considerations to policy and resources committees, or even to full council meetings. This often delays the process until such time as the travellers have been evicted from the site anyway.

The figures released by the Department of Environment are in fact misleading in their own right. In order to collate statistics on the distribution of

	July '93	July '94	%change
Greater London	145	47	-68
South East	678	648	- 4
Eastern	832	814	- 2
South West	728	396	-46
East Midlands	358	280	-22
West Midlands	702	787	+12
North West	388	339	-13
Yorks & Humberside	470	422	-10
North	100	49	-51
England	4402	3782	-14

unauthorised vehicles, the DoE relies on counts conducted biannually by district council environmental officers. At the beginning of last year, a number of district councils in the Avon area - particularly Bath, Wansdyke and North Avon - began excluding what they considered to be new travellers from their assessment of unauthorised vehicle distribution. It is fair to say that some of the drop in the number of unauthorised vehicles between 1993 and 1994, was due to this change in counting procedure. However, this does not explain the size of the drop.

The worsening situation in Avon is also partly traceable to the appointment of Graham Jones as Traveller Co-ordination Manager for Avon. Jones had previously worked as Gypsy Liaison Officer with Essex County Council before taking up the similar post with Avon in 1994. It is worth noting that one of the attractions of the position is that the Avon post is the highest paid appointment of its kind in the country. His appointment was voted through by the Lib Dems and Tories.

Upon arrival, Jones described his job as being "to solve Avon's traveller problem". However, his solutions have been more by way of eviction than by site establishment, with Avon County Council spending a staggering £632,000, mostly on the eviction of unauthorised traveller sites in the area. This figure does not include the cost of policing.

Avon and Somerset Police estimate the cost of one day's enforcement of a recent eviction of a site on the A46 at £10,000, meaning that the overall cost of evictions in Avon last year possibly exceeded £1

million.

In bizarre contrast to his job description, Jones has seen to it that a large number unauthorised traveller sites in the Avon area have been evicted.

Local council officers report that at the time of Graham Jones's arrival there were between 20 and 40 unauthorised sites in Avon. A year later there are only one or two left.

One Avon County Council officer told SQUALL: "The physical presence of travellers has virtually been wiped out since last year." In truth, a plummet in the number of travellers in the Avon area was well-advanced by the time Jones arrived, but his actions have facilitated further drops.

Jones's premise for multiple evictions was that Avon County Council should concentrate on three main site applications and evict the rest. Before his appointment, Avon had a number of possible sites for which they were seeking planning permission, the idea being that if any applications failed there would be back-up applications in progress that might succeed. By limiting the number of sites to three, Graham Jones put all the planning applications in one basket. The three he chose to concentrate on were Racecourse Quarry, Hollywood Lane and Burnett.

The Racecourse Quarry enquiry took three years to complete and was the first major site application that Graham Jones had supervised in his position as Traveller Co-ordination Manager. As described in more detail in 'Going Round in Circulars' on page 29, this application was lost. The other two sites are presently the subject of uncompleted public enquiries, but are also beset with difficulties.

The Burnett site is on ex-Ministry of Defence land, ironically situated on Gypsy Lane. However, during the course of the site application and consequent enquiry, parts of the site have been developed into industrial units. With big business moving into the area the likelihood that planning permission will be granted for travellers is rapidly diminishing.

Hasty evictions of unauthorised sites in Avon have also been facilitated using a little-known technique termed 'self-help' eviction. The law surrounding 'self-help' evictions is, to say the least, sketchy but it entails the use of 'reasonable' force to remove trespassers and their vehicles from land without recourse to the courts. 'Self-help' evictions have been possible under English and Welsh Law for centuries and require that 'reasonable' notice be given to the trespassers, although the definition of 'reasonable' is undefined.

The following legal advice was given to Avon and Somerset Police in 1985:

	July '93	July '94
Avon	332	66
Cornwall	136	121
Devon	22	23
Dorset	102	27
Glocs.	38	49
Somerset	58	55
Wiltshire	39	55

1. Trespassers on the land for more than two days may be able to claim a self-help eviction was unsafe in a court of law. Although the land owner may say that they did not know they were there.

2. Self-help evictions should not be used after trespassers have been on the land for more than 7 days. The owner must, after this period, go through the normal procedures for claiming their land in a court of law, even if they did not

know trespassers were there.

3. The police can attend to ensure that there is no violence by either side. They should not take any part in the eviction, either physically or verbally.

In May 1993, Avon County Council initiated the 'self-help' eviction of travellers and five vehicles from a site near an old railway near Bath. Forty-two hours

Nine Great Conspiracy Theories to Explain the Criminal Justice Act

notice were given to those on the site, with the eviction taking place whilst many of the occupants were absent and thus unable to remove their vehicles. In this case the travellers had been present on the land for 5/6 weeks, rendering the eviction definitely unlawful.

Graham Jones was not involved in this particular 'self-help' eviction, but he is known to be in favour of using such techniques and several of his efforts to do so have been blocked by Avon's Traveller Sub Committee. However, the Committee's power over Jones's activities are partly limited by his semi-autonomous position as Traveller Co-ordination Manger.

Graham Jones has no experience of working with new travellers and is described by council workers in the area as having little respect or sympathy with their way of life. He is also described as having little time for the interference of elected councillors.

Being an advocate of ID cards for travellers, a scheme currently piloted in Dublin, Jones approached Friends and Families of Travellers, seeking co-operation for the establishment of such a scheme in Avon. Needless to say, FFT expressed not the least bit of interest in becoming co-advocates of a scheme more than likely to be operated to the detriment of new travellers.

Although Graham Jones is not popular with those concerned for the rights of travellers in Avon, he is surely aware that the dissolving of Avon County Council into several unitary authorities next year, makes his position far safer.

As a consequence of both his actions and those of the Lib Dem/Tory anti-traveller stance, hundreds of portaloos and other facilities acquired to help unauthorised encampments, are sitting in council storage at places like Tolmarten.

Meanwhile Avon, an area associated with gypsies and travellers for centuries, has witnessed the most dramatic decrease in the number of unauthorised traveller vehicles in the country; partly facilitated by someone brought in to represent the interests of the very people he is helping to eradicate. And partly by local politicians using news-manufactured prejudice to win their little power struggles.

There is one other factor working against travellers in Avon, an influence difficult to fully assess but undoubtedly a strong local force: the Conservative MP for Woodspring, a constituency within the Avon area, is one Dr Liam Fox.

In the public enquiry that considered Avon County Council's planning application for a travellers site at Racecourse Quarry, Liam Fox testified against the proposal and the application was turned down. He has similarly testified in other cases, always against provision for travellers. Which is no small wonder, for Liam Fox was indeed one of the 16 Tories that sat on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill standing committee. He didn't say anything during the committee stage debates however, simply taking the odd note and passing the odd note to his colleagues.

And the reason why he was sitting quietly watching? The reason why he testifies against local applications for travellers, and the reason why he is such an anti-traveller force to be reckoned with?

The reason is simple, Dr Liam Fox is Parliamentary Private Secretary to none other than the Right Dishonourable, Michael Howard, Britain's beloved Home Secretary and father of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Acts.

1. *Legislation was wanted to restrain those groups which have genuine power over governments (mass protesters and trades unions for example) and those who are genuinely subversive (by advocating freedom, peace or true democracy). Such legislation would not have been acceptable to the people so it was carefully disguised as an attack on the sections of society with the silliest haircuts and therefore no popular support (ravers, travellers, hunt saboteurs and squatters).*
2. *Michael Howard is actually a nastier reincarnation of renegade Megacity cop Judge Death who believes that since crime is only committed by the living, life itself should be a crime punishable by death. Next year's revision of the Act will also criminalise facial piercing and the eating of tofu.*
3. *The brewers went to the Tories and said: "This ecstasy stuff is costing us millions in lost business, can't you make it illegal?" The Tories said they'd already done that, "but bung another few hundred thou' in the coffers and we'll criminalise the music as well".*
4. *In the Sixties, when Bill Clinton wasn't inhaling and love was free, John Major never got a single shag because he was a geek. He swore that one day he'd be Prime Minister and pass laws to make sure that nobody else had any fun either. Tony Blair is with him on this one because he still had acne in 1970.*
5. *The Government uses civil liberties as rewards for success in the World Cup. After 1966 we got decriminalisation of homosexuality and abortion. The Criminal Justice Act was born back in 1993 when Ronald Koeman screamed that free-kick into the top corner. Graham Taylor has a lot to answer for.*
6. *Public order laws were required to prevent 'disruption'. Disruption is only deemed offensive when the disruptors are of a lower social class than the disrupted. Thus; football crowds are working class and disrupt the working classes, so that's not offensive. Wimbledon or Chelsea Flower Show crowds are middle class and disrupt the working and middle classes so that's definitely not offensive. The unworking classes (the unemployed, the homeless, students etc.) are of a lower social class than a dog turd and so will always be disruptive even when they are on their own.*
7. *The Labour Party has no interest in anything other than winning the votes of the entire Daily Mail readership. It is quite prepared to sacrifice its own parents (the trade unions and the British people) for the quintennial cross of this vile sub-culture.*
8. *John Major needs a few good riots so that he can use a particularly tough speech that Thatcher lost down the back of a sofa at No.10 in 1981 and Major found quite by accident when he was looking for his stash. Giving the police lots of new powers of stop and search etc. was the last resort after being completely useless for years failed to have the desired effect.*
9. *All politicians are totally power obsessed. But they are also too introverted, self-seeking, short-sighted and stupid to be involved in anything as subtle as a conspiracy. Their behaviour is governed by neither logic nor benevolence and can only be explained by reference to Chaos Theory. The Criminal Justice Act is a miscreant product of prejudice, ignorance, panic and incompetence. But policies made on a whim can be changed on a whim and this makes the fight winnable. Join the fight and help shove the Act right back up the parliamentary orifice from whence it came.*

Author's note:

Please be warned that at least some, and quite possibly all of the above may in fact be completely true.



Matt

No Place Like Hulme

Ally Fogg marvels at the blessings woven from the curse of concrete housing estates and discovers genuine community among the squatters, tenants and travellers of Hulme.

It has to be Michael Howard's worst nightmare. Squatters, Ravers, eco-warriors and hunt sabs passing their rowdy days and nights in the last corner of the disastrous experiment in modernist architecture known as Hulme.

Its location near to Manchester's City Centre illustrates much that is contradictory about the south side of the city; you can take one road out of Hulme and find yourself in Moss Side's Gangsta belt, another and find the academic spires of the universities and colleges, another and you're with the upwardly mobile professionals of Chorlton. And standing proud in the middle of it all, a five minute pedal ride from all of the above, is a maze of streets, closes, squares and walks, the hub of them all being the near-legendary Otterburn Close.

At first glance it may look like a less than happy valley. BBC news have shots that they use as stock footage for any story about urban deprivation, drugs or crime. The psycho-killers of Cracker and Prime Suspect always live here, and your granny probably wouldn't enjoy visiting if you moved in. But, as we all know, appearances can be deceptive, and the Council's plan to move the residents into the terraced boxes of 'New Hulme' and raze the Close is moving less than smoothly. The problem is that people keep moving in faster than the Council can move them out. A unique spirit has developed in Otterburn and the residents are reluctant to leave behind something that has disappeared from other modern housing schemes - a sense of community. A large part of the atmosphere is the result of years (some would say centuries) of shared struggle in the area. Not just the immediate daily struggle against poverty, the DSS and drug and alcohol problems, but also wider political struggles. "Pay no Poll Tax" is still emblazoned on every wall, and most recently the community has been bonded like never before by the Criminal Justice Act which has to some extent criminalised the lifestyles of virtually every resident. Manchester Freedom Network has its office at number 9 next to the tenants' pressure group Partnership for Change.

Molly and Katy have just moved into a squat. Their reasons are largely typical; financial hardship, friends on the Close, moving somewhere 'fun'. But some of their thinking might be a surprise to many. Mollie says: "Otterburn is the only street in Manchester where you can leave a vehicle and have a good chance of finding it as you left it. I left my van parked at the back of where I used to live one night and the next day it was completely trashed. I

feel a lot safer here too, you're far less likely to get burgled than in student areas. I've been done over so many times in other places, I was fed up with it."

Katy adds: "Our parents' generation have this nostalgia for a mythical 'good old days' when everyone knew their neighbours and would nip round to borrow a cup of sugar. Well this is exactly that. Since I've moved in I keep meeting old friends in the pub or whatever and they say, 'Oh yeah, you've just moved into number ** with Molly, haven't you?'" This interpretation of the Close as a post-modern urban village is echoed by many of the residents who talk about Mallarky's Health Food Shop and Cafe as "the shop" and who, when looking for each other, will just wander from door to door asking if anyone has seen so-and-so. Usually somebody has.

There is a pervasive attitude of cheerful chaos everywhere, and not just among the people. The streets change names seemingly arbitrarily as you walk around; the numbering of flats is so anarchic that even long-term residents have never worked out the system involved. The lift will work fine so long as you nudge the door with your elbow at just the right moment. There is a cock that crows every morning at the crack of half past ten, and then crows "hello" to everyone that passes for the rest of the day. All this adds to the character and friendliness of the area, but more significantly is the depth of talent and ideas lying behind the anarchic facade. Many of Manchester's most interesting cultural and musical events have originated here, going back to the infamous 'punks' picnics' of yesteryear, through the Dogs of Heaven performance art festivals of 1993, to the present, monthly dub and techno extravaganzas known as 'Prana'. Many of the murals and works of street art by graffiti artists like 'Kelzo' are breathtaking. Reputedly, Otterburn Close has the highest concentration of graduates per square yard of any residential area in the country. Skills like those rub off, and while there will always be a high proportion of lunch-outs, casualties and telly addicts, the opportunities to get involved in anything from party organising to political campaigns are endless. As Katy told me: "The thing about his place is that there is absolutely nothing to do, except whatever you want."

At the heart of it all, both literally and spiritually, are the travellers. No-one is quite sure how long travellers have been coming to Hulme. Certainly nobody around here questions that they are very much part of the community. There have been inhabitable vehicles parked in Otterburn Close for as long as anyone can remember. Many of them belong to seasonal travellers who live in squats over the

winter and travel over the summer. As more and more of old Hulme was flattened over the past three years, travellers were forced closer and closer to Otterburn, the last sanctuary in the area. Now at any given time there are between ten and twenty inhabited vehicles. The benefits of the travellers are clear. They have a friendly, peaceful environment, relatively free from harassment by police or locals. They have friends in flats who can provide emergency facilities. They have access to water and toilets. And, of course, it means a place close to the city where they can live, work, study and play. In return, the travellers provide security for the residents; both the police and the Housing Department have admitted that crime is dramatically lower as a result of the traveller's presence. Many residents have benefited from the mechanical skills and other talents of the travellers. And most importantly the residents are now living in the Close because they want to, having been offered rehousing many times by the Council. They appreciate the festival spirit and unique flavour which the travellers play a key role in maintaining. The great majority are prepared to make a political judgement about the current persecution of travellers in this country and are willing to stand by them. The attitude is very much one of OKIMBY rather than NIMBY.

It was, therefore, something of a surprise when, in late March, the travellers received notices of eviction from Manchester City Council Department of Land and Property. The notices were unsigned, undated and have no legal validity, but since travellers can be, and are regularly, moved on without warning, it was enough to cause considerable concern. And so, at 10.30am on Friday March 31st, the travellers braced themselves. A large crowd of supporters began to hang around, the media arrived in force and everyone got very cold and wet on a miserable day. As there was no sign of any action the reporters interviewed everyone and each other to pass the time. Granada TV News were interviewing Dave, one of the travellers, and as he explained the situation a six foot, fluffy white bunny rabbit called 'Shagpile Splendour' walked across the background smoking a roll-up and grinning broadly. When you try to explain just what the authorities are up against in Otterburn, that event always springs to mind. How can you send the riot squad in to deal with fluffy white rabbits?

In response to the first threat of eviction the travellers all put notices in the windscreens of their vehicles reminding the council that their obligation to find alternative accommodation for them was greater than their obligation to evict them. Shortly after, the travellers

Juxta - Posing

Offence of racially inflammatory publication etc. to be arrestable

155. - In section 24(2) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (arrestable offences), after the paragraph (h) inserted by section 166(4) of this Act, there shall be inserted the following paragraph -

“(i) an offence under section 19 of the Public Order Act 1986 (publishing, etc. material intended or likely to stir up racial hatred);”.

Extract from the Criminal Justice Act 1994

received their only signed communication from Pete Jarman, then Hulme Housing team leader, offering them a place on the council house waiting list. Over the next two weeks they received two more unsigned letters from the Housing Department giving notice to leave by April 7th, then by April 28th. The letters also confirmed that there were no available sites in Manchester for them to move to. Since then, at meetings with council officials, a final, final eviction date has been set for Friday June 30th. In the meantime, council departments give the impression of trying to throw a hot potato to each other. Unsigned, unreferenced letters do not exude authority, and no-one on the Hulme Housing Team, the Director of Housing's office or the Department of Land and Property would give me a statement about the affair. Instead, I was referred to the Press Office who would only repeat that, following complaints, from July 1st Land and Property would conduct evictions on behalf of the Housing Department by removing any vehicles not having a legal right to remain.

According to the letters from the Housing Department, the complaints which had been received were of dogs running loose, litter, noise levels, and blocking of access to parking and garages. It is hard to reconcile the council's description of the travellers with my personal impression of the people I met. No-one disputes that some complaints were received at the outset, although suspicions are that the number of complaints were tiny, and that they may have come originally from councillors themselves.

Dave often acts as spokesperson for the travellers. With a quaker beard and eyes which can only be described, with apologies, as twinkling, he could probably charm Michael Portillo into letting him park his van at the bottom of his garden. Deep down he feels he is being scapegoated by the council. "All the things they have had complaints about do happen, but it's not us doing them. The council has a problem with dogs, litter, noise and all that and it's much easier to make it look as if something's being done by picking on us, than to try and track down on the people who are actually responsible. If you ask anyone who lives here who the unsociable neighbours are, they will tell you it's the smack-heads not the travellers." Of course there are some nice, friendly, sociable smack-heads around too, but as a generalisation everyone I talked to agreed. The area has its problems and the biggest one is brown powder.

If Dave and his friends feel put upon by their persecutors, they are not the type to give in quietly. They are putting together a campaign not only to stop the immediate evictions from Otterburn, but to persuade the council to provide a permanent travellers site in Hulme. Their plans are ambitious; applications are now being considered for use of Birley Fields, the last green site in Hulme. The travellers are seeking permission to turn the area into a permaculture zone; a traveller's site with work on the farm as rent. They are hoping to find grant awards to help establish the project and to use the council's Agenda 21 obligations as a campaign tool. Like most local authorities, the council's current policy on Agenda 21 appears to be "sorry, Agenda what?". Dave agrees that they are aiming high but they are hopeful. "There is a long history of radicalism in Hulme, and also a history of ordinary people getting things done. Who knows what we can achieve (twinkle, twinkle) there's some that say Hulme is on a Ley Line you know!"

Alongside Dave in the plans and negotiations has been Ray, a veteran traveller and campaigner who has lived in the same van for eight years, including two winters at Greenham Common, but is hoping to trade it in for a newer one in the summer. "I can't make myself younger, but I can make my van younger," she says. Ray came to Manchester to study Arts in Communities last year. While Dave twinkles, Ray soothes. When I first approached her to talk about the campaign she sat me down on a stool and made me look at the books on street art she'd just borrowed from the library. She told me that she was getting together a women and girls wall-painting team, and had arranged a wall to legally decorate around the corner. When I persuaded her to tell me about the campaign she told me of the three pronged attack. "Firstly we have to show the council the depth of feeling among the residents. We have already handed in a petition of several hundred names just from the Close opposing the original evictions. We'll be starting a new Manchester-wide petition soon demanding an end to the harassment and stressing the historical role of travellers in the community, the massive local support, and the need for a site in Hulme. Secondly we shall try and explain to the council the difference in cost of providing a site as compared to forcing evictions and make them see the financial sense of a site. Thirdly we're going to continue meeting with council officials and hope that they get fed-up before we do."

There is a feeling of great confidence that the evictions can be stopped. The physical layout of the square means that entrances are easy to block and, if necessary, there are many people who are willing to conduct a bit of NVDA. What happens in the long term to the residents and travellers of Otterburn is difficult to predict. The ultimate irony may be that the travellers get their site in Hulme just as the residents who shared their community finally get moved out and their homes demolished. This could well be the last glorious summer of the Old Hulme. The travellers will be part of it. The squatters, ravers and eco-warriors will also be part of it, and nobody is in a hurry to let the bulldozers in. When it's gone we will wonder if it was nostalgia that created the memories of a little corner of a hellish estate, where travellers and non-travellers, black and white, young and old, mad and madder, all lived together in relative harmony for a few years at least. But we'll know it wasn't.

Ally and the Travellers Campaign can be contacted at:
c/o Manchester Freedom Network, 9 Otterburn Close, Hulme,
Manchester M15.

Election In Touch

Bring some sense
back to Brighton



Thursday
4th May

(Polls open 8am close 9pm)



Vote
David
Dudeney

If you want a 'traveller' for a neighbour - vote Labour.

St. Peter's Labour Party is petitioning for the travellers to be allowed to return to The Level. Brighton Council says they were not doing any harm. The Green Party think they should be allowed to come back.

What do you think?

I can tell you what Conservatives think. The Conservative Party cares about people who live near The Level. Unlike Labour, Conservatives have been fighting hard to get the travellers moved on.

Conservatives want to know why residents have had to put up with the abusive language and filth for so long. The Criminal Justice Bill is there for the Local Authority to use, but Labour chooses to fight against the Bill instead of using it to protect the people of Brighton.

IF LABOUR WON'T DO THE JOB LET US!

CONSERVATIVE



Printed & published by Pat Smith, 72 High Street, Brighton BN2 1RP

Tory election leaflet, Brighton 1995

In order to provide more inmates for the construction of camps set up to do various SS projects, "Himmler widened the list of anti-socials to be arrested arbitrarily; tramps and vagabonds, beggars, even those with a fixed address - gypsies and people who travelled from place to place like gypsies if they showed no will to work regularly". These and others "who do not want to adapt themselves to the orderly Volk community" were all cited in a special Nazi decree on December 14th 1937. A month later this list of arrestable undesirables was extended to the "work-shy".

Extract from Peter Padfield's biography of Heinrich Himmler, Head of SS Gestapo - "Himmler, Reichsfuhrer SS".

The Culture Cash-in on Raves and Festivals

Seamus O'Conner takes a look at the so-called "new age entrepreneurs", using the CJA and the cultures it sought to crush as a source of profit.

Mean Fiddlers and Market Manipulators

This afternoon 25,000 people will congregate on 60 acres of Oxfordshire park land in the first of a new generation of 'raves' since the Criminal Justice Act became law," wrote Alex Bellos in the Guardian (6/5/95).

The article - a fair-sized one with a photograph - must have had the Mean Fiddler Organisation, part organisers of the event, rubbing their palms together in prospective financial glee. What better publicity for a rave party than to be associated with the new politicised sound systems and dancers.

It's the kind of PR engineering that Vince Power and his Mean Fiddler Organisation have employed and basked in ever since they did the nigh impossible and made a success of the original Mean Fiddler music venue in out of the way Harlesdon, North London. Relying on the local Irish contingent to attend a rota of known Irish acts, Power hasn't looked back since.

The Mean Fiddler Organisation now owns seven of the major venues in London, as well as running the Phoenix Festival near Stratford, the Reading Festival, several large one day events (Fleadh, Madstock etc) and now, in conjunction with Universe, the Tribal Gathering.

As regards bringing Irish bands to London, the Mean Fiddler has played an important part, but the meteoric rise of the Organisation has to some extent been ensured by cultural exploitation.

Commercially unknown bands playing at the original Mean Fiddler venue were often treated with a disrespect manifesting itself in bizarre ways. Firstly, Vince Power's outlets operated extortionate ticket deals for unknown bands playing in his venues.

Secondly, even headlining bands were refused permission to bring water into the venue by the Mean Fiddler staff. Singers were expected to buy water from the bar in order to keep their vocal cords lubricated, an early preliminary to the 'taps off - expensive water' scenario that has come to characterise commercial rave venues.

When the Mean Fiddler Organisation bought out the Jazz Cafe in Camden, London, one of their first moves was to get rid of the ticket price concession for the unemployed.

Then in 1993, after already having manoeuvred their way into the position of promoters of the Reading Festival, Vince Power and the Mean Fiddler Organisation saw the commercial potential spinning off from increasing public interest in Glastonbury Festival, and launched the Phoenix

Festival near Stratford. The market-directed plan seemed obvious. Choose a name which had 'new age' connotations, enclose an area with five stages, each with different themes a la Glastonbury, charge £50 (£58 this year) to get in and maximise profits by barring all people from bringing in drinks of any kind onto the site.

In that first year Vince Power pushed things too far for many of the kind of festival-goers who had come looking for the open cultural experiences developed through free festivals and still to be found in pockets at Glastonbury. At

the whole site was about to go berserk. Hastily, sound systems were asked to start up again in the campsite itself, diffusing the anger and averting further rioting.

This year the Mean Fiddler Organisation is to give some of the proceeds of Phoenix Festival to Amnesty International just as Glastonbury contributes to Greenpeace. The Mean Fiddler Organisation have put Amnesty's name prominently on their Phoenix Festival posters and, although Amnesty International needs as much money as it can get, the Mean Fiddler's decision is more likely a commercially astute move, based on Glastonbury's example, rather than any surge of corporate altruism. After all, the ticket prices for the two events are now almost identical, although the Phoenix Festival offers considerably less in terms of variety.



Nick Cobbing

midnight on the first few days of the first Phoenix Festival teams of officials toured the campsite situated outside the walled-off stage area, turning off boogie boxes and errant sound systems and dousing fires with hose pipes.

People felt conned and hemmed in by the anti-festival spirit and commercial capitalisation and a riot ensued. The walls of the stage area were attacked and for a moment it looked as if

venue in Kentish Town, North London, provided an obvious visual contrast situated as it is right next door to the church squatted by the Rainbow Tribe. As the Rainbow Environmental Centre struggles with its £2,000 electricity bill, there would not be one person living at the old church who would have had the £25 required just to enter the so called 'Tribal Gathering'.

Far from being a "new generation of raves" the Tribal Gathering was in fact the same old story. In Issue 8 of SQUALL we ran an article entitled 'Who spiked the Dance Floor' pointing out that legal restrictions on the right to party has pushed dance culture into the hands of the commercially-motivated, culturally exploiting the need to dance.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act is a specific hammer-blow to free party groups organising dances genuinely open to members of the community, regardless of whether they have the £25 asking price for entry. If Alex Bellos had genuinely wanted to discover a 'new generation of raves', existing despite the presence of the Criminal Justice Act, he would have done far better to have visited one of the new series of Exodus Collective raves, making community use of disused quarries and warehouses and charging just the one pound entry required to keep the ball rolling. He would have also done better to have paid a visit to one of the Bristol warehouses where the Sunnyside Collective organise large scale parties that are free to enter. Or Desert Storm in Scotland, FreeBase in Wales, Lazy House and Ebb in the West Country, or a host of other free party pushers.

"Tribal gathering?," says Diplo, from the Sunnyside Collective. "Yeah I went to one - it was the Beltane Festival near Exeter. The only way we'd have been at that Oxfordshire do would be to have shown up and done a free party in the Car Park for those that didn't have the £25 to get in."

The Guardian chose to follow up its coverage of the so-called 'Tribal Gathering' with a large article in its Arts section (8/5/95) subtitled: "The Criminal Justice Act put the rave under House arrest. But it's out and it's phat in Oxfordshire."

It talked of how the "repetitive beats" mentioned in the Criminal Justice Act were the very ones rebelliously played in Oxfordshire that weekend. However, the Criminal Justice Act helps rather than hinders such commercial raves. For a start it limits the competition - making it harder for people to organise their own. Secondly, it allows profit-mongers the opportunity to exploit the public's desire to dance; with large amounts of capital ensuring an official licence, and large entrance fees ensuring huge profits. It is in effect a cultural corruption, and all the sadder for the fact that most of us go along with this subtle but effective steering.

It just so happens that the Exodus Collective were running a rave in a



Nick Cobbing

Pumping it up in a disused quarry - the Exodus Collective keeping the dance floor healthy.

disused quarry on the same night as the Tribal Gathering.

"The difference was quite amazing," says Mary Anna Wright, a sociology researcher who attended both events. "The Exodus party won hands down; I found the other one so contrived. Also the fact that one event was legal and it was boiling hot with people sweating buckets, and the other was illegal and much safer."

Nicholas Saunders, author of 'E for Ecstasy' - an authoritative academic book on drug culture, also danced at both raves:

"It was the sort of event where people feel very bounded together and when there's a big public event with lots of stewards around such as the Tribal Gathering, they don't feel so personally involved with looking after each other; it's a bit municipal in a way. The Tribal Gathering was very efficient and well-organised but the Exodus rave had the atmosphere."

Mary Anna Wright was none too impressed by the Guardian article that preceded the event: "Fucking hell - I was so angry because Alex Bellos phoned me up and I gave him most of the information for the article. I put the whole argument about the lack of safety at events because of the effects of the Criminal Justice Act and all these clubs that are mixed up with all this tap turning off business but he ignored it completely."

Nicholas Saunders agrees that Bellos's angles were wide of the mark: "The Tribal Gathering was the kind of event we are left with *because* we have such heavy clamp downs like the Criminal Justice Act."

However, the author of the Guardian 'Arts' review on the Tribal Gathering, Andrew Smith, concluded that: "You could stage one of these things almost anywhere and, if you got the music right and allowed people to bring their own drugs, they'll swallow it. This makes them easy to please. It also makes them easy to exploit. The Tribal Gathering came down on the right side of this equation." A sorry and safe conclusion in many respects.

The Sunnyside Collective from

Bristol sent a letter to The Guardian which, to the newspaper's credit, they printed with the headline: "Rave on to the sound of money changing hands"(15/5/95).

In the letter, Sunnyside pointed out that the cost of entry "priced out those really criminalised by the CJA - the unemployed, the young, the poor. To claim that such events unify 'dance culture in defiance of the Act' is plainly disingenuous."

A member of Universe, co-promoters of the Tribal Gathering with the Mean Fiddle Organisation, approached the Exodus Collective to ask if they wanted to do a pitch at the event. It would have surely been a commercial coup if the organisers had managed to get Exodus to attend but, after discussing the proposal at a meeting, the Collective elected not to take up the offer due to the prohibitive ticket price. Since their decision was made the proposed ticket price actually went up.

"They were trying to make out that the Tribal Gathering was the sort of thing the Government are trying to stamp out but that's the thing they're trying to encourage - the mass dollars bit," commented Exodus's spokesperson Glenn Jenkins

Entrance prices were also the issue at the Safer Dancing Conference that took place in Manchester in March. Organised by a group called Lifeline, in conjunction with Manchester City Council and the Home Office, the conference was designed as a discussion of the issues raised by a spate of deaths in commercial rave clubs. Representatives of many of the big clubs in Britain were in attendance, including those that still switch off cold water taps in their toilets to maximise profits from water sales at the bar.

Glenn Jenkins from the Exodus Collective had been invited to come and speak at the Conference by Lifeline and so travelled all the way up from Luton with three of the Collective's own drug welfare people, known as the Exodus Drugs Squad.

"When I got to the door they gave me a pink badge and said the other three lads can't come in," recalls Jenkins. "I

told them that all they wanted to do was stand at the back but they told us the conference was full up to the brim. So I went inside to sort it and there was stacks of room. But they were saying 'why should you lot be allowed in for nothing when all these others have to pay?'"

The answer, of course, was obvious. The commercial club owners attending the Conference could well-afford the staggeringly prohibitive £65 entrance fee. Exodus on the other hand charge next to nothing for their raves and make no profit. The people that work on the project do so for the love of the dance and receive no payment. Once again the Exodus Collective contingent were told the conference was "filled to the brim".

Someone already in the conference hall, and a friend of the Exodus members, offered to pay their entrance fee and the organisers accepted.

"That made it stink even more," recalls Jenkins. "It gives away their true game - they had that hall for free off Manchester Council and still they were charging £65 to get in. I was invited to speak - but were told there's more no more room..... unless you've got £195. I refused to go in and chucked my passes back at them."

The farce continued when it was realised that many of the people in attendance at the conference were from clubs who turn their water taps off. One delegate did in fact stand up at the conference and accuse Club UK (Wandsworth, South London), amongst others, of operating a no cold water tap policy. But conferences come and conferences go - and what do they mean?

"I went to Club UK in April and I couldn't believe it," a dancer called Mary told SQUALL. "It's 1995 and the hot water in the women's loo was so hot you couldn't even wash your hands in it and there was no cold water. We had to get the men to go into their loo and get some cold water out."

It is no small irony that a prominent member of Universe, who co-organised the Tribal Gathering with the Mean Fiddle Organisation, is also one of the promoters of Club UK.

Will the phoenix or the vulture rise from the ashes?

Megatripolis and Bad Dream Entertainment

Universe and the Mean Fiddle Organisation are not the only profiteers to come riding in on the backs of the new culture. Megatripolis in London's West End Heaven Club has proved itself to be another example, exploiting the newly-identified market of the festival/anti-criminal justice act posse.

From the word off, Megatripolis at Heaven was always an uneasy combination. Heavy security on the door sat uneasily with the clown they employed to give you a sweetie as you went in. The £2.80 for a bottle of beer sat incongruously with the free festival vibe that the club was putting across.

"It's something that did start off so positively but people were lied to basically; effort, talent, contacts were taken from people and it was all one way," recalls Alistair, one of the core organisers of the club night. "There was deception involved in the things that were going on but there was so much work to do that we never really looked at it."

"The people who ran Megatripolis were not the people who owned Megatripolis - that is a crucial point," adds Gary, who joined the team a year after they opened at Heaven.

"There was a lot of people involved in the organisation who I know were genuine people and they were taken for a ride really by the owners."

The problem came not from Heaven's management but from the owners of the Megatripolis night, a so-called partnership of two individuals from a company called Dream Entertainments and hippy-zippy entrepreneur Fraser Clark.

"Fraser had the idea for the club and didn't know how to do it," says Gary. "So he pulled in a lot of underground type people in order to reflect that kind of thing in the club. Then he brought in Dream Entertainments to act as the business

background, and they very carefully and cleverly trademarked everything in their name."

Dream Entertainments was the company name of two individuals, Peter Mosse (known as Buggy) and JJ Abdul Nasier (known simply as JJ). JJ was also an associate partner (financial services salesman) for Rothschild bank. Megatripolis itself is a registered company but was under the entire ownership of Dream Entertainments, despite the fact that the club had been built up on the backs of a large number of free party spirited people.

Indeed, there were many people involved in the running of the club who thought that despite the economic intentions of the business-heads behind the Megatripolis night, something festival-like could be made of the night; providing an important example of such spirit in the middle of the city.

Right from the beginning, Megatripolis was a

expenses promised to speakers he had hired in to lend the club a culture-political credibility. At one stage, Clark was paid by a group who wanted to use the Megatripolis name to run a night at the Astoria; another venue. No other members of the hard-working Megatripolis organisers saw any of the money.

Blue had been one of the main Megatripolis organisers ever since the club night opened in Heaven. With some previous experience in management and marketing consultancies, he was brought into to help organise the budgeting of the club, as well as for his connections on the underground free-party scene.

"I checked into Fraser's background and knew he was financially irresponsible; his integrity around money was appalling - he wasn't malicious, he just didn't give a bollocks. I was brought in to keep an eye on this. I would say now that he was a

realities of such sloganeering: "I've got no problem with people who run a project as a company structure but you can't use a co-operative philosophy on top of a corporate structure as a device to make personal profit - it sucks."

One of the reasons why the creative team behind the Megatripolis night continued to work for so long in such exploitation was firstly that no-one was aware of what was happening behind the scenes, and secondly because the creative organisation of the club on was a full time and exhaustive job with little pause for thought.

"We just didn't want to believe that anybody was taking the whole thing for a ride," adds Blue. "But then it was the realisation that things were not going to change - that they weren't simply unaware of what the underground movement was really all about or what the whole thing was being done for - they simply weren't interested."

Fraser Clark was finally ousted

whilst others were raking it in.

"A lot of people have come out of the project cynical and in pain. It was a big thing to do - a massive project every week and a lot of people gave all their time. When we found out what was going on it was appalling; such a disappointment," winces Blue.

"The whole thing is still swinging around in my head," adds Alistair. "I just feel a lot less trusting and I don't like that feeling."

The greatest danger resulting from the use of new-consciousness sound bites to back ride positively spirited people is, of course, that the fatter the riders become, the greater the chance they will break the backs of those they are riding upon. In nature it is called 'destructive parasitism'. A disturbing, but not unusual, trend of spouting the philosophy to collect the cash, has given rise to the warnings of 'beware the new-age entrepreneur'. However, despite the tremendous dis-

appointments experienced by all those who fought for the festival spirit at Megatripolis, the creative team seemed to have survived the negative onslaught of the bad experience.

"We learnt an enormous amount by doing it and we also learnt an enormous amount about what can go wrong and how it can be prevented, as well as what we can do to clean ourselves up," says Blue.

Alistair, Blue, Gary and others involved in putting the Megatripolis night together have now formed a new posse called AngelTech, and are organising some free-parties in Brighton before heading off to Spain to dance in the sun for a while.

"We still love it - watching people having a party - watching people come to a thing and go away changed and enlivened. Their vital signs go up - their energy is better - they think better of things.

It makes a difference and it's worth doing," affirms Blue.

Other members of the team, involved in loading the equipment and decor at Megatripolis, also left in disgust and have since started up Exclamation on Thursday nights at the Fridge in Brixton, South London. Costing £4 to enter, their debut night attracted a packed house for what was described as a "cracking night".

Phoenix, Megatripolis, Tribal Gathering - the meeting place for the new consciousness or the market place for the same old unconsciousness? Informed discernment is the key to healthy choice.

"It's made me look twice and more carefully about how much I involve myself and with who. I try to keep my judgements under control but I do use more discernment," says Blue, with lessons learned and back not broken.



Matt

Straight off the back of a lorry - Desert Storm stylee. The free party posse from Glasgow were recently invited by aid workers to bring their beats to Bosnia. Desert Storm's special free party

for a war-torn people was crammed with dancers shedding their worries for the night. During the course of the event, Bosnian police arrived and told them to turn the music up.

commercial success. Correctly predicting the new market potential of the festival/rave scene, the club was almost invariably full, netting between £6,000 - £8,000 a night. In theory this should have meant that sufficient money was available to re-invest in the club and to pay the people who were doing all the work, but in reality this never happened

"Those creative people that put the work in right at the start never got the financial reward, acknowledgement or respect they deserved," says Blue, another core organiser.

"I was always told there was not much money there," adds Gary. "So because of this I used to book DJs and say 'look I'm really sorry mate, I know Ministry pay you £500 but we can only pay you £100'. I had to do a lot of that with DJs, bands, speakers, people who do the decor - everything."

Meanwhile, Fraser Clark was busy hyping up the club as the "meeting place for the new consciousness" at the same time as short-changing the

backrider."

It now seems likely that backriding was a common occurrence at Megatripolis, with Fraser Clark as only a minor shark in the set up. Dream Entertainments took a profit share of the takings and had the responsibility for paying the tax on the night, withdrawing a sizeable fraction of the takings each week for such purposes. Blue finally sussed on to the fact that Megatripolis was not registered with the tax office and that something was going wrong with the handling and distribution of the profits.

"The amount of money in the company account was many thousands short of what it should have been on the basis of turnover and expenditure - it just didn't match," says Blue.

One of Fraser Clark's multitude of philosophically manipulative soundbites was that Megatripolis was a "corporate structure with a co-operative philosophy".

Blue has little time for the

from the Megatripolis partnership by the Dream Entertainments duo, and left for America. The creative Megatripolis posse reserve little hatred for Clark, simply saying he was a "megalomaniac" and "difficult to work with".

"We split with him out of embarrassment rather than any hate or malice," says Blue.

Dream Entertainments went bankrupt this year, after a huge unpaid tax bill arrived through their door. Bankruptcy of course foregoes tax obligations. By this stage however, most of the original team had now left, convinced that the commercial backriders were throttling the very free-festival vibe they had worked so hard to foster.

One legacy of the venture is that a lot of very positively spirited people left the project feeling extremely angry at the use of new-consciousness philosophies and sound bites, designed solely to manipulate creative individuals into working hard for next to nothing,

NETROGRESSIVE

The profit motive moves in on the Internet.
Could the British Government be doing
more for democracy by using the Net?
Ben Schneider reports.

Exponential. That is the word which comes into mind when thinking about the growth of the Internet. A couple of years ago, the Net was a mysterious entity, available to very few in the UK - only used by academia and computer companies. Video recorders were first commercially available less than twenty years ago, and their ubiquitous presence now illustrates the hunger for media/technological development in consumer society.

Fortunately, the Internet Itinerant can quickly find conferences, web-sites (see box) and contacts which may correspond to his or her interests. However, what is worrying is the growing threat of commercialisation on the Net and UK Government policy regarding the provision of useful official information.

Conventional media is basically run to create profits by way of advertising. The Internet more or less frowns upon this, resulting in fear amongst media giants such as Time-Warner that the Net, as the fastest

that the punters find comfort in familiar TV-style information provision, where the consumer is spoon-fed and not required to show initiative to find what he or she needs!

Government is concerned. Tax possibilities from this media boom are most attractive but more importantly there is apprehension over how information that is disseminated via the Net bypasses formal channels and censorship. The Net also threatens the intellectual property rights and economic rights of "Government Information".

To give an example, look at Her Majesty's Stationary Office (HMSO). They publish the proceedings of the House of Commons and Lords - Hansard. This is the digest or newspaper (for what it's worth) of our country's Parliament. It costs an outrageous £7.50 a day for the Commons and £4.20 for the Lords. The argument of intellectual property is no better illustrated than here.

Despite calls for the digest of our Parliament to be made available on the

use its information gathering and supply activities by a means of stimulating the creation and growth of new IT based services." Very Thatcher. Print the shit you have to print, charge as much as possible for it in paper format and sell it again to commercial providers who can make lots of money by adding value and putting it on-line or on a CD-ROM. Free Market Heaven.

The Internet is a challenge to this policy which has been gathering steam for ten years. This Government, which has endured criticism over official secrecy and slow uptake of the Net, has bowed to pressure and created the so-called Open Government server (its World Wide Web address is <http://www.open.gov.uk>). Does it have press releases? Yes. Does it have general information on how "open" the UK Government is? Yes. Does it have proposed Bills? No. Does it have any information which it could sell? What do you think?! It will not provide information that threatens revenue of

money-making products.

The USA, in contrast, has excellent Government Net resources. Tim Jackson (FT 18.4.95) states: "There is already a lively debate in the US on ways in which technology can make democracy work better by improving the flow of information. The culture of secrecy in British governance - and the vested interests that hinder its reform - will mean that progress is slow.... The free electronic flow of information will promote better government... Meantime, users of the Web [and the Net] will have to be patient."

The Net is a positive way of disseminating information which is not already in the public domain. I believe we have a right to see this information either for free, or at a charge which reflects actual costs, not profits. Here is an opportunity to increase the public's access to vital information in a country without comprehensive Freedom of Information legislation. Don't let it slip away.

GROUP 4 ON THE NET

An article in the Independent on Sunday (26.2.95), 'The Internet: Monitor and Censor With Prejudice', rather patronisingly reported how Group Four had tapped into GreenNet to track upcoming road protest actions.

They were able to warn of an impending assault on the British Road Federation HQ and successfully prevented action taking place. Anyone can access GreenNet, but rather than gain a GreenNet account as an anonymous or independent, the company went for a full corporate entry. Why?

A spokesperson for Grope 4 stated: "We are members of it (GreenNet) and we use it as an information source. We are a company interested in environmental issues." Such statements give the impression that Group 4 must be an enlightened company with a positive attitude towards their industrial sector.

This prompted my investigation into the Group Four entry. In the User Directory,

the "areas of interest" included cleaners, nuclear and technology. Why are they interested cleaners and why is transport not mentioned?

Group Four Securitas (BV) in the Netherlands bought a 50% share of Ecover, a Belgian phosphate-free detergent manufacturer, in 1992. Group Four Securitas (BV) is the "ultimate parent" of the UK companies which comprise of the prison, security guard and technology companies that we know and love.

The Guardian (24.10.92) quoted the company as being "anxious to extend its corporate image from the protection of property to the protection of the environment". The incident at Twyford Down with Tarmac was dismissed by Group 4: "To suggest that there is some policy decision within Group 4 to try to confront ecological protesters is total nonsense. There would be no logical reason for Group 4 to do this."

THE WORLD WIDE WEB

- The World Wide Web began life in Switzerland at CERN.

- There is a special computer language which allows a combination of text, graphics, video and sound to be sent on the Net called Hyper Text Mark-Up Language (HTML). The computer must have a web "browser" or piece of software which can read web information, such as Netscape or Mosaic.

- The Web allows a user to view a screen and by pointing and clicking a mouse on highlighted images or text the screen will jump to the screen which the highlighted image/text refers to.

- Using the example of the Open Government Web Site (see figure below), there's a lovely piccy of Big Ben and underlined options, such as what's new etc. Using the mouse and

double-clicking on the What's New option brings up a new screen with information under that subject).

- There is a smaller picture of Big Ben on the What's New screen. Clicking on that will bring you back to the first screen.

- What is so exciting about this application is that a user can literally jump anywhere, from the Open Government web site to Madhur Jaffrey's Indian Cookery page to Southampton Football Club and so on and so on.

- 80% of Internet "traffic" is Web traffic.

- For July SQUALL will have a web page at the following address. It will probably change soon after that, but I will put the new address on the page so everyone will be in the know! <http://www.city.ac.uk/~cl531/ben.html>

growing medium in the world, does not pay homage to the advertising God. A good example comes from Canter & Siegel, German lawyers, who made a "scattergun" advertisement for their services in aiding visa applications for US green cards. The Wall Street Journal Europe (27.4.94) stated that 35,000 responses came within days: "Some were polite requests for information but many were hate mail... One angry soul made the point by sending 8 million characters of gibberish, a 'mail-bomb'." Such was the response that it crashed the lawyer's internet provider computer!

Mass media concern, although not unfounded, should be tempered with a worrying yet predictable development. As documented in the Guardian (27.4.95), American (and to an extent, British) Net culture is going in two directions simultaneously: "On the one hand, there are the untamed wilds of the Internet, expanding rapidly without a centralised authority... On the other, there is the emergence of massive information providers like... Compuserve... On one side of the divide, the many-to-many model reigns triumphant; on the other, old-style mass media seems alive and well in the information age."

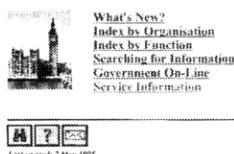
Access to the Net does involve a little computer knowledge, but this is unlikely to pose a problem for the literate. However, the more commercial providers such as Compuserve know

Net - from MP David Shaw (13.1.95, alt.british.politics Newsgroup) and others, including a letter to the Times (21.10.94), HMSO has stitched up the market. Annual subscription to the Commons Hansard is £1,275. I could buy a copy of Loot, find a cheap second-hand computer, a modem and a year's subscription to GreenNet for half the price!!

With several thousand subscriptions (the actual number is "confidential information"), HMSO is unlikely to release the copyright on this publication.

There has been a trend since the 1980s to charge increasing amounts for what could be described as Public Information. In 1984, during the Thatcher administration, a document called "Making a Business of Information" stressed the economic value of official information and encouraged HMSO to charge more for legislative and public documents. Additionally, an Information Technology Advisory Panel report of the same year stressed the importance of

CCTA Government Information Service



West Mercia Police and the Anonymous Remailer.

The benefits of the Internet as an alternative and impersonal form of communication have reached the boys in blue. An Independent article (13.5.95) discusses West Mercia Police Force as the first to go on-line.

The Web site (<http://www.demon.co.uk/westmerc/index.html>) has lots of facts and figures on crime in the region, a Policing Charter (of course!) and Operation Bumblebee. What caught my attention, however, was the facility to e-mail tip-offs to the Rozzas anonymously!

Chris Gale, who set up the Web site said: "When we receive the mail, it will appear to have come from someone whose e-mail address is just 'unknown'."

Using an Anonymous Remailer in Finland, e-mail can be sent to any address with the true identity of the sender removed. The procedure is fairly complicated but, in a nutshell, after initially e-mailing the remailer (daemon@anon.penet.fi), the user receives an anonymous user name and sets up a password. From then on, each time the user wishes to send "anony-mail", he or she sends it via this system

'How safe is this method? Is it really guaranteed to protect the sender's identity?

Well, the short answer is no. After e-mailing the Remailer for general information on security issues it states: "Short of having everyone run a public-key cryptosystem such as 'PGP*' (encrypting or coding software), there is no way to protect 'users from malicious administrators. You have to trust my personal integrity." This system has been running for a year and seems well-used.

Concern amongst would-be grasses, or anyone wishing to communicate anonymously, may be less about the administrator and more about eavesdropping hackers or police forces tapping in.

There are two problems. If the Remailer service is raided, the true identities of users are at risk. Clever users/hackers can mimic the anonymous user identities and fool e-mail recipients who believe the mail they have received to be authentic.

The bottom line appears to be that if your message is really confidential, and may cost you your freedom or life, either use encryption software or use a homing pigeon!

PGP = Pretty Good Privacy - a fairly popular encryption program, although ILLEGAL in the UK!

For this issue's *International* section, SQUALL travels to Holland to look at their long-established squat (community) centres and speak with the free radicals. Sam Beale reports, Nick Cobbing shoots the pictures.

KRAAKING THE SYSTEM

Dutch squatters have their own brand of negotiation - and it works.

The most immediately striking thing about squatting in Holland is the age of some of the biggest and best-known squats: in Den Haag, in the south, the Blauwe Aanslag has been squatted since 1980; in Amsterdam, the Vrankryk and the Binnenpret since 1984. These buildings are vibrant examples of mature squatted communities. They have the sweet smell of long-term radicalism and dissent and have realised goals that squatters facing frequent evictions can only dream of. Hundreds of people around the country have either lived or worked in them, gone to their cafes and gigs or fought to defend them. They are a living squatting history, an inspiration to new squatters.

The Blauwe Aanslag is a massive squat in Den Haag, the Dutch seat of government and official royal residence.

Blauwe for four years, believes community links are essential "we're not making points about our house, we're making points about the whole city."

Since the building was first occupied the squatters have paid themselves a small rent, according to what each can afford, which pays for electricity and materials and funds actions. There is a venue in the basement, a cinema, workshops including a carpenters, a printshop (running as a small business for eleven years) a second-hand clothes shop, and a Kurdish library. Living spaces double as artists studios. Residents include artists, musicians, radio and film-makers, students and architects.

two presses, a dark room and a computer room. Jan explained that "you can support the groups you want to support by printing for them. It's the main reason to keep on doing this: we can print at a cheaper rate for political groups."

Support for political groups is a high priority. In the quiet, sunlit Kurdish library at the Blauwe, Turkish tea was served. Namdar explained that between 30 and 40 people a week use the library which serves as a meeting point for Kurdish and Turkish people. Namdar is one of four Kurdish men currently living at the Blauwe, building up support organisations for groups at home. Mart recalls police raids and arrests of Kurdish radicals in the building. It is

Between '88 and '89 the city council began a massive redevelopment plan for Den Haag. "They want to make a gigantic techno-city, sky scrapers and all," rants Martijn over the traffic noise, standing amidst the building site that is currently the city centre. It was finally revealed in 1992 that the council are planning to pedestrianise the centre and build a ring road around the city. The Blauwe Aanslag is in the path of this road.

The squatters have since campaigned to save the building and consolidated local support. They even produced two cheaper alternative schemes which would save the Blauwe. Both were rejected. One, designed by a group of architectural students living at the Blauwe, initially gained city-wide approval. "At the first city council meeting we had a lot of support and it looked like we were going to win. The next meeting was two months later and suddenly all the people who were for us turned against us," remembers Mart. Ultimately this plan was refused because "the canal that runs alongside the building would have to be narrowed and they said the canal is of historical value. These hypocritical bastards have filled in most of the canals in Den Haag with sand and built on them already." After this decision the '86 deal was forgotten, the road was to go ahead and the money promised to the Blauwe had disappeared down the Den Haag redevelopment blackhole.

On January 12th this year, at a council meeting which ultimately sealed the decision to evict, there was a massive demonstration which ended in violence when the squatters were told the meeting was full (it was obviously not). The police, recalls almost every squatter in Den Haag, took pleasure in taunting the demonstrators and the temperature rose to the point where the police charged, the crowd lost its collective rag and the council offices were attacked. Several people were seriously injured, six were arrested and charged.

Mascha, a long-time Den Haag squatter and activist explained that this violence, or rather the media blah that followed, led to an instant turnaround in attitude towards the Blauwe. She hopes that supporters have not abandoned the building because of this but it clearly hammered morale. She is working on



The building, once a tax office, was squatted in December 1980 and named the Blauwe Aanslag, the Blue Attack, because tax office correspondence is blue.

The squatters have built living spaces for over 50 people and at least 200 others regularly use the place. Locals are welcomed to the cafe and garden, created by the squatters from scratch. Mart, who has lived at the

Five people work in the printshop earning "a bit more than on the dole," says Jan, who lived at the Blauwe for 10 years and helped start the printshop. Kees, who has worked with him for five years, explained that in the beginning everyone worked voluntarily but due to a growing number of customers and pressure from the dole who "tried to find a job for us" they decided to "make the job here then!". They are equipped with

another indication of the maturity of this squat that it has space, support and respect for this community.

By 1986 the Blauwe was sufficiently established to agree a four-stage plan with the city council. A fl1.5m (about £600,000) subsidy was promised to continue the work the squatters had begun and move towards legalisation. It seemed that the future of the building was assured.

building a case for those arrested on the January demo and, with a few others, has interviewed around 80 witnesses.

The Blauwe held a marathon two-day meeting in April to discuss what to do about the planned road. Opinion is divided. Some, like Jan in the print shop, feel there is a lot to lose from a no surrender position: "It is important for the city to have a place like this." He recognises that it is difficult to move people and all the initiatives that have taken place to another building but thinks that, "politically speaking the chances that we could stay here are so little that between getting evicted and getting nothing instead or accepting another building from the city I think I would choose the last option". Jan is not alone.

The Blauwe will get offered a deal and there are some who believe the community is more important than the building. Others cannot tolerate losing it, "not for more cars. That's the stupidest reason you can think of," says Den Haag squatter, Constantijn. Brigitte, who has worked in the printshop for two and half years, "fight to the death!". Another local, fired right up by a visit to Claremont Road No-M11 Campaign last summer, thinks the occupants of the Blauwe should learn to defend the place Claremont-stylee. There is still a long way to go, the council's plans could be two years coming but the meeting voted, in the first instance, to fight to the death.

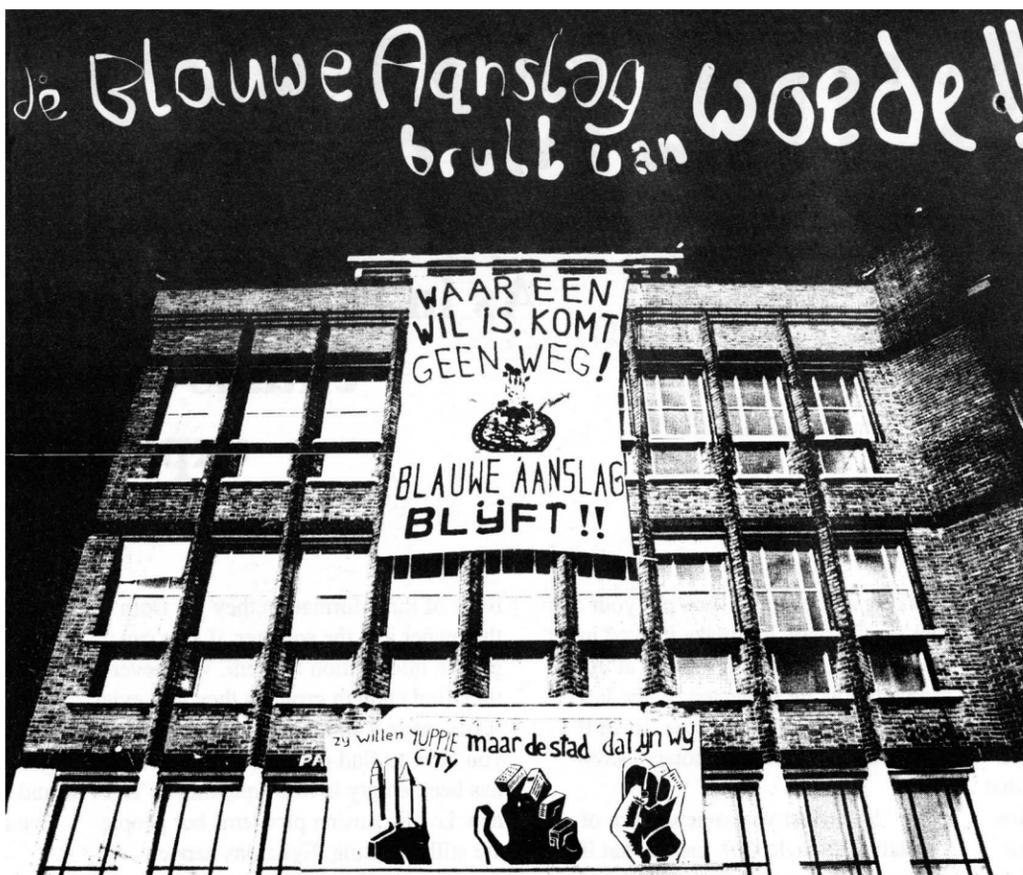
In Amsterdam there is a lot of support for the Blauwe and this decision will be very popular. People drinking in the Vrankryk bar in the centre of the capital said they will go to Den Haag and defend it. Some expressed a strong emotional link to the building, based on past battles, which they say they will never lose.

The Vrankryk is a loud, proud, brightly painted fortress. Squatted in 1984 it is known as a venue and centre of radicalism all over Holland. Paula, gay and lesbian activist amongst other things (including radical drag-queen and member of the Sissy Singers), has lived in the building for a year. He lived in a number of squats, including the Kolk, before moving to the Vrankryk which is currently home to around 18 people.

Downstairs is a venue and a classic squat cafe/bar which opens everyday from 10pm till 2am and later, when there is a gig. Paula explained the organisation of the building: "The venue is for everybody in the city.... we decided that it is better that not everybody who lived upstairs is involved downstairs, otherwise this house becomes like a central committee."

Diversity is a key: "There are people living here who don't come from the squatters' movement, they come from the gay and lesbian movement, the anti-nuclear movement, any movement!" Everyone who lives in the house is political in some way. "That's the first question we ask when somebody wants to live here, whether they are active in some kind of political way. We don't really mind in what way.... well we do.... we don't want party politics or 57 varieties of Trotskists." Current activists include safe sex campaigners and people who find safe-houses for people on the run from psychiatric institutions.

Last year saw two major events at the Vrankryk. Firstly, the squat was married to an attractive, like-minded building over the road. Two huge gold



rings hang in a tree in the street separating them as a reminder of the wedding ceremony which was "beautiful" remembers Paula. Secondly, they bought the building for fl250,000 (about £90,000, ie peanuts: the land is worth millions). Paula believes this was achieved because the building is so established: "The owner didn't really know what was going on. When he found out how many people come here and do stuff I think he was a bit frightened."

The Vrankryk has made extensive common-sense efforts to negotiate over the years with its neighbours. They have agreed only to have loud, late gigs once every few weeks, they close the bar at 2am and, said Paula, "tell people if they want to shout outside they can do it at home." Such respect and practicality is an obvious aid in the negotiating process. "I can't understand not giving the windows a paint job if they need it and it just makes sense to put your garbage out when everyone else does, not throw it in the garden. Freedom doesn't consist of 'I can play my music as loud as I want to'."

They raised the money to buy the place, partially from the bank. Similarly to the Blauwe, they now pay rent according to what they can afford. Someone on benefits pays about £100 a month, including electricity. If you earn you pay more, if you have nothing you pay nothing.

The squatters bought only the upstairs living space. Downstairs was 're-squatted' and it will, of course, only be evicted if the current owners start proceedings. All events held in the venue are benefits for action groups. The space is also used for meetings, everything from anti-fascists to Queers in Space (a day cafe for gay and lesbian info and chats).

These big squats work, it seems, because they exist for, and 'belong' to, as many different groups as want to use them. The Binnenpret, 15 minutes cycle ride from the Vrankryk, is used by 13 different groups. Each is organised individually but remains part of the cooperative which meets regularly.

Following three years of negotiations, the Binnenpret was legalised last year. Meyndert, one of the building's elder squatters, believes this was possible because, "the Binnenpret is a kind of octopus: because we have so many organisations we have a lot of different contacts everywhere in the city. We are grounded to the neighbourhood." The building has rehearsal space for

children's theatre companies; a studio and rehearsal space for bands; a restaurant and coffee shop; an art studio; bicycle workshop; a venue and, of course, the stunningly chilled sauna which Squall spent a few hours in, for purely research purposes of course.

Sitting steaming in the Turkish Bath, waiting for a few oranges to be freshly squeezed for you, it takes an imaginative leap to picture a few nervous squatters breaking into this building one night 11 years ago. They took their chance to create this place where, whatever its legal status, there pervades a feeling that you are somewhere else, somewhere where physical and psychological well-being are a priority, somewhere far away from the expensive, tourist-trap ridden city centre just across the Vondelpark.

As the temperature in the bath rises and an ice cold dip, and perhaps another orange juice, are called for, a personal debate is forced for a visiting English squatter about what we actually want from squatting. In the first instance what we want is, presumably, affordable housing and a sense of community. Something else happens though; along with the on-the-edge, radical squatters life comes a taste for the on-the-edge,

radical squatters life. At the Binnenpret and the Vrankryk there was no sense that negotiations have led to a compromise or change of direction for the squats. They do what they want to do and learn to work neighbourhood structures; a key to legalisation or buying your squat. It is clear that this process does not water down radicalism, it strengthens communities, gives them security and allows people to plan and achieve long-term projects.

Legalisation or negotiating is no longer a straight-forward process in Holland and it does not guarantee permanent stability (as the current situation at the Blauwe clearly demonstrates) which is why more squatters are attempting to buy their buildings. The more local support a squat has and the more impressive working initiatives, the more chance it has of achieving and retaining legalised status

In this country local authorities do not have nearly as much practice at negotiating with squatters. They don't like to do it and it is down to squatters to push for negotiations. Pushing means creating something to bargain with, building local support, achieving goals. Past experiences of hard work and big plans dashed by impenetrable prejudice against squatters by local authorities and property owners is naturally less than inspirational for squatters contemplating negotiations. Nonetheless directives on community initiatives for local authorities, like Agenda 21 which came out of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, are, regardless of their enforceability or substance, places to make the push.

By gaining legitimacy these Dutch squatters have won game, set and match. They started off as stigmatised as any squatters and through clear vision, common sense and hard work they've turned it around so that their local authorities have effectively sanctioned squatting as a valid way of people taking control of their housing and community needs.



WHATS THE KRAAK?

As in the UK, squatting in Holland entails knowing the law and exploring the loopholes.

Dutch squatting law has developed from before 1987 when an owner could not take you to court unless he knew your name.

“They changed that law in ‘87 and made it possible to get you in court anonymously and everybody thought that would be the end of squatting,” explains Tijn, who has squatted in Den Haag for seven years. In Dutch law, “you are protected in the privacy of your own home. As soon as you go into a house that is empty, you don’t get caught

breaking and entering, you put your own lock on the door and make it lived in; at least a table, a bed and a chair, at that moment you are protected by the law. No-one can enter your home. Even if you’re out it’s still your home,” says Tijn.

Since last year a new piece of legislation, Article 429, means that if an owner can prove that a building has not been empty for 12 months, squatters can be evicted immediately. In this instance the police decide whether to evict on the

basis of the information they get from the owner and the squatter, if s/he can get the information to them. Whenever they find enough grounds they will evict. It has made it more difficult to squat as you have to find out how long a house has been empty before squatting it. The new law is causing problems but people are still squatting. Evictions happen quickly.

“Most of the time if you’re in there for three weeks the letters start coming in,” says Tijn.

Aleis, has been trying to find a big squat in Amsterdam to run with 15 others for over a year: “Now we just have this small house because we were so tired. You can’t just jump around going from big house to big house, squat and evict, squat and evict. We have to live as well.”

When the police show up to evict under 429, Tijn says, “they show you a paper and say they have the right to enter and ask you three times to leave of your own accord. If you don’t they can evict you using any necessary means”. No warning. No court case.

How the law will work is still very vague. Tijn noted that in current test cases people are appealing against evictions in order to ascertain how the law should be interpreted: “Can it be applied when the owner comes to get his mail once every eleven months? Is that enough for them to say this house has not been empty for a year? Do you as a squatter have to prove that the house has been empty for a year or is it up to the owner to prove that it hasn’t?” It seems that each city is enforcing the law differently.

In Den Haag, Constantijn spends most of his time squatting buildings for other people or carrying out building work on places he has already squatted: “That’s the whole point. People are homeless or they have to get out of their house and I have the tools and the knowledge.” He had been working on sound-proofing a new squatted venue: “There’s a little less time to squat. But if people are desperate to get a home and they know a place I’ll go and squat”.

A squatted petrol station in Den Haag was the 1am meeting point for a squat-breaking mission. Jeroen was facing rent arrears and extortionate eviction costs if he was not out by the end of the week. Constantijn took us all to the prospective building: “It’s been empty for about three years so it’s ideal to squat.” About ten people had gathered to help. Constantijn kept nipping out to see if the upstairs neighbours had gone to sleep. Every time he came back he said we had to wait a bit longer, they had friends round, the front windows were open and it was too risky.

Marije lives in the petrol station and has been squatting for three years. The place is a squat-punk’s dream. “Take as many pictures as you like,” she announced as she sat proudly in an armchair in a room too much the cult-punk-movie set to be true. Fur-lined walls, Sex Pistols memorabilia and a car parked up as her bed.

After a couple of hours the neighbours were still up and Constantijn asked should they play it safe and wait till another night or risk it tonight? They decided to wait. Calling for chips and beer, Constantijn put his customised car jack back in his



Back in the Garage.

bag.

This ingenious implement could well knock the crow bar off its long established spot as top squatter's tool. Tijn explains: "Crowbars can wake the neighbours up but this is really subtle. You use the hydraulic power of the jack to force the door. Basically you can open any door. You take off the part that goes on the car and make a scoop. The scoop goes around the doorpost. The other part pushes in the door and as soon as enough tension has built up, the door opens without too much damage."

Constantijn has been squatting all over Holland for 13 years. He says that despite the Den Haag police force's reputation as the "heaviest police in the country" (because the royals live there), the squatting scene in Den Haag is much more relaxed than in other Dutch cities, "just go in and do it right and the police are very relaxed".

Attitudes to the police were generally surprising. At the Vrankryk it became clear that here, and perhaps elsewhere in Holland, there was no violence-non-violence debate, certainly not to the degree that it has dominated demonstrations in this country.

Paula gave me the feeling that in Holland it is accepted, perhaps prompted by a history of heavy policing and militant solidarity, that life is very complicated and that every situation demands what it demands.

He relates a survival story: "One time, after a demo, we had scaffolding outside for the house to be painted. The police tried to climb the scaffolding and there was nothing else handy so the fire extinguishers had to go. They were sort of impressed by that. It's a basic rule in the house. The police don't come in whatever. Sometimes it is smarter not to use violence, but they don't come in."

These are not nutters out for a kicking, they are thoughtful, dedicated squatters who believe that being willing to hold your ground allows a stand-off long enough for you to prove that you have something to offer as a community, that you don't merely want to take. If the fire extinguishers hadn't gone out of the window there would, very possibly, be no Vrankryk.

When a building is so large, so apparently 'hard-core' and strong that poses a serious threat to the establishment then state force will be brought to bear. In a different time and place perhaps passive resistance would have worked for them, gained them support in the community and in the media and led to negotiation that violence could have negated. But, sitting in the Vrankryk bar listening to old friends remembering the strength they had shared in defending their squat, it was evident they had merely done what each situation demanded.

Apparently in opposition to this is the common practice in Holland of contacting police when you squat a building.

Tijn: "We call the police ourselves. Otherwise you're just waiting for them. You say we have taken this empty space as our living space and make a note of who you spoke to so they can't deny you have reported it." Constantijn agrees: "I don't care about the police. After I've squatted a place I just ring them up and I'm friendly. I don't want to be the same as them. I'm different, that's what I want to be. I don't care what they think. So, just be friendly. I can be aggressive but then maybe I'll get kicked out or have problems with them. No, just hello, good morning."

Constantijn even noted that one squat was a tip off from the police: "It was about six months ago, they just drove by and said if you want to squat something tonight.... and gave us the address." Community policing or what!

Obviously police and owners will always evict if they can. "They try to

"It's a basic rule in the house. The police don't come in whatever. Sometimes it is smarter not to use violence but they don't come in."

intimidate you", says Constantijn. The police commonly cite safety as a reason for eviction. Marije was once evicted because the house did not have water and the police claimed this was a fire risk: "They wouldn't give us water and then they said we have to evict you because you don't have water." Constantijn remembers getting evicted, "because my bed wasn't a bed, it was a thin piece of cloth on the floor and they said that's not a bed!"

Tijn lives in a squat that had been empty for 12 years. It was squatted and evicted quickly seven times before Tijn moved in three and a half years ago. Since then the owner has tried three illegal evictions: "He tried to ram the door down with a sledgehammer. We barricaded it so he couldn't get in but the third time I was out for coffee and came back and he was already in."

Tijn had to fight with the owner and face out some heavies he had brought with him. "I went away and called the alarm and a lot of people showed up. The cops as well." Because Tijn had called the police when he moved in they had already registered it as being squatted: "As there were a lot of people there they had to apply the law which is that this owner has no right to break into my private home. So they arrested him."

This owner had bought the property in auction, secured the eviction of the tenants by saying he intended to live there and then left it empty for 12 years.

Squats are frequently barricaded in defence against evictions. Barricading, explained Oscar and Paula in the Vrankryk, can lead to the police having to evict through the roof. The Bratra, the Breaking and Tear Gas Unit, are used in these cases. When a house is secure downstairs they use a three-sided crane, drills and chainsaws to come through the roof.

Oscar believes, "they admire a good barricade. You can have a conversation with them. A professional understanding." Constantijn thinks you have to decide each time whether a building can be defended. "It depends on the building and the people living there. There's a squat over the road, a small place and the guy living there doesn't like violence so that will be evicted very quietly." But at the Blauwe: "It's been here 14 years and they're evicting it for more cars. So OK. Let's barricade. Come and get us out!"

Dutch squatters have another variable to deal with: the scourge of the anti-squatters. There are five private anti-squat agencies in Holland. Owners use the agencies to find people, often students, to live in their empty buildings and prevent them being squatted.

Feelings run high about anti-squatters. Walter, barman at the

Vrankryk, said: "If anti-squatting happens in London smash it when it starts. We let it happen here. Don't take that." He pointed out that a school over the road from the Vrankryk has five anti-squatters living in 30 peoples' living space.

Some anti-squatters just pay water, gas and electricity, they have no rental rights. Constantijn explained that, "You have to be introduced by another anti-squatter. I can understand it.... if you need a home you can get one like that. It sounds like it's safer to go anti-squat than to squat but that's really naive because when the owner says get out you have to get out."

He feels that anti-squatters can "do what they like but I think they have to know what they are doing. They trick people into living like that." Ever optimistic Constantijn does not see anti-squatting as a real threat to squatters: "I don't care about anti-squatters. I just carry on. If I have the chance I would talk to them. I don't believe every anti-squatter is an anti-social bastard. That's like one squatter is bad so every squatter is bad. There are people who really need a home and get introduced to it by other anti-squatters."

This squatter is quite clear how he wants to live: "I want to live in a squat because it's a good way to live. You can try to legalise it if you want, you can build it up, you can shape it anyway you like. It's where the revolution starts!"

He believes that squatting is important because it gives people direct control over the way they live. "You don't have to live without electricity or water or heating. The house where I live, we painted it, we put in a central

heating system. There's new gas, water, electricity in it. We made a garden and the roof's been fixed. I've lived there for a year now and it looks like it has been bought by very rich people! It's great".

Because of the pragmatism and ingenuity they ooze, because they are on top of current legislation, because they strive to be well informed these squatters were inspiring. They inspired a sense that no legislation has the power to silence the scream of outrage at the obscenity of property speculation in the face of homelessness.

If this attitude was exported to this country, squatters would simply rise to legislation contained in the CJA. No-one knows the business of squatting better than squatters and, armed with accurate information, with the help of friendly lawyers, they will find the loopholes in this palpably unworkable law.

The last word belongs to Meyndert at the Binnenpret who is waiting for the next "top of the wave":

"There's a new fight coming, a new kind of revolution. I see the '60s as a revolution, but I feel there is a level where people are organising themselves better now.... There's always been squatting and there will be as long as it's not a real right that everybody has a place to live, and there are places standing empty. It belongs to human nature like if somebody is hungry and he doesn't have money he will find food otherwise he will die. From the moment there were three houses and one of them was empty it was squatted."



Get out of our house: Painting of Jacob Leuchter, Dutch property speculator, tax-exile and sworn enemy of squatters, being kept at bay on an Amsterdam squat he owns and has failed to evict several times.

KRAAKING INFO

One reason why the squatting movement in Holland has endured for so long is that they have paid attention to their own media.

Under Dutch law a building must be empty for 12 months before it can be squatted. Thus, it is essential that squatters are tooled up with information.

SPOK (Speculation Research Kollektiv), in Amsterdam, conducts research into the Chamber of Commerce and property and real estate owners to help tenants and squatters find out about landlords and owners. The collective has published a book on researching owners, procedures against building plans and how to deal with the media.

Oscar from SPOK told me that the Collective recently discovered that an eviction which used an old local anti-squatting law was illegal so it was re-squatted with the 'blessing' of the police. He works 20 hours a week for SPOK and started when he moved into a squat himself and went to SPOK to find out who the owner was. "They told me I had to go to the Chamber of Commerce and I started the trail to find information."

The organisation has been running for 16 years and now has eight voluntary staff. They are currently investigating Jacob Leuchter, the mortal enemy of Dutch squatters. He is now a tax exile in Spain, but still owns the squat that was married to the Vrankryk last year (see 'Kraaking the System'). "He has said in interviews that evicting squatters is a main goal in his life," says Paula at the Vrankryk. He has attempted to evict the building eight times already but has failed every time. According to Paula this is "because he is a total fraud, everyone knows that. Even the judge".

SPOK have investigated his claims that he has sold the building to a company which demands vacant possession. The company, it would appear, is (allegedly) owned by Mrs Leuchter. SPOK have also discovered some other best-not-

mentioned-here dodgy connections concerning Mr Leuchter which lead them to be fairly confident about quashing his latest eviction attempt.

SPOK gets some money from the Amsterdam squatters' fund. Squatters (not all squatters Paula was quick to point out) miraculously donate fl5 a month to the fund which is used for SPOK, the bi-weekly squatters' newspaper, actions, and a police and secret service research group.

Squatters' information is classified according to area in Amsterdam. "The city is divided into about four parts, each has a group responsible for squatting there. Every week there is an information hour for each area at the Westmarkt", explains Paula. Sunday is traditionally squatting day in Amsterdam because "there are not so many people on the streets and usually people don't have anything to do so it's easier to get lots of people there".

Tijn runs Kraakspreekuis (a squatters' information network) in Den Haag. He regularly helps people to squat but feels very strongly about squatters gathering information before they squat: "Personally I will only go along with squatting if they do the research." He believes that it is even more important to know who owns a building than how long it has been empty simply so that you know who you are dealing with.

"Kraakspreekuis is not for people who already live in squats, it's more an opening for people to get involved or get information." He is honest with people: "I tell them that squatting is not a very easy thing and that it brings along a lot of uncertainties; in fact it is all uncertain."

Tijn is also called upon to find places for street-sleepers: "Homeless people in Den Haag are mostly alcoholics, heroin addicts, or psychiatric patients who've been kicked onto the streets.

Some of the institutions that cannot help them send them over to the squatters' information. Even the council sends them over. They just want to get rid of them that's all."

One organisation sends young people who have housing problems to Tijn and if their problems are primarily housing-related then he is happy to help.

Marcel is the author of three black books on police behaviour towards squatters. He started by documenting ten complaints about illegal evictions: "I've written down what the police should have done legally and what happened really." Marcel's interest in the law came through squatting and he is now studying law in Den Haag: "Some people say forget about the law but I think it doesn't bite to know about your legal rights."

When he started squatting Marcel says, "I didn't want anything to do with the squatting scene. I didn't have any real political interest; in an ideological way yes, but not practical. I lived with an artist who needed a place to exhibit his sculptures so we squatted a very big building in the centre of Den Haag. We thought it was quite small and we came in and it was so huge we realised we couldn't keep this for ourselves."

That was 18 months ago. He is now writing a fourth black book about police behaviour on the January demonstration at the eviction of the Blauwe, which ended in violence and arrests (see 'Kraaking the System').

Den Haag has a monthly squatters' magazine called Schijn Beweging which means selling a dummy (as in football). In Amsterdam a fortnightly paper gives news of squats and actions across the capital.

Both cities also have a number of pirate radio stations. Mart works for Radio

Tonka in Den Haag which has been broadcasting seven days a week for over a year. Situated in a former squat, Radio Tonka has had little trouble from either the police or the radio control service.

Tapes for programmes are recorded in a nearby 'studio' so that the best gear is safe from raids. Mart broadcasts a one hour jungle music programme on Thursday and also works on a punk and hardcore programme which includes squatting information. The station also broadcasts programmes about theatre, music, philosophy, artists. There are political programmes which give news about the city as well as about housing and squatting. There's an information show every Sunday: "If there is any news that's really important we just pop it in," says Matt.

As for the mainstream media, Meyndert from the Binnenpret in Amsterdam suspects a "gentlemen's agreement between local and national government), the royal family and the press that they really calm things down and don't write too much about squatting". He believes this stems from a fear of repeating blanket press coverage of radical action in the early 80s following the crowning of Queen Beatrix. This ended with full-on battles between squatters, the police and the army, with extensive barricading and tanks on the streets.

Now, he says: "It's in between the lines that squatting is over and all squatters have become journalists or designers and they've lost their wild hair. In part it is true. People who made actions in the '80s are 35 or older now." But the press, he says, ignore new squatters too: "They ignore those who are active, who are squatting or people who are in the environmental movement. They try to kill it before it becomes anything by ignoring it." He believes that squatters and activists must be on top of the press: "In an eviction [squatters] are very busy and it's quite emotional because you're losing your house again and the vision of those being evicted is never clearly given in the press." So it is important "if you're doing an action to give a press release then they know your vision as well".

Younger Dutch squatters are clearly on the media case, producing their own and watching the mainstream. Mart is back at college doing a media studies course: "I want to learn about media and media control. I think the media is the most powerful thing there is right now. It's what we've got to concentrate on as a scene. It's a fantasy in my head that we're not running behind the items and the facts but we're making the facts."



Den Haag pirate radio station. Mart, at the controls of Radio Tonka (named after the toy "because you can't destroy it") during the transmission of his one hour Thursday night jungle programme.

To Do the Right Thing

**Andy Johnson interviews Chris Cole;
a man who takes hammers to fighter-planes.**

“And he will certainly render judgement among the nations and set matters straight respecting many peoples. And they will have to beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore.”

Isaiah Chapter 2, verse 4

“Her Majesty’s prison service serves the public by keeping in custody those committed by the courts. Our duty is to look after them with humanity and to help them lead law-abiding and useful lives after their release.”

Notice outside British Prisons

When prison warders at Pentonville ask inmate Chris Cole why he receives so much post he replies it’s because he’s a political prisoner. He means it.

In January 1993, Chris evaded security at a British Aerospace base in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, and took a hammer to £100,000 worth of missile and military aircraft nose cones. Their design is so sensitive that a dent, applied with a hammer, is enough to render them useless. For this act of disarmament, carried out as part of the wider Swords into Ploughshares peace movement, Chris spent six months in Bedford prison.

BAe had had enough of Chris by then. They obtained an injunction forbidding him to enter BAe property or incite others to trespass. They were right to think that a man of such principle would not be deterred by prison. But wrong to think that the campaign was made of one man and would go quiet if he were locked up.

In November last year, Chris took part in a peaceful demonstration in the car park of the same Stevenage factory. Although he did not even enter the site, BAE invoked their injunction and pushed for a prison sentence. So, in April, Chris began a six month sentence for contempt of court at Pentonville. He shares an approximately 10 by 8 feet cell with one other person, 23 hours a day. Sometimes at weekends, when staffing levels are low, he is locked up for 24 hours.

“I don’t see myself as breaking the law,” he told Squall, who visited him in Pentonville. “I’m upholding it. British Aerospace are killing people and I’m trying to stop it.”

Chris argued this in court when he was tried for the nose cone incident and won a hung jury. At the second trial, BAe wheeled in an expert on criminal law; Chris was found guilty and

sentenced to eight months imprisonment. Having already served six on remand, however, he was released immediately.

“I think you have to do something when you look at the state of the world,” he says. “The main cause is militarism, which keeps the world the way it is. Britain is one of the major military nations and we have a responsibility to work against that.”

The protest last November was to mark the third anniversary of a massacre at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, East Timor. The Indonesian army, who invaded their East Timor neighbour in 1975, shot 528 people dead as they protested peacefully against the occupation.

The massacre was captured on film by a British cameraman. If he had been caught with the footage he would have been killed. As it was, the film was smuggled out of the country, providing rare documentary evidence of the arbitrary genocide handed out to the East Timorese.

It is estimated that since the invasion, 200,000 people - a third of the entire population, have been killed through war-related disease - starvation and massacre.

British Aerospace first sold Hawk ground attack aircraft to Indonesia in 1978. On the same day, in 1991, that a US press report put the number of dead or “disappeared” at 5,000 in a single province of East Timor, BAe signed a co-production deal with Indonesia.

In 1993 BAe also signed a \$750 million deal to supply Indonesia with 24 Hawk aircraft. Hawk ground attack aircraft have been implicated in the bombing of civilian areas in East Timor.

“British Aerospace are very bloody-minded,” says Chris, acknowledging the pun. “They keep insisting they want to be the number one arms company in the world. They are not looking at diversification. In fact, they are currently bidding for the Trident nuclear missile manufacturers, VSEL.”

A few years ago Chris, along with other activists, was invited to meet some of BAe’s directors. Chris says that after an hour or so one of the directors admitted that people who worked at BAe did have a problem with what they were doing. “But he said: ‘In our game you have to leave conscience at the door,’” recounts Chris. “That appalled me.”

After leaving school Chris began working as a junior clerk with the Catholic aid agency Cafod. He was brought up a Catholic and is still a practising Christian. It was at Cafod, he says, that he began to see the links between the arms industry and poverty in the third world.

“Before then I’d known a lot of Christians, but their Christianity was very hypocritical,” he says. “At Cafod people were acting for justice. They lived what they believed. I learnt so much there. People from third world countries would come and talk to the staff. I met people who had seen

oppression. I began to see the links between militarism and how we use weapons to keep the status quo, to keep the poor poor.”

Chris left Cafod and came to the peace movement and civil disobedience. After spending some time in a Christian community, he met up with people from the Ploughshares campaign. A chance reading of an article about BAe sparked his interest in the weapons manufacturers.

“I decided it was something I should work on,” he says. “Not on my own, there was a small group of about ten of us. We started leafleting their factories up and down the country. After a while I realised that what we were doing wasn’t enough. We had to go a stage further, move from protest to resistance where, in a symbolic way, we put ourselves between the war and the victims. It was a gradual process of becoming aware of that and coming to terms with the fact that I would have to go to prison.”

Despite his conditions, Chris is sanguine about prison. He describes it as “tolerable” and himself as “a bit of an old lag”.

As well as his current sentence, and his time for turning nose cones into golf balls, he spent three days in Pentonville in 1991 for digging a grave in the grounds of the Ministry of Defence. In Chris’s case prison is certainly not having the deterring effect it was designed to do. Chris had also breached his injunction in January this year when he took part in, and wrote a briefing for, a mass trespass at the military aircraft division of BAe in Warton, Lancashire. This was the day after he and four others (the Warton four) were acquitted of “possessing items with intent to cause criminal damage” the previous February. They had been caught in possession of a can of red paint, and paintbrushes, in the vicinity of the Warton factory.

The trial had taken 11 months to come to court and collapsed because of lack of evidence. Their intended action had occurred after BAe’s injunction came into force. So when he carried out the nose cone disarmament he knew it would result in prison.

“There was no question of me doing it and then escaping,” he says. “I wanted to explain why I did it and communicate with them. I was very nervous, obviously, although there was no danger of an explosion. But I didn’t know how the security guards would react. They were fine however, they know me, they have photographs of me and the others.”

When Chris carried out this action, he did so wearing a white lab coat. On the back was written ‘BAe bomb disposal’.

“When you resist you have to contemplate the idea of going to prison,” he continues. “The laws as they stand are designed to protect the status quo. If you challenge the status quo you are going to come up against the law.”

“One of our problems is our fear

of prison. That fear keeps us in line - very subtly. I don’t think it’s something we should be afraid of. It’s survivable, tolerable. There isn’t a lot to be afraid of.”

He is keen to stress, however, that he doesn’t think everybody should go to prison. He points out that he has a lot of outside support and the volume of letters he receives from well-wishers is essential for his morale.

“The letters are important,” he says. “You can’t do this on your own. But it’s something to think about.”

Chris’s inspiration, and that of the Ploughshares movement, derives from Isaiah’s prophecy concerning judgement among the nations and matters being set straight. Chris explains that Ploughshares developed in America in 1980 when anti-war activists (some of whom had protested against Vietnam) and Christians came together and studied this passage.

“They discovered that disarmament wasn’t going to come about by governments,” he explains, “that they would have to do it themselves. They went onto a base and disarmed an MX nuclear missile by smashing its nose cone.”

Since then there have been at least 50 other actions world-wide, ranging from disarming nuclear missiles to a Swedish conscript taking a hammer to his rifle. Prison sentences have ranged from three days to 18 years; all for non-violent protests.

“Lots and lots of people have been to prison,” he says. “Particularly with Trident. So my action was part of that history, but also part of the wider anti-arms movement.”

When Chris asked the judge how long the injunction applied for, the reply was “forever”. But he says he will continue when he is released, despite the fact that any further breaches of the injunction will almost certainly result in harsher penalties.

“I fully expect the movement to grow,” he says. “Particularly if BAe buy VSEL. That will bring in a lot of Trident campaigners. My Christianity gives me a moral basis on which to act.... that all life is sacred. BAe have taken this injunction out on me, but I have a biblical injunction to act for peace. The bible says very clearly ‘Thou shalt not kill’. But through BAe and the arms race we are killing. We can’t just say the arms industry is nothing to do with us. If we stand by we are just as guilty.”

Chris will be released from this particular prison stretch on July 17th. But given the fervency of his conscience it is quite likely it won’t be his last incarceration at her majesty’s pleasure.

Ploughshares Support Network
Box X, 111 Magdalen Rd, Oxford OX4.

Stop the Hawks Deal
One World Centre, 6, Mount St,
Manchester M2 5NS

Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT)
11 Goodwin St, London N4. Tel: 0171 281 0297

50th Anniversaries and all that

Battle of Britain, Pearl Harbour, D Day, VE Day, VJ Day; 50th anniversaries - doncha just love 'em? At least there will be an improvement this autumn, when Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be remembered in marches and other sane and purposeful actions. But shouldn't we also be celebrating another history, especially when it's so relevant to today's struggles? What history is that then? Squatting activist *Jim Paton* looks at the post war squatting movement and finds some dates worth remembering.

Maybe we can't quite compare the 40's squatting movement with 1381 or 1649, because the population was a lot smaller then. But certainly 1945-50 saw a bigger squatting movement than in 1906, 1919, the 1960s or even the late 70's or mid 80's. In the 40's people started taking over in numbers we've only dreamt about - and scaring the government shitless. Here's some dates - some hidden history worth commemorating - for you diary:

29th June 1945. Phase 1: The Vigilantes

Down in Brighton, VE Day was celebrated with some serious planning. A few weeks later, a merry scrunching of crowbars announced the occupation by homeless people of dozens of hotels and big houses being kept empty for post-war summer visitors. "Vigilantes" seems a strange name nowadays. I think the idea was that they were vigilantly scouring the streets for empty places and opening them, not letting a single home go unused. They were otherwise known as "The Secret Committee of Ex-Servicemen". By the beginning of July there were 1,000 people squatting in Brighton alone and the movement was spreading to towns all along the south coast as well as to Essex, Birmingham, London and Liverpool. There was a huge public meeting in Brighton on July 8th and others elsewhere, lots of public support and massive press coverage. Churchill persuaded the press to stop mentioning what was happening - he reckoned it was spreading the idea - introduced requisitioning powers (but not duties) for councils to take over empty property and made anti-squatting propaganda part of his campaign in the 1945 election (which resulted in the biggest ever Tory wipeout).

The vigilantes included anarchists with experience of anti-fascist and other struggles in the 30's. They didn't bother much with conventional politics or lobbying. There was still very little council housing and their campaign was mainly against private landlords. They demanded that privately-owned empties be taken over for immediate use by homeless people. Their way of making the demand was to do exactly that! This phase of the campaign may have been brief, but it struck a chord that lasted. I never heard of the camp squatters or the big London actions when I was a kid, but I do remember being warned to watch out for nasty Vigilantes. And that was in Clydebank five or six years later! They definitely ranked with Catholics and people who went in pubs as threats to us decent folk who paid our way and took regular baths.

8th May 1946.

Phase 2: The Camp Squatters

This actually kicked off on the first anniversary of VE day, but it's unlikely it was planned that way. Things had gone a bit quiet on the squatting front for a few months. People were waiting to see what the new Labour government would do and what use would be made of Churchill's requisitioning powers. It was soon clear the answer to both was "not a lot". Meantime, thousands were homeless in a housing crisis so vast that it was on a similar scale to the one we have now.

There was, at least initially, no planning and no politics involved in this. All over the country there were

repress - though they tried.

Life in the camps had to be improvised and communal. The "community spirit" and co-operation of the war years (which Major dribbles on about, but it's the likes of us who actually practice) was well the fore, as people organised water, furniture, food and child care. Refusal of registration for rationing was a means of harassment unfamiliar to us which they had to overcome. There were lots of children - I wish I'd been one of them.

Eventually, just as in the 60's and early 70's, the state had to give in and try to absorb and co-opt the movement. Councils started to organise "methodical squatting". This was exactly the same as the short-life licensing of more recent times. By 1947, "OK, we'll let you live here after all - as long as we're in charge", had become the line adopted by most bureaucrats. So, most squatters got to stay for several years before eventually being rehoused. Councils also started to use the camps themselves for "official" short-term housing, moving in thousands more people. The last of the camps was not closed until 1961. In Oxfordshire, over a hundred families from the original 1946 occupations were determined to stay together and were eventually housed in the new village of Berinsfield in 1959. Colin Ward's book (see below) quotes a telling description by a social worker of the difference between the "sheep" (the "official" squatters), who sat around freezing in squalor, waiting for the council to put glass in the windows, and the "goats" (the original

squatters) who just blagged materials, applied ingenuity, sorted things themselves. As a result, they lived much more comfortably, as well as collectively, and had a more constructive outlook.

9th September 1946.

Phase 3: The London Spectaculars, Squatting The Rich

There was some camp squatting in London, mainly in east and outer London, but the opportunities were fewer and the camps smaller than in other places. London's turn came later.

Two o'clock on a humdrum Sunday afternoon, in a tightly organised operation, squatters seized Duchess of Bedford House, a luxury block of 150 flats in Kensington. Within 10 minutes over 1,000 people were inside, including 400 families, complete with bedding, water and food. Later that day a further 500 people took over a similar block in Marylebone, as well as big houses in Holland Park, Campden Hill and upper Philimore Gardens. On Monday, it was a second block in Marylebone and on Tuesday about 200 people took Fountain Court, another luxury block in Pimlico. Wednesday saw two very big blocks done: Abbey Lodge near Regents Park and the 630-room Ivanhoe Hotel in Bloomsbury (now renamed "The Marlborough").

redundant army and air force camps, with Nissen huts and other accommodation which was less than brilliant, but a lot better than conditions many people were having to live in. It was Mr and Mrs Fielding from Scunthorpe who finally got fed up and did the obvious thing. They moved into the officer's mess of their local disused anti-aircraft battery with their children. Their friends joined them. Others heard about it and came along too. Two other local camps were taken over and the movement spread, first to Sheffield and then to virtually everywhere in England, Scotland and Wales. An organisation was formed: The Squatter's Protection Society. By September, the government reckoned there were 45,000 people squatting in 1,100 camps, but this had to be wrong. It works out to about 40 people per camp, but most occupations were by one or two hundred people at least and some, like the famous "squat city" in Bristol, were nearly a thousand strong. Other places started being taken over; schools, hotels, even a greyhound stadium, and the movement kept on growing.

Of course there were some evictions, but most eviction attempts seem to have failed. Time after time council workers and even police refused to carry them off, or were seen off by sheer force of numbers (which meant a lot more than 40 people!). The government was in a tizzy. That great socialist orator and supposed tribune of the people, Nye Bevan, and others could only trot out the familiar crap about people "jumping the housing queue". It was just too big and too energetic to



Initially the police were influenced by the ethos of the camp squats and made themselves useful, even organising a tea van at Duchess of Bedford House. But the atmosphere soon became repressive. This was (or was presented as) a much harder-edged political squatting campaign than its predecessors. There were specific demands that councils use their requisitioning powers to make these buildings available for homeless people. They had mostly become empty when the bombing started, as their rich occupiers fled to country retreats. Since Kensington, Regents Park etc. weren't exactly the centre of the blitzkrieg (unlike the East End) the government had used them for offices and crash pads for generals. Now they were about to revert to occupation by wealthy people who could pay up to £15 per week for leases. Some of the original organisers were activists in the Communist Party (CP), and the CP and their paper, *The Daily Worker*, vigorously supported the actions, making a major campaign of it. Although a minority party, the CP was strong enough then to get occasional MPs elected, as well as many councillors in working class areas. Ironically, it had denounced the Vigilantes the previous year.

The government organised an offensive on three fronts. A propaganda campaign combined the usual anti-squatting distortions with "red menace" rhetoric. The *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* (which had been rooting for the British Union of Fascists 10 years previously) ran familiar hate and lie campaigns, causing padlocks to be sold out in the suburbs as credulous people believed their homes were about to be "stolen by communists". Police leave was cancelled and cordons were set up around the squatted blocks to prevent new people joining and to keep food and other supplies from being taken in, whilst the electricity was cut off.

On Saturday 14th September, a huge rally in Leicester Square, followed by a march, supported the squatters and the demands made by the CP. Later that day, the government's legal moves became clear as five CP "ringleaders" were arrested and charged with "conspiring and inciting trespass" (they were later bound over). Finally, High Court injunctions were obtained against the squatters and they subsequently left voluntarily in a "general evacuation" on Friday 20th September. There were no actual evictions. The squatters mostly went to a "rest centre" organised by the London City Council, from where they were eventually rehoused.

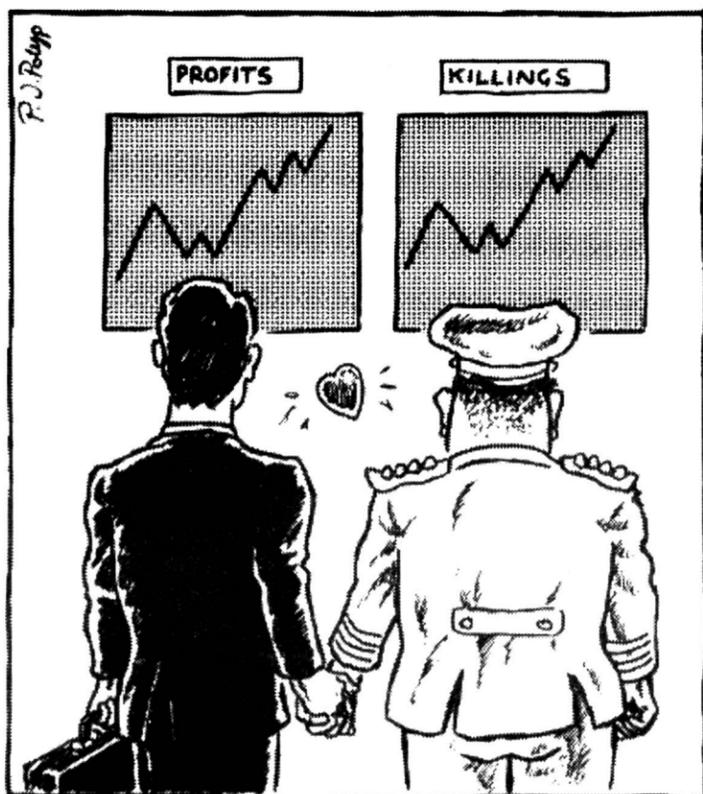
The role and tactics of the CP have been controversial ever since, and both Colin Ward and Andrew Friend (see below) have interesting observations on this. Although the CP was prominent, these actions were certainly much more than the "CP stunt" they have sometimes been presented as. Most people involved had nothing to do with the CP, and the whole thing looks much more like an opportunist attempt to exploit a movement which had already been established by the Vigilantes, the camp squatters and the Squatters Protection Society, and continued long after the London occupations were over. They did, however, show up the allegedly radical socialist government in their true colours and force them to step up the housing programme.

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Letter From Latin America

Emma Eastwood in Guatemala City

As a London squatter in exile here in Guatemala, I'm working as a human rights monitor accompanying grass-roots activists who have been subjected to death threats, kidnapping, torture and all manner of repression Latin American stylee.

Like so many other countries in this corner of the world, lack of land is probably the most pressing problem. Almost 70 per cent of a mainly indigenous population live in rural areas and their culture revolves around the spiritual and nurturing concept of Mother Earth. Families are forced to survive off of tiny and often barren bits of land, while a small but powerful elite of land owners hoard huge areas of fertile land to cultivate coffee, sugar, bananas and cotton, destined for export only. Their pockets are lined with riches reaped from the sweat of thousands of peasants forced to work on plantations for as little as 80 pence per day.

However, the situation has changed drastically over the last few months. Peasant and land rights movements are springing up like mushrooms nationwide. Peasants are saying nuffsenuff to the vestiges of colonialism in Guatemala and have been peacefully occupying plantations in conflictive zones on a national scale to demand agrarian reform. With a government that lacks the political will to confront the problem, remaining paralysed between the business and military forces of the country, the plantation owners have taken the law into their own hands. Amidst a climate of fear and tension there have been a number of violent and bloody evictions that have taken place over the last few weeks.

One night last week we received an emergency call from Rosario, a peasant leader working in the capital. She had received information from one of the groups' activists out in a conflictive region on the south coast that a group of 200 armed peasants, bribed by the local landowner, had suddenly arrived at a local plantation and violently evicted a small group of peasants. They had peacefully occupied the land a few days earlier in an attempt to pressurize the landowner into conceding a little of the plantation for the local community.

Rosario had been informed that many people had been wounded during the eviction and were hiding out in a nearby community. Also a couple of children and the local priest who had arrived to try and mediate and calm the situation had disappeared. Given the tense and dangerous situation Rosario asked us to accompany her to the community - hoping that the presence of international observers armed with cameras and tape recorders would deter the landowner from other violent acts.

We arrived at the community in the middle of the night to find confusion, fear and anger amongst the wounded peasants. We listened to stories throughout the night as they recounted the nightmare scenes that had taken place earlier that day. As dawn broke, peasants who had been hiding out in the woods began to dribble into the community to try and decide a strategy for the future. The situation was desperate. Yet despite the forces weighed against them and the constant presence of the landowner's heavies cruising by in their Range Rover, snapping photos, the peasants decided to retake the plantation. Literally they have no choice now but to continue in the struggle, without the land they and their families will starve, whilst the plantation owner's kids grow fat munching on their McDeath burgers bought with the profits made from the coffee that appears on the shelves of your local Safeway.

The taking of the plantations, coupled with an increase in the number of squatter camps springing up in the capital due to lack of adequate housing, makes for a tense situation here in Guatemala. Just a few days ago 500 anti riot police "peacefully" evicted 70 peasants from another plantation down on the south coast. Who knows how the situation will turn out, but the peasants have sworn to continue with their NVDA until a just solution is found to end 500 years of colonial exploitation here in the Banana Republic. Some are willing to die before giving up the struggle. Twyford Down, Split, Weiderdam, San Isidiro, Guatemala; same old story, same old struggle, just different strategies.

Got to say it, SQUALL 9 is even better, like the new format. Always knew that the Criminal Injustice Act wouldn't kill the spirit.

ADELANTE EN LA LUCHA!!!

LETS Trade

In Towns and villages all over the country a bag of vegetables might be traded for a night's baby-sitting. It is this currency of co-operation and community that has inspired the rapid development of the LETS schemes. *Lorna Russell* takes a look at the system of barter that bypasses the bank to promote creative exchange.

Going down the shop to buy a pound of bananas or a bottle of shampoo should not have to involve wasted minutes of label-reading, soul-searching and shop-owner interrogation. But if you don't want to give up completely, there's always the option of joining a quiet, economic revolution.

The recent explosion of Lets (Local exchange trading systems) allows you to know whose pockets you're filling, as well as helping the local economy, making a short cash supply stretch further and allowing skills to be used and things to be bought that otherwise wouldn't.

The first British system calling itself a Lets scheme was set up in Norwich in 1985. By 1990 there were two or three going. There are now about 350, so nearly everyone should have access to a scheme. Sixteen European countries now have similar systems, and things are stirring in parts of Africa, Japan, India and Brazil. Liz Shephard is co-ordinator of Lets-link UK, which gives people information about the schemes, organises national events and publishes a national magazine, Lets-link! (£2.25 or £1.75 plus 50 pence worth of your local currency). She believes the burgeoning interest is due to the fact that Lets can bring you an immediate and practical result.

Jilly Clarke, from North London, has been unemployed for two years and is a member of two Lets schemes in her area. She's so excited about what they've done for her and what they've enabled her to do for other people that she's about to join two more. "I've now got access to a whole range of services that I didn't have before. My flat was totally dilapidated and now it's being repaired and painted and renovated, and I've finally got a washing machine. They're also teaching me as they go along, so next time I can do some myself. I had to pay for the materials in sterling but I negotiated to get all the labour done on Lets on the basis that they would do the work whenever they had time." Jilly's background is in mental health so she's now offering counselling on a part-Lets basis. She's also returned to her old skill of massage. "I never felt comfortable charging sterling when I worked privately because so few people could afford that sort of money. But now I can do it on Lets and feel I'm contributing to the local community."

Liz Shephard guesstimates that nearly a quarter of the people involved in Lets are unemployed; Jilly reckons that it's over half in her schemes. Letsystems can provide something for everyone but are especially valuable for people who live on benefits. Not only is there access to previously unimaginable goods and services, but members also get to feel like

they belong to the community. Cathy Morris, a member of the Manchester Letsystem, has been unemployed for 15 years. With children of 16 and 13 she had always been far too broke to get the house and garden sorted out. She joined her local Letsystem two years ago and has now had a chicken hut built so she can sell her own eggs, had fencing put up in the back garden, loads of shelves built, acupuncture for a bad back, and the front garden changed from a mass of rotting rose bushes to a "cottage garden". "When you're living on benefits," says Cathy, "you feel like you're living on the fringes of society. But now I've got goods and services that I normally couldn't have. In return I do office work for Lets, bake cakes to order and sell batches of vegetarian food. It makes you feel like you can actually participate."

However, there is still a long way to go. If Letsystems are going to bypass the need for "real" money they have to be capable of providing the basics of life. At the moment it's nowhere near possible to live entirely on Lets and some members don't feel it ever will be. For instance, it's highly unlikely that British Gas are going to offer you the option of paying your quarterly bill on Lets.

Food is another vital area where progress seems to be slow, although there are encouraging signs. Lets would be the perfect system for getting healthy, affordable food to people, while simultaneously bypassing the retail giants. In the UK about half of the food retail market is controlled by just five companies, and the food on offer tends to be over-processed, over-packaged, and produced with little regard for animals and the environment. Getting food on Lets would mean we were much more aware of where our meal had come from and this would enable us to make more informed choices. It would give people the power to influence the production of that food, hopefully creating a better market for organic growers. Fewer people would use cars to get to out of town super stores. And by increasing the tendency to eat locally produced food, the excessive global trading which allows rich countries to import all the benefits while exporting all the costs to poorer countries would be reduced.

On most Letsystems this remains little more than an utopian vision. London's Hackney and Brixton both have thriving Lets schemes but neither can offer much in the way of food. The Cooltan Arts Centre's cafe in Brixton is the only eating out venue on their system, while Hackney has the Green Door cafe plus Hackney Wholefoods who offer 10 per cent of your purchase on Lets. Canterbury Wholefoods, in Kent, operate a similar scheme.

Things are looking more promising in Telford, Shropshire, where distributors for a local Green Growers co-op will go into town with £5 bags of seasonal vegetables that can be paid for on Lets. Mandy Winkworth, joint co-ordinator of Lets Eat!, says that here she can get good organic vegetables at a reasonable price through her local Lets scheme. Although

she recognises that no Letsystem can provide people's basic needs as yet, she is optimistic about the future of Lets: "It's the most powerful social economic development of our time. Once it can satisfy basic needs like food and shelter it will increase awareness. And once people start voting with their wallets the producers won't know where to turn!"

Les Moore, of Lets Go London, points to a practical problem of traders charging entirely in local currency: the VAT collector. If a trader is registered for VAT they have to pay 17.5 per cent of the money they make in cash. So until the Inland Revenue start taking Lets, registered traders will only be able to offer goods on Lets on a small scale.

Housing is another area in which Lets are beginning to make in-roads. Letslink have recently noticed an increased interest from housing co-ops, some of which are having a percentage of their building work done on Lets. Siobhan Harpur, co-ordinator of Manchester's Lets Solutions, who are constantly keeping dialogue open with people in housing, economic development and local government, believes that, "if people can meet their basic needs through Lets there is a real possibility of alleviating poverty". A housing co-op in Manchester is currently building new residential accommodation to be ready for the autumn, with the intention that 10 per cent of the rent will be payable on Lets. This money will go back into the maintenance and up-keep of the buildings. Lets Solutions are also planning to revitalise the run-down local community centre using local tradespeople to do the repairs and then hiring out the centre on a part-Lets basis.

Manchester Lets is generally looking like it's leading the way. In Moss Side, where unemployment among 19 - 25 year-olds is reaching 90 per cent, they are working with a black business network to build up black enterprise. "This way," says Siobhan, "some of the 'money' stays local, enabling the community to revitalise their economy. They can hold on to the possibility of sustainability; money flowing locally keeps trade going locally." Altogether, there are 85 businesses in Manchester who will do part of their trading through Lets, including solicitors, a taxi firm and a garden centre. Siobhan says they are also hoping to establish a shared work centre, perhaps with a small businesses start-up scheme which would enable people to begin their own business without building up massive debts.

The biggest growth area in Lets is health. Probably due to their background in alternative perspectives, holistic health practitioners all over the country are involved in schemes. Considering that low-waged people have problems paying prescription charges, let alone £30 an hour for acupuncture or homeopathy, this is an area where Lets can provide a practical service; and one that is generally a lot better than your GP nodding incessantly and then scribbling something unintelligible on a piece of paper. John Rhodes, Letslink's spokesperson on a Lets health service, says

that his aim is to instigate a complete health service within Lets. He believes that nearly all illnesses can be cured holistically, without recourse to the NHS, as long as they're caught early enough. "We're some of the way there in Stroud," says John, "15 practitioners have said they will charge people 50 per cent Lets. There's no reason why someone who's ill shouldn't go 3,000 'strouds' into debt to get cured; after that they'll be in a position to do things for other people on Lets."

Whether or not Lets schemes will ever allow an entirely local, ethically-sound economy to operate, they are undoubtedly capable of increasing the quality of life.

Simon Lukes, a member of Hackney Lets, points out that it also means people can stop their skills getting rusty: "People who have worked all their lives are often unable to cope with being made unemployed. If they've been an electrician for 30 years and they suddenly find themselves out of work they're unlikely to ever get that status back. Lets can offer them an alternative outlook; something else in their lives."

Simon became unemployed himself just after joining his local Lets and he found it gave him a support system to fall back on. He does electronic repairs, mends bicycles and helps with the administration for the local Lets directory, and has used the system to buy tools, have his flat sat while he was away, and buy wholefoods. But most importantly for him, when he went to a recent job interview he didn't feel like it was a make or break situation: "It was my first interview for ten years but having kept up my skills on Lets was a tremendous confidence booster. And because I had something else in my life with the Lets scheme, it wasn't like there was this big abyss that I was going to fall into if I didn't get the job." He got the job.

You'd think that such tales would be enough to make the Government believe that Lets is a good thing. But they may decide that trading on Lets counts as earning money and should therefore be deducted from the dole. The DSS are currently dealing with it as and when it appears and it seems to be down to the local benefit office's discretion as to whether they see it as money or not. Those Lets schemes that actually call it local money are more likely to run into problems. No-one has had money deducted yet but one woman was told that she would lose benefit unless she left the system. The best bet seems to be to tread warily and if in doubt use a false name for trading. (Names in this article have been changed just in case.)

The hope is that the British Government will follow Australia's example where Lets earnings are exempted for people on benefit. As long as we all understand that there's nothing more revolutionary going on than a cheap deal on acupuncture, they might just come to the right decision.

Contact Letslink on: 01985 217 871

Are you Well Red?

A Review of Books on the Criminal Justice Act

by Sean McSweeney

What part do books play in the fight to get the Criminal Justice Act repealed?

By pointing out loopholes and grey areas, and stating out rights they can help activists get around the legislation and prepare a defence and a strategy in the case of prosecution; and they can provide ammo for arguments against the Act. This survey attempts to analyse some of the available publications from these standpoints. Also, books can help you understand the damn thing. Many passages are incomprehensible without legal training and a stack of previous acts by your elbow. In **Current Law Statutes** (Chapter 33), the general notes and definitions are a help, but they are a dull read and you might not have access to a library which stocks them.

More suitable publications are available: **Blackstone Press** (M. Wasik and R. Taylor, £19.95) and **Butterworths** (J. Morton, £16.95) have both brought out guides. If your group is thinking of buying a copy of the Act (£18), you may as well pay the extra £2 (or a quid less) and get a commentary as well. And, of course, libraries buy books if asked for them often enough. Although aimed at the specialist, both these books do a good job of making the legislation understandable. Blackstone's commentary, twice the length of Butterworths', explores background, case law and debates more fully - this is useful for legal defence as well as general information, and sometimes highlights grey areas which might be useful 'in the field'.

Whilst generally not critical (or suspicious) enough, both are very good on secure units and the right to silence and are OK on anti-terrorism and the return of 'sus'. Many worrying sections (eg. much of the trespass legislation) escape comment altogether in Butterworths' - and the author's view on raves will have you foaming at the mouth! But it is perhaps the easier to follow since it follows the Act part by part. Blackstones is excellent on samples and DNA databases and highlights some hidden nasties.

At least with **Defending Your Freedom** (*Legal Research and Campaign Services*, £5) you know whose side the authors are on - L. Lucas and A. Murdie also wrote a guide to the Poll Tax. This new handbook, which deals mainly with the trespass provisions, aims to provide the

activist with info "for practical use". Loopholes, from the plain daft to the very useful, are exposed, but - as I am sure the authors will agree - a good wodge of case law is needed before protesters can be reliably advised. There is good information on defending a squat and avoiding prohibition of trespassory assembly (don't tell the police first!). Anyone about to defend themselves in court will find this publication very useful: rights and procedures, from arrest through to sentencing and appeal, review or complaint, are outlined; there are legal definitions, information sources and a list of some two dozen acts which still guarantee the right to silence. There is also advice on preparing a trouble-free demo.

This last area is also covered in **Peaceful Protest** (*Liberty*, £1); here is how the police actually behave on demos (and why), and here - if you ever needed them - are reminders of the importance of protest. Included is the argument for a bill of rights. Also from *Liberty*, **Defend Diversity; Defend Dissent** (£1) is an update (more clearly laid out) of last summer's guide to the Act. All the obvious villains are here as well as the less publicised ones, such as plea bargains and changes to bail and corroboration rules. The case studies of abuses prior to the Act are very important. These Liberty guides are excellent (now might be an appropriate time to get their briefing on ID cards), and at a quid a throw you can't go wrong.

Finally, and slightly off the point, if you ever feel the fight going out of you and you need to rekindle your outrage, read **Presumed Guilty** (*Mandarin* £5.95) by Michael Mansfield QC, the prominent defender of civil liberties. A (real-life) bungled and damaging murder prosecution is followed through all its stages, from investigation to trial, with accompanying commentary (including concrete, well thought-out proposals for reform). This criticism of our legal system was written before the passing of the Injustice Act, and is all the more damning for that. To think that things are getting even worse! The introduction to the 1994 edition anticipates the forthcoming legislation: "...there is a transparent attempt to achieve a political quick fix with no regard for the quality of justice."

We are beginning to see the truth of that.



The Post Bag

If you have any comments on the content of the magazine or wish to add a few of your own write to:
SQUALL c/o 2 St. Pauls Rd, London N1 2QN

The Road-Builders 'Hard' Men

Dear Squall

Road Building's High and Mighty have been scuttling for cover for over a year now to hide the brutal truth about "security" on the doom-laden M11 Link road through East London.

They won't talk about the 50-plus assaults committed by vicious Reliance Security heavies on non-violent anti-road campaigners.

They deny "spurious" (they say) criminal tactics used by the thugs they recruit at £3.30 an hour and who, so far, have cost the taxpayers more than £10 million.

They lie about their "concern" for the law and their "responsibility" for "fair play". They have none of the first and accept none of the second. Road-building in the eco-aware nineties is a bare-knuckle business and for the politically-sensitive, new bosses of the Transport Department's big spending Highways Agency the only real concern is keeping the lid on the painful, illegal truth about the boot boys they employ.

Last October, two TV documentaries; "public Eye" on BBC2 and Channel 4's "Ride On" showed vivid footage of Reliance Security thugs at work on the M11 link, kicking and head-butting members of the protesting public.

"Public Eye" also uncovered Reliance's secret Gestapo, the hard case "Kick Ass Squad", specialists in mob-handed rough-housing of the seriously determined.

Yet nobody wants to know.

There have been NO police prosecutions, 'though the less-than-convincing Deputy Director of the Highways Agency, Mr. Jim Boud,

did make some promising noises.

On "Ride on", which showed the video-taped head-butt, he told the world that the Highways Agency would "distance" itself from security firms using "excessive" force.

But, since then, slippery Jim has been ducking, diving and refusing to admit the Kick Ass Squad even exists. More to the point, he's also refusing to say just how much "distance" he'll put between his bosses and their £10 million team of hired boot boys.

Last March, a 15 year-old schoolgirl, just looking on at Link Road works in Wanstead, was knocked down and kicked in the ribs by a Reliance Security thug. Police, suspecting broken ribs, sent her to hospital but couldn't find her attacker among a mob of 30 bovver-booted 'hard men'.

Nobody wants to know about that one either, and, for over a year, Transport Minister Steven Norris and his minions have been ducking and diving and refusing to face the truth.

He's had police confirmation of the facts. He's had requests from two MPs. He's had letters from Wanstead residents. But lady-killer Steve - he of the five mistresses and the interesting view that only "dreadful people" use public transport - keeps the lid on by an unconvincing mixture of scorn, contempt and bluster, splitting hairs and picking nits and admitting absolutely nothing.

Not a word of regret from this unreformed secondhand car dealer. Nor a word of reassurance. Not one word of retribution either for his pet cowardly thugs, 'though brave Steve did boast that, early in 1994, he DID act - firmly, courageously and decisively - against Reliance Security's finest when a Wanstead resident complained about their spitting near her home.

And, worse still, he expected the roughed-up, pissed-off people in Wanstead to be grateful....

But, meanwhile, the Men Who Know refuse to admit the truth.

They won't act against the abuses of Security's very-debatable powers. They conspire to protect the guilty. They condemn and dismiss the injured.



THEN they have the nerve to tell us they are doing it FOR US.

Which is bad enough - but their real offence is that they also EXPECT US TO BELIEVE IT!

Peter Hughes,
Wanstead,
London.

Travelling with Prejudice

Dear Squall,

In Bosnia, it is the Muslims. In France, it is the Africans. In Germany, it is the Turks. In contemporary times, stories of discrimination against social and ethnic minorities abound across the borders of civilised Western society. In England, it is the travellers.

Over the past 20 years, born of the growth in 'hippie' culture during the 1960's and incubated by many other factors - cultural, financial and political - a growing amount of British people have chosen to live a nomadic lifestyle.

Following the example of traditional Gypsies, they have abandoned a settled way of life in houses in favour of existing 'on the road', using caravans, trucks, buses, and tent-like benders to solve their housing problems. Aid agencies currently estimate their numbers at around 150,000 although no official census has ever been made; with many finding their homes across the rural southern and western regions of England on small pockets of unused and publicly owned land.

The popularity of this unregulated DIY approach to problems of housing and quality of life has provoked huge disquiet amongst the ranks of an already deeply unpopular and embattled Government. A distinct lack of living sites, no social provision for travellers' needs, and a lengthy smear campaign by the gutter press have also contributed to widespread public suspicion. Inevitably this climate of distrust has led to dispute, discrimination and confrontation, sometimes violent, and the marginalisation of those who have chosen this way of life outside of 'normal' society.

Faced with an ever increasing gap between rich

and poor, widespread poverty and homelessness; the worst unemployment statistics in Europe; no minimum wage levels; spiralling crime figures; public disaffection with both their policies and the actual democratic process (the current Govt. was voted in by a smaller number than those who chose not to take part in the election) and accusations of corruption and hypocrisy at the highest levels; the Govt. solution has been to enact some of the most totalitarian legislation seen in modern English history, effectively criminalising the very existence of travelling people.

Such is the consequences of the Criminal Justice Act, that many young travellers have left England and have sought new homes in the more tolerant climes of France, Spain and Eire.

So it seems that this new generation of travellers have joined previous generations of traditional travellers as easy targets for bigotry and persecution. Referred to as 'scum', 'vermin', and 'sub-human', who 'have no rights' by press and politicians alike, the right-wing ruling regime have used them as easy scapegoats to enact sweeping new constitutional and legal powers which effect the civil and human rights of everybody in the UK. This is a bitter irony in the year which sees us celebrating the 50th anniversary of victory for the Allies in Europe.

With my photographs from the travelling community, I pledge to continue what I see as a long-term project documenting the culture of my people in their struggle for survival, as I believe that we have much to offer for the future of our country. If only those in power could see it.

Yours,
Matthew Smith - Photographer and Traveller.

Who Qualifies to Care ?

Dear Squall,

It's nice to know you haven't forgotten about us 'mentally ill' people ("Support or Coercion for the Mentally Ill" - SQUALL 9).

I've been in and out of the bin since 1977, when I finished at University. My problems have largely been caused by having a dysfunctional family,

ie. having a widowed mother and brother who initiated a campaign of mental cruelty against me over 20 years ago. This culminated in my having an untreated physical condition whose complications nearly killed me in 1985 and 1987. My physical health has been permanently undermined now, and has been the real reason for my more recent admissions to mental hospital.

This time I have been in the bin for fifteen months, thirteen of those detained under Section 3 of the Mental Health Act. I spent a year on the acute admissions ward when it was quite apparent that I was fit to be transferred to a lower security ward. Because I spoke and wrote of my mother ill-treating me in my adult life, my consultant psychiatrist thought I was "dangerous" and "deluded". At one stage last year he was planning to send me to the Kneesworth House Hospital, a long-stay, private psychiatric hospital in Herts. I would have been there for years. This hospital had a record of four deaths in a five month period last year, according to a national newspaper. Also last year, my consultant put me on a particular drug with the aim of "curing" me of my so-called delusions. In the end he admitted defeat and took me off the drug.

One thing that really bugs me about the mental health system is the emphasis and stress placed upon the "family" and "carers" of the patient. The nearest relative of a patient is automatically deemed to be that person's "carer" irrespective of the realities of the relationship and irrespective of whether the patient even lives with him or her. One is supposed to believe that the carer's care for the patient is comparable to that of a person caring for a partner who has senile dementia or who is severely physically disabled. The whole thing is nonsense. Depicting my mother as a carer is a sick joke: she never even cared for my father or her mother in their final months.

I am now to be freed from hospital and will be going either to a halfway house or to a flat. I am lucky to be living in one of the few areas of the country with a case management service. I have been told that my name will be going down on a supervision register. I do not know what this will mean for me. Supervised discharge orders will only affect those who are so-called "depot" injections: I have just been taken off my Clopixol injection.

Throughout these long months of psychiatric imprisonment I have remembered what the American psychiatrist Thomas Szasz says: "Involuntary mental hospitalisation is a crime against humanity."

Love and liberation
Tim Thompson,
E. Sussex.

Keep on Pedalling

Dear Squall,

Major thanks for the great article written about the expedition in issue 9 - without doubt the best piece of press-coverage we've ever had.... especially in terms of relaying the truth: so much so I barely recognised it as being a news article at all!

Viva la Verdad
Jason Lewis
Pedal for the Planet

(editor's note: The Pedal for the Planet team are currently pedalling their boat 'Moshka' around the Florida coast to St. Petersburg. From there Jason is rollerblading to San Francisco then getting back in the boat and pedalling solo across the Pacific. Steve is planning to cycle to Alaska to kayak across the Bering Straits to Siberia.)

Scottish Travelin' Tales

Dear Squall

The main news from Grampian is the same as everywhere; the CJA. Until last January, the council, the police and social services were answering enquiries about the effects of the Act by telling people that the Act didn't apply in Scotland. Since then, the advice agencies have got a little more clued-up.

A 'leaked' document was doing the rounds early in the year, listing traveller's sites in Scotland due for eviction under the Act. It was supposed to have been leaked from a 'source' in the police, but none of us have actually seen it yet. Glengarry was on the list, then Gorebridge, then us (despite not being on a site in the usual sense - we're staying in trailers until we rebuild our house). We were told about the list shortly after hearing of a very violent eviction at Glengarry. Folk at Gorebridge have been visited by police strongly suggesting that it might be a good idea to move off while they could do it voluntarily. On being told that no-one had been given anything in black and white, one police officer pointed to his hat and said: "That's the only black and white you're getting from now on."

Now that Grampian police have got round to acknowledging that the Act counts in Scotland, they've been doing the rounds of the gypsy sites, doing their best to misinform and terrify as many people as possible. They've been getting

particularly nasty with the kids telling them that they're getting evicted tonight, that the evictions will be done without notice now that the Act is in.

A lot of people are finding cottages or moving abroad. The biggest irony is the amount of people going to Spain - in 1990 a representative of the Gypsy Council said how much they were worried about forcibly settled Spanish Gypsies coming over here after 1992 (when Spain joined the EU) and getting travellers a bad name.

Regarding the CJA monitoring article in SQUALL 9, if you're going to report an incident with the police you should get the officer's name(s) as well as a comprehensive description. People reporting incidents, even from 'official' agencies, have been told that the officer wasn't on duty, or was in the station at the time in question. This probably won't surprise most people, but there's always someone who still believes that the police are there as public servants, and will help and protect any member of the public who asks for it. Bear in mind, if you're thinking of reporting something, that you'll need a lot of support to see a complaint through and that the less 'respectable' you are, the less likely you are to get proper outcome. This isn't to say you shouldn't complain. The best thing for people to do is to stick together, support and defend each other so that you're less likely to be in a situation where you can get picked off on your own or in a small group. The more witnesses, the less likely you are to get a trashing.

Most important, and regardless of where you stand in the fluffy vs spikey debate, think for yourself. Advice is good, but becoming someone else's martyr, or keeping quiet because someone told you to isn't being true to yourself and then the whole point of the Act has succeeded. Be aware that there's a lot of misinformation out there.

So let's look after ourselves and each other. It's only a few centuries since it was illegal to paint your face black and run through the King's woods (which was what people did to put the hounds off the hunt. The proles were stopped from hunting in the forests, got hungry, and so frightened the deer, thus making a bad law unworkable). Once the King couldn't enjoy his hunting people were allowed to get food from the woods again without risking execution. So we don't have to put up with the CJA (or anything else for that matter).

TK
Grampian,
Scotland.

Ministers with Dirty Backyards

Dear Squall,

So Nigel Evans (Con. MP Ribble Valley) boasts that he represents "the most beautiful rural constituency" (Actors of Parliament - SQUALL 9). He doesn't know much about the mess in his own back yard.

In the heart of his constituency, near Clitheroe, is

located Castle Cement, which belches out a poisonous cocktail of pollutants in the form of Cemfuel. In fact, this plant has burnt 10 times more Cemfuel than the Government Junior Environment Minister, Robert Atkins, has previously admitted; 34,000 tonnes, not 3,400 tonnes.

This fuel is derived from highly toxic solvent waste. It contains a number of heavy metals; mercury, cadmium, thallium, arsenic and lead. Meanwhile, Castle Cement, BNFL and Nuclear Electric are members of Lancashire County Council's Environment Forum,

which is committed to "greening" the Red Rose County and "forging on with local Agenda 21". Surely, a contradiction in terms with these strange bedfellows!

Nigel Evans is silent about this blot on the local landscape, while he campaigns for another road (Gisburn Bypass) to offset the effects of car boot sales and claims that travellers would wreak havoc in his perfect paradise.

At the same time, down the road in the adjacent constituency of Robert Atkin (Con. MP South Ribble - the aforementioned Junior

Environment Minister), Friends of the Earth have identified 144 possible dangerous waste dumps - toxic timebombs. These Ribble rumbles are causing quite a stir and a stink in both constituencies.

These MPs are no friends of the earth or its inhabitants - far from conserving it, they have allowed a trail of pollution on their patches. Under the Trades Description Act, the Conservative Party should be renamed the Consumer Party, as it encourages greed, waste and eco-destruction!

Conservatives are now an

endangered species, even in beautiful rural constituencies. Let's hope they wither away naturally or be put out to grass at the next General Election! The Earth cannot afford to let them run riot.

Yours,
Working for Peace through
Justice in Creation.
David Penny,
Lancs.

CONTRACTORS

Most of the groups listed below are run by volunteers on non-existent budgets.

If you want information, or any of the publications mentioned, make sure you send the required money, a SAE, plus as much as you can afford as donation.

Give more, get more.

Advisory Service for Squatters (ASS) - Gurus of the squatting world. Open for advice, practical and legal at 2 St. Pauls Rd, London N1 2QN from 2-6pm every day. Tel: 0171 359 8814.

SQUASH, Squatters Action for Secure Homes - Voluntary group opposing squatting aspects of CJA. Actions, lobbying, meetings. *SQUASH*, 2 St. Pauls Rd, London N1 2QN. Tel: 0171 226 8938.

Liberty - National Council for Civil Liberties. Campaigning against Criminal Justice Act. Taking HM Govt. to Euro Court? Mainly media, lobbying but recently set up CJA abuses monitoring project. *Liberty*, 21 Tabard Street, London SE1 4LA. Tel: 0171 403 3888.

Freedom Network - Networking opposition to the CJA. Co-ordinating over 50 local anti-CJA groups nationwide. Contact for one near you. *The Old Dole House*, 372 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, London SW9. Tel: 0171 738 6721.

Exodus Collective - 'A movement of Jah People'. Seriously active collective creating community, housing and seriously kicking parties. Bringing life back to Luton. *Long Meadow Community Farm*, Chalton Cross, Sundown Rd, Luton Beds. Tel: 01582 508 936.

Advance Party - "The Right to Party?" Representing ravers, party-goers, festies and organisers. Campaigning against the CJA. Information, actions, party info, meetings. networked all over UK call for a group near you. *Advance Party*, PO Box 3290, London NW2 3UJ. Tel: 0181 450 6929. e mail: firmone@sypte.co.uk

United Systems - "The International Free Party Network" Offshoot from the Advance Party seeking to bring party awareness on a more international footing hoping to incorporate international politics, global awareness and responsibility into the underground scene. Information, contacts, resources. Tel: 0181 959 7525 or 0181 889 5214 or 0171 652 4602. Express Party Line: 0891 517147.

Homeless Information Project - HIP. Southwark's information service for squatters. Practical and legal advice, CJA, information, meetings. Mon - Fri 4-7pm at 612 Old Kent Rd, London SE15. Tel: 0171 277 7639.

No M11 Link Road Campaign -

NVDA against the M11 extension. *C/O Wanstead Environmental Centre*, The High Street, London E11. Tel: 0181 989 8741.

Road Alert - Co-ordinating anti roads protests across the country. Direct action arm of Alarm UK. Seriously excellent newsletter, seriously active NVDA organisation. Opposition to CJA, information, latest news, actions, networking - get involved. *PO Box 5544*, Newbury RG14 5FB. Tel: 01635 521770.

Alarm UK - Networking over 100 community anti-roads groups nationwide. Information, opposing CJA, lobbying and media. *Alarm UK*, 13 Stockwell Rd, London SW9 9AU. Tel: 0171 737 6641.

Friends, Families and Traveller's Support Group - FFTSG "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." Monitoring CJA, legal observation, advice and information. SAE and money to this very deserving group: *7 Benedict Street*, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9NE. Tel: 01458 832371.

Labour Campaign for Traveller's Rights - Fighting for traveller's rights and particular emphasis on right to sites, wider definitions of travellers, grants and release of unused Govt land. *84 Bankside Street*, Leeds LS8 5AD. Tel: Jenny Smith 01275 838 910. Paul Winter 01132 486746.

Justice? - Anti-CJA networking group and proucers of 'Schnews', wonderful weekly newsheet. *c/o On The Fiddle*, PO Box 2600, Brighton, E. Sussex. Tel: 01273 685913.

Earth First! - "No Compromise in Defence of Mother Earth." Autonomous direct action eco collectives. Seriously committed. Growing numbers of groups appearing all over the country. £4 gets you their magazine "Action Update" contains information on actions and local groups. Also produce "Do or Die" packed full of excellent reading - well worth investigating. *Dept. 29*, 1 Newton Street, Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1HW.

Hunt Saboteurs Association - National umbrella for local groups. Very active on all fronts, hunt sabs have suffered largest number of arrests under CJA so far. Along with road protests represents most painful NVDA thorn in establishment's side, esp considering public support to ban hunting. Action and information - get involved. For info

on local group near you: *HSA*, PO Box 1, Carlton PDO, Nottingham. Tel: 01159 590 357.

121 Centre - Cafe, bookshop, meeting place, advice for all those interested in squatting, women's issues, unemployment and the state of the nation. Run by squatters at *121 Raiton Rd*, Brixton, London SE24. Tel: 0171 274 6655.

The 56A Info Shop - News action and meeting place, books, teashop, records, comics. Squatting, counter culture and lots of small press stuff and all of it behind a wonderful community wholefood store - check it out. Open Mon, Thurs, Fri 3-7pm. *56 Crampton Street*, London SE17.

Cool Tan Arts - Collection of artistically active squatters running regular cafes, lots of workshops, information. Regular events and music. Make the most of this unique centre before they get evicted. Contributions, new ideas, energy, always welcome. *The Old Dolehouse*, 372 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, London. Tel: 0171 737 2745 / 0100.

Rainbow Centre - Networking point for tribal issues, squatting, travellers, Agenda 21, Dongas, anti-roads eco & CJA. Arts space, workshops, meetings, information, events. *The Olde Church*, 23 Highgate Rd, Kentish Town NW5. Tel: 0171 267 0828.

Failte - 'welcome'. Internet world wide web site of Scottish Free Festival and Environmental Network. Info on festies, raves, anti-CJA, environmental news. Contact the URL (uniform resource locator): <http://www.gold.net/users/as27/index.html>

Faslane Peace Camp - Permanent peace camp outside Clyde submarine base that is the home of Trident submarines. Produce newsheet *Faslane Focus*, land rights, actions and anti-nuclear information. Donation to: *Faslane Peace Camp*, Shandon, Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire, Scotland. Tel: 01436 820901.

Green Line - 'Aiming to empower people to take more control of their lives'. Superb eco-info/action magazine by Catalyst Collective. Produced monthly, 20 A4 pages of news, environment, actions, campaigns, animal rights, roads, corporate watch, reviews, diary and more. Well worth £1 to: *PO Box 5*, Lostwithiel, Cornwall, PL22 0YT. Tel: 01726 850500.

Endangered Species - Socially and environmentally active group in Mid Wales. Anti-CJA, pro justice. Meetings, networking, raising local awareness. *14 Great Oak Street*, Llanidloes, Powys, Mid Wales.

Monolith News - Magazine for travellers of the new age and all interested. No. 19, modern Arthurian theories, Watt Tyler & what do the Masons have to do with Stonehenge? To find out send donation and A5 SAE to *Monolith Publications*, PO Box 4, Syston, Leicester LE7 4RD.

Stonehenge Campaign - "Stonehenge belongs to you and me." Regular newsletters, festies, information, listings and meetings. Donation and SAE to *Stonehenge Campaign*, 99 Torriano Avenue, London NW5 2RX.

Small World - "Just Do It." Non-profit organisation committed to supporting campaign groups working on environmental and social justice issues. Produce 'Undercurrents', quarterly alternative video magazine. Features CJA, direct action, anti-roads, campaigns, topical eco-issues. Videos available from *Small World Media*, 1A Waterlow Rd, London N19 5NJ. Tel: 0171 727 5255.

Festival Eye - An excellent mag that keeps on running. Summer '95 issue contains Beanfield revisited, Road Protests, festie listings, life at the Rainbow, McDonalds, Stonehenge, Beltane, lots of good pics, letters and comment. A must at £1.50 (plus A4 SAE) from: *BCM Box 2002*, London WC1N 3XX.

Conviction - Campaigning group, support and help for prisoners falsely accused/imprisoned. Produce newsletter, free for prisoners - 75p to all else, stuffed full with injustice, prison reform, Criminal Cases Review Commission. Very worthy cause in need of support. *PO Box 522*, Sheffield S1 3FF.

Contraflow - Part of the European Counter Culture Network. Radical mag about justice, campaigns, occasional articles on

squatting, CJA, travellers. Available from the *56A Info Shop* (address above).

FIN - Free Information Network. Local activists, motivators and information gatherers. Newsheets published as and when containing up to date information, festival and party news, events, meetings, campaigns etc. SAE and donation to your local branch.

AberdeenFIN - 36 Buchan Rd, Torry, Aberdeen AB1 3SW.

EFFIN - c/o York, The Coffee Bar Grassroots, 58 Charles Street, Cardiff.

GuilFIN - PO Box 217, Guildford, Surrey.

MaidstoneFIN - PO Box 263, Maidstone, Kent.

ManFIN - Dept. 53, 1 Newton Street, Piccadilly, Manchester M1.

MerseyFIN - PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 6AU.

MotherClan - 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 - c/o RSI, 30 Silver Street, Reading.

SheffFIN - The Ecology Co, 199 Crookes Valley Rd, Sheffield.

SouthWestFIN - c/o Wild Pear Court, Combe Martin, North Devon.

WalsallFIN - c/o 17 Newhall House, Newhall Street, Cladmore, Walsall WS1 3DY.

**Gnorman
and the
Gnomon**

*A children's book by
John Harrison*



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